

KUKJE GALLERY | PRESS RELEASE

Ugo Rondinone Solo Exhibition *nuns and monks by the sea*

Press Conference: April 5 (Tues.), 2022, 11AM at Kukje Gallery K3 (Seoul), April 7 (Thurs.), 2022, 12PM at Kukje Gallery Busan

Exhibition Dates: April 5 – May 15, 2022

Venue: Kukje Gallery K3 (Seoul) and Busan

I make sculptures of what it means and feels like to see, whether this is understood to be a physical or metaphysical phenomenon.

– Ugo Rondinone

Kukje Gallery is very pleased to announce *nuns and monks by the sea*, a new multi-venue exhibition of works by artist Ugo Rondinone to be installed in both the gallery's Seoul and Busan spaces. This is the artist's third solo exhibition in Seoul and his first in Busan. The strategy of showing work in different venues simultaneously is one that Rondinone often employs, allowing him to directly engage both space and time, thereby widening the spectrum in which his work is experienced. Viewers are prompted to walk through his work, moving physically and metaphysically, listening as much as seeing, feeling as much as understanding. This openness is a recurrent theme in Rondinone's practice and binds his many projects despite their diversity in material and symbolism. It is in the spirit of this focus and renewal that he presents *nuns and monks by the sea*, consisting of two unique bodies of work installed in the different exhibition spaces.

The exhibition title highlights the formidable painted bronze sculptures from the series *nuns + monks* installed in Kukje's K3 gallery in Seoul. Evoking the mystery and gravity of a holy person, the five "nuns + monks" possess and animate the space; anthropomorphic sculptures consisting of two distinctly painted parts, a single large monolithic stone capped with a smaller headstone, each figure exudes a distinct personality. But rather than feel weighed down by this iconic symbolism, these mythic beings towering above the viewer remain open and welcoming, their rough-hewn surfaces evoking not brittle dogma but the billowing garments of a healer. Originally composed using smaller limestone maquettes, the artist has scanned and enlarged them in cast bronze capturing the more intimate attributes of the studies and creating an uncanny balance of finely textured forms and towering proportion. They are ecstatic, they move in their stillness stirred by the same winds favored by Baroque artists. The power embedded in stone has been a focus of Rondinone for nearly a decade, first seen in his well-known monumental installation *human nature* at the Rockefeller Plaza in 2013 and *seven magic mountains* in the Nevada Desert in 2016. In these ambitious works as with the "nuns + monks" the artist has invested the stone with a measure of faith, in what he has called its "innate beauty and energy, its structural quality, its surface texture, and its ability to collect and condense time."

This awareness of stone's ability to both retain and radiate time also informs a subtle but profound intervention the artist has made in the gallery itself. While a viewer might not immediately register the change as their focus is directed on the five large sculptures, Rondinone has painted the walls so that the walls and floor appear as a single contiguous concrete medium. A gesture the artist has employed in earlier installations, this all-over transformation of the gallery's surfaces not only redefines the horizon—erasing the separation of floor and wall for example—but seems also to suggest a state of becoming, a chrysalis wherein the space itself is in flux, and that mirrors the frozen metamorphoses in the rocks. In so doing, the energy that emanates from "nuns + monks" throws both the viewer and the sculpture into a shared, inchoate emergence.

This sensitive orchestration of recording time is also at play in Rondinone's companion exhibition in Busan. Here too the artist has made a subtle intervention into the space, covering the large wall of windows that fronts the gallery with a gray UV filter. This slight tuning of the room's light spectrum has the effect of cooling the space, as if shaded by cloud cover. This allusion to weather is apt, as the gallery is devoted to a suite of seventeen paintings depicting sunset at the artist's home in Mattituck on Long Island, New York. Titled after this domestic location, the "Mattituck" paintings are modest in scale and painted using watercolor on canvas; using a wide palette but one that is limited to three colors in each work, Rondinone captures the delicate moment of sundown, when the sun slips below the horizon. By narrowing the chromatic range of these works to complementary hues, the artist is able to make discernable images that are nevertheless optically charged, conveying some of the magic of this special hour. In this they share a lineage with other painting series such as Rondinone's "cloud" and "sun" paintings both of which also share the titling convention the artist uses for his "Mattituck" wherein the title records the day and year of its completion.

