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**Press Release**

**ALLEN RUPPERSBERG**

***THE NOVEL THAT WRITES ITSELF***  
***EL SEGUNDO RECORD CLUB***

Exhibition from September 12 to October 31, 2014

Opening on Thursday September 11, 2014 from 6 pm to 9 pm,  
in the presence of Allen Ruppertsberg

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**THE NOVEL  
THAT  
WRITES  
ITSELF**

**ALLEN RUPPERSBERG**

Allen Ruppersberg

*The Novel That Writes Itself*

Title page

Binder: 469 pages, 247.75 x 302 mm each one

Limited edition of 24 copies signed and numbered

Produced and published in 2014 by mfc-michèle didier

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# ***THE NOVEL THAT WRITES ITSELF***

## **It all begins with the end of a story**

It all begins with the end of a story, the one about the Colby Poster Printing Company that shut down in December 2012, taking with itself an emblematic graphic identity into history. A Colby poster can be easily distinguished from others and bear the stamp «from L.A.». Multicolored posters with unexpected gradients of flashy, typically Californian colors — the yellow of the sun or the beach, the green of the lush vegetation in this “West Coast” Eden, the blue of the ocean, the red or the pink of all the other wonders of this heavenly place on earth — the Colby posters, covered with outrageously bold characters, do not respect any typographical rules. These rules are mistreated, possibly by ignorance, probably on purpose; in either case it is a certain rule of the West not to follow the rules of the East.

«Colby Posters were the ultimate graphic design “ready-mades” and I think Marcel Duchamp would agree.»<sup>1</sup> says Julia Luke of the Hammer Museum.

Individuals or professionals of Los Angeles entrusted the production of their communication media to the Colby printing house: announcements for school fairs, concert, political meetings, posters for films, performances or all other services. The posters were then put up on the wooden utility poles that characterized the city, as true marks of identity in the cityscape of Los Angeles. Many other artists and celebrities, such as Elvis Presly, Martin Luther King, Ed Ruscha or Eve Fowler also turned to this particular aesthetic. Allen Ruppertsberg was one of their most faithful and regular customers.

## **From the book to posters, from the posters to the binder**

It begins also in 1978, when Allen Ruppertsberg has an idea of a work in progress which he would call *The Novel That Writes Itself*, and which he would make in the shape of a fictionalized autobiography where he would talk of his adventures as a young artist, which he is at the time. The main characters by his side in this novel would be the artist’s friends (Ed Ruscha), his gallery owner (Rosamund Felsen), collectors (Elyse and Stanley Grinstein) who would buy their places in the story for 300 dollars. Allen Ruppertsberg also provides the opportunity to become a supporting character for 100 dollars or to be an extra for 50 dollars. A decade later, Allen Ruppertsberg does not manage to materialize the project, he is still missing some elements.

In parallel to this project, he starts to produce aphorisms or enigmatic questions — THERE IS JUST / A MOMENT / WHEN THINGS CEASE, HOW I MISS THE AVANT-GARDE — printed on multicolored posters. These posters, the famous Colbys, start to show up at his exhibitions around the middle of the 1980s. He realizes in 1990 that in fact “the novel had written itself” without his knowing. By then, 50 posters had been produced. *The Novel That Writes Itself* is thus given substance to by Colby Posters through which he shows not only how the characters of his autobiography evolve but also an array of his projects such as *Honey, I rearranged the collection* or *The Singing Posters*, a phonetic interpretation of *Howl*, a poem by Allen Ginsberg.

The pages of *The Novel That Writes Itself*, a work whose essentially romanesque nature requires the shape of a book, break away one by one to be put on the walls of galleries or museums. This novel by Allen Ruppertsberg takes, in its provisional form, the shape

of a renewed installation, enriched with each new presentation. In the footsteps of El Lissitzky, Allen Ruppersberg declines the traditional structure of a book by turning its pages into posters. Jan Tumlir quotes, in his introductory text to *The Novel That Writes Itself*, the following words by El Lissitzky: «The traditional book was torn into separate pages, enlarged a hundredfold, colored for greater intensity, and brought into the street...» The artist lives a different life from the renown typographer but their intentions converge.

*The Novel That Writes Itself* finishes to write itself in 2013 with the closing of the Colby Company. Time has come, perhaps, to bring back the classic format of a novel. Allen Ruppersberg, however, has chosen to compensate the constraint of a book by giving it the independence of a poster. The binder holds together a number of separate pages who can keep their original poster-like nature.

*The Novel That Writes Itself* builds itself in the way a cadavre exquis is made, through a random mixing of posters from the Colby printing house that the artist has collected, some pictures of installations of *The Novel That Writes Itself* and, Allen Ruppersberg's very own Colby Posters. He thinks of the artist's book as an interactive sculpture, in a similar way to how he had perceived his first novel *Greetings from L.A.* in 1972. *The Novel That Writes Itself* took him more time (1978 - 2014) but the writing of this piece required by its nature the experiences Allen Ruppersberg went through in his life as an artist which, in his case, are as numerous and varied as the posters themselves.

<sup>1</sup> Julia Luke, Senior Designer Hammer Museum, in *Printing the Identity of Los Angeles*, text by Chad Kouri, 2013, <http://www.mascontext.com/>

<sup>2</sup> Jan Tumlir, *The Torn -Apart Book*, text published in *The Novel That Writes Itself*, 2014

# The exhibition at mfc-michèle didier gallery

The exhibition will consist of two different parts: *The Novel That Writes Itself* and *EL SEGUNDO RECORD CLUB*.

*The Novel That Writes Itself* is a new edition by Allen Ruppersberg, the fourth production of the artist published by mfc-michèle didier. Prior to this work have been produced the installation *The New Five Foot Shelf* in 2001, the artist book *The New Five Foot Shelf of Books* in 2003 and *Chapter VI* in 2009.

*The Novel That Writes Itself* is a finished whole of a novel in progress, initiated in 1978 by the artist. This work includes, gathered in a binder of more than 10 cm thick, the text *The Torn-Apart Book* by Jan Tumlir, in introduction, and a series of 460 single-sided perforated sheets. Page after page, we discover the posters produced by the artist at the Colby Poster Printing Company up until its closing down in 2013, the posters Colby had produced that the artist had collected, and several photographs of past installations of *The Novel That Writes Itself* which come to punctuate the narration.

The exhibition, by offering the possibility to handle the binder, a heavy object, will give each person the chance to feel the magnitude of the novel-artwork *The Novel That Writes Itself*. The work is meant to be Allen Ruppersberg's autobiography, as fictionalized as it may be, and must therefore embrace the essence of the artist's work during the past 40 years.

The opening night of the exhibition will also provide the occasion for a whole new record store to open its doors : *EL SEGUNDO RECORD CLUB*.

*EL SEGUNDO RECORD CLUB* follows the mythical tradition of the 1969 *AI's cafe* and the 1971 *AI's Grand Hotel*, two projects by Allen Ruppersberg which consisted respectively of opening a real café and a hotel, the originality coming from the fact that they were run by artists. These places became, in a matter of a few weeks, places of assembly, parties or performances.

*EL SEGUNDO RECORD CLUB* will be run according to other principles imagined by Allen Ruppersberg, in line with the nature of this new setting, a vinyl store to be explored. The idea, however, stays the same compared to the previous adventures mentioned above, each visitor is invited to come and discover what the record shop by Allen Ruppersberg has in store for them.

The exhibition will take place from September 12 to October 31, 2014 at mfc-michèle didier gallery in Paris. The opening night will be on Thursday September 11, 2014 from 6 pm to 9 pm in the presence of Allen Ruppersberg, artist and temporary record store owner.

# Allen Ruppersberg's biographical references

Allen Ruppersberg is born in 1944 in Cleveland, Ohio, United States. He lives and works in New York and in Santa Monica.

Allen Ruppersberg is among the generation of American conceptual artists who changed the way art was thought about and made 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 the media and consumer society.

Over the years, Ruppersberg, an avid collector, has accumulated an impressive quantity of books, posters, postcards, educational films, magazines, records and other documents or objects that bare 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.

During his early years in Los Angeles, he began significant relationships with John Baldessari, Ed Ruscha, William Wegman and Allan McCollum. He participated in the 1969 exhibition *When Attitudes Become Form* and is recognized as a seminal practitioner of installation art, having produced works including *Al's Cafe* (1969), *Al's Grand Hotel* (1971) and *The Novel that Writes Itself* (1978).

Since the late 1960s, his work has been the subject of over sixty solo exhibitions and nearly 200 group shows.

