

Juri Markkula  
Heaven Series

Juri Markkula's new Heaven series is unveiled at Art Basel Hong Kong 2022. With its visual etymology stemming from Markkula's earthy-toned Interference series, Heaven is the pivot at which the artist's gaze turns upwards to the skies.

Luminous, of iridescent hue, the Heaven series simultaneously absorbs and reflects. This back and forth of inward perception and outward stimulus mirrors the voyage of light as it attempts to penetrate each artwork. The artist creates each unique piece at his studio in Gotland, Sweden, a process which is at the nexus of the industrial and the chemical. Each of these new works defies colour categorization, except to say that each is the fruit of a pursuit of complementary colour, illuminated and guided by experience and instinct.

In the Heaven series, Markkula offers combinations and permutations of seeming infinity. His chemistry harnesses advanced materials from the white heat of technology, working with scientific precision and mechanized application to construct, create and innovate. In so doing, he succeeds in a metamorphosis and alchemy. He draws the curtain of science aside and steps into the realm of chance encounters, meeting and embracing the frail beauty of the human experience. Where in the past he succeeded in transfiguring the industrial into the human, in Heaven Markkula's reach extends upwards to the bountiful arcadia of the firmament.

In Swedish, Heaven refers to the celestial – therefore both an eternal afterlife, and the atmosphere and skies above us. This series therefore incarnates a physical and a spiritual realm. It both mirrors and exceeds reality, forming contrasts and alliances of tone and shade which react with guided spontaneity to the co-existing forces of light, mood and perception. Like a diamond, the Heaven series offers carats and facets – surfaces which rise to meet the eye and the soul separately and with intensity.

Each of the new works in this series, entitled Green, Blue, Pink and Gold is of the same size and shape; shorn to the exact specification of height, depth and breadth as their peers. The titles are a pared-down description of the pigment before light is unleashed – before the colours transform and the artworks transcend. Each artwork could be photographed from multiple angles and be documented again with subtly different results. The interactions, connections and relationships they form with the outside world are objective conditions of variety and nuance. Nebulous personality traits and myriad external factors seem to collide on surfaces to produce patinas, reflections and shimmering spectacles which are eternally varying, part reality and part mirage. They are as the skies themselves, sucking in attention, continually surprising, unpredictable, mesmerising.

A fifth artwork, Paradise, taller than the others, presents a surface of mirrored, holographic tension. The natural consequence of the inhalation and exhalation of absorption and reflection, of rejection and acceptance, this artwork seems to double and intensify reality. It alters the state of the world around it. The immutable laws of chemistry and industry have conspired to form an object with a life of its own. This creation at once confides and conceals, turning to present its face of playful yearning and earnest intensity, creating and recreating itself with continual joyous abandon, in homage to the varying radiance of light and mood which surrounds it.

To be in the company of the Heaven series is to begin and set forth on a journey. The pathway is one of variety, of conflicts and complements, a winding channel of mystery, of oscillation and vicissitude, of the material and immaterial. Heaven is the fulcrum of faith and science at the service of nuance

and imprecision, industrial matter as the forged link from the human to the divine. The complementary colours are themselves the rhyming harmonies of a life that we seek and only periodically find. Happy harmonies are pinpricks of light and jubilation, elusive and unpredictable. The Heaven series is the quest to capture that harmony.