

# I ♥ JOHN GIORNO

## THE NEW YORK PREMIERE OF "UGO RONDINONE: I ♥ JOHN GIORNO" A CITYWIDE FESTIVAL



**Image:** John Giorno (left) and Ugo Rondinone (right), 2015

**NEW YORK, NY** – On the evening of the June 21st summer solstice, *Ugo Rondinone: I ♥ John Giorno*—the first major U.S. exhibition about the American poet, artist, activist and muse **John Giorno**—will open simultaneously across 13 locations in New York City. *I ♥ John Giorno* is a work of art by Giorno's husband, the Swiss artist **Ugo Rondinone**. The exhibition is a celebration of the life and work of John Giorno—an artist whose work has influenced generations. Taking place in his chosen hometown, the exhibition affords a unique opportunity for Giorno's contributions to be recognized within the canons of American poetry and art history, and celebrates the artist's **80<sup>th</sup> birth-year**.

*I ♥ John Giorno* is an unprecedented collaboration between leading non-profit and alternative spaces across New York, which are joining forces for the first time to mount a multilayered exhibition on a single subject. Partner venues include: **Artists Space, High Line Art, How! Happening, Hunter College Art Galleries, The Kitchen, New Museum, Red Bull Arts New York, Rubin Museum of Art, Sky Art, Swiss Institute, White Columns, and 80WSE Gallery**. Reconfigured as a festival, including installations in galleries and public spaces, as well as a full roster of public programs and events, *I ♥ John Giorno* is free and open to the public.

Expanding upon the exhibition that took place at Palais de Tokyo in Paris from October 2015 to January 2016, *I ♥ John Giorno* has been re-conceptualized specifically for New York, highlighting Giorno's significant relationship with the city, and his singular role in creating and fostering community here. The 18-part exhibition has been divided by Rondinone into chapters reflecting the layers of Giorno's life and work, his longstanding influence on and dedication to his chosen hometown of New York City, and his relationships with artist friends, lovers and collaborators including: **Richard Bosman, Phong Bui, Angela Bulloch, Anne Collier, Verne Dawson, Judith Eisler, John Giorno, Mark Handforth, Matthew Higgs, Pierre Huyghe, Françoise Janicot, Scott King, Elizabeth Peyton, Ugo Rondinone, Erik Satie, Kendall Shaw, Michael Stipe, Billy Sullivan, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Peter Ungerleider, Joan Wallace, and Andy Warhol**, whose work will be presented as part of the festival.

The exhibition format echoes the symbiotic relationship between Ugo Rondinone and John Giorno, who have been both partners and collaborators for the past two decades. **Rondinone** describes the show saying: "*I ♥ John Giorno is a kaleidoscopic exhibition about the life and work of American poet and Tibetan Buddhist John Giorno, whose rich and stimulating life has woven many threads of American culture and spirituality. Within the dreamscape of the exhibition, one is invited to wander through the juxtaposed realm of art and poetry where image and language build upon themselves in a layered stream of consciousness driven by the biographical, the conceptual, and the emotional.*"

# I ♥ JOHN GIORNO

On view at **Sky Art** is Ugo Rondinone's *THANX 4 NOTHING* (2011), a video work in which Giorno reads his poem of the same name, declaring: "I give enormous thanks to all my lovers, / beautiful men with brilliant minds, / great artists, / Bob, Jasper, Ugo, / may they come here now / and make love to you." Written on his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday, this work reflects on his life with gratitude, mixing biting irony with Buddhist wisdom. Sky Art will also display *the archive of john giorno (1936-ongoing)*, which is a facsimile of Giorno's original archive that includes over 12,000 texts, photos, and documents across his private and artistic life.

