

KUKJE GALLERY | PRESS RELEASE

Ugo Rondinone Solo Exhibition *earthing*

Exhibition Dates: May 16 – June 30, 2019

Venue: Kukje Gallery K2 and K3 spaces

Like a diarist, I record the living universe; this sun, this cloud, this rain, this tree, this animal, this season, this day, this hour, this wind, this kind of earth, this kind of water, this sound in the grass, this pitch of wind, this silence.

– Ugo Rondinone

Kukje Gallery is pleased to present *earthing*, an exhibition of work by the Swiss artist Ugo Rondinone. This is the second solo exhibition of the artist at the gallery. Installed in both Kukje's K2 and K3 galleries, *earthing* will include four distinct bodies of work that, though different, share the artist's sensitive approach to materials and his commitment to exploring the role of nature in shaping the human experience. Throughout the various mediums the artist retains his focus on observation and recording "the living universe."

The exhibition begins within the K3 gallery and a single sculpture that sits in the heart of the space. Titled *the sun* (2017), this circular sculpture is a massive gilded bronze ring constructed using bent tree branches the artist gathered. Balancing vertically on the floor in the middle of the gallery and resembling a great gate, *the sun* mirrors the way the artist has used other circular forms such as clock faces to suggest passage across time and through space. In much the same way that the hands of a clock follow the cycle of the sun, *the sun* powerfully evokes the force and omnipresence of our most proximate star in its symbolic use of the circle. Rondinone's decision to construct the ring by lashing overlapping wooden branches together with wire, combined with his transformation of these materials into weighty but radiant gilt bronze, allows him to celebrate the paradox of our everyday reliance on the sun's energy, and its mythic incarnation in our imagination. Confronting this archetypal power, Rondinone uses gold and casting, as processes of transformation, to further tie the sun to metamorphosis and the romantic tradition of synthesizing nature with the sublime.

In the K2 gallery, the artist presents a site-specific installation comprised of three discreet works that together create a total environment. The first is titled *primordial* (2016) a room-sized work that consists of fifty-two life-sized, hand-sculpted cast bronze fish that hang from the ceiling. *primordial* is a body of work in a larger series consisting of three animal groups: *primitive* (birds), *primal* (horses), and *primordial* (fish). Each group represents a natural phenomenon or element: air, earth, and water.

primordial is installed with two other works *two standing landscapes* (2019) and *yellow white green clock* (2012), balancing the conceptual precision and interest in theatrical spaces the artist is known for. The fish in *primordial* are hung evenly throughout the K2 gallery; suspended at differing heights, they create a sense of tremendous depth, beckoning the viewer to walk slowly within the space as if they were carefully navigating an underwater forest. This sense of entering an enchanted space is heightened by a site-specific work titled *two standing landscapes* which consists of a unique soil mixture that has been applied directly to the pillars that punctuate the gallery's interior architecture. Covering them completely, the pillars become discreet, uncanny objects floating in space. Part of an ongoing series of soil sculptures, *two standing landscapes* has the effect of transforming the gallery into something organic, charging it with a metamorphic air. While the application of the rough medium evokes a wild, inchoate environment, Rondinone's careful attention to the installation maintains a sublime balance with the other two works, thereby insuring the viewer is held in a state of meditation as they contemplate material fragility, mass and weightlessness, and their own body.

This sense of being immersed in a sculptural environment allows Rondinone to accomplish one of his stated goals for the *landscape* series, "creating a mental space." This interest in phenomenology and the way the observation of nature can mirror consciousness is further evoked by the presence of time, illustrated by an exquisitely fabricated stained glass clock-face that hangs on the gallery's far wall: *yellow white green clock*. The final work in K2, this modestly scaled work includes the Roman numerals familiar from a regular clock but has no hands, thereby suggesting not only the passage of time but something more metaphysical; glowing against the gallery wall, the work resembles a window into another space and echoes the way colored glass has been used

in churches to signal transcendence. In this way, the clock face suggests a porthole or ontological threshold and acts as a poetic double entendre, courting the viewer's imagination to visualize what lies beyond the gallery's walls. In much the same way, each fish in *primordial*, individually crafted and bearing the fingerprints of the artist, has been given a separate unique title by Rondinone, thereby setting it apart from the others and giving it a special power. Titles such as *the boulder*, *the marsh*, and *the ecosystem*, both as singular ideas and when taken together, create a poetic vehicle for transporting the viewer—a parallel meaning that echoes the clock face that embodies but does not tell the time.