Ugo Rondinone has for nearly forty years made visually stunning work that invites the viewer to renew their senses, becoming more sensitive to the resonances of nature that surround them. In so doing his work serves as a testimony and a balm to those who may be grieving the impermanence of things. Walking across the threshold of the filtered entrance in Busan, the viewer is confronted with a long line of sunsets, as if watching time repeat itself, an almost unbearable testament and a profound meditation on what the artist calls "the living universe," where his work records the elemental features of nature, "this season, this day, this hour, this sound in the grass, this crashing wave, this sunset, this end of the day, this silence."¹

About the Artist

Ugo Rondinone was born in 1964 in Brunnen, Switzerland and lives and works in New York.

Rondinone has been the subject of recent institutional exhibitions at: Auckland Art Gallery, New Zealand and SKMU Sørlandets Kunstmuseum, Kristiansand, Norway in 2021; Medellín Museum of Modern Art, Colombia; Kunsthalle Helsinki, Finland; and Guild Hall, East Hampton, New York in 2019; Fundación Casa Wabi, Puerto Escondido, Mexico; Arken Museum of Modern Art, Ishøj, Denmark; and Tate Liverpool, UK in 2018; Bass Museum of Art, Miami; Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, California; Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati, Ohio; Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow in 2017; and Carré d'Art, Nîmes, France; Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam, the Netherlands; and The Institute of Contemporary Art Boston, US in 2016.

In 2013, Rondinone installed *human nature*, an exhibition of nine monumental stone figures in Rockefeller Plaza, New York, organized by Public Art Fund. In 2016, Rondinone's large-scale public work *seven magic mountains* opened outside Las Vegas, co-produced by the Art Production Fund and Nevada Museum of Art. In 2017, Rondinone curated a city-wide exhibition, *Ugo Rondinone: I ♥ John Giorno*, which was presented in twelve New York non-profit institutions: Artists Space, High Line Art, How! Happening, Hunter College Art Galleries, the Kitchen, New Museum, Red Bull Arts New York, Rubin Museum of Art, SkyArt, Swiss Institute, White Columns and 80WSE Gallery.

Recent and forthcoming exhibitions include: Kukje Gallery, Seoul / Busan; Galerie Eva Presenhuber, Zurich; Kamel Mennour, Paris; Gladstone Gallery, NY; Sadie Coles HQ, London; Esther Schipper, Berlin; Sant'Andrea de Scaphis, Rome; Galerie Krobath, Vienna; Belvedere 21, Vienna; Museo Tamayo, Mexico City; Scuola Grande San Giovanni Evangelista / Venice Biennale; Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt; Städel Museum, Frankfurt, and the Phillips Collection, Washington, D.C.

¹ All quotes come from the interview *Organic Accord: Ugo Rondinone* in Mousse Magazine, November 2020. <http://moussomagazine.it/ugo-rondinone-mitchell-anderson-2020/>



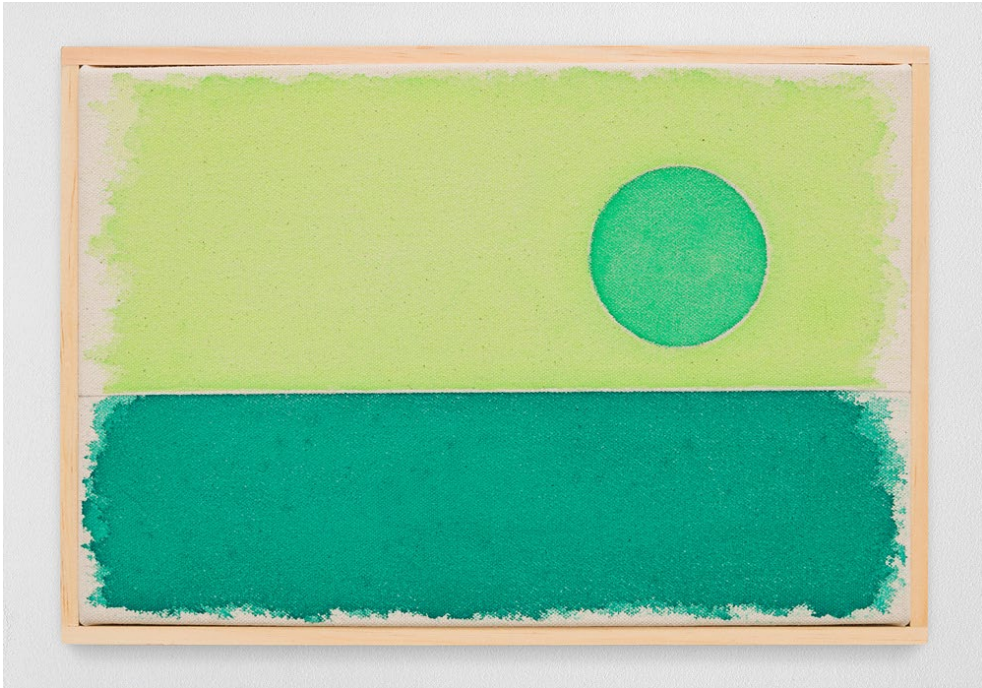
Ugo Rondinone (b. 1964)
black green monk
2020
Painted bronze
296.5 x 157 x 122 cm
Courtesy of studio rondinone
Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Ugo Rondinone (b. 1964)
blue yellow monk
2020
Painted bronze
295 x 125 x 114.5 cm
Courtesy of studio rondinone
Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Ugo Rondinone (b. 1964)
yellow red monk
2020
Painted bronze
295 x 170.5 x 97 cm
Courtesy of studio rondinone
Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Ugo Rondinone (b. 1964)

