
Ugo Rondinone

the water is a poem
unwritten by the air
no. the earth is a poem
unwritten by the fire

18 October 2022 – 8 January 2023



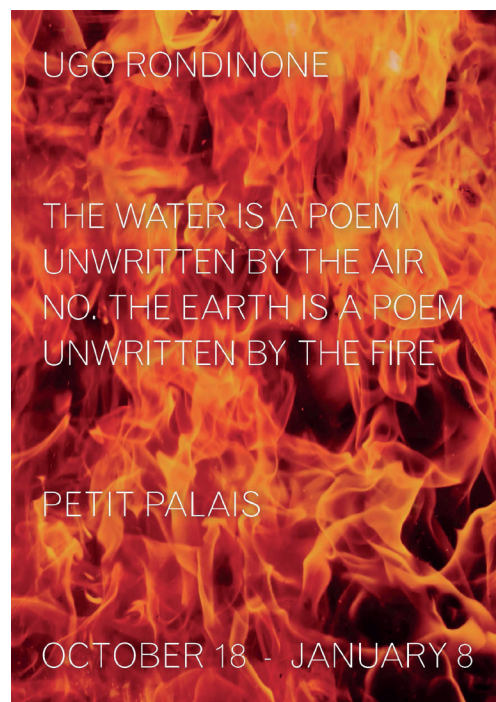
Petit Palais
Musée des Beaux-Arts
de la Ville de Paris

Informations
petitpalais.paris.fr

Ugo Rondinone's exhibition at the Petit Palais comprises two ensembles of works enhanced by a new video installation. Revolving around human bodies in contact with the elements and nature, these works are in keeping with the multiple families of works produced by the artist since the late 1980s. Earth, sky, air, water and fire, associated with beings at rest or in movement, are invoked in the fulness of their spiritual dimension.

The first ensemble, *humansky*, welcomes visitors and immediately underlines the melding of being and the elements: seven moulded, suspended bodies embellished with a blue cloud-dotted sky «camouflage» confronting visitors with water and air.

The second group, historically the source of this trilogy, consists of *nudes*. Made from a blend of transparent wax and earth collected from seven continents, these sculptures also have a «camouflaged» look stemming from the mixing of their non-homogeneous components. They depict the bodies of male and female dancers seated and at rest. Created on a human scale, these nudes seem realistic at first, until the visitor, coming closer, discovers their clearly artificial aspect, particularly visible at the junction of their limbs with their bodies. These sculptures are thus «paradoxical» in their compliance with the Rondinone aesthetic: he plays on the «opposition» between what is expected of a dancer, and the pose he makes each one assume. Banishing any choreographed gesture and any reference to the stage space, these motionless, withdrawn bodies seem to have become one with nature, intensely concentrated and lost in a meditative state.



Press contacts :

Petit Palais

Mathilde Beaujard

mathilde.beaujard@paris.fr

+ 33 (0) 1 53 43 40 14 / 06 45 84 43 35

David Ulrichs PR

David Ulrichs

david@davidulrichs.com

+49 176 5033 0135

From one ensemble to the next visitors witness a process of bodies in mutation: moving from the ethereal suspension of *humansky* to the quasi-lethargy of the *nudes*, the bodies are «reborn» in the film *burn to shine*, whose presentation at the Petit Palais is a world premiere. The film is projected onto six screens inside a cylindrical space made of charred wood and forming a circle, a recurring geometric figure for the artist. The body is in movement here: 12 percussionists and 18 male and female dancers are gathered around a fire in the desert. Combining an ancestral trance from the Maghreb with the gestures of a contemporary dance conceived with the help of Franco-Moroccan choreographer Fouad Boussof, they unite with nature from sunset until dawn, when the sun rises again.

The cylinder's wooden slats exclude any view of the outside; they indicate a path to follow. Since the beginning of his career, Ugo Rondinone has considered it necessary to create an enclosed «isolated» environment facilitating dialogue with nature. Hence the importance for him of presentation gambits attenuating the presence of the surrounding urban landscape. The filters on the windows – *when the sun goes down and the moon comes up* – in the sculpture gallery and the north pavilion are part of this quest and remind us above all that each of Rondinone's exhibitions is inherently a work of art in its own right.

According to the artist, the link between the first two groups and *burn to shine* is a desire for transformation: «The initial inspiration came from a poem by John Giorno titled 'You must burn to shine': a Buddhist proverb about the coexistence of life and death, reminiscent of the much older Greek myth of the phoenix, the immortal bird that regenerates cyclically or is reborn in a different way. Associated with the sun, the phoenix receives new life by resurrecting from the ashes of its predecessor”.

Lastly, the artist has taken into account works belonging to the Petit Palais, with which his own are confronted here. He has turned to anthropomorphic sculptures from the museum's collection to better «contextualise» the nudes and surrounded the cylinder of *burn to shine* with four paintings by Eugène Carrière.

The exhibition is made possible through the collaboration and support of:
Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich ; Esther Schipper, Berlin ; Sadie Coles HQ, London ; Gladstone, New York ; kamel mennour, Paris et Kukje Gallery, Seoul.

Exhibition curators:

Juliette Singer, Chief curator, in charge of contemporary projects at the Petit Palais, Paris
Erik Verhagen, Professor of contemporary art history, Université polytechnique Hauts-de-France.

Ugo Rondinone is recognized as one of the major voices of his generation, an artist who composes searing meditations on nature and the human condition while establishing an organic formal vocabulary that fuses a variety of sculptural and painterly traditions. The breadth and generosity of his vision of human nature have resulted in a wide range of two-dimensional and three-dimensional objects, installations, videos, and performances. His hybridized forms, which borrow from ancient and modern cultural sources alike, exude pathos and humor, going straight to the heart of the most pressing issues of our time, where modernist achievement and archaic expression intersect. In most recent years Rondinone's existential observations on humanity, technology and the passing of time took a new turn in the shape of large-scale public sculptural installations. These include aluminum casts of 2000-year old olive trees, hand-modelled clay masks, and rough-cut stone figures and stacked boulders painted in artificial colors. Parallel to his work, Rondinone has also maintained an active interest in the art of his predecessors and peers, as testified by the group exhibitions he has organized in Vienna, Paris and New York as well as the touching collective tribute to his life-partner, the late poet and performance artist John Giorno, at Palais de Tokyo in Paris in 2016 titled *I ♥ JOHN GIORNO* and restaged in thirteen non-profit institutions in 2017 in New York.

Ugo Rondinone was born in 1964 in Brunnen, Switzerland. He studied at the Universität für Angewandte Kunst in Vienna before moving to New York in 1997, where he lives and works to this day. His work has been the subject of solo presentations at the Centre George Pompidou, Paris (2003); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2006); Art Institute of Chicago (2013); Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai (2014); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2015); Secession, Vienna (2015); Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2016); MACRO, Rome (2016); Carré D'Art, Nîmes (2016); Berkley Art Museum, Berkeley, Contemporary Art Center Cincinnati, Cincinnati (2017); Bass Museum of Art, Miami (2017); Belvedere, Vienna (2021); Tamayo Museum, Mexico City (2022) and Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt (2022). In 2007 he represented Switzerland at the 52nd Venice Biennale.

The artist lives and works in New York.