



Per Fronth

Carbon Compositions

Dillon Gallery
New York 2008

for Aya Augustine

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Dillon Gallery
New York October 2008

By Cecilie Tyri Holt
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Contributing Editor, Kunst for Alle

-Salt, I want you to taste Salt!

Per Fronth stressed the importance of me visiting him in his hometown of Kristiansand. And so I did. Kristiansand is a little town located in the archipelago coastal-area in the south of Norway. Fronth picks me up at the airport by boat and I immediately get the importance of being there. I was suddenly thrown into Fronths paintings. We travelled through all of his paintings from the series “**Archipelago**”. On the way I got a glimpse of the children in “**Evolution of Melancholy III. – St. Matthew**” and I could feel the presence of the “**Waterlillies**”. I got it. I had to experience this nature to fully understand Fronths culture. This is Fronths palette.

- It´s like eating cake for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Even though the scenes in Fronths paintings often are located in Kristiansand and the surrounding area they are far from sunny, idyllic statements about an easy, breezy existence. The paintings would fall right through a pink fluffy cloud of simplicity that often describes a day from one of your childhood summers. The interesting part is that I cannot specify the reason why these paintings are unable to represent their motives in a straightforward way. It´s like being on a boat in the middle of the summer. The air is warm and you’re watching the skies drift away by the summer breeze. Suddenly the light changes. The scene is still beautiful, but you know something is about to happen. There is an abstract underlying unease in most of Fronths artworks that creates a strong contrast to his choice of motives.

The series “**One Hundred Years of Complete Boredom**” comprise of many beautiful artworks. They show a young woman dressed in a romantic, white dress. She carries a lantern in search of something or someone. The light is golden and creates a tranquil atmosphere. It´s beautiful, so beautiful that Fronth decides to attach the word “boredom” to the series and compares watching the paintings with eating cake for breakfast, lunch and dinner. By using the overly beautiful and aesthetic as a background in all his paintings, Fronth comments on abundance in society. Everything is seemingly so beautiful and filled with comfort-zones that in the end it´s just sickening.

- I want to redefine photography by way of using my paintbrushes.

Another thing that puzzled me the first time I saw Fronths pictures was the undefined artistic medium. Was the picture a photography or was it a painting? But now I’ve learned that it´s not important. He relates his art to different medias but in the end the pictures comprise of detailed compositions. Fronths artworks can be described both in comparison to the work of a composer and an author. He collects different pieces and settings from his own life and history in order to compose a new picture and a new reality for the spectators to experience. Fronth is searching for tranquility and balance in his compositions. And by way of using both photography and oil-paint Fronth can artistically be found right in between reality and fiction.

- I want my works to be about life not art.

The search or the quest seem to be a continuous theme in many of Fronths pictures. Like the girl with the lantern in “**One Hundred Years of Complete Boredom / Scandinavia**”, the boys, and the girl, in the enormous picture called “**Bridge / Teenage Lux**” are also carriers of light. But what are they searching for? “**Bridge / Teenage Lux**” is reminiscent of a film-still. The scene is from a view common to Fronth. Ever since he was a little boy growing up in Kristiansand he used to fish for crayfish and crab. I do not know how often New Yorkers ever see young boys fishing for crayfish and crab though. Even this everyday scene, at least for Norwegians in the summertime, Fronth makes into something oblivious and abstract. The picture tells a story not only about a summer activity but it is also loaded with symbolic meaning. The number three is repetitive in the three boys, three poles and the three “svabergs”, a Norwegian term best described in English as slopes of naked rocks polished by receding glaciers during the last ice-age 10.000 years ago.

Numerology is a system that has a link to Judaism, Hinduism, Christianity and other religions. The belief that there is a connection between numbers and living things are interpreted differently by every religion. According to christian numerology the number of three is a symbol of completeness mainly because of the Holy Trinity. We also find examples of the importance of the number of three in the division of time into the concepts of past, present and future. The aspect of time seems to be of great importance in regards to the division of the picture “**Bridge / Teenage Lux**” into sort of a triptych. The triptych has a history that stems from early christian art and altar paintings from the Middle ages.

