

Wildflower Bouquet
Tom Wesselmann



Date : 1987
Enamel on Laser Cut Steel
38 × 24 3/4 in
Edition of 30
Signed and numbered on bottom and on verso

Artist bio

Tom Wesselmann was born in Cincinnati in 1931, and studied art first in Cincinnati, then in New York at the Cooper Union. When he was a student at Cooper Union, he was much influenced by Abstract Expressionism, especially Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock. However, he turned away from that style because he determined these artists had become so introspective that there was little room for creative exploration by others.

His reaction took him to Pop Art, the other extreme of action painting to a tightly controlled style and subject matter that was mundane - the antithesis of psychological complexities. Wesselmann, like Andy Warhol and Wayne Thiebaud, asserted that everyday objects had significance unto themselves and that they were worthy of depiction because of a common understanding about what they were. Wesselmann was one of the contributors to the three original portfolios that launched the Pop Art Movement.

Thus, along with Andy Warhol, Roy Lichtenstein and Claes Oldenburg, Wesselmann started experiments in 1959 with small, abstract collages. Then, in 1960, he adopted advertising images to make bold amusing still lifes and interiors, collages and assemblages using commonplace household items, and often, a highly stylized female nude.

In the late 1960's an increasingly dominant eroticism emerged in works, with its more literal but still intense colors and tight, formal composition. The pictorial elements, exaggerated in their arabesque forms and arbitrary coloring, became significantly larger in scale in his works of the 1970's. Enormous, partially free-standing still-lives moved into sculptural space, and finally became discrete sculptures of sheet metal. In the 1980's he returned to works for the wall with cut-out steel or aluminum drawings.

He has pioneered a number of art forms now strongly associated with him, namely his 'drop outs' where negative shapes become positive shapes and his 'cut outs' which utilize laser cut metal to create extraordinary three-dimensional drawings. He too, has been a remarkable printmaker having created large, spectacular silkscreens and lithographs.

His works are in most major museums around the world, including the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Museum in New York, the Hirshhorn Museum in Washington D.C., the Walker Art Center and the Minneapolis Institute of Fine Arts in Minneapolis, the Chrysler Museum in Norfolk, the Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Dallas Museum of Fine Arts, the Worcester Art Museum, the Princeton University Art Museum, the Atkins Museum of Fine Arts in Kansas City MO, the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, the Cincinnati Art Museum, and many others. His works can also be seen in important public museums in Germany, France and Denmark.