



PRESS RELEASE

Ugo Rondinone : *BURN TO SHINE*
April 6 – September 18, 2024

Press Conference : April 8, 12:30PM

“Like a diarist, I record the living universe. this season, this day, this hour, this sound in the grass, this crashing wave, this sunset, this end of the day, this silence.”

– Ugo Rondinone

Museum SAN is pleased to present *BURN TO SHINE*, a solo exhibition of works by Swiss artist Ugo Rondinone (b.1964). With over forty works of sculpture, painting, installation, and film featured in the museum’s three main galleries, as well as the Nam June Paik Hall and the outdoor stone garden, *BURN TO SHINE* offers the most comprehensive presentation of the artist’s oeuvre in Korea to date. In contrast to the broad spectrum of medium and visual language that individual works employ, however, the exhibition, as a whole, gravitates toward themes that remain at the core of Rondinone’s artistic practice spanning over three decades – the cycle of life, and relationship to nature that fundamentally define our human condition and experience.

At the heart of the exhibition is *burn to shine* (2022), the eponymous film which invites the viewers to an all-encompassing, immersive sensory experience with its captivating acoustics and movements of the human body. Made in collaboration with Franco-Moroccan choreographer Fouad Boussouf, the performance combines ancient rituals of the Maghreb region in Africa with contemporary dance. Twelve percussionists, with eighteen female and male dancers, circle around a fire with their body and spirit in a mystical trance. Presented in an infinite loop, their ritual continues until the fire burns out and the sun rises, only to begin all over again with the emerging darkness. A celebration and mourning of life at once, the film explores the fragile boundary in between. According to the artist, *burn to shine* is a desire for transformation: “The initial inspiration came from a poem by John Giorno titled *You Got to 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.”

The cyclical nature of life is once again examined in the two artworks, *your age and my age and the age of the sun* (2013 - ongoing) and *your age and my age and the age of the moon* (2020 - ongoing). Occupying the two identically designed galleries on the ground and second floors of the museum, the two spaces resonate with one another in both harmony and cacophony of the celestial bodies. The project invites young children (ages 3-12) in the local area of the exhibition to participate with their drawings for each gallery. The current presentation at Museum SAN displays over two thousand drawings completed by more than a thousand children residing in the city of Wonju, where the museum is located. As an ongoing project, these drawings by children have been, and will continue to be accumulated in the collection of the artist as an intercultural, intergenerational dialogue evolving with the passage of time.

The motif of the sun and moon reappear in Rondinone's *mattituck* series, another example in which the artist contemplates the passage of time with unique poetic sensibility. Named after the Long Island locale where the artist lives and works, the watercolor series captures the golden hour of sunset (and moonrise) through its various stages in a three-color palette of complementary hues. The title of each painting simply bears the date of its completion – as an intimate diary, a record of life and a gentle reminder of *memento mori*.

In the same gallery, Rondinone presents eleven sculptures of horses cast from blue glass, titled after different seas around the world. Slightly smaller than life-size, each sculpture is formed from one distinct shade of transparent blue – bisected horizontally to suggest a horizon line running through the silhouette of the animal. The contained form of the horse thereby becomes a vessel for a seascape. Rondinone's horse sculptures embody ideas of space, time and nature that have recurred throughout his work over three decades. Each object suggests a compound of the four elements – water, air, earth (connoted by the body of the horse), and fire, crystallized in the substance of the fired glass. The capsule-like, sealed form of the horse is countered by its intimation of boundless space. Each sculpture moreover projects itself outwards, beyond its glass confines, by casting blue light across the gallery. In this way, the sculptures are prisms that alter the space around them – creating a 'lightscape' of shifting blues. Within this environment, the viewer's own physical presence – vertical, opaque, and mobile by contrast with the phantasmal horses – is thrown into relief.

Rondinone's pursuit of the spiritual through nature reaches new heights in his *nuns + monks* series. In the Nam June Paik Hall, a lone figure of the four meter-tall *yellow red monk* commands the presence of a Gothic saint under the dramatic light from the skylight above, while an ensemble of six nuns and monks placed outdoor gives an impression of prehistoric monoliths against the garden's natural stones. Towering at three meters, the anthropomorphic monuments are cast in bronze, but fabricated based on small-scale limestone models. As described by the artist – "Stones have been a presence and recurring material and symbol in my art. They are the subjects of the stone figures that I began with the monumental *human nature* installation at the Rockefeller Plaza in 2013, followed by *seven magic mountains* in the Nevada Desert in 2016. Both groups are the study and enjoyment of naturally formed stones as objects of beauty and contemplation, and in turn generate personal, meditative states of looking which the boundaries between the outside world and internally visualized spaces break down. In

doing so, I make sculptures of what it means and feels like to see, whether this is understood to be a physical or metaphysical phenomenon. *nuns + monks* will continue to address the dual reflection between the inner self and the natural world. Just as the external world one sees is inseparable from the internal structures on oneself, *nuns + monks* allows such layers of signification to come in and out of focus, prompting the viewer to revel in the pure sensory experience of color, form, and mass while simultaneously engender an altogether contemporary version of the sublime.”

