

The XXIX Mänttä Art Festival opens with a more extensive programme than ever before. The theme is NO, art curation is scrutinised, and the event programme is an integral part of the exhibition.

The summer 2025 exhibition of the Mänttä Art Festival will be observed through the word "no". Subjects such as locality, childhood and parenthood, the human environment, traditions, and the mind and body are examined through the NO lens. The XXIX Mänttä Art Festival will also explore art curation from different perspectives. In addition to the 84 contemporary artists, the exhibition will feature numerous co-curators making this the most extensive curatorial process in the history of the exhibition.

For **Krister Gråhn**, curator of the XXIX Mänttä Art Festival, new and unprecedented are not intrinsic to art, and he does not believe in the disposability of art. In his work, he often reflects on how the art world - both locally and globally - could holistically take more responsibility for the environment. He aims to approach his curatorial work as an ongoing process rather than a series of projects that start and end.

"Currently, there is a focus on the welfare effects of art. However, I hope that the impacts are long-lasting, fostering change and sustainability over time. Culture should not merely offer temporary relief from daily struggles; it should contribute meaningfully to our overall well-being," concludes Gråhn.

"NO is a small, strong, and difficult word. When I was invited to be a curator for the Mänttä Art Festival, my child was at the age when they would respond to every question with a NO! It made me think about why identities are largely constructed through what we are not," recounts Krister Gråhn on the origin of the theme, "Yet, as an adult, I am repeatedly reminded that I should learn to say no."

"NO is surprisingly broad in its absoluteness. Not only does it imply external constraints, but it is also a counterforce coming from within. NO refers to something we no longer accept or believe in. NO is autonomy and equality, but it also breeds censorship and racism. Some prohibitions go unnoticed as we consider them so self-evident while others raise the question: why NOT?", adds Gråhn.

In addition to the traditional and topical contemporary art exhibition, visitors at the next Mänttä Art Festival will see art curation examined under the microscope. The focus will be on the distribution of power and responsibility of the artistic directing known as curating. Krister Gråhn has invited a group of co-curators, experts in different roles in the art world, to participate. They will bring an unprecedentedly wide range of artists and themes into the programme.

"The idea is to dismantle the curator's autocracy and share the position. With this, the aim is to move the Festival as an institution towards a more community-oriented and conversational direction, which will further connect art and everyday life. I also hope to get away from the one-off nature of art projects. Overall, we are creating an entity, in which the activities linked to the art are an integral part of the exhibition - not just afterthoughts," describes Gråhn.

"Curating is a role that lacks a clear definition. The invited co-curators apply their unique curatorial practices to their work, allowing us to reflect on what can and should be curated. At the Mänttä Art

Festival, the curated topics extended beyond art to include research, art writing, pedagogy, and public engagement with art,” Gråhn explains.

Co-curators of the XXIX Mänttä Art Festival

- Architect and Doctor of Technology **Iida Kalakoski**, MW-Kehitys Oy and its CEO **Otto Huttunen**
- Teacher **Hannele Karppinen**, Visual Artist **Heidi Saramäki** and **Antti Korkka**, Head of Culture and Leisure in Mänttä-Vilppula
- Ihmisyyden tunnustajat, theatre professional **Satulia Saarilehto** & Visual Artist **Paula Tella**
- Visual Artist **Elina Försti** & Architect and Doctor of Technology **Iida Kalakoski**
- Art Historian **Kaija Kaitavuori**
- Doctoral Researcher and Curator **Sanna Karimäki-Nuutinen**
- Visual Artist and Art Educator **Hanna Rantala**
- Poet and Art Critic **Raisa Jäntti**
- Jewellery Artists **Tarja Tuupanen** & **Jenni Sokura**

Areas of co-curation

Jewellery Art & the Politics of the Body. Jewellery Artists Tarja Tuupanen and Jenni Sokura will curate a collection of international jewellery art for the Mänttä Art Festival. Through the works of nearly 20 jewellery artists, the collection will examine the human body and its politics. The jewellery artists are **Lin Cheung** (UK), **Ana Escobar Saavedra** (CO/FR/AE), **Benedict Haener** (CH), **Jussi Järvinen** (FI), **Liisbeth Kirss** (EE), **Nadiye** (FI), **Jasmin Matzakow** (DE), **Nanna Melland** (NO), **Maria Nuutinen** (FI), **Anna Rikkinen** (FI), **Åsa Skogberg** (SE), **Hansel Tai** (CN/EE), **Vivi Touloumidi** (GR/DE/BE), **Wen-Ju Tseng** (UK), **Lisa Walker** (NZ), and **Zhipeng Wang** (CN).

The Urban Plan as a Work of Art. Iida Kalakoski and Otto Huttunen will discuss the urban landscape as a work of art. The aim is to form a vision of what a residential area for artists would look like. The invited architects and architecture students are **Leo Hirviniemi**, **Jesse Kitinoja**, **Mari-Sohvi Miettinen**, **Essi Nisonen**, **Leo Nuutinen**, and **Beate Pekkarinen**. The sound designer for the project is **Kimmo Hokkanen**.

