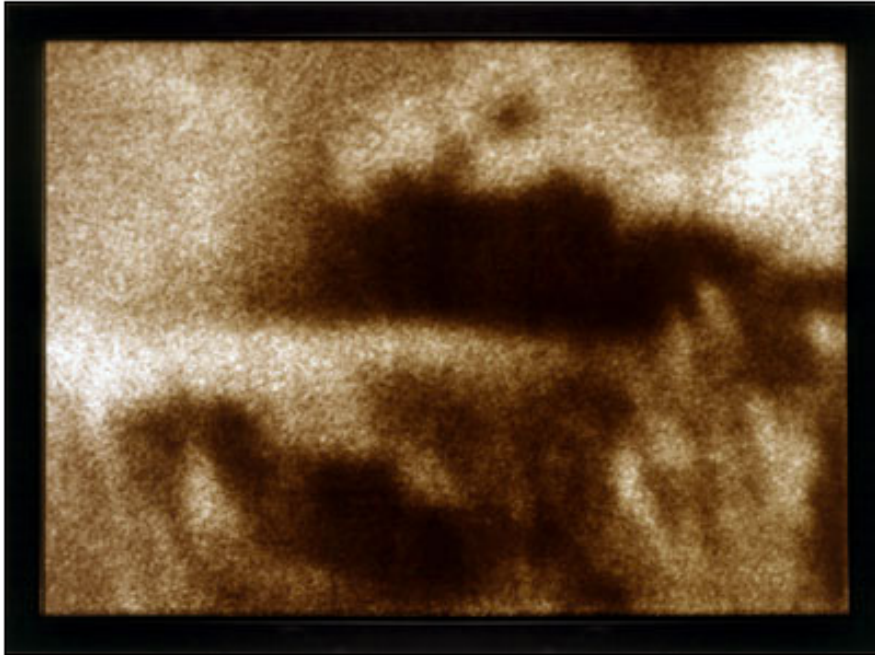


# Petzel

Roberta Smith, "Allan McCollum," *The New York Times*, September 10, 2004.

## The New York Times



Allan McCollum, *Perpetual Photo*, 1982-90, Sepia-tone black-and-white photograph, 45" x 60" x 3 framed. From the series "Perpetual Photos," 1982-.

### Allan McCollum

*Friedrich Petzel Gallery Gallery*

*Through October 2*

*Doris C. Freedman Plaza*

*Through February*

**P**art artist, part designer, part assembly-line savant, Allan McCollum continues his nearly 30-year project of demythologizing the aesthetic. His work takes the seemingly random details of everyday life, the bits of generic visual information that we have ceased to notice, and refocuses our attention by isolating, formalizing or magnifying them, but most of all by reproducing them in large quantities. In the process he banishes romantic notions of artistic touch, uniqueness or progress, while emphasizing factory production, art's commodity status, the importance of context and the systemic nature of just about everything.

In his latest show at Friedrich Petzel, Mr. McCollum, true to form, recycles some of his infinitely recyclable motifs. These are new, enlarged versions of his "Perpetual Photos" from 1982, the small, less-than-artworks, you might say, that he spotted in the backgrounds of sundry television shows and photographed. Originally 8 by 10 inches, these images are now monumental, like details of photographs that would cover most of the wall. Some suggest wounds, others hint at portraits, landscapes or spirit photos; one

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Allan McCollum. *Recognizable Image Drawings*, 2003. Graphite pencil on rag paper.

or two may bring to mind a giant Seurat drawing. Their murkiness is somewhat sinister, frustrating the eyes' implicit desire to see and understand.

Two new series of Mr. McCollum's "Recognizable Image Drawings" present 220 drawings, each depicting a small, black hard-edged shape based on one of the counties in Missouri (105) or in Kansas (115). They are recognizable in only the strictest sense, but in the gallery context the drawings resemble nothing so much as the sometimes mindless theme-and-variation industriousness of a dedicated modernist. A third piece presents cast plaster topographical maps of Kansas and Missouri, similar

to versions that Mr. McCollum offered to donate to historical societies in both states. Of the nearly 250 he contacted, 120 accepted.

At Doris C. Friedman Plaza, by way of the Public Art Fund, Mr. McCollum presents enlarged versions of his "Perfect Vehicles," the monochrome sculptures whose unvarying shape is based on a Chinese ginger jar that he first made in 1985. There are three lined up on pedestals on the plaza, one black, one red, one gold—by chance, or not, the colors of the German flag. With their pointed lids resembling helmets, they suggest sentinels—albeit pompous, hollow ones, for show more than anything else.



Allan McCollum. *Perfect Vehicles*, 1988/2004. Acrylic latex on concrete.

—Roberta Smith