Photography and oil paint from his own life and history in order to compose a new picture and a new reality for the spectators to be described both in comparison to the work of a composer and an author. He collects different pieces and his art to different medias but in the end the paintings comprise of detailed compositions. Fronth composes and divides his pictures in his characteristically bold way. He actually leaves the division of the picture - Salt, I want you to taste Salt!

Fronth not only creates a strong contrast to his choice of motives. 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.

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 abandonment in society. Everything is seemingly so beautiful and filled with comfort zones but in the end it just sickening.

- 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. Even 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 a 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 black, black shadow. This is a quite dramatic way to divide the picture into three parts that can symobilise 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 Krohg (1852-1925) “Albertine i Politilægens Vendeværelse” from 1887. The latter comparison because of Fronths way of experimenting with the spectators glance and the pictures theatrical aspect.

In his time Christian Krogh was an artist who combined photography and painting and 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 bad shadow in the middle of “Bridge / Teenage Lux”. 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 to 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 young boys 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 unaltering 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. Gursky’s 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 work on the photographic medium.
The reality of fiction

“Evolution of Melancholy III – St. Matthew” is one of Fronth’s paintings that provokes the question about an artwork’s 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. Afterwards he steps into his role as an artist and handles the pictures like parts of his own life story.

Fronth’s 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 medium’s 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. 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 media 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 Fronth’s pictures. I always get the sensation that there is something uncomprehensible and somewhat distraught in Fronth’s pictures. Like in “Waterlilies”. 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 itself. But why can 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 Fronth’s 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?
Waterlilies I. (archipelago)
Mixed Media / Oil on Canvas
165 x 200 cm / 65 x 78 in

Waterlilies II. (archipelago)
Mixed Media / Oil on Canvas
165 x 200 cm / 65 x 78 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
Reservor: Years end / Setesdal / Helicopter I.
Mixed Media / Oil on Canvas
220 x 165 cm / 98 x 65 in
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
Commission by Bentel & Bentel Architects, New York
for Rouge Tomate New York LLC
Selected Group Shows / Projects / Filmfestival

2006  Cielo / Boca Raton Resorts / GAIA Awards
      Glass Association of America
      Collaboration with Bentel & Bentel architect
      New York

2000  Shorts International Film Festival
      Best Film - Experimental category: "GoDIVA!
      New York

1993  CD-release: "Simens Sang"  Fronth/Jakobsen/Svendsen
      Norway

1994  Art Fair Miami
      Miami

1994  Art Fair Genk
      Belgium

1995  Art Fair Genk
      Belgium

1999  Clink Wharf Gallery  "Works on Paper + 
      London

1993  The John McEnroe Gallery " An Invasion of Privacy" 
      New York

1996  "Aamlid-skjoldet" donated to Setesdalsmuseet, 
      Norway

1996  ROOM "Fourteen Days - A Salon"
      New York

1997  The John McEnroe Gallery "An Invasion of Privacy" 
      New York

1991  OIS Salon Show
      New York

1987  Amnesty International Award
      Grand Prize: "Ode to a Hunter" 6 min. shortfilm
      New York

2000  Shorts International Film Festival: "Ode to a Hunter" "GoDIVA!
      New York

2001  Toronto Film Festival - Official selection: "Ode to a Hunter"
      Toronto

2001  Berlin Film Festival - Official selection: "Ode to a Hunter"
      Berlin

2002  "40" Nupen/Opdahl/Widerberg/Furuholmen/Fronth
      Norway

2004  Global Art Venue     Seattle

2005  Biennale in Bogota  Colombia

2005  Biennale in Rome  Italy

2005  Biennale in Copenhagen  Denmark

2005  Biennale in Berlin  Germany

2005  Biennale in São Paulo  Brazil

2004  Biennale in Lebanon  Lebanon

2004  Biennale in Shanghai  China

2004  Biennale in Seoul  Korea

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