



The singing posters (2003)

June 22st - September 24th 2006

Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo
 Monasterio de Santa María de las Cuevas
 Avda. de Américo Vespucio nº 2. Isla de la Cartuja. 41071 - SEVILLA

Access

Avda. de Américo Vespucio nº 2
 Camino de los Descubrimientos s/n

Transport

Buses C1 y C2

Opening times

April 1st - June 30th

Tuesday to Frydays: 10 - 21 h.
 Saturdays: 11 - 21 h.

July 1st - August 31st

Tuesday to Frydays: 10 - 15 h.
 Saturdays: 11 - 15 h.
 Noches de miércoles a sábados: 20 - 24 h.

September 1st - September 30th

Tuesday to Frydays: 10 - 21 h.
 Saturdays: 11 - 21 h.

Sundays: 10 - 15 h

Closed: Mondays y holidays.

Tickets sales until half and hour before the museum closes.

Contact details

Tel. (34) 955 037 070 | Fax (34) 955 037 052
 caac@juntadeandalucia.es | www.caac.es



Allen Ruppertsberg

One of Many

— Origins
 and Variants

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Allen Ruppertsberg (Cleveland, Ohio, 1944) belongs to the first generation of North American artists to use elements of mass media culture from a critical point of view. His work represents a reflection on the relations between apparently contradictory concepts - reality and fiction, high and low culture, public space and private space, etc. Throughout his career Ruppertsberg has turned to a multitude of artistic tools and techniques, such as installations, performance, drawings, slide shows, collages or videos and has used literary resources, autobiographical references and objects from popular culture to reconsider aesthetic categories such as "authorship", "artistic work" or "exposition space" and to explore the limits between an original and its copy or copies. His main aim is to promote "a more democratic type of art object" and widen the sphere of exposition spaces, bringing into question the entirety of the mechanisms of production, distribution and reception of aesthetic content.

Allen Ruppertsberg - Variants and Origins, which has also been shown in the Düsseldorf Kunstthalle and Dundee Contemporary Arts, is an exhibition concerning the relations between the artist's work and his passion for collecting books, posters, press-cuttings, obituary notices, postcards or educational films and documentaries. These objects have always made up the raw material for Ruppertsberg's creations, to which he applies an operation of revaluation and aesthetic resignification for, by removing them from their "natural" context, he gives them symbolic and narrative connotations they did not originally have. The exhibition looks into Allen Ruppertsberg's particular way of understanding the act of collecting, selecting and presenting works or artefacts which, over more than forty years, has brought together an extensive, varied archive of texts and objects that tell us not just of his personal life, but also represent a sort of collective memory of contemporary society that leaves its mark on the disposable products it creates. He has said, "My art consists in what is common to all and is particular to each."

Much of Ruppertsberg's production is based on the idea of multiplicity. While, on the one hand, he has created multiple copies of certain products and objects without the use of an original, he has also used large-scale methods of reproduction to create "original" pieces, or has carried out "unique versions" in the form of hand-made copies of mass-produced objects. On the basis of this commitment to multiplicity as a structuring principle of his artistic discourse, Ruppertsberg chooses to create hybrid, trans-disciplinary projects that allow him to take his pieces outside traditional exhibition spaces and make "a more democratic type of art object" that is not just shown or sold in galleries and museums "but that can spread through the world and take on new life."

Ruppertsberg's work is closely linked to the places where he has lived: Los Angeles, New York and, for shorter periods, several European cities - Utrecht, Arnheim, Münster, Frankfurt or Basle. His earliest work is associated with Los Angeles, where he moved in 1962 to study at the Chouinard Arts Institute (now CalArts). It was here, when concept art was at its height, that he conceived and made some of his most renowned work, such as *Al's Café* (1969) or *Al's Grand Hotel* (1971) - two installations located in spaces foreign to the art world (a café and a hotel), that became meeting places for artists in the city. In *Al's Café*, Ruppertsberg offered a menu with "artistic" specialities in a locale decorated with objects typical of such establishments (landscape and pin-up calendars, fishing gear, autographed photographs of film stars or sporting heroes, etc.). Visitors to *Al's Grand Hotel* could stay in one of its seven themed rooms for between 15 and 30 dollars per night.

