

# THERE'S NO TRUE NUMBER ONE.

## IT TAKES GUTS TO BE JUST GREAT.



**KOSKENKORVA**

ALMOST THE SECOND BEST VODKA IN THE WORLD

FREDRIK K.B.

# – I AM THE ARISTOTELIAN POWER WITHIN THE STONE

By Aase Melby Block

*When creative people follow their urge – to create – the moment of realization often arrives at an early age. Many artists have given accounts of such visionary glimpses, but who can beat Salvador Dali's personal memories from when he was yet in his mother's womb, or 'paradise' as he called it? He recounted in detail the colours, for example, which were the same as those in hell; red, orange yellow and a shimmering blue. And if we credit him with a magical talent, he would have known even then that his way would be that of art.*

*In a different field, yet one equally challenging – climbing mountains – we encounter the alpine skier and mountaineer Hans Kammerlander from south Tyrol. He has made more than 2500 ascents, including K2 at over 8,600 metres. How does one come to the decision to become a mountaineer, risking one's life on every ascent? He recounted the following in *Der Spiegel* in the summer of 2008: At the age of eight he used to take tourists up the 3,059 metre high Moosstock from his home village of Sand in Taufers. The view from up there – his 'home mountain' which towered above the village and the farm – was his inspiration: "I was overcome with the desire to become a mountain climber."*

*A similar story can be told of the Norwegian sculptor Fredrik K. B. who is presented in this article. At the age of five he was asked the obligatory question: What do you want to become when you grow up? The child Fredrik answered "I don't want to become, I am a sculptor!"*



*Female 2003 (marble) ca. 40 cm*

## Galleri Kjeldaas

Fredrik K.B. has long since added his name to the list of leading international sculptors. He currently lives and works in Haarlem just outside Amsterdam, in an old military fortification which has been converted into an 'art fort' for a great number of artists. The fort, built in the nineteenth century, is on the UNESCO world heritage list.

Fredrik's story of his path to recognition as a sculptor contains all the ingredients – the dream of chiselling out figures in stone, making one's own way without the advantage of an academy education or access to grants and scholarships. All this meant that he had to fend for himself, trust his own ability to work, and not least his talent! For a period he identified with the main character in Knut Hamsun's *Hunger*, before things became considerably easier when a gallery owner in Oslo, Harald Kjeldaas, discovered

the beauty, power and elegant lines of his sculptures.

Fredrik K.B. visited Oslo and we met him at Galleri Kjeldaas, close to Grand Hotel in the heart of Oslo. The gallery is one of Norway's foremost galleries for sculptures and exhibits the work of leading Scandinavian sculptors (as well as that of painters and graphic artists) indoors and outdoors – such as outside the main entrance to Hotel Continental where Fredrik K.B. has two works on exhibition for three months from December 2008.

Here is Fredrik's story about how he was 'discovered': "I was visiting friends and family in Oslo together with my Dutch girlfriend Reina. Somebody suggested that we should get in touch with the five best galleries in the capital, and so Reina contacted one gallery after another. All of them were interested, but when she met Harald Kjeldaas, all he asked was 'How soon can the sculptures be delivered?' That evening some

pieces were delivered, and the very next day, after just a few hours' exhibiting, I received a message from Harald that one sculpture had already been sold and that he needed more.

And since then I have sold sculptures steadily. I work a lot and very intensively, and have a high rate of production. To me, a sculpture is finished when it is finished; I don't think in terms of hours when I am working. And I am often working on several sculptures at the same time."

*Your story of the way forward from your archaic dream at the age of five, and onwards to realizing that dream, is very special. The dream is clearly an introduction to your artist's life in which you travel along a valley between two tall mountains. In your little rucksack is a hammer and chisel. On the first rise lies an enormous stone which you began to chisel at, carving your very first sculpture. When you have finished walking from peak to peak you leave behind twenty sculptures which you yourself can see from above, due to the phenomenon of levitation. Without making invidious comparisons, a similar experience is described by Jack London in his novel The Star Rover.*

*This significant dream in which you tread on holy ground between the mountains is the entrance to a Greek/Roman temple. It is interesting that you, as a modern human being, take the mythological history of antiquity seriously. It becomes a part of you and your way forward.*

*Then - you are eighteen, attending the Rudolf Steiner School at Hovseter, and you have made a name for yourself writing poetry and other things.*

*Øystein Parmann, a past director of the Dreyer publishing house, has come across your poems. He speaks to you over the phone, invites you to his home and in a sense he helps lead you in the right direction. You decide completing a one-year creative writing course at the Nansen School at Lillehammer. Is it perhaps after this conversation and*



*Fredrik K.B. and Miss Fortuna (Larvikitt) 2007. (Photo: The Magazine)*

*several subsequent meetings with Parmann out at Nesodden that you decide on how you want to proceed?*

Fredrik K.B.: "Yes, those fantastic encounters with Parmann, when we sat in his library and talked about literature, art and life, have influenced my life. It was in the wake of those meetings that I decided to travel to Italy to become a sculptor. Besides, my archaic

