

UGO RONDINONE

nuns + monks

Esther Schipper, Berlin

Sept 11 – Oct 17, 2020



Esther Schipper



Ugo Rondinone

Ugo Rondinone was born in 1964 in Brunnen, Switzerland. He studied at the Hochschule für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna. The artist currently lives and works in New York.

In 1991, 1994, and 1995, Rondinone received the Swiss Eidgenössischer Preis für freie Kunst.

In 2007, Rondinone represented Switzerland at the 52nd Venice Biennale.

Referring concurrently to the natural world, romanticism and existentialism, the works of Ugo Rondinone encapsulate a “mental trinity” that has underpinned his art for thirty years.

Selected solo exhibitions include: **everyone gets lighter**, Kunsthalle Helsinki (2019); **sunny days**, Guild Hall, East Hampton (2019); **your age and my age and the age of the sun**, Fundación Casa Wabi, Mexico City (2018–19); **vocabulary of solitude**, ARKEN Museum for Moderne Kunst, Ishøj (2017); **moonrise. east. july**, Aspen Art Museum (2017); **let’s start this day again**, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati (2017); **your age and my age and the age of the rainbow**, Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow (2017); **good evening beautiful blue**, The Bass Museum of Art, Miami Beach (2017); **the world just makes me laugh**, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley (2017); **giorni d’oro + notti d’argento**, MACRO Testaccio and the Mercati di Traiano, Rome (2016); **vocabulary of solitude**, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2016); **Moonrise Sculptures**, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2016); **golden days and silver nights**, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (2015); **Ugo Rondinone: Breathe Walk Die**, Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai (2014); **Ugo Rondinone: we run through a desert on burning feet, all of us are glowing our faces look twisted**, Art Institute of Chicago (2013); **Ugo Rondinone: Human Nature**, Public Art Fund, Rockefeller Plaza, New York (2013); **thank you silence**, M Museum, Leuven (2013); **Wisdom? Peace? Blank? All of this?**, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (2012); **Nude**, Cycladic Art Museum, Athens (2012); **The Night of Lead**, Aargauer Kunsthhaus, Aarau (2010) and MUSAC, León (2009); **zero built a nest in my navel**, Whitechapel Gallery, London (2006); **roundelay**, Centre Pompidou, Paris (2003); **no how on**, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (2002), and **So much water so close to home**, MoMA PS1, New York (2000).

Rondinone has curated three exhibitions on the relationship between art and poetry, artists and poets, **Secession**, Vienna (2015), **the spirit level**, Gladstone Gallery, New York (2011), **the third mind**, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2007). He also created an exhibition dedicated to the life and work of the poet John Giorno, entitled **I Love John Giorno**, Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2016).

Rondinone’s work is held in the following collections: The Bass Museum of Art, Miami; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Galleria Nazionale d’Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome; Migros Museum, Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich; Musée d’Art Contemporain, Strasbourg; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; New Museum, New York; The Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; The Museum of Modern Art, New York, among others.

Inaugurated in early May 2016, Rondinone’s large-scale outdoor sculpture **Seven Magic Mountains**, realized by the Art Production Fund and the Nevada Museum of Art, is on view in the desert near Las Vegas.

In October 2018, Ugo Rondinone launched **Liverpool Mountain**, his first public sculpture in the UK and the first of its kind in Europe, at Mermaid Courtyard outside Tate Liverpool.

Photos:
© Andrea Rossetti

Cover, exhibition view: Ugo Rondinone, **nuns + monks**, Esther Schipper, Berlin 2020



Exhibition view: Ugo Rondinone, **nuns + monks**, Esther Schipper, Berlin 2020

nuns + monks, an exhibition of new sculptures by Ugo Rondinone is on view at Esther Schipper, Berlin from September 11 through October 17, 2020.

Stones have been a presence and recurring material and symbol in Ugo Rondinone's art. They are the subjects of the stone figures that he 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 in which the boundaries between the outside world and internally visualized spaces break down. In doing so, Rondinone makes sculptures of what it means and feels like to see, whether this is understood to be a physical or metaphysical phenomenon.

