



Les Enfants d'Ouranos, Bois #3, 2022. Ink on wood. @JR. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin.

JR

LES ENFANTS D'OURANOS

March 3 - April 15, 2023

Perrotin is pleased to introduce JR's newest series, *Les Enfants d'Ouranos*. Building upon *Déplacé-e-s*, which shares the stories of refugee children from around the world, this project explores the tensions between the visible and invisible. The title of the exhibition translates to *The Children of Ouranos*—referring to the primordial Greek god of the sky who fathered the Titans, the first gods—and associates JR's subjects with holiness. Negatives of each photograph are transferred onto reclaimed wood and reinforced with black ink for contrast. The children become glowing silhouettes, evoking classical depictions of divinity.

In 2022, JR began *Déplacé-e-s*, a series conceived with refugee populations in Ukraine, Rwanda, Mauritania, Greece, and Colombia. *Déplacé-e-s* presented aerial photographs of 120 foot-long banners depicting the full image of young children playfully running. Carried by large groups of people around refugee camps or a city, the printed

banners revealed, with keen clarity and specificity, the naivete and innocence of displaced children living through conflict. Their massive scale and larger-than-life format provided a duly deserved commemorative moment, serving as a temporary monument to the childrens' dreams and aspirations.

JR's new series *Les Enfants d'Ouranos* presents similar images, yet we see them through a different lens that obscures the specific context. Unveiling this new photographic and technical process, JR renders the portraits of the children in a mysterious, uncanny manner: Instead of printing the positive, he transfers the negative directly onto reclaimed wood, adding black ink to reinforce the contrast. With a new technique that harkens back to earlier practices, JR creates an idealized version of youth, saturated in divine connotations, ripe with possibilities. The negative space allows him to reveal what, until now, has remained invisible: the divinity of children emanating from carefree innocence and ingenuity. With this new work JR instills the images of

the children directly impacted by global conflict and living in refugee camps with transcendence and the opportunity to command influence and create a new world.

In these images, surfaces reflecting light are reversed and presented as shadows and where shadows exist, the areas are filled with light. The reversal of light and dark conveys a sense of otherworldliness to these children's depictions and blurs specificities and particularities. They become atmospheric portraits imbued with a primordial or mythological quality, referenced by the title.

Les Enfants d'Ouranos are children in the process of becoming adults, a transition where all possibilities of change and transformation lie. Their 'yet to be determined' adulthood and the reminder of their divine existence place them in space and time—as Titans who existed well before the world was created and defined.

Les Enfants d'Ouranos finds our humanity's origins in our own children— particularly those who are displaced and need to start over. It is in these divine children that JR sees and captures the moment where all possibilities lie, where the world is yet to be elucidated, where hierarchies can be inverted, where the status quo and preconceived notions can be challenged and new, more benign, social

constructs can be envisioned. It is in this new field where everything is possible.

A large scale, site-specific version of *Les Enfants d'Ouranos* will be on view on the façade of the Parrish Art Museum from May to September, 2023. This building intervention and JR's signature artistic practice will become part of the Museum's dominant public view and will coincide with the institution's 125th anniversary. As the Parrish looks back at its own origins at its 125th anniversary milestone, *Les Enfants d'Ouranos* will be a reminder that, during that process of determination and consolidation, it's valuable to look through a reversal lens to identify spaces that open up possibilities for the future.

In addition to the Parrish Museum, JR's *Déplacé-e-s* series is on view at the Gallerie d'Italia in Turin, Italy until July 16, 2023.

—Mónica Ramírez-Montagut,
Director of The Parrish Art Museum in Water Mill

[More information about the artist >>>](#)