



Press Release

UGO RONDINONE

thank you silence

27.06 >< 06.10.2013

For over twenty years, Swiss artist Ugo Rondinone has been developing an oeuvre in a variety of media, from painting, graphic design, sculpture and photography to video and audio. His work is often based on themes and motifs from our everyday environment that acquire a poetic dimension by being isolated, expanded or given a specific material treatment. With respect to their form, his installations contain diverse references to the history of art and popular culture. His work varies from landscapes drawn in Indian ink, reminiscent of Romanticism, to rainbow coloured light sculptures that refer to sixties psychedelia.

For the first time in Belgium, the exhibition *thank you silence* at M - Museum Leuven brings together five groups of works created by Ugo Rondinone in the last three years. These groups of works relate to the artist's interest in nature and mankind. The bronze sculptures entitled *primitive* are a series of hand-moulded birds named after natural phenomena. *Clocks* made of stained-glass introduce the notion of time into the exhibition. *thank you silence* also features the *nude* series of hyper-realistic, introverted figures cast in a mixture of wax and earth pigments. Also on show is a brand-new series of four monumental soil *landscapes*, each of which is experienced from a different perspective: hanging landscape, standing landscape, angled landscape and leaning landscape. Specially for the exhibition Ugo Rondinone also created another new work entitled *your age and my age and the age of the sun*. This required the collaboration of children from the city of Leuven who produced over 300 drawings of the sun, which are presented in a concrete box in the upstairs gallery at M. Finally, the exhibition includes a number of *date paintings*, poems and the work *thank you silence* which lends its name to the show. Through the various groups of works on display Ugo Rondinone constructs a carefully considered transition from nature to man and introduces links between abstract ideas associated with them.

Eva Wittocx is the curator of this exhibition.

This exhibition was made possible thanks to the support of Pro Helvetia.

primitive

The 59 bronze bird sculptures called *primitive* form the first of a three-part series that also contains *primal* (horses) and *primordial* (fish). Due to its random positioning, at a cursory glance Ugo Rondinone's *primitive* looks like a flock of birds has just landed inside M's exhibition space. This first impression of timid birds that might fly away again at any moment quickly makes way for an impression of static sculptural execution. Indeed, the birds are cast in bronze after being sculpted by the artist. Each bird was sculpted by hand in a limited period of time – one bird per day. The texture of fingerprints on the bird sculptures is the trace, as it were, of Rondinone's creative process. Leaving visible traces of his creating hand is not a new element in his oeuvre. The artist also applied this principle in earlier work, such as the 2004 series of sculptural masks entitled *sunrise* and *moonrise*. Each bird in *primitive* has a name that refers to the cosmos or to natural phenomena such as the moon, mist, a rainbow, a cloud, a mountain, the Milky Way, fire or water. The titles of the different birds offer reflections on nature.

thank you silence

The installation entitled *thank you silence* (2005) is the earliest work by Ugo Rondinone on show at M. It also lends its name to the exhibition. Rondinone is in fact in the habit of taking the title of an individual work and naming a whole exhibition after it. In so doing he is not so much referring to that particular work as endeavouring to convey the feeling evoked by that specific title. *thank you silence* consists of a sculpture from which confetti very slowly flutters to the ground, conveying to the spectator a sense of tranquillity, alienation and the retarded passage of time.

poems

Poetry is an integral part of Ugo Rondinone's oeuvre. The artist makes a point of playing with the evocative effect of words to augment the intensity of his visual work or in some cases to emasculate it. Rondinone's verses are often concise musings about transience and human life.

clocks

Ugo Rondinone has integrated a number of unusual clocks into the *thank you silence* galleries. They consist of a round steel frame containing a clock face made of coloured cathedral glass. He had the windows of the M galleries covered over so that the only natural light to penetrate the galleries is filtered and coloured. The five works suggest a vague awareness of time. However, this is not translated visually by, for example, clock hands. The only clues there are to tell us that the works can be interpreted as clocks are the displaced or reflected Roman numerals indicating the hours and the titles of the works which contain the word 'clock'. These clocks are the only colourful artworks in the exhibition, all the others being grey and earth colours.

landscape

In galleries 23 to 26 of *thank you silence* Ugo Rondinone has created four brand-new series of four monumental 'landscapes', each of which is experienced from a different perspective. *Hanging landscape, standing landscape, angled landscape* and *leaning landscape* each covered in soil. This use of soil has the effect of bringing nature into the white museum spaces. The juxtaposition of the heavy, rough monumental volumes and the fragile nudes slumped on the concrete floors creates a strangely stilled atmosphere in each of these galleries.

nude

The exhibition *thank you silence* is bringing together the complete series of *nudes* for the first time: fourteen life-sized, hyper-realistic statues of introverted, seated figures made of wax. The simple titles *nude (x)*, *nude (xx)*, etc. emphasise the anonymity of the nudes. The sculptures represent frozen snapshots, moulds of the bodies of different men and women who all appear to be deeply lost in thought, but who may awaken at any moment. This field of tension between sleeping and waking, between life and death, inspires reflection on the transience of human existence. Ugo Rondinone's series of *nudes* is a continuation of various earlier installations in which the artist depicted himself or clowns in similar ways and situations. The *nudes* are not displayed on pedestals but installed directly on the concrete floor, either leaning against the wall, or in a slumped position. They appear very lifelike, but at the same time unreal... The fact that their eyes are closed, their limbs fragmented and cast in a mixture of wax and earth pigments, makes it difficult to identify with them.

date paintings

In galleries 23 to 26 Ugo Rondinone brings together a series of small paintings in graphite and white gesso paint on canvas he produced over the last years. The compositions are treated quite traditionally as still lifes, landscapes and streetscapes. Inspiration for these paintings came from urban scenes Rondinone encountered on his travels or from ordinary objects found in his studio. The works serve as a sort of diary entry, for every title corresponds to the date on which the work was painted. Like the poems, the date paintings are also characterized by a sense of fragility and vulnerability. The finely drawn outlines stand in marked contrast to the crudely painted ground of the canvas.

your age and my age and the age of the sun

In the last gallery Ugo Rondinone also created another new work, entitled *your age and my age and the age of the sun*. The walls and the ceiling are covered in concrete to look like the floor, filling the spectator with a sense of alienation. In this gallery, No. 27, also the highest point in M, Rondinone has created a concrete volume which follows the shape of the space. In its monumentality the volume seems to reference structures in antiquity and this impression is confirmed by the title *your age and my age and the age of the sun*. The sombre structure is in stark contrast to its interior which is covered with children's drawings of suns attached to a plywood base. The artist invited children in Leuven and the surrounding area to produce drawings of the sun, which they did in schools and in several workshops at the museum. The names of all the children who produced the more than 300 suns hanging in *your age and my age and the age of the sun* are listed at the entrance to the gallery.



M VAN
**MUSEUM
LEUVEN**

M - Museum Leuven
L. Vanderkelenstraat 28
3000 Leuven
tel. 016 27 29 29
m@leuven.be
www.mleuven.be

OPEN

Mon. till Tue. and Fri. till Sun. from 11h00 till 18h00 – Thu. till 22h00. **Closed on Wed.**

TICKETS

Individual visitors: 9 €
13 > 18: 3 €

Reduction fee: 7 €
< 13: free entrance

< 26: 5 €
Families: 22 €

PRESS CONTACT

Gerrie Soetaert
for
M - Museum Leuven
tél. +32 (0)475 47 98 6 9
gerrie.soetaert@skynet.be

PRESS PHOTOS

Please download from the online press room <http://mleuven.prezly.com>

Photos free of charge, to be used only to announce the exhibition in M – Museum Leuven

Media Partners M – Museum Leuven:



M is supported by:

