

DIANE ROSENSTEIN GALLERY

Joe Ray: *Complexion Constellation*
June 17 – August 5, 2017

Diane Rosenstein is pleased to announce *Joe Ray: Complexion Constellation*, a thematic solo exhibition of sculpture, painting, photographs, collage and performance by the Los Angeles-based artist. This monographic presentation emphasizes the artist's 50-year exploration of both "inner and outer space" from 1968 - 2017. *Complexion Constellation* opens Saturday, June 17th, 2017 with a reception for the artist from 6:00 – 8:00 PM.

Joe Ray (USA, b. 1944) grew up in Alexandria, Louisiana and studied fine art at the University of Southwestern Louisiana in 1962, where he was one of few black students in a previously segregated college. Ray arrived in Los Angeles, in 1963, at the age of 20; in 1965 he was inducted into the US Army and sent to Viet Nam, two weeks after the Watts Riots. Upon his return, Ray moved to Leimert Park, and committed himself to his art making. "Being an artist was not the easiest thing to think about as a profession ...But after [Viet Nam], it was easy to make a decision to become an artist, because of the position I was put in: I could not have made it...I could have not come back. So if you put your life on the line for that, you can put your life on the line for something you feel some passion for."

Ray met artists Larry Bell, Doug Edge, and Terry O'Shea, and began exploring sculpture through plastics. In the mid-1960s, partially through the interdisciplinary work of artist DeWain Valentine (and chemical engineer Ed Revay), there was a revolution in the use of plastics and cast resin throughout Southern California. Ray reveled in the alchemical oddity of the material and exploited resin's paradoxical nature as a hard substance that can both radiate and be permeated by light.

His first sculptures were translucent and related to his interest in euphoric perception, of endless depth. He added pigments, often employing black and white values, such as in "New Eye" (1969), an important early cast resin work that is from a series of "Light and Space" sculpture included in this exhibition. In 1970, he received the "Young Talent Award" from LACMA, and enrolled in the first class at CalArts, under the mentorship of Nam June Paik and John Baldessari.

The title of the exhibition – "Complexion Constellation" – refers to text painted across "In Space," 1980, an intergalactic landscape painting, from a series of Ray's "Nebula" paintings that began in the late 1970s. Using acrylics and aerosol paint, these "Nebula Paintings" continue his exploration of outer fields of vision with an affinity for early 20th Century Impressionism.

This show also includes photographs, such as documentation of early performances (with Doug Edge and Terry O'Shea) at Robert Irwin's studio for "The Market Street Program," 1971; "The Green Hotel Performance," 1972 (with Tony Ramos and Lowell Darling); and an untitled series of thirty-one silver prints (1970-1972), made during visits home to Louisiana while a student at CalArts. These vintage photographs, on loan from LACMA, were created as a result of the artist's desire to represent the people and places he grew up around -- predominantly children only one generation removed those who picked cotton. These children are referenced again in "Fields To The Yard," (2014), a series of monoprint collages that speak to the implications of President Obama's legacy on generations of residents of the American South.

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Joe Ray has centered his art practice in Los Angeles for the past fifty years. His sculpture, painting, photographs, performance, and filmmaking engages key movements in Southern California art history, from "Light And Space" plastics, early performance in Venice and at CalArts, abstract painting, and collage. He was recently included in *Prospect 3.: Notes For Now* (Curated by Franklin Sirmans), New Orleans, LA (2014-15); *The Artist's Museum* at MOCA (2010), L.A. *Object & David Hammons Body Prints*, at Roberts & Tilton Gallery (2007), Los Angeles; and *Made In California: Art, Image, and Identity 1900-2000*, at LACMA (2000).

The artist and the gallery gratefully acknowledge the generous loan of artwork from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) and The Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art (USU).

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