



The Topographical Model Donation Project For One Hundred and Twenty Historical Society Museums In Kansas and Missouri

Produced with the financial and technical help of the staff at the GrandArts Gallery in Kansas City, Missouri. The project was facilitated with the help and support of the gallery's curator at the time, Sean Kelley.

In May, 2003, I began a project involving the multiple fabrication of two topographical "relief" models of two states, Kansas and Missouri. The prototype patterns were computer-carved from satellite data by the company Solid Terrain Modeling, in California. They use Geographical Information Systems data, and they are scientifically accurate to a very fair degree. The heights of the geological features were exaggerated slightly, to give a better picture of the elevations across the states. The topographical models of the state of Kansas are approximately 4 x 11 x 27 inches each, and the models of the state of Missouri are approximately 3 x 23 x 17 inches each.

From these two patterns I had two molds made, using Hydrostone gypsum. Some of the casts were painted in lush colors for display as sculptures, and they were exhibited at the GrandArts Gallery in November and December 2003.

In addition to the painted sculptures, the very same molds were used to make gypsum models that were donated to small, regional history museums throughout both the states of Kansas and Missouri. These donations were facilitated by my writing a few hundred letters to the small museums, offering the models as donations. I delivered the models to the museums myself, with the help and company of Cydney Millstein, an architectural historian living in Kansas City, during a road trip that took a full month, in August 2003.

It can be very expensive to create a topographical model — but once a rubber mold is made, it can be relatively economical to produce them in quantity. I worked to "piggy-back" a practical, educational project on top of an art gallery project. I designed the topographical model project to be looked at in two very different ways, by deliberately giving it two very different sets of significances — one in the world of contemporary art, and one in the world of regional history museums.

Allan McCollum