

CAC

Contemporary
Arts Center



UGO RONDINONE

let's start this day again

ugo rondinone

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Ugo Rondinone is one of the most well-known and successful contemporary artists working today. His practice is a poetic exploration of the human condition situated between self-reflection, social norms and the contemplation of our natural world. Rondinone's work varies from monumental sculptures in public space, paintings and installations, to small, delicate bronze objects that show traces of the artist's touch. His entire body of work can be divided into two, defined by the use of either natural earth tones or an intensified version of the color spectrum: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet.

Let's start this day again brings together examples of seven series of works from the latter, and will be Rondinone's first major survey exhibition in a U.S. museum. Rondinone's rich application of color entirely transforms our perception of the surrounding gallery spaces. The installation of colored gels on the CAC's skylight invite us to enjoy the sky and clouds above in a kaleidoscopic manner, and to see the architecture bathed in a shifting rainbow palette as the hours pass.

Together with 45 life-size clown sculptures, this exhibition showcases paintings and sculptures that explore inner states of being and serve as symbols for contemplation. Rondinone also invited thousands of area school children to contribute drawings of rainbows to this exhibition. This cheerful, expressive presentation of rainbows celebrates the magic and wonder associated with this meteorological occurrence, rather than its saccharine presentation in popular culture. Overall, Rondinone has created a holistic work of art, which includes Zaha Hadid's architecture and immerses us in its vibrant yet meditative atmosphere.

Curated by Raphaela Platow,
Alice & Harris Weston Director



clowns

Forty-five life-size clown sculptures leisurely recline in this gallery space. Easily mistaken to be real people, they are meticulous 3D casts of 45 both male and female models. Each wears a mask cast from his or her own face with visible signs of wear. The masks feature long eye lashes, the staple red clown nose and various different facial and ethnic features. Collectively titled, *vocabulary of solitude*, the clowns are clad in striped and dotted costumes that complement the color arrangement of their environment. In contrast to the "scary clowns" that have become a recent media hysteria, these clowns are meditative and focused inward, as if taking a break from performing and acting. They are engaged with nothing and no one but themselves. Such clowns have been a metaphorical persona for the artist since the 1990s as a vehicle for what Rondinone deems the most pressing aspect of being an artist – the contemplation of inner and outer life. His clowns are lost in their own musings and don't seek to connect, socialize or react.



“They are engaged with nothing and no one but themselves...”

Subtitled after 45 recurring activities that describe our everyday repetitious routines, these clowns invite us to reflect upon the mundane aspects of our daily reality from sleeping, laughing and washing to eating and back to sleeping. Their inward disposition suggests isolation and boredom, but also conjures the possibility that the colorful vibrancy of their surroundings is a reflection of the magical discovery possible from a place of rest. They invite us to sit still for a moment, to slow down, stop reacting and do nothing but observe.



light bulb

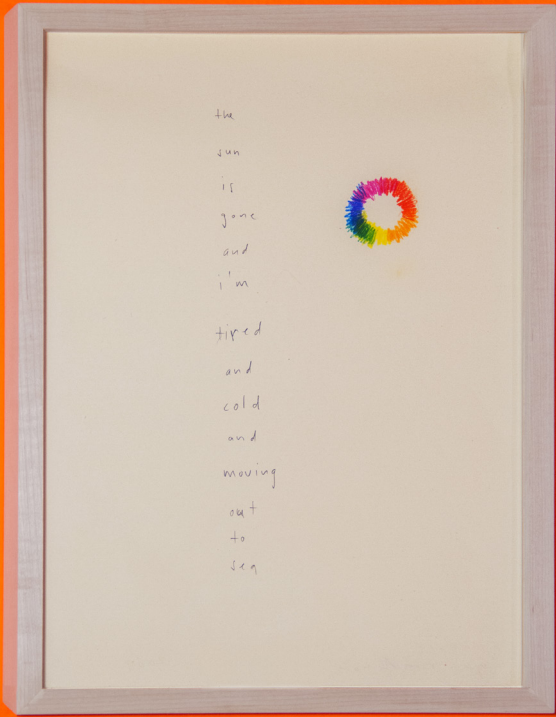
This large scale light bulb cast from wax, and colored with pigments, is the eighth in a series of 24, created in 2005. They are titled after every hour of the day, from *The 1st Hour of the Poem* to *The 24th Hour of the Poem*, and reflect the cyclical repetition of time. The sculpture's uneven surface reveals the dull material quality of wax and the mottled traces of the casting process. Without the adornment of a shade this bare, oversized bulb is comical in its appearance, yet also reminiscent of laconic, barren interiors. By executing the sculpture in wax, Rondinone further exaggerates its existential quality—the heat of the lamp will ultimately melt the wax and consume itself. The artist's placement of the work at the height of his belly button further emphasizes the reading of the work as a symbol for the circle of life.



