

# No Things But in Ideas: an interview with Allan McCollum

by Robert Enright



Allan McCollum. *Perfect Vehicles*, 1985/88. Acrylic paint on solid cast Hydrocal. Installation: Galerie Yvon Lambert, Paris, France, 1988.

In 1985 New York-based artist Allan McCollum began a series of works he called *Perfect Vehicles*. They were copies of what looked like Chinese ginger jars cast in solid Hydrocal and then covered with many coats and colours of paint. He installed them in groups ranging from five to fifty. A few years later he introduced a variation; now the *Perfect Vehicles* were larger—as tall as six-and-a-half feet—and were cast from glass-fibre-reinforced concrete. Assembled together, it was tempting to assign to them a range of associations. They were like large-scale chess pieces, or abstract versions of warriors from a Kurosawa film, or cartoon cousins of the splintered brooms from *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. These were interpretations with which

you could legitimately quarrel; what was unquestionable was their containment and presence as sculptural objects. You could even go so far as to say they embodied their naming. Or, more accurately, the first half of their name. Whether you agree with the assessment, the meaning of the adjective is a given. But McCollum's objects were also "vehicles" and your first reaction is to complete the question the word implicitly brings to mind. Vehicles for what? The noun, hooked in by a question mark, stands as a quixotic interrogation.

McCollum himself, while he might debate my specific associations: would not argue with the general approach. In a 1992 interview with Thomas Lawson, he mused on the various ideas he considered in making and naming the series. The vases were religious objects, they were fine art objects you could find in the Metropolitan or the Victoria and Albert museums; and they were closely related to the kind of kitsch that occupies shelf space in Woolworth's. His appreciation of their resonance was mindful of both popular culture and technology. His reason for putting a number of the Perfect Vehicles together—you could create something like a power station—grafts a bit of H. G. Wells onto the skin of General Electric. Additionally, as kid growing up in LA, the phrase "perfect vehicle" was used by film directors as a way of referring to a project that was ideally suited to their particular talents and vision. McCollum even entered the gender debate in describing his vases as both male and female, and further suggested that they looked organic as well as machine-made. The vases were screens onto which the artist, and his various audiences, were encouraged to project a disparate number of meanings.



Allan McCollum. *Perfect Vehicles*, 1988. Acrylic paint on glass fiber reinforced concrete.

It's critical to appreciate how wide is the spectrum of issues—esthetic, social and political—raised by the vases. They ask us to consider what constitutes originality in art, and whether it matters. (He delights in pointing out that perhaps his most moving sculpture, the *Dog from Pompei*, 1990, a plaster cast of the



Allan McCollum. *The Dog From Pompei*, 1991. Cast glass-fiber-reinforced Hydrocal. Replicas made from a mold taken from the famous original “chained dog” plaster cast of a dog smothered in ash from the explosion of Mount Vesuvius, in ancient Pompeii, in 79 A.D. Produced in collaboration with the Museo Vesuviano and the Pompei Tourist Board, Pompei, Italy, and Studio Trisorio, Naples, Italy.

parallel between the fecundity of nature and the numerical productivity of his installations. These kinds of generative associations aren’t restricted to any single body of work, but carry over into everything he does from 2,000 drawings to 10,000 pieces of petrified lightning.

McCollum approaches the making of art in a deeply personal way. As he says, “most of my projects are rooted in some loss in my personal life,” whether in the way his grandmother’s death shaped the final form of the *Surrogate Paintings*, 1978 or in the way the investigation into time and loss afforded him by his fossil projects was amplified and personalized through the death of his father. In *Lost Objects*, exhibited at the Carnegie Museum of Art in 1991, McCollum was able to make his installation of dinosaur bones seem like both an excavation site and a burial ground. The work had about it an air of gravity and its tone was elegiac. When the artist observes that his objects “have an aura of meaningfulness that’s unknowable and non-specific,” I sense his use of aura is almost religious and that he is positing a heartfelt and considered eschatology. In the Lawson interview, the invocation of this rooted transcendence is even more direct. He will settle for nothing less than the “kind of halo effect that emerges in the experience of the objects.”

McCollum’s interest has been in producing objects that were simple enough to be complicated, ones that could bear the weight of the complex personal and cultural layering he felt was implicit in the making of art. In the ‘60s he had been influenced by the French cultural anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss’s notion “that there was no such thing as a non-complex language.” If that were true of written language, McCollum reasoned, it must be equally true for visual language. What he was looking for—and what he found in each of his surrogate pictures, vases, photographs, drawings and fossils—was a “standard type of cultural object that we make, save and value.” In the case of the vases, he intended to use the form as a way to produce “a reductive sculpture that had a spread of potential meanings.” The simplified poetics of this pursuit strike me as being particularly American. William Carlos Williams, one of America’s finest poets, developed early on in his career an aesthetic based on the clarity

famous chained dog from the doomed city, is merely “a copy of an object that only existed as a copy to begin with. Not only that, it’s a cavity not a solid thing.”) The vases address themselves to the question of what it means to be an American artist, and how that inheritance shapes attitudes towards space, scale and number. In McCollum’s imagination they are also a reflection of “the continuous abundancy montage” that characterized Cold War American and Russian geopolitics, the super-powers engaged in a neck-and-neck race to demonstrate industrial superiority. His mechanomorphic interest in the role played by human values in industry and mass production leads him to some reflections of an unusual kind. He sees his *Individual Works*, 1987-89, a vocabulary of shapes collected from supermarkets to sidewalks and installed in groups of over 10,000 objects, as not only projections of the human body but of its eroticized nature as well. In this way, he sees a



Allan McCollum, 1978. *Surrogate Painting* [No. 783]. 6 1/16 x 5 9/16 inches. Acrylic on wood and museum board.



Allan McCollum. *Lost Objects*, 1991. Enamel on cast glass-fiber-reinforced concrete. Painted replicas made from molds taken from dinosaur bone fossils in the collection of the Carnegie Museum of Natural History, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Produced in collaboration with the Carnegie Museum of Natural History and the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

evolved over the last 30 years. From the beginning, he has been enamoured of objects and means of production: as he says, “process matters and processes can be beautiful.” For him, process is the way things get made. Once made, the object can be considered and *that* process of consideration is where meaning is discovered. “With my work you have to think it through before it seems interesting,” McCollum says. He has reversed Williams’s dictum so that it comes out “no things but in ideas.” (Were he an architect, his pronouncement would not be that form follows function, but that philosophy follows form; were he a philosopher he would be John Dewey.) I want to call him a pragmatic conceptualist because, when subjected to the scrutiny of looking and thinking, his objects prove his ideas. He is omnivorously curious and his work chronicles that endless openness to possibility. “Every project I’ve done has been an inquiry into what it is we look for in an artwork,” he says in the following interview, acknowledging, without having to say, that the result of his passionate inquiring and looking has been the production of a body of art rich in meaning and inestimable in value.

