

JYRKI PARANTAINEN

Persons  
Projects

Jyrki Parantainen always seeks to further his conceptual approaches and working methods. His artistic practice combines the photographic medium with other genres of art, engendering crossover formats that include both two- and three-dimensional elements. When producing new works, the phase of conception and preparation is a fundamental part of the creative process, which Parantainen likens to that of writing a script for a film. However, chance plays a large role in his artistic process as well. The main themes of Parantainen's work deal with the basics of being human: life and death, flesh and blood, love and hate, all with an undertone of absurdist humor.

Jyrki Parantainen (\*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 used to be a Professor of Photographic Art. Among his numerous exhibitions are the notable solo shows *Dreams and Disappointments* at Anderson Art Museum, Helsinki (2006), *Fire* at The Finnish National Gallery Ateneum, Helsinki (1998), and the group show *Magnetic North*, The New Art Gallery, Walsall (2001). Other exhibitions include the solo show *Between Heaven and Earth*, at Gallery Heino, Helsinki (2012), and the group shows *Helsinki School*, at Christophe Guye Galerie, Zurich (2011), and *Tru(E)motion: The Helsinki School* at the Daegu Photo Biennale (2010). Parantainen was awarded the Fotofinlandia Prize in 1989 and the National Arts Council Suomi Prize in 1998.



# POETRY OF CIRCULATION

In his “Poetry of Circulation” series, Parantainen uses anonymous graphic art from the 18th and 19th century, which he has been collecting for more than 30 years, combining them with words and concepts drawn from art history, music titles, and other cultural references. Connecting these words to various parts of the image through the use of pins and taut brass wires, he maps the visual space, creating tension throughout the work.

His fascination with cables and strings traces back to his teenage years, when he developed a passion for building scale models of large ships. He was captivated by the intricate rigging and masts—elements that were not merely decorative but functional. In his own work, the wires become an essential visual component, emphasizing tension,

function, and minute details. The pins not only serve as anchor points for the wires, but also introduce a visceral quality to the surface of the works, evoking sensations of stinging or stabbing.

Parantainen reinterprets the original illustrations with dark humor, satire, and irony. His work engages deeply with cultural and art history, touching on political and social themes, and reflects a strong interest in everything that lies beyond the everyday. His references range widely, from cinema to biblical imagery.



