

Allan McCollum
THE EVENT: Petrified Lightning from Central Florida
(With Supplemental Didactics)
October 20 - November 24, 2000
537 W 22nd Street



THE EVENT: Petrified Lightning from Central Florida
(with Supplemental Didactics)
1998

Over 10,000 cast fulgurites in zircon, epoxy & sand; over 13,000 booklets, paper

PRESS RELEASE

Opening reception: Friday, October 20, 6-8 pm

“It’s hard to imagine how memory and meaning could exist without language — both are always only available through some sort of representation. I imagine that objects having meaning — artworks, keepsakes, people, stones — could not exist for us without their “literature.” How could a bolt of lightning, lasting only for the tiniest fraction of a second, be understood otherwise? Events this brief will always evade our synapses — and their existence will always only exist after the fact, amongst one’s representations. Perhaps a true picture of how an artwork has meaning could be constructed if the literature supporting the artwork was put on display at the same time, along with it. The Petrified Lightning project was created to explore this idea — an exhibition to enact the “event” as always already absent, with the residue and the meaning always already appearing in its place.”

-- Allan McCollum

Friedrich Petzel Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of Allan McCollum entitled *THE EVENT: Petrified Lightning from Central Florida (with Supplemental Didactics)*. There will be an opening reception on October 20 from 6-8pm. For this large-scale project McCollum explored the ways in which treasured objects are created in nature and in culture, and how their meanings are constructed within the community that gives them value. *THE EVENT: Petrified Lightning from Central Florida (with Supplemental Didactics)*, was developed in Tampa for the University of South Florida Contemporary Art Museum and the Museum of Science and Industry.

McCollum spent the summer of 1997 triggering lightning strikes by launching small rockets with hair-thin copper wires trailing behind them directly into storm clouds as they passed overhead. The triggered lightning bolts were directed down the wires into various containers prepared by the artist that were filled with Central Florida minerals donated by a local sand mining operation. The bolts instantly liquefied a column of sand with temperatures up to 50,000 degrees Fahrenheit. This immediately recondensed into a column of naturally created glass that exactly duplicated the path of the lightning bolt. These were then dug out by the artist in a manner similar to the way a paleontologist might remove a fragile fossil from its matrix. The result is the fulgurite, or what is sometimes referred to as petrified lightning.

Using a mixture of epoxy and zircon, 10,000 fulgurites were cast from a single mold. Through this process, McCollum specifically explored the creation of objects by lightning. In this way he also deconstructed commonly held ideas of instant production of objects, and popular metaphors that are often used to describe the processes of creativity, as with our fantasies of receiving "illumination" from above, being "struck" with an idea like a "bolt from the blue."



As another element of the installation, he produced a series of over 13,000 small booklets on over sixty subjects related to fulgurites and lightning. This arrangement provided the equal balance between the visual and scientific content that was integral to the exhibition.

This is Allan McCollum's second solo exhibition with Friedrich Petzel Gallery. Other recent projects and exhibitions include *Museum as Muse* at the Museum of Modern Art, *L'Envers du Decor* in Lille, France, and *InSite* San Diego.

For further information, please contact the gallery at info@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.