In his concern with existence, Rondinone often contemplates time as a measure, as a quantity, and lengths of duration such as hours, days and years. Yet, the artist's titles also speak of time as a mysterious poem that reflects on the qualitative character of a life made up of deep, meaningful moments. As such, Rondinone's work exemplifies the Ancient Greek dual terminology for time and exists in its tension. Chronos describes chronological time, while kairos points to deep time or unique moments fully and meaningfully lived. In so doing, his work extends an invitation to rest and dwell in those deep moments, while the clock continues its relentless path forward.

poems

Poetry has accompanied Rondinone throughout his life. His haiku-like contemplations became part of his practice in 2003 when he began to integrate words and narratives, creating an elaborate series of drawings that linguistically describe a protagonist's daily activities and musings. Given equal status amongst his paintings and sculptures, the poems are integrated into the context of his exhibitions to add a beautiful, if at times laconic, perspective. For Rondinone, poetry and visual art are closely linked in their open-ended quality, and their shared capacity for multiple readings depending on the subject's personal background and state of mind on a given day. The exquisite, but economical drawings that accompany some of the poems create a dialogue, which underscores the challenge of unfettered communication and regularly disintegrate into the absurd. Rondinone has also written poems directly on exhibition walls, canvas and other support materials, such as wood.



rainbow

For his large-scale exhibition projects, Rondinone integrates all aspects of the gallery to transform the space into an immersive artistic environment. The magical installation *love invents us* on the CAC skylight is a case in point, reinventing a concept the artist first presented in 1999. The installation's lyrical title has appeared as an outdoor neon sculpture emulating the shape and colors of a rainbow. For this iteration, Rondinone covered the window panes of the CAC skylight with colored gels representing all the colors of the rainbow. In so doing, he creates a vibrantly colored lens through which we view the sky and passing clouds in a heightened manner.

love invents us also functions like a monumental sundial, as the light casts colorful beams across the staircases and vast concrete wall. These multi-hued shapes move across the CAC's Urban Carpet wall to reflect the earth's movement around the sun – moving slowly, but gracefully from east to west. With this elemental union between the inside and outside world, *love invents us* is a hopeful symbol of love as a facilitator and catalyst for life.





sun painting

Rondinone started his ongoing series of circular Sun paintings in 1992, and by 2013 had created 202. These large-scale paintings begin as small, spontaneous watercolors and record the colors he perceived when looking at the sun. The artist likens these works to “automatic drawings.” Automatic drawings and writings were developed by early 20th century Surrealists to explain works produced by subconscious rather than conscious creation methods.

The watercolor sketches are then transferred onto large canvases with a spray gun and replicate the mesmerizing effect of colors bleeding into one another. All Sun paintings are titled in Rondinone’s native Swiss-German language after the date they were created. Similar to a diary entry, they are a representation of the artist’s state of being on each respective day. Rondinone’s Sun paintings also pay homage to artists of the mid-20th century Pop and Post-Pop movements, such as American painters Jasper Johns and Kenneth Noland, who created their own versions of circular paintings. Rondinone started these Sun paintings at the same time he began making intimate sketches of the woods he encountered while taking long hikes in his native Switzerland. Similarly titled after their date of completion, cropped versions of these sketches were then enlarged, redrawn in ink and framed to create immersive landscapes. They evoke the 19th century Romantic tradition of sketching during walks in nature, akin to German poet Johann Wolfgang Goethe’s *Wanderzeichnungen* (travel sketches). Read in dialogue, these two bodies of works exemplify the artist’s careful, contemplative and enduring recordings of both his inner world and his natural surroundings.



still.life.

The still life is an important genre within the history of art that features the depiction of inanimate, typically commonplace objects such as fruit, flowers and candles. With origins in Ancient Greco-Roman art, still life painting emerged as a distinct genre in Western painting by the late 16th century, and has remained significant ever since. Until the modern era, many elements of a still life had iconographic meaning and were tied to larger concepts such as mortality, fertility and transcendence. Rondinone started creating still life works in 2007. Rather than traditional arrangements, his are single, highly realistic objects such as stones, sections of bread, burnt-down candles or pieces of fruit purposefully arranged on the floor. All of the candle sculptures in this exhibition are cast in bronze, with lead-filled interiors that keep them solidly in position.