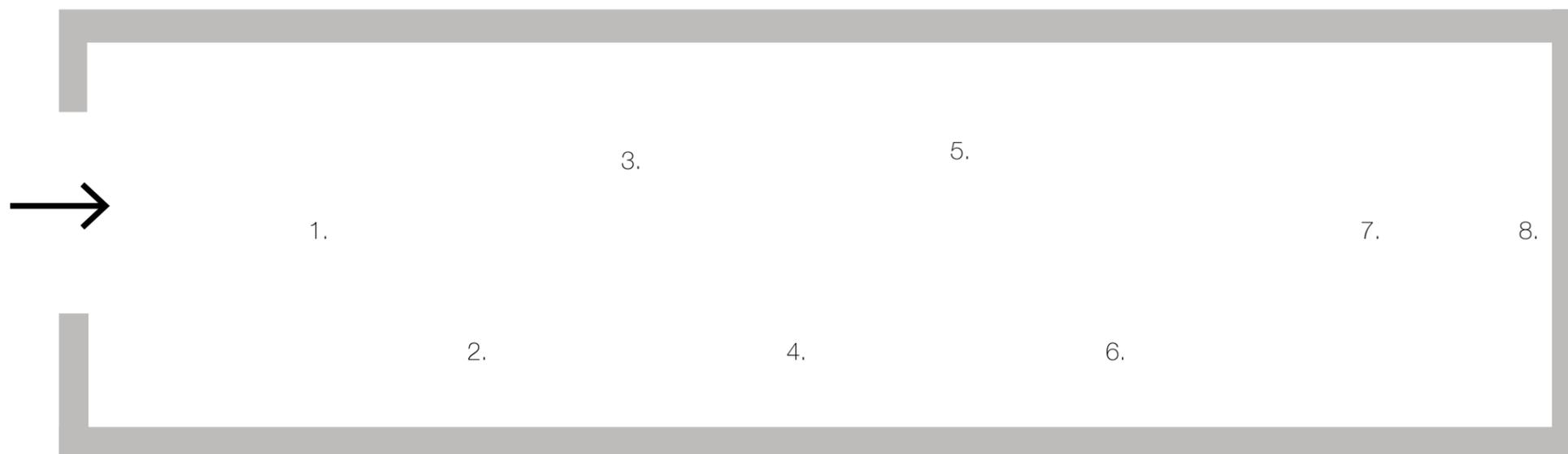
nuns + monks will continue to address the dual reflection between the inner self and the natural world. Just as the external world one sees is inseparable from the internal structures of oneself, **nuns + monks** allows such layers of signification to come in and out of focus, prompting the viewer to revel in the pure sensory experience of color, form and mass while simultaneously engender in an altogether contemporary version of the sublime.

Ugo Rondinone



white yellow nun, 2020, cast bronze, painted, unique, 300 x 139,8 x 97 cm (118 1/8 x 55 1/8 x 38 1/4 in) (UR 320)

FLOOR PLAN



1. Ugo Rondinone
black green nun, 2020
 Cast bronze, painted, unique
 300 x 96,2 x 160,5 cm (118 1/8 x 37 7/8 x 63 1/4 in)
 Unique
 (UR 318)

2. Ugo Rondinone
white yellow nun, 2020
 Cast bronze, painted, unique
 300 x 139,8 x 97 cm (118 1/8 x 55 1/8 x 38 1/4 in)
 Unique
 (UR 320)

3. Ugo Rondinone
light blue white monk, 2020
 Cast bronze, painted, unique
 300 x 173 x 96,2 cm (118 1/8 x 68 1/8 x 37 7/8 in)
 Cast bronze, painted, unique
 (UR 324)

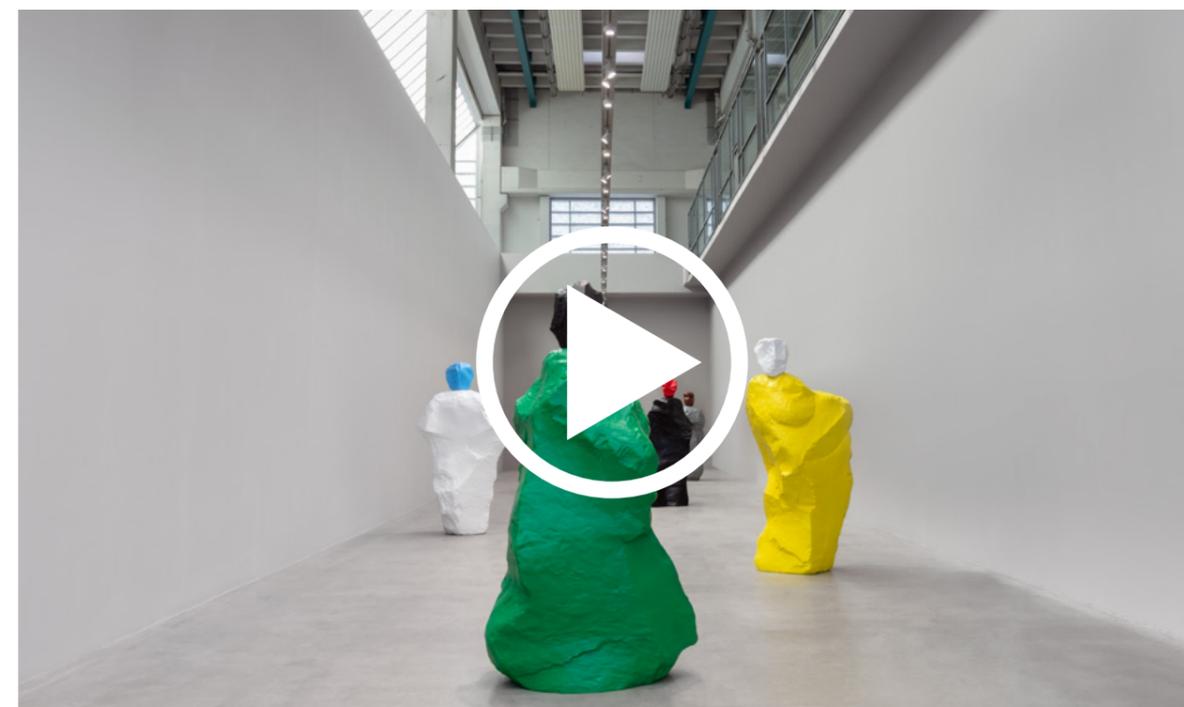
4. Ugo Rondinone
red black monk, 2020
 Cast bronze, painted, unique
 300 x 162 x 108 cm (118 1/8 x 63 3/4 x 42 1/2 in)
 Cast bronze, painted, unique
 (UR 323)

