

LEO VALLEDOR



**At
First
Sight**

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At First Sight



25 July - 23 August 2024

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Art history and criticism tends to preempt the experience with the wonder called art. As the discipline names and describes art with authority, the feeling for its sensuous, vital form tends to give way to programmed understanding. This can be sharply observed when “abstract” configurations are explained away on behalf of the viewer who oftentimes is speechless or clueless before some thing that bears no resemblance to so-called reality or alludes to no reference in the world, memory, or imagination. In a way, the earnest, though mystified, viewer is left with only the object and its history and criticism. The sensing body disappears amid the generous gesture of abstraction.

There is thus a need to recover that chance to engage with abstraction, without the pressure, or even the prior burden, of getting “it” and getting it “right.” The first solo exhibition of Leo Valledor in Manila offers an occasion. Certain ciphers quickly come to the fore to frame this moment: that Valledor, who practiced in California and New York, has Filipino roots and that his abstraction comes from the hard-edge minimalist lineage. The artist and his art may be conveniently decoded via this shorthand at the outset.

But we can be more patient. We can spend more time with Valledor, his studies, and his paintings; and try to foil how a programmed understanding might take over what should be a heady experience.

We see highly finessed canvases of almost pure color, organized in terms of geometric fields. They are very nearly flat, with barely a tone to indicate an illusion of dimension, denying the lyricism of gradation that validates skill or simply the realism that gives pleasure or the assurance of recognition. Though they are seemingly flat, they actually dissemble, making us ask if the color is the very support of the painting, or if it is, in fact, the layer of painting. Where is the medium here? And how does the paint work? The stature of painting may be betrayed by drips on the margins, index of material life beyond the control of even the most assiduous artist, or by a slight shift in the hue of the dominant palette. Color is a kind of all-over sublimation; and yet it is a clearing as well, a refuge in an existing— or another— ecology.

These canvases are not typical; they are shaped canvases containing patterns, their tectonic integrities tested by how they are made to barely touch each other. The shapes distract us: they draw our attention away from the expected “content” of the painting, if such content were a binary to its “form.” To the degree that the shapes dwell in our senses, they become vectors of visual interest themselves, assuming the status as both support and the totality of the art itself. And because the shapes achieve relative autonomy, the enterprise of painting ceases to pertain solely to representation. Painting becomes object, and also effect.

Upon closer reading of the stimuli playing out across the paintings, which consist of lavish geometries and inscriptions of line, fulsome in their physicality, we are also struck by the seams at which the planes find intimacy. These edges are delicate and severe, but they mark the suture, or the facture, of painterliness, at the same time that they enable the continuum, too, of abstraction, as a possible infinity or, at the very least, an instinct for the expansive. These edges are intervals as if they were for breathing, or meant to disrupt formalism, or to hold out an opportunity to improvise as in jazz or beat poetry. The latter seeded the sensorium of Valledor in the United States in the Fillmore District in the fifties and in Manhattan with the Park Place Gallery coterie in the sixties.

Abstractionists of the minimalist bent like Ellsworth Kelly and Donald Judd put their faith firmly in the agency of the body to intuit the world. Their thoughts on this are instructive, as we more closely acquaint ourselves with Valledor's impulse. Kelly asks and answers: "What is the world? It's what your eyes see. But as you move, everything changes. If you move a little, the whole world adjusts." The coordination of the eyes and the limbs within the world is the awareness of aroundness: the wholeness that adjusts, the worldly that changes, the everything that moves a little.

The intensity of this agency of the body makes the visual possible and of interest. This body diligently, persistently, even obsessively works through conceiving and discerning, not in the programmatic way, but rather in a performative, tropic affection. As Judd would encourage: "You have to look and understand, both. In looking you understand; it's more than you can describe. You look and think, and look and think, until it makes sense, becomes interesting." Judd extends this investment in the human capacity to actually ordain time and space altogether. For him, they are not givens, and that it is in abstraction that they can be invented: "Time and space can be made and don't have to be found like stars in the sky or rocks on a hillside." Time and space can be had by looking and thinking in trance-like repetition until a tricky world transpires. As Valledor himself reveals: "By four-dimensional color I mean the notion that it exists within time. And I have this idea about time being part of all these ambiguities that we see in dimensions, like the idea that you read a line two-dimensionally and the difference in [if] that line [were] coming straight toward you as a point. I feel that the difference in that is time."

