

# WWD

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## ‘I ♥ John Giorno’: An Homage of Two Decades

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Artists Ugo Rondinone and John Giorno have been lovers and collaborators for the past 20 years in New York. “Ugo Rondinone: I ♥ John Giorno,” Rondinone’s latest exhibition, pays homage to that timeline, reflecting on Giorno’s decades-long career as a muse, activist, poet and artist. The show opened on Wednesday in select venues across the city and is the largest collaborative effort by the two artists.

“I wanted to create a citywide artwork, and I thought the best place to do that is in the city’s historic alternative art spaces,” Rondinone explained. Hunter College, Sky Art and the New Museum are among the institutions participating. “It was also important that there was no need to pay admission to see each chapter,” Rondinone continued, explaining their choice to use “alternative art spaces” as opposed to the more conventional galleries and museums around town.

“I ♥ John Giorno” first ran in 2015 at the Palais de Tokyo in Paris. Afterward in New York, the concept “took on its own life,” Giorno recalled, as more collaborators across the city stepped up to host parts of the exhibit and pay homage themselves to two of New York’s treasured artists. The graphic quality in the title of the exhibit, a heart instead of the word “love,” is a nod to Giorno’s history as a New Yorker and his impact on the city — replacing his name on the iconic I ♥ NY image.

“What happened was the Palais de Tokyo was so great, both Ugo and I didn’t really want it to come to New York, because it could never be that good,” said Giorno during the exhibit’s opening night party on the terrace of the Public hotel on Wednesday night, where pink drinks were free-flowing. It seemed fitting to celebrate Giorno’s prolific career on the Summer Solstice, the longest night of the year.

What does the future have in store for the duo? Rondinone’s next exhibit, “Ugo Rondinone: the world just makes me laugh,” opens at the Berkeley Art Museum on June 28, and at the Bass Museum in Miami on Oct. 3. In terms of future collaborations between the two artists, Giorno was matter-of-fact.

“Well, we’re lovers and married, we’ve been together for 20 years, and we’ve collaborated many times, and no doubt it will go on,” he said.

