PER FRONTH

PUBLIC COMMISSION
THEATRE OF WAR
ETTERRETNINGSTJENESTEN
NORWEGIAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICE
2013
As an artist working in the contemporary arts and addressing the important issues of our times; is it truly an honor to be commissioned to make work from my Theatre of War - series for the Norwegian Intelligence Service HeadQuarter / Etterretningstjenesten.

The efforts by the Norwegian People through the policymaking of our politicians and the execution of our armed forces represents, succesful or not, an undertaking for wanting to make the world a better place - paid by the highest price for some souls.

I believe storytelling through art is an important gateway to further understanding of ourselves, thus I seek to empower my works to be a vivid participant in discussing alternative perspectives of the Human Condition.

The series Theatre of War focuses on Norwegian Democracy Forces in Afghanistan. A war in many ways barely noticed by the Norwegian Public.

The military campaign would not have happened unless two planes flew into the Twin Towers in New York. An event I eyewitnessed in my own neighborhood that crisp September morning in 2001.

It is my duty as an artist to address these issues - and to make my artworks relevant to the difficult facets of life, not just art itself.

The three commissioned works are thus physical representations of how my life's own trajectory was altered by human willfulness. An act of terror that changed my heart, my art - and ultimately, our lives.

Per Fronth
Oslo, May 8th 2013
PER FRONTH
REMAINS / AFG
(from the Theatre of war -series 2009)
Triptych
Mixed Media / Oil on HDF
240 x 170 cm / 95 x 67 in
PER FROTH

SILK ROAD QUILT | CONTACT SHEET | AFG
(from the Theatre of War series 2009)
Mixed Media / Oil on MDF
9 panel selection / each panel 40 x 40 cm
122 x 122 cm / 48 x 48 in
PER FRONTH
AFG | Paraphrase The Storyteller |
(from the Theatre of war -series 2009)
Mixed Media / Oil on MDF
240 x 90 cm / 95 x 35 in.
Excerpts from the sold out book by Press Forlag: Per Fronth by Cecilie Tyri Holt & John August Wood

The Theatre of War

(Afghanistan)

Ever since his days as a press photographer, Fronth’s purpose as an artist has been to connect his works more closely to life than to art. In May 2009 he went to Afghanistan.

“On September 11th of 2001 I experienced our neighbourhood in New York being attacked. I was awakened by a loud knock on the front door just right over my head and I had the oddest feeling to be in the belly of a war in a place I had seen a few times in my life.”

Fronth decided to follow the consequences of that unmediated horrific act in New York. The direct result was the Norwegian involvement in creating a better Afghanistan for Afghan citizens.

“Six years later my own country Norway was part of a geopolitical and military coalition trying to remove the injustice that prevails in Afghanistan. I am utterly part of a Norwegian war effort. I write in Norway, and because of that the political process and choices made by my representatives affect me. Even if I don’t agree with everything decided by the Parliament and the Government, I control the process indirectly. I have an opinion and a vote.”

The Norwegian artist Steinar Jacobsen (b. 1967) has known Per Fronth since they met in New York in the early 1990s. In 1995 they visited Havana, Cuba, and in 2008 they travelled to the Venice Bienale. Jacobsen considers Fronth a great intellectual, an artist with a two-sided relationship between reality and art.

“Per relates more closely to his contemporary surroundings than most other contemporary artists. Per has visited Afghanistan; not many artists do that. Per is a traditional thinker with an extreme commitment to the present state of the world.”

Fronth points out that he considers it binding that Norway, being one of the world’s richest nations, actively contributes to improving the living conditions of poor people in the world because democracy probably is the most suitable social form to promote balance and equality between people.

“I know of no better form of government that gives room for the individual’s possibilities to reach their full potential. In this

Per Fronth has since taken as a press photographer and writer in his work, he has followed the consequences of the war in Afghanistan. He has written about the political and military situation in the country, and his work has been published in Norwegian and international newspapers and magazines.

