

she: Where's Al?

he:

Note to Self

by Steven Stern

From index cards to diners, Allen Ruppersberg's approach to making art is replete with endless loops of reference

she: What happened to Al?

he: He went to New York I think.

she: Really?



he: Hotels and bars. I'm surprised Al missed this.

he: He too.



he: Where

she: I do

he: An o



she: I tried to call Al but his phone was disconnected.
he: Only temporarily.



she: Where's Al?
he: I think he went back to Cleveland.

he:
she:



she: Dining and dancing. Al's missing out.
she: He'll be here.

Where's Al? (detail) 1972 Colour photographs, typed index cards Dimensions variable

'Start out and go in.'

Allen Ruppersberg, *Fifty Helpful Hints on the Art of the Everyday* (1984)¹

The last time I encountered Allen Ruppersberg's work in a gallery – at his most recent New York show – the centre-piece of the exhibition was a jigsaw puzzle. It sat on a low table in the middle of the room, already completed, the pieces fitted together. Its box – a dead-on simulation of the mass-market form – was on the table next to it. The puzzle depicted crammed bookshelves: one wall of the Broadway studio that Ruppersberg occupied from 1986 to 2001. It was a photograph recycled from an earlier piece, *The New Five Foot Shelf* (2001) a project he did for Dia Center for the Arts in New York documenting his sprawling collection of literary and Pop cultural ephemera. The gallery was selling the puzzle in an edition of 15. And I got to thinking:

the art collectors who purchased this object, what would they do with it? How, ideally, would it be displayed?

There was a brief period in my pre-adolescence when I bought and tried to do jigsaw puzzles. I remember that there is a thing sold in hobby shops known as 'puzzle glue'. You smear the stuff on the surface of your completed puzzle and it coheres, a joy forever, ready for framing. I vaguely recall doing this once, attempting to preserve my precious assemblage. It was all a bit embarrassing, really. So I wondered: might collectors assemble Ruppersberg's puzzle – or maybe hire someone to do it for them – and then glue it together like this, display it on the wall? Connect up their own assemblage with the artist's? Somehow I doubted it, though it was an option, just as leaving it in its box was an option, an option that most art works don't provide, exactly.

The gallery statement for the Christine Burgin Gallery show quoted from Georges Perec's *Life: A User's Manual* (1987) a novel in the form of a puzzle (or the other way round) that has a puzzle-maker as one of the main characters. (The late French author has been a recurring reference point for Ruppersberg, perhaps an exemplary figure. Among many other things he has written an essay about the various methods of arranging one's books.) When the puzzle is completed, and each piece fits into the next, Perec claims, 'the piece disappears, ceases to exist as a piece'. But is that true, really? Does the piece ever stop being a piece, even when it is integrated into the puzzle? No matter how well the thing coheres, a puzzle never becomes the picture it depicts. Even if you slather it with puzzle glue and stick it on your wall, what you are displaying is never simply the image, but your own accomplishment, a record of time spent.

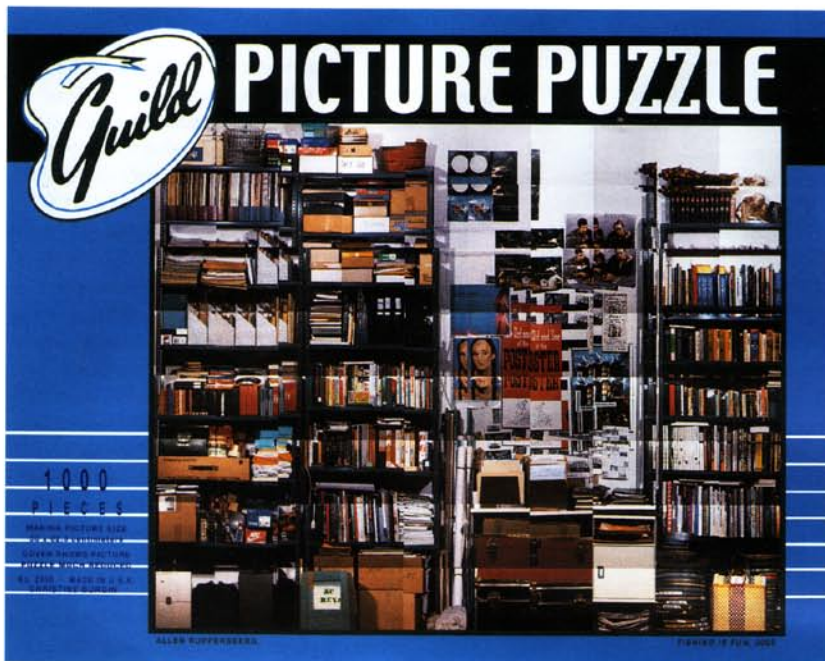
Honey, I Rearranged the Collection Whilst I Was Drunk, Can You Tell? 2002 Silkscreen and mixed media on paper 61x65cm
Courtesy: greengrassi, London

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A Ruppersberg 2000

Honey, I rearranged the collection while I was drunk. Can you tell? I can't.