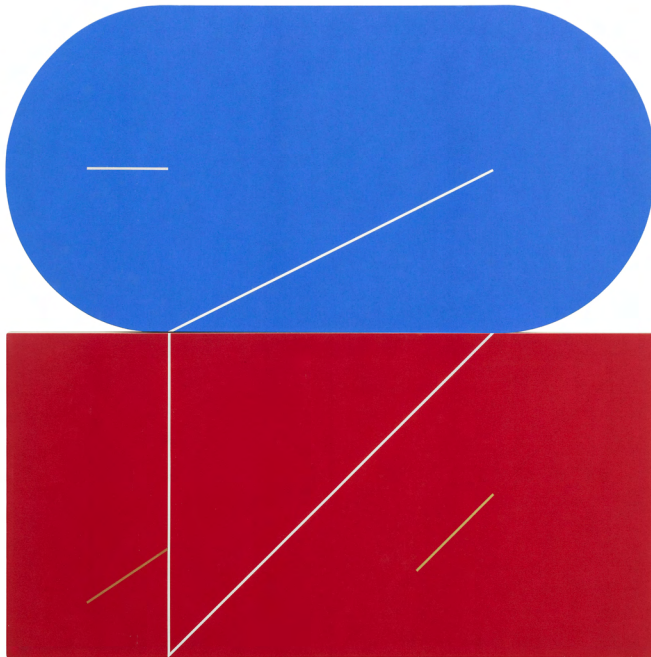
What does this all mean in our effort to belong to Valledor's art, to gain a measure of it from, let us say, the site of the Philippines? It may be argued that abstraction, in fact, had frustrated the default desire for the "identity" assigned to the artist, that it was able to delay the recognition of his identity as Filipino in the former empire of the United States that had colonized the Philippines. This delay, like the interval in his paintings, releases the migrant or diasporic artist from convenient multicultural capture and simultaneously invests him with a less legible, but nevertheless salient, post-colonial and cosmopolitan persona. Valledor's abstractions in their time were able to diffuse the appearances of identity and in the same breath resist the discriminations stemming from systemic racism, which surely included the occlusion of his robust practice in the narrative of art history. As an artist with a Philippine heritage doing abstraction in the United States, Valledor eluded easy identification and might have invited erasure. That said, he would render the said abstraction political as he challenged how the apparatus of representation would elide or confine him, the very same condition that had made him complex as an at once, and irreducibly so, Filipino-American and abstractionist.

If Valledor complicates the purity of the painting form by his hints at tonality and vibration, the contingency of acrylic, and the carpentry of his canvases, so does his quest for idealized purity make sense only in relation to the struggle with objectification in both non-objective painting and racialized, therefore objectifying, society. In this process, Valledor would anticipate a potential civic space as shapes open up and pigment bleeds to flesh out the spectrum of spatiality that makes the social matter— or to instantiate the social itself through spatiality. To Valledor, a citizen of the diaspora, this allegorical, because ethical, space in abstraction was fundamental. It made quite sure that his subjectivity did not become too obvious to be routinely hailed, poised as it was to stage the difficult demands of society and the syncopated sensibility of the artist to stake out another ground, or clearing of color, or overall shapely rhythm.