The following Interview was conducted in Allan McCollum’s studio in New York on June 26, 2001.

**Border Crossings:** Tell me about your growing up and what, if any, connection it had to art.

**Allan McCollum:** I grew up in a working-class family and it seemed that everybody had been some kind of artist or actor or poet. There were a couple that were pretty successful and one of them was Jon Gnagy, who had married my mother’s sister. His 15 minute drawing show—I think it had a couple of different titles, but *Draw With Me* is the one I remember—was the first show broadcast from the Empire State Building in 1946.

**BC:** Which I saw in Canada, as did tens of thousands of other kids. He was famous.

**AM:** He was, although it wasn’t like all my friends were artists, so it didn’t gain me any popularity at school, or anything. But it did give me a sense that there was something else going on outside of the area I grew up in. He had lived in New York for years, and when he and my aunt came by it was like New York Bohemia coming to our house in the southern California suburb of Redondo Beach.

of objects and the importance of close observation. His pronouncement, “no ideas but in things,” was famously realized in “The Red Wheelbarrow,” a poem that amounts to an act of secular worship for what he called “thingness.” For the time we’re inside the poem, everything does depend upon his red wheelbarrow, his white chickens and his glazed rainwater. Once we step outside, what lingers is the pristine clarity of their arrangement, the purity of their palette and the resonant possibilities of their combined meaning. The lesson Williams’s apparently simple poem teaches us is that the more reduced something is and the more minimal its expression, then the more amenable it is to having meanings applied.

I mention Williams and his genie poetics because of its similarity to the aesthetic Allan McCollum has



Allan McCollum’s uncle, television art instructor Jon Gnagy, was popular all over North America in the 40s and 50s

**BC:** Why do you think there such an interest in art and aesthetics in your family?

**AM:** I really don't know but it seems to have gone on for a number of generations. My great grandfather was a traveling ventriloquist during the Civil War, for instance. I only know sketchy stories but I know my father had been a model and an actor as a child. He had a good part in *Reefer Madness*, one of the worst movies ever made. My mother was a young actress and singer who studied voice all through my growing up, my grandmother was a piano teacher, and my grandfather was a draftsman and a frustrated cartoonist. My paternal grandmother was an actress and a nightclub singer, and my mother's brother was a very well-known folk singer named Sam Hinton, who released record albums in the '50s. Then many of these relatives' children went into the arts in one way or the other.

**BC:** I read in a few earlier interviews where you referred to your life as impoverished.



John Gnagy "Learn to Draw kits," promoted on television and available in art stores nationally.

**AM:** It was, I guess, financially. There's no reason on earth anyone should associate being in an artistic family with being rich, or even informed, though. For instance, I have an aunt who is a wonderful watercolourist, a wonderful musician, and she also made wonderful pottery. But I never got the sense that she was studying to see what John Cage was doing, or reading contemporary criticism. She is more like a person who loves craft and the folk arts. I mean you can see from Jon Gnagy's drawings that he wasn't teaching his audience how to draw like Ben Nicholson, who was a friend of his, or like any other modern artist. He said he made his own specific choice to develop new forms of art education rather than in becoming a modern, gallery artist. But he must have been influenced by the genre artists where he grew up in Kansas because he chose

all kinds of traditional middle western types of imagery that would have probably fit very well in rural Canada, too.

**BC:** In your case you got a high school education but didn't bother go on to university or to art school. Was there an economic reason why you didn't, or was it just lack of interest?

**AM:** I don't think I can separate them. I mean there wasn't any money in the family to send me to college but then again I didn't have the knowledge to know how important it was, either; and I definitely didn't have the patience for dealing with authority! I didn't have the experience of being with a really good teacher, and I was a loner, and I think I imagined that in all of my schooling I'd often been told what to do by people who were sometimes less competent than myself, and in my own ignorance about this, I imagined that all university schooling would be about the same. That's why I was very surprised when I sat in on a class ten years later at Cal Arts and realized it wasn't even remotely like public high school at all. But my mother or father hadn't been to college and none of my siblings went either, so higher education was like a blind spot in my family. In thinking back to who my best friends were, not many of them went to college either.

**BC:** So how did you get interested in art?

**AM:** Jon Gnagy's influence stayed with me in many ways, I'm only now really realizing this. He was raised in a Mennonite craft-oriented community in Kansas where everybody knew how to do everything. This is the way he described it. You didn't call a specialized carpenter to build your house; you called your friends. All the men knew how to cook and the women knew how to build a fence and there wasn't much specialization and division of labour. When he went out into the secular world he was surprised and



disappointed that the rest of the world didn't function like this. He was totally serious about hating to hear somebody say "I can't draw," or "I can't sing." I remember him saying on television, "... people often say to me 'I can't draw a straight line.' Well, I always tell them, 'Neither can I. When I draw a straight line I use a ruler.'" He was also an avid fan of all kinds of grassroots music that didn't come from elite training. And although his ambitions weren't the same as Cézanne, he utilized Cézanne's system of breaking things down into rods, cones, cubes, and spheres. He turned Cézanne's system into a teaching technique, and he was always very clear about where he had borrowed it. I think in television he was a great innovator. In the '40s and '50s national advertising was limited to large companies, so he invented a way of promoting his books and his kits by "mass-producing" ads, in his New York television studio, for local stations all over the country. He would do ads for local art stores, he'd stand there in the studio and they'd do kinescopes of him saying 'you can buy my kits down at Jay and Kim's Art Supply Store at the corner of Main and Elm Streets.' He'd do these spot ads and send film clips out to all the local TV stations that carried his shows. That way he was literally recommending each little store by name. It must have been exciting in those days to invent marketing strategies that hadn't existed before.

**BC:** I remember being absolutely mesmerized by him. My whole family would sit around and watch him actually make a drawing or painting. It seemed like magic; in front of your eyes these marks would add up to a landscape. Did you share a sense of wonder in watching your uncle?

**AM:** Me too, I kept thinking, how did he do that? Of course they'd keep cutting to commercials, and when they came back you knew he'd done something more than what you'd seen. But he broke things down in a really clever way. He probably taught an entire generation of us to draw. And I admired his generosity very much. Not that I always found him easy to get along with. But he obviously loved new technology and anything that came out, he was the first to know about it. His goal was to democratize art. That had a really strong influence on me. For instance, like Jon, I have never done any artwork that I didn't think someone else could do just as well, before or after me. I think that reads in my artwork. It allows a person to identify with the art in a different way than they would if I were a master painter, doing something that was beyond them. I think in the end that's alienating to the viewer and asks them to deify the artist in a way that I distrust.