Fronth composes and divides his pictures in his characteristically bold way. He actually leaves the middle of “**Bridge / Teenage Lux**” totally black. The middle of the picture is thus dominated by a big, black shadow. This is a quite dramatic way to divide the picture into three parts that can symbolise the past, present and the future.

The picture is so beautifully accomplished that my eyes slowly wander in circles over the canvas. It´s kind of like watching a **Caravaggio** because of Fronths choice of colours and the use of strong chiaroscuro. It also reminds me of the Norwegian painter **Christian Krohgs (1852-1925) “Albertine i Politilægens Venteværsele”** from 1887. The latter comparison because of Fronths way of experimenting with the spectators glance and the pictures theatrical aspect.

In his time Christian Krohg was an artist who combined photography and painting in a new way. He also challenged the idea of where the focal-point in the paintings should be. In “Albertine” he tells the sad story of a young girl that is forced into prostitution. But it is not Albertine the spectator first sees in the painting because someone else is occupying the middle of the canvas. Just like Fronths big shadow in the middle of “**Bridge / Teenage Lux**”. In Krohgs painting the real action or the real story is being told in the background of the scene. The spectator is being asked to see the entire frame and the spectators glance is being compelled to move in Krohgs famous painting. This is also the case in Fronths “**Bridge / Teenage Lux**”.

By using chiaroscuro, a term that describes the strong contrasts in baroque paintings, Fronth creates a dramatic scene. It seems as if these boys are searching for something or someone in the water. Water is often regarded as a symbol of life. Hence the picture can be interpreted as the youths searching for the meaning of life. The bridge may symbolise the turning-point and the connection between the past and the future, between childhood and adulthood. The lighthouse may symbolise the one thing that´s constant and unfaltering in everyone's life. That lighthouse symbolises of course a million different things to a million different people. Some believe in a God, some believe in the kindness of other people etc. The lighthouse means whatever you want it to mean.

In addition to placing Fronth in relation to retrospective art history, one can also regard him as representing a photographic expression and experimentation that is similar to other contemporary artists like **Mike & Doug Starn (1961-)** or **Jeff Wall (1946-)**. The German photographer **Andreas Gursky (1955-)** also creates huge photographic compositions of different kinds of space, often without any people in it. If there is people in the photographs, their purpose is to form a pattern rather than to function as individuals or symbols. One never gets to know the people in Gurskys photographs. Unlike the people in Fronths art works, they’re just pieces that together form great compositions. Gurskys photographs, like Fronths art work, pieces together a new reality. Gurskys art is thus similar to Fronths artistic concept, but far glossier. Fronth makes the fact that his art works comprise of different parts quite visible to the naked eye, while Gursky do not show the seams at all. Nevertheless, it´s interesting to see how Fronth reacts artistically to other contemporary artists that base their work on the photographic medium.

The reality of fiction

“**Evolution of Melancholy III – St. Matthew**” is one of Fronths paintings that provokes the question about an artworks reality effect. Is this a photograph of a scene from reality or is it a painting of a fictitious place? It is a beautiful seaside view sprinkled with a rainbow. This artwork is composed of a number of different photographs taken over the course of 18 minutes - from 1:02 till 1:18 pm. Fronth collects impressions. His pictures are reconstructions, not lies. But they are reconstructions of a new reality. It looks fake and it is fake, but rather a new fake reality.

Fronth tells me stories about every child in his paintings. He knows every one of them. But the stories he tells in his pictures are not necessarily about them. He also tells me that he strongly identifies with the little girl in “**The Way the Sun Attaches to Her (archipelago)**” and with the twelve-year-old boy with his back to the spectator in “**Evolution of Melancholy III – St. Matthew**”. It’s about self-identification and subjectivity. Fronth identifies with everything he portrays.

