

Ugo Rondinone *the rainbow body*

22 May – 02 August 2025
62 Kingly Street W1

Opening Thursday 22 May, 6-8pm



The rainbow is a bridge between everyone and everything. — Ugo Rondinone

Ugo Rondinone's latest exhibition at Sadie Coles HQ, *the rainbow body*, features a series of figurative sculptures within a fluorescent environment. The walls, floors and ceiling of the gallery have been finished in rainbow shades that mirror the sculptures' own colours, engendering a push-pull dynamic between the individual figure and the landscape of the exhibition. The display also includes bronze sculptures of candles that restate the larger theme of suspended time.

Combining transcendental radiance with a sense of introspection, *the rainbow body* reprises several of the core concerns of Rondinone's practice: the interplay of part and whole, for example, or the link between the immediate moment and cosmic time. The polychrome figures – spread across the floor of the main gallery – have their origins in his *nude* series of 2010, a group of fourteen casts of seated or crouching dancers, each assembled from smaller wax sections (in the original group, clear wax was mixed with earth sourced from each of the seven continents). Naked apart from head coverings, the dancers are captured in moments of repose, their eyes closed. The joins between the body parts are left visible, in a conscious subversion of the casts' realism.

The *nude (rainbow)* series marks an evolution of the original sculptures. While the earlier nudes were bound to the earth in their make-up, the prismatic coloration of the rainbow figures betokens a state of transfiguration – the physical body dissolving into light. In this, there is an allusion to the 'rainbow body' phenomenon of Buddhism and its antecedents, the highest level of spiritual attainment, whereby the elements of the mortal body transform into the lights of the spectrum before evanescent into pure light.

The rainbow shades bind the figures into an immersive system, acting as a "bridge between everything and everyone", in Rondinone's words, with the colour-filled gallery coming to resemble a stage – a site of possibility. At the same time, each figure signifies interiority, conveying a distinct psychological presence. The dancers are, in Rondinone's words, "passive, just being themselves without any activity or conscious evaluation." Historical time collapses into the present moment, in a way that resonates with the artist's wider practice – whether his iterative paintings of sunrises, his life-size casts of olive trees, or his sculptural group of trompe l'oeil *clowns* (begun in 2000) imagined in various states of rest and slumber.

The second gallery contains a constellation of sculptures of candles, arrayed across the floor in the style of votive offerings. Like the dancers (each captured at the height of youth and physical prowess), these are markers of time: half-metamorphosed objects, rendered statuesque and changeless. Forming part of Rondinone's long-running *still.life* series of mundane objects transmuted into bronze, the candles express an oscillation between the everyday – seeming almost bathetic in their modest scale – and the transcendental. Their bronze medium moreover suggests a displacement of materials between the two bodies of work in the exhibition: bronze would be a more 'classical' material for the human figures, wax a more probable one for candles.

Giving emblematic expression to the theme of time, a stained-glass clock illuminates the gallery from one end. It has been liberated of hands, as though time had dispersed or condensed into a singularity. Evoking the primordial clock of the sun, the window symbolises the interconnectedness of nature and humanity, a concept that has underpinned Rondinone's art from its earliest beginnings.

– James Cahill

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 Pilane Sculpture Park, Sweden (2025); The Galleria d'Arte Moderna, Milan (2025); Arte Abierto, Mexico (2025); Aspen Art Museum, Colorado (2024); Kunstmuseum Lucerne, Switzerland (2024); Museum SAN, South Korea (2024); The Städel Museum, Frankfurt (2023); Storm King, New York (2023); The Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva (2023); Scuola Grande San Giovanni Evangelista di Venezia, Venice (2022); Petit Palais, Paris (2022); Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt (2022); Tamayo Museum, Mexico City (2022); Belvedere, Vienna (2021); Bass Museum of Art, Miami (2017); Contemporary Art Center Cincinnati (2017); Berkeley Art Museum (2017); Carre D'Art, Nimes (2016); MACRO, Rome (2016); Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2016); Secession, Vienna (2015); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2015); Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai (2014); Art Institute of Chicago (2013); 52nd Venice Biennale (2007); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2006); and Centre George Pompidou, Paris (2003). Forthcoming exhibitions include The Madoo Conservancy, New York (August 2025).