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Mariabruna Fabrizi, "An Exploration of the Generic: Allan McCollum's 'Over Ten Thousand Individual Works'," *Socks Studio*, January 9, 2014.

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January 9, 2014

AN EXPLORATION OF THE GENERIC: ALLAN MCCOLLUM'S "OVER TEN THOUSAND INDIVIDUAL WORKS"

by mariabruna fabrizi [contemporary art, politics](#)

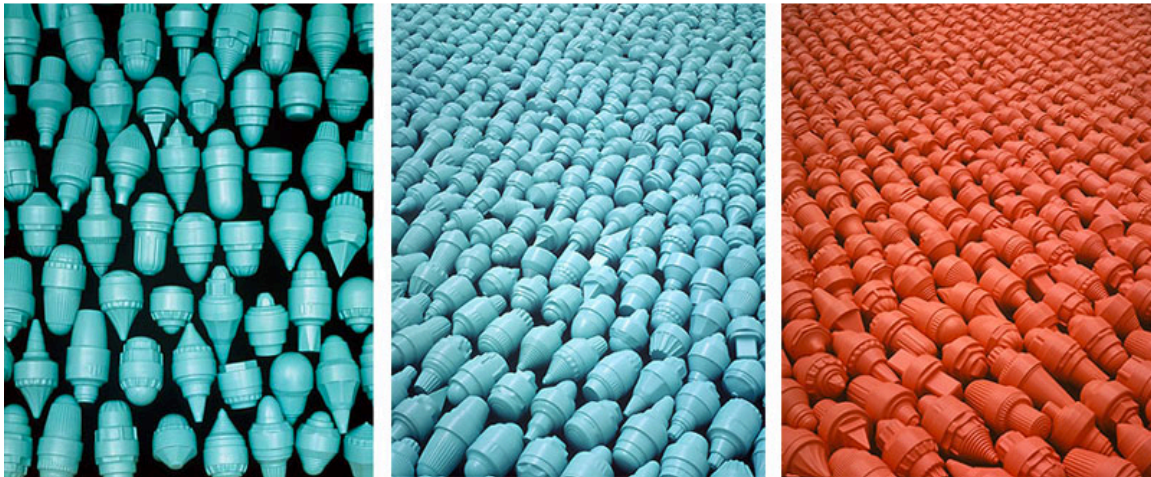


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Allan McCollum (1944) is an American artist, born in Los Angeles and currently based in New York, who spent his career investigating the relationship between mass-produced objects and individuals. On a visual level, the results of his research are similar to those of Pop Art, for the focus on the object of consumption, and to Minimalism, for the repetitive operations and the production of series. On a deeper level his works introduce a further layer, that of the symbolic meaning and appropriation in a world which produces in series for a generic mass of individuals.

His on-going series "Over Ten Thousand Individual Works" is one of the most significative experiences in McCollum trajectory. Even if this work is identified by a specific name, it is part of a continuous project which includes the whole corpus produced by the artist, as he stated in an interview: *"For me, my whole life's work is a single project. I think of it like a book. I keep adding chapters, but it's all the same book."*



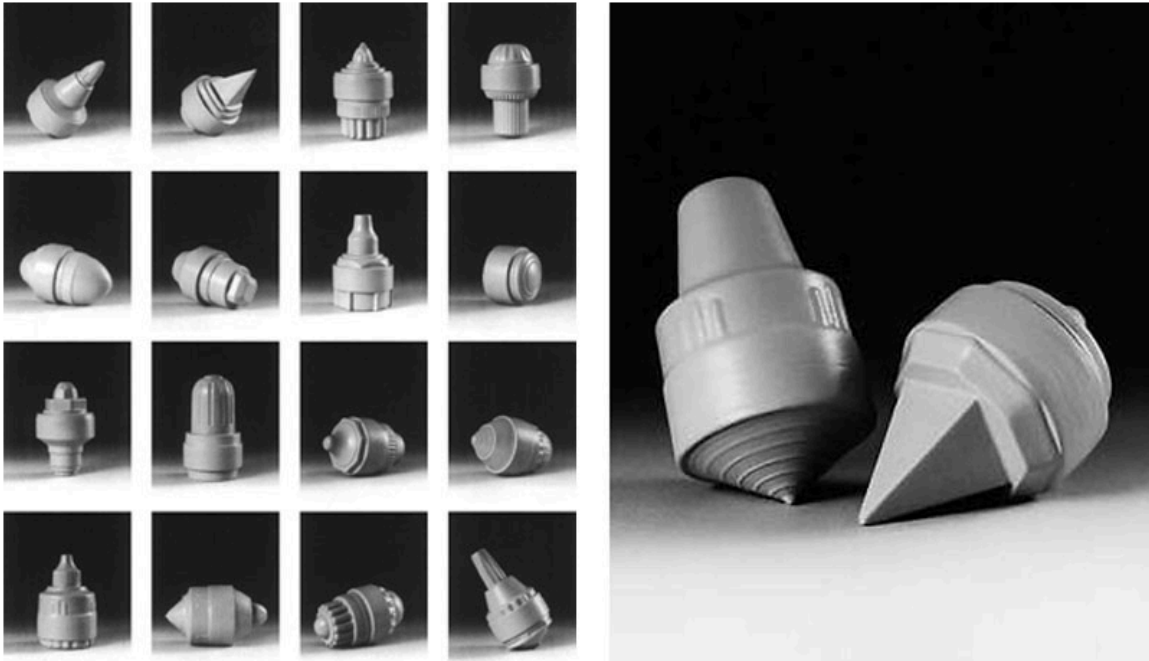
To produce the piece, the artist collected hundreds of small shapes from people's homes, supermarkets, hardware stores, and sidewalks: spoons, containers, cups, earrings, paper-weights, small toys, pencil sharpeners, orange squeezers and so on.

From this objects many rubber mold are produced from which replicas of these shapes can be hand-cast in plaster. Combining the initial shapes together a new vocabulary of things is created, things which embold in their DNA the first shapes

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collected but end up turning into something completely different. In the end there are not two finished individual object which look alike. The shapes are hand-casted in gypsum, hand painted, then grouped in collection of 10.000 objects painted in the same color.



The notions of rarity and uniqueness connected to the value of the object (and specifically the object of art) are called into question. The art-work itself is an ever expanding collection and new "Individual Works" are produced in abundance by the artist, challenging the concept of copy and original over and over. The object is multiplied and dissolved at the same time in the available multitude of unique specimens. McCollum's approach seems to predict the growing world of 3D printing with the intrinsic possibility of shifting from mass produced to individual, customized goods.

"If you're not one of those people who affects history and most of us are not then how are you supposed to enjoy looking for personal meaning in the souvenirs of that class of people who manipulate history to your exclusion? How can this be possible? I think it takes a pretty blind state of euphoric identification to enjoy another's power to exclude you. I usually end up

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feeling angry and powerless when I visit a museum. I find myself thinking, "Who are these people? Who paid for this building? Where did they get their money? Who chose these art works? How much did they cost? What does all of this have to do with my experience?" And on and on . . . I work to remedy this alienation by basing the value of my work on a new model, a model based on abundance and availability, not uniqueness and exclusivity." Allan McCollum



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<http://socks-studio.com/2014/01/09/an-exploration-of-the-generic-allan-mccollums-over-ten-thousand-individual-works/>