

— For immediate release

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Public Art Fund presents...

## **Allan McCollum's *Perfect Vehicles***

*At Doris C. Freedman Plaza in Central Park*

**September 8, 2004 – February 2005**

**New York, NY**—This September, artist Allan McCollum will exhibit three new *Perfect Vehicles* at the southeast corner of Central Park. This will be the first time in more than a decade that McCollum has made new works in this iconic sculptural series, and it will also be the artist's first-ever outdoor exhibition in New York. McCollum, who came to the art world's attention with his *Surrogate Paintings* of the late 1970s, has continued to create wide-ranging conceptual artworks that deftly examine the nature of art and other culturally valued objects, the practice of museum display, and the relationship between originals and copies. Installed at the southeast entrance to Central Park, McCollum's *Perfect Vehicles* will form an unlikely counterpart to the more traditional statuary at nearby Grand Army Plaza and elsewhere throughout the park.

McCollum began making the first works in his *Perfect Vehicles* series in 1985, presenting and re-presenting an iconic sculptural form in order to investigate the ways in which a single object can contain cultural meaning. All of the *Perfect Vehicle* sculptures bear the same shape—that of a Chinese ginger jar, a traditional vessel that has been extensively copied and reproduced for centuries. McCollum's earliest works in the *Perfect Vehicles* series were just over a foot-and-a-half tall, and in 1988 he scaled them up to just over six-and-a-half-feet tall, the size of works presented at Doris C. Freedman Plaza—although these sculptures will be shown on pedestals for the first time, raising the overall height to almost 10 feet.

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The *Perfect Vehicles* are always thickly painted in a different hue of commercially available acrylic latex paint; the works here are black, red, and metallic gold, a majestic trio of colors that fittingly evokes traditional Chinese color schemes. Made of cast glass-fiber-reinforced concrete, they have no opening, utterly eliminating the typical use-value that one might expect of a vase. Presented singly or in groups, McCollum's *Perfect Vehicles* invite a range of associations: they look like something you might find in The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Asian Art department or in the storefront windows of Tiffany & Co., but they could also be behemoth chess pieces or cartoon abstractions of an English bobby.

McCollum has long employed multiple versions and variations in his artwork, probing the difference between an object and an icon, and also between an original and a copy. His sculptures and installations also consider what we expect from an artwork, as in his 1978 series, *Surrogate Paintings*, which featured arrangements of dozens of variously sized objects, hung on a wall like a portrait gallery, but consisting only of a frame and a monochrome surface where one might expect a family photograph or a small painting. Throughout the 1980s, McCollum continued to examine the nature of art and everyday objects, and the conventions of viewing art. In the early 1990s, his work took a significant new direction when he began work with archaeological and geological artifacts, creating casts and multiple copies of the chained dog of Pompeii (1990), fossilized dinosaur bones (1991), and other things. In 2003 he began *The Kansas and Missouri Topographical Model Donation Project*, for which he made replicas of topographical models of Kansas and Missouri, and then undertook a mail campaign to offer them to more than 250 local historical societies (120 of whom accepted).

Allan McCollum came of age as an artist in Los Angeles in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Minimalism reached its height as an art movement. The *Perfect Vehicles* represent his questioning of the Minimalist notion that an artwork can be reduced to “the thing in itself” – that is, that a sculpture or a painting could simply be an object, instead of symbolizing or referring to something else. The *Perfect Vehicles*—which McCollum describes as “an homage to the idea of one thing standing for another”—are a celebration of the way that we look for meaning in the objects that surround us, and then use them as vehicles to express our own ideas. “I think there's something very magical about the way we express one thing ‘through’ another thing...our competence in doing this is fraught with risks, as well. It's a specifically human dilemma.”

**Allan McCollum** was born in Los Angeles, California in 1944 and currently lives and works in New York. Mid-career retrospectives of his work have been mounted at the Musée d'Art Moderne, Lille, France (1998); the Sprengel Museum, Hannover, Germany (1995-96); and the Serpentine Gallery, London (1990). His work has appeared in major international festivals including the 1991 Carnegie International at The Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh and the 43rd Venice Biennale (1988). A concurrent solo show featuring McCollum's *Perpetual Photographs* and *Recognizable Image Drawings* from the *Kansas and Missouri Topographic Model Donation Project* will be on view at Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York, from Sept. 1-Oct. 2.

**Doris C. Freedman Plaza**, named for the founder of the Public Art Fund, is located at 60<sup>th</sup> Street and Fifth Avenue. This is the southeast corner of Central Park. Subways: N, R to Fifth Avenue-60<sup>th</sup> Street; 4, 5, 6 to Lexington Avenue – 59<sup>th</sup> Street.

**Public Art Fund** is New York's leading organizer of artists' projects, new commissions, installations and exhibitions in public spaces. With 25 years of experience and an international reputation, the Public Art Fund identifies, coordinates and realizes a diversity of major projects by both established and emerging artists in New York City. By bringing artworks outside the traditional context of museums and galleries, the Public Art Fund provides a unique platform for an unparalleled public encounter with the art of our time. The Public Art Fund is a non-profit arts organization supported by generous contributions from individuals, foundations, and corporations, and with public funds from The New York State Council on the Arts, a State Agency, and the City of New York Department of Cultural Affairs.

This exhibition is made possible through the cooperation of the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation, The Honorable Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor of the City of New York and The Honorable Adrian Benepe, Commissioner, New York City Department of Parks & Recreation.

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