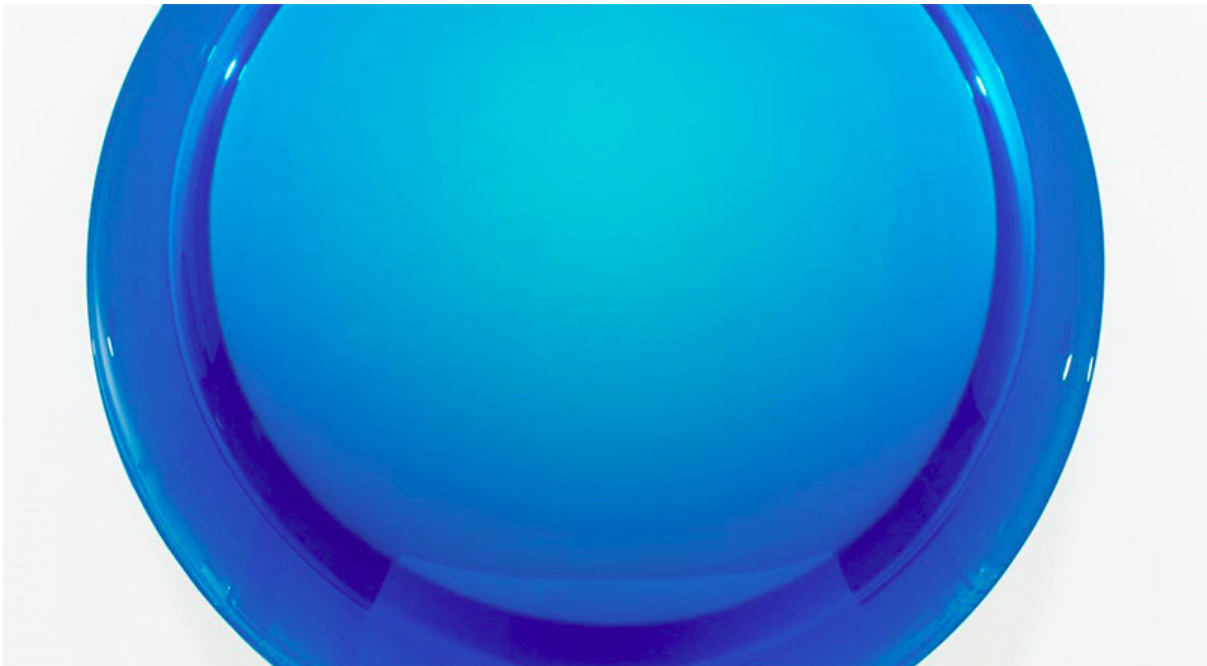


**Dreamidiamachine.com:** 'ART-PRESENTATION: Plastic Show', by Efi Michalarou, February 15, 2017



**Light and Space** denotes a loosely-affiliated Art Movement related to op art, minimalism and geometric abstraction originating in Southern California in the '60s. It was characterized by a focus on perceptual phenomena, such as light, volume and scale, and the use of materials such as glass, neon, fluorescent lights, resin and cast acrylic, often forming installations conditioned by the work's surroundings.

**By Efi Michalarou**

**Photo: Almine Rech Gallery**

The group exhibition "Plastic Show" at Almine Rech Gallery in London presents a selection of works by seminal California artists from the Light and Space movement: Mary Corse, Robert Irwin, Craig Kauffman, John McCracken and DeWain Valentine, five artists who, through a series of individual explorations, went on to investigate the broad potential that plastics could yield. Known for their pioneering work with various synthetic resins and synthetic polymers during the '60s and '70s, these artists are today recognized not only for their active roles in the development of plastics as a newly discovered medium in art, but also for their sophisticated techniques and at times even quasi-acrobatic prowess required to shape them into the seamless, translucent, luscious volumes. Mary Corse began studying painting at the Chouinard Art Institute in Los Angeles where she was inspired by the abstractions, compositions and color theories of artists such as Josef Albers and Wassily Kandinsky. In the mid-60s, she produced large-scale monochromatic shaped canvases and non-traditional materials such as Plexiglass illuminated by fluorescent light bulbs or incorporating materials that reflect light such as glass microspheres. Through her art practice, Corse explores surfaces and space to fuse the boundaries between painting and sculpture. One of the pivotal figures in recent American art, Robert Irwin's career has spanned a period of more than 50 years. His site-responsive works aim to refocus the habituated eye, posing questions rather than providing answers and encouraging the viewer to be made aware, afresh, of the visual field around them. Irwin has said about his art that he tries to 'open up things' and 'just

allow them to happen', but also that 'the pure subject of art is human perception': a conditional activity determined by context. A leading exponent of the Light and Space Movement, Irwin's installations employ light, string and scrim to create subtle alterations in physical space. Architectural in scale, his works emphasize and expose particular spatial and perceptual experiences, for example by painting walls a particular color, suspending panels to create a focused space beneath, or using taut panels of material scrim to change and intervene in specific architectural details. Craig Kauffman in the 1960s helped put Los Angeles on the art map with audacious experiments in molding industrial plastic to create ethereal wall-mounted sculptures, some resembling giant pieces of jelly candy. After an initial group of works with flat plastic, Kauffman discovered the industrial process of vacuum forming, and proceeded to translate his sensuous forms into wall reliefs, painted on the reverse with sprayed acrylic lacquer. John McCracken began his career as a painter, he moved toward a more object-based aesthetic, making abstract works in the form of basic geometric shapes such as cubes or quadratic volumes. In 1966 he developed what became his signature sculptural forms: tall, leaning planks made of wood, coated in fiberglass, and then painted with a highly finished lacquer. Striking in their monolithic simplicity and characterized by pure, monochromatic surfaces, McCracken's handcrafted "planks", which rest on the floor and lean against the wall, successfully blur the boundary between painting and sculpture. As the defense industry slowed down after World War II and the Navy declassified some of its best-kept secret materials, one of the lucky beneficiaries was De Wain Valentine, a budding young artist in Fort Collins, Colorado. A local defense contractor gave the shop department at Valentine's junior high a batch of leftover polyester resin used for making patrol torpedo boats, and Valentine was hooked. He is best known for large-scale, translucent resin cast sculptures in a variety of apparently simple, geometric shapes – that vary none the less greatly from the Minimalist grids and cubes. Artists such as Donald Judd and Sol LeWitt were concerned to achieve more a mechanical perfection, heightened by an interest in mathematic (or combinatorics). Valentine, on the other hand, was much more interested and excited by physics than by mathematics.

Info: Almine Rech Gallery, Grosvenor Hill, Broadbent House, London, Duration: 9/2-25/3/17, Days & Hours: Tue-Sat 10:00-18:00, [www.alminerech.com](http://www.alminerech.com)



De Wain Valentine, Concave Circle Blue, 1968-2016, Cast polyester resin, 60,3 x 60,3 x 23,5 cm, Photo: Melissa Castro Duarte, Courtesy of the Artist and Almine Rech Gallery



John McCracken, Link, 2000, Polyester resin, fiber glass and wood, 231 x 38 x 6,5 cm, Courtesy of the Artist's Estate and Almine Rech Gallery