Christian Houge

(born in Oslo, 1972)

Based in Oslo, Norway, Christian Houge has been making photographic art for over twenty years, and new insights continue to open. Exploring the relationship between Humankind and Nature is an ongoing theme in his work.

By exploring this relationship, Houge investigates Man’s condition with recurring themes such as environmental impacts in the Anthropocene era, identity, and death. He often juxtaposes the visually aesthetic with an underlying sense of unease, which invokes cognitive dissonance in the viewer, inviting the exploration of personal references and producing deeper insights.

Houge began working on the *Vanitas* series and performances in 2019 after completing his ritualistic burning of trophy animals for the series *Residence of Impermanence*. Over the past four years, he collected rare human skulls used for medical research, which he then burned in detailed classical Vanitas still lifes in the *memento mori* (Latin for “remember you shall die”) tradition inspired by the Dutch masters in the 1600s.

This cathartic performance evokes the impermanence of life and the vanity of living, a meditation on the human condition in a culture where death has become taboo. This reminder contrasts our self-confirmation through social media, which can leave us somewhat detached from ourselves. By juxtaposing beauty and violence, these still lifes in the *memento mori* tradition are meant to inspire on many different levels, as the references to what a skull represents are endless. The artist’s primary objective is to create a dialogue with thought-provoking and inspiring art.

In 2021 Houge’s series *Residence of Impermanence* (2017-2019) received nine nominations for the Prix Pictet sustainability award with the theme FIRE. This work was exhibited at six museums and several galleries, including a solo show at Fotografiska, Stockholm (2019) and Galerie Omnius, Les Recontres d’Arles (2019). Furthermore, work from *Residence of Impermanence* is touring the US in 2022-2023 with the exhibition *Facing Fire: Art, Wildfire and The End of Nature in the New West,* initiated by the California Museum of Photography (UCR), Los Angeles. This exhibition explores the ever-worsening forest fires due to climate change.

Houge’s series *Death of a Mountain* (2016-2020) was nominated for the Leica Oskar Barnack Award in 2021 and received an arts grant from the Norwegian government the same year. His solo show at Buer Gallery in 2021 received much attention, as well as works shown at the Oslo Negative Photo Festival and Street Level Photoworks in Glasgow in 2021. Many works from his series are included in major private, public, and institutional collections.

His next solo exhibition, *Temple of Light*, will be on display at Bold Gallery in Prague from October 20 to November 20, 2022, and will include works from both the *Vanitas* and *Residence of Impermanence* series.

His work has been shortlisted for the BMW Prize at Paris Photo (Scout Gallery, London). In 2015-2016, *Paradise Lost* toured China. His work has been published in several books and presented at symposia and TED talks.

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**Selected exhibitions and nominations**

**2022**

Temple of Light (Residence + Vanitas), Bold Gallery, Prague (solo)

Vanitas, Oslo Photo Festival (solo)

Death of a Mountain, House of Photography, Rotterdam (solo)

Paradise Lost (selected works), Galleri Balder, Oslo (solo)

**2021**

Death of a Mountain, Street Level Photoworks, Glasgow (collaborative)

Death of a Mountain, Oslo Negative Photofestival, Deichmans, Oslo

In:Human Nature and As Far as My Eye Can Sea – The Expedition Exhibition, Rev Ocean, Bomuldsfabrikken Kunsthall, Arendal (collaborative)

Residence of Impermanence, Berger Museum, Norway (solo)

Nine nominations for the Prix Pictet Award for Residence of Impermanence

Facing Fire, UCR ARTS California Museum of Photography, Los Angeles (collaborative)

Nominated for the Leica Oskar Barnack Award for Death of a Mountain

Death of a Mountain/ In:Human Nature, Buer Gallery, Oslo (solo)

**2020**

Facing Fire, UCR ARTS California Museum of Photography, Los Angeles (collaborative)

**2019**

Metafysica and Residence of Impermanence, Haugar Kunstmuseum, Vestfold (collaborative)

Residence of Impermanence, Fotografiska Museum, Stockholm (solo)

Helt Dyrisk (Residence of Impermanence), Preus Museum, Horten (collaborative)

Residence of Impermanence, Galleri Fineart, Oslo (solo)

**2018**

Transfiguration, Galleri Balder, Oslo (collaborative with Andres Serrano, Christer Strømholm)

Into the Light, Galleri Balder, Oslo (collaborative)

**2017**

Shadow Within/Rituals, Gulden Kunstverk, Drammen (solo)

