

In the Western world people see the work as just pattern; if I show it in the Arab world the work changes totally' Susan Hefuna

December 2010

## Allen Ruppersberg

*Allen Ruppersberg: No Time Left to Start Again*

Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles

16 September – 6 November

There's a disarmingly generous quality to Allen Ruppersberg's recent work, from the installations of pop culture and found photographs from the Los Angeles artist's personal collection, to the walls, stacks and boxes of Day-Glo posters that give phonetic shape to a poem such as Ginsberg's *Howl* (1955) or issue advertisements and exclamations. Such works facilitate an inclusive environment, in part by collapsing classist markers for aesthetic taste (the artist confers as much worth to the laminated photo as the drawing, for example, and to a Duchamp or Elvis reference). They also solicit an engaged, almost synaesthetic spectator, who reads and sings the printed word, and upon viewing a photograph of an LP starts to hear its music. As a collector, Ruppersberg is a memorialist, and his extensive work with musician and artist obituaries, for example, attests to his awareness of the responsibility to tap his archival materials for collective remembrance.

For *Allen Ruppersberg: No Time Left to Start Again*, his sixth solo exhibition at Margo Leavin Gallery, Ruppersberg assumes the mantle of reconciling himself – and the viewer – with certain cultural, biographical and urban hauntings. In *Untitled (LA in the 70s)* (all works 2010), a series of silkscreens layered with a loose, scrapbook logic, the artist maps out the 1970s art scene in era-specific yellows and greens and purples, pairing LA Metro descriptions of Sunset and Santa Monica Boulevards with drive-by shots of restaurants and textual routes through artworld nodes ('Bas Jan [Ader] knew Guy [de Cointet]', 'Guy knew Jack [Goldstein]' and Jack, unsurprisingly, knew everyone). Ruppersberg affixes address labels of still more notables on one piece (Burden, Ruscha, Lamelas et al.); in another, he organises content around an advertisement for the Girls A-Go-Go-Go club; and over all three he layers a black-and-white (but figuratively sepia-toned) photograph given to him at the opening of his 1970 exhibition at the Pasadena Art Museum, which depicts his art buds hanging in Venice.

No less nostalgic but considerably more complicated are the six pegboards that line the wall of the main gallery, silkscreened with archery targets and replica party flags (*No Time Left to Start Again / The B and D of R 'n' R*). These boards serve as display surfaces for laminated colour copies of images of musicians, newspaper obituaries and found photographs – a tailored selection of the approximately 1,000 copies that fill the cardboard boxes on the gallery floor. In a similarly designed installation last fall at the Santa Monica Museum of Art, Ruppersberg allowed visitors to make their own selections of images and move around the pegboard hooks to suit the structures of these narratives (the artist himself reorganised the display twice over the exhibition run). In an unfortunate move, the piece at Margo Leavin offers no participatory component. Much of Ruppersberg's work does not rely upon explicit interaction to produce its resonant, collective effects, but given how greatly a democratic ethos informs this piece and its Santa Monica consort, the lack of invitation to interact in this case is pretty disappointing. *Tyler Coburn*

*Untitled (LA in the 70s)*, 2010, silkscreen on paper, 127 x 97 cm. Photo: Brian Forrest. Courtesy the artist and Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles

