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## I Did Not Transcend

### Sometimes It's a Struggle Putting Pen to Paper



Allen Ruppertsberg, *Greetings from California* (1972). Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Purchase with funds from Ron Bailey, Peter Norton, Phil Aarons, Kevin Brine, Beth Rudin DeWoody, Raymond J. McGuire, Jon Sandelman, and David Wasserman, 2005.16. Courtesy Whitney Museum of American Art

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Writing is hard. I don't enjoy doing it. Never have. And I don't trust writers who say otherwise. But one day, many years ago, when I was pretty inept at constructing a paragraph or essay, I somehow knew that I needed to write. I have dipped in out of being thought of as a writer for three decades, and now that I don't have the time to think about what to write, better yet write it, I find myself writing at least bi-weekly.

For me, writing always worked best when I had the time to separate myself from the world. When the writing was going well, I would wake up each morning with sentences pouring out of my head. I would pick my computer up from the floor and just start writing in bed. When I reached a pause, which was probably after about a half hour, I would take a shower. Running water, for some reason, usually gets the thoughts flowing again. And even though my writing was pretty much finished for the day by the early afternoon, if I was still in the middle of an article or essay, it was always best for me to not be very socially engaged for the rest of the day. Reading and going to movies was often a helpful distraction, but talking a lot just took my brain off track for the next day.

And so, I hope you can appreciate that it can sometimes be difficult to produce with frequency when I also have several full-time jobs as the focus of my days, especially when I am on the road, as I often am, traveling distances, often with back-to-back trips. I just returned from Los Angeles, where I saw some great exhibitions, and had a particularly transporting experience at the Allen Ruppersberg retrospective at the Hammer Museum ("[Allen Ruppersberg: Intellectual Property 1968-2018](#)", until 12 May).



Allen Ruppersberg, *The Singing Posters: Allen Ginsberg's Howl by Allen Ruppersberg (Parts I-III)* (2003/2005). Courtesy the artist and Greene Naftali, New York; photo courtesy Skirball Museum, Skirball Cultural Center, Los Angeles; photo: Robert Wedemeyer.

Mind you, while I find it ironic and somewhat unsettling approaching multi-panel narrative works from the left, as that is how the exhibition is arranged, I was thoroughly transported by the work. One room- size installation includes music by the great artist, composer and musician Terry Allen, which I haven't listened to in a long time, but which is as vivid in my memory bank of songs as when I first met Terry in the late 1970s.

And so, with all due reverence and respect, having just returned two days after this week's deadline, unable to quite focus on what I was meant to write, I keep hearing one particular Terry Allen song cycling through my head. And so, I quote Terry:

I just left myself today

I just packed me up and went away

I didn't float

I didn't fly

I did not transcend

No I

Just walked out on me

Again

Again

And therein lies another kind of inspiration. Transportation through stasis. It is a productive escape I often forget to take.