In:Human Nature, MAAEMO restaurant, Oslo (commission)

Mirror, Mirror, Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco (collaborative w/Ed Ruscha, Adam Fuss, Liliana Porter)

**2016**

In:Human Nature, TM51 Gallery, Oslo (solo)

Fotofever/ParisPhoto, Louvre, Paris

Cornette de Saint Cyr, Paris (auction)

**2015**

Paradise Lost/Arctic Technology/Barentsburg/Shadow Within, Three Shadows Photography Art Center, Beijing (solo)

Fotofever/ParisPhoto, Artistics Art Gallery, Paris (collaborative)

Paradise Lost/Arctic Technology/Barentsburg/Shadow Within, How Art Museum, Wenzhou, China (solo)

Paradise Lost/Arctic Technology/Barentsburg/Shadow Within, Redtory, Guangzhou, China (solo)

**2014**

Shadow Within 2010-2013 / Darkness Burns Bright 2013/2014, Fineart Gallery, Oslo (solo)

Shadow Within as part of Beyond Earth Art (contemporary artists and the environment), Johnson Museum of Art, New York (collaborative - incl. Olafur Eliasson, Edward Burtynsky, Mathew Brandt, Yun-Fei Ji, amongst others)

Arctic Technology, The El Paso Museum of Art, Texas (collaborative)

Arctic Technology, Glenbow Museum, Alberta, Canada (collaborative)

Shadow Within w/talk, LIFF (Lofoten International Photofestival) (solo)

**2013**

Shadow Within - nominated for the Prix Pictet Award

Shadow Within, Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco (solo). Accompanied by Call of the Wild (Joseph Beuys, Ed Ruscha, Patricia Piccinini, and Alan Rath)

Arctic Technology series, Carnegie, Oslo (commission)

Vanishing Ice Tour 2013-2015, USA/Canada, Whatcom Museum, Bellingham

Publication: Vanishing Ice, Alpine and Polar Landscapes in Art, 1775-2012 by Barbara Matilsky.

Publication: Altered Landscapes: Photographs of a Changing Environment (Impact of human activity on natural landscapes) by Ann M. Wolfe, Rizzoli Publications.

**2012**

Arctic Technology, part of Vanishing Ice, Whatcom Museum, Bellingham (collaborative)

Shadow Within, public talk, Ambassador’s residence, London

**2011**

Ut med det, Rådhusgalleriet, Oslo (solo)

Okurimono, Oslo Photo

**2010**

Arctic Technology, Akershus Kunstsenter, Oslo (collaborative)

Arctic Technology/ Barentsburg, part of In Full Color, Hosfelt Gallery, New York (collaborative)

**2009**

Nominated for the Prix Pictet Award for the series Barentsburg.

Arctic Technology/Barentsburg, Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco (solo)

AntArctica, Haugar Kunstmuseum, Tønsberg (collaborative)

The Coldest Winter, Hosfelt Gallery, San Francisco (collaborative)

**2008**

Arctic Technology, Hosfelt Gallery, New York (solo)

Arctic Technology, Gardemoen Airport, 10th anniversary, Oslo (public)

Arctic Technology, Oslo Central Station/Rom for Kunst, Oslo (public)

**2007**

ArtBasel/Scout Gallery, London and Miami (collaborative)

PhotoLondon Fair, Zebra Gallery, London (collaborative)

Annual Grants exhibition, Kunstnernes Hus, Oslo (collaborative)

Annual Grants exhibition, Fotogalleriet, Oslo (collaborative)

Arctic Technology, Defence Ministry Headquarters, Oslo (commission)

**2006**

Sotheby’s, London (collaborative auction)

Zebra One, London (collaborative)

Annual Grants exhibition, Oslo (collaborative)

Arctic Technology, Defence Ministry Headquarters, Oslo (commission)

**2005**

Arctic Technology, Scout Gallery, London (solo)

Arctic Technology, BMW Awards, Paris Photo (collaborative)

Arctic Technology/ Barentsburg, Paris Photo, Louvre, Paris / Scout Gallery, London (collaborative)

PhotoLondon Fair, Scout Gallery, London (collaborative)

**2003**

Annual Grants exhibition, Kunstnerenes Hus, Oslo (collaborative)

Økokrim, Oslo (commission, public)

Eiendommspar, Oslo (commission, public)

**2002**

Autumn Grants exhibition, Kunstnernes Hus, Oslo (collaborative)