Above: *Fishing is Fun* 2005 Jigsaw puzzle Box size 37x29x5cm
Below: *How to Remember a Better Tomorrow* 1969 Mixed media Installation view at John Weber Gallery, New York
Above: Published by Christine Burgin, New York Below: Margo Leavin, Los Angeles

'Each work is singular, unique and resists any stylistic or linear analysis. Each work is one of a kind.'² So Ruppersberg writes (about his own practice, one assumes) in the aphoristic 1985 text *Fifty Helpful Hints on the Art of the Everyday*. For my own purposes this is, admittedly, less than 'helpful'. Analysis is what I've signed up for here, and, like it or not, stylistic or linear is the way it's usually done. Not that I needed Al to inform me of the intractability of his *oeuvre*. I figured that out early on. Exhausted by the exhaustiveness of his catalogue, I feared offering nothing but an endless series of re-descriptions. So if the task is in some way to 'cover' Ruppersberg's career, I'll admit failure right from the outset. ('Cover' that is, as in presenting a neatly completed, finished object, like a published book finally between covers after much scattered effort.)

At the same time Ruppersberg's work is replete with cross-connections, quotations and borrowings, endless loops of reference. Everything he's done is potentially metonymic: one piece (any piece) can describe and stand for the whole. To do justice to the entire body of work one would need to be constantly jumping forward and back in time, in a series of flashbacks, back-tracks, cross-cuts and dissolves (something like a classic Hollywood film or Proust). One would need to look at everything, use every piece: nothing can be dismissed. Therefore: either a blank chronology – one *sui generis* thing after the other – or else a network so spidery with multi-directional connections as to be almost illegible. But if each work is, somehow, both resolutely singular and

endlessly intertextual, then points of entry are multiple.

One might begin, appropriately, with *Exhibit A* (1970), a work shown in Ruppersberg's first museum exhibition, at the Pasadena Museum of Art: two stacks of cardboard boxes spray-painted with the title phrase. Unlike Warhol's Brillo boxes, first exhibited six years earlier, these are 'really' boxes. They come from the supermarket and were intended to be thrown out after the show was over – which, reportedly, is just what happened. Other stacks of boxes were covered with other words – 'Solitude', 'Perfect', 'Anthrax' – terms, Howard Singerman noted, 'chosen to impend and imply, to stand just away from their definitions'.³ These words are also *serious*. But gravity is all they have, all that supports them and gives them presence. A simple push would disarticulate the pieces, rearrange the letters and send meaning tumbling down.

'We should have long ago got into the habit of moving about, of moving about freely, without it being too much trouble. But we haven't done so, we've stayed where we were; things have stayed as they were. We haven't asked ourselves why it was there and not somewhere else, why it was like this and not otherwise. Then, obviously, it was too late, our habits were formed. We began to think we were well off where we were. After all, we were as well off there as over the road [...] We have difficulty changing, even if it's only the position of our furniture.'

Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces*⁴

In his early days in Los Angeles, Ruppersberg moved from apartment to apartment frequently, packing up and relocating on impulse. At present he shuttles between three home bases: an apartment in Brooklyn, a home studio in LA and a recently acquired apartment he shares with his sister in his home town of Brecksville, Ohio. 'It's a nice place to keep all my stuff', he says.

'I use my art to transform my life, I use my life to make my art.'

*Fifty Helpful Hints on the Art of the Everyday*⁵

Also at the Pasadena Museum show: *Lee Balianz*, an alphabetical grid of Los Angeles addresses, hung (noted Allan McCollum) 'the way detectives might arrange lists of clues on a wall to try to make sense of them'.⁶ These locations are missing a crucial component, though: the names to which they are attached. Clues are always partial. They can be used to solve the puzzle, but they themselves stand outside the puzzle.

