



**TOM  
WESSELMANN**



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# TOM WESSELMANN (1931-2004)

*Bedroom Brunette with Irises*

1988/2004

oil on cut-out aluminum

105 3/4 x 164 5/8 in. (268.6 x 418.1 cm)



**WATCH VIDEO**

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## PROVENANCE

Robert Miller Gallery  
Private Collection, New York, 2004

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## EXHIBITION

Rome, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma, *Tom Wesselmann*, June 8–September 18, 2005 (color ill. pp. 174–75)  
New York, Robert Miller Gallery, *Tom Wesselmann: Sunset Nudes*, March 9–April 22, 2006 (color ill.)

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## LITERATURE

John Wilmerding, *Tom Wesselmann: His Voice and Vision* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 2008), p. 253 (color ill. pp. 248–49, as "Bedroom Brunette with Irises, 1988/04")

# — IMPORTANT FACTS

- *Bedroom Brunette with Irises* is a *Steel Drawing* masterwork that despite its uber-generous scale, utilizes tight cropping to provide an unimposing intimacy while maintaining a free and spontaneous quality.
- *Bedroom Brunette with Irises* is among the largest works by the artist to come on to the market.
- Wesselmann conceived of this piece in 1988 and had it fabricated in 2004 just before his death in December of that year – it is among his last great works.



# DETAIL IMAGES









# MARKET ANALYSIS

Tom WESSELMANN

## Statistical Analysis

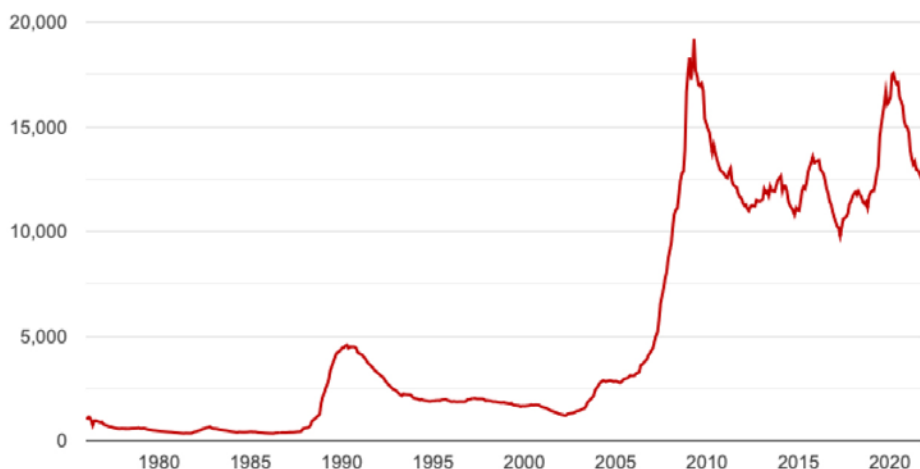
Number of lots	1685
Change from 1/1976 - 11/2021	+1182.5%
Compound Annual Growth Rate	5.6

## Revaluation

Input value	0 USD
Revalue date	11/2021
Revaluation	0 USD

Central 80%-USD (Nominal terms)

AMR | Art  
Market  
Research



Since 1976 Wesselmann's market has grown with a 5.6% annual rate of return.

*Bedroom Brunette with Irises* is among the largest works by the artist to come on to the market

Wesselmann conceived of this piece in 1988 and had it fabricated in 2004 just before his death in December of that year – it is among his last great works.

Wesselmann's female figures are among his most desirable and most sought-after subject matter

This piece has been in the same private collection since it was created.

# TOP WORKS SOLD AT AUCTION



*Great American Nude no. 48*  
1963

oil and collage on canvas, acrylic  
and collage on board, enameled  
radiator and assemblage  
84 x 106 in. (213.3 x 269.2 cm)

**Sold at Sotheby's New York:  
May 2008 for \$10,681,000**



*Smoker no. 9*  
1973

oil and Liquitex gesso on linen  
83 x 89 ½ in. (210.8 x 227.3 cm)

**Sold at Christie's New York:  
May 2008 for \$6,761,000**

# TOP WORKS SOLD AT AUCTION



*Smoker no. 17*

1973

oil on shaped canvas

96 x 131 in. (243.8 x 332.7 cm)

**Sold at Sotheby's New York:**

**May 2007 for \$5,864,000**



# COMPARABLE WORKS SOLD AT AUCTION



## *Still Life with Four Lizes*

1991

alkyd on cut-out steel

60 x 80 in. (172.7 x 203.2 cm)

**Sold at Christie's New York:  
May 2021 for \$2,070,000**

Comparable medium, and our piece is 2x larger than this one

While it has color, it does not have the female imagery that is so iconic within Wesselmann's oeuvre

Sold for over \$2M which is \$380 per square inch, while *Bedroom Brunette with Irises* is only \$192 per square inch which is less than ½ the price.

