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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

From Start to Finish: De Wain Valentine's Gray Column

***On View at the Getty Center from September 13, 2011–March 11, 2012
As Part of Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A., 1945–1980***

*The Getty Conservation Institute Presents From Start to Finish, Drawing on the Expertise of
Getty Scientists to Reveal Materials and Methods Innovated by Artist De Wain Valentine*



De Wain Valentine in the final stages of sanding *Gray Column* in 1976. Image courtesy of De Wain Valentine. Photographer unknown.

LOS ANGELES—One of the most influential sculptors active in Los Angeles in the 1960's and 1970's, De Wain Valentine is perhaps best known for his striking, semitransparent, and delicately colored large-scale polyester resin sculptures of simple geometric forms that interact intensely with the surrounding light. Not as well known, however, are the challenges Valentine faced in finding a material that would allow him to realize his artistic vision.

Now, as part of the Los Angeles-wide *Pacific Standard Time* initiative, the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) will present ***From Start to Finish: De Wain Valentine's Gray Column***, an exhibition focused on the materials and fabrication processes developed by

Valentine that made the creation of his large-scale works possible. The exhibition centers around the 1975-6 sculpture *Gray Column*, which, at twelve feet high, eight feet across and about 3, 500 lbs, is one of the largest artworks Valentine made with polyester resin, and has never before been publicly displayed.

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On view at the J. Paul Getty Museum at the Getty Center from September 13, 2011 through March 11, 2012, ***From Start to Finish*** complements the Getty Museum's survey exhibition *Pacific Standard Time: Crosscurrents in L.A. Painting and Sculpture, 1945–1970*, which also includes an additional work by Valentine.

Valentine was one of a number of artists during the postwar era in Los Angeles who adopted new materials and highly innovative fabrication processes for their work, most of which were being developed for use in the aerospace, boat, automobile, and even surfboard industries. Like several of his contemporaries, Valentine had turned to polyester resin, a material that could be cast and polished to create sculpture with a stunning, pristine surface. The most limiting factor in using the commercially available polyester resins, however, was that none of them could be used to create large volumes in a single pour—anything more than a thin layer of resin would crack badly during the casting process due to the high levels of heat released on curing. As a result, only fairly small-scale sculptures could initially be achieved.

Unwilling to accept this limitation, Valentine partnered with Ed Revay, a local representative from PPG Industries' resins division to modify the company's existing products. With much trial and error, the pair was able to develop a polyester resin that would enable Valentine's vision: to create, with a single pour of resin, luminous artworks of much larger proportions.

Gray Column exemplifies the incredibly large scale on which Valentine could work with the new material he helped to develop. The sculpture was originally conceived as one of a pair of columns intended to stand side by side in the new company headquarters of Baxter Travenol in Deerfield, Illinois. However, modifications by the architect to lower the ceilings led Valentine to change the installation by laying the two columns on their sides. ***From Start to Finish*** will be the very first installation of one of those columns, installed upright as the artist intended.

From Start to Finish brings to the public's attention the importance of the materials and manufacturing processes utilized in Valentine's innovative work, illustrating the story of how this extraordinary piece of art, *Gray Column*, was made—from the casting of the resin to the extensive polishing required to achieve the final, perfectly smooth finish. The exhibition also will explore some of the practical and ethical issues linked to the conservation of the work.

In addition to the exhibition, the GCI is gathering information on the materials and working methods of many of the artists from the Post World War II era known for utilizing a

vast array of new resins, paints and plastics such as Peter Alexander, Larry Bell, Robert Irwin, Craig Kauffman, John McCracken, and Helen Pashgian – all of whom produced bright, pristine-looking objects directly inspired by California culture and landscape to create the distinctive “L.A. look” sometimes referred to as “Finish Fetish.” The rich colors and beautiful surfaces that typify their work, painstakingly achieved through novel fabrication processes, will be researched through artist interviews, technical examinations of select artworks, and scientific analysis.

