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## ***Restoring the Cases Required Nearly as Much Work as Preserving the Artifacts***

AN INTERVIEW WITH ALLAN MCCOLLUM ABOUT THE  
*Natural Copies from the Coal Mines of Central Utah*

by Catherine Quéloz



Left to Right: Maurice Evans, preparator; Pamela Miller, Curator; Allan McCollum, Artist; John Bird, Moldmaker and Preparator.

The following interview focuses on one of Allan McCollum's most recent series, the *Natural Copies from the Coal Mines of Central Utah*. This project involves the production and presentation of copies of natural casts of dinosaurs' tracks originally discovered in the roofs of coal mines in Central Utah and recently found by Allan McCollum in a small community museum, the College of Eastern Utah Prehistoric Museum.

Allan McCollum, who for many years has often engaged the issues arising out of copying and reproduction, for the last few years has been more particularly interested in copying objects that belong to a faraway past. In order to sidestep any appearance of diluting the "aura" that might attach to an original historical artifact, and to avoid any precise cultural references, he has been choosing to copy objects which are already copies by definition as, for example, fossils or other forms of *Natural Copies*.

In his last three projects, *The Dog from Pompei*, the *Lost Objects*, and the *Natural Copies*, references to art or historical objects disappear to give place to categories of objects that emphasize time and memory independently from references to an almost always elitist culture.

The context of discovery and conservation of the objects to which McCollum refers in the *Natural Copies*, which is largely quoted in the *Reprints* (reproductions of fragments of texts referring to dinosaur tracks and fossils), situates the work in a history of a community, of a museum, and of a scientific discourse. The *Reprints* can be read as a desire to reconstitute a context for these objects.

**Quéloz:** We could say that your more recent pieces, the *Dog from Pompei*, the *Lost Objects*, and the *Natural Copies from the Coal Mines of Central Utah* belong to the same category and are different from some of your earlier cast pieces, because they are copies of archeological and paleontological objects which already existed as a mold or cast. But, except for that, they have – and particularly the *Natural Copies* – a link with the *Plaster Surrogates* or the *Individual Works* by the fact that, contrary to the *Dog from Pompei* or the *Lost Objects*, the original dinosaurs’ tracks were almost a part of everyday life of the people who find them (According to the *Reprints*, they even hung them above their front door). Can you talk about this piece in relationship to your other pieces?



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.

**McCollum:** All three of the series are “natural copies” of one kind or another, but the coal mine tracks I used are actually “natural casts,” which is a very particular type of fossil, one that is actually produced as a cast, naturally, through various geological processes. The *Lost Objects* were derived from mineralized fossils, which are not casts exactly, they’re molecule-by-molecule replacements of the original bone, and so the entire structure of the bone is preserved, all the way through – a cast only preserves the external form; and the *Dog from Pompei*, the cast I used was made by a human being from a “natural mold,” which is different from a “natural cast,” it’s a mold made by nature, so the cast hadn’t been naturally produced exactly, there was human participation; but these dinosaur track casts were totally made by nature. One of the reasons I especially enjoyed doing the coal mine tracks was that I came across them on my own, by accident, while I was driving through the middle of Utah, in the College of Eastern Utah Prehistoric Museum, a community museum in the small town of Price. There wasn’t any art world intervention in this project, or any curators or art dealers helping me out or anything. So I had a lot of control to do what I wanted, once I was able to get the museum’s permission to make the molds from their objects.



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

I think the reason the project appealed to me was the particular story that you mention, the story that went along with the objects, that they were . . . One thing I’d been looking



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.

for was to find some kind of allegory for the way an art object comes into being, or at least how we like to think an art object comes into being. So there seemed to be a lot of this in the story of how the tracks came into existence, and how they wound up on display in a museum. The story reminded me of the way we like to think about artworks, but almost like an allegory, or even a parody in a way, or like a moral tale. So the fact that they had this story was really important to me. And one of the facts that was important was that they emerged from the mines as a byproduct of something else. The people who found them did not go into the mines to find dinosaur tracks, they went into the mines to dig out coal for the furnaces to run the power plants. So there is something important to me about this fact that they were a byproduct, something they found accidentally, and valued – I think – partially because they were a byproduct in a sense. This is what I read into the story, anyway.