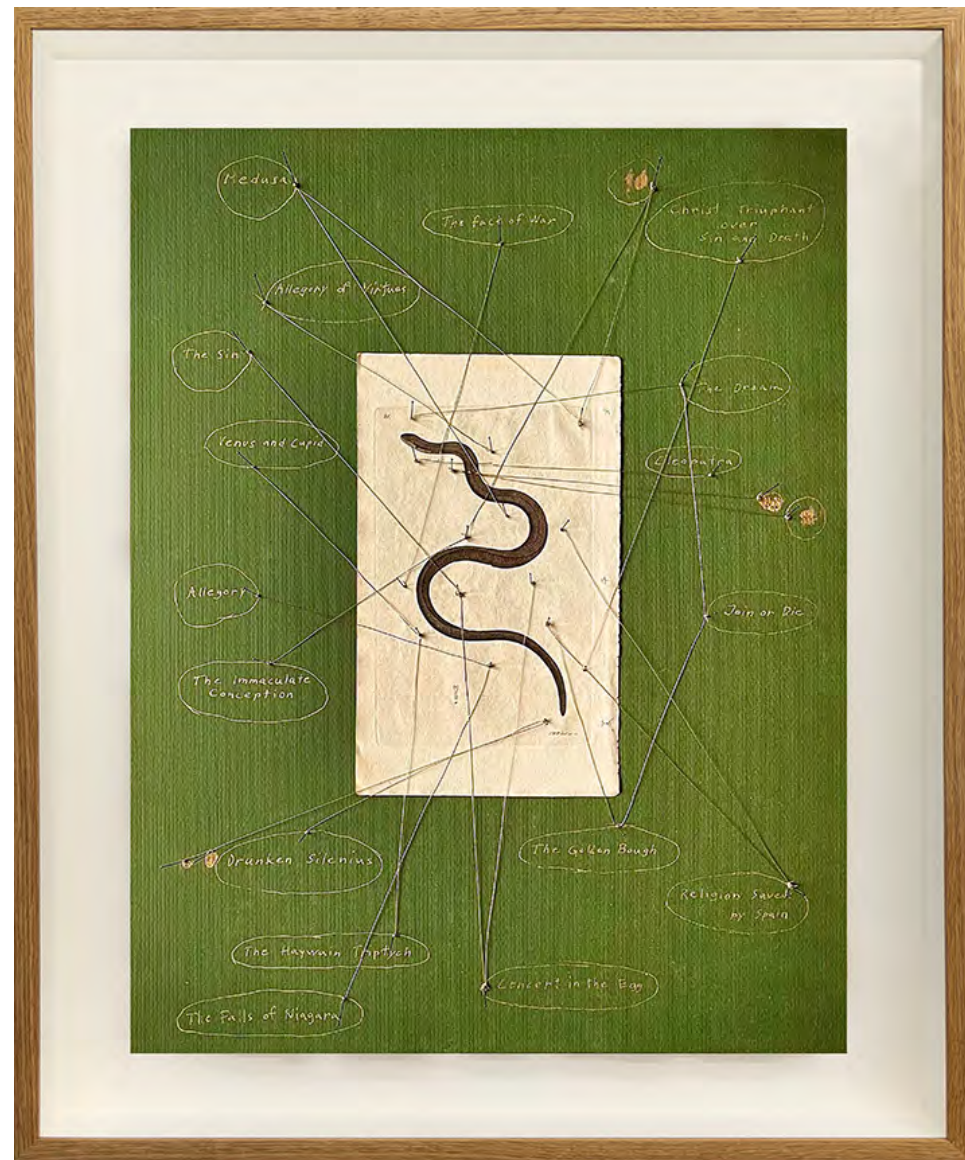


*Eternal Garden*, 2024, insect pins, brass wire, 100 x 70 cm





*Valse Triste*, 2025, insect pins, brass wire, 80 x 64 cm

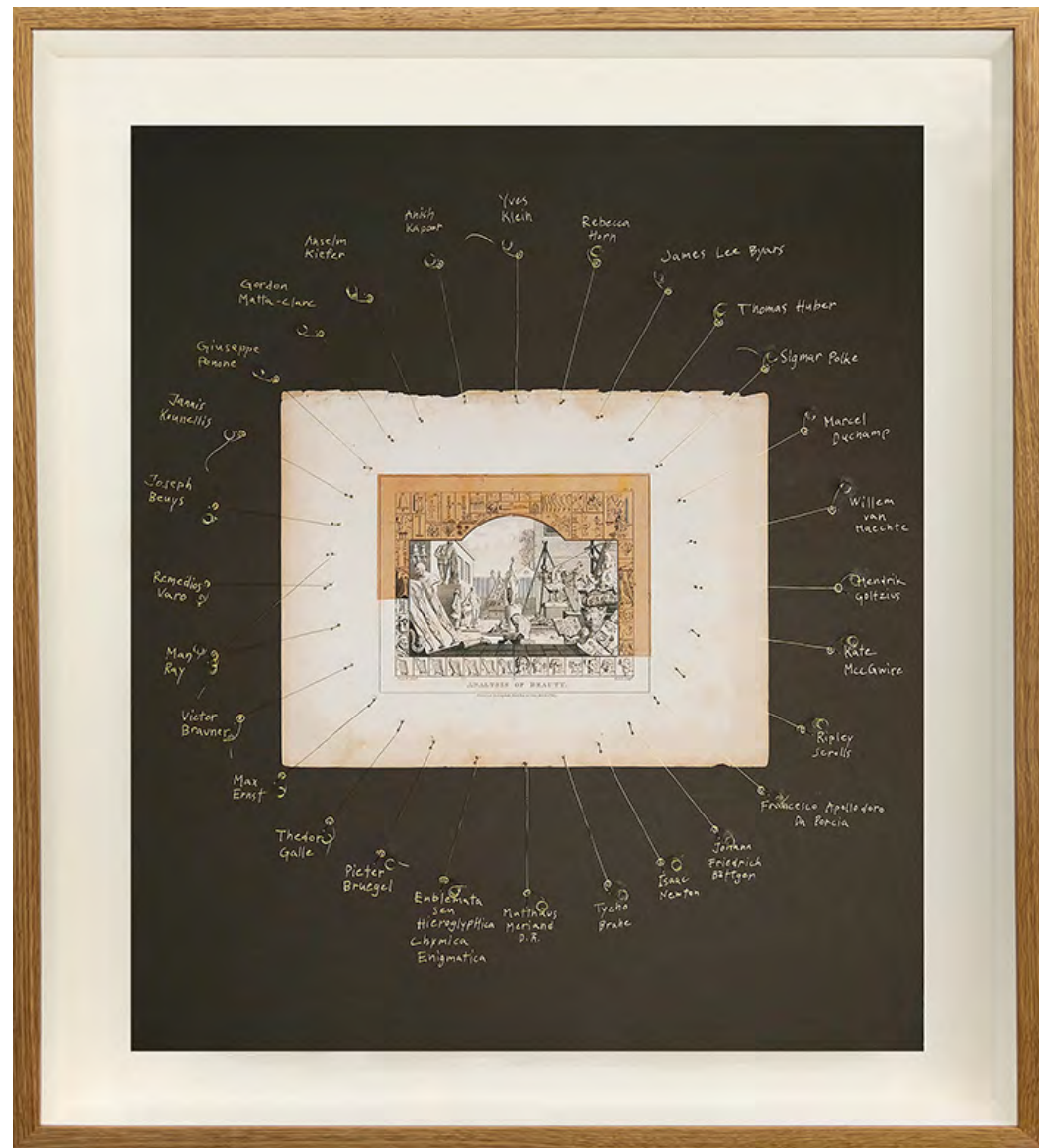


*The Magic Circle*, 2025, insect pins, brass wire, 61 x 47 cm



*Solution*, 2025, insect pins, brass wire, 69 x 61 cm





*Beauty is Alchemy*, 2025, insect pins, brass wire, 72 x 63 cm



*The Helsinki School - Out of the Depths of Photography, 2024, Persons Projects, Berlin*