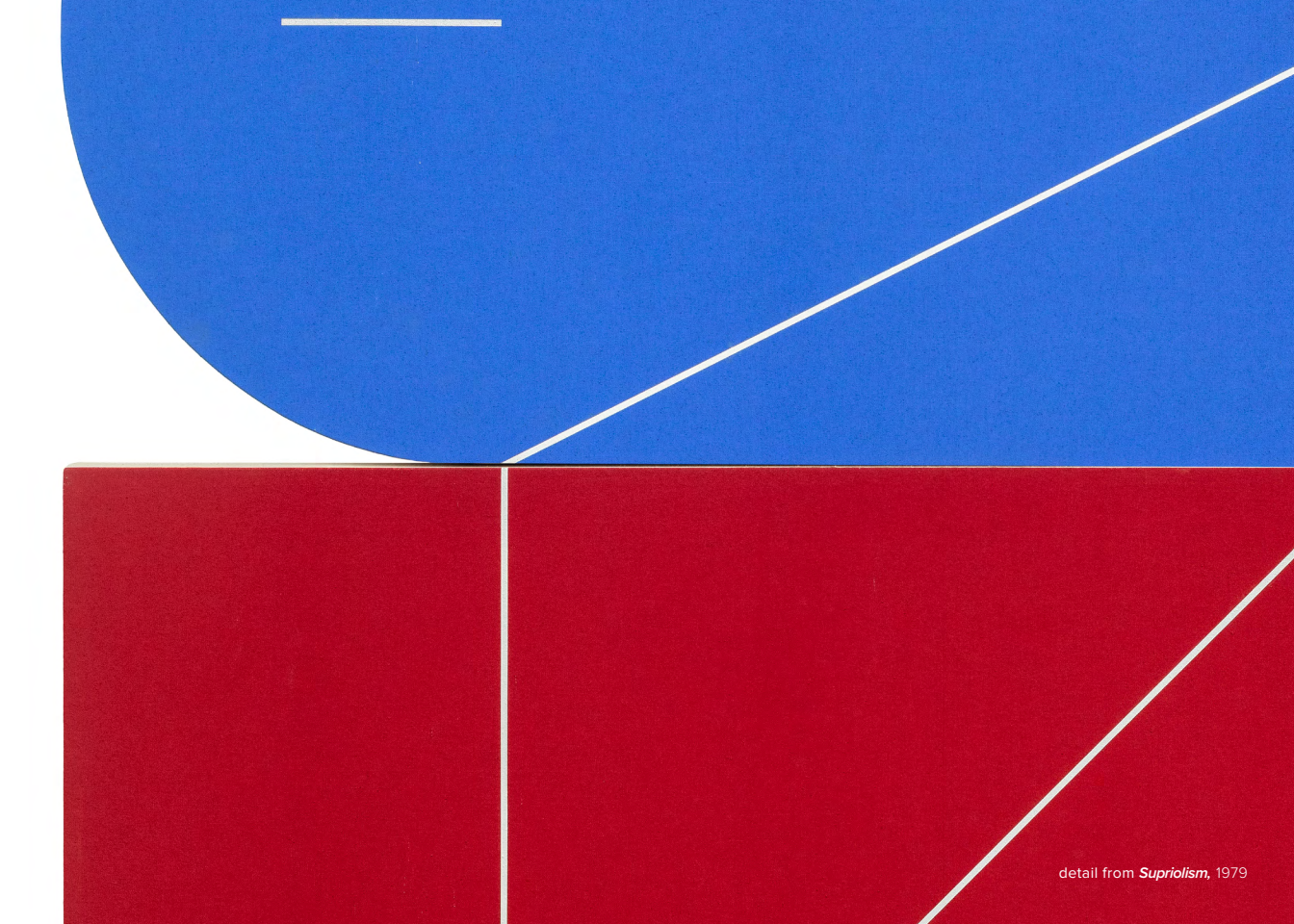
words by Patrick Flores
Courtesy of the Leo Valledor Estate







