

SASKIA NEUMAN GALLERY

Gavin Gleeson

Partial Parade

02.10 – 01.11.2025

In Gavin Gleeson's (b. 1995, USA) painting, a distinct theatre unfolds between clarity and evasion, winding through everyday memories and their transformation into something strange and poetic. *Partial Parade* is the artist's first solo exhibition in Scandinavia and marks a new phase in his artistic practice.

Gleeson grew up in Kentucky to Irish parents and is currently based in London, where he earned his MA from the Royal College of Art (2024). In his work, the landscapes, structures and psychological undertones of his upbringing intersect with the cultural echoes of his heritage. This duality runs like a wayward thread throughout his work — intimacy and distance, melancholy and playfulness, safety and unease.

The exhibition's title *Partial Parade* captures this tension. The word "partial" carries both the meaning of something fragmentary and of being biased, leaning in one direction. "Parade" — procession, carnival, spectacle — suggests something ceremonial yet fleeting, tinged with joy and celebration, however simultaneously shadowed by more sinister undertones. Gleeson's paintings inhabit precisely this in-between state; charged with color and energy, but always with a sense of fragility and interruption.

Recurring motifs serve as gateways into this world with ladders, tables, bleachers, and stages. They are everyday objects, but in Gleeson's visual language these images are symbolic, and recharged. In the painting *Folded Parade*, a solitary bleacher-like structure emerges. Gleeson describes the work as a kind of blank sheet, where fragmented memories from his childhood; Churchill Downs in Louisville — the historic racetrack founded in 1875, known for hosting the annual Kentucky Derby — is spread out. This site as a key to the artist, the place where he first began sketching; the architecture and people. Below the bleachers, once again, we encounter the construction of a table, transformed into a boardgame or altar.

For Gleeson, painting is a playground, though one that carries as much seriousness as it does levity. He describes the process as "entering the space like a child suddenly given full access to the playroom unsupervised — let the games begin." This playfulness is not a fleeting gesture, but a method of allowing the paintings to emerge through improvisation, association and detours. Fantasy and make-believe worlds merge with a need for structure and order.

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The titles of the paintings are integral to this universe. They may be wordplay, distorted idioms or riddles — *Table Stakes*, *Cold Turkey*, *Menu for the Gods* — serving as both apparent clues and disguises. Gleeson notes that he often sees the works as unfinished until they receive a title, even if these names may later prove to be fluid, replaced, or forgotten. In this process, language becomes yet another space where humor, gravity and ambiguity converge.

It is in this interplay between improvisation and structure, between the lighthearted and the existential, that Gleeson's painting finds its force, its potency. His visual language resonates with artists such as Prunella Clough, Walter Swennen, and Norbert Schwontkowski — all known for balancing abstraction with poetry. Similarly, Gleeson allows his works to become fields of reflection, where memories, associations, and material shifts merge into something that resists being reduced to narrative, yet never ceases to point toward one.

Partial Parade presents a practice in which painting is not a closed image but an open construction—ready to be activated by the viewer's own memories and imagination. Ladders, grandstands, tables, and balloons become points of departure for inner parades: processions of memories, associations, and atmospheres that never fully reveal themselves, yet carry their own weight and presence.