Among Ruppersberg's early projects *Where's Al?* (1972) stands out – as its title suggests – as the signature work. Described by the artist as a 'short story', it is, basically, nothing but clues. The structure is as direct and simple as a knock-knock joke – or, more to the point, a game of hide-and-seek. An installation of 150 casual snapshots and 121 typed index cards, it appears at first to be some sort of documentation. The photos depict various countercultural-looking types having fun at the beach, at parties, in coffee shops – that familiar sort of knowing fun, collecting memories in a self-conscious way. (They could all be captioned with that picture postcard phrase 'wish you were here'.) The texts are miniature plays, dialogues in which unnamed characters repeat versions of the title question over and over, in banal, deadpan conversations:

She: I thought Al was in New York.

He: No, not yet.

She: But he's not here.

He: No.





Above: *Al's Café* 1969 Installation view Below: *Al's Café (Johnny Cash Special #3)* 1969 Mixed media Dimensions variable
Opposite page: *Al's Grand Hotel* 1971 Installation view

He: *Where's Al?*

She: *Maybe he's staying home to read?*

He: *What's he been reading?*

She: *Joan Didion.*⁷

The unnamed interlocutors apparently know Al well; they provide clues to what he likes (hotels and bars, chess, Mexican food), know he travels often, has anti-social periods, reads a lot. But the information they provide begins at some point to break down, to contradict itself. (Al wakes up at seven, at eight or at eleven; he's in Texas or Cleveland; travelling or 'hibernating on Sunset'.) 'Every photograph is a certificate of presence', Roland Barthes once wrote, but in Ruppertsberg's fiction photographs are called on to be the opposite, to certify absence. *Where's Al?* is a mystery story, but an ambiguous one. If Al's absence is suspicious – identifies him as 'the suspect' – it is equally possible he is the victim. The story hints that something tragic may have happened:

He: *Isn't Al here?*

She: *No. Not yet.*

He: *He could be in an accident somewhere.*

She: *I guess.*

Still the gatherings go on. He and She persist in hanging out without him. The question the title poses is never answered. *Where is Al?* What is he avoiding?

'[I]f playing hide-and-seek is one of our emblematic games – at once testing the appetite of the seeker and the resolve of the one who hides – it is also a game haunted by the possibility of escape, of being able to escape the intention, the desire of another (chosen)

person. Every successful game of hide-and-seek – and one way or another, barring tragedy, it is always successful – reassures the players that no one can escape, that there is nowhere to escape to. The transgression is to disappear, to find a place where no one keeps an eye on you.'

Adam Phillips, *Houdini's Box*⁸

Georges Perec's grandest *tour de force*, and the reason his name shows up in trivia columns, is his 1969 lipogram novel *La Disparition*, a work written without the benefit of the letter 'E' (and translated into English in 1994 as *A Void*). As the title sug-

gests, it is a mystery, a missing person story, concerned with the disappearance of one Anton Voyl, whose absence structures the plot. The linguistic constraint is never acknowledged in the text – it can't be, in fact. 'Reality only needs a slight adjustment to make it art', Ruppertsberg claimed in one of his *Hints*.⁹ Such an adjustment was at the centre of *Al's Café* (1969), a more or less actual dining establishment the artist created, located in a Los Angeles storefront, open every Thursday evening for three months. The place certainly *seemed* real. To McCollum it appeared to be 'the American café of all American cafés, looking as if it had been nurtured for 40 years by a caring café-owner, filled with memories to be shared with generations of patrons'.¹⁰ And, for the brief time it existed, it served a real and valuable purpose for the Los Angeles art world, offering somewhere to hang out, a gathering place for a rootless community in a centreless city.

But there were several crucial adjustments to the café's apparent reality – most notably, what was on the menu. Ruppertsberg himself acted as short-order cook, creating sculptural 'dinners' on the spot. Among the offerings: 'three rocks with crumpled paper wad', 'seashells and pinto beans', 'small dish of pine cones and cookie' – all exactly what they claimed to be, all sold for the price of a hamburger. (Assemblage as combination platter, served with real coffee and beer.) The café was a huge success, filled beyond capacity every week for its brief, and abruptly terminated, run. Local and visiting artists, the hip LA *demi-monde* – from







Dennis Hopper to Joni Mitchell – stopped by to see what was going on. The inedible ‘dinners’, which were sold like hot cakes, sold like hot cakes.

