

6 Key Milestones from Ugo Rondinone's Incredible Career

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Page 1 of 6



Ugo Rondinone
PHOTO: DON STAHL

The celebrated talent continually pushes the boundaries of artistic expression. On the occasion of his major project during the 59th Venice Biennale and upcoming survey at the Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt, we look back on some key works



Ugo Rondinone, siebteraprilneunzehnhundertzweiundneunzig, (1992)
PHOTO: COURTESY OF RIZZOLI NEW YORK

1. siebteraprilneunzehnhundertzweiundneunzig, 1992

Created first with watercolor on paper, then rendered later in acrylic spray paint, Ugo Rondinone's "Sun" paintings make up one of the artist's most iconic, long-standing series. This early iteration is among nearly 400 documented in the new book *The Sun* (Rizzoli). "My work is imbedded in the observation of nature and its relation to the human condition and connects us with our sources in the natural world. Its beauty and terrors and mysteries and connotations. The 'Sun' paintings are not only an investigation of the mutable potential of painting but also a celebration of life," he tells Galerie.



Ugo Rondinone, Cry Me a River, (1997)

PHOTO: STUDIO RONDINONE; COURTESY OF THE ARTIST

2. Cry Me a River, 1997

Rondinone's first-ever neon sculpture was originally installed on a building facade in Biel, Switzerland. "Despite its diversity, my work does have unifying themes, most notably time and meditation," says the artist, who explores rainbow motifs in a variety of mediums. "And as the work progresses, I like to slow down and prolong the temporality in which past, present, and future belong to one single and unique loop."



Ugo Rondinone, 2007 Venice Biennale.

PHOTO: STEFAN ALTENBURGER

3. Venice Biennale, 2007

Rondinone and Urs Fischer presented their work at the Church of San Stae on the Grand Canal for the 52nd Venice Biennale. There, Rondinone conceived a series of trees, cast from ancient olive species in Naples and fabricated in aluminum and white enamel. The form refers to the “mental trinity”—the natural world, romanticism, and existentialism— which has underpinned the artist’s oeuvre for 30 years.



Ugo Rondinone, "Human Nature" (2013)

PHOTO: JAMES EWING

4. "Human Nature," 2013

In a project commissioned by the Public Art Fund, the artist erected nine monumental, stacked-boulder sculptures in New York's Rockefeller Plaza. Arranging the stones in the shape of people, he intentionally left the rough edges and weather marks to contrast with the slick, urban surroundings. "The stone figure is the most archetypal representation of the human form; an elemental symbol of the human spirit, connected to the earth yet mythic in the imagination," Rondinone said in 2013.



Ugo Rondinone, Seven Magic Mountains, (2016)

PHOTO: ISAAC BREKKEN

5. Seven Magic Mountains, 2016

Every year, thousands of art aficionados make the pilgrimage to Nevada to visit Rondinone's towers of colorful, locally sourced boulders standing more than 30 feet high. Initially scheduled to be on view for just two years, it is Rondinone's largest-scale outdoor sculpture. According to the artist, the location of the desert landscape along Interstate 15 is physically and symbolically midway between the natural and the artificial.

"I just follow my work....its tenderness, violence, animosity, and compassion are the outer edges of what feels like a total map of the human condition. That map is not done yet."

UGO RONDINONE



Ugo Rondinone, "burn shine fly," (2022)

PHOTO: ANDREA ROSSETTI; COURTESY OF THE ARTIST, GALERIE EVA PRESENHUBER, ZURICH, ESTHER SCHIPPER, BERLIN, SADIE COLES HQ, LONDON, GLADSTONE, NEW YORK, KAMEL MENNOUR, PARIS, KUKJE GALLERY, SEOUL

6. "burn shine fly," 2022

This summer, Rondinone transforms the Scuola Grande San Giovanni Evangelista in Venice with "burn shine fly," a project he describes as "a multi-voiced, choral setting." A dramatic contrast to the Renaissance and Baroque architecture of the church, the exhibition features an installation of seven human-size casts of nude dancers camouflaged as blue skies hanging down from the ornate vaults. The work suggests the harmonious feeling of a dance of which Rondinone could be considered the choreographer. "The experience has been wonderful," says the show's curator, Javier Molins. "From the first moment I saw the Scuola Grande de San Giovanni Evangelista, I thought that was the perfect place for Ugo. After that first visit, we met in his studio in Paris and later in New York to work on the ideas that Ugo had for the exhibition because from the beginning we wanted to do something specific for the space. He responded as he has done so many times during his artistic career: with a proposal involving a contrast with the architectural space that was to accommodate it." He adds: "Like so many great artists he makes us see things that we would not have seen by ourselves."