Statue of "Nosey," memorial to a baby elephant (deceased, 1993) bought for the Chaffee Zoo in Fresno, California, with funds donated by "the Children of the San Joaquin Valley," in 1949.

**BC:** Another event in your childhood that seems to have been important is the purchase of an elephant towards which you helped raise money. It was a community based project.

**AM:** "Nosey," the baby elephant in Fresno! I donated a dime to help pay for it when I was five years old! That experience became more interesting to me the more I started trying to figure out how objects have meaning. I think that's been a theme in my work: where does meaning come from, where is it located, is it in the viewer's mind, is it in the community at large? Is it dialectical or inherent in the object? These are philosophical questions, some of which are easily answered and some of which are not. I was thinking about trying to make a work that incorporated the values of an entire community in a pretty obvious way, in addition to having the irony or philosophical exploratory that you might expect from an artist of a cosmopolitan orientation. In other words I wanted to make something that had many different levels of appreciation, all of them sufficient to make it a good object. I mean that in a moral sense. I realized at one point

that that childhood experience of helping to buy an elephant for the local zoo had great meaning for me. My memories of the event coalesce with a lot of trains of thought and I became interested in how communities can pull together and develop something that creates personal wealth of meaning for its citizens. My memory of that is very personally meaningful.

**BC:** When you moved to New York you were 31. Obviously you had started making art in California prior to moving. What had you been doing and what was it that determined your coming to New York to live?

**AM:** That's a big question. I decided I wanted to be a modern contemporary artist in 1967, which was a decision I made on my own. I owned a house trailer at the time and I had moved it to Venice, California because it was the only trailer park I could find with a space available near the beach. I was a beach kid who grew up in a beach culture, and a surfing environment. The beach seemed important to me, I wanted it to be nearby. I grew up in the middle of it. My mother sang at one of the Beach Boys' weddings, for instance. They all lived nearby. I was never a surfer myself, but I did grow up in this very casual atmosphere, where you might imagine being lazy forever. I had gone to restaurant management school and had learned a little bit about cooking, food processing, portion control and how to organize a kitchen. For two years I worked the night shift at the Los Angeles Airport, for the TWA dining unit, organizing meals for the passengers and the flight crews. But I quit my job while I was living in that trailer, and started to become friends with the artists—there were a lot of artists in Venice, and around this time I slowly realized artists weren't the way they'd been depicted on TV—not counting Jon Gnagy, they were depicted as lunatic madmen frothing from the mouth, throwing paint at the canvas from across the room, throwing fits, and sleeping with rich art collectors' wives. It's terrible what you see on American TV about artists. My first real serious influence was **John Cage**. I made a friend at the restaurant management school who also worked as an artist model for the artist John Altoon, and she knew about Rauschenburg and Cage and I went out and bought books on them both.

**BC:** Cage's *Silences* would have just come out?

**AM:** Yes! What a memory you have! I got really focused on Dick Higgins' *Something Else Press* books because there was one store in all of LA that sold them and I happened to find it. At the same store you also could buy marijuana paraphernalia and antiwar posters, and so on, of course! But after reading a few of the *Something Else Press* books I was totally hooked on art.

**BC:** Did you see the concrete poetry anthology edited by Emmett Williams and published in the same year?

**AM:** Yes, and I still have it! So I read Cage and I read Michael Kirby's *Happenings*. He was a theatre critic who became very interested in what we now call "performance art," most of which he classified under theatre.

**BC:** Were you aware of what people like Jim Dine and Claes Oldenburg were doing at the Judson Church? Or the Fluxus performances by Yoko Ono?

**AM:** I was aware of them through these books from the early '60s. I also had a friend of a friend from high school who taught filmmaking at the Judson Church, and I was aware of that. Somehow this must have coincided with my experiences growing up with folk arts, I mean the Fluxus attitude was very much like the "folk art" of the exact moment! And also, these artists were very interested in mass production and in mass communication, which rang a bell with me.

**BC:** And in demystifying the art object. That was essential to what they were doing.

**AM:** It's good you point that out, because to me that was probably the single most important thing they were doing. I was very sensitive to this issue because I hadn't gone to art school and I didn't like the fact that art was a mystery. I thought, dammit, I'm not going to start from the level of mystification! I don't think I went into an art supply store until the mid '70s because I just refused to be a part of what had already been figured out. It was a form of rebellion. Early on I bought most all of my materials from supermarkets and hardware stores. This may sound normal, now—but to someone like me in those years, this was a difficult leap to make.

**BC:** It's interesting that you come by your outsider aesthetic quite honestly.

**AM:** Robert Ryman and Daniel Buren and Sol LeWitt were serious influences much later. But of course by then, I came to them already informed by a whole body of thought. It wasn't until 1976 that I learned about Robert Watts—his work was extremely influential on the work that most people know me by. Some of my work is almost an extension of some of his series, I now realize. I began with Fluxus. And Fluxus and performance art were mixed in so much with the antiwar movements in those times. I made my first painting for an antiwar exhibit in 1967. And for some reason all these performance artists came to LA during the late '60s and so did all the conceptual artists. I think the Dwan Gallery drew them out. Rauschenberg was a fixture; Jasper Johns was around; so were all the Pop artists because Gemini was doing these technically complicated workshop things and they all wanted to come out and work in the Gemini studio. So I was very lucky to be in LA during that period. I took a job in 1967 as an art handler on a truck and I spent maybe two years doing that. I met every dealer, curator, collector and every artist of any reputation just by picking up and delivering art. And I learned a lot from the other drivers who all seemed to have their MFAs. I also learned about the mechanics of the art world and I developed a view of art that wasn't just from looking at it in the gallery but also taking it off the walls, wrapping it, seeing how it was signed on the back. You know, taking care of it, conserving it. I got a view of the business as a whole.

**BC:** So was it an easy transition to make in 1975 because you knew so much about New York by reading and by contact with the artists who visited the West Coast?

**AM:** I should say before I moved to New York I was influenced enormously by LA artists. I was hugely influenced by Vija Celmins and her love of duplication and the way she considered copying a kind of spiritual act. And I was very influenced by Al Ruppersberg who is still a close friend and still a kind of a genius. In my early years as an artist, I was of the preconception that artists were painters. This was my Jon Gnagy brain. I wanted to be the standard type painter. But I outgrew that pretty quickly.

**BC:** The piece you wrote about him is very fine and also highly self-revealing. It seems to be an act of criticism that is autobiographical. You did a similar thing in your article about Matt Mullican when you refer to his near obsessional quality. It sounds like you're talking about yourself.

