Hammer Museum Presents Major Retrospective
Opening February 10, 2019

(Los Angeles, CA)–The Hammer Museum presents a major retrospective on the work of Conceptual artist Allen Ruppersberg (b. 1944, Cleveland), the artist’s first comprehensive US survey in over 30 years. Allen Ruppersberg: Intellectual Property 1968–2018 is an opportunity to experience the artist’s work with unprecedented breadth and depth. Many of the works included, from private and public collections in Europe and elsewhere, have never before been exhibited in US museums. Organized by the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, where it premiered in March 2018, the exhibition will be on view at the Hammer Museum from February 10 – May 12, 2019.

“Allen Ruppersberg has been a force in Los Angeles for many decades,” said Hammer director Ann Philbin. “He was a key figure in establishing our city as a center for Conceptual art with innovative projects like Al’s Cafe (1969), which functioned at once as sculpture, environment, and performance. This seminal work is part of the Hammer’s collection, and we’re thrilled to share 50 years of this artist’s impressive career.”

Ruppersberg moved to Los Angeles in the mid-1960s with the goal of becoming an illustrator, but soon became active in an emerging scene alongside artists such as John Baldessari, Ed Ruscha, William Leavitt, and others exploring the interface of language and image filtered through the lens of mass culture. His early projects—including environments made with found objects; wry, narrative photo works; and redrawn book covers—began a career-long practice of creating works that prompt both reading and looking, and that intertwine fact with fiction.

By the mid-1970s, he was actively working between Los Angeles, New York, and Europe. Ruppersberg’s projects have always had at their center a focus on the American vernacular—or, as the artist characterizes it, the “vocabulary of the ordinary.” The artist has drawn from his vast archive of books, newspapers, records, films, and ephemera to create work ranging from meticulously detailed drawings of books to collages made from calendars to sculptures derived from vintage comics. Perhaps more than any other artist of his generation, he has mined the nuances of culture through its visual details, unsung conventions and modes of the everyday, often welcoming the involvement of the viewer as social participant, an aspect of his work that has had particular resonance with a younger generation of artists.

Featuring more than 120 works made over the past 50 years, the exhibition includes Ruppersberg’s photo works combining text and image, early assemblage sculptures, and his groundbreaking environments *Al’s Cafe* (1969) and *Al’s Grand Hotel* (1971), participatory projects that helped put Los Angeles on the map as a center for Conceptual art.

**Exhibition Sections:**

**Locations: 1968–1973**
The exhibition includes a range of Ruppersberg’s earliest “Location Pieces,” made as site-specific projects or assemblages and show his engagement with found objects and elements from nature. Also included are examples of the artist’s photo works, primarily made in and around Los Angeles between 1968-1974, in which he formed wry narrative vignettes using text and image. In the key early works *Al’s Cafe* (1969) and *Al’s Grand Hotel* (1971), he created viewer-activated spaces—in this case a functioning café with small assemblage sculptures served as “meals” and later a hotel, complete with themed guest rooms and entertainment. Deftly combining sculpture, performance, and the prepared environment, it can be seen today as progenitors of what became known in the 1990s as “relational aesthetics.”

**Reading and Copying: 1974–1984**
“From the very beginning,” Ruppersberg noted, “I found that the things I was looking to make had as much to do with words as with pictures.” His affinity for novels, screenplays, newspaper articles, and other writing have informed much of his work since the mid-1970s. Some works depict books as objects, as in the painting *Greetings from California* (1972), where a book floats over the Hollywood hills. Other works use his own handwriting, as in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1974), a series of 20 canvases onto which he transcribed the entire text of Oscar Wilde’s novel in felt-tipped pen. *Reminders* (1991) is a sculptural work comprised of custom-made, imitation mass-produced books, displayed as if on a bookstore’s discount table. *Reading Standing Up* (2004-2008) is a tiled floor containing a poem to be walked on and read at the same time.

**The Archive: 1985–2003**
“I am definitely a custodian of obscure and disappearing things of all sorts,” Ruppersberg remarked, considering his own process of translating the archival into art. The exhibition includes a range of works drawn from the artist’s vast repository of books, magazines, comic books, newspapers, posters, records, and films. This section features “Cover Art” (1985), a series of photo-collages made from vintage wall calendars; *Lectures and Film Screenings* (1994), a walk-in installation that evokes a school hallway with audible lectures behind its doors and a window into an “audiovisual room” with aging televisions playing instructional films; *Big Trouble* (2010), a large-scale work based on Uncle Scrooge McDuck comics of the 1950s; and *The New Five Foot Shelf* (2001), in which life-size photographs of the artist’s former New York studio line the gallery walls, creating an immersive and unconventional self-portrait.