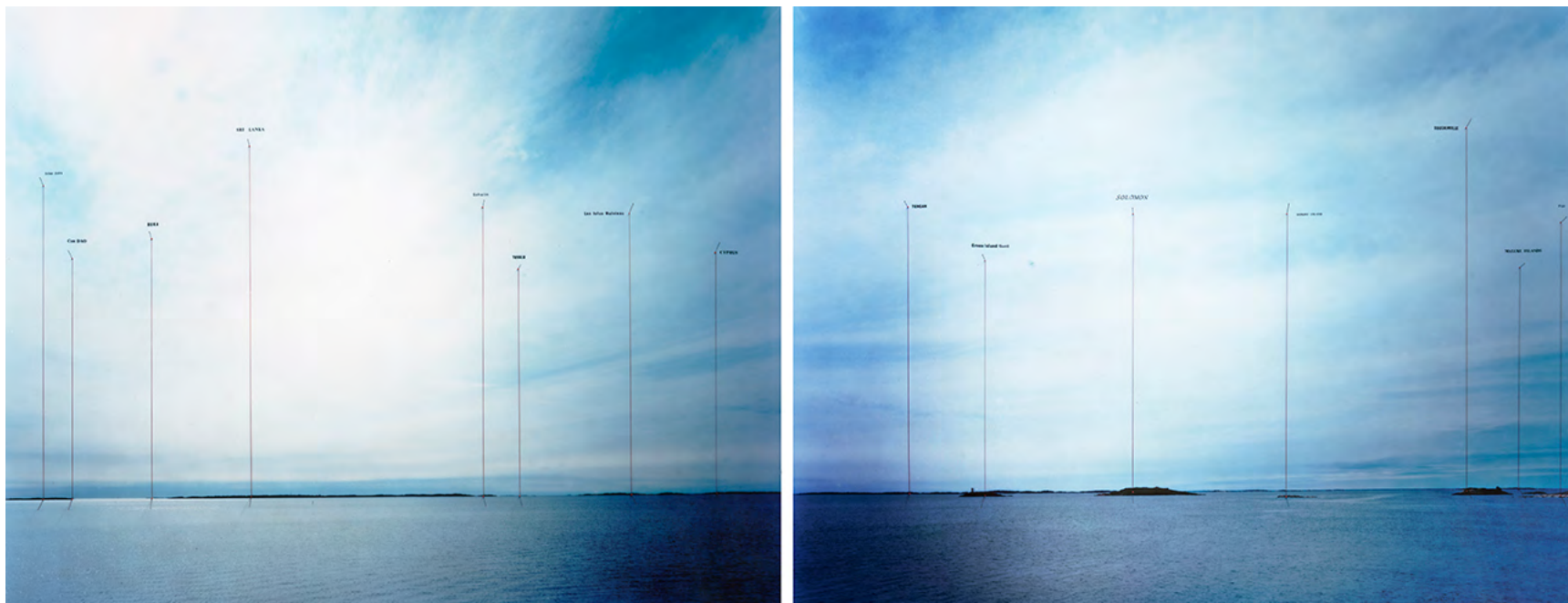
# HORIZONS

In his “Horizons” (2008) series, Parantainen utilizes words and images to create a more conceptual understanding of a landscape. For Parantainen, a landscape is much more than a sum of shapes, colors, and light – it is grief, dreams, beauty, world politics, environmental disasters, and violence. The landscape is also concerned with time – the past, the present, the future. The horizon, then, can lend itself to an intense human experience of longing for a better life, for a space with infinite realities. The words and sentences on Parantainen’s works in this series either poeticize or politicize the otherwise blank canvas that is the typical landscape photo. His choice of backdrop ranges globally, allowing his words to forge a new identity for these landscapes as he experiences them.

