EXHIBITION GUIDE

TORBJØRN RØDLAND
THE TOUCH THAT MADE YOU

29 September – 19 November 2017

INTRODUCTION

What can potentially happen in front of and inside a camera is miraculous.
Torbjørn Rødland

Torbjørn Rødland (born 1970, Stavanger, Norway) constructs portraits, still lifes and landscapes, which simultaneously inhabit and defamiliarise the realm of the everyday. Embedded with multiple symbols and meanings, his staged scenarios 'keep you in the process of looking', revealing layers of discomfort and pleasure. With a highly constructed and at times fetishistic approach to subjects, objects and materials, Rødland makes photographs that are formally acute, conceptually playful and psychologically evocative.

In Rødland's images, precision and critical rigour co-exist with an erotic, improvisational intensity that evades the reach of language. This standoff between intellectual and intuitive modes of perception places the unpredictable physicality of the world at the centre of his work. The artist's approach to image-making – using analogue photography in staged set-ups – draws attention to their constructed nature, while leaving open the potential for unexpected outcomes. That these images hold the viewer's gaze is not only the result of a pleasure in the act of looking, but also the indirect, uncertain nature of their messages.

At first glance, Rødland's work often inhabits the aesthetic space of commercial photography. Recurring tropes within his images include produce, such as oranges, bananas, cakes or octopus tentacles, and close-ups of body parts and related accessories. Knees, feet and torsos partner with pads, socks and tattoos, while viscous substances, such as honey and paint, coat, ooze and drip over bodies. Often held in delicate tension and balance, Rødland's images depict ambiguous, often surreal, interactions between humans and materials that evidence our intertwinement with our surroundings.

Rødland's exhibition at the Serpentine Sackler Gallery, his first institutional show in the UK, brings together a diverse selection of works from the past two decades, demonstrating the breadth of subjects captured and scenarios created by the artist. The exhibition also includes one of Rødland's six films, *132 BPM* (2005), in which a monotonous techno beat emanates through plants and people.

The show's title, *The Touch That Made You*, refers to the physical and immaterial affects that are embedded within images. As the artist says, 'we're all to some degree a result of how we are seen, held and touched'. From the rays of light and liquid effects that gradually reveal a photograph in the darkroom, to the framing and staging enacted through the lens of its author, Rødland's works put us in a frame of looking and of being looked at.

SOUTH GALLERY

Candles and Cubes 2016
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 2/3
Courtesy of the artist and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

Blue Portrait (Nokia N82) 2009
Chromogenic print on Fuji Crystal Archive paper mounted on dibond, ed. 3/3
Collection Malmö Konstmuseum/Malmö Art Museum, Sweden

This work is taken from the exhibition *Dearest Kitty*, a solo exhibition of Rødland's work at Nils Stærk, Copenhagen, in 2010, and was also presented as a billboard on the façade of 95 Horatio Street as part of an ongoing series of public art installations by the Whitney Museum of American Art. The title of the show in Copenhagen appropriates the common introduction used in the diary of Anne Frank, a German-born Jewish victim of the Holocaust who gained posthumous fame following the publication of *The Diary of a Young Girl* in 1947. Here, Frank's portrait is pictured on the digital interface of a Nokia mobile phone. Poised as an icon and eternal simulacrum, Rødland places Anne Frank in direct relation to selfie-culture and the confessional nature of social media.

The Cut 2016
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 2/3
Courtesy of the artist and Air de Paris, Paris

Two Puppies 2007
Chromogenic print on Fuji Crystal Archive paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 2/3
Collection Frac Grand Large – Hauts-de-France

Black Beetle 2011
Selenium toned gelatin silver print, ed. 1/3
Courtesy of the artist and STANDARD (OSLO), Oslo

Cars and Flowers 2011
Selenium toned gelatin silver print, ed. 1/3
Courtesy of the artist and STANDARD (OSLO), Oslo

Prayer Changes 2011
Selenium toned gelatin silver print, ed. 1/3
Courtesy of the artist and STANDARD (OSLO), Oslo

The title of this work, *Prayer Changes*, is appropriated from the title of a song on Kelly's *U Saved Me* album from 2004. The lyrics of American singer R. Kelly often celebrate sexual acts and Jesus Christ on the same album. For Rødland's Protestant background this represents an impossible contradiction, a coming together of opposites – like the two analogue exposures conjoining to deepen each other's meanings in this double exposure.

