

Allan McCollum
Julian Pretto Gallery
June, 1979

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

Allan McCollum's recent paintings could easily fit into context with the work Joseph Masheck has described as "Pictures of Art" in his essay of that title (*Artforum*, May, 1979): each one has the appearance of being a painted-over painting. The objects are small, literally shaped in relief like framed and matted painting, drawing, prints or photographs, and each, entirely including the sides, painted in a single, flat color. The idea seems to have been to reduce the paintings to their most common and recognizable elements in terms of their perception as framed objects on the wall. The result, paradoxically perhaps, is that one's attention is thrust out from the interior space of the object to that which surrounds it. One's gaze is then supported by a number of similar pieces which are lined up at approximately the same height,

around the gallery. Individually, the pieces appear somewhat banal and materialistic. As a group, however, the seemingly regular shape and form of a single work is given interest and complexity as every piece is different in color, size, and form. One's sense of the commonness of the object is denied and a gestural aspect normally associated with internal parts, brushstroke, color or texture, for examples, are found in the differences from object to object. Moreover, the dramatic space of Julian Pretto's gallery in its rawness and with its very high ceilings becomes a consideration in play with these small, ideally simple paintings. The space appears to have an elegance evoked by one's perception of this group of paintings adorning the room.