Supriolism, 1979
acrylic on shaped canvas
72.05 x 71.97 in • 183.2 x 182.8 cm



detail from *Suprialism*, 1979

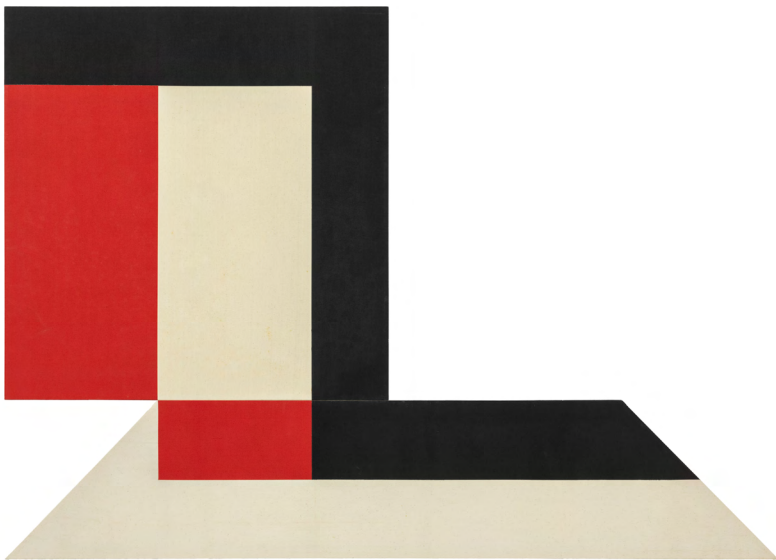


Exit, 1970
acrylic on shaped canvas
90 x 42 in • 228.6 x 106.7 cm

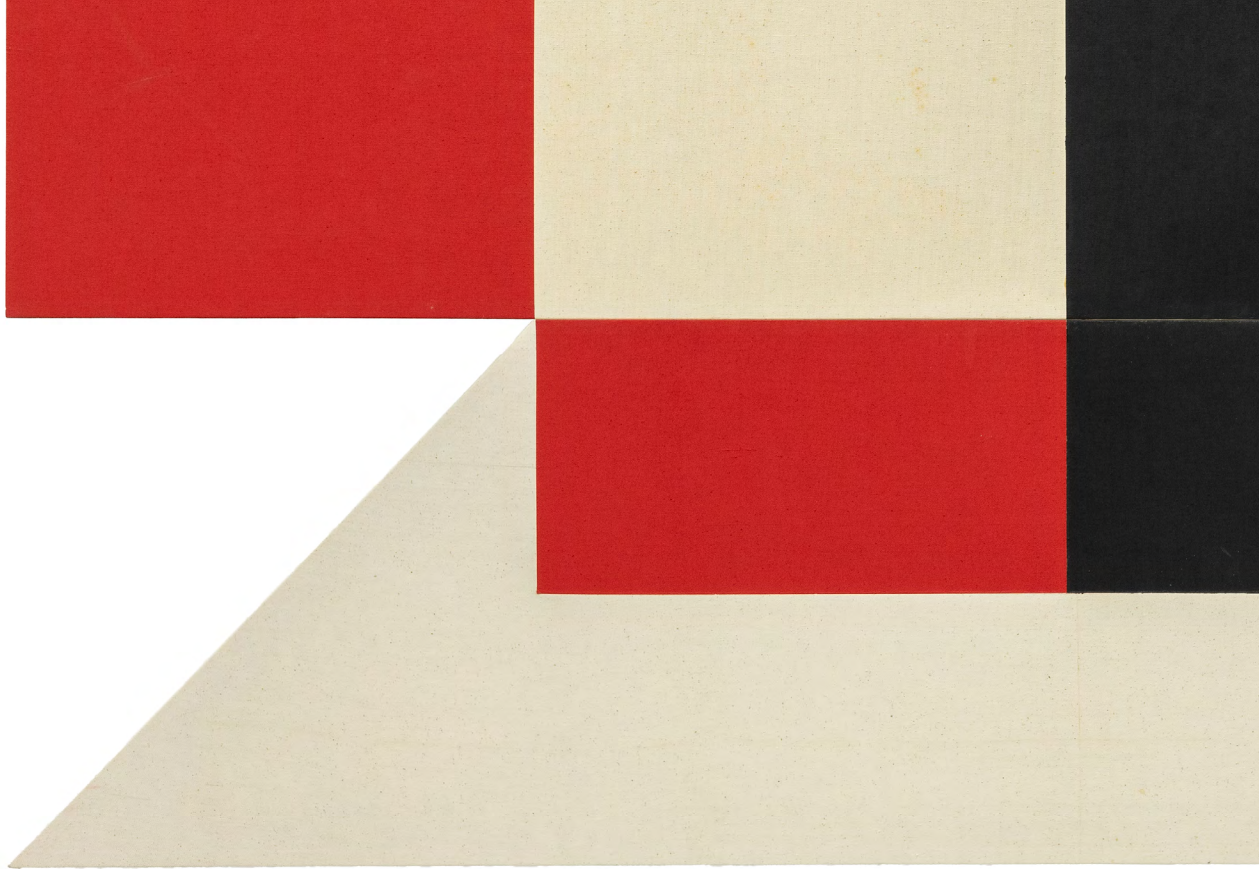








Last Tangle, 1976
acrylic on shaped canvas
top panel: 59.88 x 60 in, 152.1 x 152.4 cm
bottom panel: 23.8 x 119.6 in, 60.7 x 304 cm