5. Ugo Rondinone
yellow orange monk, 2020
 Cast bronze, painted, unique
 300 x 157,2 x 85 cm (118 1/8 x 61 3/4 x 33 1/2 in)
 Cast bronze, painted, unique
 (UR 322)

6. Ugo Rondinone
brown gray nun, 2020
 Cast bronze, painted, unique
 300 x 130,9 x 106,7 cm (118 1/8 x 51 1/2 x 42 1/8 in)
 Unique
 (UR 321)

7. Ugo Rondinone
violet blue monk, 2020
 Cast bronze, painted, unique
 300 x 128,4 x 92,2 cm (118 1/8 x 50 3/8 x 36 1/4 in)
 Unique
 (UR 319)

8. Ugo Rondinone
the evening 1822, 2016
 Cast bronze
 93 x 45,5 x 5 cm (36 5/8 x 17 3/4 x 2 in)
 Edition of 2
 (UR 200)



Exhibition video: Ugo Rondinone, **nuns + monks**, Esther Schipper, Berlin 2020



Exhibition view: Ugo Rondinone, **nuns + monks**, Esther Schipper, Berlin 2020



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From left to right: **yellow orange monk**, 2020, cast bronze, painted, unique, 300 x 157,2 x 85 cm (118 1/8 x 61 3/4 x 33 1/2 in) (UR 322); **violet blue monk**, 2020, cast bronze, painted, unique 300 x 128,4 x 92,2 cm (118 1/8 x 50 3/8 x 36 1/4 in), unique (UR 319); **brown gray nun**, 2020, cast bronze, painted, unique, 300 x 130,9 x 106,7 cm (118 1/8 x 51 1/2 x 42 1/8 in) (UR 321); **red black monk**, 2020, cast bronze, painted, unique, 300 x 162 x 108 cm (118 1/8 x 63 3/4 x 42 1/2 in) (UR 323)



Exhibition view: Ugo Rondinone, **nuns + monks**, Esther Schipper, Berlin 2020



From left to right: **the evening 1822**, 2016, cast bronze, 93 x 45,5 x 5cm (36 5/8 x 17 3/4 x 2 in), edition of 2 (UR 200); **violet blue monk**, 2020, cast bronze, painted, unique 300 x 128,4 x 92,2 cm (118 1/8 x 50 3/8 x 36 1/4 in) (UR 319); **brown gray nun**, 2020, cast bronze, painted, unique, 300 x 130,9 x 106,7 cm (118 1/8 x 51 1/2 x 42 1/8 in) (UR 321)



Exhibition view: Ugo Rondinone, **nuns + monks**, Esther Schipper, Berlin 2020

nuns + monks, 2020

The works are unique sculptures that belongs to Ugo Rondinone's new body of work, **nuns + monks**. Conceived on the occasion of the artist's 2020 solo exhibition at Esther Schipper, Berlin, the 3-meter tall sculpture is made of two parts – the body and the head – that form the basic shape of a human body wrapped in a cloak. Made in cast bronze, painted, unique, the sculptures were conceived from limestone models, scans of which were “three-dimensionalized” within a digital program. Each sculpture weighs 450 kg approx.