I found out later, for instance, in talking to a coal miner, that when they take a track down from the ceiling they would wait till after hours, they would not do it while they're working so they would say to the boss: "Can I stay after hours and take down these dinosaur tracks?" because it took a long time to do it right. The fact that the whole process of removing them has been a byproduct of labor reminded me of the way we think about art, as being something that



One of the largest coal-mine tracks ever discovered. The length is 4 1/2 feet (1.36 meters); the stride of the trackmaker was over 12 feet (3.3 meters).

has no use value in a sense. We think of it this way, so I liked the way this dinosaur track story seemed like a little dramatization of that, of the way we separate esthetic objects from useful objects, in our thinking, the way we polarize these concepts. Like a little fable on that theme.



The College of Eastern Utah Prehistoric Museum's Hall of Dinosaurs.

The museum itself where I found them was only established in 1960. It is a very new museum and it is a museum that grew out of a community effort, from the ground up. It wasn't some kind of local aristocracy trying to preserve itself. It was . . . The man who started the museum, Don Burge, moved into Price from Los Angeles to teach geology at the community college, and discovered that everybody in the small town collected fossils, and he couldn't understand why there wasn't any place in the community to show them; Price is in the center of Utah, where of a lot of

really rich fossil deposits are located, some of the best in the world. So he got together with the local geology club and decided that with some effort they could put together a place to show their fossils, because they were such good quality.

But the museum seems to think of the track casts as fairly secondary to the fossil skeletons; they couldn't exactly understand why I was so interested in them. I was talking to the curator, trying to convince her to let me make the molds, and she said: "Well, you know, we may be using our fossils to make casts ourselves, to sell as a way of raising money for the museum," and she added, "If we let you do this, I wouldn't want your project to compete in any way with the museum, you know . . ." and I said, "Well, you know, if you were to start reproducing the track casts and selling them yourself, it would probably hurt me a lot more than it I could ever hurt the museum." She thought about it for a minute and said, "But anyway, I can't imagine that we'd ever do replicas of the tracks . . ." I felt that she figured the track casts would be the last thing the museum would be interested in replicating. And, in fact, when I went through their files to make notes on how they



Original natural casts of dinosaur tracks found in the roofs of Utah coal mines, on display at the College of Eastern Utah Prehistoric Museum, City of Price, Carbon County, Utah.

acquired them, I kept noticing that when they actually paid for them, when they weren't donated to the collection, they were paying around \$50 each for them. I said to the registrar, "I cannot believe you are buying these things for so little money," and he said: "We never pay more than \$50, it's sort of an unwritten rule." . . . So, I was thinking, my God, I'm treating them like fine artworks...and in their mind, it seemed like they regarded the track casts as more like a residue almost, and I begin to feel that the fact that the museum collected these objects was as much of an outreach to the community, as much a way for the institution to communicate with the community itself, as anything else, as actual paleontology. Because really once the footsteps are removed from the context of the mine roof, from the actual "trackway," they tell a lot less about the dinosaurs than they would if they were left in place. But Price is a coal mining town, and this is also important.



Billboard welcome to Price, Carbon County, Utah

We like to imagine that art emerges fairly spontaneously from a community and finds its way into these archival, museum situations to be protected and saved for future generations through some sort of organic process, but the process is never really so organic. It is a process dominated by the interventions of one class of people. But we have this fantasy that maybe it works like this, maybe the process is quite natural. But in the case of this particular museum in Price, it seems

that the museum actually did grow out of the community, and the tracks actually did find their way into the museum sort of from the "grass roots" up, and this was really refreshing and amusing to me, because the track casts don't exactly seem to be all that important scientifically, the collection seems to mostly serve a simpler kind of social function. I mean they will have, in a way, a great fossil skeleton of a dinosaur on display and they will just put the track casts around it on the floor, almost as if they were using them more to inspire wonder, than anything else. They treat them a little like curiosities in the museum, which they are . . .

**Quéloz:** But it is not the way they are treated in the texts (*Reprints*).

**McCollum:** But most all of the texts write about tracks *in situ*.

**Quéloz:** But one of the texts says that they are more important than the dinosaurs' bones.

**McCollum:** Yes, to learn certain types of thing from them, especially about their social behavior and their movement, but when they are all together at the original site, as complete trackways, showing how they walked and ran, and how they interacted with one another. Most of the texts you're thinking about are not so much about coal mine casts that have been removed from the mines, but about dinosaur tracks in general, as trace fossils.

And, of course, in addition to the allegorical story of how the track casts found their way out of the mines and into the museum, and maybe we could say this about other projects too, but there was something so specifically familiar about the idea of digging into a hole, into a tunnel and carrying flashlights and candles and finding these objects. It seems to be a kind of story that related to the idea of going deep into the unconscious and pulling some artistic inspiration from you do not know where, something very archaic and primitive. So, I also liked it very much that the story also functions as a parable in some way for that kind of act, pulling things up from the deep.