detail from *Last Tangle*, 1976





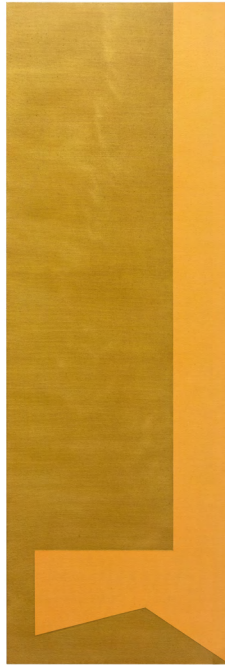
Desire, 1971
acrylic on shaped canvas
96 x 59.84 in • 243.8 x 152 cm





detail from *Desire*, 1971





Untitled, 1981

acrylic on shaped canvas

left panel: 69.61 x 25.98 in • 176.8 x 66 cm

right panel: 69.61 x 25.19 in • 176.8 x 64 cm

artwork: 69.61 x 51.17 in • 176.8 x 130 cm



detail from *Untitled*, 1981



At First Sight, 1983
acrylic on shaped canvas
42.36 x 48.03 in • 107.6 x 122 cm





detail from *At First Sight*, 1986









Untitled Drawing 3, c. 1980s

ink and colored pencil on graphing paper
11h x 8.50w in • 27.90h x 21.60w cm (unframed)
17h x 14.75w in • 43.20h x 37.50w cm (framed)



Untitled Drawing 1, c. 1988

ink and colored marker on graphing paper
11h x 8.50w in • 27.90h x 21.60w cm (unframed)
17h x 14.75w in • 43.20h x 37.50w cm (framed)



Untitled Drawing 8, c. 1980 - 1985

ink and colored marker on graphing paper
11h x 8.50w in • 27.90h x 21.60w cm (unframed)
17h x 14.75w in • 43.20h x 37.50w cm (framed)



Untitled Drawing 4, c. 1980s

ink and colored marker on graphing paper
11h x 8.50w in • 27.90h x 21.60w cm (unframed)
17h x 14.75w in • 43.20h x 37.50w cm (framed)



Untitled Drawing 6, c. 1980s

ink and colored marker on graphing paper
11h x 8.50w in • 27.90h x 21.60w cm (unframed)
17h x 14.75w in • 43.20h x 37.50w cm (framed)



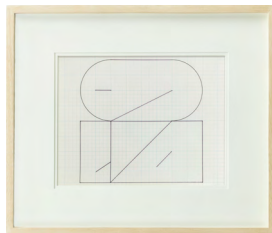


Supriolism (Drawing), 1979

Ink and colored pencil on graphing paper

8.50h x 11w in • 21.60h x 27.90w cm (unframed)

14.75h x 17w in • x 37.50h x 43.20w cm (framed)

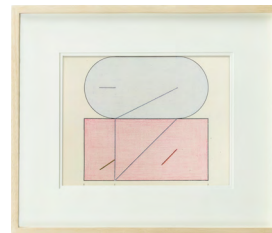


Untitled Drawing (Supriolism), c. 1970s

ink and colored pencil on paper

8.50h x 11w in • 21.60h x 27.90w cm (unframed)

14.75h x 17w in • x 37.50h x 43.20w cm (framed)



Untitled Drawing (Supriolism), c. 1970s

ink and colored pencil on paper

8.50h x 11w in • 21.60h x 27.90w cm (unframed)

14.75h x 17w in • x 37.50h x 43.20w cm (framed)





Untitled Drawing 9, c. 1980 - 1985

ink and colored marker on graphing paper

8.50h x 11w in • 21.60h x 27.90w cm (unframed)

14.75h x 17w in • x 37.50h x 43.20w cm (framed)