**AM:** Well, those three artists—Al and Matt and Vija—were hugely important to me, but I don't think there was an LA artist who didn't influence me: Wallace Berman and Billy Al Bengston and Ed Ruscha and John Baldessari and also people you might never have heard of. Maybe because I never went to school I was often influenced by people who had exactly opposite ideas about art. I showed in the Nicholas Wilder Gallery in the early '70s, which was mostly a Greenbergian painting gallery. He also showed Bruce Nauman and a couple of conceptual artists but his real love was painting. I guess I was doing what I could only describe as a cross between post-painterly abstraction and post-minimalism.

**BC:** Was this before the Bleached Paintings?

**AM:** It was after. The Bleached Paintings were of course influenced by Frank Stella and Morris Louis and John Cage!

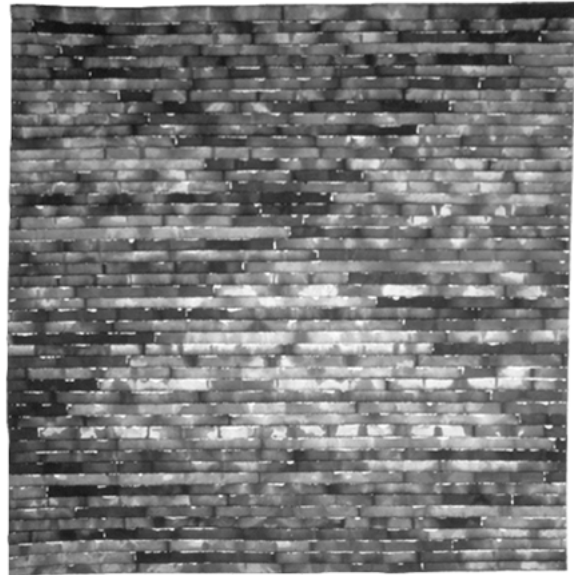
**BC:** What about Agnes Martin?

**AM:** I was well aware of her, but I'm not a big fan. I wasn't into meditative revelation so much as creating some kind of an immediate impact, with the resonance and reflection coming afterwards. With my work you have to think it through for a while before it starts to seem interesting. Hopefully you're encouraged to do so by a kind of sensual surprise in the beginning. But the paintings I was showing at the Wilder Gallery were certainly under the influence of Jon Gnagy's interest in systems. I always started with systems, which

I might have also got from Cage. I was strongly influenced by what used to be called task-oriented performance. I just borrowed that way of thinking when I went into painting. I had a couple of systems based on canvas that had been cut into regular shapes. I had stacks and stacks of 6 x 6 inch canvas squares which would be glued together, according to varying systems. Some of them would be painted one way and others painted another way; some would be covered with sand and some with glitter.

**BC:** These are the *Constructed Paintings*?

**AM:** Yes. I was reading a lot of Robert Morris, and it's really interesting when you're reading Robert Morris and Clement Greenberg at the same time. I sensed how different they were but on the other hand the issues were not that dissimilar. There was an interest in literalism, in Helen Frankenthaler's concern with the honesty of the materials of painting compared to say, Robert Morris' interest in "making" in general. There's a whole lot of parallels if you haven't been trained to think one way or the other. You can see a general thrust towards literalism, which I also interpreted as being a kind of antiwar activism, actually. I considered it to be anti-metaphor, anti-escapist and anti-rose garden attitude. It was a question of seeing what an art object is. This issue was dealt with by many French writers, and filmmakers, and other dramatists and artists of the time. It was a period of anti-imperialist sentiment and anger and activism in which the last thing you wanted to do was to create a way for someone to escape what was going on. Because every second you didn't look at the facts somebody was killed somewhere. As a citizen you could get involved in all kinds of activism but as an artist what did you do? If you had a formalist train of thought you turned towards making things that couldn't be looked at any other way except to be exactly what they were. Which is why Frank Stella seemed so wonderful to everybody. I remember reading—it was probably Rosalind Krauss—that Richard Serra's work was aligned with the real forces of gravity, for instance. There was no false gravity; it wasn't like David Smith where things were welded here and there, seeming to float around like a Calder mobile, or any of the sculptors who were working with the possibilities of fictional space, like painters did.



Allan McCollum: *Constructed Painting*, 1970-71, canvas, dye and caulking, 231 x 245 cm.

**BC:** Was it crucial for you to be grounded then?

**AM:** Well, it was crucial to not be dealing in fictions. I don't know if that means grounded. For instance in the mid '70s I developed a very deep anger that nobody ever talked about the value of an artwork. People wrote about objects on the wall as if they had no value, as if they didn't cost ten or ten thousand or ten million dollars. Yet artworks are always for sale, they always obtain meaning through exchange and not simply through some kind of "intrinsic spirituality." There's all kinds of factors that give meaning and value and identity to an artwork and they are certainly not all "formal." I developed this attitude towards fiction with reading the writings of Alain Robbe-Grillet, and watching the films of Jean-Luc Godard.

**BC:** Were you systematically reading French writers at the time?

**AM:** I wasn't, not really systematically. What I would do is read ARTFORUM and I would write down the names mentioned in the footnotes of a Rosalind Krauss article, or one by Robert Morris, or whomever. I



would say, ‘who is this Claude Lévi-Strauss,’ and I’d go buy his books. I wanted to know what other people were thinking about. I also had my own agenda. I was, of course, influenced by Lévi-Strauss’s book, *The Savage Mind*, quite a bit and the thing that stands out in my mind is when he argued that there’s no such thing as a non-complex, primitive language. This phrase, ‘there’s no such thing as a non-complex language’ really stuck with me because I realized it applied equally well to systems of making objects—good objects, bad objects, or whatever. I hadn’t been reading Baudrillard at that point.

**BC:** It occurs to me that you were lucky to be “uneducated” because it allowed you freedom to think about ideas in a way that wasn’t prescriptive. Nobody told you how to think about art and that seemed to be a distinct advantage.

**AM:** It’s probably six of one, half a dozen of the other. By not having a map to find your way through these writers you sometimes come to conclusions that are not really that smart. You sometimes are slow to understand that two writers are totally set against one another philosophically—and yet you’re influenced by both; what did Ayn Rand say, or was that Karl Marx? You know you can’t get through life this way.

