



Allan McCollum

Artist involves community in unique shapes project

By Aleta Mayne on February 5, 2010 10:56 AM

Just as each person in Hamilton is unique, so, too, are the more than 6,000 printed shapes that artist-in-residence Allan McCollum will be distributing to town residents in April.

The New York City-based artist has chosen Hamilton as the location of his newest project, meant to both represent individualism and unite the community. He visited campus this week, to give a history of his work during a Wednesday-night lecture and to meet with students who will be helping with the project.

In 2005, McCollum designed a system through Adobe Illustrator to produce enough two-dimensional shapes that there can be a different shape for each person on the planet.

The system also keeps track of the hand-drawn computer images to ensure that no two will ever be alike and that no two people will ever share the same shape.

With the hopes that this project will continue even after McCollum is gone, he has organized the system to produce more than 31 billion different shapes—more than enough to accommodate what is estimated to be the world's population peak.



Students will be helping Allan McCollum (left) with his project, which involves distributing individual shapes to each resident in the town of Hamilton. (Photo by Janna Minehart '13)

"Each of his creations are unique, yet remain remarkably similar to one another, like us—humans," said studio art major Gabe Rosen '12, who is helping with the project.

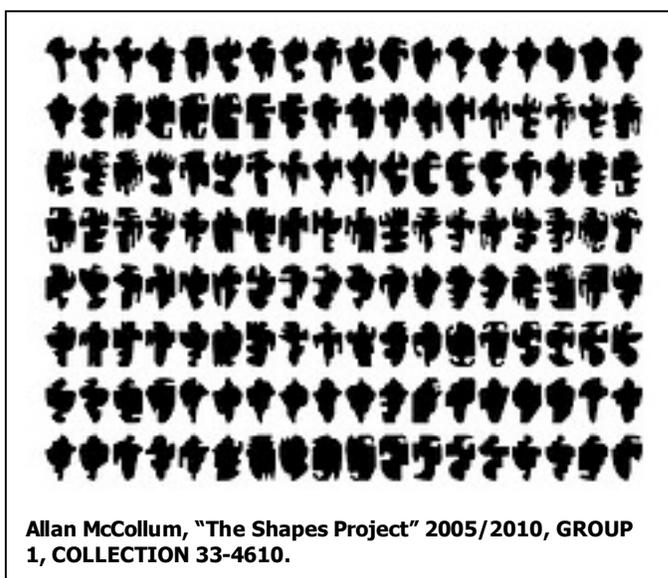
Although McCollum has used the shapes system in other projects, Shapes for Hamilton is the first time he will be distributing individual shapes to each member of a community.

Art and art history professor DeWitt Godfrey is coordinating the project with McCollum, the 2010 Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation Distinguished Artist in Residence in the Department of Art and Art History, through the Institute for the Creative and Performing Arts.

Other Colgate staff members, like Visual Resources Curator Jesse Henderson, also are devoting their talents.

Henderson developed the database that catalogs the shapes for Hamilton and has outlined the workflow required to produce each print.

"The end result is going to be very satisfying to see," she said. "People are curious and excited not just to see something, but also to receive something."



Mark Williams, art studio technician, helped Henderson devise a methodology to get the shapes into a printable format, and Michael Holobosky from campus document services will be the prepress technician who manages the printing.

Holobosky, who has worked on museum projects in the past, said he is excited to be part of something that involves the entire community.

"Especially a community that is so tightly knit as Hamilton," he added. "I hope Hamilton

will take full advantage—if they could see what went on behind the scenes, they would really appreciate what this artist has created for them."

Students involved with the project are currently working out the distribution details. McCollum has emphasized the importance of distributing the shapes in a community location, not on campus, because it is meant to be a town-wide event.

Before the shapes are given out, they will be on exhibit at the Clifford Gallery March 8-31. Stay tuned for more information about when and where Hamilton residents can pick up their 5" by 7" printed shapes, each signed by McCollum and provided free of charge.