Speaking of his early days as an artist, Ruppertsberg has said: ‘It was the period of post-studio work and I, like others, was interested in getting away from the obsession with the studio and works that were only seen in galleries and museums.’¹¹ *Post-studio*: of the various names for Conceptual practice, this one is the most specific to its place and time: Los Angeles of the late 1960s. The term was used as the title of a CalArts class taught by John Baldessari, who claims he lifted the phrase from Carl Andre.¹² But it’s a strange phrase – stranger than most ‘post-something’ coinages – mixing temporality and location. The studio is a place, and how can something be ‘after’ a place? The grammatical contradiction pokes at the way the studio is a metaphor (the accumulated weight of the past, a series of practices, a hierarchy of values) while still remaining an actual place (where artistic work gets done). The puzzling formulation raises questions. What is after the studio? Where do you go once you’ve left?

AL’S GRAND HOTEL: guests have nearby access to freeway network which puts all Southern California points of interest within a few minutes of easy driving
Brochure, *Al’s Grand Hotel* (1971)

If the café was about connecting the art object to the Los Angeles street, Ruppertsberg’s subsequent ‘real life’ project – a seven-room hotel in a rented house – provided access to an even larger network of associations and had even grander ambitions: you could come and hang out, stay the night, move in temporarily, make Al’s created environment part of your own travels and life story. In place of the assemblage–dinners of the café, guests were offered thematically decorated rooms: ‘The Bridal Suite’, ‘The Jesus Room’ (complete with human-scale wooden cross), ‘The Al Room’ (Ruppertsberg had a reputation by this point, and his public persona

was itself a ‘point of interest’). Besides being simultaneously a real hotel and an art work, it is – in the fine Hollywood tradition of remake – a restaging of the 1932 movie *Grand Hotel*. A quote from the film hung above the reception desk: ‘The same thing every day. They come and go. Nothing ever happens.’

‘This place is just like Asbury Park, New Jersey. The same stucco houses, women in pyjamas, delicatessen stores, etc. There is nothing to do except tennis, golf or the movies [...] All the writers sit in cells in a row and the minute a typewriter stops someone pokes their head in the door to see if you are thinking. Otherwise, it’s like the hotel business.’

Nathanael West writing to Josephine Herbst about the screenwriter’s life in Hollywood.¹³

According to the anonymous interlocutors of *Where’s Al?*, among the works Al is reading are ‘things on Houdini’ and ‘magic books’. In the video *A Lecture on Houdini* (1973) this research is finally put to use. In the same way that the *Café* was actually a café and the *Hotel* truly a hotel, this is really

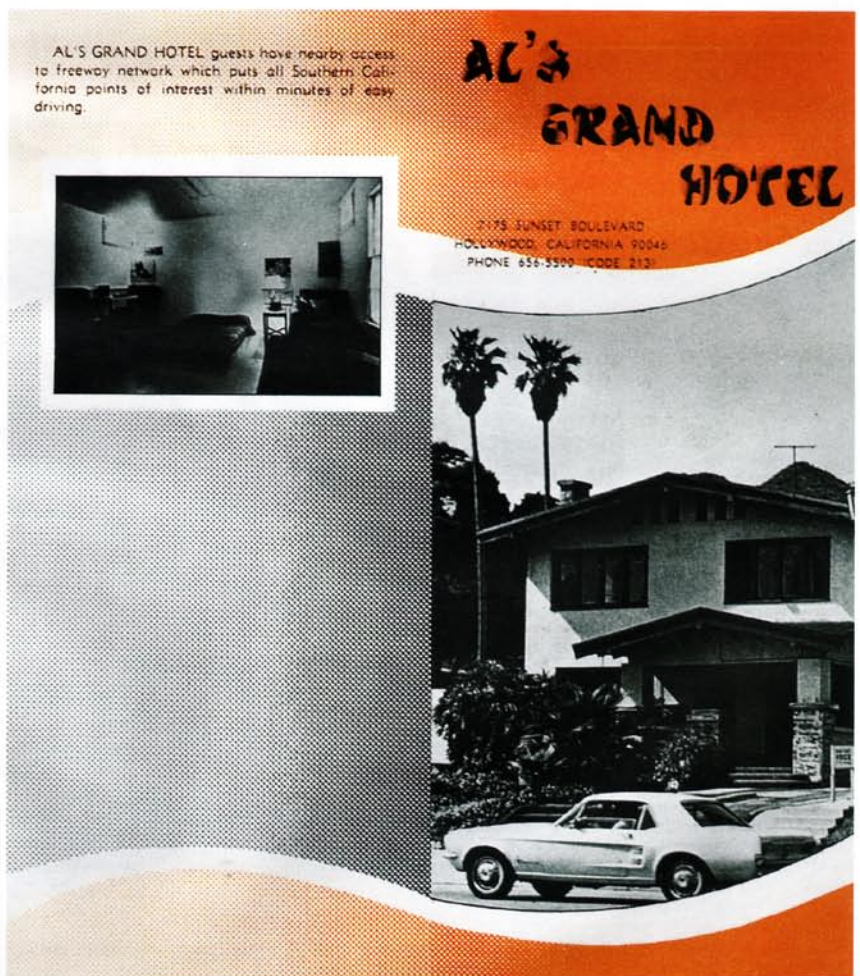
a lecture on Houdini. ‘It’s a very straightforward, serious lecture’, Ruppertsberg says. ‘The only difference, of course, is I’m trying to get out of a straitjacket while I present it.’ Which is, of course, a difference that makes a difference. While reciting his flat, earnest text, Ruppertsberg tries to elude his bondage. With mounting intensity he describes the dual obsessions of the magician’s life: to expose fraudulent spiritualists and to discover for himself if communication with the afterworld is truly possible. It’s a story of scepticism struggling against a desire to believe. With an absurd literalism Ruppertsberg’s attempts at escape mirror Houdini’s quest for transcendence. (Ultimately, neither succeeds.) But the artist’s constraint is never acknowledged in the text.