The sculptures of nuns + monks present themselves in their original beauty. An “archaic” beauty that brings to mind two other groups of works by the artist: the raw stone figures of **Human Nature** in Rockefeller Plaza, 2013, and the neon-colored stone mountains **Seven Magic Mountains** in the desert of Nevada, 2016. These 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 in which the boundaries between the outside world and internally visualized spaces break down. In doing so, Rondinone makes sculptures of what it means and feels like to see, whether this is understood to be a physical or metaphysical phenomenon.

The series **nuns + monks** continues to address this dual reflection between the inner self and the natural world. Just as the external world one sees is inseparable from the internal structures of 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 in an altogether contemporary version of the sublime.

The creation of these works was nourished by Rondinone's assiduous frequentation of the medieval sculpture department at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and in addition by a powerful confrontation with Giacomo Manzù's **cardinals** (born Giacomo Manzoni, 1908-1991), whose own particular modernity, permeated by a classicism that defies time and categorization, inevitably corresponded to Rondinone's interest.



red black monk, 2020, cast bronze, painted, unique, 300 x 162 x 108 cm (118 1/8 x 63 3/4 x 42 1/2 in) (UR 323)

black green nun



Foreground: **black green nun**, 2020, cast bronze, painted, unique, 300 x 96,2 x 160,5 cm (118 1/8 x 37 7/8 x 63 1/4 in) (UR 318)



black green nun, 2020, cast bronze, painted, unique, 300 x 96,2 x 160,5 cm (118 1/8 x 37 7/8 x 63 1/4 in) (UR 318)



From left to right: **black green nun**, 2020, cast bronze, painted, unique, 300 x 96,2 x 160,5 cm (118 1/8 x 37 7/8 x 63 1/4 in) (UR 318);
white yellow nun, 2020, cast bronze, painted, unique, 300 x 139,8 x 97 cm (118 1/8 x 55 1/8 x 38 1/4 in) (UR 320)

white yellow nun



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Exhibition view: Ugo Rondinone, **nuns + monks**, Esther Schipper, Berlin 2020

light blue white monk



light blue white monk, 2020, cast bronze, painted, unique, 300 x 173 x 96,2 cm (118 1/8 x 68 1/8 x 37 7/8 in) (UR 324)



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red black monk



red black monk, 2020, cast bronze, painted, unique, 300 x 162 x 108 cm (118 1/8 x 63 3/4 x 42 1/2 in) (UR 323)



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From left to right: **red black monk**, 2020, cast bronze, painted, unique, 300 x 162 x 108 cm (118 1/8 x 63 3/4 x 42 1/2 in) (UR 323); **violet blue monk**, 2020, cast bronze, painted, unique 300 x 128,4 x 92,2 cm (118 1/8 x 50 3/8 x 36 1/4 in) (UR 319); **the evening 1822**, 2016, cast bronze, 93 x 45,5 x 5cm (36 5/8 x 17 3/4 x 2 in), edition of 2 (UR 200); **brown gray nun**, 2020, cast bronze, painted, unique, 300 x 130,9 x 106,7 cm (118 1/8 x 51 1/2 x 42 1/8 in) (UR 321)



Exhibition view: Ugo Rondinone, **nuns + monks**, Esther Schipper, Berlin 2020



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violet blue monk



violet blue monk, 2020, cast bronze, painted, unique 300 x 128,4 x 92,2 cm (118 1/8 x 50 3/8 x 36 1/4 in), unique (UR 319)



Exhibition view: Ugo Rondinone, **nuns + monks**, Esther Schipper, Berlin 2020

the evening 1822, 2016

Dating from 2015 and 2016, the quietly provocative artworks collectively known as **Windows** form a significant recent series by Rondinone. Each work in this series of hanging life-size windows cast in bronze or aluminum is named after a painting by the German Romantic artist Caspar David Friedrich. The bronze windows designate paintings with night-time scenes. When completed, this series will stand in for Friedrich's complete oeuvre, 160 windows in total.

Left in their raw state after casting, each work in the series undermines the fundamental function of the window in daily life with their defiant solidity and sightless panes. Instead of diminishing the interiority of the spaces they hang in by allowing us to see outside, Rondinone's metal windows reinforce a sense of isolation from the external world and provoke a palpable sense of enclosure.

The window is one of a number of common domestic objects, including doors, brick walls, light bulbs and clocks, that Rondinone has used as a motif over the course of his thirty-year long career. Frequently, he will subvert the imagery of these familiar, functional entities to create a tension between the external appearance of an object and its essence. "In my work," the artist has said, "I like to slow and elapse temporalities, in which nothing is ever over and done with, everything can recur or be revived, and in which past, present, and future are looped together."