His work can be found in permanent collections of museums internationally, including the Foundation de Appel in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, the Museum für Moderne Kunst in Frankfurt, Germany, the Museum of Modern Art in New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, United States.

mfc-michèle didier produced three pieces by the artist before *The Novel that Writes Itself*: the installation *The New Five Foot Shelf* in 2001, the artist book *The New Five Foot Shelf of Books* in 2003 and *Chapter VI* in 2009.

## Solo Exhibitions and Duos since 2001

- 2014 *Allen Ruppertsberg: No Time Left to Start Again and Again*, Wiels, Brussels  
*FOR COLLECTORS ONLY (everyone is a collector)*, Greengrassi, London  
*Drawing & Writing: 1972-1989*, Marc Selwyn Fine Art, Beverly Hills, CA
- 2013 *The Umbrella Corner (6/6)*, curated by Moritz Küng, ProjecteSD, Barcelona
- 2012 *Allen Ruppertsberg: The Birth and Death of Rock n' Roll*, The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago
- 2011 *Dan Graham / Allen Ruppertsberg*, Galerie Micheline Szwajcer, Antwerp
- 2010 *Allen Ruppertsberg: No Time Left to Start Again 2*, Air de Paris, Paris  
*Allen Ruppertsberg: No Time Left to Start Again*, Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles  
*Allen Ruppertsberg*, Greene Naftali Gallery, New York
- 2009 *You and me or the art of give and take*, Santa Monica Museum of Art, Santa Monica  
*Allen Ruppertsberg: As the Crow Flies/How I miss the Avant-garde*, greengrassi, London
- 2008 *Allen Ruppertsberg*, Camden Arts Centre, London  
*Allen Ruppertsberg and Allan McCollum*, Studio Guenzani, Milan  
*Allen Ruppertsberg: Selected Works*, Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles
- 2007 *Alterations*, Galerie Micheline Szwajcer, Antwerp
- 2006 *Allen Ruppertsberg: The Singing Posters*, Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Utah State University, Logan, UT  
*Allen Ruppertsberg: Photoworks 1970-73*, Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles  
*Allen Ruppertsberg et Guy de Cointet*, Air de Paris, Paris, France  
*Allen Ruppertsberg: The Singing Posters*, University Art Museum, Berkeley, CA
- 2005 *Allen Ruppertsberg: One of Many - Origins and Variants*, Kunsthalle Dusseldorf, Dusseldorf, Germany, travelled to: Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee, Scotland; Centro Andaluz de Arte Comtemporáneo, Seville, Spain; IAC Institut d'Art Contemporain, Villeurbanne, France  
*Allen Ruppertsberg: Free/Trade Art and Poetry*, greengrassi, London  
*Allen Ruppertsberg: The Singing Posters, Parts II & III*, Gallery Name, City, State  
*Exhibition Title*, Jurgen Becker; Karin Guenther / Nina Borgmann Galleries, Hamburg, Germany  
*Allen Ruppertsberg: The New Five Foot Shelf*, Texas Gallery, Houston  
*Allen Ruppertsberg: Line Drawings, Book Pages, Games and a Puzzle*, Christine Burgin Gallery, New York
- 2004 *Allen Ruppertsberg: The Singing Posters*, Rice University, Sewall Gallery, Houston, TX  
*Allen Ruppertsberg: The New Five Foot Shelf and Other Projects*, Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles  
*Allen Ruppertsberg: The New Five Foot Shelf*, Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, The Netherlands
- 2003 *Allen Ruppertsberg: The Singing Posters*, Studio Guenzani, Milan  
*Allen Ruppertsberg: The Singing Posters, Poetry/Sound/Collage/Sculpture/Book*, Gorney \ Bravin + Lee, New York
- 2002 *Allen Ruppertsberg*, Galerie Micheline Szwajcer, Antwerp  
*Allen Ruppertsberg: Drawings 1973-1980*, Christine Burgin Gallery, New York  
*Allen Ruppertsberg: The New Five Foot Shelf*, Galerie Erna Hecey, Luxembourg
- 2001 *Allen Ruppertsberg*, Colby College Museum of Art (Skowhegan School), Waterville, Maine  
*Allen Ruppertsberg: The New Five Foot Shelf*, Galerie Micheline Szwajcer, Antwerp  
*Allen Ruppertsberg: The Novel that Writes Itself; Honey I Rearranged the Collection*, Margo Leavin Gallery, Los Angeles

