

Torbjørn Rødland

Bones in the Canal and Other Photographs

March 12 – April 18, 2026

New York

Press Release

David Kordansky Gallery is pleased to present *Bones in the Canal and Other Photographs*, an exhibition of new photographs by Torbjørn Rødland. Rødland's first solo gallery exhibition in New York in nearly a decade, the show features two distinct bodies of work, including a group of smaller-format photographs that constitute some of the most significant changes he has made to his working methods since the beginning of his career 30 years ago. *Bones in the Canal and Other Photographs* is on view in New York at 520 W. 20th St. from March 12 through April 18, 2026. An opening reception will be held on Thursday, March 12 from 6 to 8 PM.

Rødland has long been interested in the ways in which photography's seeming exhaustion as a medium provides new opportunities for experimentation and storytelling. Here, he takes a special interest in the formal history of twentieth-century art photography, which presents limitations—and possibilities—for reinvention and expression. While the art world has increasingly relegated art photography of this kind to its own narrow interpretive corner, Rødland's use of ultra-compact 35mm viewfinder cameras, and his decision to challenge himself to adapt to their focus- and framing-based parameters, allows him to return to some of the concerns that drove his earliest work while adding new complexity and range to the context in which his entire project continues to be seen. This broader context is made evident in the larger-format photographs on view, which are unified by their focus on close contact between human subjects and charged, often asymmetrical and unresolved power dynamics.

Underscoring both the newness and the continuities of these bodies of work, *Bones in the Canal and Other Photographs* is divided into two discrete sections. The front of the gallery is dedicated to the 35mm photographs, which depict a wide range of subjects in both color and black and white. With the wider lenses of the smaller cameras, Rødland positions his human subjects in the middle distance, making their surroundings equally integral parts of the compositions. The relationship between figure and landscape recalls the Northern European romanticism that Rødland looked to in the 1990s, bringing the presence of nature into the work with similar prominence. The visual elements of this shift speak to his ongoing interest in acknowledging and working with the inexplicable and irrational forces that shape both physical reality and the internal dimensions of human experience alike.

They also give expansive symbolic resonance to images—forests, bodies of water, quiet streets in old cities, colorfully dressed figures in mysterious tableaux—that are often associated with fairy tales and dreams but that lose power when exposed to critical cynicism. Rødland brings conceptual interest precisely to the kinds of images which conceptual art practices tend to disparage and discard. This dynamic is reflected in the titles of two 35mm photographs, *Arvo Pärt* (2025) and *Tavener's The Lamb* (2024–2026), that reference a genre of contemporary classical music that has been dubbed “Holy minimalism,” in which stripped-down vocabularies are employed to evoke the divine rather than a purely materialist worldview. Like many of the works in the exhibition, the pregnant and elusive textures of their archetypal scenes demonstrate how new energy can arise from cultural forms that have been emptied of meaning by the passage of time, the waning of attention, or shifts in taste and ideology.

Rødland's interest in the emergence of aliveness from materials and situations that otherwise function, as the show's title suggests, like bones in a canal, also informs the ways in which his photographs are made. Prioritizing improvisation and experimentation and seeking to forge a balance between relinquishing control and maintaining it, he brings attention to elements of the photographic process that exceed his control. The larger format works that appear in the exhibition's innermost space exemplify Rødland's choreography of such elements both inside and outside the camera, as well as his alchemical syntheses of the physical and imaginative facets of making photographs. These works feature images of subjects engaging with each other or with objects in ways that elicit questions about power, sexuality, and religion, even as they suggest that the ideological layers of these themes are only ever part of the story.

The other part of the story is located in the embodied forces of light, shadow, color, and mass that Rødland's analogue camera and darkroom processes translate from one state into another. Works like *Awkward Seat* (2023–2026), in which a person naked from the waist down attempts to sit in the outstretched hands of a Nativity figure, provide provocative metaphors for what it means to come into contact with the world—and what it means for viewers to come into contact with art. Despite the presence of forms and situations that can be read topically, these images ultimately resist rational interpretation, linking them to photography's history as a medium in which scientific processes are employed to conjure illusions or document what is otherwise invisible. In this sense, Rødland uses what he knows—and what the culture thinks it knows—to make indelible pictures of the unknown.

Torbjørn Rødland (b. 1970, Stavanger, Norway) has been the subject of solo exhibitions at including *Oh My God You Guys*, Le Consortium, Dijon, France (2023); *Bible Eye*, The Contemporary Austin, TX (2021); *Fifth Honeymoon*, a traveling exhibition produced as a collaboration between Bergen Kunsthall, Norway, Bonniers Konsthall, Stockholm, Sweden, and the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki, Finland (2018–2019); *THE TOUCH THAT MADE YOU*, Fondazione Prada, Milan, Italy (2018) and the Serpentine, London, England (2017); *Back in Touch*, C/O Berlin, Germany (2017); and *Blue Portrait* (Nokia N82), Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY (2016). Recent group exhibitions include *Before Tomorrow – Astrup Fearnley Museet 30 Years*, Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, Norway (2023); *Crossing Views: A Selection of Works from The Collection*, Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris, France (2020); *What People Do for Money*, Manifesta 11, Zurich, Switzerland (2016); *LIT*, 9th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art, Germany (2016); and 48th Venice Biennale, Italy (1999). His work is in the permanent collections of institutions including The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, CA; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, IL; Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, Norway; Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma, Helsinki, Finland; Malmö Art Museum, Sweden; and Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Rødland lives and works in New York.

Bones in the Canal and Other Photographs includes work developed and produced at the residency programs of LUMA Arles, Callie's, and c/o bardi.