

Allen Ruppertsberg

One of Many: Origins and Variants

Exhibition Events

Thursday 20 April

7pm, Meet in Gallery 1

**'The Crack of Doom on the Hydrogen
Jukebox' with Geoff Ward**

FREE but please book your place

Geoff Ward, Deputy Principal
University of Dundee, who actually
met Allen Ginsberg, will read from the
poet's path-breaking works. He will
commence with a response to *The
Singing Posters: Poetry, Sound,
Collage, Sculpture, Book. Allen
Ginsberg's Howl by Allen Ruppertsberg*
(2003) in the exhibition.

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Allen Ruppertsberg quote

Allen Ruppertsberg is a constant collector. Over the past forty years he has amassed a large collection of the stuff of everyday life: books, magazines, postcards, photographs, slides, calendars, comic books, newspaper clippings, obituaries, educational videos. This archive of memorabilia and ephemera both informs and finds its way into Ruppertsberg's expansive practice, which has ranged from poster series to large-scale public works. This exhibition brings together a number of his major installations from 1970 to 2005 to provide a comprehensive view of his unique and influential practice.

A key member of the Los Angeles art scene in the late sixties and early seventies and one of the first generation of what became known as Conceptual artists, Ruppertsberg along with his contemporaries sought to challenge the autonomy of works of art. Instead of producing work/objects simply for display in museums or galleries he was more interested in incorporating his art within everyday life and vice versa. By using the common vernacular and re-using mass produced cultural symbols and materials

dates

he aims to produce art about *what is common and particular to everyone*.

All the things in my collections are basically different forms of words and pictures: films, book, magazines, and comics. Some of it is from a personal past, but I would say the majority of it is from the vast contemporary cultural past which surrounds me.

This exhibition brings together works from the 1960s to the present including sculptures, installations, drawings and prints, as well as objects and artefacts that were part of his early non-gallery installation projects in Los Angeles: the fully functioning *Al's Café* (1969) and *Al's Grand Hotel* (1971), which appear here in the installation *These Fragments* (1968-2003).

The entrance to the exhibition is illuminated by an entire wall covered in posters. Inspired by a 1959 recording of Allen Ginsberg's notorious poem 'Howl', Allen Ruppertsberg produced *The Singing Posters: Poetry, Sound, Collage, Sculpture, Book. Allen Ginsberg's Howl by Allen Ruppertsberg* (2003) which comprises a phonetically translated version of the poem printed onto commercial 'Day-Glo' advertising posters. These are interspersed with found road-side posters from advertisements for dog shows to real estate signage.

Ginsberg was one of the leading exponents of the Beat Generation in the 50s and in order to access and understand his original poem the viewer is compelled to read the poem out loud, reintroducing the text into contemporary life and 'breathing life' back into this tirade.

Remembrance of Ginsberg is also found in *Letter to a Friend* (1997) one of several works to deal with the notion of memorial. Laid out on the gallery floor in black and white tiles, this memorial is written in the form of a letter from Allen to an unknown friend. It includes the names of important and influential figures from the artistic and cultural worlds who all happened to die in 1997 and include artists Willem de Kooning, Martin Kippenberger and Roy Lichtenstein. In both these works Ruppertsberg opens up the normally private act of reflection on the passing of someone into the collective, public consciousness.

In the same room the enigmatic *Where's Al?* (1972) is displayed. This work consists of Polaroid photographs interspersed with index cards. The index cards each contain different texts which relay conversations about Al. The work reveals something of Al's life; where he lives, his hobbies, what he's watching on TV and most importantly what he reads, from detective novels and fanzines to 'the great works of literature', but Al

remains absent, mysterious; a fictional character in his own real life narrative.

His love of books is apparent throughout the exhibition and his influences and interests range from Ginsberg to Oscar Wilde to the daily newspapers. *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1974) is a word for word copy of Wilde's famous novel about a painting. Written out in pen over 20 canvases, the piece becomes a painting about a book. This act of copying is prevalent within Ruppertsberg's work and it allows him *to convey himself through a text, written by another, inviting the viewer to see the other's work through his eyes*.

To reveal art and conceal the artist is art's aim.

Oscar Wilde, Preface to *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, 1890

Kunstkammer (1991) and *The New Five Foot Shelf* (2001) both offer access to Ruppertsberg's vast personal collections. *Kunstkammer* borrows its title from the amateur collections of curiosities that existed before public museums and *The New Five Foot Shelf* takes its name from the 1910 encyclopedic book of knowledge 'The Five-Foot Shelf of Books' published by P.F. Collier & So, New York. To make his Five Foot Shelf Ruppertsberg condensed the contents of his New York studio producing fifty leather bound volumes of collected texts, and a series of large scale colour

photographs of the studio. This work also exists as a website (www.diaart.org/ruppertsberg) making the archive accessible to all.

'I'm interested in the translation of life to art because it seems to me that the world is just fine as it is'

Allen Ruppertsberg, 'Fifty Helpful Hints for the Art of the Everyday', 1984

Throughout his career Ruppertsberg has also produced a number of major public projects, elements of which have been installed throughout the exhibition. Street Signs from *Evening Time is Reading Time* (1991), Utrecht and *The Best of All Possible Worlds* (1997), Münster are lit up on the approach to the galleries and *Siste Viator (Stop Traveller)* made for a project in Arnhem in 1993, welcomes visitors into Gallery 1. Together these projects evoke the feeling of a different time and place, and bring to mind the worlds we travel to or find ourselves in on entering the pages of a book.

'The individual search for the secret of life and death. That is the inspiration and the key'

Allen Ruppertsberg (b. 1944,) has lived and worked in both Los Angeles and New York at different times in his career and is currently included in the major survey exhibition *Los Angeles 1955 – 1985* at the Centre Georges Pompidou Paris.