

NEWS RELEASE

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Skirball Cultural Center to present

**THE SINGING POSTERS:
POETRY SOUND COLLAGE SCULPTURE BOOK
Allen Ginsberg's *How/* by Allen Ruppertsberg**

Installation pays tribute to the legendary poem, a hallmark text of the 1950s Beat Generation, now regarded one of the great modern American poems

May 7–August 23, 2015

LOS ANGELES—The Skirball Cultural Center presents *The Singing Posters: Poetry Sound Collage Sculpture Book*, artist Allen Ruppertsberg's homage to poet Allen Ginsberg's famous poem *How/* (1955–1956). It will be on view from May 7 through August 23, 2015. Ruppertsberg first conceived of the work when he discovered that his students at UCLA had never heard of the poem. For the artist, it was a way to introduce *How/*—which marks its sixtieth anniversary this year—to a new generation. By examining this seminal work of Ginsberg—a prominent American Jewish poet, free thinker, and voice of the Beat Generation—Ruppertsberg revives the spirit of the era.

For the installation, Ruppertsberg transcribed *How/* into phonetic spellings and printed the “new” text on approximately 200 vibrantly colored posters reminiscent of commercial advertising. These are installed floor to ceiling on gallery walls. The phonetically spelled text compels viewers to read the poem out loud and experience it not only as a historically significant written work, but also as a vivid spoken-word experience that resonates to this day.

Drawing upon graphic design styles of the period when *How/* was published, Ruppertsberg sought to communicate the “high culture” of poetry via the common language of advertising. The layout and typography of the posters are visually chaotic, like the barrage of images conjured up by the poem. The installation also includes Ruppertsberg's personal scrapbooks, which contain an accumulation of images, newspaper and magazine clippings, photographs, and other miscellany that the artist has collected throughout his life, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s.

The Singing Posters: Poetry Sound Collage Sculpture Book is presented by the Skirball in conjunction with its major spring/summer exhibition, *Bill Graham and the Rock & Roll Revolution*, also opening on May 7. Both exhibitions share the context of the counterculture movements that proliferated in San Francisco in the mid-twentieth century. The epicenter for the Beat Generation—which rejected materialism and conformity and embraced poetry, jazz, Eastern religion, and experimentation—San Francisco was where Ginsberg purportedly began drafting *How/* and where it debuted at a reading in 1955. It was within this cultural landscape that would-be concert promoter Bill Graham (1931–1991) would come to produce programs in the 1960s that offered an eclectic mix of jazz, poetry readings, and rock & roll; Graham's Fillmore Auditorium

shows became a breeding ground for experimental music and a community hub for young people who shared a common culture.

About *Howl*

Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* debuted in 1955 at a reading in San Francisco and quickly became a hallmark text of the Beat Generation. The poem contains a jumble of images and buzzwords that vividly depict the socio-political climate of America in the 1950s. Its chaotic format emulates the state of affairs at the time. On March 25, 1957, 520 copies of the poem were seized by U.S. Customs and the San Francisco police. A subsequent obscenity trial was brought against Lawrence Ferlinghetti, who ran City Lights Books, the poem's publisher. Nine literary experts testified on the poem's behalf. Supported by the American Civil Liberties Union, Ferlinghetti won the case, with the court deciding the poem was of "redeeming social importance." The highly publicized case ensured the wide readership of *Howl*, now considered one of the most significant modern American poems.

About Allen Ruppertsberg

Allen Ruppertsberg (b. 1944) is an American pioneer of conceptual art who lives and works in Los Angeles and New York. His work includes paintings, prints, photographs, sculptures, installations, and books. In 1967, he graduated with a BFA from the Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles (now California Institute of the Arts), where he developed significant relationships with John Baldessari, Ed Ruscha, William Wegman, and Allan McCollum. Ruppertsberg belongs to a generation of artists whose practice attempts to bridge the distance between art and life through artistic languages that employ everyday objects such as magazines, commercial ads, postcards, and records. His work is socially engaged, even provocative, and accessible to the everyday person.

About *Bill Graham and the Rock & Roll Revolution*

Bill Graham and the Rock & Roll Revolution is the first major museum exhibition about the life and career of Bill Graham (1931–1991). Recognized as one of the most influential concert promoters in history, Graham launched the careers of countless rock & roll legends in the 1960s—including the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, Santana, Fleetwood Mac, the Who, Led Zeppelin, the Doors, and the Rolling Stones—at his famed Fillmore Auditorium. He conceived of rock & roll as a powerful force for supporting humanitarian causes and was instrumental in the production of milestone benefit concerts such as Live Aid (1985) and Human Rights Now! (1988). Organized by the Skirball, the exhibition opens May 7 and runs through October 11, 2015.

About the Skirball

The Skirball Cultural Center is dedicated to exploring the connections between 4,000 years of Jewish heritage and the vitality of American democratic ideals. It welcomes and seeks to inspire people of every ethnic and cultural identity. Guided by our respective memories and experiences, together we aspire to build a society in which all of us can feel at home. The Skirball Cultural Center achieves its mission through educational programs that explore literary, visual, and performing arts from around the world; through the display and interpretation of its permanent collections and changing exhibitions; through an interactive family destination inspired by the Noah's Ark story; and through outreach to the community.

Visiting the Skirball

The Skirball Cultural Center is located at 2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90049. Museum hours: Tuesday–Friday 12:00–5:00 p.m.; Saturday–Sunday 10:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.; closed Mondays and holidays. Admission to exhibitions: \$10 General; \$7 Seniors, Full-Time Students, and Children over 12; \$5 Children 2–12. Exhibitions are always free to Skirball Members and Children under 2. Exhibitions are free to all visitors on Thursdays. For general information, the public may call (310) 440-4500 or visit skirball.org. The Skirball is also home to Zeidler's Café, which serves innovative California cuisine in an elegant setting, and Audrey's Museum Store, which sells books, contemporary art, music, jewelry, and more.

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