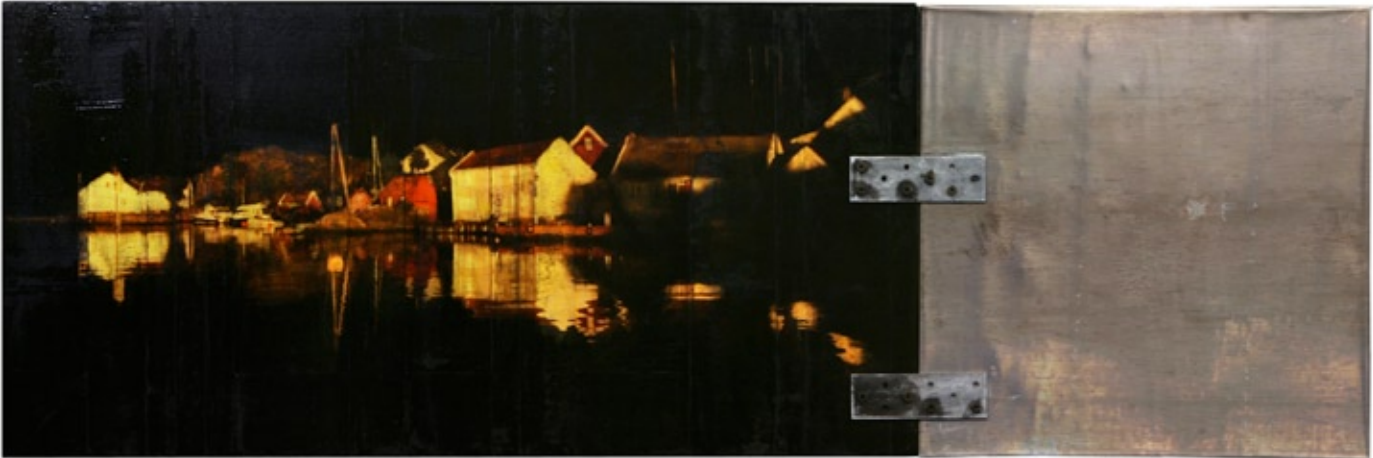
He tells me that if I had seen what he saw at the moment he took the photographs that “Prism/Cliché (archipelago)” comprise of, I wouldn’t recognise his picture. Even though Fronth partakes in the situations by knowing the people and the place he photographs, he also distance himself from the scene like a photojournalist documenting an event. Afterwords he steps into he role as an artist and handles the pictures like parts of his own life story.

Fronths pictures are both reality and fiction because he mixes photographs with painting. The photographic medium has the status of being sort of a truth-bearer. A photograph is seen as evidence of something that took place. The French philosopher and semiotician **Roland Barthes (1915-80)** introduce a theory in his last book called. Here he defines the photographic core as the mediums referentiality. A photograph is always seen as proof of something happening or someone being in front of the camera. This reality-effect leads the spectator to believe in the photograph in a completely different way than we do in a painting. One looks at a painting without premonition. We accept that a painting is fiction but we take it for granted that a photograph represents reality. But what happens with the degree of reality when the two mediias are combined?

- There is tranquility in my pictures. Water gives me balance.

