

Merci! John Giorno

Apr 26 — Jun 7, 2025 | Paris, Matignon & Turenne (Front Space)

Almine Rech Paris and Giorno Poetry Systems are pleased to announce 'Merci! John Giorno,' on view from April 26 to June 7, 2025, a group show celebrating the work of John Giorno (1936 - 2019) and the ten-year anniversary of the Palais de Tokyo's landmark 2015 exhibition 'Ugo Rondinone: I & John Giorno.'

To celebrate the 10 year anniversary of the Palais de Tokyo exhibition 'Ugo Rondinone: I & John Giorno,' Almine Rech and Giorno Poetry Systems present an exhibition of works by, for, and inspired by John Giorno (1936 - 2019) in two galleries in Paris, as well as a range of collaborations in museums in the city and the region throughout 2025. A portion of the funds from the sale of artworks will benefit Giorno Poetry Systems, the New York-based nonprofit organization Giorno founded in 1965 and that still operates today.

The two-part exhibition, titled 'Merci! John Giorno,' explores John Giorno's life and work and his role as a community builder and artistic influence on other artists, poets, and musicians across time and space. This exhibition features works by Giorno, as well as works by artists in his artistic and social circles, such as Ugo Rondinone, Rirkrit Tiravanija, Judith Eisler, Billy Sullivan, William S. Burroughs, and Verne Dawson. In addition, it includes the work of contemporary French artists who were inspired and influenced by the iconic 2015 exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo, marking the lasting impact this exhibition has had on an emerging generation of artists in Paris. Contributing artists include Julie Béna, Tarek Lakhrissi, Clément Rodzielski, David Douard, and Mélanie Matranga. A graphic identity for the exhibition is conceived by Scott King, who had also designed the identity for 'Ugo Rondinone: I & John Giorno' in 2015.

In addition to the two gallery exhibitions, this 10th anniversary celebration includes a series of collaborations throughout the city and the region that point to the expansive reach of Giorno's work to bring together poetry, art, activism, and music. At the Palais de Tokyo, a spectacular site-specific installation brings Giorno's unique visual vocabulary back to where it had filled the entire museum ten years prior: a display of Giorno's Welcoming the Flowers prints, in an arrangement conceived by Ugo Rondinone, is presented on the Palais' large windows (12 June – 7 September, 2025). In collaboration with the Centre Georges Pompidou, Giorno's iconic interactive work Dial-A-Poem (1968 - present) is represented with Dial-A-Poem France (+33 9 87 67 54 92), where a French phone number provides access to a selection of recordings by 31 poets and artists reading in French, including Olivier Cadiot, Jacques Donguy, Jean-Jacques Lebel, Laetitia Paviani, and Clément Rodzielski, and many others from the LGBTQIA+ community, echoing Giorno's concerns as a queer artist and activist. The phone number is displayed as a large graphic that welcomes visitors to the Tripostal, in Lille, in the context of Fiesta, the 7th major edition of lille3000, and the exhibition 'Pom pom Pidou', featuring works from the Pompidou's collection curated by Jeanne Brun and Jean-Max Colard (26 April – 9 November, 2025).

Occupying the entirety of the Palais de Tokyo, 'Ugo Rondinone: I & John Giorno' was the first retrospective of the life and work of John Giorno, a key figure of the American underground scene from 1960s until his passing in 2019. The late artist's husband and frequent collaborator, the Swiss artist Ugo Rondinone, conceived the exhibition as a work in its own right and combined poetry, visual art, music, and performance. The "I" of the exhibition's title referred to a collective "I," as Rondinone invited each of us to share and to feel the spiritual and political commitment of an iconic figure of American counterculture. Structured in eight chapters, each of which celebrated an aspect of Giorno's unique artistic and multi-layered language, it included site-specific installations of Giorno's paintings, drawings, and moving-image works, as well as works by artists who have portrayed him, including Andy Warhol's cinematic masterpiece *Sleep* (1963), the film's remake by Pierre Huyghe, and paintings of Giorno by Elizabeth Peyton, Françoise Janicot, Verne Dawson, Billy Sullivan and Judith Eisler. Rirkrit Tiravanija presented an multi-media installation that involved a reconstruction, at scale 1, of Giorno's studio with a 12-hour video of the artist performing his poems. Ugo Rondinone created a four-channel video installation featuring Giorno, wearing a tuxedo and in bare feet, performing his iconic piece *Thanx 4 Nothing* on an empty stage in the Palais des Glaces in Paris, which is now part of the Pinault Collection. Also included was an installation of images of Giorno's vast personal archive, as well as Giorno's Buddhist shrine and collection of Buddhist scrolls and objects.

Whether they are recorded on an album, painted on a canvas, delivered on stage, printed on a T-shirt, or deconstructed in the pages of a book, Giorno considers poems as forms of expression that can live within different contexts using different technologies and formats. This multi-disciplinary approach radically democratizes the creative act and places Giorno's work within a rich and diverse range of communities and histories. As a result, his work inspires new ways to think about how art, poetry, performance, music, spirituality, and activism can become productively entangled and cross-fertilized. Ten years after his landmark exhibition at the Palais de Tokyo, and 5 years after his passing, *'Merci! John Giorno'* celebrates the lasting impact his work has had on others.

— Anthony Huberman, Artistic Director of GPS (Giorno Poetry Systems)

The group show will feature works by **Julie BÉna, William S. Burroughs, David Douard, Verne Dawson, Judith Eisler, John Giorno, Tarek Lakhriissi, Mélanie Matranga, Clément Rodzielski, Ugo Rondinone, Billy Sullivan, and Rirkrit Tiravanija.**

Almine Rech and Giorno Poetry Systems would like to extend their thanks to Sylvia Kouvali, Casey Kaplan, Galerie Allen, and Galerie Chantal Crousel for their generous contributions to this exhibition.