



The Mind's Eye

The Photographs of Derek Parfit

11th May – 30th June 2018
Private view 11th May, 6-8pm

narrative projects is pleased to present *The Mind's Eye: The Photographs of Derek Parfit*, an archive of images captured by one of the most unusual and influential philosophers of our time. This exhibition, the first ever of Parfit's photographs, will examine his idiosyncratic method and practice, introducing a previously unpublished oeuvre that complicates the legacy of this century's most original moral philosopher.

What makes me the same person throughout my life, and a different person from you? And what is the importance of these facts? In pursuit of answers to these two questions and their implications for the practice of ethical life, Derek Parfit upturned generations of philosophical work on ethics, rationality, and identity. His two books are widely regarded as among the most important contributions to moral philosophy in the past century, with an early review in *The Sunday Times* proclaiming "something close to a work of genius." Precognizant of his own impact, Parfit writes in 1984: *I believe that most of us have false beliefs about our own nature, and our identity over time, and that, when we see the truth, we ought to change some of our beliefs about what we have reason to do.* (Reasons and Persons, p. 281, 1984)

Parfit was also a prolific and sophisticated photographer, returning each year for decades to St. Petersburg and Venice to capture images of architecture, water, fog, and light. With a painterly sensibility and an uncommon feeling for color, Parfit's photographs provide compelling new insights into his philosophical work, and reveal a sensitive and finely developed aesthetic neither published nor exhibited during his lifetime.

Compensating for an unusual neural condition – *aphantasia*, the inability to form or retain mental images – Parfit began to meticulously capture the ethereal architectural landscapes of Venice and St. Petersburg, places he could not call to mind without the aid of his photographs. Over the course of his life, this practice developed into work of true artistry. As curator Olivier Berggruen writes, “his awareness of space... has a tactility which is akin to the experiments of 19th-century British painters such as Turner and Whistler, whose works similarly join the palpable with the abstract and atmospheric.” (BLAU Magazin, 2018)

Parfit's writing is “dense with science-fictional thought experiments, all urging a shift toward a more impersonal, non-physical, and selfless view of human life.” (Larissa MacFarquhar, *The New Yorker*, 2011) This debut exhibition of Parfit's photographs offers visual realizations of an idealized world, and draws from one of the only visual archives in history to survive a major philosopher – a rare and beautiful epilogue to the life of one of this century's most original minds.

About the Artist

Derek Parfit (1942–2017) is regarded as one of the most influential philosophers of the modern era. His two books, *Reasons and Persons* (1984) and *On What Matters* (2011) have been called the most important contributions to ethics in over a century. He was a Fellow at All Souls College, Oxford, and held teaching positions at Harvard, New York University, and Rutgers. In 2014 he was laureate of the Rolf Schock Prize in Logic, modern philosophy's highest honor.

The Mind's Eye: The Photographs of Derek Parfit is organized by Owen Laub with Samuel Sokolsky-Tiff.

For further information or high-resolution images, please contact:

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