Allan McCollum. *Over Ten Thousand Individual Works*, (detail) 1987/88.  
Enamel paint on Hydrocal.

So, the whole story, how the position the track casts occupy in relation to the labor of mining, and how they found their way into a community museum seemed almost like an idealized version of the way we like to imagine an artwork emerges, but not mediated by an author . . . more than just like a found object, or a kind of an artwork, it was more like a found process, a process of something coming up from some mysterious void, and so . . . there was an element of this allegory played out in the other two natural copy projects, too, but the scale of this one, the museum being connected to a small two-year community college, the relatively small scale of this (the town itself has only 10,000 people, the same amount of people in one collection of the *Individual Works*), and the newness of the museum gave me a certain view . . . a little story to hold in my mind that was so simple.

It was not a particularly intellectual process. I was just sort of intuitively charmed by the whole tale, and by what happens when you've been an artist for thirty years, how you start seeing the world in a different way, just because you are an artist, just the same way anybody else from any other business comes to see the world differently, and you start recognizing... it becomes impossible not to see analogies between what you do and what somebody else does, what your discipline does and what another discipline does, and you know I do think a lot about how artworks circulate socially, how they find their way from one place to another, and so the story rang a lot of bells for me.

There was something I wanted to say about that, it has to do with the *Surrogate Paintings*. I remember when I was first designing the *Surrogates*, one of the trains of thought that I was following – this was in the late sixties and early seventies, so minimalism was very prominent, and I would



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



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

look at a Mangold or a LeWitt or especially a Ryman and I would think, “There is almost no way to define this object as a painting just in terms of what you see, it is its identity that is put forward, it has the identity of a painting.” That is how it works. Everything you see in a painting, you might find it somewhere else and it would not be part of a painting, but, because it is located in what we call a painting, we recognize it as telling a different kind of story. So that was when I became interested in this idea of the identity of a painting, and why I was taking pictures of them off the television, and installing them so specifically over couches and sofas.

**Quéloz:** In a certain way, that is what links the *Surrogates* to the *Natural Copies*, you are more interested in the ways the function in the society and in their status than what they contain in themselves. The *Surrogates* are also tracks of what people have on their

walls . . . Like the *Natural Copies*, they are fragments from which we can construct, invent a story, the History.

**McCollum:** That is a good comparison. I did not think of it that way, because when I do think of a painting, I immediately think of “a table, a lamp, a chair, etc. and a painting” and that is the way I define it to myself, that the painting is a part of a much larger Gestalt and if it were not a part of that Gestalt it would not be a painting. It would have to be something else, and so what I was thinking about back then was how interesting it was that everything that made up a painting could always also be found somewhere else, so that the terms of painting were not really only the terms of painting, the terms of painting were



Allan McCollum: *Surrogates on Location*, 1982. Snapshots from TV screen.

the terms of the world at large; but, identity was something else, I mean you could not look at a painting and say: OK, the conventions of painting are these particular terms exclusively, because you can find texture anywhere, you can find line and form and color and representation in other areas of sign making that are not painting, and so forth. So, it was the idea that a painting was actually a way of looking at something more than it was a kind of object. So, maybe this is just a standard Duchampian approach too, but I think in the context of the late sixties, in this attempt to try to define everything, this was a new thought to me . . . and I think that what I’ve been trying to do with these “natural history” objects is to expand that way I have of thinking about painting to the larger discipline of fine art as a whole, to a larger scale entirely, and to recognize that unlike Duchamp’s found objects, some objects, like the *Natural Copies*, really might be art objects if they

were in an art museum instead of a natural history museum, or at least they are very much like art objects, because all of their qualities are more or less analogous to art objects, within their own context. So in the same way that the terms of painting are really the terms of the world at large, so are the terms of the entire fine art discipline really the terms of the world at large, the terms of all other disciplines.