About the Artist

Ugo Rondinone (b. 1964, Switzerland) 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.

Rondinone’s work has been the subject of solo presentations at the Centre Pompidou, Paris (2003); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2006); Art Institute of Chicago (2013); Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai (2014); Palais de Tokyo, (2015); MACRO, Rome (2016); Carre D’Art, Nimes (2016); Berkley Art Museum, Berkeley, (2017); Bass Museum of Art, Miami (2017); Belvedere, Vienna (2021); Tamayo Museum, Mexico City (2022); Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt (2022); Petit Palais, Paris (2022); Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva, (2023); Storm King Art Center, New York (2023) and the Städel Museum, Frankfurt (2023). In 2007, he represented Switzerland at the 52nd Venice Biennale.

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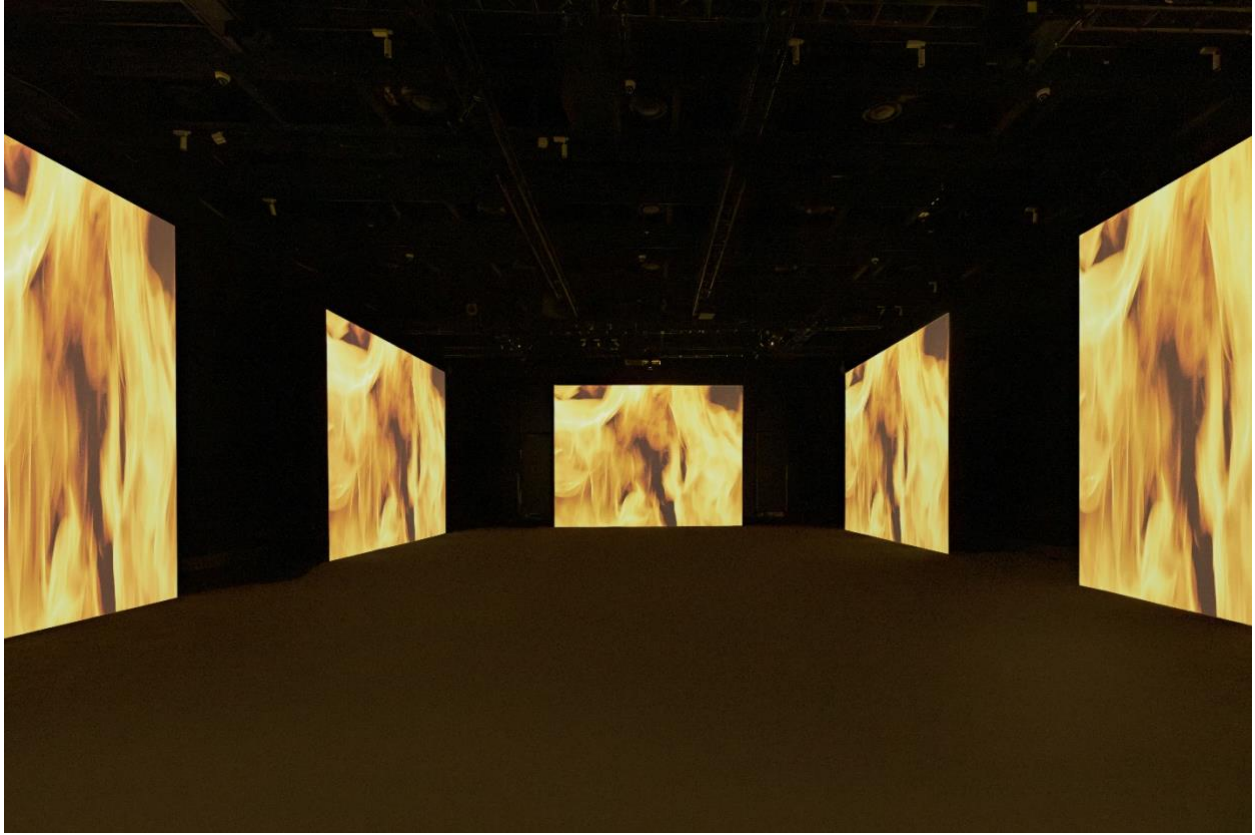
Ugo Rondinone
yellow red monk
2021
painted bronze
400 x 213 x 140.8 cm

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Courtesy of studio rondinone and Kukje Gallery, Seoul; Esther
Schipper, Berlin; Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zürich; Gladstone, New York;
Mennour, Paris; Sadie Coles HQ, London



