



MEDIA ADVISORY

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Media Inquiries: Nancy Lee, 310-443-7016, nlee@hammer.ucla.edu

Hammer Museum Presents Major Retrospective *Allen Ruppertsberg: Intellectual Property 1968-2018* Opening February 10, 2019



(Los Angeles, CA)–The Hammer Museum presents a major retrospective on the work of Conceptual artist Allen Ruppertsberg (b. 1944, Cleveland), the artist’s first comprehensive US survey in over 30 years. ***Allen Ruppertsberg: 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 Ruppertsberg 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.”

Ruppertsberg 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. Ruppertsberg’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.

Image captions (L-R): Allen Ruppertsberg, *Greetings from California*, 1972. Acrylic on canvas. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Purchase with funds from Ron Bailey, Peter Norton, Phil Aarons, Kevin Brine, Beth Rudin DeWoody, Raymond J. McGuire, Jon Sandelman, and David Wasserman, 2005.16. Courtesy Whitney Museum of American Art; Allen Ruppertsberg, *The Singing Posters: Allen Ginsberg’s Howl by Allen Ruppertsberg (Parts I-III)*, 2003/2005 (detail). Commercially printed letterpress posters. Courtesy the artist and Greene Naftali, New York; photo courtesy Skirball Museum, Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles; photo: Robert Wedemeyer.

Featuring more than 120 works made over the past 50 years, the exhibition includes Ruppertsberg'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 Ruppertsberg'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," Ruppertsberg 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. *Remainders* (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," Ruppertsberg 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 Ruppertsberg'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 Ruppertsberg (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 Ruppertsberg: 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-

Barragán. 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 Ruppertsberg's work. Produced in close collaboration with the artist, the book features scholarly texts, as well as Ruppertsberg'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, is distributed internationally by D.A.P.

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Allen Ruppertsberg currently lives and works in New York and Santa Monica, California. Recent solo exhibitions include *Air de Paris, Paris* (2016); Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles (2015); Greene Naftali, New York (2014); MFC-Michèle Didier, Paris (2014); Greengrassi, London (2014); Wiels, Brussels (2014); and The Art Institute of Chicago (2012). His work is in many public collections, including The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Milwaukee Art Museum, WI; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

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 Ruppertsberg & Siri Engberg

Sunday, February 10, 2 p.m.

The artist Allen Ruppertsberg is joined in conversation by Walker Art Center senior curator Siri Engberg, who organized *Allen Ruppertsberg: Intellectual Property 1968–2018*, the first comprehensive US survey in over three decades of the Conceptual artist's work.

Exhibition Tours

Saturdays, February 16–May 11, 1 p.m.

Educators lead tours of *Allen Ruppertsberg: Intellectual Property 1968–2018*.

On March 23, a tour will be given in Spanish.

Allen Ruppertsberg 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.

Art historians Thomas Crow and Alexander Dumbadze discuss the artistic milieu of the 1960s and 1970s and how it shaped Allen Ruppersberg and his contemporaries. Crow's recent book, *No Idols: The Missing Theology of Art*, turns away from contemporary cultural theories to address a blind spot in today's art historical inquiry: religion.

Dumbadze is the author of *Bas Jan Ader: Death Is Elsewhere*, about the late Dutch-born Conceptual artist Bas Jan Ader.

Curator Walk-through

Sunday, May 12, 2 p.m.

Curator **Aram Moshayedi** leads a walk-through of the exhibition.

CREDIT LINE

Allen Ruppersberg: Intellectual Property 1968–2018 is organized by the Walker Art Center.

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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.