

De Wain Valentine

Oct 13 — Nov 14, 2015 | London, Savile Row

Almine Rech Gallery is pleased to present DeWain Valentine's first solo exhibition in the United Kingdom and his second with the gallery.^[1] The show will be on view from the 13th of October to the 14th of November, 2015.

This exhibition constitutes one more step in the "vast reappraisal of the important artistic force that developed in L.A. in the 1960s - often referred to as the Light and Space movement - and of Valentine's major role there up to now. [...]

Spanning across several decades, different and utterly fascinating plastic-based media and technical methods (not traditionally used in Modernist sculpture), DeWain Valentine's production has continually embodied a unique, quintessentially Southern Californian aesthetic. 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. [...]

His concerns with surface transparency and translucency, the use of industrial materials and processes, an emphasis on the qualities of prismatic color, and interest in the viewer's perception and interaction connects him to the so-called Light and Space movement from the 1960s and 1970s. Overall, what should be emphasized as a principal and distinctive feature of DeWain Valentine's art (and his personality) are an unwavering attachment to an aesthetic of pure visual and haptic joy, and to a sensual and uplifting celebration of outdoor life in the California of the 1960s.

The work of the Light and Space artists, who gathered around the fledgling, yet intense, art scene located on the coast of Venice, California, was influenced by the distinctive and unique qualities of the atmospheric landscape of Los Angeles. [...] *Finish Fetish* is another category employed to characterize the production of some of these artists, such is the case with DeWain Valentine. The term, often used by artist, critic and museum curator John Coplans, alludes to the embrace of new industrial technologies, surface slickness, and glossy, attractive colors. [...]

DeWain Valentine was born in Colorado and arrived in L.A. in 1965 to teach a course in plastics technology at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). He is regarded today among the earliest pioneers in the use of industrial plastics and resins to execute monumental sculptures that reflect the light and engage the surrounding space through its mesmerizingly translucent surfaces that arrest one's gaze. [...] This technical knowledge, combined with his subsequent experience working with fiberglass-reinforced plastic in boat building shops and painting automobiles, air planes - and even, according to some, UFOs - led to his fascination and artistic involvement with sculptures made out of colored plastic and polyester resin, all materials evoking a futurist era. [...]

On view in the exhibition are both large-scale and smaller size colored sculptures. [...] Whichever the format or the color, the artworks, with their smooth, highly-polished translucent surfaces explore the material's ability to carry and reflect light. [...]

As one stands, facing the surface of some of these sculptures, one can gaze through this translucent resin-based substance, as one becomes aware of the inner space and the space beyond it, as if our eyes could enter through and penetrate something that our physical body could never do. In Valentine's own words: *I am fascinated by the idea of being aware of the outer surface of an object, of seeing through it and of seeing also the inner surface.* This statement also reflects the artist's concerns with the viewer's perception and the phenomenological possibilities triggered by his artworks. These awe-inspiring viewing experiences are heightened by the sculptures' responsiveness to and activation of their environments. Valentine skillfully juxtaposes the literal objecthood with the illusionist effects of atmospheric light, solidified sky, and contained fluid color." [2]

Also on view are examples of Valentine's *Skyline* watercolor paintings on thick paper from the 1980s to the 1990s. Here, several works composed of painted backgrounds are reminiscent of clouds, and horizons. The background harks back to ideas of space, light and transparency essential to his work. These never shown watercolors echo the sculptures with their structured ethereality: the atmosphere created is contained within geometrical forms and lines.

Almine Rech Gallery will also be featuring a solo presentation of works by DeWain Valentine at Frieze Master London, booth F13.

DeWain Valentine (b. 1936, Fort Collins, Colorado) has exhibited extensively in one-man exhibitions at institutions and galleries such as David Zwirner Gallery, New York, USA (2015); Almine Rech Gallery, Paris (2014); La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art, La Jolla, USA (1985); Honolulu Academy of Arts, Honolulu, USA (1985); Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, USA (1979); Pasadena Art Museum, now the Norton Simon Museum, Pasadena, USA (1970). He has also been included in many noteworthy surveys, most recently *Pacific Standard Time: Crosscurrents in LA Painting and Sculpture, 1950-1970*, Martin-Gropius-Bau, Berlin (2012) and J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, USA (2011); *Primary Atmospheres: Works from California 1960-1970*, David Zwirner Gallery, New York, USA (2010); and *West! Frank Gehry and the Artists of Venice Beach, 1962-1978*, Frederick R. Weisman Art Museum, Minneapolis, USA (2005). DeWain Valentine has been awarded both the National Endowment for the Arts Grants (1991) and the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship (1980).

DeWain Valentine lives and works in Los Angeles, California.

[1] Almine Rech Gallery, Paris (2014); Bruno Bischofberger Gallery, Zürich, Switzerland (1969).

[2] This is an extract from an essay by art historian and author Joachim Pissarro, part of the illustrated catalogue on DeWain Valentine to be published by Almine Rech Gallery.