

## Dating Fraulein Absinthe

*an interview sitting down with Fredric Nord*  
by Larry Armadillo

His non-speak clause seems to be temporarily waived. “Five minutes”, he says. The writer who became photographer. He meets me at infamous hot spot “Linger”, situated in downtown Vladivostok. Mr. Nord, whose mother is famous opera diva Ingeborg De Laurentis and father is gossip medias favourite bad boy, simply known as Eriksson. The place is decorated with civil war memorabilia, oddly balanced against children's drawings, most likely from the daycare center next door. Frankincense. Dark wood furniture. Carefully lit, or rather, unlit. Allowing a place for those secret lovers and poet wannabees. Tiny dogs under tables waylaying for leftovers. I've been tracking him for months, he's eluded me for, well, months. Finally. Thanks to flattery, networking and some healthy cash, he's agreed to a sit down. It doesn't take long for me to understand that we're not really going to talk a lot about arts and philosophy. “Why don't we leave that to the newer generation next door, they might still believe it to be possible”.

“Back when I was a teenager I was really living on the edge, you know, smoking Nietzsche, drinking Schopenhauer, those days were wild man, I hardly remember nothing”. Nodding fervently. “Then came the war, a genuine case of us against them... man... everything fell apart you know, a man really gets to know himself in those situations...” I'm making an effort to get some quotes about his lovelife; Esmeralda Pennypacker? “Oh, don't get me started on that mess, man... messy, messy...”. He seems to drift away for a while but finds his way back. “But I did love her, that's for sure, now I hear she's with that actor guy, what's his name... huh, go figure... well, as long as she's in a good place, I guess... me, I'm just dating Fraulein Absinthe” Carefully putting emphasis on the word Absinthe. “It's a better fit, you know”. He's rambling. “You gotta find a relationship that's gonna work for you, not the other way around, if you find that special one: don't go tasting it like expensive wine, you just go ahead and devour it”

Okey. So I'm switching to aggressive now, confronting him, saying; but isn't that just a bunch of cliché's coming from a man who's actually written some good, original work in his day? “Agreed”. He gets defensive. For a moment he looks like a kid caught reaching for that last cookie without asking nicely first. Maybe he's not used to someone disagreeing to his face, I think to myself. Don't you think the readers deserve better? “Well, I do, actually, but I don't think they want better.” But... what does that mean? “You know, it's like they don't have time for anything genuine anymore, I don't know, what can I say, man, it's just the way the world turns I guess”. Rambling again, I'm sparing you most of it. He turns to self pity. “Or it's me, probably, it's like... I can photograph it but not speak it... well, that's communication for you, I guess, it takes time and effort on both sides, but we keep on taking it for granted... I mean, if I use the word reality, you'll actually believe that you know what I mean by that, well, we don't really, we never really do... think about the loneliness in that”. I ponder that, sure, but

he precedes the wrinkles on my forehead. “Look, man, I don’t want to bring you down, just trying to tell it like it is, putting it out there for you, you did ask for it... I mean, sure, we have to simplify definition in order to make it through our daily lives... but when we forget about the definitions... you know, about the definitions being fluid and ever changing, it’s just like life, just like the Buddha said...” Sweat starts to bleed through his simple white shirt, rolled up sleeves, three buttons unbuttoned; he’s a corduroy man. “I guess, what I’m trying to say is that if we could remember how everything is and needs to be constantly redefined, you know, then we can actually live... and that’s really what my work is about, uhm, grasping at that sense of awe, holding it gently like a newborn baby... it’s that sense of wonder that’s gonna open you up to real experience, you know, then maybe you won't have to pay for that tattoo, "carpe diem" or whatever, 'cause you're already living it... maybe, I don't know... I guess”.

Just as I think I’ve got him started for real, he relapses to his memories of the war. You’ve heard it all before. Talks about his childhood. Menswear. Cigars. His favourite TV-show is Fringe. He likes to read the papers on paper, which he considers a sign of old age. Since this is an art magazine I’ll refrain from recounting his views on the St Louis Blues, covering line-ups, their season so far and his hope of them reaching the finals. An account spanning the better part of this interview – although – in all fairness, it was only going to last for five minutes to begin with. “A hockey team named after a blues, you gotta love that!” The conversation seems to follow it’s own path like this. We meander. Round and about and again. Directionless is the word that comes to mind. He’s carefully avoiding the basic human enigma which has been so prominent in all of this man’s work. He’s getting exceedingly comfortable, which is not necessarily a good thing. Greedily sipping another Absinthe Sour. Never looking up from it. He has yet to see my face.

I decide to make one last run for it; so, what does it really mean to be human? “Beats me”, he says, “I mean, I guess you have to feel human to know what it is to be human, and all I’ve got is this wandering winding well of thoughts and patterns of thoughts and thoughts on, well, me”. “Read a book, or don’t read a book, it’s the same thing, the read will change your life but your life is ready to change already, no matter what. Life is what happens while you’re busy making other happenings, I mean, it’s not like nothing happens when nothing happens, you know, making plans is a happening as well as not planning what’s supposed to happen”. He’s obviously getting drunk. But. He has a point. I think. In his unwillingness to talk about these things. It’s impossible. He goes on as if he just read my mind. “Hey, it’s like this man, either you’re present or you’re not, life unfolds anyway and whatever, it’s your responsibility, your decision, how much of every experience you’d like to enjoy, umm, if... if you can’t see it in the images, you’re not gonna see it in the text, and you sure won’t see it in an interview reading Flirty Dog Magazine”. I’m just about to point it out as he realizes his mistake. “Sorry dude, I mean Dirty Flowers, I read your stuff all the time”.