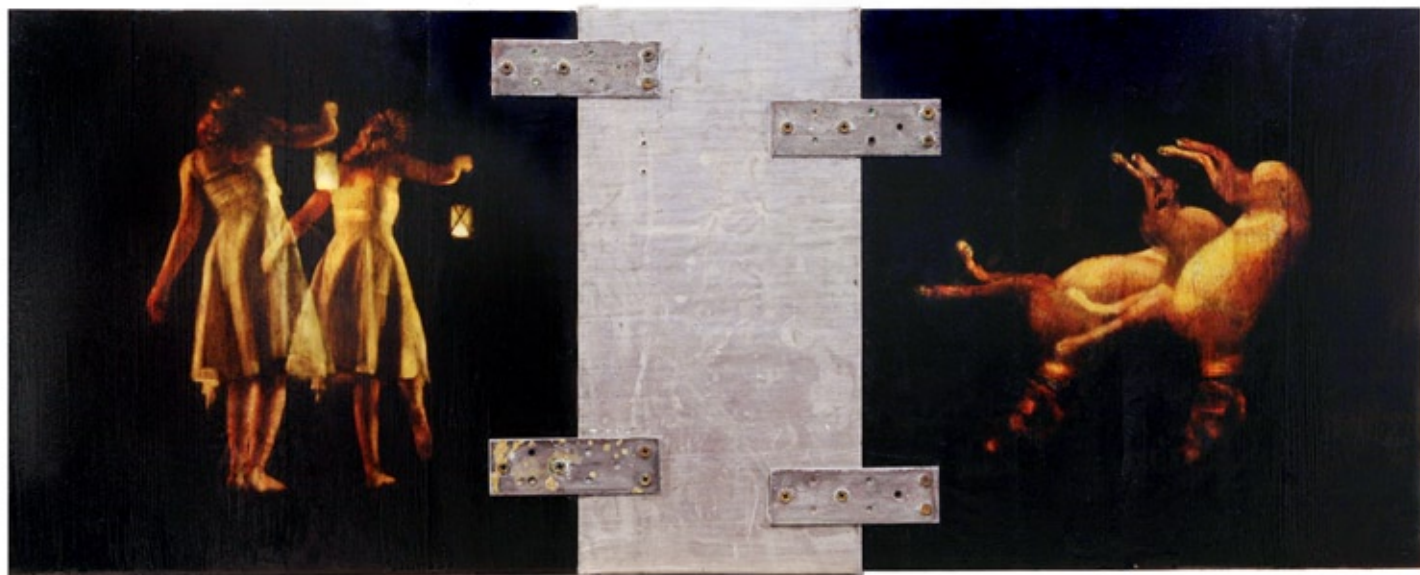
Fronth can be compared to a musician that samples different parts from different song and put the pieces together to form a new song. Or a composer who creates a symphony by combining different sounds. He can also be compared to a writer that writes about different incidents in his life in order to create a new story. That way he can distance himself from his motives as a photographer and then later personalise his artworks when he starts working on his compositions. Because he uses his natural environment in a lot of his paintings he creates a reality that we believe in but he provides every picture with a new layer of meaning. That is why I get the feeling that there is something I’m not seeing when I’m looking at Fronths pictures.

I always get the sensation that there is something uncomprehensible and somewhat distraught in Fronths pictures. Like in “Waterlillys”. I can almost hear the theme from the movie “Sharks” when I see those girls looking down at the water not knowing what the water is hiding. Something’s about to happen. If not as dramatic as a shark, it may symbolise that puberty is about to show it’s grim face. But why can’t I see this picture as a symbol of something uncomplicated as girls taking a bath on a hot summers day? It is too idyllic and esthetic to be credible. Instead of seeing it as a beautiful picture I start to doubt its intentions. I doubt the pictures unquestionable beauty because nothing is flawless and unquestionable. If something or someone is too shallow and perfect, a natural reaction is doubt. There is a Norwegian saying that specify this: *Stillest vann har dypest grunn* - The calmest waters are the deepest. One can only imagine how spectators will read Fronths autobiographical storylines from the southern Scandinavian surroundings of Ny-Hellesund, Flekkerøya and Kristiansand. Does it seem like an illusion or a fantasy? Maybe it’s all a dream?



Top image:
Brake of Day (Psychology) ver.II
Phototransfer / Lead / 3M Reflective / Oil on Wood
120 x 40 cm / 47 x 16 in

Bottom image:
Entry / East / Reflex (archipelago) ver.II.
Phototransfer / Lead / Oil on Wood
120 x 40 cm / 47 x 16 in



Above:
 One Hundred Years of Complete Boredom
 / Year of the Sleeping Dogs
 Phototransfer / Lead / Oil on Wood
 100 x 40 cm / 40 x 16 in



Opposite page:
 One Hundred Years of Complete Boredom
 / Scandinavia Ver. II.
 Mixed Media / Oil on Canvas
 160 x 195 cm / 65 x 77 in



