

# *Ether Schipper*

Ugo Rondinone

**i don't live here anymore**

September 15—October 21, 2023



Ugo Rondinone, **i don't live here anymore**, 1999.  
C-print, Plexiglas, Alucobond, 150 x 100 cm. © the artist

Which place did you leave? Why don't you live there anymore? And where did you move? The statement as title **i don't live here anymore** immediately raises questions that will most likely remain unanswered, but it doesn't matter. It looks like a good place, with room to express oneself; to deepen understanding of the self; to experiment with fetishist interests; to play with gender; to show fierceness as much as vulnerability; to probe the sculptural potential of the body by morphing it into abstraction.

Nevertheless, it is not only a space of joy and happiness, as the photos' references to Pierrot indicate—a quietly observing archetype known to symbolize a sense of melancholy. What is the melancholy about? Is it about what one leaves behind when moving away, moving on or up? Goodbyes are indeed always part of change, markers of transition to move into a new mode, state, or phase.

A certain ease with change is, however, also discernable in these five photos, as much as in the larger body of Rondinone's photographic work to which this suite belongs. The photos portray Rondinone as compelling, timeless archetypes, transformed into ambiguous idiosyncratic figures: the femme fatale dressed entirely in black; the dreamy hippie girl; the Viennese actionist-cum-seductive-androgynous-butcher; the underground music type; and, as presented here, a fetish version of Pierrot in a sculptural, Dadaist-like outfit. Altogether, the photos show an enjoyment of androgyny; the possibility to alternate identities; and the concept of gender fluidity that was made intelligible after years of emancipatory work. As the body of work exemplifies, one can shift character, if one understands how to use the tools of performativity.

But what about the references to Dadaism? Isn't it often considered the big bang of modernism, heralding a time of rapid change? Indeed, after its 1916 proclamation with a manifesto, various other modernist

movements took off—not irregularly drawing on the eclectic Dada movement, which was against any kind of prewritten form and thrived on ambiguity. More than eighty years later, **i don't live here anymore** was created at the dawn of a new era too, namely the digital age. In it, imagery and image-making have taken a radical turn because of the exponential progress of the internet and digitalization processes, which transmuted into social media where decentralized mechanisms of image distribution would let subjectivity blossom—with all its advantages and disadvantages.

There is yet another anachronistic reference to decipher: the muzzle—with its flawless lines that stylistically resemble the line flow of constructivism—emphasizes and extends the shape of the face, but also discloses its grid-like structure, almost as a precursor to biometric facial recognition of today. Combined with the fierce gaze into the abyss, which looks like a Nietzschean warning that the abyss also gazes back, it is as though the downsides of the dawning digital age are already identified.

Besides Rondinone's reflection on performativity and transformation, these interpretations and thoughts seek to unravel how **i don't live here anymore** renders the notion of timelessness palpable. Taking eternally recurring archetypes as subject matter, the artist modifies and reinterprets them, plays around with them and explores their potential in relation to his own subjective being, placing them in a realm of ambiguity to render them ubiquitous and unique at the same time. As such, Rondinone shows that no matter how alienating something may seem, one can always discern one's own connections. It is the shimmering yet powerful familiarity one finds in a *déjà vu*.

Text by Léon Kruijswijk

Ugo Rondinone is recognized as one of the major voices of his generation, an artist who composes searing meditations on nature and the human condition while establishing an organic formal vocabulary that fuses a variety of sculptural and painterly traditions. The breadth and generosity of his vision of human nature have resulted in a wide range of two-dimensional and three-dimensional objects, installations, videos, and performances. His hybridized forms, which borrow from ancient and modern cultural sources alike, exude pathos and humor, going straight to the heart of the most pressing issues of our time, where modernist achievement and archaic expression intersect.

Ugo Rondinone was born in 1964 in Brunnen, Switzerland. He studied at the Universität für Angewandte Kunst in Vienna before moving to New York in 1997, where he lives and works to this day. His work has been the subject of solo presentations at the **Centre George Pompidou**, Paris (2003); **Whitechapel Gallery**, London (2006); **Art Institute of Chicago**, Chicago (2013); **Rockbund Art Museum**, Shanghai (2014); **Palais de Tokyo**, Paris (2015); **Secession**, Vienna (2015); **Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen**, Rotterdam (2016); **MACRO**, Rome (2016); **Carre D'Art**, Nimes (2016); **Berkley Art Museum**, Berkeley (2017); **Contemporary Art Center**, Cincinnati (2017); **Bass Museum of Art**, Miami (2017); **Belvedere**, Vienna (2021); **Tamayo Museum**, Mexico City (2022); **Schirn Kunsthalle**, Frankfurt (2022); **Petit Palais**, Paris (2022); **Scuola Grande San Giovanni Evangelista di Venezia**, Venice (2022); **The Musée d'Art et d'Histoire**, Geneva (2023); **Storm King**, New York (2023) and **The Städel Museum**, Frankfurt (2023). In 2007 he represented Switzerland at the 52nd Venice Biennale. Forthcoming exhibitions include: The Phillips Collection, Washington and Fosun Foundation, Shanghai.

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