

DUJOUR

June 19, 2017

Behind the Exhibit: I ♥ John Giorno

Warhol's former muse is taking over 13 of the city's artistic institutions

By Samuel Anderson



After two decades, most couples would have settled for a Hallmark card. Ugo Rondinone and John Giorno, on the other hand, are celebrating their 20 years as a power couple of contemporary art with a citywide exhibit of Giorno's work called "[Ugo Rondinone: I ♥ John Giorno](#)".

The show, organized by Rondinone, surveys Giorno's varied experimentalism, which began with beat poetry in the early fifties, and carried over to subsequent downtown scenes including punk and pop art. When the pair met in 1997, Giorno was an icon of New York City subculture, having been immortalized in Andy Warhol's epic film *Sleep*. Behind the scenes, Giorno had been busy building an extensive oeuvre.

"I was around here in the very early 50s among the beat poets and the pop artists who knew you didn't throw these things away. So I just saved it," Giorno tells us. "When [Ugo and I] first got together, he saw that I had this huge archive, and that's when the idea [for the show] began to percolate."

Originally mounted at Palais de Tokyo in 2015, the exhibit in New York will take up 13 different gallery spaces across New York, including the New Museum and Swiss Institute. The show's epic proportions are fitting given both Giorno and Rondinone's love of the large-scale. While Rondinone may be known for making monumental statements, this sweeping love letter to Giorno gives new meaning to the term "public display of affection."