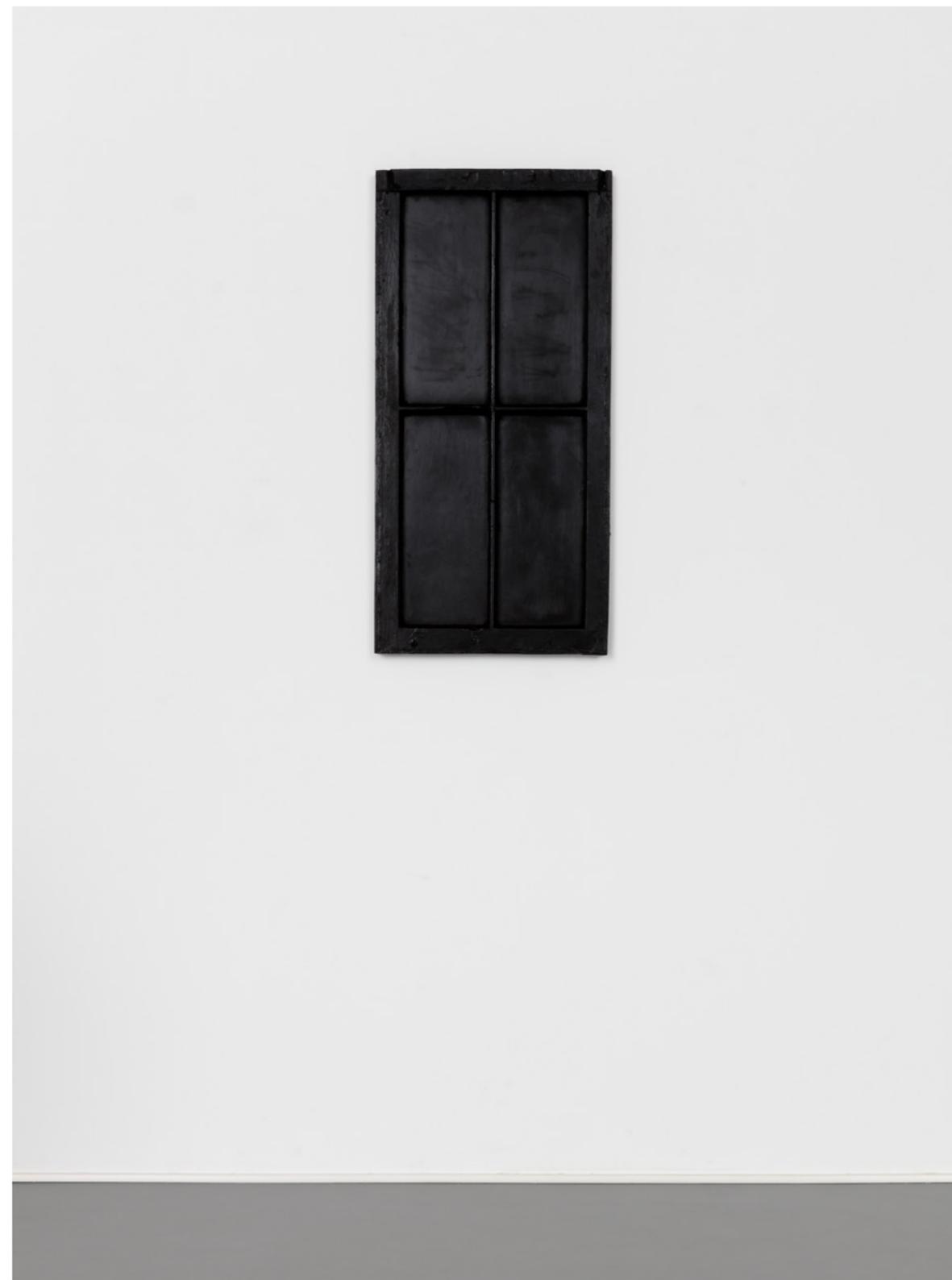
In creating windows that restrict rather than facilitate a greater understanding of what lies beyond them, Rondinone generates a type of paradoxical viewing experience that is typical of his work. By disrupting the expected, the recurring images in his work are "static metaphors in transition," he says. They provoke, "a present tense, where time has stopped and opened out to reveal suggestiveness or changelessness or hollowness."

The articulation of an undefinable feeling, as oppose to a clearly communicated idea or narrative scenario, stems from the artist's fascination with romantic imagery. The way in which German Romantic painters like Friedrich pioneered the incorporation of emotional subjectivity and dreamlike states into their dramatic landscape scenes has been particularly influential on Rondinone's work. Among his first exhibited pieces were large-scale paintings of landscapes, a genre he was drawn to for its nostalgic evocations. For these early shows, the gallery windows were always boarded up to isolate the works from the bustle of the world around them, minimizing distractions to bring focus to the artworks. "I like when a space can create its own reality," he has explained.