Recently, Fronth has been working on a book about the military conflict in Afghanistan. The book is based on interviews with soldiers, journalists, and analysts who have been involved in the conflict. Fronth has also been working with images from the war, including photographs taken during his visits to the country.

Fronth has been involved in various projects related to the conflict in Afghanistan, including a documentary film and a photo exhibition. He has also been active in promoting peace and understanding through his work.
Monologues (Anger Management) 2003
Mixed Media / Oil on canvas
Ea 30 x 35 cm / 12 x 14 in
Collection of HØV / Norway

"Everything relies on the relationship between the viewer and the artist being based on trust. In function as the sender, and the viewer is the receiver. And what do I wish to accomplish? I'm an adventurer, and I'm exposing myself to danger to gather the material from which I compose my stories. In a way I'm a storyteller representing the ones who want to tell their stories. Through my novels I'm part of a band of observers, as a participant, a photographer and an artist, it is very important to me."

APF (Paraphrased The Storyteller) is a panamona that is composed of many different situations. The format, the bright colours, the guns and the uniforms can be interpreted as references to a pictorial universe from Fruith’s childhood. Fruith has based a lot of projects on different hunting themes in which the portraits, gloating horses and men with bows and arrows or guns and rifles. These pictures are reminiscent of the carbone Fruith read when growing up, like Silver Annie, Phantom, and Asteri. These are stories that convey the relationship between good and evil, life and death.

In the war situation in Afghanistan there is obviously a close relationship between life and death. One moment can have dramatic consequences. Fruith makes use of this fact in his work and relates to the moment most often one tends throughout the history of art to express the ephemeral nature of life. For example, in the middle of the Norwegian camp in Afghanistan there is a large white cooker whose function is to keep bodies from decaying before their flight back to Norway.

This enlarged photograph Asmates depicts a hand holding pieces of glass. The glass pieces are the remains of the windshield of the car that Trond Petter Kolset (1978-2009) was sitting in when a suicide bomber killed him on 17 April 2009. The hand holding the glass thus becomes a symbol of how tragic life can be - a distinct moment mori.


AFG (Paraphrased The Storyteller) viser et panamona med en rikelig sliké situasjon. Fantom, de lyttige figurer som er gener og unismer, brukte mest som retningsstoler til regnesoneringsbilledkunstner, bærende fra Fruiths ungerlige. Og også av bildene hans viser på både, skjærtøy og på gylperbaude herrer – ingen som gikk ved til regnesoner-ners som han de har valgt opp Sylvest, Amundsen, Karnel med det gode og det usikk. Hans ungerlige skaper på liv og død.

I konstellasjonen i Afghanistan har Fruith betegnet seg, er det et andret forhold mellom liv og død. Et øyeblir kan få drastiske følger. Fruith har påfelt opp symboliske elementer som retningsstoler til kunstnerbilledets mange eksempel på momenter mori – dødsf, du skal slå – Livets flyktighet fast et i pensjonister på leretten.

I Afghanistan finnes det en rekke objekter som kan tolkes nettopp som et symbol. Målet i derer Fruith bidrar da han beskriver de norske soldatene, det er en stor hjorten. Det var 400 veveredere og denne sto klar i tilfelle de måtte kjole ned despe deltid soldater i påvisne av den siste flykten hjørne. Den store brvne løstet sete som et trær, men påminnende symbol om den uutsatte posisjonen soldatene befinner seg i.

Installation view:
Dillon Gallery New York 2010:
Evolution of Melancholy / Theatre of War Conflict

Artworks:
AFG (Paraphrase The Storyteller) 443 x 167 cm / 174 x 66 in
Study for Two Sunsets 5 / 25 495 x 200 cm / 195 x 78 in
Private Collection / New York
PER FRONTH / 2013
perfronth.com

Per Fronth is represented by:

Dillon Gallery / New York
Gallery B15 / Copenhagen
Galleri Infill / Norway
Galleri Bl-Z / Norway
Kunstgalleriet / Norway