

To Be Or To Not Be

Essay by Erik Sæter Jørgensen

The first time Frode Felipe Schjelderup came to my house was after some gig at Folken I have long forgotten. We had been discussing movies and when discussing movies we were sure to eventually discuss vampire movies. Frode had said something about wanting the Bram Stoker's Dracula DVD, I had it at home, one of my first DVD purchases and a movie I remember sneaking a view of when my parents screened the Laserdisc version at the nightclub they ran back when Francis Ford Coppola was still more Godfather Coppola than Megalopolis Coppola. My apartment back then wasn't far from Folken, so off we went. I got the DVD from one of many bookcases in my living room full of DVDs, gave it to Frode, talked a bit longer and that was the end of the night.

Dracula is the eternal outsider, penetrating society without winning belonging. Remaining he who studies mortal customs from the shadows, moving through the city equal participant and witness.

That exchange contains the constants. Cinema, music, drawing, painting, sculpture and writing make up his work. The film that becomes a figure, a name becoming a character, their t-shirt becoming a band. City, country, planet made real. The artist's observation moving through fiction, forcing itself through the matter of quotidian life before returning to the inhabited mind all changed by the journey.

Frode calls himself a fiction artist. The fiction grows through sustained attention, character and revelation perpetually interweaving and chain-reacting.

Charlie the leopard in category belongs to the wild. He is the invisible presence while untamed, in captivity he is managed and watched. Charlie reverses direction. If Mowgli is the human child who learns to live among animals, Charlie suggests a reverse Mowgli: the animal who enters the human world and makes its conventions newly strange.

Charlie feels personal, the vampire clinical, present but not of the society through which he moves. This doubleness recurs throughout Frode's work. His figures can be exposed and concealed, solitary and social, recognisable and impossible at once.

Who receives permission to appear? Who remains in shadow? Watchers, watched and waiting as characters each line up for their turn.

Frode chose the title *To Be Or To Not Be* early and never offered any alternative.

This interruption of automatic comprehension enforces an involuntary *memento mori* sentiment in me. Being is denied a stable condition that conclusively affirms or denies. A leopard enters the personal. The vampire merges with the city. A remembered DVD becomes the beginning of an essay. None belong neatly where placed. Each expands the habitat.

Frode still likes vampires. I still like vampires.

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Frode Felipe Schjelderup

22 August – 13 September 2026

Bryne Kunstforening
Bryne Mølle
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Saturday 12–16
Sunday 13–17

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