

BRAFA ART FAIR

PRESS TEXT BRAFA 2024
28 JANUARY - 4 FEBRUARY
BRUSSELS EXPO

SAMUEL VANHOEGAERDEN GALLERY

TOM WESSELMANN: NUDES, FLOWERS & STOCKINGS

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Monica lying on Robe, one arm back, 1986
Enamel paint on laser-cut steel
48 x 111 cm

Tom Wesselmann: Steelcuts & other works

The Samuel Vanhoegaerden Gallery dedicates this Brafa edition entirely to Tom Wesselmann (1931 - 2004), one of the leading figures of Pop Art. The exhibited collection is the result of years of careful searching and collecting from around the world. Since many works are already in museum collections, especially internationally, this is an exceptional exhibition for our country.

His earliest works: collages of American living rooms

Tom Wesselmann's first works date from the late 1950s and early 1960s and were primarily collages made from wallpaper and advertisements, sometimes combined with painted nudes in American interiors. These works are extremely rare and are mostly found in museum collections around the world. Two small works of this kind will be shown at Brafa.



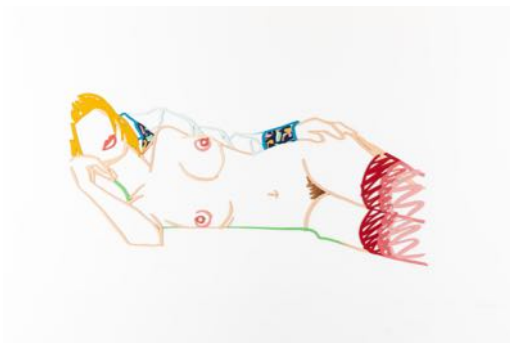
Little Great American Nude #1,
1962, Paint, plastic portrait,
printed reproductions, fabric with
pencil on metal plate, 17,8 cm

Great American Nudes

The introduction to Henri Matisse's fauvist works in the early 1960s inspired Tom Wesselmann to create his legendary "Great American Nude" series. Wesselmann succeeded in transforming the historical nude as we have known it for centuries into his own style, reducing the erotic charge of the naked woman, and never making the viewer feel uncomfortable.

The focus at Brafa 2024: Steelcut works

In the early 1980s, Tom Wesselmann reinvented himself and brought innovation to modern art with the famous "steelcut works." Thanks to the introduction of laser technology, Wesselmann could draw and cut into steel plates, replacing traditional materials such as canvas and paper with steel and aluminum. The artist said about this: "It was so exciting. It was as if I were suddenly an entirely new artist."



Monica Nude in Robe and Stockings, 1986
Enamel paint on laser-cut steel
81,3 x 169 cm



Wildflower Bouquet, 1988
Enamel paint on laser-cut steel
147,3 x 147,3 cm

Although the artist temporarily switched to a different medium, he remained faithful to the themes he had explored since the beginning of his career: the tradition of the nude, still lifes, and occasionally landscape works.

With this innovative laser cutting technique, Tom Wesselmann managed to create a sketch-like yet unprecedented linear elegance. Although the works appear as freshly painted wall drawings (the influence of street art from the 1980s is undeniable), each work underwent a careful process in which the drawing was precision-cut using the laser. Tom Wesselmann then hand-painted them in black, gray, or color. Even after forty years, this laser technique retains an unparalleled freshness, giving these artworks an unmistakable contemporary appeal.

Brafa 2024

The exhibited steelcuts are iconic examples that illustrate the artist's dedication to the study of the female nude and his ambition to go beyond the traditional flat painting surface. At the Brafa Fair, the public has the unique opportunity to admire a groundbreaking part of the artist's oeuvre in person, which is essential to properly assess these works. In reality, the viewer can fully appreciate the specific technique of these works because the wall itself is an integral part of the artwork.

The auction record for a work by Tom Wesselmann is \$10.7 million, dating back to 2008. It goes without saying that the price range of the works exhibited at the Brafa Fair is considerably lower, ranging from 50,000 to 750,000 euros, but it is plausible that Wesselmann could be one of the rediscoveries in the coming years.



Monica Nude with Matisse, 1987
Enamel paint on laser-cut steel
128 x 218 cm