Untitled Drawing 7, c. 1988

ink and colored marker on graphing paper

8.50h x 11w in • 21.60h x 27.90w cm (unframed)

14.75h x 17w in • x 37.50h x 43.20w cm (framed)



Untitled Drawing 2, c. 1988

ink and colored marker on paper

8.50h x 11w in • 21.60h x 27.90w cm (unframed)

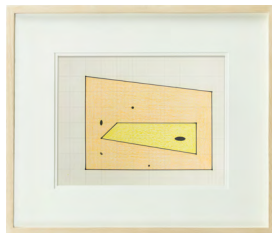
14.75h x 17w in • x 37.50h x 43.20w cm (framed)



Untitled Drawing 5, c. 1980s

ink and colored pencil on graphing paper

8.50h x 11w in • 21.60h x 27.90w cm (unframed)
14.75h x 17w in • x 37.50h x 43.20w cm (framed)



Untitled Drawing (Fancy Dance), c. 1980

ink and colored pencil on graphing paper

8.50h x 11w in • 21.60h x 27.90w cm (unframed)
14.75h x 17w in • x 37.50h x 43.20w cm (framed)



Study: Untitled, 1981

ink on graphing paper

11h x 8.50w in • 27.90h x 21.60w cm (unframed)
17h x 14.75w in • x 43.20h x 37.50w cm (framed)





LEO VALLEDOR

Bio

Leo Valledor (b. 1936 - d. 1989, San Francisco, USA) was a San Francisco-born, New York-based abstractionist and founding member of downtown Manhattan's trailblazing Park Place Gallery, an artist collective and exhibition venue founded by ten emerging artists, many of whom are now recognized as among the most influential Modernists in American history.

Valledor's strong understanding of color optics, geometric planes and dimensional illusion combined with shaped canvases to engage the viewing space in powerful ways. Influenced by luminaries such as Ellsworth Kelly and Frank Stella, Valledor's work resonated with the color-field and minimalist aesthetics, distinguished by his inventive manipulation of space, shape, and color.

Valledor's artistic legacy continues to reverberate through collections nationwide, with works in prominent collections including The Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Leo Valledor's work has been exhibited at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Daniel Weinberg Gallery, M. H. de Young Memorial Museum, and the Los Angeles Museum of Contemporary Art.

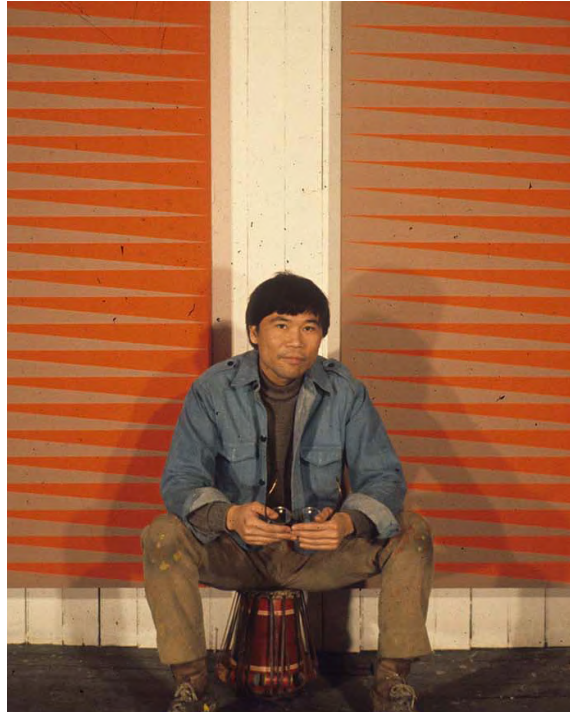


Image: Leo Valledor with his painting 'Echo' (for John Coltrane), 1967. Park Place, The Gallery of Art Research, Inc. records and Paula Cooper Gallery records, 1961-2006. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