July 29th (archipelago)
Mixed Media / Oil on Wood
60 x 100 cm / 24 x 40 in



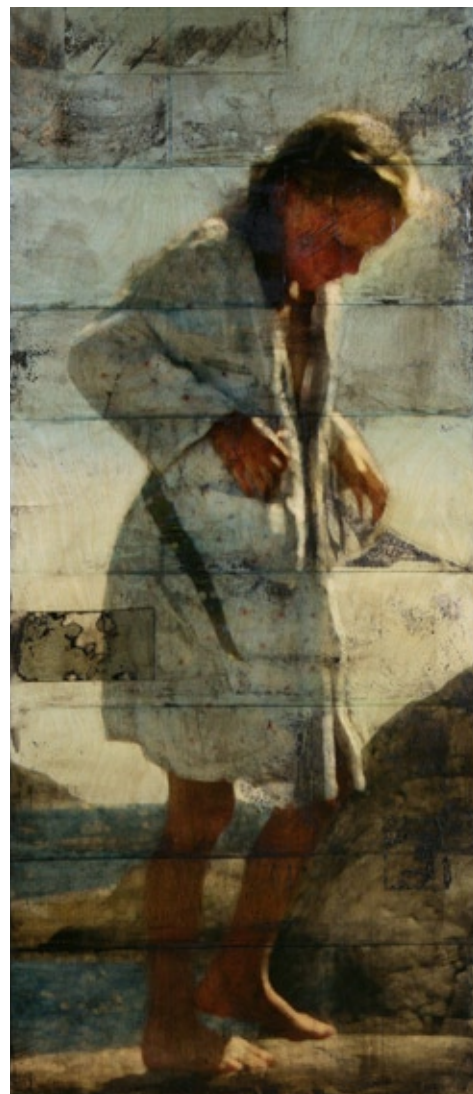
Boat - Treshold (archipelago) Ver II.
Phototransfer / Oil / 3M reflective material on Wood
40 x 50 cm / 16 x 20 in



Waterlillies I. (archipelago)
Mixed Media / Oil on Canvas
165 x 200 cm / 65 x 78 in



Waterlillies II. (archipelago)
Mixed Media / Oil on Canvas
165 x 200 cm / 65 x 78 in



The Way The Sun Attaches to Her (archipelago)

Phototransfer / Oil on Wood

Panel I. - III.: 40 x 92 cm / 15 3/4 x 36 2/3 in Panels IV : 20 x 50 cm / 8 x 20 in



Evolution of Melancholy III - St. Matthew Ver. II
Mixed Media / Oil on Canvas
315 x 165 cm / 126 x 66 in



Bridge / Teenage Lux (archipelago)
Mixed Media / Oil on Canvas
465 x 165 cm / 184 x 65 in



Ceremony - Institution? (archipelago)
Phototransfer / Oil on Wood
100 x 40 cm / 39 x 16 in