Black Goo, White Lace 2015
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 3/3
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich and New York

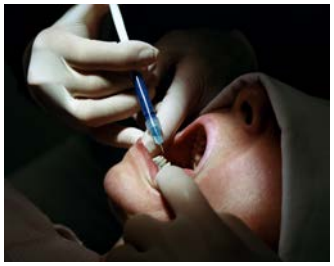
This work is an example of the artist's interest in bringing disparate, materially repellent subjects together. With a similar strategy to *Trichotillomania*, which depicts blonde hairs fed into the pseudo-smile of an orange wedge, *Black Goo White Lace* pairs the delicacy and lightness of lace with the tarry gloop that mars its surface. Rødland says that he does not create images such as these in order to illustrate a particular idea or to argue a point, but rather to explore the symbolic potential of the photographic medium and how the viewer can be activated on seeing such contrasts.

Tablets and Waves 2014
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 2/3
Courtesy of the artist and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

Avocado 2013
Chromogenic print mounted on aluminium, ed. 2/3
Collection Goga Ashkenazi

Plate and Spoon 2015
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 1/3
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich and New York

Pump 2008–10
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 3/3
Private Collection, Copenhagen



Intraoral no. 1 2015
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 1/3
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich and New York

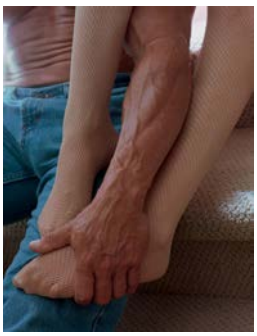
This photograph is part of a wider series that Rødland produced while collaborating with dentist Danielle Heller Fontana, as part of Manifesta 11 in Zurich (2016). By gaining access to dental examinations and implant production, the artist analyses our irrational and charged connections to teeth and the complex web of symbols associated with the only exposed parts of our skeletons.

Bathroom Tiles 2010–13
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 2/3
Collection Antonia Josten

Comb Over 2015–16
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 1/3
Private Collection, Copenhagen

Midlife Dilemma 2015
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 2/3
Collection Fin Serck-Hanssen

Rødland's photographs often feature pairs of human subjects that are ostensibly contrasting or conflicting in their appearance and age. At the time of making this particular image, the artist's age fell halfway between that of the two models depicted in the photograph. Out of this violent confrontation arises a universal question: how does the strong, confident, younger self prepare for or treat the future aged self?



Stockings, Jeans and Carpeted Stairs 2013–17
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 2/3
Courtesy of the artist and STANDARD (OSLO), Oslo

Hand on Fire 2008
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 2/3
Collection Marie Caroline Elbæk Schjeldal

Untitled 2009–13
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 3/3
Collection Erling Kagge, Oslo

Drawn to subjects whose bodies and faces speak to different cultural readings and historical settings, Rødland often integrates magical, mythical, subjective and surreal visual strategies into his portraits, asking us to reconsider our conventional assumptions about this mode of photography. This photograph was made in 2009, ten years after Rødland completed the *Nudist* series, number six of which is also on display within the exhibition. Returning to the forest landscape that often appears as a backdrop in many of his works, Rødland creates an image that pushes the limitations of how a body can be represented with analogue photography. The contorted subject is both human and animal, female and male, realistic and fantastic. Underpinning this ambiguity is an interest in how photographs can obscure as much as they reveal; they change the way that bodies are understood and deform and rupture reality.

Disney's Doc by Hitler 2008–10
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 3/3
Courtesy of the artist and Nils Stærk, Copenhagen

Disney's Bashful by Hitler 2008–10
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 3/3
Courtesy of the artist and Nils Stærk, Copenhagen

It is a little-known fact that Adolf Hitler owned a copy of the animated Disney feature of Snow White and would screen it to his inner circle. The photographed drawings of the two dwarfs, Doc and Bashful, were originally found tucked inside of a frame, hidden behind a watercolour painting of a German house in the Alps painted by Hitler himself. By presenting these two artworks, both signed 'A.H.', Rødland draws upon the uneasy connection between this fairytale character and the figure of Hitler.