‘It is said that Houdini’s genius did not lie in invention of new effects from scratch; rather, he was a developer of the unsuspected drama in old effects.’

*A Lecture on Houdini*¹⁴

Allan McCollum suggests that the dinners served at *Al’s Café* – ‘grass patch with five

Above: *Al’s Grand Hotel* 1971 Installation view Below: *Al’s Grand Hotel* 1971 Brochure



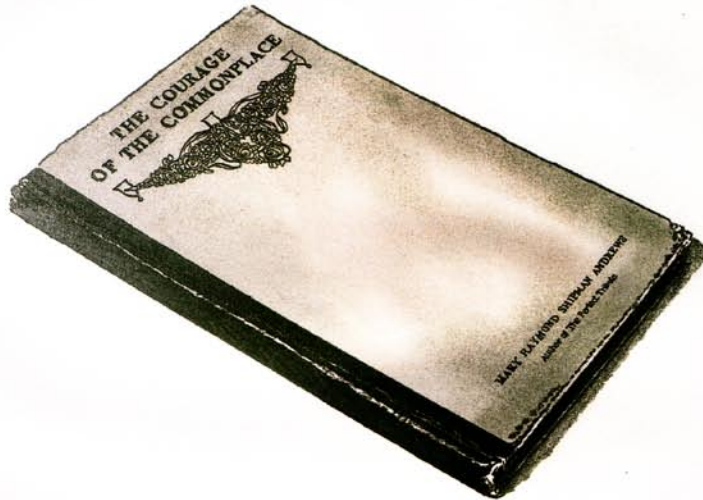
rock varieties served with seed packets on the side' and the rest of the menu – could be seen as parodic rejoinders to the earnest excesses of Land art, at the time 'already becoming rife with all kinds of fanciful, romantic and exotic "natural" primitisms'.¹⁵ Here was 'nature' served on a plate. In a similar way the Houdini lecture might perhaps be thought of as a response to the more extreme and transgressive forms of Performance art. Is there an echo of Chris Burden in Ruppertsberg's (failed) attempts to mimic what Houdini called his 'self-created hazardous work'?¹⁶ After all, the magician did not just develop the drama in old effects; he desublimated the claims of spiritualists. Consorting with the dead was just a trick, an entertainment; no real barriers were crossed.

About the *Café* and the *Hotel* Ruppertsberg has said: 'As much as I could make them, they were real. That was the point: they had to be real to escape being looked at like art.'¹⁷ If one is interested in escape, Houdini is, of course, an exemplary figure. In his unlikely profession of 'escape artist', he practised a strange and contradictory sort of anti-magic. He was simultaneously a mystifier and a demystifier. The handcuffs, boxes and chains he eluded were simply puzzles to solve, for both artist and audience. Adam Phillips wrote that the great illusionist 'wanted people to look, and to believe their eyes; and then he wanted to persuade them that seeing must not be believing'.¹⁸

When Ruppertsberg opened *Al's Café*, he was unsure how long it would last. The project's sudden ending provides a lesson in seeing and believing – and also what can happen when things escape being looked at as art: after three months of casing the establishment with plain clothes men and noting that it was full of 'longhairs' tucking into meals of 'sticks and leaves and twigs and all kinds of natural stuff', the police raided the café and hauled the artist off to court for serving alcohol without a licence. Ruppertsberg recalls that at his hearing the judge said, "Just get out of here. This is dismissed. Go away." And I thought, okay, that's perfect, that's the end. I can't do any better than this.'