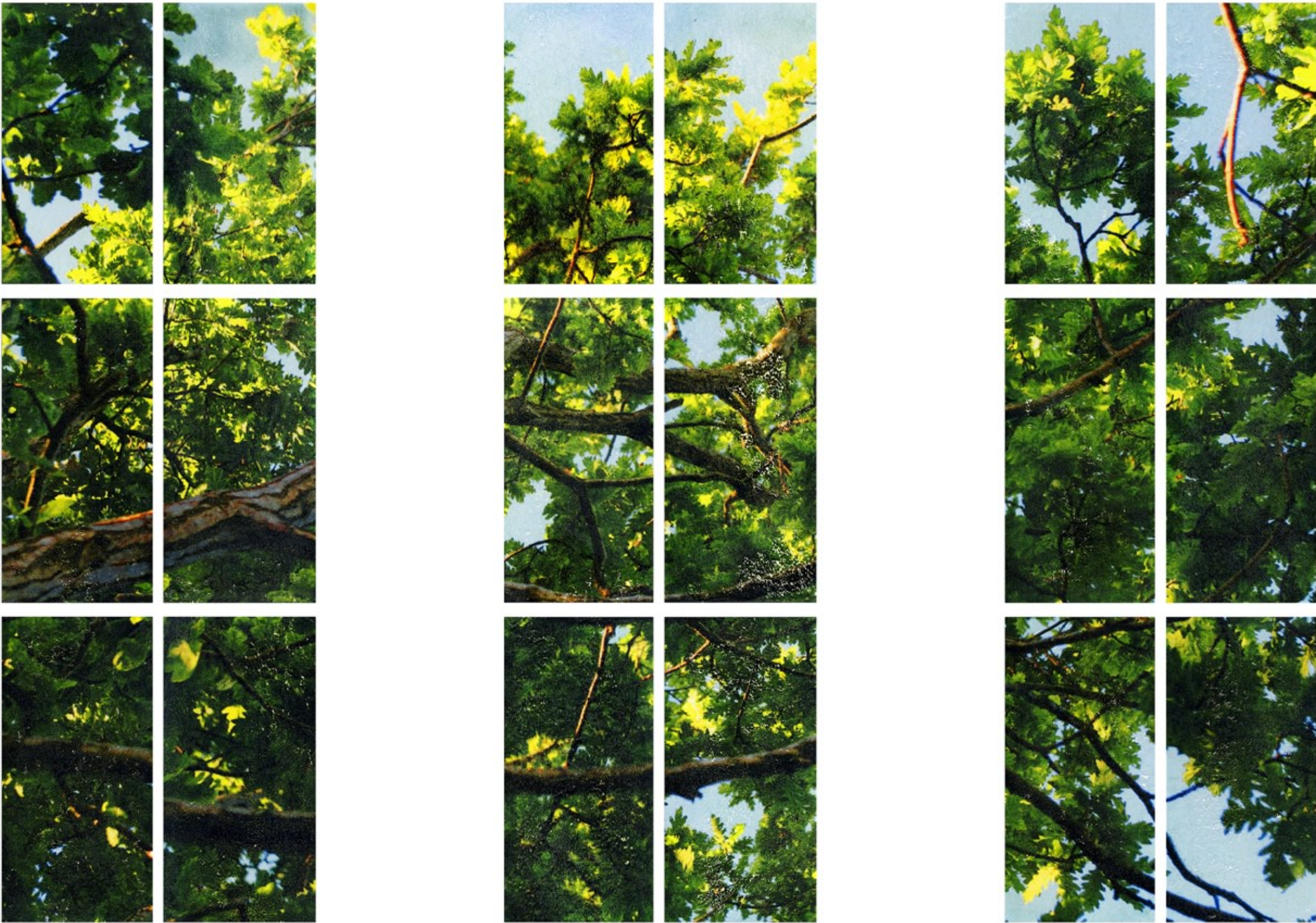


Prism / Cliché
(archipelago) Ver III.
Mixed Media / Oil on Canvas
220 x 165 cm / 87 x 65 in



Reservoir / Years end /
Setesdal / Helicopter I.
Mixed Media / Oil on Canvas
220 x 165 cm / 98 x 65 in

epilogue



Metaphor of Divine Intelligence 8:31 min.
/ Photosynthesis Oak Flekkerøya (Trip-Tych)
Pigment on Tempered Glass - 18 Glasspanels
Each wall 210 x 72 inches / 534 x 182 cm
Commision by Bentel & Bentel Architects, New York
for Rouge Tomato New York LLC

Per Fronth
Born November 24th 1963 Christianssand Norway

Solo Exhibitions

2008 Dillon Gallery "Carbon Compositions "

2008 Galleri Bl-Z " quattro "

2006 Dillon Gallery " new works "

2006 Kunstgalleriet " in abundance "

2006 Molde Kunstforening

2005 Ålesund Kunstforening " mms/metaphores "

2004 Galleri Bl-Z " / undertow "

2003 Kunstgalleriet " paradoxical sleep monologues"

2003 Christian Dam Galleries " genome days "

2003 " Independence Day " East-Timor, Sørlandets Kunst Museum

2002 Dillon Gallery " Exit Christianssand"

2001 Galleri Bl-Z "Archipelago"

2000 Martha Schneider Gallery "cargo"

2000 Galleri Christian Dam "Bloodlines"

2000 Anderson Stewart Fine Art " Bloodlines "

1999 Dillon Gallery " lifedreams "

1998 " Xingu Chronicles " Online presentation One Show
Interactive Award Golden Pencil Award, Crea Dir. James Roven