**Memorials: 2004–2018**
Many of Ruppersberg’s later works laud or memorialize fellow artists, poets, novelists, and musicians who were crucial to his own development as an artist. In *Rauschenberg* (2014), a 44-foot collage comprised of cut and collaged letters, he transcribes Robert Rauschenberg’s obituary from the *New York Times* word for word, creating a poignant portrait. Several of his large-scale memorials are showcased in the exhibition, including *The Singing Posters: Allen Ginsburg’s Howl by Allen Ruppersberg (Part 1-3)* (2003/2005), a mural-scaled work in which the famous Beat poem is printed phonetically on vibrantly colored advertising posters made at L.A.’s now-defunct Colby Poster Printing Company.

*Allen Ruppersberg: Intellectual Property 1968–2018* is organized by the Walker Art Center, and curated by senior curator Siri Engberg, with assistance from curatorial fellows Jordan Carter and Fabián Leyva-
Barargán. The Hammer’s presentation is organized by curator Aram Moshayedi, with curatorial assistant Ikechukwu Onyewuenyi.

**EXHIBITION CATALOGUE**
The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated, Walker-designed catalogue, the most comprehensive volume to date on Ruppersberg’s work. Produced in close collaboration with the artist, the book features scholarly texts, as well as Ruppersberg’s own writing. Essays in the publication have been contributed by exhibition curator Siri Engberg, the Walker’s Senior Curator of Visual Arts; Thomas Crow, the Rosalie Solow Professor of Modern Art and Associate Provost for the Arts at New York University; Matthew S. Witkovsky, the Richard and Ellen Sandor Chair and Curator in the Department of Photography at the Art Institute of Chicago; and Aram Moshayedi, curator at the Hammer Museum. The publication, produced with four cover designs, also includes an illustrated chronology of the artist’s life and work, and a comprehensive exhibition history and bibliography. The volume, available in the Hammer Store and online at [store.hammer.ucla.edu](http://store.hammer.ucla.edu), is distributed internationally by D.A.P.

**ABOUT THE ARTIST**

**RELATED PROGRAMS**

**Winter Exhibitions Celebration**
Saturday, February 9, 8–11 p.m.
Food and cash bar all night. Free and open to the public. Hammer members receive priority entry and a free first drink.

**Allen Ruppersberg & Siri Engberg**
Sunday, February 10, 2 p.m.

**Exhibition Tours**
Saturdays, February 16–May 11, 1 p.m.
On March 23, a tour will be given in Spanish.

**Allen Ruppersberg Artist Dialogues**
In these informal, 45-minute gallery talks, artists and scholars discuss specific works in the exhibition.

* Mungo Thomson
  Thursday, March 7, 6 p.m.

* Kathryn Andrews
  Thursday, March 14, 6 p.m.

* Raul Guerrero
  Thursday, March 21, 6 p.m.

* Fiona Connor
  Thursday, March 28, 6 p.m.

* Jan Tumlir
  Thursday, April 25, 6 p.m.*
Thomas Crow & Alexander Dumbadze
Tuesday, April 30, 7:30 p.m.

Curator Walk-through
Sunday, May 12, 2 p.m.
Curator Aram Moshayedi leads a walk-through of the exhibition.

CREDIT LINE

Lead support for the exhibition is provided by the Henry Luce Foundation. Major support is provided by the Prospect Creek Foundation and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. Additional support is generously provided by Carlo Bronzini Vender, Jill and Peter Kraus, Margo Leavin, and Maja Oeri. The Hammer Museum’s presentation is generously supported by Kathi and Gary Cypres and by Karyn Kohl and Silas Dilworth, with additional support from the Lenore S. and Bernard A. Greenberg Fund.

Media sponsorship is provided by Cultured Magazine, KCET, and KCRW 89.9.

ABOUT THE HAMMER MUSEUM
The Hammer Museum is part of the School of the Arts and Architecture at UCLA, and offers exhibitions and collections that span classic to contemporary art. It holds more than 50,000 works in its collection, including one of the finest collections of works on paper in the nation, the Grunwald Center for the Graphic Arts. Through a wide-ranging, international exhibition program and the biennial, Made in L.A., the Hammer highlights contemporary art since the 1960s, especially the work of emerging and under recognized artists. The exhibitions, permanent collections, and nearly 300 public programs annually—including film screenings, lectures, symposia, readings, music performances, and workshops for families—are all free to the public.

HAMMER MUSEUM INFORMATION
Admission to all exhibitions and programs at the Hammer Museum is free, made possible through the generosity of benefactors Erika J. Glazer and Brenda R. Potter. Hours: Tuesday–Friday 11 a.m.–8 p.m., Saturday & Sunday 11 a.m.–5 p.m. Closed Mondays and national holidays. Hammer Museum, 10899 Wilshire Boulevard at Westwood, Los Angeles. Onsite parking $6 (maximum 3 hours) or $6 flat rate after 6 p.m. Visit hammer.ucla.edu for details or call 310-443-7000.