



**EUROPE**

# School for disobedience set to open in Finland

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Artist Jani Leinonen will run a series of lectures and workshops teaching young people how to be activists



Jani Leinonen/Kansallisgalleria / Pirje Mykkänen  
Teacher Jani Leinonen

A controversial Finnish artist is planning to launch a school for disobedience to teach people how to become social activists.

**Jani Leinonen** will be leading a series of lectures, workshops and art installations at the Kiasma Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma in Helsinki urging people to challenge the status quo.

"The whole idea started from the fact that I was worried that maybe kids in schools are just too happy to take their place in society and fulfil the goals that are fed to them," he told Finland's national broadcaster **YLE News**.

"The idea is to teach them to be outspoken in their questioning of everything they see in the media, read and even what they're taught in school," he says.

Leinonen is well-known in Finland for his controversial blend of art and activism. In 2010, he was part of team of hooded activists who abducted and decapitated a Ronald McDonald statue from a fast food store in Helsinki as part of an art project aimed at questioning the company's ethics.

The disobedience classes will be taught by a team of local activists including rapper Karri "Paleface" Miettinen, Left Alliance politician Li Andersson and Lutheran pastor Marjaana Toiviainen. The classes – many of which are already full – are aimed at school children and young people, but adults are welcome as well.

Miettinen explains why blindly following societal norms can be dangerous and why disobedience should be on the school curriculum. "War, genocide, slavery and all the worst things in the history of mankind are actually the result of obedience, rather than disobedience," he says, quoting US historian and activist Howard Zinn.

The school of disobedience comes at a time when Finland is having a difficult conversation about race, identity and immigration. Last month a politician belonging to the anti-immigration Finns Party, which is a member of the ruling coalition, said he would "defeat this nightmare called multiculturalism". His comments sparked a furious response, with thousands of Finns taking to the streets in anti-racism marches.

Leinonen argues that this is where true power lies; with the masses. "It's not heroic politicians that change the world, even if history writes it that way," Leinonen says. "It's actually citizens' movements that change big things."

*The School of Disobedience opens at the Museum of Contemporary Art Kiasma September 4 and runs until the end of January 2016.*

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