SOUTH POWDER ROOM

132 BPM 2005
Digital video, 13 min, looped
Courtesy of the artist and Air de Paris, Paris

Displayed as part of the exhibition is the fourth of six video works that Rødland produced between 2004 and 2007. Previously exhibited at MoMA PS1 in 2006, *132 BPM* is structured around a repetitive and monotonous techno beat that emanates through plants and people. Shot during a one-month stay in western Croatia, the artist brought with him an iPod playlist of dance music, all with the identical tempo of 132 'beats per minute'. Rødland's intention was to 'add a constant beat to the images – and not the beat of fast editing'. After shooting the work in various locations within nature, he worked with Sex in Dallas, a French electronica group based in Berlin, to create the final soundtrack. The work explores the ways in which 'sublime nature is mystically linked to urban longing'.

NORTH PERIMETER

The Very Hungry Caterpillar 2005
Chromogenic print on Fuji Crystal Archive paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 1/3
Courtesy of the artist and Nils Stærk, Copenhagen

In this work, Rødland creates a surreal assemblage composed of George W. Bush's supposed favourite drink, food, ice cream, movie and children's book that gives the photograph its title. The artist made

the work as a reaction to the American president's re-election in 2004 and functions as an abstracted rendition of this particular moment in history.

The Photographer 2015
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 2/3
Courtesy of the artist and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

Red Pump 2014
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 3/3
BDU Collection

ACV10 2009
Selenium toned gelatin silver print, unique
Collection Marisa Bellani

ACV09 2009
Selenium toned gelatin silver print, unique
Collection Marisa Bellani

ACV03 2009
Selenium toned gelatin silver print, unique
Courtesy of the artist and STANDARD (OSLO), Oslo

The title of these three gelatin silver prints refer to the initials of Andy Capp, a British comic strip created by cartoonist Reg Smythe, which has been included in *The Daily Mirror* and *The Sunday Mirror* newspapers since 1957. Rødland attempts to create something fresh out of a series of fading tropes: the printed newspaper, the habit of smoking, the gelatin silver print process and the character of Andy Capp himself (Smythe died in 1998).

This is My Body 2013–15
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 2/3
Courtesy of the artist and STANDARD (OSLO), Oslo

Pads 2010–14
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 1/3
Collection Aud Cuniberti

Heiress with Dogs 2014
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 1/3
Courtesy of the artist and rodolphe janssen, Brussels

Rødland's work often inhabits the aesthetic space of commercial photography and concurrently, the artist utilises magazine collaborations that offer access to certain subjects that he is interested in photographing. This work, *Heiress with Dogs*, operates alongside other images in the exhibition dealing with the iconography of well-known figures, such as *Prayer Changes*, *The Morning After* and *Brooklyn Beethoven*. Paris Hilton, the ultimate heiress, represents a new type of fame that is based entirely on image-creation and dissemination. Rødland presents his model firmly entrenched within her own celebrity image.

Mountain Lake, Evergreen Trees 2007–14
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 1/3
Private Collection

WEST PERIMETER

The Morning After 2005
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 1/3
Courtesy of the artist and STANDARD (OSLO), Oslo

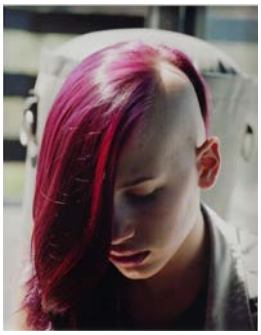
This work depicts a sleeping face covered in black marker that emerges from and merges with a poster depicting the American rapper, Eminem. Framed by the sense of regret that is embedded within the work's title, the photograph is an uncomfortable meditation on the sadistic nature of western college humour and the ethics of race representation.

Shadow Work no. 2 2014
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 3/3
Courtesy of the artist and Nils Stærk, Copenhagen

Apple 2006
Chromogenic print on Fuji Crystal Archive paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 2/3
Collection Frac Grand Large – Hauts-de-France

Intruders 2005
RC print mounted on aluminium, ed. 1/3
Courtesy of the artist and Nils Stærk, Copenhagen

Rødland photographed these early eyewitness drawings of grey aliens in the New York studio of Budd Hopkins, an American painter, sculptor and prominent figure in alien abduction phenomena and related UFO research.