Maybe what I'm saying is very obvious. But the fragment that you are talking about... the idea of a fragment, it is that a discipline like painting is a collection of fragments itself, drawn from all the possible activities of the culture as a whole, and put together to form a special, single type of activity. The discipline itself is a kind of track, or a trace, of the movement of culture, like the trace fossils. So, in that sense, I was very aware of the analogy between the idea of a trace in the art sense and the idea of the trace in the sense of scientific evidence, but . . . by doing the *Reprints* that go along with the exhibitions, I've been trying to, I guess, illustrate the way I am analogizing, because . . . I think that I was able to experience these objects as artworks because I knew the whole story. If you did not know the whole story, they might not seem so. So I thought it was important to put the story out, and of course then I realized that that is what galleries and museums always do. They put out an object and then put out big thick books with essays written by art historians telling you how to contextualize the object, so I realized I wasn't doing anything different.

**Quéloz:** Do you consider the *Reprints* as part of the work? Do you mean that they cannot be separated from the work and they have to be exhibited with it?

**McCollum:** They definitely seem to be part of the work, yes, more or less, but... Objects are never alone, they are always determined by some kind of discourse. So I took about twenty different little texts from various scientific and popular sources and called them the *Reprints*, which, of course, is a pun in English, on the idea of prints as in footprints, and printed them on colored paper, like leaflets, to be taken by visitors to the exhibits. The titles of many of them I chose specifically because they seemed to make an elliptical reference to my work, or to art issues in general. This one, "It Can Be Difficult To Determine the Boundaries of a Footprint" seemed to suggest certain philosophical or esthetic issues, in a humorous way, and this one, "Identifying the Trackmacker" would seem to be about authenticity and authorship!

**Quéloz:** Did you take the images from the same books?

**McCollum:** I had to take one picture myself, as the photocopy of the magazine article I was working from was quite degraded, but my picture was almost identical to the original. They're all pretty much authentic. Sometimes I extracted a small section of writing that had no separate title, so I drew a sentence from the text to function as the title, like this one, "Discovering Dinosaur Tracks by Sheer Luck," which seems to maybe refer to chance procedures, or artistic inspiration. The picture that accompanies "Artificial Casts, Molds and Replicas" is really a picture of my own studio, because there wasn't any picture in the book that was suitable. So I did rearrange a little here and there to create some humor, and to make some references to art issues, and so forth, but not too



much. The *Reprints* entitled “Assemblages of Dinosaur Tracks” and “Elite Tracks,” for instance, were taken directly as found. Most of the *Reprints* are pretty much straight.

**Quéloz:** It is a kind of “montage.”

**McCollum:** This is the one that is the most obviously about painting: “A Footprint as a History of Movement.” It seems to be a reference to abstract expressionism, and I really laughed when I found it. It also happens to be a great text about dinosaur tracks.

**Quéloz:** In the title of the project, you mention the name of the area where the footprints have been found, Central Utah. Is it an allusion to the idea of site specificity? This idea was already there in *The Dog from Pompei*, but Pompei is almost a museum, not Central Utah. Is it a way to say that we are outside of the art institution, in a remote and isolated place?

**McCollum:** It’s hard for us to think about Utah without thinking about Robert Smithson, with the Spiral Jetty there, isn’t it?... I think that’s one of the reasons Utah attracted me in the first place, Smithson’s presence there, and the meaning of that to me. The geologists I met there also seem to be aware of his work. It meant something to me, to be in this area, at this point in my life, because I know that in the late sixties and the early seventies I wouldn’t have done what I’m doing now, because I was concerned then with the gallery itself as the true site, the site where art received its meaning, even if the artwork was happening elsewhere, on the periphery, in the desert, or somewhere – this seemed to be the irony in Robert Smithson’s work, for instance, at least as I experienced it then, and I responded to that in my work, especially with the *Surrogate Paintings*. I made the *Surrogates* because they were exactly what you’d expect to find in an art gallery, not something you’d be surprised to find there.

**Quéloz:** But it was also taking what was in anybody’s home (above the sofa) that you put in the art gallery if we refer to the *Surrogates on Location*...

**McCollum:** The gallery or the museum, the home . . . all of these places are the normal sites of paintings. I wanted to create a homogenous view of their functioning, a kind of generic, portable art object for the wall. And if you can’t really discover the terms of painting within painting, if you have to look for it in the system of objects that give the painting its identity, then when you think about that, that the same features you find in a painting could be found elsewhere, in a garage door, or the surface of a fence, or a dry creek bed, or whatever, then suddenly the site of painting becomes very fragmented and dispersed. There doesn’t seem to be one particular location where you can find anything that is really defining, so I think I must have been figuring out my work in response to this kind of reasoning . . . this dichotomy of the site and the non-site that engaged Smithson so much, and his humor about it, his sort of romance with detritus, with the peripheries of things in relations to the centers. But I wanted to be really site-specific in the gallery.

