

PETER HALLEY AND UGO RONDINONE
'STILL' A TWO-PERSON DIALOGUE EXHIBITION

by Mark Westall



Ugo Rondinone, *lax low lullaby*, 2010, wood, hardware, enamel, 320 x 260 x 15 cm, 126 x 102 3/8 x 5 7/8 ins. © Ugo Rondinone. Courtesy of Studio Rondinone & Modern Art, London

Peter Halley, *Prison with Conduit II*, 1992-1993, cast fiberglass, steel, acrylic, 175.3 x 238.8 cm, 69 x 94 ins. © Peter Halley. Courtesy the artist & Modern Art, London

Architectural elements, including windows, doors, walls, conduits, smokestacks and cells, all play a significant part in the works of both Halley and Rondinone. 'Still' brings together a number of key motifs within each artist's practice, in a unique conversation that has been reduced exclusively to an installation of greyscale, monochromatic works.

On the ground floor, Rondinone will exhibit two ominous and monumental door sculptures fitted with a variety of bolts and chains. Whilst these austere sculptures appear introverted and hostile, they are also subverted by their larger-than-life, almost cartoon-like essence. They dwarf the viewer before them, and contain no concrete answer to whom is being contained, to where these doors might lead, or if we are being shut out. Many of the works in Rondinone's oeuvre carry suggestions of purpose, intention and utility. Yet these symbols are rendered contradictory and dysfunctional: doors are locked, windows contain no view, there is no exit.

Alongside these sculptures, Halley will present three prison paintings. These works feature the repeated forms of multiple reductive prison motifs, each fitting into the surface of the work as if it were a puzzle – prisons interlinked. Here, geometry might be conceived as a metaphor for society, and indeed geometry and symmetry as a metaphor of government. The works of both artists will be exhibited on a reflective cinderblock wallpaper by Halley that covers the entire gallery.

On the first floor, Halley will exhibit a suite of three wall reliefs made in the mid-1990s, titled 'Cell with Conduit', 'Prison with Conduit' and 'Static'. These works are cast fiberglass 'paintings', and are painted in combinations of greys. The works are exhibited upon struts, so that they appear to float in front of the wall. For both Halley and Rondinone, images of containment and isolation can also possess a spiritual dimension.

In direct dialogue with these works is Rondinone's confrontational free-standing brick painting on burlap. Previously Rondinone has spoken of the professions of his parents in relation to these works ("My Father was a builder, my Mother a seamstress"), though the symbol of

this white brick wall offers itself as a foreboding architectural element within the gallery. One has to walk around the structure and stand back from it to appreciate its function as a painting, and its relation to the poetics of the installation.

In the reoccurring motifs of containment and hostility, as well as a contrary spirituality, the works of both artists in dialogue explore the boundaries of what is abstract, not only within art, but within human behaviours. Together these works index the different formal languages developed by Halley and Rondinone, both of whom attend to the ways architectural structures, institutions and interior spaces are organised and represent our psychological lives.