

Joe Ray (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.”

In the mid-1960s, Ray began casting with resin, a new material for artists that, along with light, came to define “Southern California’s Light and Space” movement. By 1970, he received a “Young Talent Award” from LACMA, and enrolled in the first class at CalArts. While at CalArts, Ray created early art performances with Doug Edge and Tony Ramos, among others in Venice, CA and Pasadena. He took his B.A. in 1973 under the mentorship of Nam June Paik and John Baldessari. Joe Ray’s work has never been confined to a specific medium or style and has shifted between representation and abstraction, sculpture, painting, and photographs. His cast-resin sculpture *New Eye* (1969) situates him within Walter Hopps and Ed Kienholz’s Ferus Gallery scene, while its black and white tubes point to issues of racial segregation and inequality in Los Angeles.

Joe Ray 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). His work is in the permanent collection of Los Angeles County Museum of Art and The Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art (Utah State University). Joe Ray lives and works in Los Angeles.