About the Artist

Ugo Rondinone is one of the most acclaimed international contemporary artists of his generation. His sculptures, paintings, drawings, and site-specific installations span a tremendous range of materials and conceptual vocabularies, yet they are all joined by his remarkable balance of wit, lyricism, and generosity coupled with a deep commitment to humanity. Over the past two decades, he has created a strikingly diverse body of work that confronts and celebrates the passage of time, the beauty and vulnerability of nature, and the humor that resides in everyday love and loss. This dynamic can be seen in the way his work moves between observing nature (as seen in subjects such as the sun, moon, rainbows, tree, and stone figures) and his interest in observing an inner world using metaphors of seclusion and isolation (seen in subjects such as windows, doors, and brick walls). Merging this poetic sensibility with material innovation and ingenuity, his work has been seen in celebrated exhibitions around the world including critically acclaimed site specific exhibitions that have inspired countless visitors including *human nature* at Rockefeller Plaza in New York where he showed nine massive bluestone sculptures (2013); *seven magic mountains*, a public art project comprised of seven towers of colorful boulders at a desert in Nevada (2016); and the Gardens of Versailles in France where he first exhibited *the sun* (2017-2018).

Ugo Rondinone was born in 1964 in Brunnen, Switzerland and currently lives and works in New York. Selected recent solo exhibitions include Arken Museum of Modern Art, Ishøj (2017); Bass Museum of Art, Miami (2017); Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley (2017); Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati (2017); Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow (2017); Place Vendôme, Paris (2016); The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2016); Carré d'Art-Musée d'art contemporain, Nîmes (2016); Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2016); MACRO Testaccio and Mercati di Traiano, Rome (2016); Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai (2014); Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, León (2009); Hayward Gallery, London (2008); Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (2006); and Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2003) amongst many others. Rondinone represented Switzerland, along with Urs Fischer, in the 52nd Venice Biennale (2007) and conceived *Ugo Rondinone: I ♥ John Giorno* at Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2015). In 2017 Rondinone curated a city-wide exhibition in New York in honor of his life partner. Rondinone's work is featured in major museum collections, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and Dallas Museum of Art.

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Ugo Rondinone (b.1964)

the sun

2017

gilded bronze

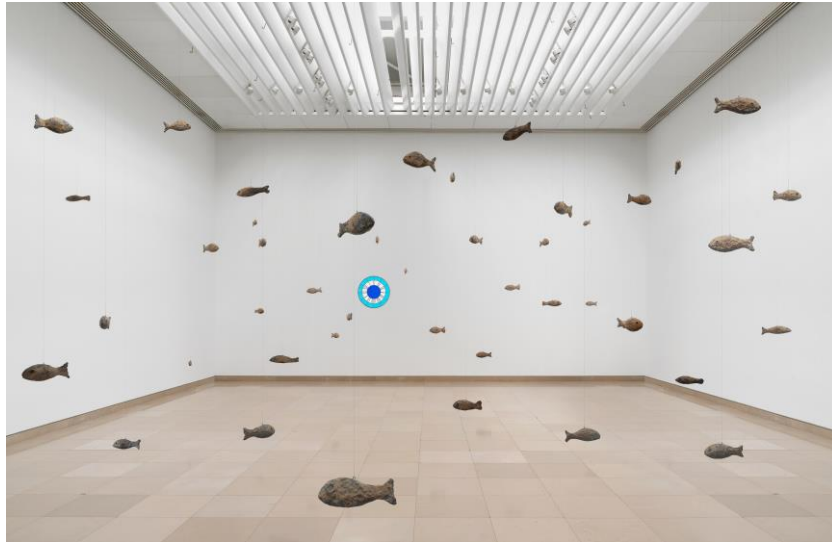
ø 500 x 65 cm

Courtesy of studio rondinone

Installation view of *Voyage d'hiver*, Palace of Versailles, Versailles, France, 2017

Photo: Tadzio

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Ugo Rondinone (b.1964)

primordial

2016

bronze, patination; 52 parts
installation dimensions variable
Courtesy of studio rondinone

Installation view of *becoming soil*, Carré d'Art-Musée d'art contemporain, Nîmes, France, 2016

Photo: Stefan Altenburger

Image provided by Kukje Gallery