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Ruppersberg Opens Volumes of Narrative Possibility

ART REVIEWS

By DAVID PAGEL
SPECIAL TO THE TIMES

Unlike most art exhibitions, **Allen Ruppersberg's** wide-ranging show at Margo Leavin Gallery invites you to browse. Treating viewers like visitors to a well-stocked (if eccentric) bookstore, the well-known but infrequently exhibited Conceptualist's drawings, sculptures and paintings let your mind wander as you meander from piece to piece, picking up and perusing whatever strikes your fancy, at whatever pace you please.

In the main gallery, two large-scale arrangements form the centerpiece of the exhibition. Titled "Good Dreams, Bad Dreams, What Was Sub-Literature?" and "Low to High," they include about 100 re-created books, 20 hand-painted signs advertising titles by various authors, a vitrine of first editions, magazines and comic

books, as well as informative displays and a sign announcing a lecture at 4 o'clock.

The colorful signs cover an entire wall, paying homage to the vanishing art of sign painting and

pointing to myriad worlds in which readers might get lost. With equal economy, a vitrine of antique texts tells a century-spanning tale of men and women, nature and culture, hope and despair. The 4

o'clock lecture goes on in your head as you become the story's absent narrator.

Across the gallery, re-created books in Dutch, English, German and Polish are randomly stacked on a wooden stairway that goes nowhere. Commemorating the Battle of Arnhem, as well as his-

tory's disappearance and the power of personal myths, Ruppersberg's work is matter-of-fact about melancholy. Never sappy or sentimental, it links unimaginable loss to creative imagination.

In two side galleries, drawings of book covers, frontispieces, bookmarks and obituaries similarly interweave loss and possibility. Uniting all of Ruppersberg's self-effacing works is the democratic desire to get people to spin their own stories.

■ *Margo Leavin Gallery, 812 N. Robertson Blvd., (310) 273-0603, through April 27. Closed Sundays and Mondays.*