Cultural Environment & Building Conservation. Elina Försti and Iida Kalakoski examine the dilapidating traditional landscape, issues of repair and reparability, and the urban landscape of the Mänttä-Vilppula factory town. Collaborating with Försti and Kalakoski are Architect **Riina Sirén** and architect student **Amanda Ikonen**.

518 City Pennants. Hannele Karppinen, Heidi Saramäki, and Antti Korka will lead a project in which all 518 preschool and primary school pupils from Mänttä-Vilppula are invited to reflect on what they would not give up in their home area. Based on this, the children will design city pennants, which will be displayed around the town and as part of the Pekilo exhibition.

Exhibition Catalogue 2.0 The editor-in-chief of the 2025 exhibition catalogue is Poet and Art Critic **Raisa Jäntti**. Instead of the traditional printed publication, the catalogue will be published during the summer as daily posts on the Festival's social media channels.

The Study of Art as an Artwork. Kaija Kaitavuori's work is in four parts. Her *Museomagiaa* article will change its form during the Festival from an article to a work of art. Mänttä as a Work of Art challenges the residents of Mänttä-Vilppula to look at their own lives as art. The Violon d'Ingres / Violin of Ingres project features artists who have another active practice or job alongside their artistic endeavours. Art Soup! events offer gatherings, discussions, and soup in the old Valvomo space in Pekilo featuring artists **Eeva-Mari Haikala**, **Jaakko Rustanius**, and **Pia Lindman**.

The guided NO art tours. Sanna Karimäki-Nuutinen has designed a series of guided tours, which focus on the

viewers' experience. Do you have to make an effort to experience art? Each NO tour guide will offer a specific perspective focusing on topics such as disability, accessibility, refusal, or cooperation between humans and other species. The tour guides are **Markku Haanpää, Riikka Leinonen** and the duo **Outimaija Hakala and Snejka**.

The Lupin Laboratory, by Hanna Rantala, is a workshop project divided into three parts. In the first part, Rantala calls for volunteers to mow the lupins. In the second part, visitors are invited to try ink painting with pigment extracted from lupines. Lastly, Rantala will lead Lupine Dialogues, a discussion focused on invasive species, beauty, and harm.

The Unarmed Finland exhibition and Sirkus Lystikus by Väinölä Summer Theatre. Ihmisyyden tunnustajat will curate a part of the pacifist exhibition Unarmed Finland for the exhibition spaces of the Väinölä and Sampola communities. The exhibiting artists are **Joonas Peltola, Pekka Peltola, Riitta Pietilä, Erkki Saarilehto, Juha Saarilehto, Merja Saarilehto, Satulia Saarilehto**, and **Reija Tähtinen**.

Sirkus Lystikus, a play by the Väinölä Summer Theatre, will premiere in mid-July. The tragicomedy, directed by Satulia Saarilehto and Paula Tella, tells the story of a circus community and resistance to change. Working Group: **Satulia Saarilehto, Paula Tella, Päivi Aikioniemi, Eija Husso, Outi Jaakkola, Paula Jaakkola, Jarkko Kotakorpi, Liina Makkonen, Liisa Mankinen, Jouni Marjanen, Heli Peltola, Joonas Peltola, Riitta Pietilä, Jari Ronkainen, Jussi Saarilehto, Merja Saarilehto, Ulla Silván**, and **Reija Tähtinen**.

Of the 84 artists/artist groups featured at the XXIX Mänttä Art Festival, 38 were chosen by the co-curators and the remaining 47 were invited by Curator Krister Gråhn. The artists invited by Gråhn are **Dorian Bajramovic, Maria Duncker, The Animal Rights Academy, Elina Försti, Ramina Habibollah, Minna Havukainen, Timo Heino, Heikki Hautala, Pauliina Jokela, Jaakko Kahilaniemi, Matias Karsikas, Kastehelmi Korpijaakko, Kalle Lampela, Santeri Lehto, Virve Lilja, Anni Löppönen, Simo Mantere, Heikki Marila, Teemu Mäenpää, Maija Närhinen, One Love Group, Marja Patrikainen, Antti Pussinen, Mikko Rekonen, Aleksandra Kulonen & Repin Institute alumni, Restlessminds, Erkki Saarilehto, Jasu Salmi, Teemu Salonen, Heidi Saramäki, Jere Suontausta, Paula Tella, Tommi Toija, Päivi Tuovinen, Pekko Vasantola, Milja Viita**, and **Timo Wright**.

"Next summer, the Mänttä Art Festival will also grant an opportunity to explore different definitions of art, theories, and reflections on what art consists of. Many of the works were selected from the artist's existing oeuvres. Even though society has changed, the works are still relevant – in different ways. New and unprecedented is NOT synonymous with the quality of art," says Gråhn.

A press preview of the XXIX Mänttä Art Festival's exhibition will be held at the Pekilo exhibition space on Tuesday 10th of June from 12 pm to 4 pm. To register for the preview, please email: tiedottaja@kuvataideviikot.fi.

The XXIX Mänttä Art Festival is open daily from 15.6.–31.8.2025 from 10 am to 6 pm.

For more information

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