

Petzel

ALLAN MCCOLLUM

A Moment in Time: Plaster Surrogates, 1991-1993

January 15 – February 28, 2026

520 W 25th Street

Petzel is pleased to present *A Moment in Time: Plaster Surrogates, 1991–1993*, an exhibition of historical works by American artist Allan McCollum opening Thursday, January 15, 2026. The show marks McCollum's twelfth solo exhibition with the gallery and will be on view through February 28, 2026 at Petzel, 520 West 25th Street. This is the gallery's first-ever presentation of the artist's *Plaster Surrogates* series, bringing together seven works ranging from collections of five to forty. In an age of ever-increasing proliferation of reproductions, McCollum's meticulously crafted, unique *Plaster Surrogates*, which destabilize the traditional hierarchies between originals and copies, remain more relevant than ever.

Over the past fifty-five years, McCollum has developed a rigorously sustained practice through distinct yet interrelated series, including the *Constructed Paintings*, *Surrogate Paintings*, *Lost Objects*, *Perfect Vehicles*, *Natural Copies*, and *Shapes Project*, to name a few, each examining how artworks circulate, signify, and accrue value within cultural systems. Working serially, he has consistently explored the tension between uniqueness and mass production across media and scale.

The *Plaster Surrogates* mark a decisive turn in McCollum's investigation into how an artwork can serve as a sign for itself. Cast from molds yet unmistakably shaped by the artist's hand, each object is carefully painted, center and frame alike, in enamel, allowing subtle shifts in brushwork, surface, and tone to register across the works. What might initially appear as a mechanically generated array reveals, upon closer examination, a distinctly spatial presence through edges, depths, and painted planes that bear the physical trace of McCollum's labor. No combination of size, frame color, or mat hue is ever repeated, and each *Surrogate* asserts its own material specificity, even as it participates in the logic of seriality.

This approach grew out of McCollum's earlier *Surrogate Paintings* from 1978, constructed from wood, museum board, and many coats of paint, which reduced painting to its most conventional outer markers—frame, mat, and a central void—thereby proposing an object that functions as a signifier of a painting and setting the stage for the cast forms that would follow.

With the first *Plaster Surrogates* created from molds in 1982, McCollum began producing the works in larger quantities with black centers. By stripping the objects of any representational context, he subtly shifts attention to the frameworks that typically go unnoticed: the conventions of display and, ultimately, the systems through which culture assigns value to objects.

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About Allan McCollum

Over the past 50 years, Allan McCollum has explored how objects achieve public and personal meaning in a world caught up in the contradictions we make between unique handmade artworks and objects of mass production, focusing recently on collaborations with regional communities and historical societies in different parts of the world. In 2005, he designed The Shapes Project, a system to produce “a completely unique shape for every person on the planet, without repeating.”

Solo retrospectives of Allan McCollum’s work have been mounted at ICA Miami (2020); the Musée d’art Moderne et Contemporain, Geneva (2006); Musée d’Art Moderne, Villeneuve d’Ascq, Lille, France (1998); the Sprengel Museum, Hannover, Germany (1995-96); Serpentine Gallery, London (1990); the Rooseum Center for Contemporary Art, Malmö, Sweden (1990); Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, The Netherlands (1989), and Portikus, Frankfurt, Germany (1988), among many others. He has produced public art projects in both the United States and Europe, and his works are held in over 90 art museum collections around the world.

McCollum’s work has been included in numerous group exhibitions, including: *Art & Entertainment*, MAMCO, Geneva (2018); *Fade In: Int. Art Gallery—Day*, Swiss Institute / Contemporary Art, New York (2016); *Art for a Nation: Inspiration from the Great Depression*, High Desert Museum, Bend, Oregon (2016); *The Art of Our Time*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, curated by Helen Molesworth (2015-2016); *New York in the 1980s: Urban Theater*, Modern Art Museum, Fort Worth (2015); *Take It or Leave It: Institution, Image, Ideology*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2014); 9th Bienal do Mercosul, Porto Alegre, Brazil (2013); *This Will Have Been: Art, Love, & Politics in the 1980s*, Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago (2012-2013); *The Pictures Generation: 1974-1984*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2009); *Singular Forms*, The Guggenheim Museum, New York (2004); *The Museum as Muse*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1999); *L’Informe: Mode d’Emploi*, Centre Pompidou, Paris, France (1996); *Objects of Desire: The Modern Still Life*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1996); *Allegories of Modernism*, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (1992); The 1991 Sydney Biennale, Sydney, Australia (1991); *Image World: Art and Media Culture*, The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1989); *A Forest of Signs: Art in the Crisis of Representation*, The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1989); *Aperto*, the 43rd Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy (1988); and *Ailleurs et Autrement*, Musée d’Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris, France (1984), and many more.

Petzel is located at 520 West 25th Street New York, NY 10001. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10am–6pm.
For press inquiries, please contact Karolina Chojnowska at karolina@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.