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Francisco Sierra – *A bird in a studio*
von Bartha, Copenhagen
24 August – 28 October

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We are thrilled to present the debut solo exhibition in the Nordic region by Chilean-Swiss artist Francisco Sierra (* 1977), showcasing new oil paintings and gouaches on paper.

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Its title *A bird in a studio* is inspired by the coincidental event when an actual bird, straying from its way, inadvertently entered the artist's studio while he was working on a large-scale depiction of an owl for the central work for his exhibition in Copenhagen. This double reference of both, an imagined and an interrupting bird, is typical of Francisco Sierra's preoccupation with the concurring internal and external spheres, something that becomes apparent in his current exhibition.

His works often include autobiographical elements such as memories from his childhood in Chile, when, for example, he dreamed of running the most fantastical zoo in the world. At that time, birds were particularly important to him, and they continued to populate his imagination along with other mythologized animals, such as spiders (*Spider King*, 2023 and *The all new Holy Spider*, 2023) and dolphins (*Kun for dine øjne*, 2023), all of which are represented in his paintings on view.

With *OYL*, 2023, the artist continues his decade-long fascination with this nocturnal bird of prey as a motif. The title deliberately misspells Eule, the German word for owl, referencing his earlier paintings *Oylen*, 2012, and *Schnee Oylen*, 2023.

In his latest work, he focuses on representation, artificiality, and deception through the use of the trompe-l'oeil technique, as well as revealing part of his artistic process, which often involves hand-molded clay models as a starting point for certain paintings.

Elaborating further on the question of deception is the shiny, metallic, almost one-dimensional surface of the mysterious bird's face. The expression quotes a mask that the artist found in a souvenir shop in the Atacama Desert, in Chile.

Throughout his oeuvre, and still today with *A bird in a studio*, Francisco Sierra's motifs reveal and break with the hierarchy of high and low culture and the socially imposed boundaries of taste. This is no different in the painting with the kitschy Danish title *Kun for dine øjne* (Engl.: for your eyes only), 2023, rendering a baby dolphin leaping out of the sea, recalling stereotypical depictions of the joyful, friendly dolphins from the ever-present popular culture.

For Sierra, sources of inspiration span from art history's iconic masterpieces and highly philosophical questions about life to incidental discoveries in thrift stores, or surprising encounters in the studio. Yet he incorporates all of those aspects when painting, brush stroke after brush stroke, creating new images, but ones with an old and wise soul.

Francisco Sierra was born in 1977 in Santiago de Chile. He lives and works in Cotterd, Switzerland.

VON BARTHA