LEO VALLEDOR CV

b. 1936, d. 1989,
San Francisco

SELECTED SOLO & TWO-PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2024 *Leo Valledor: At First Sight*, Silverlens, Manila
Frieze, Silverlens, New York, NY
- 2023 *Remains of Surface*, Silverlens, New York, NY
- 2020 *East-West Series 1968-71*, Brian Gross Fine Art, San Francisco, CA; Exhibition catalog
Leo Valledor: Dimensional Space, David Richard Gallery, New York, NY
- 2019 *Leo Valledor, The Bridge (To Sonny Rollins)*, Kadist, San Francisco, CA
- 2018 *A New Slant*, Brian Gross Fine Art, San Francisco, CA
Leo Valledor: Color As Space as part of Frieze VIP Program "In The City", White Box, New York, NY
Leo Valledor: Curved, David Richard Gallery, New York, NY
- 2016 *Leo Valledor: Color Space*, Brian Gross Fine Art, San Francisco, CA
- 2012 *Shapin' Up*, David Richard Gallery, Santa Fe, NM
- 2011 *Play It By Eye*, Togonon Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 2008 *Between Sound & Space: The Paintings of Leo Valledor*, Togonon Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 2006 *Leo Valledor Selected Works*, Togonon Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Leo Valledor & Carlos Villa, Mendenhall Sobieski Gallery, Pasadena, CA
The Filipino Roots of Minimalism: Leo Valledor and Mario Yrisarry, Mitchell Algus Gallery, New York, NY
- 1982 *Leo Valledor: New Paintings*, Modernism, San Francisco, CA
- 1980 *Leo Valledor: Paintings*, Modernism, San Francisco, CA
- 1976 Daniel Weinberg Gallery, San Francisco, CA
Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA
- 1974 M.H. de Young Memorial Museum, San Francisco, CA
- 1973 Daniel Weinberg Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 1971 San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA
San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA
- 1966 *Valledor*, Graham Gallery, New York, NY
Robert Grosvenor Sculpture/Leo Valledor Paintings, Park Place Gallery, New York, NY
- 1965 *Leo Valledor/Robert Smithson/Sol LeWitt*, Park Place Gallery, New York, NY

LEO VALLEDOR CV

- 1959 ***Blue & Black Series***, Dilexi Gallery, San Francisco, CA
1958 California School of Fine Arts, San Francisco, CA
1957 ***Jazzus Series***, 6 Gallery, San Francisco, CA
1956 ***Compositions***, 6 Gallery, San Francisco, CA

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2025 ***East of the Pacific: Making Histories of Asian American Art***, Amon Carter Museum of American Art, Fort Worth, TX
- 2024 ***Legacies: Asian American Art Movements in New York City (1969-2001)***, 80WSE, New York, NY
Art Fair Philippines, Silverlens, Manila
- 2023 ***The Armory Show***, Silverlens, New York, NY
Art Fair Philippines, Silverlens, Manila, Philippines
- 2022 ***East of the Pacific: Making Histories of Asian American Art***, Cantor Arts Center, Stanford University, Stanford, CA
Gesture/Color/Form, Brian Gross Fine Art, San Francisco, CA
Dead Lecturer / distant relative: Notes from the Woodshed, 1950-1980, Wallach Art Gallery, Columbia University, NY
Ω, Anglim Trimble, San Francisco, CA
- 2021 ***Break + Bleed***, San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA
- 2020 ***30th Anniversary Exhibition***, Brian Gross Fine Art, San Francisco, CA; exhibition catalog
- 2019 ***Dilexi Gallery: The Early Years***, Brian Gross Fine Art, San Francisco, CA; exhibition catalog
Building the Building: SOMArts 40th Anniversary Exhibition, SOMArts Cultural Center, San Francisco, CA
- 2018 ***Way Bay 2***, Berkeley Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley
Way Bay, Berkeley Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley
- 2017 ***Inventing Downtown: Artist-Run Galleries in New York City, 1952-1965***, Grey Art Gallery, New York University, New York, NY
Park Place Gallery: Founders and Friends, Then and Now, David Richard Gallery, Santa Fe, NM
Altered Spaces: A Psychedelic Legacy, David Richard Gallery, Santa Fe, NM
- 2016 ***Mustard Road***, The Battery SF, San Francisco, CA