sechsterjulizweitausendundzwanzig

2020

Watercolor on canvas, artist's frame
20.3 x 30.5 cm

Courtesy of studio rondinone

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Ugo Rondinone (b. 1964)

siebterfebruarzweitausendundzweiundzwanzig

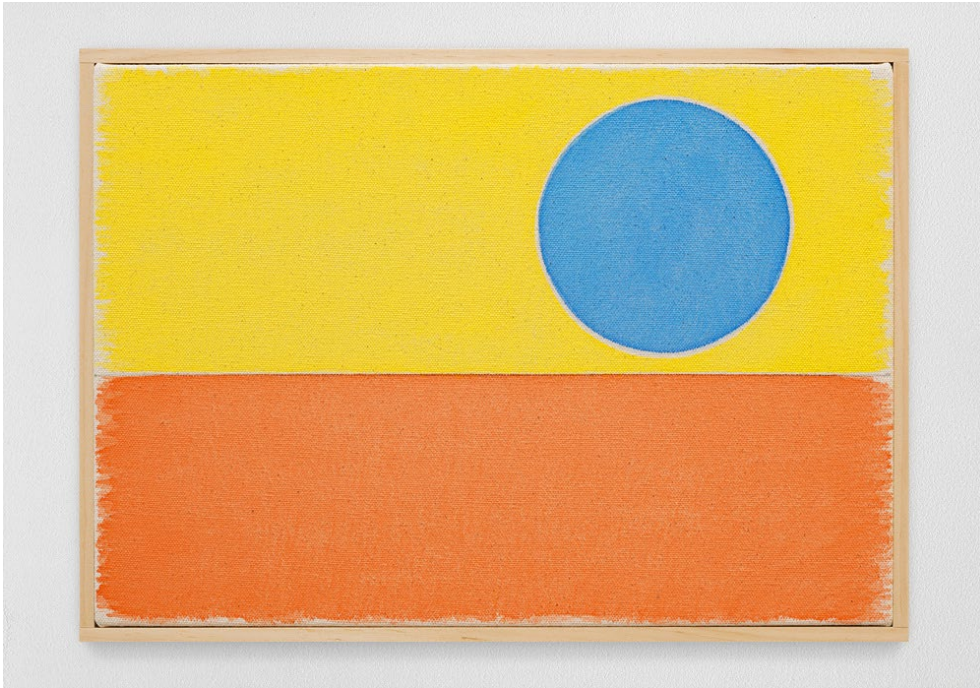
2022

Watercolor on canvas, artist's frame

22.9 x 33 cm

Courtesy of studio rondinone

Image provided by Kukje Gallery



Ugo Rondinone (b. 1964)

neunzehnterfebruarzweitausendundzweiundzwanzig

2022

Watercolor on canvas, artist's frame

22.9 x 33 cm

Courtesy of studio rondinone

Image provided by Kukje Gallery

Copyright and credit line **must be placed adjacent to or near** the reproduced images.
Images may be used solely during the relevant exhibition period for promotional purposes only,
and **may not be edited** without prior permission.

High-resolution images are available for download via Webhard.
WWW.WEBHARD.NET | ID: kukjegallery | PW: kukje

KUKJE GALLERY | COMMUNICATIONS

T +82 2 3210 9821 | press@kukjegallery.com

KUKJE GALLERY

54 SAMCHEONG-RO, JONGNO-GU SEOUL, 03053 KOREA
T + 82 2 735 8449 | F + 82 2 733 4879 | WWW.KUKJEGALLERY.COM

Ugo Rondinone Solo Exhibition *nuns and monks by the sea*