'As I possess the largest collection (private or public) in the world of material regarding magic, magicians, books, scripts, programmes, spiritualistic effects, documents, steel engravings, catalogues, letters, clippings, automata, am still looking for anything that would embellish my collection on the subject of magic or mysteries.

HOUDINI, 394 E. 21 St., Brooklyn, NY' ad placed by Houdini in the *New York Evening Post*¹⁹



The Gift and the Inheritance (The Courage of the Commonplace) 1989 Pencil on paper 46x51cm
Courtesy: Christine Burgin, New York

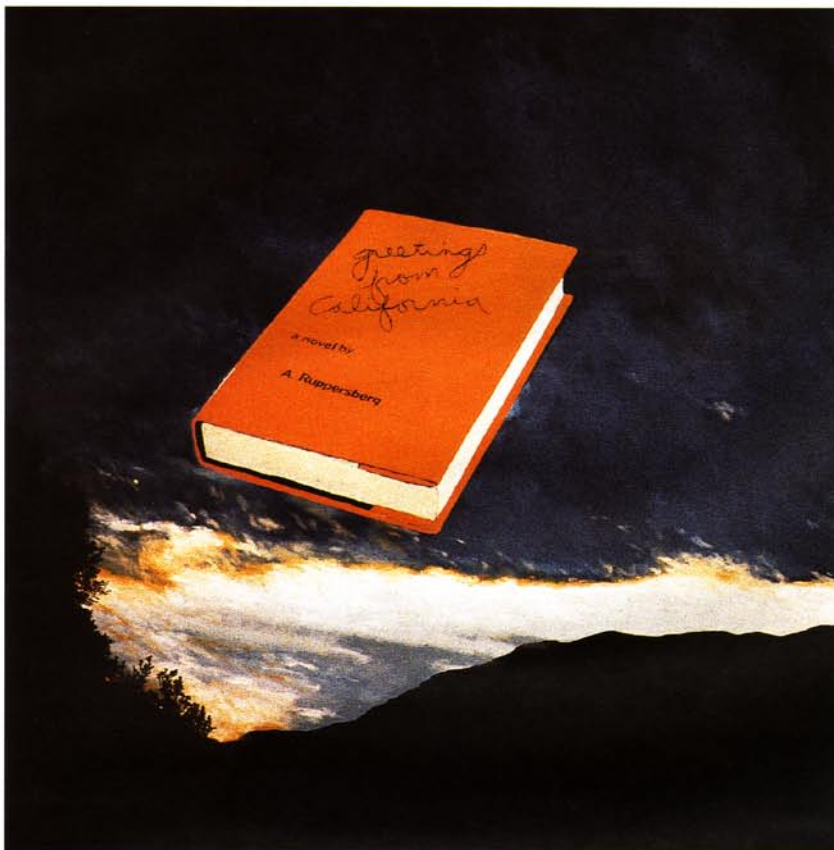
In retrospect *Where's Al?* and the *Lecture on Houdini* seem like rehearsals for (and clues about) an actual disappearance Ruppertsberg was to make, away from the sort of local, interactive community-based works he had been making: 'Because everybody knew that I did them, and they would say "well, what are you going to do next – *Al's Department Store* or *Al's Gas Station* or something?" And I thought, Okay, that's enough of that. I don't want to get identified with one thing or the other. Being a first-generation Conceptual type, it's not about that. It's about ideas and, in my case, a variety of ways to do them – never wanting to do the same thing all the time, whether it's live in one place or make the same kind of work.' So while the ideas he set into motion continued to resonate in the art world (from Gordon Matta-Clark's restaurant-as-art work *Food* (1972) to Rirkrit Tiravanija's adjusted-but-real hang-outs), *Al* escaped into the library.

'The intellect is a cleaver', Ruppertsberg has written; 'it discerns and rifts its way into the secret of things. I do not wish to be any more busy with my hands than is necessary'. Of course, that credo of a 'first-generation Conceptual type' had already been written before Ruppertsberg set pen to paper, when Thoreau first included the lines in *Walden* (1854).²⁰ In *Henry David Thoreau's Walden by Allen Ruppertsberg* (1973) the artist spent three solitary months copying out the famous bible of solitude – a project that, paradoxically, required his hands to be

constantly busy. The copied book, turned into a unique manuscript, was displayed in a handmade leather case designed to resemble a book. His subject thoroughly covered, Ruppertsberg placed his *Walden* between covers, a cover version.

