

UGO RONDINONE
pure sunshine

05 September – 04 October 2012
4 New Burlington Place London W1

Ugo Rondinone's autumn exhibition at Sadie Coles features a major new series of 'mandala paintings', the latest in a series which the artist began in 1991. Collectively titled *pure sunshine*, nine circular canvases spray-painted with concentric yellow rings combine to form a visual symphony evoking a constellation of suns.

The yellow bands, whose melting edges recall heat haze, reflect a number of Rondinone's enduring preoccupations – whether with time, cosmic cycles, or the primordial opposition of day and night. In line with all six of Rondinone's groups of paintings (landscapes, mandalas, horizons, windows, stars and brick walls), each work is titled according to the date of its completion. This strategy, with its echoes of Minimalism (On Kawara's *Date Paintings*, for example), here suitably reflects the unchanging – seemingly unending – diurnal course of the sun. As throughout the artist's practice, time is expressed verbally and space pictorially.



With their different shades of shimmering yellow in variously sized bands, the works employ a scheme which has recurred throughout Rondinone's corpus, in both his mandala paintings and rectangular horizon paintings. The theme of sunshine itself reaches back to earlier projects such as an installation at the Berlin Biennale in 1998, where a window was tinted with yellow plexiglass and a soundtrack played the refrain "everyday sunshine!"

A key strand within Rondinone's multifaceted corpus, the mandala paintings engage self-reflexively with twentieth-century abstraction. They merge the psychedelic patterns of Op Art with the depthless tones of Colour Field painting, while also pointing to the diagrammatic imagery of Pop Art (for instance Lichtenstein's paintings of sunbeams). In particular, they resurrect the 'target' format famously adopted by Kenneth Noland, one of the generation of so-called "Post-Painterly" abstractionists poised between Abstract Expressionism and Minimalism. Rondinone extends Noland's precepts of repetition and random permutation of colour and line. But Rondinone's paintings are more exacting in their geometry and finish, their airbrushed surfaces bearing no traces of the artist's hand.

Through allusions to different genres, Rondinone plays upon the sense in which many austere 'abstract' images may be read figuratively – just as Rothko's floating blocks of colour, with their own melting borders, continue to intimate the horizons or portals which appeared in his early paintings. Rondinone's rings of distilled yellow likewise point to various visual phenomena: targets, suns, or (arrayed in sequence) lens flares – the bleached and scattered after-traces found in photographs of the sun. At the same time, their systematised titles work to counteract romantic pictorial associations. The mandala canvases are therefore paintings of 'pure sunshine' and works of 'pure abstraction' in the same instant. In the same way, the horizon paintings of tiered lines which Rondinone has produced in conjunction with the mandala paintings may be read as highly schematic landscapes (an interpretation that is supported by more literal landscape elements in the artist's work, for instance his drawings in the style of Goethe's travel sketches).

Alongside the large mandala paintings, Rondinone is showing the 175 preparatory sketches made for every such painting since 1991. These studies prefigure the final works while also serving as counterpoints: they betray the artist's individual handwork in contrast to the stencilled spray paint of the larger versions; and they express a note of the personal and private at odds with the public face presented by the corresponding paintings.

Ugo Rondinone (Swiss, b. 1964) has exhibited internationally. He currently has a solo exhibition, nude, at the Museum of Cycladic Art, Athens. Major solo shows include *The Night of Lead (Die Nacht aus Blei)*, Aargauer Kunsthau, Aarau, Switzerland (2010); *Festival d'Automne*, Paris (2009); MUSAC, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla, León (2008); the 2007 52nd International Art Exhibition Biennale, Venice, Italy (with Urs Fischer); Art on the Plaza, New York, presented by Creative Time, New York, 2007; and *zero built a nest in my navel*, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (2006). In 2012 he curated the show *the spirit level* at Gladstone Gallery, New York. Next year, Rondinone will have solo shows at M Museum, Leuven, Belgium; and the Art Institute of Chicago. In tandem with *pure sunshine* at Sadie Coles, Rondinone has a solo exhibition, *primitive*, at the Common Guild, Glasgow (until 17 November). Ugo Rondinone lives and works in New York.

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