**BC:** What made you decide to leave LA since it seemed to be offering you so much?

**AM:** There were a lot of exciting artists in LA but there were no exciting venues. The best galleries were constantly closing due to lack of money; the Pasadena Museum of Art, which had been started by John Coplans and Walter Hopps, closed its doors in the early seventies. My gallery closed and then a second gallery that represented me closed. I wasn’t showing internationally or in New York or anywhere but LA I was depressed, I had no money, and no real audience for what I was doing. Then I was offered a teaching job in Tallahassee, Florida for ten weeks. I took the job, I got the money, I went back to California and rented a U-Haul truck, got all my stuff and moved to New York. Not knowing what was going to happen, I found a studio in the Village Voice want ads and kind of suffered for some time. What was really hard for me was giving up all my credentials as an LA artist. When I came I had a couple of acquaintances that showed with the Paula Cooper gallery and the Bykert gallery, because I’d met them during a group show in Detroit. So I wasn’t starting from scratch in terms of knowing people but I did start from scratch in terms of having a respected body of work. It took me about seven years to get a show in a commercial gallery.



*Plaster Surrogates*, 1982/84

**BC:** I was at the Metropolitan Museum a couple of days ago and I went downstairs to see the William Blake show. Beyond it there was a space which contained an exhibition of 16th-century Italian picture frames. What’s interesting to me is that I didn’t see picture frames; I saw what looked like an installation of your *Plaster Surrogates*. Did the *Surrogates* firmly establish your reputation? Because I don’t think it’s possible to see an empty picture frame and not think of Allan McCollum.

**AM:** When I was doing those gridded constructions with the little six inch canvas squares the artist Scott Grieger told me he thought of me every time he sat on the toilet looking at the tiles on the wall! But the *Surrogate* series were very important for me as an artist and I think I’m still mining today the thoughts that revolved around them. I had become known for another kind of painting in LA and I took very seriously the *Paper Constructions*. But I guess I would have to say the *Surrogates* were the first time I felt like I was really speaking with my own voice. I wasn’t doing parodies of Dorothea Rockbourne or Frank Stella. I wasn’t averaging out the ideas of six artists that didn’t belong together—although I loved this idea of the average painting, although I don’t think I described it that way at the time. But looking back I must have loved trying to put together Frank Stella, Richard Serra and Jules Olitski. I did paintings like that.

**BC:** And these were conscious hybrids?

**AM:** No, no. I wasn't Scott Grieger! He's an LA artist I knew who use to do "combinations". He would have a Billy Al Bengston crossed with a Richard Serra. His works were analytical knee-slappers, and he's a true jokester and a wonderful artist. I would have to say I wasn't working consciously, like Scott, but I was very focussed on his hybrids, and also on the idea of a painting making itself, an idea which seemed to be inherent in the splash works by Serra. Dorothea Rockbourne influenced me too, her series, "Drawings Which Make Themselves," and Mel Bochner's drawings were an influence, and Sol Lewitt was a *huge* influence. But I finally felt I'd suffered enough trying to figure out all the formalist and anti-formalist and minimalist and post-minimalist trains of thought that was all around me, and that I'd successfully moved through these preoccupations when I started thinking about the artwork as a *prop* in a social construction, an object that played a role in supporting a larger social system. My thinking had been influenced by Ruppertsberg and Matt Mullican and by the Structuralist writers, and it seemed that we weren't just talking about an object in ideal space and time, we were talking about an object that played a part within a set of socially-constructed categories. I began to better understand Daniel Buren, and also Hans Haacke. You couldn't isolate a painting and find its meaning without first understanding what it meant in this larger social context. And that thinking led me to carrying reduction through to a strange conclusion that I found hard to argue with: I felt that paintings were props before they were artworks. It was as if I started defining painting by saying a painting is what goes over the couch.

**BC:** When I first saw an installation of the *Surrogates*, I thought of salon painting and that method of installation.

**AM:** People who know art history always think of this, I find. I think Benjamin Buchloh is a wonderful historian whose writings have influenced me from time to time, but on one occasion I was speaking with him and he made a reference to my salon style hanging and I said, 'but you also have to remember that it's the way you see art hung today in department stores and poster shops and amateur painting exhibits.' And he looked at me and said, 'but that's not art.' For all his Marxist expertise, he could stand there and tell me that art in a juried show or a department store is "not art." I realized at that moment that no matter how brilliant an art historian might be, he can still see his job as determining which objects are actually art and which objects are not. I thought the pronouncement was unconscionable. That's when I realized I didn't agree with all his opinions!

**BC:** Because, if anything, your art career has centered around an insistent sense of demystifying the whole process of art-making, of not making it special and privileged.

**AM:** Yes, you could say that. When I did the dinosaur tracks from the roofs of Utah coal mines, I was exploring the way objects can obtain certain particular meanings within a very specific community, for instance, without being artworks exactly. That series of the dinosaur tracks was part of a set of five that were about time gone by and the way an object can represent the pasts of specific places, or specific regions. These projects all involved fossils or natural casts of some kind. These kinds of objects were already copies, then I made further copies of these geological copies, to see if copies of copies might gain or lose something in the process, like the way "copies" are supposed to always have less meaning than their originals. There's hundreds of artists still today working to demystify the conventions of art by regularly bringing foreign objects into an art galleries that don't seem to belong there—but this is so boring now. I think it's a totally another thing to bring in a kind of object that functions so much like an art object that it's very difficult to explain why it isn't!



Allan McCollum. *Surrogate Paintings*, 1979-81. Acrylic paint on wood and museum board. Installation: Chase Manhattan Bank waiting area, New York City, 1981.



Allan McCollum. *Natural Copies from the Coal Mines of Central Utah*. 30" x 30" x 30" each. 1994-95. Enamel paint on cast polymer-enhanced Hydrocal. Natural dinosaur track cast replicas produced in collaboration with the College of Eastern Utah Prehistoric Museum, Price, Carbon County, Utah.

**BC:** Have you ever had any difficulty in your mind in reconciling the philosophy of mass production with your insistence upon unique objects? One of the intriguing things in your work is the legerdemain that mass produces ten thousand discreet objects.

**AM:** I don't know that for me mass production always suggests identical things. In the case of standardized things—Ford Motor cars, Winchester rifles and Singer sewing machines—I get chills when I think of these inventions. I'm thrilled by the beauty of replaceable parts and by the whole process of assembly line production. But as much as mass production I think about the language of large quantities. In 1983 Craig Owens wrote an article on me about repetition, even though I had never used the word to describe my work. This wasn't the angle I was coming from. I didn't think about repetition in the Freudian sense or in any sense. I did think about mass production because it was a system used to produce lots of objects, so I became involved in learning about the economics and the history of mass production. But it was the idea of quantity production that led me there. I was just trying to come up with the fastest, bestest way to make the mostest objects. I also experienced the way that producing things in huge quantities had become a part of the language of the Cold War period. It's always been a language in America, but growing up in the Cold War it was especially emphatic, because you had the Soviet Union and the United States in this neck-and-neck competition to determine which system produced the most abundance. It was on this level that the propaganda from both economic systems emerged; pictures of bountiful farms and tons of bales of hay and wheat.