Another distinctive feature of the work by Ruppertsberg, who took part in the 1972 Documenta V in Kassel, curated by Harald Szeeman, has been his systematic use of language and philosophical and literary references, taken from both established figures, such as Dickens, Thoreau, Voltaire, Herman Melville, W.B. Yeats or Allen Ginsburg, and popular novels or journalism and advertising. In *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1974), first shown at the Claire Couple Gallery in Los Angeles, he transcribed by hand the complete text of the novel by Oscar Wilde onto twenty, six-foot square canvasses. He thus created a painting to be read, an object that is, at one and the same time, single and multiple, original and copy, writing and reading.



The new five foot shelf, (2001)

The use of linguistic and narrative elements and the reflection on the very act of reading and writing marked much of Ruppertsberg's work of the 1970's and 1980's, when he produced pieces such as *Where's Al?* (1972), *Collection of Letters* (1975), *The Secret of Life and Death* (1977), *Raymond Roussel Falls to the Floor* (*Discovering Art*) (1979) or *Le Mot Juste* (1983).

After the retrospective exhibition dedicated to him by the Museum of Contemporary Art in LA in 1985 and which meant for him a clear turning point in his life and art, he moved to New York, a city he had visited assiduously since 1970 and where he was to stay until the year 2000, when he returned to LA to teach at UCLA. Ruppertsberg's "New York period" produced pieces such as *Remainders: Novel, Sculpture, Film* (1991), *Kunstkammer* (1991) or *Good Dreams, Bad Dreams. What was Sub-Literature?* (1996), that revealed his passion for collecting all sorts of objects, from cheap editions of classical authors to American educational films from the second third of the 20th century.

New York also served as a stepping stone to visit several European cities (Utrecht, Arnheim, Münster, Frankfurt and Basle), where he created installations and pieces of public art, such as *Evening Time is Reading Time* (1991), *The Best of All Possible Worlds* (1997), *You Are Here, You Are There* (1998). All these pieces consider the idea of the "commemorative monument" which, as Ann Goldstein has said, represent for Ruppertsberg "a public and a private act of remembrance". Goldstein adds, "His memorials are open to the present, but they connect us with the truths and fictions of the past, with the mysteries of life and death." The same comment is applicable to his installation *Letter to a Friend*, first done for the Portikus rooms in Frankfurt, which reproduces on a synthetic floor of imitation tiles the names of deceased artistic and cultural figures, adding a hand-drawn copy of the obituary notes of the same people as they appeared in the press.

More recently Allen Ruppertsberg has created pieces like *The New Five Foot Shelf* (2001)¹, that he himself has defined as "a great biographic work", including, among other things, life-size photographs of the different parts of his workshop and numerous texts and objects taken from his personal archives, or *The Singing Posters* (2003), an enormous collage in which he combines posters reproducing the phonetic transcription of a recording of Allen Ginsberg reading his famous poem *Howl* with others done by the Colby Agency publicising all sorts of events and products (rock concerts, real estate offers, etc.). We cannot forget that one of the permanent features in the work of this versatile American artist is the use he makes of posters and other communicative devices of mass culture.

Allen Ruppertsberg has prepared an installation specifically for this new show, entitled: *These Fragments... 1968-2003* (*Rheingold Collection*), in which he offers a general overview of his creative career from the end of the 1960's to the present, showing his own particular view of the relations between daily life and artistic creation, between the construction of fiction and the production of the real, between the realms of the private and the public. In *These Fragments* Ruppertsberg links and associates motifs and ideas of projects old and new, using eighteen pieces of gaudily painted theatre furniture on which he places objects used in previous installations like *Al's Café*, *Al's Grand Hotel*, *The Fountain of Youth*, *How to Remember a Better Tomorrow*, *Siste Viator* (*Stop Traveller*) or *The Singing Posters*.

1. A digital version of this piece can be seen at <http://www.diaart.org/ruppertsberg>