Young Head 2013
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 1/3
Courtesy of the artist and Nils Stærk, Copenhagen

The exhibition contains a diverse selection of Rødland's portraits, which demonstrate the breadth of

subjects that the artist has worked with throughout his career. When photographing people, Rødland's intention is for the portrait to move beyond a singular, individual reality and into an expanded realm of symbolic associations with a plurality of meanings.

Baby 2007
Chromogenic print on Fuji Crystal Archive paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 3/3
Private Collection

Rødland is interested in the idea of the double-take, of presenting a familiar subject to the viewer, but in such a way that it prevents us from dismissing it visually. This sense of staying with an image, of being kept in the process of looking, is related to the ambiguous readings created by each subject. For example, the baby depicted in this work flattens a hand to its heart in a pose that is not only unexpected (more suited to an adult), but also loaded with multiple associations. Images such as this embody the unique combination of chance and staging that is constantly active in Rødland's work, where the image is created out of the photographer and model's responses to each other.

Drunken Man 2014
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 2/3
Courtesy of the artist and David Kordansky Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

Rødland frequently plays with the viewer's senses by placing together what is conventionally considered beautiful and attractive with subjects that repel or undermine this allure. *Drunken Man* is an image where these contrasts are performed within a single frame; it is a scene about intoxication, support, balance, touch and connectivity, which echoes and reinvigorates historical representations of the Greek woodland deity, Silenus.

Freckles 2014
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 1/3
Collection Hipstakokken, Oslo

Go to the Vip Room #5 2007
Chromogenic print on Fuji Crystal Archive paper mounted on dibond, ed. 2/3
Courtesy of the artist and Nils Stærk, Copenhagen

Go to the Vip Room #1 2007
Chromogenic print on Fuji Crystal Archive paper mounted on dibond, ed. 2/3
Courtesy of the artist and Nils Stærk, Copenhagen

In response to the experience of driving in Los Angeles and impressed by the horizontality of its shifting lights and settings, Rødland produced this series of multiple analogue exposures after his first visit to the city that would later become his home.

First Abduction Attempt 2014–16
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 1/3
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich and New York

Rødland's work often incorporates motifs of freedom and restraint, which are performed by the different models with whom he works. These actions are often improvised within a specific situation that the artist creates whereby the models respond through prompt and interpretation. As the artist states, 'you can give the same direction to two different models and get wildly different results'.

Summer Scene 2014
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 3/3
Courtesy of the artist and STANDARD (OSLO), Oslo

Trichotillomania 2010–11
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 2/3
Collection Antonia Josten

When choosing his subjects, Rødland often anticipates the potential reactions, associations and desires of his viewer. By appropriating certain fetishes, fears and paranoias, simple yet striking works such as *Trichotillomania* create juxtapositions that are exploratory and rich. The title of the work refers to a condition where a person feels compelled to pull their hair out.

Red Wine, White Wine 2013
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 3/3
Collection Erling Kagge, Oslo

NORTH POWDER ROOM

His Right Hand 2005
Chromogenic print mounted on aluminium, ed. 1/3
Courtesy of the artist and Nils Stærk, Copenhagen

The Geller Effect 2014
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 3/3
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich and New York

Hands and Eyes. Portrait no. 4 2009–10
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 3/3
Courtesy of the artist and Nils Stærk, Copenhagen

Baby Bats 2002
Chromogenic print on Fuji Crystal Archive paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 3/5
Collection Fredrik Winther, Oslo

Pale Blue, Sunset Pink, Spring Yellow 2012–14
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 1/3
Courtesy of the artist and STANDARD (OSLO), Oslo

Goldene Tränen 2002
Chromogenic print on Fuji Crystal Archive paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 1/3
Snare/Christiansen Collection, Oslo

Philadelphia 2008–14
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 2/3
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich and New York

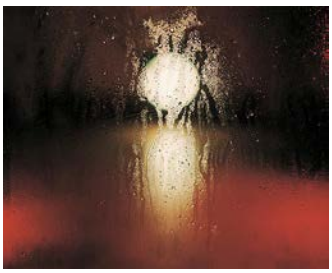
Frost no. 4 2001
Chromogenic print on Fuji Crystal Archive paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 1/5
Courtesy of the artist and Nils Stærk, Copenhagen

In 2001, Rødland collaborated with four leading musicians within the Norwegian black metal scene to explore common ground between their musical output from the 1990s and his own photographic work produced at that time. One connection that arose was their embrace of the Nordic landscape as a place where fantasies can be projected, which chimed with Rødland's attempt to reclaim the subjectivity of this landscape against its emptying out of meaning through commodified repetition.

