



Allan McCollum: Enlarged Model of a Sand Spike from Mount Signal (in progress, 2000)

WHERE DOES THE MEANING COME FROM?

MAYBE THE MEANING OF AN ARTWORK
IS THE SUM OF ALL MEANINGS GIVEN TO IT
BY THE SUM OF ITS VIEWERS?

In this way, meaning might adhere to an artwork in the way meaning becomes attached to any other common object, perhaps in the way a pearl forms around a grain of sand, or perhaps in the way a concretion might accrete around a seed, or a pebble, in the sands of an ancient sea.

Is it the artist's place to participate in this community process, in this accrual and amplification of an object's meaning? Or is it the artist's job only to create new objects, new meanings?

Or is it perhaps that the artist has no choice in the matter?

Let's begin with a simple seed in the sands of Lake Cahuilla, an ancient sea that disappeared centuries ago, and a type of geological oddity once so common and so specific to the area, a "sand spike" sand concretion.

Over the last century, these concretions were excessively collected from the foot of Mount Signal, a mountain that long ago had been an island, straddling what is now the Valle Mexicali, Baja California, Mexico, and the Imperial Valley, California, U.S.A.

Sadly, these sand spikes have now disappeared from the area entirely.