**BC:** And happy farmers producing it all.

**AM:** Of course, the happy farmers. But also mass production of automobiles and tanks and soldiers and guns. America was doing exactly the same thing in its propaganda: the continuous abundancy montage. It would be in every newscast, every television special, every movie.

**BC:** It was an image cornucopia.

**AM:** I don't see how anyone could not have been deeply influenced by this imagery. And when you think about it, there's just as many negative images of mass production. I was thinking the other day about the plagues in the Bible; and then there was the European fear of the Asian hordes; the Domino Theory and of course World War II's fully-mechanized mass produced warfare. Not to mention the Holocaust in which people were murdered on a mass scale and tools were invented to make it easier to do that. Everyone has seen those pictures of thousands of teeth that were saved from the death camps because there was gold in them. So mass quantities of things created imagery that went all through my childhood; it was horrible and it was hopeful at the same time.

**BC:** I looked at your work and thought the accumulation of ten thousand objects was a way of numerically creating big attack art, to use Greenberg's phrase. Did the scale of American art have anything to do with the size of your art?

**AM:** It must have, but it wasn't a conscious thing. Coming to art in the late sixties, large scale was pretty much an assumed thing. I never went through the experience of seeing it go from tiny to big. There must have been one point in my life when I realized paintings could be huge, but it was probably more because of Rosenquist than Pollack or Newman.

**BC:** With "pop" images and not with formalist ones?

**AM:** Yes. That issue of scale was very important, and it definitely fed into my feelings about mass produced objects, because I'd become interested in how arbitrary or political the decisions are to decide when things are few or many, or all the same or not all the same.

**BC:** One of the things that you insisted upon in every interview is the emotional impact of what you do. What's the source of that insistence? The need for emotional integrity in connection with the art object and the art audience comes up in every one of your conversations.



Allan McCollum. *Drawings*, 1989/93. Graphite on board. Installation of over 2,000: Centre d'Art Contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland, 1993.

**AM:** It might have been due to my uncle, I really don't know. But it was automatic for me to mix up art with our mythic and operatic American entrepreneurialism. Let me point out one story that I remember. I was walking down a SOHO Street back in the early seventies and I saw three or four cardboard boxes that were about 14 by 14 by 18 inches. They'd been put out in the trash. One of them was turned over and 600 or 700 little self-published poetry books were falling out of it. I looked at that and I felt like weeping for a moment. This was a story, someone's dream to be recognized as a poet, and to have other people recognize the feelings inside them. Someone had gone to the expense of self-publishing and at some point they either died, or threw these boxes of books away, and now they were just trash. I guess

my mind must always see allegories everywhere like crazy, because I saw this as a story about someone's American dream squashed. It was a ridiculously sentimental way to look at a box of trash, perhaps, but to me this entrepreneurial impulse has to do with wanting love, wanting recognition, wanting to be successful



and useful to the community, wanting to make enough money to take good care of your family, wanting to be able to express yourself. It's an American language, this way of dreaming.

That was around the same time I started coming up with a language for describing the emotionality that runs through mass production, whether it's desires to save the world by inventing a cure for AIDS, or desires to make a few million dollars in the process. And I don't think that money is usually the central impulse, either; the central impulse is to save people's lives, to help, to be loved, and to feel satisfied with your worth. You can't just wave away the entrepreneurial impulse as some sort of money-grabbing way of making your way through life. So in that sense I started to realize I could speak of large quantities as connected to hoping and wishing, mass quantities could mediate all of those dreams. My most recent work is concerned with these issues more directly. I'm trying to do projects about meanings and communities and objects. I was asked to do something for a whole new section of the city of Malmo, Sweden. I was asked to do art for a new, large residential project. I did a series of metal plates, all shaped like little heraldic shields, that are very much like my *Drawing* series of 1989, and I designed them so that everyone in the city could have their own symbol. Instead of people identifying with one overarching symbol that seemed to represent the whole of the community, why not create a system that generates individual symbols to represent individuals? I



Allan McCollum. *New City Marker*. 2001. One of around 1,000. installed on buildings in Malmo, Sweden. . Brushed aluminum, 9" high.



Allan McCollum. *Over Ten Thousand Individual Works*, detail. 1987/88. Enamel on cast Hydrocal, 2" diameter each, lengths variable.

wanted to design a system that could help an individual's develop a unique relationship to a particular residence or neighborhood—but at the same time, the system could easily be used to have your identity determined by actions of the State or the development corporation. I wanted to explore the idea of a community having its identity defined by people not an actual part of the community. It was a kind of a scary, ambiguous piece, I thought.

I've now made way over 30,000 shapes that are all unique in the *Individual Works* project. In the late eighties I made enough molds to produce about 48,000 unique objects. And every time I make one more half of a shape I get 380 more, so it's exponential. I was just going to say that mass production doesn't necessarily have a strict ideology, I don't think. It's equally popular in fascist countries, communist countries and democratic countries. It's a system of production, it's not exactly an ideology. And I was a little bit afraid when I made the individual works that I might be creating an evil system, because it would be an easy system to produce an infinite



amount of false distinctions and false differences. Baudrillard was very adamant to point out how we substitute false differences for real differences and how people are completely alienated from their actual circumstances. And at the same time I knew the system had the potential to mystify. When we all identify with a certain symbol, there's a way in which we obtain our individuality and another sense in which we lose our individuality into the mystique of the group. We can form a very complex relationship with an object and it can lead in many different directions. It can go towards nationalism and it can go towards deep individualism, for instance.

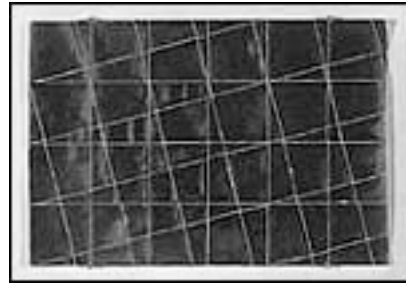
**BC:** One of the things that makes your work so attractive is your interest in recovering things that are lost. I think of the fossil projects and most recently the lightning project. I'm not talking about the fact that they're already replicas of replicas, but about the emotional charge that comes from *The Dog From Pompei* or in finding a way to actually make lightning an object. It strikes me that there is a sense of elegy in your work. I find it very moving that you want to do these things.

