

The XXIX Mänttä Art Festival is saying NO! In-store is the most extensive curatorial process in the history 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 look at art curation from different perspectives. In addition to about 40 contemporary artists, the exhibition will feature numerous co-curators making this the most extensive curatorial process in the history of the exhibition.

"NO is a small, strong, and difficult word. When I was invited to curate the Mänttä Art Festival, my child was at that 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?"

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 work of the co-curators is largely based on the local context and Mänttä-Vilppula as the setting for the Festival.

"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.

The XXIX Mänttä Art Festival will push the boundaries of contemporary art with the help of the co-curators who will utilise architecture, design, urban planning, art education, theatre, jewellery, public art, art writing, and documentation. All co-curators have years of experience in their practices and strong expertise in their fields.

Co-curators of the XXIX Mänttä Art Festival

- Architect and Doctor of Technology **Iida Kalakoski**, MW-Kehitysy 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

The urban plan as a work of art. Architect Iida Kalakoski, DTech, and Otto Huttunen of MW-Kehitys Oy 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 and how it could be realised while paying attention to artists' working and operating conditions, independent living, creativity, relationship with nature, and sustainability.

518 City Pennants. Teacher Hannele Karppinen, Visual Artist Heidi Saramäki and Mänttä-Vilppula's Head of Culture and Leisure Antti Korkka 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 each design their own city pennants, which will be displayed around the town and as part of the Pekilo exhibition in the summer of 2025.

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 social media channels of the Mänttä Art Festival. Texts based on experience will present the co-curators, events, artists, and artworks. The printed catalogue will be a NO anthology, a collection of texts from different authors related to the theme.

Cultural environment & building conservation. Visual Artist Elina Försti and Architect Iida Kalakoski, DTech, examine the dilapidating traditional landscape, issues of repair and reparability, and the urban landscape of the Mänttä-Vilppula factory town. The state of the old spirit factory in Mänttä is related to the barns of the Ostrobothnian Plain and issues of building conservation. The changes in working life and society reflect through to the appreciation of buildings.

The study of art as an artwork. *Museomagiaa* article by Art Historian Kaija Kaitavuori changes its form from an article to a work of art at the Mänttä Art Festival. The article will take over the former control room turned exhibition space of the old Pekilo factory. The study is elevated to the status of a work of art and returned to its starting point. What is art is not the question proposed this summer, but how is art?

Guided art tours. Dissertation Researcher and Curator Sanna Karimäki-Nuutinen will be curating the guided tours of the Mänttä Art Festival. Experiencing art will be the focus of the guided tours. Do you have to make an effort to experience art? The guided tours will explore how the Mänttä Art Festival is experienced from a specific, inaccessible, or other species perspective.

Lupin laboratory. Visual Artist and Art Educator Hanna Rantala will take art education out of the exhibition space and to the roadsides of the art town. The starting point of Rantala's workshops is the volunteer-based mowing of the invasive lupine and the processing of the clippings into a new form. The open-to-all sessions will involve mowing, experimenting with lupine pigments, and creating a work of art as part of the Pekilo entrance. Amidst the activities will be a discussion on the themes of this year's Mänttä Art Festival.

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. Different bodily features underlie many ideas, ideologies, laws, practices, values, and beliefs.

Ihmisyden tunnustajat - Disarmed Finland and Väinölä Summer Theatre. The pacifist exhibition Disarmed Finland by Ihmisyden tunnustajat tours Finland during wintertime. In the summer of 2025, Ihmisyden tunnustajat will curate a part of the exhibition for the exhibition spaces of the Väinölä and Sampola communities. Satulia Saarilehto and Artist Paula Tella will produce a play on resistance to change for the Väinölä summer theatre.

The artists of the XIX Mänttä Art Festival will be announced in March 2025. The Mänttä Art Festival is the largest summer exhibition of contemporary art in Finland. The XXIX Mänttä Art Festival is open every day from 15 June to 31 August 2025.

For more information

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