

GLADSTONE GALLERY

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REVIEWS THE THIRD MIND

THE THIRD MIND: CARTE BLANCHE A UGO RONDINONE

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Given carte blanche to chart his artistic tastes and influences, Ugo Rondinone has lodged the works of 31 artists in a dozen or so 'interzones' (William S. Burroughs's cut-up and fold-in concepts are a dominant inspiration), in which works by two, three or four artists, exhibited together, 'metamorphose into a third mind, and from this collision a new spirit emerges, an absent third person, invisible and beyond grasp'. Rondinone's poetic conceit is borrowed from Burroughs and Brion Gysin; the original cut-up collages from their cult book, *The Third Mind* (1965), fill one of the rooms; and the source for the book's title, personal-success guru Napoleon Hill, is quoted at the top of Rondinone's curatorial precis. That Hill, proponent of the psychic-economic 'master mind' principle and author of *Think and Grow Rich!* (1937) and *Success Through a Positive Mental Attitude* (1960), should sire such artistic offspring is a comic miracle.

As usual, it is impossible to get a clear read on Rondinone's bored aesthete athleticism – an artist so enamoured by pointlessness and ennui, yet so industrious! The 'central metaphor' of this curatorial effort is the clockbug, which 'exists by consuming its own faeces [and] uses its antennae to rotate itself in a counter-clockwise direction, so that it persists in a cycle of ingestions and excretion. The clockbug provides a metaphorical mirror for one archetypal existential dilemma that we all must face: The oscillation between the boredom of satiation and the longing of unfulfilled desires.'

A Bug's Life meets Faust. How this relates to the *The Third Mind* is unclear, but no matter – so many of the works speak for themselves, and their juxtapositions often bear fruit. What a rare treat to see examples of installation pioneer Paul Thek's 'meat pieces' from the mid-1960s; that they share space with Swiss artist-healer Emma Kunz's geometric drawings is a happy concatenation. Hauling Ronald Bladen's minimalist sculptures out of storage and surrounding them with Nancy Grossman's black-leathered busts and Cady Noland's Americana silkscreens on aluminium is genius. Here, though, the emerging third mind is not 'invisible and beyond grasp'. The organising principle is simple: everything is black and white. It is interior decoration.

The fastest walkthroughs, for me, were rooms devoted to solo artists: the faux-naive theatrics of Karen Kilimnik, the faux-naive collages of Joe Brainard, and Sarah Lucas's smashed-up car installation. Here, even the Second Mind – mine – was barely solicited. Unfortunate, too, that every room was filled with a fourth presence; the b-flat drone of Martin Boyce's ceiling work; *When Now Is Night (Web)* (1999), a gigantic neon spiderweb that bathed in unhealthy light a pile of dirt and detritus by Laurie Parsons (*Troubled*, 1989) and a large, lush canvas by Jay DeFeo (*Hawk Moon No. 1*, 1983–5). All in all, however, a triumph: the best Palais de Tokyo show ever, and Ugo Rondinone's most compelling installation yet. *Christopher Mooney*



The Third Mind: Carte Blanche a Ugo Rondinone, 2007, installation view. Photo: Marc Donaghe. Courtesy Palais de Tokyo, Paris