

Peter Halley and Ugo Rondinone
Still

4 May – 15 June 2019
Vyner Street, E2

I can't tell you how
I knew - but I did know that I had crossed
The border. Everything I loved was lost
But no aorta could report regret.
A sun of rubber was convulsed and set;
And blood-black nothingness began to spin
A system of cells interlinked within
Cells interlinked within cells interlinked
Within one stem. And dreadfully distinct
Against the dark, a tall white fountain played.

– Excerpt from 'Pale Fire' by Vladimir Nabokov

Modern Art is delighted to announce 'Still' a two-person dialogue exhibition by Peter Halley and Ugo Rondinone, which marks the first time the artists have shown their work together.

Architectural elements, including windows, doors, walls, conduits, smokestacks and cells, all play a significant part in the works of both Halley and Rondinone. 'Still' brings together a number of key motifs within each artist's practice, in a unique conversation that has been reduced exclusively to an installation of greyscale, monochromatic works.

On the ground floor, Rondinone will exhibit two ominous and monumental door sculptures fitted with a variety of bolts and chains. Whilst these austere sculptures appear introverted and hostile, they are also subverted by their larger-than-life, almost cartoon-like essence. They dwarf the viewer before them, and contain no concrete answer to whom is being contained, to where these doors might lead, or if we are being shut out. Many of the works in Rondinone's oeuvre carry suggestions of purpose, intention and utility. Yet these symbols are rendered contradictory and dysfunctional: doors are locked, windows contain no view, there is no exit.

Alongside these sculptures, Halley will present three prison paintings. These works feature the repeated forms of multiple reductive prison motifs, each fitting into the surface of the work as if it were a puzzle – prisons interlinked. Here, geometry might be conceived as a metaphor for society, and indeed geometry and symmetry as a metaphor of government.

On the first floor, Halley will exhibit a suite of three wall reliefs made in the mid-1990s, titled 'Cell with Conduit', 'Prison with Conduit' and 'Static'. These works are cast fiberglass 'paintings', and are painted in combinations of greys. The works are exhibited upon struts, so that they appear to float in front of the wall. For both Halley and Rondinone, images of containment and isolation can also possess a spiritual dimension.

In direct dialogue with these works is Rondinone's confrontational free-standing brick painting on burlap titled 'vierteraprilzweitausendundneuzehn'. Previously Rondinone has spoken of the professions of his parents in relation to these works ("My Father was a builder, my Mother a seamstress"), though the symbol of this white brick wall offers itself as a foreboding architectural element within the gallery. One has to walk around the structure and stand back from it to appreciate its function as a painting, and its relation to the poetics of the installation.

In the reoccurring motifs of containment and hostility, as well as a contrary spirituality, the works of both artists in dialogue explore the boundaries of what is abstract, not only within art, but within human behaviours. Together these works index the different formal languages developed by Halley and Rondinone, both of whom attend to the ways architectural structures, institutions and interior spaces are organised and represent our psychological lives.

Modern Art Ltd
50–58 Vyner Street, London E2 9DQ
+44 (0)20 7299 7950 www.modernart.net

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Peter Halley was born in 1953 in New York City, where he lives and works. He received his BA from Yale University in 1975 and his MFA from the University of New Orleans in 1978, remaining in New Orleans until 1980. Halley's work was included in survey exhibitions throughout the 1980s, including the São Paulo Biennale (1985), Whitney Biennial (1987), Documenta 8 (1987), Australian Biennale (1988), Carnegie International (1988), in addition to numerous single-venue and travelling exhibitions across the United States and Europe. In the years since, Halley's work has been the subject of solo museum exhibitions at venues including CAPC Musée d'Art Contemporain de Bordeaux (1991); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (1992); Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1992); Des Moines Art Center (1992); Dallas Museum of Art (1995); The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1997); Kitakyushu Municipal Museum of Art (1998); Museum Folkwang, Essen (1998); Musée d'art moderne et contemporain, Saint Étienne Métropole (2014); Santa Barbara Museum of Art (2015); and Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt (2016). Halley has also written on art and culture throughout his career, and is recognised for his longstanding role as the publisher of index Magazine. His largest installation to date, New York, New York, opened in September 2018 at Lever House, New York. In May 2019, he will present Heterotopia I at the 58th Venice Biennale, a large-scale installation curated by Gea Politi and Cristiano Seganfredo.

