

ACE GALLERY BEVERLY HILLS

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DE WAIN VALENTINE *EARLY RESINS 1968 – 1972 AND NEW WORK*

EXHIBITION THROUGH FEBRUARY 2012

Ace Gallery Beverly Hills is currently exhibiting cast polyester resin sculptures from 1968-72 by DeWain Valentine, an installation that has been augmented with recent acrylic wall sculptures and *Rainbow Ring* (1972).

Valentine spent his childhood in Colorado where his family worked in hard rock mining and as a child he would visit the mines, and started collecting and polishing his found objects. When he polished the stones and specifically the crystals, he was led to the observation and experience of hard objects having translucency and transparency. His father later owned a car dealership and young Valentine found himself being fascinated by the repair department. He was twelve years old when he surface repaired and painted his first car. At the high school he attended, an art teacher supplied students with new materials including plastic. The US had gained access to acrylic from the Germans during World War II, from a company Rohm and Haas who pioneered its development, which the Americans obtained and adapted for use for the windows of their fighter planes. A nearby Colorado aircraft plant had donated scraps of the material to local high schools. He learned how to polish the plastic as a junior in high school in 1946 from these acrylic scraps. The government had also recently declassified fiberglass, which was being used in making the lightweight, high velocity PT Boats during World War II. With his high school teacher, Valentine started experimenting with the use of fiberglass, soon bringing these plastics home and baking them in his mother's oven. She would come home to a house full of toxic fumes and not happily, have to open all the windows to air out the house. Already in his early teens he was baking, forming, molding and fabricating with plastics, still a very new material with limited availability. After high school he attended the University of Colorado and studied under Richard Diebenkorn. He was awarded a double scholarship and went to Yale University, where his main teacher and stimulus was Philip Guston at the Yale School of Art.

Valentine became attracted to Los Angeles by his observations through *Artforum* magazine, which was based in Los Angeles at the time, covering young artists such as Larry Bell, Craig Kauffman and Kenny Price. He felt that LA was more interesting for him, with the concerns of these artists (glass, Plexiglas, glazes) and the burgeoning interest in Fetish Finish, rather than the Pop and Minimal movements predominant in

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New York at the time.

With his background, he had an affinity to Los Angeles, and when he settled here in 1965, he taught Plastics at UCLA, with plastics of all kinds from acrylics to polyesters, from liquid to solid. He had his first exhibition at the Dwan Gallery in 1966, exhibited with Ace Gallery in Canada in 1967, and then Ace Gallery Los Angeles in 1968. With early success, visitors to his studio included the likes of Arman, Donald Judd, Richard Serra and Sol LeWitt.

Influenced by the color, light and space of the Southern Californian environment, a number of artists, including Valentine with studios in the vicinity of Venice Beach, became a generation who helped define the contemporary art subsequently produced in Los Angeles. Car customizing and automobile lacquers made their way into their work and they pioneered the use of industrial materials such as cast acrylic, Plexiglas, polyester resin and glass in their artworks. With these often highly toxic materials, they created sleek forms with pristine surfaces. Valentine's variously scaled, lens-like translucent sculptures embody a careful balance of form, an unexpected palette of hues with varying translucency. Defying their own weighted physicality through their transparent qualities to seem amorphous and weightless, an illusion of defying gravity in their balance is also created. The circular forms on view are freestanding, balanced with a wider, heavier base to stabilize them. Created slightly earlier and related to the *Circle's* on view, was the remarkable and physically imposing 174" wide 5,000-pound cast resin sculpture, *Large Wall*, 1968. The machine-like smooth surfaces, suspending clear color in space evidence the influences of Southern Californian sky, ocean and atmospheric conditions. Valentine's concave and convex lenses inevitably integrate into any environment warping perspectives rather than simply circumventing visibility. The interest in the phenomenology of light and its effects connects Valentine to the Light and Space and L.A. Glass and Plastic movements, in which he was an integral, leading and influential exponent, sharing an underlying interest in capturing and manipulating light to present variable perceptions. He is currently working with glass and acrylics, stone, bronze and steel.

Valentine's work is in numerous museum collections including the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, MOMA New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art Los Angeles, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. **DeWain Valentine currently has a solo exhibition on view at The Getty Center, *From Start to Finish: De Wain Valentine's Gray Column*. His work is also included in the following exhibitions: The Getty Center *Pacific Standard Time: Crosscurrents in L.A. Painting and Sculpture, 1950-1970*, and the related Pacific Standard Time Exhibition at The Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego, *Phenomenal: California Light, Space, Surface*.**

DeWain Valentine was born in Fort Collins, Colorado in 1936. He lives and works in Los Angeles, California.

For further information and visuals please contact Jennifer Kellen, Director
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Gallery Hours: Tuesday through Saturday 10:00 AM to 6:00 PM