1998 Dillon Gallery " Xingu Chronicles "

1998 Galleri Ericson " Xingu Chronicles "

1997 Galleri Bi-Z, Kristiansand

1994 Bergen Kunstforening, Bergen

1994 Galleri Bi-Z, Kristiansand

1993 Meisner Soho Gallery

1990 Tvedestrand Kunstforening, Tvedestrand

1988 Galleri Kick, Kristiansand

New York
Norway
New York
Norway
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Norway
Norway
Norway
Copenhagen
Norway
New York
Norway
Chicago
Oslo
London
New York
New York

New York
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New York
Norway
Norway

Public Collections

Museum of Modern Art, Wakayama	Japan
Bibliothèque Nationale de France	France
US Library of Congress	Washington
Sørlandets Kunstmuseum	Norway
Museum of Setesdal	Norway
MGM Grand Hotel	Las Vegas
Rouge Tomato Fifth Ave New York LLC	New York
Boca Raton Resorts	Boca Raton
Meringoff Properties	New York
North Atlantic Strategic Alliance (NATO)	Norway
Ekerbergrestauranten	Norway
Farsund Rådhus	Norway
Assuranceforeningen Gard, Arendal	Norway
Akershus Energi	Norway
Akershus Fylkeskommune	Norway
Fusion Group of Companies, Weston	Florida
Royal Norwegian Consulate General	New York
The Cruiseship: "The World of Recidency"	Bahamas
The Cruiseship: " Navigator"	Bahamas
The Printmaking Workshop	New York
Eiendomsspar – Victoria Eiendom	Norway
Front Restaurant, Aker Brygge	Norway
Choice Hotels	Norway
NRK Norsk Rikskringkasting	Norway
Sparebanken Pluss	Norway
Scandinavian Retail Group	Norway
Ventelo	Norway
N&T Leo Burnett	Norway
Norsk Plateproduksjon	Norway
Nikon Interfoto	Norway

Private Collections (selected)

Fr. US Vice President Hon. Al Gore
 Sting & Trudie Styler
 Christina & Hubertus von Baumbach
 Lawrence Konner
 Benjamin Macklowe
 Peri Gilpin & Christian Vincent
 Mrs. & Mr. Nix
 Mrs. & Mr. Peter Jebsen
 Paul Greenhalgh
 Andy Jacobs
 David Passerman
 Yasmeen Ghauri
 Lauren & Paul Savoy
 Gill Holland jr.
 Mrs. & Mr. Nathan Kanofsky
 Meisner Collection
 Daniel Franck
 Camilla & Bjarne Samuelsen
 Mona & Thore Berthelsen
 Ola Mæhle, Oslo
 Scandinavian Retail Group, Oslo
 Dag E. Thorenfeldt, Oslo
 Odd Nerdrum
 Marius Jørgensen
 Nicolette & Hans Herman Horn
 Steve Meringoff

Nashville
New York
Germany
New York
New York
Los Angeles
United Kingdom
United Kingdom
Los Angeles
Michigan
New York
New York
New York
New York
New York
Norway
Norway
Norway
Norway
Norway
Norway
Bahamas
New York

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Augusta & Gill Holland Jr, James Roven, Christian Vincent, Kathryn & Ian Fay, Janey Fire & John Kalymnios
Everyone at Dillon Gallery; Christine, Jennifer, Sarah, Oswald, Sergio, Valerie
Taa-Taa (2002 - 2008)
Mamma,
and above all; Ella for allowing me to experience time through Aya Augustine



Years end / afternoon / setesdal / helicopter II.
Phototransfer / 3M Reflective material / Oil on Wood
100 x 40 cm / 39 x 16 in

Awards


2008	Cielo / Boca Raton Resorts / GANA Awards Glass Association of America Collaboration with Bentel & Bentel architects	Florida
2000	Shorts International Film Festival Best Film - Experimental category: "GoDIVA!"	New York
2000	PDN Digital Contest Grand Prize: "Ode to a Hunter" 6 min. shortfilm	New York
1997	Norwegian Photojournalist Association - Picture of the Year " Xingu Chief "	Norway
1993	Norwegian Fund for Photographers	Norway
1987	Amnesty International Award - For work on Iranian Refugees in Turkey	Norway