Reference work: Caspar David Friedrich, **Evening (Der Abend)**, 1821, oil on canvas, 22,3 x 31 cm
Niedersächsisches Landesmuseum Hannover

The **Windows** series pursue a similar goal. Here, the windows are symbolic of sight and of discovery. While they frame no external view, the evocative titles of each work in the series encourage the onlooker to use their imagination to project their own idea of a landscape onto the blank panes of the work. Far from restricting our vision, **Windows** encourage us to look deep into the mind's eye.



the evening 1822, 2016, cast bronze, 93 x 45,5 x 5cm (36 5/8 x 17 3/4 x 2 in), edition of 2 (UR 200)



the evening 1822, 2016, cast bronze, 93 x 45,5 x 5cm (36 5/8 x 17 3/4 x 2 in), edition of 2 (UR 200)



Detail: **the evening 1822**, 2016, cast bronze, 93 x 45,5 x 5cm (36 5/8 x 17 3/4 x 2 in), edition of 2 (UR 200)

TRANSFIGURED MATTER

The recent sculptures *nuns + monks* by Ugo Rondinone take their rightful place in the continuity of a narrative introduced by the artist thirty-two years ago. A narrative composed of chapters that would never cease to interact with one another throughout a trajectory made up of intertextual questions, back-and-forths, survivals, displacements and reinventions of shapes and attitudes, or of interrogations that are constantly being renegotiated. This narrative originated in 1988 with the death of Manfred Kirchner, then Ugo Rondinone's partner, from an AIDS-related illness. "In the midst of the AIDS crisis, I turned away from my grief and found a spiritual guard rail in nature, a place for comfort, regeneration and inspiration. In nature, you enter a space where the sacred and the profane, the mystical and the secular vibrate against one another". The resulting works, landscapes with Romantic overtones painted in ink on paper were first shown at the Kunstmuseum in Lucerne, then in several other exhibitions, including one at the Walcheturm gallery in Zurich, always with the same constraint: hung in confined spaces, their windows nailed shut with wooden boards, 'cut off from the world', turned inward. From that point on, the opening up onto nature specific to the landscape found itself counterbalanced by a feeling of enclosure conducive to introspection. And a spiritual turning inward that would find itself perpetuated in the artist's self-portrait (*Heyday*), inspired by Joris Karl Huysmans and his fictional character, the reclusive Jean des Esseintes, and shown in the framework of his exhibition *Cry me a river*, also in Zurich, in 1995. Returned to its initial function, the window of the Walcheturm gallery was once again visible. In front of it was now a brown-painted frame and double pane, which opened like an arched backdrop through which one could see the self-portrait of the artist, portrayed as a passive figure, from the outside. The relationship between content and container, artwork and receptacle therefore responded to an inverted antagonistic principle. But in fine a precarious, equivalent equilibrium had been achieved, from which the spirituality expressed by the artist via the different chapters of the narrative in progress would then unfold.



Cry me a river, Galerie Walcheturm, Zurich, 1995

The nuns + monks sculptures express in turn this dialectic from within and without. From opening up onto the world and from turning inward on oneself. From an introspective gaze combined with an exteriority receptive to nature's elements of which these sculptures bear the traces. The imprint. Rondinone's works have never stopped oscillating between extremes, entangling, suspending them. Aufheben.... The sculptures of nuns + monks possess a natural beauty. An "archaic" beauty that evokes other sculptural ensembles by the artist: Human Nature on Rockefeller Plaza in 2013 and Seven Magic Mountains in the Nevada desert in 2016. They manifest visibility yet at the same time seem to avoid the gaze of those to whom they are shown. Their features are indistinct. And in this era of multiple gender identities, they are divested of sexual characteristics, even though their titles allow us to differentiate them. It would certainly be extremely difficult to distinguish the nuns from the monks based on their mere appearance. Wrapped and protected in their cloaks, they seem, like his 1995 self-portrait and the ensuing clowns and nudes, absorbed, in the same way that Diderot characterized the figures depicted in certain paintings by Chardin. Absorbed in what? In whom? In the spectators wandering around them? In the architectural space that serves as the backdrop for their paradoxically motionless choreography? Unless, as is extremely likely, the space in question is mental. Meditative. Transcending the matter that still seems to determine their heft. Or, more than transcended, one could say the matter in nuns + monks is transfigured, revealing a radiance reinforced by the chromatic contrasts, the harmony generated by the juxtaposition of different body parts—the head and the cloak—and by the sculptures, perfectly integrated from one to the next, the abovementioned radiance evoking medieval statuary serving the same religious and spiritual purpose to which the artist is deeply committed. It should be explained that the creation of these works was nourished by Rondinone's assiduous frequentation of the medieval sculpture department at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and in addition by a powerful confrontation with Giacomo Manzù's cardinals, whose own particular modernity, permeated by a classicism that defies time and categorization, inevitably corresponded to his interest.