In addition to work by Giorno's partner, Ugo Rondinone, the exhibition features works by peers that have looked to Giorno as a muse. Highlights include: **Andy Warhol's** iconic *Sleep* (1963) accompanied by Erik Satie's *42 Vexations* (1893) at **Swiss Institute**, which features Giorno sleeping for five hours and twenty minutes; **Pierre Huyghe's** *Sleeptalking* (1998) at **Howl! Happening**, filmed 35 years after Warhol's *Sleep* on the same bed; and **Michael Stipe's** *We All Go Back To Where We Belong* (2011) at **High Line Art**, a video portrait of John Giorno made in the style of Andy Warhol's *Screen Tests*. Additional portraits of Giorno by artists including **Phong Bui, Verne Dawson, Judith Eisler, Elizabeth Peyton, and Billy Sullivan** will be shown at White Columns; while **Kendall Shaw's** paintings and photographs of Giorno dancing will be shown at The **Bertha and Karl Leubsdorf Gallery** at **Hunter College**. Also on view there will be "Grasping at Emptiness," a collaboration with **Richard Bosman** that pairs his drawings with Giorno's eponymous poem. **Rirkrit Tiravanija's** piece *JG Reads* (2008), a replica of Giorno's Bowery studio, inside of which is projected film of Giorno performing his poetry, memoirs, and music accompanied by a bench by **Mark Handforth**, will be shown at The Kitchen. In addition to a sculptural portrait work by **Joan Wallace**, over 80 photos of Giorno's life on stage between 1974-1999 taken by **Françoise Janicot**, who traveled to performance and poetry festivals around the world documenting Giorno, will also be on view at The Kitchen.

A leading member of the Beat Generation of poets, Giorno revived the genre of 'found poetry' and worked to make poetry accessible through viral strategies. His *Dial-A-Poem*, an iconic work of art that anticipated mass media communication and the commercial success of hotlines, will be reactivated and on view at **Red Bull Arts New York**. First staged at the Architectural League in 1969, and again at MoMA in 1971, *Dial-A-Poem* uses phone lines connected to answering machines, allowing anyone to call in and listen to prerecorded poems by **William S. Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Joe Brainard, Anne Waldman, and John Cage**, to name a few. Giorno's sound poems—made with sound engineer Bob Bielecki and representative of his pioneering work in experimental electronic audio—will also be presented along with songs from The John Giorno Band, which Red Bull Arts New York will release as an LP. A vast collection of works by **Giorno Poetry Systems**, the nonprofit and record label John founded in 1965 as a means of distributing poetry and performance recordings, will be available for listening at **White Columns**. Visitors can sit in bean bag chairs designed by **Angela Bulloch**, accompanied by slideshows by **Anne Collier** made using the albums as source material.

Tibetan Buddhism has long informed Giorno's life and art. Following his travels to India throughout the 1970s Giorno became a disciple of Dudjom Rinpoche, and actively helped to grow his Nyingmapa lineage in the United States. A curated group of thankga paintings will be on view at the **205 Hudson Gallery** at **Hunter College**, selected by Giorno from the **Rubin Museum of Art** collection. These works will be paired with Giorno's personal shrine, relocated from his home to the gallery space, as well as weekly teachings by a Lama of the Nyingmapa lineage. Also on view at **Hunter College** will be documentation of Giorno's *AIDS Treatment Project*, which organized benefit concerts and sold LP series by **Allen Ginsberg, Patti Smith, Laurie Anderson** and more, in order to provide direct cash grants, "given with love and affection" as described by to Giorno, for emergency situations to patients living with AIDS. **Peter Ungerleider's** film "Loving Kindness" that documents Giorno's initiative amidst his larger musings on death within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition will also be on view.

In an ode to the iconic "I ♥ NY" logo, **Scott King's** graphic identity for the festival uniquely celebrates the life of Giorno as a New York icon. The logo of the exhibition's title will be on view throughout New York City, with notable locations including the Washington Square Park facing windows of **80WSE** and the lobby of the **New Museum**.

Readings, performances and discussions throughout the summer will be organized by **Artists Space**, including poetry performances from Giorno's vast oeuvre as well as talks and symposia providing critical and historical contextualization for his work and its influence on other poets and artists. **The Brooklyn Rail** will dedicate their summer issue to the exhibition which will be guest edited by **Laura Hoptman** and **Mónica de la Torre**.