**Quéloz:** Pompei as I said is a kind of open air museum, but the coal mines of Central Utah, it is a place referring to the world of labor, even if paradoxically these tracks are natural and not the result of a hard work.

**McCollum:** Oh, but I found them in a museum and really I cannot say for certain whether I would have found the story to have the proper ending if they had not wound up in a museum. The meaning to me is that they found their way into a socially determined value system.

**Quéloz:** Why did you paint them?


**McCollum:** I always do that.

**Quéloz:** It is a way to say that it is another copy. It is the same process that for the other series. They are all different.

**McCollum:** Well, yes, but in this case, especially because they are a kind of product, a product of the earth's geologic process, and as I am always interested in trying to think about artworks and mass-produced objects as inextricably connected – because we define art objects by contrasting them to mass produced objects all the time, we define what is artistic by what is not artistic, what we think of as mechanical, commercial, and so forth. So in trying to take apart this particular dichotomy I am always trying to point out that in some way mass production in itself is always kind of an extension of natural production. So, I wanted the *Natural Copies* to look like a cross between a product of both kind of processes...

**Quéloz:** To me, for the viewer, all this is made clear through the texts of the *Reprints*, and that is why I think they are very important. For example, there is a text which comments on the notion of quantity and one can read: “One might ask why they are not more abundant, because there were undoubtedly a great many dinosaurs living on the Mesozoic continents during a span of perhaps a hundred million years, and these were all fairly active animals that moved about quite a lot. Think of the number of steps that were taken collectively by all of the dinosaurs of Mesozoic times; it staggers the imagination!” It is a very subtle way to include a comment on your work. You refer to something which is not directly in

REPRINT —  
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS ARMOSTRONG AND MUSEUM WORLD  
P.P. Thomas & Co., 1961



**THINK OF ALL THE STEPS  
THAT WERE TAKEN COLLECTIVELY  
BY ALL OF THE DINOSAURS**

Dinosaur footprints or trackways (these being extended trails composed of many tracks) are not rare, not, except in certain particular localities, are they abundant. One might ask why they are not more abundant, because there were undoubtedly a great many dinosaurs living on the Mesozoic continents during a span of perhaps a hundred million years, and these were all fairly active animals that moved about quite a lot. Think of the number of steps that were taken collectively by all of the dinosaurs of Mesozoic times; it staggers the imagination! And to show how it does stagger the imagination, let's play quite briefly with a few figures.

It has been calculated from observations that a work horse, not a free, unhampered horse of the broad plains, but a plodding old dobbie, will take about 6,000 steps during the course of the day. A step means a stride with one foot, and since it is obvious that the horse plants all four feet on the ground during the day to a total of 6,000 times four, our horse, while he makes grass each time he puts a foot down, would make 24,000 footprints from sun to sun, and that would be a lot of tracks. Now, suppose the horse lives to an age of 20 years, which is not unusual for a horse, or a total of 7,300 days. By simple arithmetic it can be calculated that the horse would take about 44,000,000 steps during the course of his life, making a total of about 175,000,000 contacts of all four feet to the ground. There are a lot of potential footprints in a figure such as that.

Let us assume that the average dinosaur was not so active as a work horse, and may have taken only 3,000 steps a day, but let us also assume that the dinosaurs, being large reptiles, were comparatively long-lived, as are the large reptiles, such as crocodiles and turtles of our modern world. Thus it is not unreasonable to suppose that the total number of steps taken by the average dinosaur (if there was any such thing as an average dinosaur) might very easily have added up to as large a figure as that for the 20-year-old horse. Now think of the horde of dinosaurs that inhabited the world for a stretch of time extending over about 100,000,000 years; multiply a figure of say 150,000,000 (a conservative estimate of foot-to-ground contacts for a single animal) by the tens of millions of dinosaurs of Triassic, Jurassic, and Cretaceous times. The result must be somewhere in the billions of billions.

relationship with art but which functions metaphorically as a comment on your work. It is a copy, an appropriation, a reprint, but it is also a writing on your work at large.

**McCollum:** You do not think it is enigmatic ... you think the relation is pretty clear...?

**Quéloz:** Sure, and I can quote a few sentences that helped me to interpret this project and also your work in general.

**McCollum:** I wish you had seen the show, because all of the *Reprints* were in different colors, in little letter trays, so there was constant activity of people walking by and taking them. There were twenty different *Reprints* in twenty trays, on two tables and they filled up the tables. The action of the viewers constantly picking them up was very repetitive and theatrical.