Seven Magic Mountains, Las Vegas, Nevada, 2016-ongoing

Between matter and its negation, these sculptures invest a polarized field. Amphibological. Made in bronze, they were conceived from limestone models, scans of which were “three-dimensionalized” with digital tools. In response to the friable limestone, the solidity of the bronze. In response to the stone’s natural, ancient origins, the here and now contemporaneity of the polychrome castings. Of course, we must, as is often the case in Rondinone’s work, seek the response, ineluctably unstable, inherent in his propositions in the interpenetration of the extremes and intervals they bring about. In a game of equivalences. Opening up onto the world, to nature, and turning inward on oneself. In matter that is as embodied as it is disembodied. And given its elevated spiritual coefficient, so remarkable these days and, in a manner of speaking, absent from contemporary art, in an anagogical principle that re-transcribes and accompanies the process of transfiguration underlying this group of sculptures.

Erik Verhagen, Paris, July 2020

Translation from French by Laurie Hurwitz



Reference work: Giacomo Manzù, **Great Sitting Cardinal**, 1983

AVAILABLE WORKS



Ugo Rondinone
brown gray nun, 2020
Cast bronze, painted, unique
300 x 130,9 x 106,7 cm (118 1/8 x 51 1/2 x 42 1/8 in)
Unique
(UR 321)



Ugo Rondinone
blue blue nun, 2020
Cast bronze, painted
Unique
292 x 158 x 105 cm (115 x 62 1/4 x 41 3/8 in)
(UR 396)

SELECTED PRESS

Organic Accord: Ugo Rondinone

moussemagazine.it/ugo-rondinone-mitchell-anderson-2020

November 5, 2020



CONVERSATIONS

Ugo Rondinone in Conversation with Mitchell Anderson

Since the early 1990s, the work of Swiss-born, New York–residing Ugo Rondinone has cultivated a sense of wonder in viewers around the globe. Expressing an enduring interest in our primal and romantic collective relationship with the natural world, his works utilize advanced technologies to reveal or replicate that which is lost or forgotten as civilization plods on. In the past this has taken the form of rainbows lighting up the night sky as electric signs, fairy-tale forests rendered in ink at epic scale, and giant stones dramatically painted and stacked in rough renderings of the human form.

At the end of summer 2020, Rondinone continued this last project with three simultaneous exhibitions at [Esther Schipper, Berlin](#); [Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich](#); and [Sant'Andrea de Scaphis, Rome](#), debuting a new series of sculptures. I caught up with Rondinone to hear his thoughts about the place of the artist in a world increasingly unable to ignore the natural; the planning behind these major installations; and his faith in the capacity of form to convey narrative.

MITCHELL ANDERSON: Your new series *nuns + monks* (2020) just debuted simultaneously at three galleries whose locations draw a more or less vertical line down

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the middle of Europe. How much of this planning was logistical, and how much was simply your choice? Does this become part of the sculptures' reception and life span?

UGO RONDINONE: The concentrated symbolic energy of the new body of work goes hand in hand with its synchronous presentation. Once I lift up a new sculpture in three different places at the same time, the sculpture has a greater chance to enter people's souls, like a parasite. The work is open but sharp and suffused with a combination of humor and pathos. At the same time, it represents an investigation of the mutable potential of sculpture as both a physical medium and a site of rich cultural disclosure in contemporary art.

As the exhibition's title suggests, the sculptures in *nuns + monks* address varied iconographies associated with these most resonant of forms. Nuns and monks occupy the literal and figurative centers of human life, but they also appear in a wide range of social and narrative contexts. I wanted to reveal the multivalent potential of nuns and monks as vessel and beacon, human body and mystical source. In so doing, the work reveals a broad array of interests, notable for both historical depth and up-to-the-minute urgency. Religious imagery has immense transformational power; a familiar symbol can transform another symbol, like a stone, into something richly metaphorical.

MA: Your work is remarkable in how it operates: an exhibition of yours is almost a work unto itself. Your installations are a total aesthetic and perceptive experience, involving for instance wall paintings, lights, and works that connect to a larger narrative. In Berlin and Zurich there's a total installation feel. In Berlin the show echoes the soaring cathedral ceilings, and at Zurich the whole room appears as a concrete bunker or tomb. Does the exhibition concept emerge from the works, or from the space? And how do you work on a series—as a totality or in pieces?