**AM:** I think of my work as terribly elegiac sometimes and I'm surprised more people don't think of it that way. But in fact most of my projects are rooted in some loss in my personal life, and my attempts to make myself happy again. I think about Lacan's comments that any representation—whether it is a word, a letter or a symbol—is by definition a substitute for something that's not there. So any word or concept we utter is already an attempt to recuperate something that's missing. There's a way to look at all representation as a continuum of grief and of mourning—and I do think like that sometimes. Plus, I've been clinically depressed all my life—I was put in a mental hospital for this when I was a teenager. It's a personal battle that I have and that my family has had. Actually, I've never brought it up in an interview, but I was suicidal as a teenager and when I was 17, I spent five months in a mental hospital trying to understand my depression. I still see a psychoanalyst two times a week, and I take anti-depressants every day—like many New Yorkers! I know my artwork can seem very sad, and sometimes it's become so sad that nobody will buy it and I don't blame them in a way. My father died just before I started on the dinosaur bone project, which came to be all about a lost reality, and the residues of a world that we can never really know.

**BC:** Which is how fathers often are?

**AM:** Absolutely. But I got to the idea of thinking about the past and what's been lost mostly just by just trying to intellectually analyze what it is we look for in an artwork. Because as I said, every project I've done has been an inquiry into what it is we look for in an artwork, and an attempt, if not to demystify, then at least to relativize that process and put it into context with other objects that accomplish similar results, or that express similar things to us. So I was interested in what our needs are in looking at a painting, I don't know if it's a human need but there is something that drives us to want to make them and to look at them. When we walk into a person's home why do we wander across the room while they're hanging up our coat and look at all their pictures? There's some kind of curiosity and a hope for comfort. In any case, it's an emotion, and what seemed to be missing from my work was a sense of the long past. I'd been trying to synthesize a feeling of the past by coating over my objects with many coats of paint—because I really wasn't interested in eliminating that from an artwork. In a way I'm trying to create synthetic artworks, things that are almost artworks but you're not quite sure if they qualify. So I've been interested in those attributes that trigger us to respond to something as an artwork. Is it in a frame? Is it on a wall? Has it got an image, has it got this, has it got that? Once all the terms are satisfied, it's as if a conductor has tapped his baton and now it's time to play. What's missing in a copy is that sense of “pastness” which is always there when you look at a painting. Because a painting is always done in the past, even if it was only yesterday. Almost any museum experience of painting involves paintings that were done ten years or 30 years or 600 years ago. It's a need that's expressed with saving old photographs, or any kind of heirloom or archive. You want that from a painting, you want a sense that it's captured a moment that happened before. I used to have a friend whose uncle was an antique collector, and she had all these funny habits when we went shopping. She'd pick up things in a junk shop and go, “I think this might be . . . oh my god, I think ... Nah!” And that's the way I wanted my art to be. It was an idea that I especially articulated with the *Paper*

*Constructions* in the '70s, where you didn't know for sure if they were something you could throw away or not. I've always wanted this in my work: is this something I could get through customs and say it's worth ten cents or do I have to say it's worth ten thousand dollars? I'm fascinated by this lack of visible inherent quality that artworks can have with people who aren't interested in art. It's easy to duplicate a copy from the past but not the past itself. So I've been jumping around with the idea of something being missing and something being lost. Maybe it's just an intuitive sense of my own that the world is often in a tragic state of slowly disappearing.



Allan McCollum. *Untitled Paper Construction*, 1974-75. Colored pencil on 96 standardized paper shapes, glued together. 16 x 24 inches.

**BC:** You actually fossilize memory. In the Fossil projects it's interesting that you would have gone that far back to laden these objects with the emotion they clearly have for you and that you want them to have for the viewer as well.

**AM:** Sometimes I think of myself as a dramatist. I have a background in theatre and I wanted to be a dramatist when I was a teenager.

**BC:** I understand the interest in fossils. Every kid, at one juncture, is obsessed with dinosaurs; everyone did a dinosaur book in school. They're absolutely fascinating.

**AM:** But they're also absolutely unknowable. If there was ever an emblem for a disappeared world it would certainly be the dinosaur. I wanted to be a special effects man when I was a kid and did all kinds of films with dinosaurs and fake monsters.

**BC:** Stop action animation?

**AM:** I experimented with stop action animation. Split-screen masking like Ray Harryhausen. I did my term paper in high school on Ray Harryhausen who was probably America's most distinguished Hollywood stop frame motion animator. But like I said before, if you make a cast of a dead animal, the dead animal's always the more real, but if you make a copy of a copy of a copy of a dead animal, it's a different kind of intervention.

**BC:** No matter how many times you replicate *The Dog from Pompeii* it's still a terrifically moving image.

**AM:** I saw the image in Life Magazine when I was a kid. It was so sad and I never forgot it. But I have to be totally honest here; I wasn't looking for that dog when I went to Pompeii. I wanted to get the famous loaf of bread. I wanted to use a mundane object so that its drama wouldn't over-shadow. I wanted it simply to be about the past. And dammit, it turned out those loaves of bread from Pompeii aren't plaster casts, they're actual carbonized bread, and if you touch them they shatter. They are very fragile and, of course, they wouldn't let me make a mold. It was a disappointment because the dog just had too much charge as an emotional object. In the end I'm glad I did use it because I also loved the way a roomful of them reminded me of Eadward Muybridge's photos. Still, I didn't want that emotion to be there, I wanted the tragedy of disappearance and loss, but I wasn't looking for the melodrama of a tortured dog. But I didn't refuse it because I thought this could be an interesting commentary on expressionism since the chief device of expressionism is always distortion.

**BC:** Has a sense of theatricality played a large part in your sensibility and is it therefore traceable in your art?

**AM:** Oh yeah. I realize that objects always take their place within a drama. And there have been a couple of projects that I have chosen more for the drama than for the objects. I'm getting more and more that way. Also in the sense of theatrical presentation I'm very influenced by set design and I would have to say I've spent many years as a science fiction fan. I think science fiction movies have a huge influence on the way I install things. Most of my installations could look like X-Files settings, because I almost feel I have a soul connection with whoever it is that designs those great X-Files sets!

**BC:** But you don't gravitate towards Geiger's gun metal blue look?



Allan Kaprow. *Yard*. 1961.

**AM:** No, just I just like the dramatic starkness of the eerie, earthly settings. I always liked Donald Judd who made those incredibly stark, systematic installations of multiple similar objects. I guess I should add that I was really influenced by Allan Kaprow's tire piece; I've been influenced a lot by art that really filled the gallery. By rooms that are filled to the brim. With my feelings about the "abundance effect" it was a natural thing. My shows that most clearly expressed that particular feel were the *Drawings* shows, probably. When I finished filling the walls I always had to move in a lot of tables. I tried to create the feeling of there being a surplus of objects, and to me that's dramatic in the same way that box of poetry books I saw on the street was dramatic. So I've often looked for objects that satisfy the criteria of the dramatist. It's not just for effect but it's also to prove a point: that it's the *stories* that gives an object its context and its community value. It's always all the things we know but of which we are not at the moment thinking, to paraphrase Robert Barry.