Andy Warhol, Wayne Koestenbaum has argued, was suspicious of language; he 'didn't understand how grammar unfolded episodically in linear time, rather than in one violent, atemporal explosion'.²¹ Ruppertsberg, in obvious contrast, is besotted by the possibilities of language, by the episodic. It seems useful, though, to take up the distinction between the image and word as essentially one of time, of speed. How does one slow down the image, create that gradual unfolding, without leaving the realm of art behind? When Ruppertsberg began drawing pictures of books in the 1970s, he included captions that indicated the time spent drawing or the time spent reading. (Later, more detailed, book drawings thematized effort simply through their excessive realist facture.) What these drawings display is never simply the image, but the artist's accomplishment, a record of time spent.

'I'm basically a *pulp* artist', Ruppertsberg said in a 1999 interview.²² This is claiming allegiance to one side of the high/low divide, but it is also figuring that divide in terms of materials and durability. Pulp literature, by definition, is cheap and disposable. Genre itself is a technology of reproduction: endless variations on a theme.



Greetings from California 1972 Oil on canvas 183x183cm
Courtesy: Christine Burgin, New York

Ruppensberg is an obsessive collector of ephemera: old magazines and movie posters, forgotten educational films, Xeroxed flyers for Punk rock shows. And this is necessarily a strange and contradictory sort of occupation: preserving the peripheral and the disposable, saving what was never meant to be saved. Many of Ruppensberg's installations of the 1980s and 1990s – such as *How to Remember a Better Tomorrow* (1988) or *Remainders* (1991) – seem to be about the odd poignancy of this doomed, impossible project.

In the Middle Ages, before the printing press made the book a commonplace object, libraries used heavy metal chains to attach their valuable volumes to the lecterns on which they were read. Oxford University kept its books in chains well into the 18th century. Technologies of reproduction allowed books to be free of their chains, thus staging an escape.

Ruppensberg first visited New York in 1970, got his first loft space in 1975 and from 1985 to 2001 spent most of his time in the city. The works from this period are concerned with locating oneself in time, in much the same way that earlier pieces were about location in space. The artist's various collections – which include the growing archive of his own past work – become material to

be reused, preserved in new forms. If the freeway – an inexhaustible network of interconnected access points – is the model for the early work, the reclaimed loft – a layered history of forgotten past uses – might be the East Coast equivalent.

'New York was always locked in history', says Ruppensberg. 'Which is a good thing, too – and that's one reason that I moved there.' (If you're going to function as an escape artist, then locks are essential to your act.) A reporter from the *LA Times*, describing his New York studio for a 1993 article, wrote: 'The place feels like the hide-out of someone who maintains multiple lives as a researcher, detective, archivist and wistful daydreamer.'²³

In a series Ruppensberg has been working on for the last few years prints of a stately Victorian-style library are overlaid with various grids and washes of colour. They are captioned:

Honey, I rearranged the collection to let someone know how it felt to be a patron of art at the end of an era.

Honey, I rearranged the collection to show that we tried to collect Conceptual Art but wound up with something else.

Honey, I rearranged the collection as an excuse to stay away from CHELSEA, it scares me.

Honey, I rearranged the collection to showcase the work we got before anyone else even heard of the artist.

Honey, I rearranged the collection so that it represents my secret life. I'll be back in 2 weeks.

'New Yorker cartoons for the art world', Ruppensberg has called them, and they do seem designed to tweak the obsessions of the art-collecting crowd. 'But', he adds, 'they're actually almost true-to-life ideas, things that I've either heard or feel myself, or somewhere in between. It's such a particular way of thinking about collections. Art collectors are no different – they think like I do about the idea of stuff.'

As Los Angeles and New York have structured Ruppensberg's methods, his return to his home town is inspiring new work: 'In Ohio I've developed a new way of working which is purposefully covering all the bases: I'm doing a lot of work that is specifically made at Kinko's. Because Kinko's is everywhere, obviously. And so I've gotten into using the colour Xerox machine at Kinko's, which is very good. Most of my collection is ephemera of one kind or another – whether it's movie posters or record album covers or whatever – that lend themselves to reproduction on the Xerox machine. It's a way of using this stuff – that then preserves it in another way – it turns it into art, and the art lasts, and it's one way of using all of these kind of cultural bodies of stuff that I have. [Working at Kinko's] fits me in a number of ways, but I also like the anonymity of it. You go there, and they're all the same, and people don't bother you, and you're just part of that transient crowd that goes in and out of there.'