The exhibition ***From Start to Finish*** and the wider research project are part of the GCI's larger Modern and Contemporary Art Research initiative, which aims to advance the conservation profession's knowledge and practice for modern and contemporary art by addressing some of its most pressing needs. The initiative includes a broad range of activities and approaches, including scientific research into the stability and behavior of many modern materials such as modern paints and plastics, the dissemination of information via workshops and publications, and the promotion of dialogue among professionals through meetings and conferences. More information can be found at:

www.getty.edu/conservation/science/about/macar.html

Available in conjunction with the exhibition is the publication ***From Start to Finish: De Wain Valentine's Gray Column*** (Getty Conservation Institute, \$24.95, hardcover), which tells the fascinating story behind the making of Gray Column, from its original concept to its display at the Getty Center, which marks the first time the piece will be installed as Valentine intended—standing vertically. The book includes a short essay, a conversation with the artist and a wealth of stunning archival images taken during Gray Column's creation. Together, they illustrate the extraordinary lengths Valentine undertook to develop a material that would enable him to cast colossal pieces, and the effort undertaken to achieve their extremely delicate, pristine surfaces. The book also includes a 30-minute DVD that recounts the project in greater detail through interviews and documentary footage.

Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A., 1945-1980 is an unprecedented collaboration of more than sixty cultural institutions across Southern California, which are coming together to tell the story of the birth of the LA art scene. Initiated through grants from the Getty Foundation, Pacific Standard Time will take place for six months beginning October 2011.

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The J. Paul Getty Trust is an international cultural and philanthropic institution devoted to the visual arts that includes the J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Research Institute, the Getty Conservation Institute, and the Getty Foundation. The J. Paul Getty Trust and Getty programs serve a varied audience from two locations: the Getty Center in Los Angeles and the Getty Villa in Malibu.

About *Pacific Standard Time: Art in L.A., 1945 – 1980*

Pacific Standard Time is a collaboration of more than sixty cultural institutions across Southern California, coming together for six months beginning in October 2011 to tell the story of the birth of the Los Angeles art scene and how it became a major new force in the art world. Each institution will make its own contribution to this grand-scale story of artistic innovation and social change, told through a multitude of simultaneous exhibitions and programs. Exploring and celebrating the significance of the crucial years after World War II through the tumultuous period of the 1960s and 70s, Pacific Standard Time encompasses developments from L.A. Pop to post-minimalism; from modernist architecture and design to multi-media installations; from the films of the African-American L.A. Rebellion to the feminist activities of the Woman's Building; from ceramics to Chicano performance art; and from Japanese-American design to the pioneering work of artists' collectives. Initiated through \$10 million in grants from the Getty Foundation, Pacific Standard Time involves cultural institutions of every size and character across Southern California, from Greater Los Angeles to San Diego and Santa Barbara to Palm Springs. Pacific Standard Time is an initiative of the Getty. The presenting sponsor is Bank of America.

The Getty Conservation Institute

The Getty Conservation Institute works internationally to advance conservation practice in the visual arts—broadly interpreted to include objects, collections, architecture, and sites. The Institute serves the conservation community through scientific research, education and training, model field projects, and the dissemination of the results of both its own work and the work of others in the field. In all its endeavors, the GCI focuses on the creation and delivery of knowledge that will benefit the professional conservation community through scientific research, education and training, model field projects, and the dissemination of the results of both its own work and the work of others in the field. In all its endeavors, the GCI focuses on the creation and delivery of knowledge that will benefit the professionals and organizations responsible for the conservation of the world's cultural heritage. To learn more, visit www.getty.edu, or subscribe to the GCI's E-Bulletin by visiting www.getty.edu/subscribe/gci_bulletin/.

Visiting the Getty Center

The Getty Center is open Tuesday through Friday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. It is closed Monday and major holidays. Admission to the Getty Center is always free. Parking is \$15 per car, but free after 5pm on Saturdays and for evening events throughout the week. No reservation is required for parking or general admission. Reservations are required for event seating and groups of 15 or more. Please call 310-440-7300 (English or Spanish) for reservations and information. The TTY line for callers who are deaf or hearing impaired is 310-440-7305. The Getty Center is at 1200 Getty Center Drive, Los Angeles, California

Additional information is available at www.getty.edu.

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