**BC:** When I first saw the *Surrogate Paintings* I remember thinking they were like characters, they had a personality, as if they had been slyly anthropomorphized. I'm sure that wasn't your intention.

**AM:** That was my intention: to choose the portrait shape rather than the landscape shape. It's the shape of canvas we use in depicting a person.

**BC:** I gather nothing can be done innocent of art history? I was thinking about your work and how informed it is by so much earlier art. I don't mean that it's directly quotational but that it operates out of a larger aesthetic context.

**AM:** I guess I like art. You wouldn't know it from my work but, the surfaces on my *Perfect Vehicles* were very influenced by Elizabeth Murray. Her canvasses led me to an appreciation of the effect of many coats of paint. Back in the early seventies I loved the multi-coated surfaces of Ralph Humphrey and Gary Stephan.

**BC:** So beauty matters to you then?

**AM:** Is that called beauty? I don't know. I mean *process* matters and processes can be beautiful. I don't know if I would have thought of it that way, as beauty, but I like the way things look.

**BC:** But it clearly matters to you that art connects with people?

**AM:** I think it can be tragedy when artists sometimes have to cut themselves loose from their roots in order to enter the art world, like so many artists do. The art world seems to exist to exclude people more than to include them. I drifted away from my family and my neighborhood and its values, and it's been a

painful experience, ultimately. A mistake. At a certain point in life you want to re-explore your past. So I've been talking a lot here about Jon Gnagy because I've only just recently began to understand how important he was to me. I'm always questioning whether or not someone else could do what I'm doing, and could someone else follow the thought processes that led up to making my work. Everything can be reduced to something pretty simple, usually. Kurt Vonnegut said that if you can't explain what you do for a living to a 12-year-old, then you're a fraud.

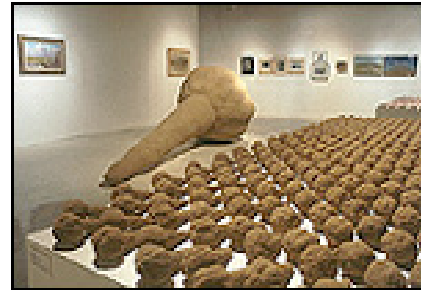
This kind of thinking has recently led me to new projects, like my sand concretion project. I went to a small desert town I'd never been to because I knew sandspike sand concretions came from a local mountain around there, a mountain that straddled the Mexican-US border. I went to check it out and it turned out to be a town much like where I grew up in the '40s and '50s. In order to make anything happen with my project I wanted to become involved with the local people, of course. When I finished the project I felt that I had recovered some of what I had grown up with. I could have gone to high school with these people. I joined their local art association and I did four exhibits in the area, each one involving paintings of Mount Signal, where the sandspikes came from. I showed lots of paintings of the mountain done by local people. I worked with the local artists and learned to understand some of their values, like how a big issue in their art is whether or not it's OK to paint from a photograph in a magazine or whether you should always paint from a photograph you took yourself. I just sunk back into my childhood being with them.

**BC:** I think of the Lightning project as a perfect metaphor for the way inspiration actually happens. The curiosity of that project is an instantaneous moment turned into a whole process that emerges as if it were at the other end of a funnel. It isn't just that the project produces itself, it's also a perfect metaphor for what art is.

**AM:** I was very ambitious with that art project. I would say it was closer to an opera. In fact I'm still finishing up the details of that project and the story telling.

I think at this point in my life I'm not so preoccupied with making work to sell to art collectors so much as I have been learning about the way things get done in the world and learning to put all the unnecessary things out of my mind while doing my job as an artist. So when I was in the desert town I felt freer to become interested in things local to the area—I made a large 15 foot concrete sandspike sculpture, a large plaster eight foot mountain model, I published 16 little booklets with reprints of stories about the sandspikes in two languages.

Then I did all the shows of the individual artists, we had about 60 artists from both sides of the border who had painted Mount Signal from all these different views. I made a thousand small models of the mountain and showed them along with the paintings and the big models and all the booklets. I was trying to do an artwork in the form of a "civic promotion." I also produced around 1000 cast plaster sandspikes, and covered them with actual sand from the mountain—I went out and collected it from the mountain's base.



Allan McCollum. *Mount Signal and its Sand Spikes: A Project for the Imperial Valley*, 2000. An inSITE 2000 Project, installed at the University Gallery, San Diego State University, San Diego, California. Enlarged 'Sand Spike' model and 1000 souvenir replicas produced in collaboration with the Imperial Valley Historical Society Pioneer Museum, Imperial, California, from an actual Mount Signal sand spike concretion in their collection, and exhibited along with over 50 paintings, drawings, and photographs of the mountain by local artists from California and Baja California.

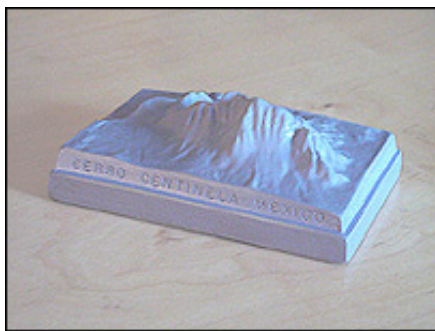


Allan McCollum. *THE EVENT: Petrified Lightning from Central Florida (with supplemental didactics)*, 1998. Installation: University of South Florida Contemporary Art Museum, Tampa, Florida, 1998. Over 10,000 casts of an actual fulgurite produced by lightning triggered by the artist at the International Center for Lightning Research at Camp Blanding, Florida.





Allan McCollum. *Mount Signal and its Sand Spikes: A Project for the Imperial Valley*, 2000. An inSITE 2000 Project, installed at the University Gallery, San Diego State University, San Diego, California. Mountain model produced in collaboration with El Museo Universitario de la Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, Mexicali, Mexico, and exhibited along with over 50 paintings, drawings, and photographs of the mountain by local artists from California and Baja California.



Allan McCollum. *Souvenir Model of Mount Signal (El Cerro Centinela)*, 2000. Enamel on Hydrostone, 2" x 4" x 6" each. Produced in collaboration with inSITE2000, using Geographical Information Systems data. Approximately 1000 were made.

So these objects were like artworks and souvenirs at the same time. I promised the people I worked with that I would use the molds to make souvenirs for the museum when the art part of the project was finished. You know, you go into the souvenir shop and get one for six bucks or whatever they charge and the museum uses the money to help keep the museum open. It was great to do something in that context, to please a specific community, and then have it also work as artwork in the larger, more international art community. I'd like to keep doing that. It's an awfully elaborate procedure and you don't make any money doing it, but you learn so much about the world in the process.