

Jyrki Parantainen | *Secular Limbo*

Opening: Friday, 05 September 2025, 6 – 8 pm

Exhibition: 06 September – 25 October 2025



Persons Projects is proud to present Jyrki Parantainen's solo exhibition, *Secular Limbo*, a poetic reflection on the alchemy between emotions and memory. Additionally, for Berlin Art Week, we will present a selection of lightboxes from his *Fire* series at Hallen 06 in the Wilhelm Hallen, Berlin.

Jyrki Parantainen is one of the most influential artists to emerge from the Helsinki School. As the leading professor of the photography department at Aalto University of Art, Design, and Architecture for over ten years, he played a crucial role in developing this unique educational platform into one of the most recognizable and influential departments worldwide.

Parantainen's current exhibition at Persons Projects introduces his most recent works from the *Poetry of Circulation* series, complemented by his sculptures and objects from the *Between Heaven and Earth* series. This collection of works carries on his fascination with developing conceptual approaches and working methods by combining and weaving various philosophical and historical themes into his art pieces.

The overall theme that revolves around the core of Parantainen's art deals with the basics of what it means to be human. Life, death, love, and hate all become the paint which he mixes on his emotional palette to create the underlying humour that forms its own score of absurdity. The exhibition *Secular Limbo* investigates the relationship between art and religion from a range of perspectives, exploring different aspects of both physical and psychological elements that highlight the weaknesses within the human condition. His work can be critical of religious ideas while at the same time inviting descriptions like 'metaphysical', 'mysterious', and 'cosmic'.

His *Poetry of Circulation* combines the photographic medium with other genres of art, engendering crossover formats that include three-dimensional elements. The phase of conception and preparation is a fundamental part of his artistic process, which he likens to that of writing a script for a film. His materials vary from different types of photographs to found lithographs. He uses push pins and various metal strings to connect words and phrases to perceived points of vulnerability that are meant to link us to uncontrollable forces, creating zones of tension between everything that lies beyond the everyday. His philosophical choices range from the last words spoken by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749 – 1832), *Mehr Licht* (*More Light*) to Stephen Hawking's theories about the universe, *ZODIAC*.

Parantainen's sculptures address spiritual and immaterial themes that are examined through delicate, small-scale objects, transparent materials. A laboratory glass turned upside down, covered with gold flakes on the top, protects a small globe, which stood on the artist's shelf for over 30 years *Biggest Unknown Curved Over*. A doll's head covered with gold leaf, feathers around, held up by a putto (baby angel), a type of guardian spirit trapped in a laboratory glass, is observed through the telescope of a French soldier in uniform from the Napoleonic wars. A strange composition of different elements, a messy and very open story – in other words: *Golden Dew of Sleep*. Every Steampunk-style sculpture carries an ultimate secret, a message tucked inside, written by the artist. These sculptures become portals to transport the viewer through the artist's imagined world of myths and emotions that could be found on Jules Verne's submarine that floats in a sea of Fluxus surrealism.

Artwork: Jyrki Parantainen, *Transparent Palace*, 2012, 157 x 40 x 40 cm