What most clearly marks Ruppensberg's work and life is *restlessness*: constant motion – from one project to another, from one medium to another, from one city to another. But there's something essentially paradoxical about the very idea of restlessness. It suggests continual activity, the absence of stability, a refusal of torpor and stasis. But, at the same time, its opposite is intensity. To be restless is to be active, but it is also to be bored, perhaps to luxuriate in a sort of pleasantly uncomfortable boredom. It is as if the decision about what to do next is deferred so as to prolong that in-between period, the moments before choice happens. When you're restless, you pace around the

apartment, walk around the neighbourhood, pull books down from the shelves, rearrange, reorganize. You don't work, exactly, though what you do may, after the fact, end up looking like work.

When I first started on this project, I spent hour after hour immersing myself in Ruppertsberg's work, poring through hundreds of slides and old catalogues. I knew that at some point I would have to call the artist himself, but I kept putting it off, deferring the moment of contact until I had mastered his history. Finally I gave up, put the books down, set aside the various shapeless scraps of notes I had accumulated and made the call. When I admitted all this to Al, he said it sounded a lot like his own relation to his past work: 'I always thought that I should just work within the basic parameters that I establish for myself, and so all the early work – I just went through a lot of ideas, because that's what I felt like doing, and all of those ideas were open-ended enough that I could go back to them any point and work on them some more. And this is what I always thought, while I was doing things in the '70s as a young artist. I realized that I was moving fast through lots of ideas, and that if I liked them in the future, I would come back and do more.

And so everything was left open and made available for further work. And so eventually, I think that's what happened. The idea of rearranging my life and the work is an ongoing subject.'

'It had to unfold gradually so that the common themes and ideas would naturally reveal themselves, just as one story generates another.'

Fifty Helpful Hints on the Art of the Everyday

'What came to the surface was the nature of the fuzzy, the uncertain, the fugitive and the unfinished, and in the end I chose deliberately to preserve the hesitant and perplexed character of these shapeless scraps, and to abandon the pretence of organizing them into something that would by rights have had the appearance (and seductiveness) of an article, with a beginning, middle and end.'

Allen Ruppertsberg's retrospective, 'One of Many – Origins and Variants', will be on show at Kunsthalle Dusseldorf from 10 December 2005 to 19 February 2006, and then travel to Dundee Contemporary Arts Museum and Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Seville.

Steven Stern is a writer living in New York.

1 Published in *Allen Ruppertsberg: The Secret of Life and Death, Volume 1: 1969-1984*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1985, p. 111

2 Ibid.

3 Howard Singerman, 'Allen Ruppertsberg: Drawn From Life', in *The Secret of Life and Death*, p. 19

4 Georges Perec, *Species of Spaces and Other Places*, ed. and trans. John Sturrock, Penguin Books, 1997, p. 71

5 *The Secret of Life and Death*, p. 113

6 Allan McCollum, 'What One Loves About Life Are the Things That Fade', in *Allen Ruppertsberg: Books, Inc.*, FRAC Limousin, 1999, p. 10

7 Reprinted in *The Secret of Life and Death*, pp. 87-104

8 Adam Phillips, *Houdini's Box*, Vintage Books, New York, 2001, p. 7

9 *The Secret of Life and Death*, p. 113

10 McCollum, p. 8

11 'Interview: Allen Ruppertsberg, Frédéric Paul', *Allen Ruppertsberg: Books, Inc.*, p. 33

12 'Interview with John Baldessari by Christopher Knight', Smithsonian Archives of American Art, 1992

13 Quoted in Otto Friedrich, *City of Nets*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1997, pp. 8-9

14 'A Lecture on Houdini', reprinted in *The Secrets of Life and Death*, p. 68

15 McCollum, p. 9

16 Quoted in Phillips, p. 20

17 Frédéric Paul interview, p. 36

18 Phillips, p. 12

19 Quoted in Phillips, p. 101

20 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden, or, Life in the Woods* (1854), Vintage Books/Library of America, New York, 1991, p. 80

21 Wayne Koestenbaum, *Andy Warhol*, Viking Penguin, New York, 2001, p. 1

22 Frédéric Paul interview, p. 44

23 Kristine McKenna, '“Stuff” is His Middle Name', *Los Angeles Times*, 21 November, 1993

Honey, I Rearranged the Collection because Poetry is Too Difficult 2002 Silkscreen and mixed media on paper 80 x 110cm
Courtesy: greengrassi, London



Honey, I Rearranged the Collection because Poetry is Too Difficult.