

The New York Times

Tom Wesselmann Nudes, and the Collection of the ‘Baron of Botox’

SEPT. 10, 2015



Tom Wesselmann's "Great American Nude No. 53" from 1964. All Rights Reserved, The Estate of Tom Wesselmann, New York/Licensed by VAGA, New York, NY, Mitchell Innes & Nash, NY.

WESSELMANN'S NUDES UNCOVERED AT SHOW

“Painting, sex and humor are the most important things in my life,” Tom Wesselmann once said. He combined all three in the early 1960s “Great American Nude” series for which he became known, with epically scaled odalisques luxuriating amid the dazzling products of modern life. In April, Mitchell-Innes & Nash in Chelsea will present the first survey of his paintings in New York since his death in 2004, a show including the 10-foot-by-8-foot “Great American Nude No. 53” (1964) as well as his little-known late abstractions composed from painted cut-aluminum scraps.

Mr. Wesselmann, who disliked the term Pop, chafed at being the only major artist of the Pop generation not honored with a museum retrospective in his lifetime. This partnership between the Wesselmann estate and Mitchell-Innes & Nash will remedy that lack of attention in New York. Claire Wesselmann, the artist’s widow and early model, said the gallery’s experience with artists’ estates, including that of Willem de

Kooning, Mr. Wesselmann’s first hero, and his Pop colleague Roy Lichtenstein, was a factor in the collaboration.

“Wesselmann is a little bit under the radar for no good reason, because he certainly was one of the real innovators in the whole movement,” said Lucy Mitchell-Innes, one of the gallery’s owners. The exhibition will show how he collaged billboard imagery and functional objects like neon lights, radios and fans into his paintings, and adapted laser technology to make three-dimensional steel-cut compositions beginning in the mid-1980s.

“Although he dealt with historically classical subjects like the nude and still life,” she added, “it’s very much filtered through new media and new technology of that period.” **HILARIE M. SHEETS**

BOTOX BARON’S COLLECTION

Fredric Brandt was the celebrity dermatologist whose clients included Madonna, supermodels, trophy wives and business titans.

He started out as the son of candy store owners in Newark, began a practice in Miami, and after expanding to New York in the late 1990s developed a clientele hungry for his cosmetic talents, which

MITCHELL-INNES & NASH

led the news media to call him the “Baron of Botox.” (His pneumatic features showed that he freely practiced his art on his own body.)

Dr. Brandt died in April at age 65, from suicide, leaving a hoard of contemporary art by painters he had discovered before their values took off, according to Paul McCabe, an art adviser in London and New York who worked with him for 15 years helping him construct his collection.

“When you look at it now, it seems full of obvious things hedge funders would love to have, but he didn’t pay hedge fund prices,” Mr. McCabe said.

Now, 200 items from his collection are being offered for sale by the auction house Phillips, with an estimated value of more than \$15 million. Phillips, which has been more aggressive in the contemporary art market under its new chief executive, Edward Dolman, said that it won the Brandt consignment over competition from other houses and that it was backing the sale with a third-party minimum price guarantee.

Nineteen of the best works are to be sold at the house’s contemporary evening sale in London on Oct. 14, including a Damien Hirst spot painting. Dr. Brandt liked Mr. Hirst’s mix of science and beauty, Mr. McCabe said, and owned four Hirst paintings, as well as works by Rudolf Stingel, Yoshimoto Nara and Christopher Wool. He kept his art in his Midtown Manhattan office and in his apartment in Chelsea, but mostly in his minimalist Miami townhouse.

When he phoned, the irrepressible “Dr. B,” as Mr. McCabe called him, would sometimes leave messages in rap.

“We would talk six days a week and compare notes about art,” Mr. McCabe said. “I miss that.” **GRAHAM BOWLEY**

ARTISTS’ BOOKS AT PS1

Doom and gloom may seem like the prevailing mood of the publishing industry, but not when it comes to artists’ books. Organizers say that last year’s NY Art Book Fair, staged by the nonprofit organization Printed Matter, drew an elbow-to-elbow crowd of 35,000 people who happily pawed through table after table of Xeroxed fanzines, Ed Ruscha-style conceptual photo essays and every ink-on-paper offshoot in between. The 10th edition of the fair returns to MoMA PS1 in Long Island City with a ticketed preview on Thursday, Sept. 17, and free admission next Friday through Sept. 20.

“We keep hearing about the death of print, but our book fair gets bigger every year,” said Shannon Michael Cane, the fair’s curator. “This year we had over 900 applications to get into the fair, and we only had 360 spots.”

The largest rise in applicants came from art galleries, he added, “who see it as an alternative to the art fairs, with an audience — a really young audience — they can tap into.”

Mr. Cane said his fair continues to focus on small publishers, and to champion affordable artists’ books as a way to combat moneyed elitism within the art world. (This year’s highlights include new zines from an emerging Miami artist, Marilyn Rondón; collages of visual poetry made in 1968 by D. A. Levy; and an offbeat memoir about mailing artists’ books, Marc Fischer’s “Deliverance: Writings on Postal Relations.”)

MITCHELL-INNES & NASH

Equally important? Getting offline and gathering with kindred fans. “The person who made the book is probably standing right in front of you, and you can talk to them about it,” Mr. Cane said. Yet what with the D.J.s and live bands performing for crowds in the courtyard and the no less packed exhibition rooms, Mr. Cane acknowledged that he’s been asked, “Is this a book fair, or is this Coachella?”

“We’ve outgrown PS1,” he said. The organizers have looked at new spaces, though none have fit both the fair’s physical needs and its meager budget. Until a move happens, attendees should be prepared to get sweaty. **BRETT SOKOL**

Correction: September 12, 2015

A report in the Inside Art column on Friday about plans for a sale of artworks that were owned by Dr. Fredric Brandt, a dermatologist whose clients included celebrities, by the auction house Phillips misstated the estimated value of the items. It is more than \$15 million, not more than £15 million (about \$23 million).