



PRESS RELEASE

Jyrki Parantainen

Maa

Opening: January 16, 2015, 6 – 9 pm
Exhibition: January 17 – March 7, 2015

Gallery Taik Persons is highly pleased to present Helsinki School artist Jyrki Parantainen with a selection of works from his early series *Maa* [Earth] (1989–1991). Parantainen, who played a key role as to the Helsinki School during its founding years, continues to be one of the School's driving forces.

Always seeking to further his conceptual approaches and working methods in the production of artworks, Parantainen's creative process has undergone significant transformations throughout his now over twenty-year long career. A continuous red line in Parantainen's oeuvre is the importance of conceptualization and preparation in producing a new work, both mentally and materially. Critical introspection and methodical accuracy are crucial aspects to this process, which Parantainen likens to writing a film-script. The implementation of the work reveals itself as a stage on which personal emotional endeavor, precise technique, and perfect timing engage in a forceful intimate dialogue, palpably described by Parantainen as a form of "wrestling".

As an image, the artistic act of wrestling is particularly applicable in the case of the *Earth* series, which, consisting of landscape photographs taken exclusively during the nighttime, presented a challenge of sorts to Parantainen's "strong and personal fright towards darkness". With reference to the visual and conceptual traditions of Land Art, or Earth Art, beginning in the 1960s in North America and Europe, Parantainen followed the idea of isolating specific natural landscapes and topographies for use as sites of artistic production. A basic notion of Land Art is to create artworks by means of the present geographical and material conditions within a given natural space. That is, rather than placing an artwork into a natural landscape, it is through nature and natural material itself (rocks, branches, water) that the creation of a site-specific artwork is achieved. Land Art practitioners like Robert Smithson (1938–1973) and Michael Heizer (b. 1944) had sought to express a social critique of the commercialized art gallery system, thus relocating the sites of their artistic production to far-off geographical areas; to deserted, 'unruly' wastelands, beyond the realm of public exhibition. Though in this sense politically inclined, Land Art activists explicitly distanced themselves from "ecological" endeavors as later pursued in Environmental Art or Nature Art of the 1970s/-80s, stating radically that Land Art was "about art, not landscape" (Heizer).

In the *Earth* series, Parantainen's artistic intervention into the Finnish landscape takes place in a highly individuated way. Indeed, the sites are chosen and staged as subjects within the idiom, or genre, of Land Art. The work process involves a careful integration of various organic media, ranging from torches with live flames, over liquids like milk, to dry materials like chalkstone. Unlike traditional approaches, however, Parantainen's landscapes are captured and reproduced visually in form of photographs, thus adding a new aspect of mobility to the otherwise site-bound location of the physical landscape. Though perhaps not concerned with issues of "environmental sustainability" in the conventional sense of the word, Parantainen's *Earth* works do fulfil an ecological effect of recycling, with regard to traditions of using and representing nature in art.

Jyrki Parantainen, born 1962 in Tampere, Finland, lives and works in Helsinki. He graduated from the University of Art and Design, Helsinki (now Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture) in 1992, where he is Professor of Photographic Art. Among his numerous exhibitions are the notable solo shows *Dreams and Disappointments*, Anderson Art Museum, Helsinki (2006), *Fire*, The Finnish National Gallery Ateneum, Helsinki (1998), and the group show *Magnetic North*, The New Art Gallery, Walsall (2001). More recent exhibitions include the solo show *Between Heaven and Earth*, Gallery Heino, Helsinki (2012), and the group shows *Helsinki School*, Christophe Guye Galerie, Zurich (2011), and *Daegu Photo Biennale. Tru(E)motion: The Helsinki School*, Daegu (2010). Parantainen was awarded the Fotofinlandia Prize in 1989 and the National Arts Council Suomi Prize in 1998.