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Allen Ruppertsberg

*The Novel That Writes Itself*

Binder: 469 pages, 247.75 x 302 mm each one

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# **JEAN-LUC GODARD**

**Il arrive un moment où les  
choses cessent d'être un  
pur spectacle, un moment  
où un homme se sent perdu  
et qu'il montre qu'il est perdu.**

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**Today  
Tomorrow  
The Next Day  
And  
The Day  
After That**

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Allen Ruppersberg

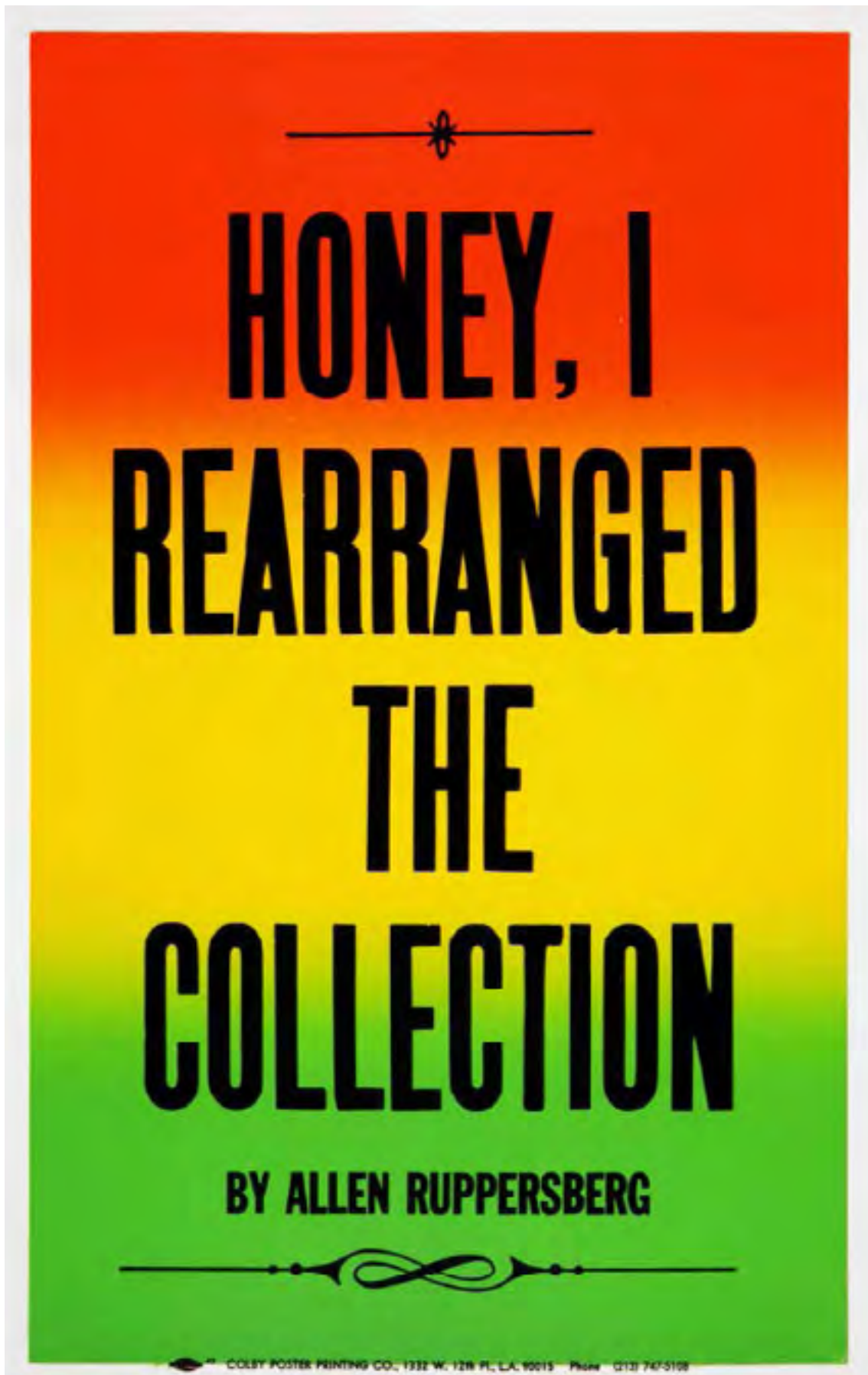
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# **ERRATA**