Commissions

2008	Rouge Tomato Fifth Ave New York LLC	New York
2008	TV-aksjonen NRK - Official Artist	Norway
2007	Hotel Norge	Christianssand
2007	+bank	Norway
2006	Boca Raton Resorts	Boca Raton
2005	Ekebergrestauranten	Norway
2005	Restaurant Front / Aker Brygge	Norway
2004	Ventelo ASA	Norway
2002	MGM Grand Hotel	Las Vegas
2002	Meringoff Properties	New York
2002	Navigator of the Seas – Cruiceship	Bahamas
2002	Recidency of the World – Cruiceship	Bahamas
2001	Eiendomsspar Norway	Norway
1999	Hotel Norge, Christianssand	Norway
1999	TV2	Norway
1997	Bico Company, Christianssand	Norway
1995	Assuranceforeningen Gard, Arendal	Norway
1991	N&T Leo Burnett, Oslo	Norway

Selected Group Shows / Projects / Filmfestivals

2008	Rebecca Kormind Gallery "Curios & Curiouser "	Copenhagen
2004	KellerGreene Gallery	Los Angeles
2004	Global Art Venue	Seattle
2002	Bomuldsfabriken: 100 kunstnere fra Sørlandet	Norway
2002	"40" Nupen/Opdahl/Widerberg/Furuholmen/Fronth	Norway
2002	Tribeca Temporary : Fronth / O'Connell / Sanderson / Simonelli	New York
2001	Berlin Film Festival - Official selection: "Ode to a Hunter"	Berlin
2001	Toronto Film Festival - Official selection: "Ode to a Hunter"	Toronto
2001	Sundance Film Festival - Official selection: "Ode to a Hunter"	Park City
2001	Florida Film Festival: "GoDIVA!"	Miami
2000	Shorts International Film Festival: "Ode to a Hunter" "GoDIVA!"	New York
2001	Wright Gallery	New York
2000	Martha Schneider Gallery	Chicago
1999	Green Art Gallery "3"	Dubai, UAE
1999	Clink Wharf Gallery "Works on Paper + "	London
1997	The John McEnroe Gallery "An Invasion of Privacy"	New York
1996	ROOM "Fourteen Days - A Salon"	New York
1996	"Aamild-skjoldet" donated to Setesdalsmuseet,	Norway
1995	Kodak Panther Generation Exhibit Part II/London,Invited Artist	London
1995	New York Academy of Art	New York
1994	Kodak Panther Generation Exhibit Part I /Frankfurt,Invited Artist	Germany
1994	Compuserve Artist Forum - inaugural online exhibition	New York
1994	Art Fair Genth, Genth	Belgium
1994	Portraits by Artist	Los Angeles
1994	Art Fair Miami	Miami
1993	CD-release: "Simens Sang" Fronth/Jakobsen/Svendsen	Norway
1993	Museum of Modern Art, Wakayama Wakayama	Japan
1993	Copenhagen Photoweeek/ 93 Copenhagen "Invited Artist"	Copenhagen
1993	Fronth / Nupen / Furuholmen, Galleri Bi-Z Christianssand	Norway
1993	Artist Equity, 7th Regiment Armory	New York
1992	Copenhagen Photoweeek/ 92 Copenhagen "Invited Artist"	Copenhagen
1992	The Printmaking Workshop	New York
1992	CB 313 Gallery "Working Papers"	New York
1992	Quart Rock Festival Christianssand "Official Festival Artist"	Norway
1992	Fotografisk Vårutstilling	Norway
1992	Meisner Soho Gallery "A Limited Wilderness"	New York
1991	Høstutstillingen Oslo, Debut at the Annual Norwegian State Exhibit	Norway
1991	CB 313 Gallery "Art for Music's Sake"	New York
1991	OIS Salon Show	New York
1989	Galleri Kick, Christianssand	Norway



Per Frønth is represented by:

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