

Galleri Riis

MORTEN ANDENÆS

Red, beige, black and empty
Final throes
Foundering figure, golden ground

August 27-30, 2026

Chart Art Fair, Copenhagen

Booth 24

"I have always been deeply fascinated by photographs and their verisimilitude, by how an appearance is perceived, felt and understood to stand in for the thing itself. Photographs are slippery, deeply complex, and in this they mirror real-life experience. We seek predictability, and order, but the world is messy, full of conflicting viewpoints, and I'm interested in making images that cannot be easily reduced, but exist as experiences that are as ambivalent and redolent with emotion as a face-to-face encounter."

For the past two decades, Morten Andenæs' concise and poetic imagery, as well as his literary texts on photography have made a distinct mark on the Norwegian photography scene. Curator Ida Kierulf, now at the Henie Onstad Arts Centre, wrote that Andenæs' atmospherically charged visual language renders the world at the same time familiar and fundamentally alien. His work shares an affinity for the inherent existential drama of the everyday with Nordic artists such as Tom Sandberg and Wilhelm Hammershøi, though Andenæs' work also carries an underlying social critique and moral ambivalence related to his upbringing in the Norwegian social democratic system.

The works presented at Chart Art Fair have not been shown previously. On the surface they share similarities with regards to form and subject matter. Typical of Andenæs' work, what appears to be records of an everyday scene, a tabletop in various states of disarray for example, are upon closer examination revealed to be intricate constructions.

Russian constructivism and Thomas Demand come to mind with *Red, beige, black and empty*, as does Rubens, Velasquez and medieval gold-ground paintings with *Final throes* and *Foundering figure, golden ground*, respectively. However, these photographs are more than art-historical references to modernism, the Baroque and the Middle Ages, evoking desire and destruction, chaos and vitality, death, transcendence, reactionary cultural forces and ideological and religious zeal.

Andenæs' photographs are multifaceted in subject matter and approach, and by making use of the painterly qualities inherent in digital photography, he creates works that are deep in tonal complexity and color. In gallery spaces or between the covers of a book, print-quality, image-size, juxtaposition and sequencing emphasizes the tactility of photography and its potential to move us not just visually, but viscerally. He offers the viewer fragments of a whole that seems just beyond reach, and by encouraging the viewer to explore a myriad of conflicting narratives and reflections, his works welcome interpretation, curiosity and complexity at a moment in which freedom of artistic expression is subject to limitations by dogmatic certainty.

Morten Andenæs' work has been exhibited extensively in solo and group exhibitions at Kunstnernes Hus, Henie Onstad Arts Centre, The Norwegian National Museum, Galleri Riis, Galleri MELK and Fotografisk Center in Copenhagen among others. He has published three major photobooks, one novel, a book on contemporary photography for Objektiv Press and a number of essays for catalogs and journals. In 2025, Andenæs curated the largest exhibition to date of the late Tom Sandberg at the Henie Onstad Arts Centre together with Susanne Østby Sæther. His works are represented in major public collections such as The National Museum, Henie Onstad Arts Centre, Kunstsilo/Sørlandets Kunstmuseum, City of Oslo Art Collection and Kistefos/Christen Sveaas Art Foundation, Oslo.

Galleri Riis at Chart Art Fair is supported by OCA Office for Contemporary Art Norway

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ADMIR BATLAK

«In the Kink»

I Pose for Scale

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Batlak insists on his work being constantly “in process”, suggesting material agency as he described his installation at MUNCH as “on the way to becoming”. It was not seeking to become a monument or to be fixed in a particular form, but to retain its monumentality while resisting symbolic meaning. He spoke of the sculptures as being in a liminal state, between brand new and already in decay, monumental and fragile, clumsy and fabulous. Despite the artificiality of the main material – plastic – the finished result was remarkably organic. The industrial finish of the sequins was made less glossy by printing directly onto them. The sculpture looked almost like an underwater mythical creature, covered in scales. A sea monster with a camp side, showing off its iridescent, golden locks while invoking the nostalgia of monuments to “brotherhood and unity”.

- From the essay “Collaging information into a pose” by Tominga O'Donnell, from the exhibition catalogue «In the Kink», Solo Oslo III, MUNCH, 2023.

Standing before *I Pose for Scale*, the botanist in me immediately starts scanning forms and patterns, trying to register and classify the source material Batlak has used to create this monumental quilt. Certain elements strike a familiar chord – like the photographic fragment of sequins slightly below center-left, which echoes his installations from «In the Kink», shown at MUNCH in 2023. The tall green cypresses rising above the truncated lamppost at the bottom center also appeared in a work from his 2024 exhibition *Every Frill is an Edge* at Galleri Riis, where they were part of a photograph taken in Batlak's birth city, Mostar, in the former Yugoslavia. Alongside these echoes of earlier works, the quilt also includes fragments of different urban landscapes: from palm trees in San Francisco, oases of emerald green water from the river Neretva, tiled streets, stairways, bushes, and flowers. These snapshots have been stacked and compressed into a whole where the parts can no longer be separated. Like memories that blend, overlap, and blur across time and place, *I Pose for Scale* reads like a patchwork of remembrance, in which the collisions of forms, colors, and associations remain disorienting and unresolved.

- From the essay “Admir Batlak: I Pose for Scale” by Mathias Danbolt for Entrée, Bergen, 2025.

Admir Batlak (b. 1982 in Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina) lives and works in Oslo. He is a trained fashion designer from Istituto Marangoni in Milan (2006). In recent years, he has worked primarily with visual art and has shown his work at Entrée, Bergen (2025), Galleri Riis (2024), Solo Oslo III, MUNCH, Oslo (2023), Soft, Oslo (2022); The Sculpture Triennale, Sculptors Association, Oslo (2021); NoPlace, Oslo (2020). He is represented in the collections of The National Museum in Oslo, Kode in Bergen and Stavanger Art Museum among others. In 2020 he won the Norwegian Art Association's debutant prize at Høstutstillingen (Kunstnernes Hus, Oslo).

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