The artist pays careful consideration to the real object and precisely captures the tunneling and mottling of wax at the top and sides of the candle, the bend of the burnt wick and the hardened pool of melted wax around each base. By placing 21 candles on the floor of this gallery, he shifts our gaze downwards and invites us to meander through the ocean of colorful candles, which differ in size. Rondinone's punctuation of his titles, *still.life.* with the addition of each candle's unique color in brackets, underscores the contradictory quality of "still" and "life"—lifeless and alive. Considering the burnt candle as a symbol of an individual's lifespan, the installation can be interpreted as a poetic metaphor of the mortality of all life.



clown shoe

This tired, timeworn pair of clown shoes dangling from an oversized nail is one of seven Rondinone created in 2006. It is titled *silence*. During this time, the artist also created his first life-size and life-like clown sculptures. Both series were initially produced in a group of seven to represent the 7 days of the week.

And much like the clowns exude an air of quiet and contemplation, the titles of these pairs of shoes – *gone, no one's voice, mute, silence, quiet, still and calm* – express existential aspects of passivity, from the frightening suggestion of life's end to a deeply rested disposition. Purposefully stowed away, the clown shoes connote the end of a long day, and a break from performing. We are led to believe that one of the clowns, reclining on the floor in socks, may have placed them here.

rainbow drawings

Rondinone has often turned the meteorological phenomenon of the rainbow into works of art. In 1996, he created the installation *you're my sunshine*, which featured the colors of the rainbow painted on the gallery floor. In 1997, he started a series of large-scale, neon public sculptures that emulate the shape of a rainbow. Their half-crescent form outlines short sayings such as "Cry me a River," "Dog Days are Over" and "Our Magic Hour." These works celebrate the rainbow as a hopeful symbol for the gay rights movement and feature the artist's interest in poetry, song lyrics and word play with their open-ended meanings.

For this exhibition, Rondinone invited close to 5,000 area school children under 12 years old to contribute drawings of rainbows to his exhibition. They capture some of the magic and wonder found in myths and stories that cultures have created to explain the occurrence of rainbows over the centuries. The fact that each drawing is unique also speaks to the remarkable fact that every rainbow is perceived uniquely by every single viewer. Ugo Rondinone and the Contemporary Arts Center would like to thank all of the young artists who contributed their artwork to this exhibition.





window

In 1997, Rondinone created *everyday sunshine*, his first installation that incorporated a window sculpture. The glass panes of a wooden window frame were exchanged with pink Plexiglas which returned the gaze through the window back onto the now rosy hued face of the viewer. Dating back to the Renaissance, windows have produced a paradigm shift in our perception by providing a translucent viewfinder to frame the world. As a threshold between the inside and the outside, windows are both objects and vehicles of visual perspective. In art, the 'view through the open window' became an increasingly widespread practice for scrutinizing reality, and eventually led to a pivotal achievement of the Renaissance – the theory of linear perspective.

First conceived by Italian architect and writer Leon Battista Alberti, the Renaissance window became a metaphor for objectivity, and was applied to painting as a framing device for the world. In contrast to this systemic, mechanical application, Rondinone's window sculptures are subversive symbols for a perspective situated in our own inner realities. The viewer's reflection in the mirrored surface offers an opportunity for introspection. The iteration in this exhibition, the nowhere, is one in a series of 24 titled void, painted with a variety of colors. Every piece in the series is a reflection on emptiness in both its bleak and alluring aspects, and conjures associations with popular meditation concepts such as the 'empty mind' and 'going nowhere but deep within.'

CONTEMPORARY ARTS CENTER

UGO RONDINONE

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Curated by Raphaela Platow

May 6 – August 20, 2017

Generously supported by

Sadie Coles HQ Gallery, Barbara Gladstone Gallery, Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Galerie Esther Schipper, U.S. Bank, Alice F. Weston, Pro Helvetia and Thomas R. Schiff. This project is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional support by Gradison Foundation, LNS America, Inc.; ArtsWave Corporate Partner: The Cincinnati Insurance Companies.

Ugo Rondinone (b. 1964, Brunnen, Switzerland) is a renowned mixed-media artist who lives and works in New York. Recent solo exhibitions include: *giorni d'oro + notti d'argento* at Museo d'Arte Contemporanea di Roma (Rome, Italy), *Seven Magic Mountains* organized by Art Production Fund and the Nevada Museum of Art (Nevada, United States), *vocabulary of solitude* at Museum Boijmans van Beuningen (Rotterdam, Netherlands), *i love john giorno* at Palais de Tokyo (Paris, France), *artists and poets* at Vienna Secession (Vienna, Austria), *breathe walk die* at Rockbund Art Museum (Shanghai, China), *human nature* organized by Public Art Fund in Rockefeller Plaza, (New York, United States), *we run through a desert on burning feet*, all of us are glowing our faces look twisted at Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago, United States), *thank you silence* at M – Museum Leuven (Leuven, Belgium). His work is in the collections of MoMA (New York, ICA (Boston), SFMOMA (San Francisco), Walker Art Center (Minneapolis), The Bass (Miami Beach) and Dallas Museum of Art, among others.