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## ABOUT JOHN GIORNO

John Giorno (b. 1936, New York City, USA) is an artistic innovator who has been defying conventional definitions of poet, performer, political activist, Tibetan Buddhist, and visual artist since he emerged upon the New York art scene during the late 1950s. In the 1960s, he began producing multi-media, multi-sensory events concurrent with Warhol's Exploding Plastic Inevitable. He worked with Rauschenberg's Experiments in Art and Technology (E.A.T) in 1966, and with Bob Moog in 1967-68. His breakthroughs in this area include Dial-A-Poem, which was first presented in 1968 at the Architectural Society of New York and was later included in the MoMA's Information exhibition in 1970. His contributions are significant to many culturally defining moments: the Beat generation, Pop Art, Punk, the Pictures Generation, and the hip-hop era. His work is included in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Musée National d'Art Moderne, Paris; and Queensland Art Gallery/Gallery of Modern Art, Brisbane; among others.

## ABOUT UGO RONDINONE

Ugo Rondinone (b. 1964, Brunnen, Switzerland) is a renowned mixed-media artist who lives and works in New York. Recent solo shows include: *your age my age and the age of the rainbow*, The Garage Museum of Contemporary Art, Moscow; *let's start this day again*, Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati; *every time the sun comes up*, Place Vendome, Paris; *girono d'oro + notti d'argento*, Mercati die Traiano, Rome; *becoming soil*, Carre d'Art, Nîmes; *seven magic mountains*, Art Production Fund and Nevada Museum of Art/Desert of Nevada; *vocabulary of solitude*, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; *Ugo Rondinone: I ♥ John Giorno*, Palais de Tokyo, Paris; *golden days and silver nights*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney; and *artists and poets*, Secession, Vienna. His work is in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and the Dallas Museum of Art, among others. Upcoming shows include *the world just makes me laugh* at Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley; and *good evening beautiful blue* at Bass Museum of Art, Miami.

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## PARTNERING INSTITUTIONS

### ARTISTS SPACE

Founded in 1972 in downtown Manhattan, Artists Space has successfully contributed to changing the institutional and economic landscape for contemporary art by lending support to emerging artists and emerging ideas alike, often controversially contributing and critically challenging the intellectual and artistic status quo in New York City and beyond. Artists Space is located at 55 Walker Street, New York, NY 10013. <http://artistspace.org>

### HIGH LINE ART

Presented by Friends of the High Line, High Line Art commissions and produces public art projects on and around the High Line. Founded in 2009, High Line Art presents a wide array of artwork including site-specific commissions, exhibitions, performances, video programs, and a series of billboard interventions. Curated by Cecilia Alemani, the Donald R. Mullen, Jr. Director & Chief Curator of High Line Art, and produced by Friends of the High Line, High Line Art invites artists to think of creative ways to engage with the uniqueness of the architecture, history, and design of the High Line and to foster a productive dialogue with the surrounding neighborhood and urban landscape. <http://art.thehighline.org>.

### HOWL! HAPPENING

Founded in 2015, Howl! Happening: An Arturo Vega Project is a nonprofit gallery, performance space, and archive dedicated to preserving the past and celebrating the contemporary culture of the East Village and Lower East Side. Howl! Arts creates opportunities for artists to produce and show their work, and engages in activities aimed at improving the quality of life for artists and members of the creative community. Howl! Happening is located at 6 East 1st Street, New York, NY 10003. <http://www.howlarts.org>

### HUNTER COLLEGE ART GALLERIES

The Hunter College Art Galleries, under the auspices of the Department of Art and Art History, have been a vital aspect of the New York cultural landscape since their inception over a quarter of a century ago. The galleries provide a space for critical engagement with art and pedagogy, bringing together historical scholarship, contemporary artistic practice, and experimental methodology. The Bertha and Karl Leubsdorf Gallery focuses on presenting historical and scholarly exhibitions and programming that provide new scholarship on important and often under-represented artists and art movements. The 205 Hudson Gallery is dedicated to presenting exhibitions and programming that examine the impact of and critical issues around contemporary art. [www.huntercollegeartgalleries.org](http://www.huntercollegeartgalleries.org)