Ugo Rondinone was born in Brunnen, Switzerland, in 1964. He lives and works in New York City. Rondinone studied at the Hochschule für Angewandte Kunst, Vienna. His work has been the subject of solo museum exhibitions at venues including Tate Liverpool (2018); Fundación Casa Wabi, Puerto Escondido (2018); Aspen Art Museum (2017); Carré d'Art – Musée d'art contemporain, Nîmes, (2016); Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2016); Rockbund Art Museum, Shanghai (2014); Art Institute of Chicago (2013); Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk (2009); and Hayward Gallery, London (2008). Rondinone has participated in recent group exhibitions at institutions including South London Gallery, London (2018); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2018); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2017); Palace of Versailles (2017); National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa (2016); Yokohama Museum of Art (2016); MoMA PS1, New York (2015); and Musée du Louvre, Paris (2015). In 1991, 1994, and 1995, Rondinone received the Swiss Eidgenössischer Preis für freie Kunst.

For more information please contact Alexander Glover: alexander@modernart.net

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Ground Floor Gallery (clockwise from entrance)

Peter Halley
Legacy, 2019
metallic acrylic and Roll-A-Text on canvas
203.2 x 198.1 x 10.2 cm
80 x 78 x 4 ins
(MA-HALLP-00169)

Ugo Rondinone
Zero zany zone, 2019
wood, fittings, varnish
293.4 x 266.7 x 24 cm
115 1/2 x 105 x 9 1/2 ins
(MA-RONDU-00002)

Peter Halley
Redemption, 2019
metallic acrylic and Roll-A-Text on canvas
220.9 x 187.9 x 10.2 cm
87 x 74 x 4 ins
(MA-HALLP-00167)

Peter Halley
Yesterday, 2019
metallic acrylic and Roll-A-Text on canvas
228.6 x 177.8 x 10.2 cm
90 x 70 x 4 ins
(MA-HALLP-00168)

Ugo Rondinone
Healing hollow halt, 2019
wood, fittings, varnish
288.3 x 208.3 x 16.5 cm
113 1/2 x 82 1/8 x 6 1/2 ins
(MA-RONDU-00003)

First Floor Gallery (clockwise from entrance)

Ugo Rondinone
vierteraprilzweitausendundneunzehn, 2019
oil on burlap
300 x 600 x 59 cm
118 1/8 x 236 1/4 x 23 1/4 ins
(MA-RONDU-00001)

Peter Halley
Static I, 1994
cast fiberglass relief on steel armature and
extended cleats, spray-painted in shades of
grey using black and white golden acrylic gesso
175.26 x 246.3 cm x 7 cm
69 x 97 x 2 3/4 ins
Edition of 3 + 1 AP
(MA-HALLP-00097)

Peter Halley
Prison with Conduit, 1992-1993
cast fiberglass relief on steel armature and
extended cleats, spray-painted in shades of
grey using black and white golden acrylic gesso
175.5 x 239 x 10.8 cm
69 1/8 x 94 1/8 x 4 1/4 ins
Edition of 3 + 1 AP
(MA-HALLP-00096)

Peter Halley
Cell with Conduit, 1994
cast fiberglass relief on steel armature and
extended cleats, spray-painted in shades of
grey using black and white golden acrylic gesso
175.5 x 244 x 12.3 cm
69 1/8 x 96 1/8 x 4 7/8 ins
Edition of 3 + 1 AP
(MA-HALLP-00094)