• **MISSING IMAGE** •

# **THE NOVEL THAT WRITES ITSELF**



# **MAJOR CHARACTERS PART ONE 1978-1996**

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im with yu **in**  
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**wak up**  
**ilektrifid**  
out of the coma by our  
**own souls' airplanes**  
**ROR-ring O-vel**  
**thuh ROOF**

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Allen Ruppersberg

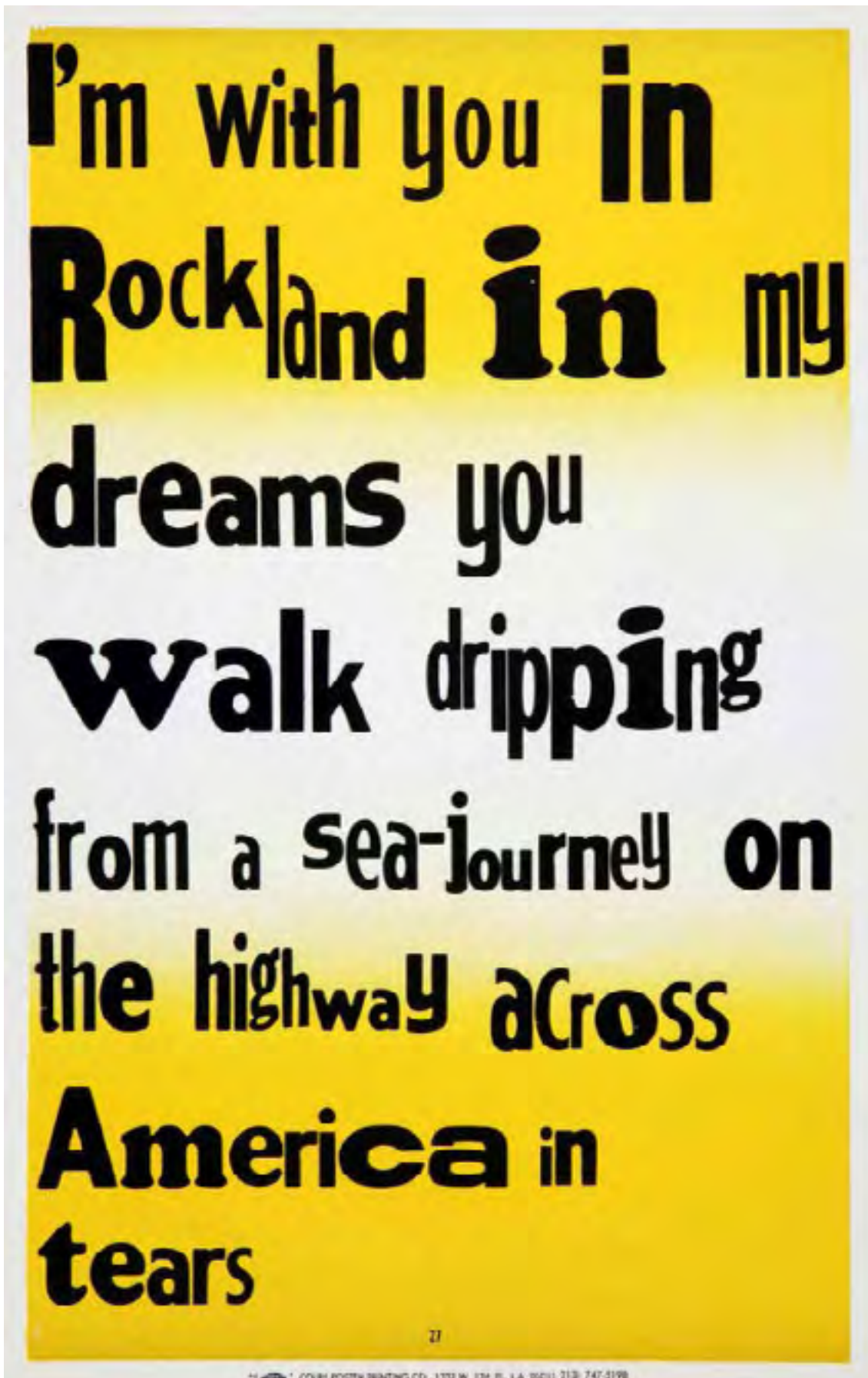
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