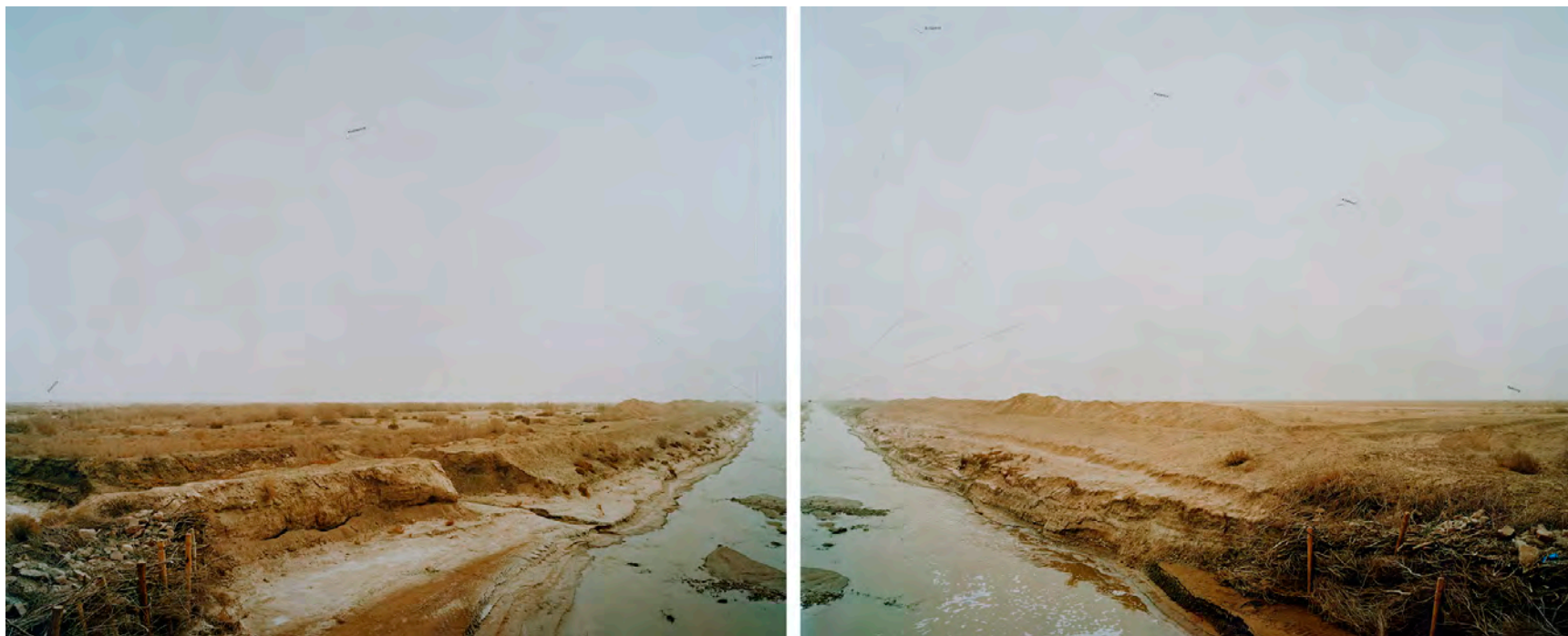




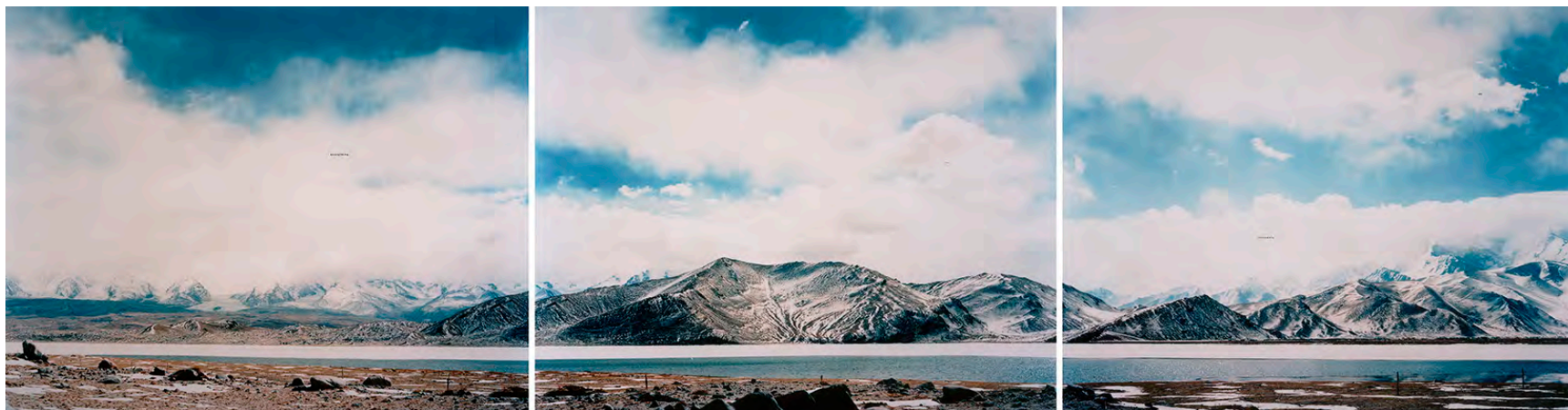




*Two Horizons*, 2007, Archival pigment print, 100 x 240 cm, diptych



*Virtues*, 2008, Archival pigment print, 125 x 316 cm, diptych



*Under China Clouds*, 2008, Archival pigment print, 125 x 400 cm, triptych





*Horizons*, 2008, Heino Gallery, Helsinki





*3 Million Years*, 2008, Archival pigment print, 125 x 280 cm, diptych



*Dead Centre*, 2008, Archival pigment print, 107 x 300 cm, diptych





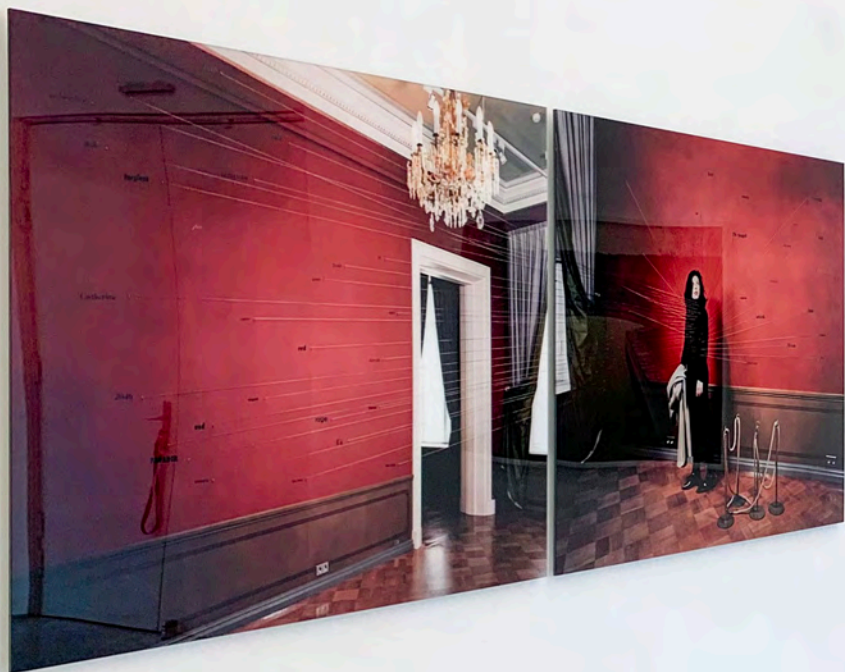
*Horizons*, 2008, Heino Gallery, Helsinki