UR: The exhibitions are the products of intense focus and a constant renewal of my relationship with the materials. To this end, I organize my studio so that I can dedicate myself to only one production at a time, and it fully occupies my attention. Nonetheless, subjects and formal experiments carry over from one medium to another, and the window sculptures in *nuns + monks* provide a sense of the scope of my interests and passions between the inner self and the natural world. They also demonstrate how I give my motifs space to come into focus at their own pace. As I return to a set of motifs and symbols over the years—as is the case with the windows—they reveal their emotional complexities and reverberations, gaining in mystery and becoming only more elusive as I hone them and explore their intricacies. Knowledge and familiarity are never taken for granted; rather, I keep the unknown squarely at the center of my gaze.

MA: With *Seven Magic Mountains*, installed ten miles south of Las Vegas Boulevard in 2016 and extended to remain in place until next year, I'd say you reinvented Land art for the twenty-first century. It's a great deal more accessible than Michael Heizer's relatively nearby *Double Negative* (1969), both physically and emotionally. A lot of this,

I think, has to do with the colors. What are you achieving when you contradict our natural idea of what a stone mass looks like? What function do these painted surfaces achieve for you?

UR: The mountain sculptures, the stone figures, and the recent bronze sculptures *nuns + monks* evoke archaic and contemporary sources alike, concretizing cycles of time and life as physical form. I'm putting faith in stone as material—in its innate beauty and energy, its structural quality, its surface texture, and its ability to collect and condense time. The grotesque biomorphic distortion that characterizes the lifetime of a stone can become a haunting openness when transformed by color and palpable emotional charge. All three groups of works share a paradoxical mixture of vulnerability and strength, and express solidarities between human and nature.

MA: But these new works are not stone, they're bronze casts that have been enlarged from smaller maquettes in your studio. Approaching these sculptures, I sense an uncanny questioning of what the material is, thanks to the perfectly painted surfaces and the coloring, which seems to alternately add to and subtract from the feeling of weight. When I think of this kind of material shift or revelation in art, I would normally think a generation older than you, for instance Robert Gober's work. I know you have a long history of working with bronze at all scales, but with these pieces, what feeling were you seeking, from a material point of view?

UR: The decision to cast the sculptures was a practical one, not motivated by a surreal gesture of hide and seek—like I did with the moonrise masks (2005–06), where the sculptures look like fresh clay, but are in fact bronzes covered with a mixture of pulverized clay and polyurethane. First I was looking for a stone that breaks well and can look like the folds of a nun's or monk's garment. But a good breaking stone like limestone is not ideal at the size I wished to work at, because limestone breaks in unexpected places. So I decided to 3D scan the limestone and enlarge it to my desired scale.

MA: This year has been about nothing if not the environment and the ways that we as humans continue either bow to it or ignore it and suffer the consequences. The pandemic, the wildfires, the continued rise of the oceans—it's becoming harder and harder for us to escape or ignore the world around us. With these sculptures, perhaps more than with the stone figures, I find myself thinking of the times when on a hike or a drive I've searched for a human form in untouched nature. How do you view the artist's relationship to the natural world, and where would you situate your work in that respect?

UR: The natural world is my first source of inspiration. It started with the large ink landscapes at the end of the 1980s. In the middle of the AIDS crisis in 1989 I turned away from grief and found in nature a spiritual road map for solace, regeneration, and inspiration. In nature one enters a space where the sacred and the profane, the mystical and the mundane, vibrate against one another. *nuns + monks* continues to address the dual reflection between the inner self and the natural world. Just as the external world

one sees is inseparable from one's internal structures, *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 engendering an altogether contemporary version of the sublime. 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 was born in 1964 in Brunnen, Switzerland. He lives and works in New York. Referring concurrently to the natural world, romanticism and existentialism, his works encapsulate a "mental trinity" that has underpinned his art for thirty years. His recent solo institutional exhibitions include *everyone gets lighter*, Kunsthalle Helsinki (2020); *sunny days*, Guild Hall, East Hamptons (2019); *let's start this day again*, CAC Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati (2017); *vocabulary of solitude*, ARKEN – Museum for Moderne Kunst, Ishøj (2017) and Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2016); *the world just makes me laugh*, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley (2017); *giorni d'oro + notti d'argento*, MACRO Testaccio and the Mercati di Traiano, Rome (2016), and *becoming soil*, Carré d'Art, Nîmes (2016).

Mitchell Anderson is an artist interested in the narrative possibilities of objects and images. Recent institutional exhibitions include Fondazione Converso (2019) and Fri-Art Kunsthalle Fribourg (2017). Recent and upcoming group exhibitions include Kunsthalle Zurich (2020), Kunsthalle Bern (2021) and MAMCO, Geneva (2019). He is a frequent contributor of criticism to a variety of international arts publications and has operated the project space Plymouth Rock, in Zurich, since 2014.

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