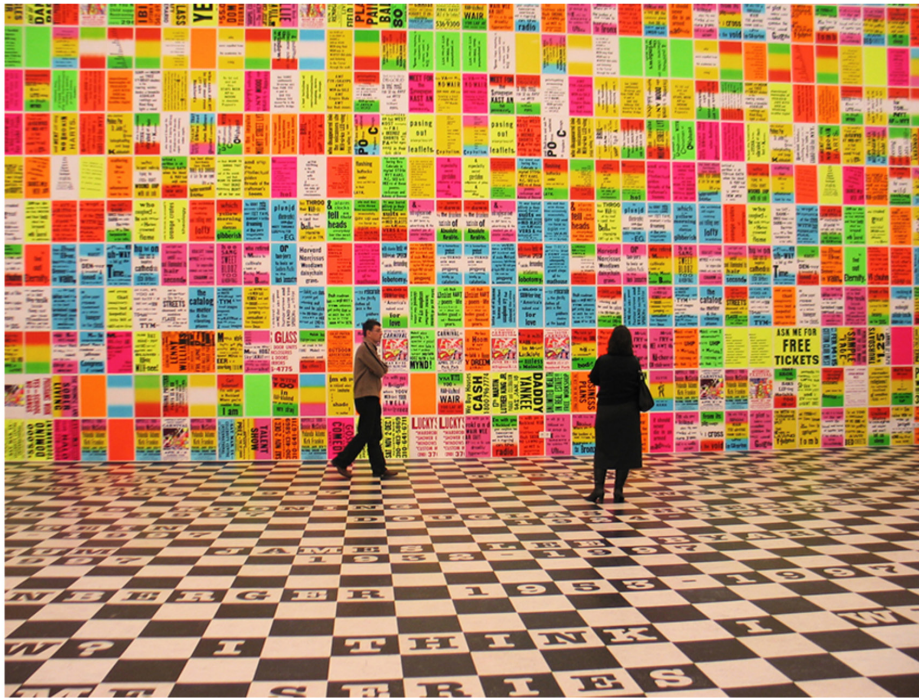


Walker Art Center opens major retrospective Allen Ruppertsberg: Intellectual Property



Allen Ruppertsberg, *The Singing Posters: Allen Ginsburg's Howl by Allen Ruppertsberg (Parts I-III), 2003/2005 (detail)*; Courtesy the artist and Greene Naftali Gallery, New York.

MINNEAPOLIS, MN. - [The Walker Art Center](#) announces the presentation of a major retrospective on the work of American artist Allen Ruppertsberg (b. 1944), who has not been the subject of a comprehensive US survey for 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. On view at the Walker from March 17 – July 29, 2018, the exhibition will travel to the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles from February 10 – May 12, 2019.

One of conceptual art's most rigorous and inventive practitioners, Ruppertsberg is among the first generation of artists to espouse a method of working privileging ideas and process over traditional aesthetic objects. Born in Cleveland, Ruppertsberg moved to Los Angeles in the mid-1960s, where he became active in an emerging art scene led by artists such as John Baldessari, Ed Ruscha, William Leavitt, and others exploring the interface of language, image, and idea filtered through the lens of mass culture. By the mid-1970s, he was actively working between Los Angeles, New York, and Europe. Ruppertsberg's projects, wide-ranging in media and approach, have always had at their center a focus on the American vernacular—or, as the artist characterizes it, the "vocabulary of the ordinary"—its books, music, popular images, and ephemera. 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 Walker 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. Since the 1970s, 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. The exhibition also includes a progression of the artist's more recent, immersive installations featuring such materials as commercial advertising posters, large-scale photographs, and hand-painted signs.

The exhibition unfolds in chronological zones, or chapters, which chart the development of the artist's work and thematic interests.

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. *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," 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 LA's now-defunct Colby Poster Printing Company.

New Commissioned Work

As part of his retrospective, Ruppertsberg was invited to explore the Walker library and archives to create a new piece. Over the course of several years, he periodically visited the library, poring over boxes of ephemera, including newspaper clippings, invitations, and printed material from the Walker history. He assembled items of interest on the color photocopier and then created photocollages to fill the walls of the exhibition's final gallery. Accompanying the environment are brightly-painted furniture objects derived from generic items traditionally created for stage sets and constructed for visitors to explore the space.

Curator: Siri Engberg, Walker Senior Curator, Visual Arts

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; and the *Walker Art Center*, Minneapolis.