

INTERVIEW: ARTIST UGO RONDINONE

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INSIGHT FROM THE SCULPTOR IN ADVANCE OF HIS SUNNY DAYS EXHIBITION AT GUILD HALL



From the towering, colorful “Seven Magic Mountains” outside of Las Vegas to the sleeping clowns that took over an entire floor of Miami’s Bass Museum during a multi-institution retrospective, the work of Ugo Rondinone acts as a synapse between childlike wonder and the contemporary art world. Therein, the Gladstone Gallery-represented artist enacts duality: shifting his vision from large-scale to miniature, temporary to immovable, and unharnessed to in-check. Swiss-born (through based in NYC and the North Fork), Rondinone employs drawing, painting and sculpture. His expressive works, regardless of medium, tantalize—and they have for decades.



"seven magic mountains," courtesy of Art Production Fund, New York and Nevada Museum of Art, Reno

We had the rare opportunity to speak with Rondinone at the unveiling of his work "The Rugged" at the Bridgehampton home of Ziel and Helene Feldman—founders of HFZ Capital Group (the real estate development firm behind Bjarke Ingels' The XI). In addition to acquiring the work, the Feldmans are supporters of Rondinone's forthcoming show *Sunny Days* at Guild Hall in East Hampton. For the show, Rondinone embraces the sun as a muse and delivers multiple radiant works—in contrast, perhaps, to the stoic but monumental earthliness of "The Rugged."



"the rugged," courtesy of Optimist Consulting for HFZ Capital

Regardless of medium or material, wonder acts as a unifying component. According to Rondinone, this isn't unique to him. "All artists keep wonder alive," he shares with us. "Art starts within childhood. As an artist, you feed from childhood memories. Many artists retreat as children and build up their own world. Their art reveals this." Rondinone speaks of art with a poet's tongue, an attribute warmly reminiscent of his husband, the poet John Giorno. "Art goes beyond language," Rondinone adds. "Poetry, as well. They have similarities. They are slow. They create their own temporality."



"the sun at 7:30 pm" (2018) and "zehntermärzzweitausendundzehn" (2010), courtesy of Guild Hall

As for his process, despite the disparate means of execution, Rondinone says it's his previous artistic explorations that yield inspiration. "The next work is always triggered from the work before—from my body of work itself," he says. "The work creates its continuity." He furthers this, referencing his penchant for duality. "I am always looking for the contrary," he continues, "If I do something small, next I will do something large. I had a phase where I did a lot of colors. I dwelled on these color schemes. The phase before it was all black and white."



"your age and my age and the age of the sun" (2013-present), sun drawings made by the children of Long Island, courtesy of Guild Hall

The invitation from Guild Hall aligned with Rondinone's desire to do a show on light. "There are three rooms, so I knew all three mediums would be explored—drawing, sculpture and painting—all around the sun." He emphasizes the importance of one particular work "your age and my age and the age of the sun" (2013-present), which is several drawings united. He tells us, "I've involved children as part of an ongoing series in different cities—first in Belgium and Mexico City and this, the third station, Long Island—where I ask children from ages six to 12 to draw me a sun." Unsurprisingly, the youthfulness of the contributions match the vibrance of Rondinone's own work.



"the rugged," courtesy of Optimist Consulting for HFZ Capital

Whether indoor or outside, large or small, and no matter the medium, Rondinone's art initiates a personal dialogue with the same intention. "I deal with very childlike imagery," he explains. "I would not make a distinction between the outdoor work and any other." Rather, he says, all his work "should overcome borders." In their mystical, magical way—where viewers must confront what they see along with what they bring—the work might just help do this.

Sunny Days will run from 10 August through 14 October at Guild Hall. Admission is free.