Ugo Rondinone
violet blue nun
2020
painted bronze
294 x 157 x 100 cm

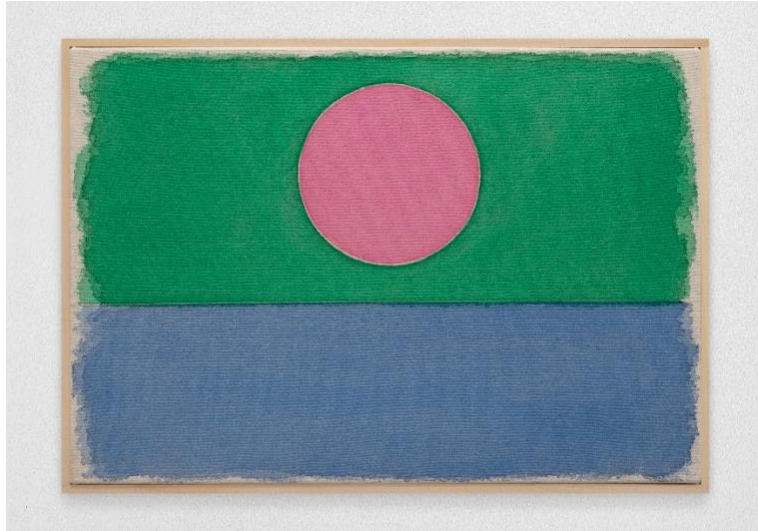
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Ugo Rondinone
burn to shine
2022

dimensions variable: synchronized video projection

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Schipper, Berlin; Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zürich; Gladstone, New York;
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Ugo Rondinone
achtzehnterseptemberzweitausenddreundzwanzig
2023
watercolor on canvas, artist's frame
28 x 40.6 cm

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Schipper, Berlin; Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zürich; Gladstone, New York;
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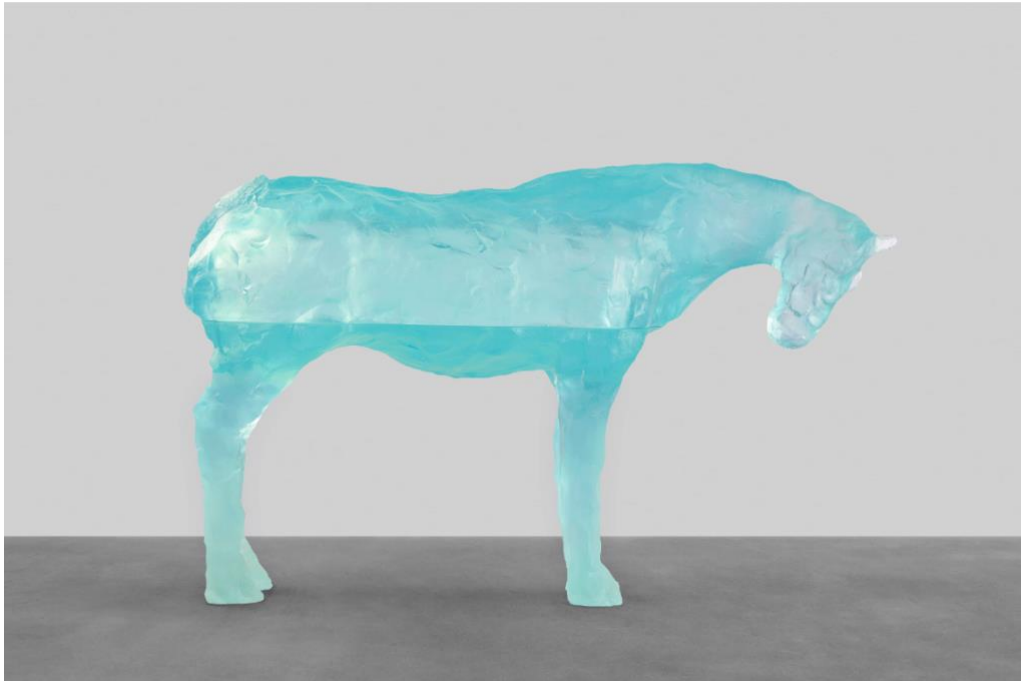
Ugo Rondinone
dreizehnterseptemberzweitausenddreißig
2023
watercolor on canvas, artist's frame
30.5 x 45.7 cm

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Schipper, Berlin; Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zürich; Gladstone, New York;
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Ugo Rondinone
beaufort sea
2023
blue glass
87 x 99 x 32 cm

© Ugo Rondinone
Courtesy of studio rondinone and Kukje Gallery, Seoul; Esther
Schipper, Berlin; Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zürich; Gladstone, New York;
Mennour, Paris; Sadie Coles HQ, London



Ugo Rondinone
celtic sea
2023
blue glass
84 x 134 x 43 cm

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Schipper, Berlin; Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zürich; Gladstone, New York;
Mennour, Paris; Sadie Coles HQ, London



Ugo Rondinone
the peace
2022

acrylic on wood, glass panel
245 x 160 x 8 cm

© Ugo Rondinone
Courtesy of studio rondinone and Kukje Gallery



Ugo Rondinone
Photo by Maru Tepei
Courtesy of studio rondinone
Image provided by Kukje Gallery