Allan McCollum. *Drawings*, 1989-93. Pencil on museum board, each unique. Installation: Centre d' Art Contemporain, Geneva, Switzerland, 1993.

Earlier with the *Individual Works* or the *Drawings*, you are a little bit confused in the gallery as if you are in a situation, as if you are looking at something being stored or being on display right after it was made but not really presented yet; or something being sold at some kind of wholesale price, or in a wholesale showroom... naturally I like creating a display that could be any number of different kinds of display, so you start recognizing all incidences of display share some kinds of characteristics, of meanings.

The last three shows became increasingly didactic in the way they look, but in a way that is, I do not want to say ironic but ... maybe allegorical, where there are a number of conflicting interpretations...In a way where there is not only a confusion about whether

the display is an esthetic or a commercial display, but it could also be an educational display...I am trying to represent the way all displays share some primitive identity and how the way we address them determines how we distinguish them. The only thing that really disqualified it from a purely educational display was that there were too many objects, and this is always the case in my work, it's where the art-logic breaks down, as well. The quantity seems to be all wrong. The *Dog from Pompei* also had a didactic on the wall explaining all about Pompei and the volcano and all that. The only thing that was not explained was why there were a hundred dogs and not simply just one.

**Quéloz:** I would like to make some remarks about the *Reprints*. But, before that, I would like to underscore the fact that your recent works refer to other types of museums such as the natural history museum or the archeological museum. Can we consider these displacements as a way to comment the organization and the forms of display of art museum?

**McCollum:** Yes, I think so; it's interesting to me the way the art museum tries to present its opinions as if they were facts, like the science museums do. As if the artworks were examples of something real, something with real relevance to everyone, when there's always just a tiny minority of people making these esthetic choices.

**Quéloz:** Let's come back to the *Reprints*. For me they do not only speak about dinosaurs. They are also texts which refer to your practice, your way of working your thoughts about the place of art in society. Some texts emphasize the notion of process. I think, for example, of the *Reprints* which show drawings about the transformations of footprints. Other texts talk about the difficulty to define the object: "It Can Be Difficult to Determine the Exact Boundaries of a Footprint."

We also notice that the discourses of the paleontologists are contradictory (a comment on art criticism)?

**McCollum:** There are two particular texts and one just refutes the other one, did you notice that?

**Quéloz:** There was also something about the authorship of the people who discover the tracks, there were farmers and miners...

**McCollum:** Oh! I know the one you are talking about, Edward Hitchcock, it was in the 19th century and there was some debate about who should get the credit for discovering these tracks, and apparently none of them was a scientist. And in fact, so many of these tracks are named after the persons who found them even though they were not scientists.

**Quéloz:** I also like very much what the person who founded the museum (which is part of a grammar school in Salt Lake City) says in the opening discourse: "I hope it is as interesting to you as my hobby has been to me." (Is it a comment on artistic practice?) It is something you could say.

**McCollum:** Yes, in fact I thought about this sentence when I was walking to the opening.

Why were you able to read it this way, that's what is so curious to me. Is it because we are so use to thinking in metaphor? because we are in the arts?

**Quéloz:** But you also selected the parts of the texts which are very significant. In each *Reprint* there is one or two things which can be related to your practice. For example there is also the question of the collection and I also noticed some images of working places of paleontologists which look like pictures of your studio or of exhibitions of your works...

Many texts talk about the notion of reproduction: Dinosaur Tracks in the Field and Laboratory: Artificial Casts, Moulds and Replicas.

**McCollum:** . . . and even in the show you have the *Natural Copies* and also the *Reprints* which are copies, so I imagine people thinking: so: which are the prints which are the *Reprints*? Which is the natural copy and which is the unnatural copy?

**Quéloz:** There is one *Reprint* which talks about the difficulty of building the museum, the College of Eastern Utah Prehistoric Museum. It talks about cases and how things were displayed . . .

**McCollum:** . . . “The glass was so old, you could not see through it any more, and most of the cases had six or eight layers of paint on them that we had to clean up...”

**Quéloz:** Yes and also that idea that to display the work took almost as much work as the work itself... First it is about display and then it goes on about work: “After endless work nights, combining muscle, sweat, tears, paint remover, splinters, turpentine, profanity, and ruined clothing, the Museum officially opened to the public....”

**McCollum:** Oh, yes: “ . . . restoring the cases required nearly as much work as preserving the artifacts.”

Catherine Quéloz  
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