Arms 2008
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 3/3
Private Collection, Copenhagen

Nudist no. 6 1999
Chromogenic print on Fuji Crystal Archive paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 4/10
Collection Thierry Struvay, Brussels

This work is part of a larger series made by Rødland in 1999 where he depicted nudists in various staged scenarios. While nudists remove their clothes in order to become closer to nature, being photographed by the artist places them in an unbreakable bond with culturally developed ways of seeing and being.



Ohne Titel Nr. 2 2002
Chromogenic print on Fuji Crystal Archive paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 1/3
Courtesy of the artist and STANDARD (OSLO), Oslo

This work was originally part of Rødland's 2003 solo exhibition at Galleri Wang, Oslo, titled *Goodnight Moon, Goodnight Room, Goodnight Breasts*. By swapping sunlight for coloured stage lights and the forest for dark interiors, the image exemplifies the artist's desire to cultivate an ambiguous line between what is staged and what is real. The precision of Rødland's technique is embedded in his desire to not only capture a single instance in time, but also the feeling and ambience which charges that moment.

Peel no. 3 2013–14
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 2/3
Collection Elise By Olsen

Hair 2010–14
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 1/3
Courtesy of the artist and STANDARD (OSLO), Oslo

Black Tape 2003
Gelatin silver print, ed. 3/3
Collection Erling Kagge, Oslo

Rødland describes this image as 'a flat, monotonous photograph of a flat, plastic medium containing flat, monotonous music'. The music in question is by Von, the American black metal band from San Francisco, California. Interested in ideas of spiritual transgression through music, Von may or may not have inspired the early 90s Norwegian wave of black metal musicians, several of whom Rødland photographed in 2001. *Frost no. 4* is an example on display in the exhibition.

Butterflies 2007
Chromogenic print on Fuji Crystal Archive paper mounted on dibond, ed. 1/3
Courtesy of the artist and STANDARD (OSLO), Oslo

Untitled (East Hampton) 2005
Selenium toned gelatin silver print, ed. 1/3
Courtesy of the artist and STANDARD (OSLO), Oslo

Rødland describes his desire 'to externalise internal images, which are both personal and cultural'. This conversation between personal and collective interpretations of the world is evident in this work, which speaks to the primacy of individual inspiration and subjectivity that characterises painting of the Romantic period in art history, while also commenting on universal notions of taste and beauty. Rødland is interested in how works can be perceived accordingly to what is installed alongside them and the context in which they are seen.

Hands and Eyes. Portrait no. 2 2007–10
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on dibond, ed. 3/3
Courtesy of the artist and Nils Stærk, Copenhagen

Brooklyn Beethoven 2005
Selenium toned gelatin silver print, ed. 1/3
Courtesy of the artist and STANDARD (OSLO), Oslo

In this photograph, Rødland depicts a bust of Beethoven that stands in Prospect Park, Brooklyn. Depicting his subject in black and white, the artist enacts a certain queering of reality, simultaneously commenting on the presence of white heroes in Brooklyn's neighbourhoods and alluding to the reclamations of Beethoven's potentially African heritage.

Five Berries 2014
Chromogenic print on Kodak Endura paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 2/3
Private Collection

Boy 2000
Chromogenic print on Fuji Crystal Archive paper mounted on aluminium, ed. 5/5
Collection Tom Bergesen

Interested in how perceptions and provocations can vary through different cultures and time periods, Rødland 's photographs make us question the acceptability of certain subjects and motifs in contemporary society. In *Boy*, a child is portrayed urinating within an idyllic natural landscape.

SATURDAY TALKS
Free talks take place at 3pm on selected Saturdays to explore the works on show. To book BSL interpretation for the Saturday Talks, please visit serpentinegalleries.org/bsl

14 October: Amira Gad, Curator
4 November: Joseph Constable, Assistant Curator

Visit serpentinegalleries.org for details

Further information on the artworks is available via the Serpentine's free Wi-Fi: www.sgtours.org. Please ask a member of staff for details.

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