

PRESS CLIPPING

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UGO RONDINONE

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY/

SWISS INSTITUTE

.....[Matthew Marks'] show's title, borrowed from a song by the group America, might refer to Rondinone himself: Creator of dynamic, polymorphous exhibitions with elements of photo, sculpture, sound and painting, none necessarily related by style or theme, he is a mercurial figure. The heterogeneity of his output is partly attributable to the fact that he frequently joins forces with other artists. For his collaborative installation with painter Urs Fischer and New York underground poet John Giorno (a Rondinone clown in a previous collaboration) at the Swiss Institute, Rondinone covered most of the gallery floor with a low, stagelike platform, painted black and white in a hypnotic pattern of wavy lines (somewhat reminiscent of the mirror mosaic). The viewer was invited to walk on it (shoeless) to approach a group of framed collages and two surreal sculptures by Fischer (one a cast plaster arm holding up a cat by its tail, the other a strange construction of two wooden chairs painted bright pink), which served as an interesting but unrelated visual element to consider while listening to a recording of Giorno reading his epic "There Was A Bad Tree," a kind of socioecological morality tale about a community that tires in vain to kill an evil tree. The poet's words, coming from speakers hidden under the platform, were set to pensive, ultramellow instrumental music of the kind Rondinone often employs to establish a contemplative mood.

In Rondinone's hyperreal world, life is a melancholy path of futile searches and broken hearts on a rotting planet. The heady mix of romance and misery is both irresistible and maddening. Yet he tries to reclaim meaning in the meaninglessness of all of it through poetry and beauty, which in his work is often conflated with the poetic. At the end of Giorno's story, the people are rewarded with fruit, jewels, and stars - splendor. For Rondinone too, in the absence of poetry we are like those inert, exhausted clowns, lying masked somewhere between bloated boredom and oblivion.



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