List of Works

Clowns

vocabulary of solitude, 2014. Polystyrene foam, epoxy resin, fabric.

Be. Breathe. Sleep. Dream. Wake. Rise. Sit. Hear. Look. Think. Stand. Walk. Pee. Shower. Dress. Drink. Fart. Shit. Read. Laugh. Cook. Smell. Taste. Eat. Clean. Write. Daydream. Remember. Cry. Nap. Touch. Feel. Moan. Enjoy. Float. Love. Hope. Wish. Sing. Dance. Fall. Curse. Yawn. Undress. Lie.

Courtesy the Artist and Sadie Cole HQ, Gladstone Gallery and Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich

Lightbulb

the 8th hour of the poem, 2006. Wax, pigments.
82 x 140 x 82 cm (32.25 x 55 x 32.25 in)

Courtesy of Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels, and Sadie Coles HQ, London

Poems

lines out of silence, 2003. 30 Drawings. All pencil on paper, framed. 33 x 25 cm (13 x 9.8 in)

Courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich

Rainbow

love invents us, 1999. Translucent film on existing skylight. Dimensions variable

Courtesy of the Artist and Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich

Sun Painting

ersternovemberneunzehnhundertachtundneunzig, 1998. Acrylic on canvas. Plexiglass plaque with caption.

ø 220 cm (86 5/8 in)

Pizzuti Collection, Columbus

Still Lives

2013. Cast bronze, lead, paint.

still.life. (neon yellow candle)

10 x 22.5 x 19 cm (3 7/8 x 8 7/8 x 7 1/2 in)

still.life. (warm yellow candle)

10 x 6.5 x 5 cm (3 7/8 x 2 1/2 x 2 in)

still.life. (straw yellow candle)

10.5 x 10.5 x 7.5 cm (4 1/8 x 4 1/8 x 3 in)

still.life. (neon orange candle)

14.5 x 7.5 x 8 cm (5 3/4 x 3 x 3 1/8 in)

still.life. (carrot orange candle)

8 x 10 x 8 cm (3 1/8 x 3 7/8 x 3 1/8 in)

still.life. (neon orange candle)

7.5 x 7 x 5 cm (3 x 2 3/4 x 2 in)

still.life. (fuchsia pink candle)

14.5 x 7.5 x 8 cm (5 3/4 x 3 x 3 1/8 in)

still.life. (white candle)

6 x 14.5 x 10 cm (2 3/8 x 5 3/4 x 3 7/8 in)

still.life. (ghost white candle)

12.5 x 18.5 x 13.5 cm (4 7/8 x 7 1/4 x 5 3/8 in)

still.life. (dusty pink candle)

8 x 8 x 5.5 cm (3 1/8 x 3 1/8 x 2 1/8 in)

still.life. (neon pink candle)

7 x 5 x 4.5 cm (2 3/4 x 2 x 1 3/4 in)

still.life. (mint green candle)

9.5 x 8.5 x 7.5 cm (3 3/4 x 3 3/8 x 3 in)

still.life. (celestial cyan candle)

11.5 x 5.5 x 4.5 cm (4 1/2 x 2 1/8 x 1 3/4 in)

still.life. (ciel blue candle)

10 x 6.5 x 5 cm (3 7/8 x 2 1/2 x 2 in)

still.life. (persian blue candle)

14 x 8 x 5.5 cm (5 1/2 x 3 1/8 x 2 1/8 in)

still.life. (pale violet candle)

12.5 x 18.5 x 13.5 cm (4 7/8 x 7 1/4 x 5 3/8 in)

still.life. (pale violet candle)

4.5 x 8.5 x 7 cm (1 3/4 x 3 3/8 x 2 3/4 in)

Courtesy Gallery Barbara Gladstone, New York and Brussels

still.life. (fuchsia pink candle)

12.5 x 14 x 12.5 cm (5 x 5 5/8 x 4 7/8 in)

still.life. (light pink candle)

11.5 x 5.5 x 4.5 cm (4 1/2 x 2 1/4 x 1 3/4 in)

still.life. (moss green candle)

7.5 x 7 x 5 cm (2 7/8 x 2 3/4 x 1 7/8 in)

still.life. (lavender candle)

9.5 x 8.5 x 7.5 cm (3 3/4 x 3 3/8 x 3 in)

Courtesy Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich

Clown Shoe

silence, 2006. Leather, wooden nail, paint.

60 x 100 x 25 cm (23.6 x 39.4 x 9.8 in)

Courtesy Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich

Rainbow Drawings

your age and my age and the age of the rainbow, 2014 - Present. Mixed media on paper.

Dimensions Variable.

Courtesy of the Artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

Window

the nowhere, 2015. Acrylic on wood, Plexiglass.

112 x 196 x 5 cm (44 x 77 x 2 in)

Courtesy of the Artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

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