

**Allen Ruppertsberg**  
***No Time Left to Start Again and Again***  
**WIELS Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels**  
**16.05 – 17.08.2014**

*I'm basically a pulp artist. As popular culture grows and at times threatens to overwhelm everything, I think any artist is aware of his relationship to it. At the same time, I also believe art is not popular culture or entertainment.*

—Allen Ruppertsberg

Allen Ruppertsberg (b. 1944 in Cleveland, Ohio; lives and works in Santa Monica, California, and Brooklyn, New York) belongs to a generation of American conceptual artists that changed the way art was made and thought about at the end of the 1960s. His multiform artistic work, which includes paintings, sculptures, photographs, installations, performances and books, amongst other media, is inspired by the Beat Generation and anchored in a critical approach to media and consumer society. Over the years, Ruppertsberg, an avid collector, has accumulated an impressive quantity of books, posters, postcards, educational films, magazines, records and other documents or objects that bear witness to American popular culture. This archive serves as a regular resource for the artist, who tirelessly draws, copies, classifies and recycles elements in the making of his works.

At WIELS, Ruppertsberg presents one of his more recent works, entitled *No Time Left To Start Again/The B and D of R 'n' R*. It is a sweeping survey of recorded American vernacular music, from folk to rock, passing through gospel and blues. The monumental installation assembles various materials drawn from the artist's archives, such as amateur snapshots, obituaries for deceased musicians and images of old records. A soundtrack composed of a hundred popular songs accompanies the installation. The songs are taken from the artist's collection of over 4,000 78rpm records, and are contained on 8 vinyl records especially produced for the exhibition.

In parallel with the installation, Ruppertsberg presents a selection of earlier works that echo certain notions important to *The B and D of R 'n' R*, such as memory, the transmission of knowledge and the relationship between art and popular culture. In the central hallway is a selection of silkscreened projection screens made in the 1990s. These vintage screens are silkscreened with images taken from the educational films – he owns over 2,000 – in the artist's collection. On the wall is a series of works whose titles begin with the formula, 'Honey, I have rearranged the collection', and end with a joke. The jokes vary: some often offer a glimpse into the obsessions of the art world, some turn on relationship issues, and some on more existential concerns. These witticisms were initially jotted down on Post-its that Ruppertsberg used to adorn his own work, as if he were himself the collector who had left his wife a note. In 2000, he replaced the practice of appropriating his own work with that of drawing a home library. Over the years, he has retouched the drawing using a variety of techniques: silk-screening the image in multiple colours and positions, enhancing it with watercolours, stickers, found photos, texts, etc. In each instance, the visual alteration is linked to the punch line of a joke. The image of the library, which returns time and again in this series, can be interpreted as the equivalent of the collection alluded to in the text. More broadly, though, it alludes to the notion of the archive. The library is this reservoir – of ideas,

forms, stories and lives – that has been the source of Ruppertsberg's work for the past forty years.

Winner of several prestigious prizes, among them the National Endowment for the Arts (1976 and 1982) and the Guggenheim Fellowship (1997), Ruppertsberg has participated in numerous international collective exhibitions, such as *When Attitudes Become Form*, Kunsthalle, Bern, 1969; dOCUMENTA V, 1972; Biennale de Lyon, 1996. Important solo exhibitions of his work have been staged by the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, 1985, the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, 2005, and the Museum of Art, Santa Monica, 2009.

**Exhibition curated by Devrim Bayar, WIELS Curator**