### THE KITCHEN

The Kitchen is one of New York City's oldest nonprofit spaces, showing innovative work by emerging and established artists across disciplines. Its programs range from dance, music, performance, and theater, to video, film, and art, in addition to literary events, artists' talks, and lecture series. Since its inception, The Kitchen has been a powerful force in shaping the cultural landscape of this country, and has helped launch the careers of many artists who have gone on to worldwide prominence. The Kitchen is located at 512 West 19th Street, New York, NY 10011. <http://thekitchen.org>

### NEW MUSEUM

Founded in 1977, the New Museum is a leading destination for new art and new ideas. It is Manhattan's only dedicated contemporary art museum and is respected internationally for the adventurousness and global scope of its curatorial program. The New Museum is located at 235 Bowery, New York, NY 10002. <http://www.newmuseum.org>

### RED BULL ARTS NEW YORK

Red Bull Arts New York is an experimental, non-commercial arts space dedicated to offering new opportunities to local and international artists by supporting bold ideas and ambitious projects that extend the boundaries of exhibition making. Red Bull Arts New York is located at 220 West 18th Street, New York, NY 10011. <http://redbullartsnewyork.com>

### RUBIN MUSEUM OF ART

The Rubin Museum of Art is an arts and cultural hub that inspires visitors to make connections between contemporary life and the art and ideas of the Himalayas and neighboring regions including India. Emphasizing cross-cultural connections, the Rubin is a space to contemplate ideas that extend across history and span human cultures. A selection of Giorno's recent paintings that center on Buddhist themes and a new poetry reading by Giorno of *God Is Man Made* will be installed at the Rubin from June 16, 2017-Jan 8, 2018 as part of the exhibition *The World Is Sound*, which focuses on the interplay between Tibetan Buddhist music and contemporary sound art. The Rubin is located at 150 W 17th St, New York, NY 10011. <http://rubinmuseum.org>

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## **SKY ART**

Sky Art is a nonprofit art center founded by Frahm & Frahm and Moinian Group. It will focus on contemporary artists working with dialogues of activism, in order to explore the potential of the visual arts to engage with wider socio-political issues. Sky Art is located at 555 11th Av. New York, NY, 10036. <http://www.skyartny.com>

## **SWISS INSTITUTE**

Swiss Institute is an independent non-profit contemporary art institution dedicated to promoting forward-thinking and experimental art making through innovative exhibitions and programs. Committed to the highest standards of curatorial and educational excellence, SI serves as a platform for emerging artists, catalyzes new contexts for celebrated work, and fosters appreciation for under-recognized positions. Open to the public free-of-charge, Swiss Institute seeks to explore how a national perspective can foster international conversations in the fields of visual and performing arts, design and architecture. SI is temporarily located at 102 Franklin St, New York, NY 10013. <https://www.swissinstitute.net>

## **WHITE COLUMNS**

White Columns is New York's oldest alternative art space. It was founded in 1970 by Jeffrey Lew and Gordon Matta-Clark as an experimental platform for artists. White Columns presents an ongoing program of exhibitions, projects, talks, screenings, and events. It is a not-for-profit gallery which is open to the public, free-of-charge, eleven months per year. Over the past forty-six years, hundreds of artists have benefited from early exposure and support at White Columns. White Columns is located at 320 West 13th Street, New York, NY 10014. <https://www.whitecolumns.org>

## **80WSE Gallery**

An extension of the Department of Art and Art Professions in the NYU Steinhardt School, 80 WSE Gallery is under the curatorial direction of Nicola Lees. The gallery presents contemporary and historical exhibitions, as well as experimental projects by noted artists and curators, produced in collaboration with faculty and the students. 80WSE Gallery is located at 80 Washington Square East, New York, NY 10003. <http://steinhardt.nyu.edu/80wse>

## **THE BROOKLYN RAIL**

Founded in October 2000 and currently published 10 times annually, The Brooklyn Rail provides an independent forum for arts, culture, and politics throughout New York City and far beyond. The journal, in addition to featuring local reporting; criticism of music, dance, film, and theater; and original fiction and poetry, covers contemporary visual art in particular depth. The Brooklyn Rail is distributed for free at locations throughout the city, and will be available at each partner institution. <http://brooklynrail.org/>

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