

In the early 1960s, I had the good fortune of meeting a lot of artists. Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, John Cage, Trisha Brown and Carolee Schneeman. These artists and painters were the real influence on me, as a poet. Whether it was a performance or a painting, they did what arose in their minds, and made it happen. It occurred to me that poetry was seventy five years behind painting and sculpture and dance and music. I said to myself, if these artists can do it, why can't I do it for poetry? (John Giorno in conversation with Hans Ulrich Obrist, 2002)

*UGO RONDINONE : I LOVE JOHN GIORNO*'s the first retrospective of the life and work of the American poet John Giorno (born 1936, lives and works in New York), a key figure of the American underground scene of the 1960s. The exhibition is conceived by Swiss artist Ugo Rondinone (born 1964, lives and works in New York) as a work in its own right. I structured the exhibition in eight chapters, each representing a layer of Giorno's multifaceted work. Taken as a whole, they reflect how he works and help us to understand the dual influences that American culture and Buddhism had on his life and art, Rondinone explains in a conversation with Florence Ostende in December 2014.

Giorno was an iconic character in Andy Warhol's early films who found inspiration in the appropriation of found images by Pop artists and captured the real-life colloquial language of advertisements, television, newspapers and street slang. A leading figure in the lineage of the Beat Generation, he revived the genre of 'found poetry' and worked to make poetry accessible to all.

Since the early 1960s, Giorno has seen poems as viruses that must be transmitted to as many people as possible. His 1968 seminal work *Dial-A-Poem* allowed people to listen to poems over the telephone simply by dialing a number and quickly received over a million calls.

Whether they are recorded on an album, painted on a canvas, delivered on stage or deconstructed in the pages of a book, Giorno considers poems as images that can be endlessly reproduced using different technologies. In the age of sampling, cut and paste, digital manipulation of text, appropriation as art form – which finds its peak in hip-hop and the textual orgy of the World Wide Web – the world is finally catching up with techniques and styles that Giorno pioneered several decades ago. (Marcus Boon, 'Introduction', in *Subduing Demons in America, Selected Poems 1962-2007*, Soft Skull Press, New York, 2008)

Combining poetry, visual arts, music and performance, the exhibition reveals the significant influence of Giorno's life and work on several generations of artists who have portrayed him, from Andy Warhol's cinematic masterpiece *Sleep* (1963) and its remake by Pierre Huyghe, to R.E.M.,

Rirkrit Tiravanija, Elizabeth Peyton, Françoise Janicot, Verne Dawson, Billy Sullivan and Judith Eisler.

With: Anne Collier, Angela Bulloch, Verne Dawson, Judith Eisler, John Giorno, Mark Handforth, Matthew Higgs, Pierre Huyghe, Françoise Janicot, Scott King, Elizabeth Peyton, Ugo Rondinone, Erik Satie, Michael Stipe, Billy Sullivan, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Andy Warhol.

The title *UGO RONDINONE : I ♥ JOHN GIORNO* is a collective «I» in which Ugo Rondinone invites each of us to share and to feel the spiritual and political commitment of an iconic figure of American counterculture. This exhibition is not just the first Giorno retrospective; it is a declaration of love that heralds the invention of a new genre.

(Florence Ostende)

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