# DREAMS AND DISAPPOINTMENTS

His series “Dreams and Disappointments” explores humans’ physical and psychological vulnerability. Representations of the human body are marked with pushpins and strings that are attached to their perceived points of vulnerability. The strings that are pulled tight to a point outside the frame of the image are alluding to the presence of an unknown and dominant force. The events in the images are describing the individuals’ relationship to themselves and other people. The events are social situations that often repeat themselves in human life. In these cinematic set ups, the individuals are represented in the moment when they are facing their history, future, dreams, and fears. Some of the photos have text: Singular words such as ‘death’, ‘passion’, or ‘time’ can be seen, and at times Parantainen pairs

an image with a longer poem. These texts, a motif across Parantainen’s wider body of work, add tension to the photos in “Dreams and Disappointments”, referring to those crucial moments the subjects of his photos are experiencing.





*Poetic Realities*, 2020, Persons Projects, Berlin



*Personal Museum*, 2006, C-Print, Diasac, 100 x 260 cm, diptych





*Map of Expectations*, 2005, C-print mounted on aluminum, 100 x 130 cm





*Coordination of Past*, 2005, Archival pigment print, 100 x 130 cm





*Alphabet of Possibilities*, 2004, Archival pigment print, 100 x 130 cm





*Letter to Mona*, 2006, C-Print, Diasec, 128 x 160 cm



*Poetic Realities*, 2020, Persons Projects, Berlin





# FIRE

Jyrki Parantainen's *Fire* series (1994-1999) is a unique body of work that challenges the parameters between beauty and fear. It's a study of the sublime. Parantainen's use of real fire creates an emotional stage that seduces the viewer into a state of enchantment and negative pleasure. These light boxes have been refitted with today's technology and haven't been on view for the past 20 years.

*Fire* is a study of interiors that have been invaded by the alien force of a living fire. Inhabitants are present yet absent. It captures places in their everyday guise, sometimes before the cleansing of the transforming inferno. The everyday life objects, souvenirs, furniture and utility articles used in the photographed scenes leave the marks left by the people living in them. All the "studios" are

carefully chosen, staged and sometimes totally renovated as seen with the kitchen, office, library, corridor and movie theater. To realize this project, Parantainen, with the help of his team of assistants, furnished then actually burned down his selected empty locations. In other words, the images are more than just fiction. They also document his artistic pyromania.

The pyrotechnical process has to be planned precisely beforehand to avoid any risk of life or loss of photographic equipment. None of the shootings could have been repeated. The fire destroys everything in a moment. The timing of the lighting and shooting of the evolving image is crucial to the extinguishing of the actual flames. These images are realized in large scale neon boxes that are self-standing.



Jari Paavola  
 1960-  
 The Room  
 2011  
 Digital print  
 100 x 150 cm

# NEW PERSPECTIVES THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

The Helsinki School of Photography is a unique and innovative institution that has been at the forefront of photographic education in Finland for over 50 years. The school's focus is on the creative and artistic aspects of photography, rather than just technical skills. It provides a platform for students to explore their own vision and express it through the camera. The school's curriculum is designed to be flexible and responsive to the needs of individual students, allowing them to specialize in areas that interest them. The Helsinki School of Photography is a place where creativity and technical skill go hand in hand, and where students are encouraged to push the boundaries of what is possible in photography.



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## THE HESKINEN SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHY

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HESKINEN SCHOOL OF PHOTOGRAPHY  
 HELSINKI, FINLAND



*Fire No 02. (23.6.1994, Outokumpu, Finland), 1994, Archival pigment print, 128 x 160 cm*





*Fire No 04. (27.6.1996, Haapsalu, Estonia), 1996, Archival pigment print, 128 x 160 cm*



*Fire No 17. (28.6.1996, Haapsalu, Estonia), 1996, Archival pigment print, 160 x 128 cm*



*Fire No 19. (23.2.1997, Helsinki, Finland), 1997, Archival pigment print, 160 x 128 cm*





*Fire No 03. (16.6.1994, Outokumpu, Finland), 1994, Archival pigment print, 160 x 128 cm*



*Fire Installation, 1998, Art Museum Ateneum, Helsinki*





*Fire No 23. (20.7.1997, Helsinki, Finland), 1997, Archival pigment print, 128 x 160 cm*





*Fire No 27. (24.5.1998, Helsinki, Finland), 1997, Archival pigment print, 128 x 320 cm, Diptych*



*Fire Installation*, 1998, Art Museum Ateneum, Helsinki

# Persons Projects

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