LEO VALLEDOR CV

- The Butterfly Effect: Art in 1970s California*, Palo Alto Art Center, Palo Alto, CA
- 2014 *Sensation*, David Richard Gallery, Santa Fe, NM
- 2011 *SFMOMA, 75th Anniversary show from the Permanent Collection: "Abstract Art in the U.S. 1955-65"*, San Francisco, CA
- 2008 *Reimagining Space: The Park Place Gallery Group in 1960s New York*, Blanton Museum of Art, Austin, TX
- Asian/American/Modern Art: Shifting Currents 1900-1970*, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA
- 2006 Togonon Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 1995 Mitchell Albus Gallery, New York, NY
- 1988 Bluxome Gallery, San Francisco, CA
871 Fine Arts, San Francisco, CA
- 1987 Bluxome Gallery, San Francisco, CA
- 1985 San Francisco Art Institute
Redding Museum and Art Center, Shasta College, Redding, CA
John Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco, CA
San Jose Institute of Contemporary Art, San Jose, CA
Sun Gallery, Hayward, CA
- 1984 Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, CA
Public Image, New York, NY
San Francisco Arts Commission Gallery, CA
- 1982 Belca House, Kyoto, Japan
- 1978 Mills College Art Gallery, Oakland, CA,
Worth Ryder Gallery, University of California, Berkeley, CA
- 1977 San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA
Lone Mountain College, San Francisco, CA
- 1976 San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA
- 1975 Six Painters, Six Attitudes, The Oakland Museum of California
- 1974 San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA
- 1971 East-West Series, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
- 1970 San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco, CA
- 1968 Park Place Group, Hayden Gallery, MIT, Cambridge, MA
Philips Exeter Academy, Exeter, NH
San Francisco Art Institute, CA
- 1967 Denver Art Museum, Denver, CO

LEO VALLEDOR CV

- Park Place Gallery, New York NY
Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA
Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX
Long Beach Island Foundation of the Arts and Sciences, Loveladies, NJ
Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, Athens, GA
Instituto Torcuato de Tella, Buenos Aires, Argentina
Museo del Arte, Caracas, Venezuela
Drew University, Madison, Wisconsin
New York University, NY
Bykert Gallery, New York, NY
Heath Gallery, Atlanta, GA
1966 Larry Aldrich Museum, Ridgefield, CT
Jacksonville Museum of Art, FL
Lannan Foundation Museum, Palm Beach, FL
Bykert Gallery, New York, NY
1965 Art'65, American Express Pavilion, New York's World's Fair, Queens, NY
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA
Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition, Latin America
World House Galleries, New York, NY
Young Masters, Graham Gallery, New York, NY
John Daniels Gallery, New York, NY
Van Bovenkamp Gallery, New York, NY
1964 Eleven Artists, Kaymar Gallery, New York, NY
Noah Goldowsky Gallery, New York, NY
Park Place Group, New York, NY
1961 San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA
1959 Dilexi Gallery, San Francisco, CA
1958 Dilexi Gallery, San Francisco, CA
1955 Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN
1954 Six Gallery, San Francisco, CA

EDUCATION

- 1955 California School of Fine Arts (San Francisco Art Institute)

LEO VALLEDOR CV

TEACHING

- 1987 San Francisco Art Institute
1978 University of California, Berkeley
1977 Lone Mountain College, San Francisco (Art Exhibition Director and teacher)

SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

- Achenbach Foundation for Graphic Arts, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, CA
Allentown Art Museum, Allentown, PA
Berkeley Art Museum, University of California, Berkeley, CA
Crocker Art Museum, Sacramento, CA
The Daum Museum of Contemporary Art, State Fair Community College, Sedalia, MO
The Dorothy and Herbert Vogel Collection: "Fifty Works for Fifty States"
Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, CA
Nora Eccles Harrison Museum of Art, Utah State University, Logan, UT
Oakland Museum of California
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, PA
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco, CA
San Jose Museum of Art, San Jose, CA
Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, MO
University of Agder, Kristiansand, Norway
US Department of State Art in Embassies Program, Washington D.C.
Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY
Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, CT

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Heinrich, Will "Dead Lecturer/Distant Relative: Notes from the Woodshed, 1950-1980" The New York Times, September 16, 2022. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/05/arts/art-we-saw-this-fall.html>
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MISCELLANEOUS

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LEO VALLEDOR

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