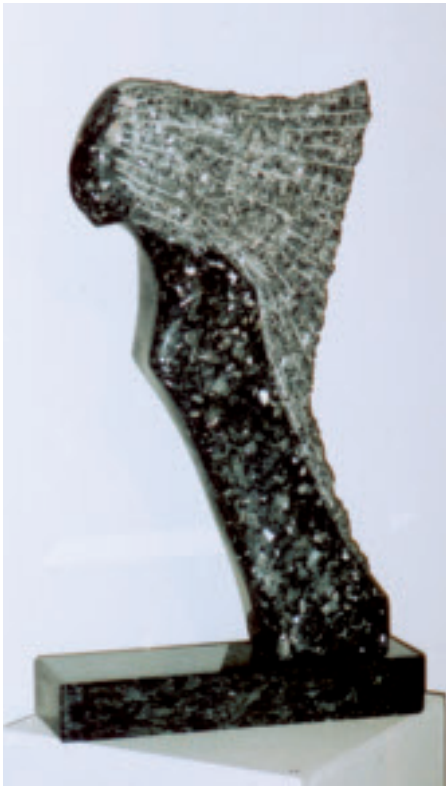
dream as a child, returned to me in a glimpse of the utmost truth. But first I had to find my own lines, find my style in which every line was perfect and entirely my own. That is essentially the way I work today with stone, whether it be marble or Norwegian granite. I have also cast a number of sculptures in bronze, but I am first and foremost a sculptor. It was actually when first carving sculptures in stone, such as marble, that I felt I had no choice; it was in marble or granite that I could fully express myself. That became the answer to the question of what it means to create, what the motivation is, why I do it. I couldn't do anything else!"

### The first sculpture

In the year 2000 Fredrik K.B. travelled to the town of Carrara, famed for its marble quarries where marble has been extracted since Roman times. The town is situated in the Apuanian Alps, some four miles from the Ligurian Sea. It was popular to teach tourists how to sculpt in marble. But it was expensive to rent a room, a place to work, and to pay for teaching, so the young Fredrik, who had no means to pay for such expenses, took his hammer and chisel and climbed the marble mountain in search of the best marble, just as Michelangelo Buonarroti had done five hundred years previously.

Fredrik K.B.: "When Michelangelo found the stone he wanted to use, he would carve an 'M' in the rock so that his assistants could take out a block. I don't know how many hours I spent searching for the grand master's initial, but I decided that if I found it, I would carve my first sculpture from that very stone and never tell a soul!"

I spent the first seven weeks alone in the mountains around the village of Seravezza where I made my first sculpture. When I showed it, I was allowed to work in a marble studio in Pietrasanta and learn from the artists and marble sculptors.



*Gallionsfigur 2007 (Larvikitt blue pearl) ca. 70 cm*

It was at that time I became acquainted with a famous, elderly sculptor who lived in the same village that I was staying in Italy. He said to me “Making the sculptures isn’t difficult – it’s knowing what to make.” I understood then how fortunate I was, because that had never been a problem for me. The sculptures come into being right before my eyes; I am delighted with every new shape, every new line I find in the stone. And at the same time I feel that



*Nature in me 2006 (Asian green marble) ca. 60 cm*

an artist’s great sorrow is that he or she may never see and experience their own work to the full.”

### The art collector

But perhaps we, the public, can? Fredrik Kjensli Bråten, known as the artist Fredrik K.B., might comfort himself with the following story: An art collector in Amsterdam had invited Fredrik to his home to show him his newly acquired sculpture of a female in its



*Albert 2000, the very first sculpture made of marble from the mountain in Seravezza where Michelangelo would carve his ‘M’ in the rock*

new surroundings. The art collector had adorned the sculpture’s belly with a piece of gold jewellery. Fredrik K.B. did not really like it, but, as he said, “I loved the feeling, the passion and the love which made him do it!”

It is obvious that Fredrik K.B.’s sculptures live their own lives and radiate a force which attracts those who see his art. Perhaps it is simply that they see the artist and his inherent powers in the stone – for it would then be true that Fredrik K.B. could express it in Aristotelian terms: “I am the power within the stone”!

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## The New International Ibsen Award

On 31 August 2008, theatre and film director Peter Brook (1925) received the new, international Ibsen Award of NOK 2.5 million. The official ceremony was held at the National Theatre in Oslo, where Liv Ullmann and Tancred Ibsen (great-grandchild of the great dramatist and social critic) handed over the recently created prize.

Brook has a Russian-Jewish background, was born in London and since 1970 has lived and worked in

Paris. He is regarded as one of the world’s leading theatrical instructors, with a background inter alia in the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal Opera House in London. He has also directed numerous plays, films and television productions.

In the jury’s reasoning it states: Peter Brook is winner of the International Ibsen Award for 2008 because he has so convincingly demonstrated that all significant theatre has a unique ability to bring people together,

that culture is something everyone can appreciate, and that no group or nation can claim ownership of a work of literature, either in the form of words or as performed on stage.

The International Ibsen Award was established by the Norwegian government to honour a person, organisation or institution in art and culture that has made an extraordinary effort in the spirit of Henrik Ibsen.



**Idar Aarheim** is editor-in-chief of *The Magazine*. His academic background is literature, history of religions and history of ideas from universities in both Germany and Norway.

Mr Aarheim has had extensive experience from Norwegian media having served as editing secretary in *Morgenbladet* and as culture-editor in *Morgenposten*. In the past, he has

edited several magazines and has previously had responsibility for information and press-relations for two of Norway's largest companies.

Idar Aarheim has written on the subject of wine for a great number of publications in Norway. He has also carried out a great number of international wine-judging assignments.

Idar Aarheim received the order of Knight of the Spanish *Isabella La Catolica*.

Mr. Aarheim has been the publisher of *The Magazine* since the start in 1993.



**Aase Melby Block** is an editor with an academic background in literature, history of art, and history of ideas. In addition she has been an art-critic for *Morgenbladet*, Norway's oldest daily newspaper.

As a co-editor in *The Magazine for*

*Corps Diplomatique* right from the start in 1993, she is a special contributor to the cultural section. Amongst other achievements, she has written several books about Norwegian artists.

Mrs Melby Block has a multilingual background. Having lived abroad in several countries, she also has a broad understanding of international affairs.

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