## *Bedroom Blonde with Iris*

1987

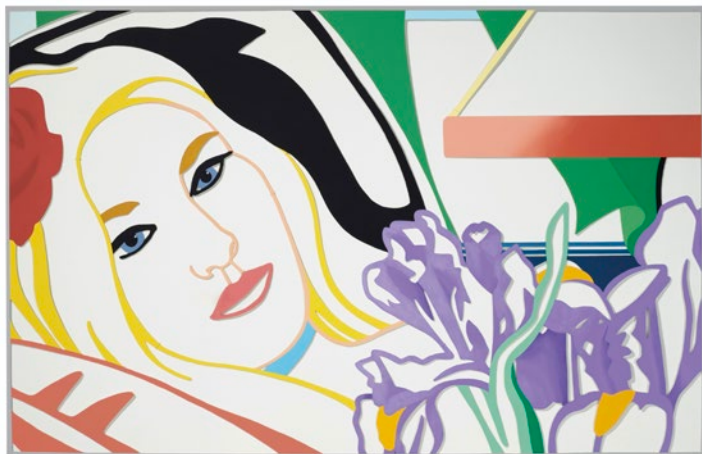
enamel on laser-cut steel

53 ¾ x 83 ¼ in. (136.5 x 211.5 cm)

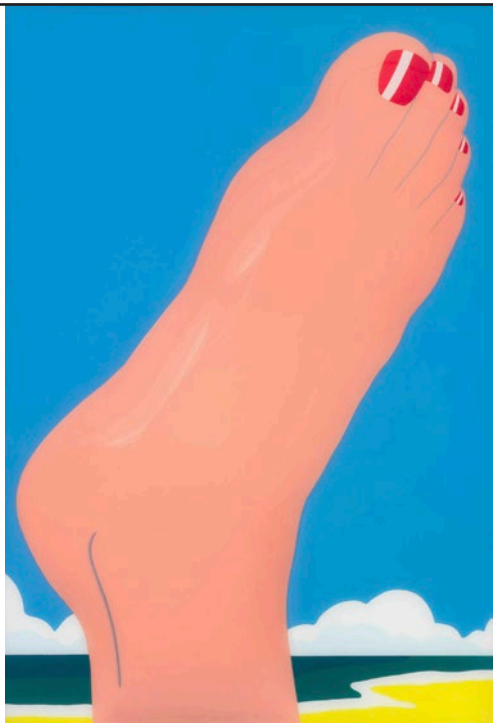
**Sold at Christie's New York:  
November 2019 for \$399,000**

This artwork is almost 1/3 of the size with the same imagery

Sold in November 2019 for \$399,000 which was more than double its \$180,000 high estimate, a testament to the increasing strength of Wesselmann's market



# WESSELMANN IN MUSEUM COLLECTIONS



**Whitney Museum of American Art  
New York**

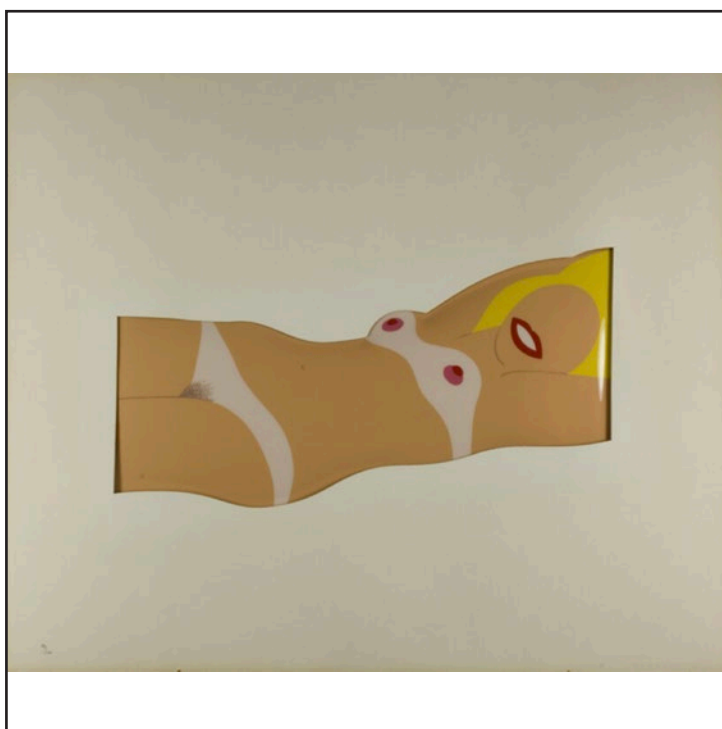
*Seascape Number 15*  
1967

painted thermo-formed acrylic  
65  $\frac{3}{16}$  × 44  $\frac{13}{16}$  in. (165.6 × 113.8cm)

**Art Institute  
Chicago**

*Cut-Out Nude*  
1965

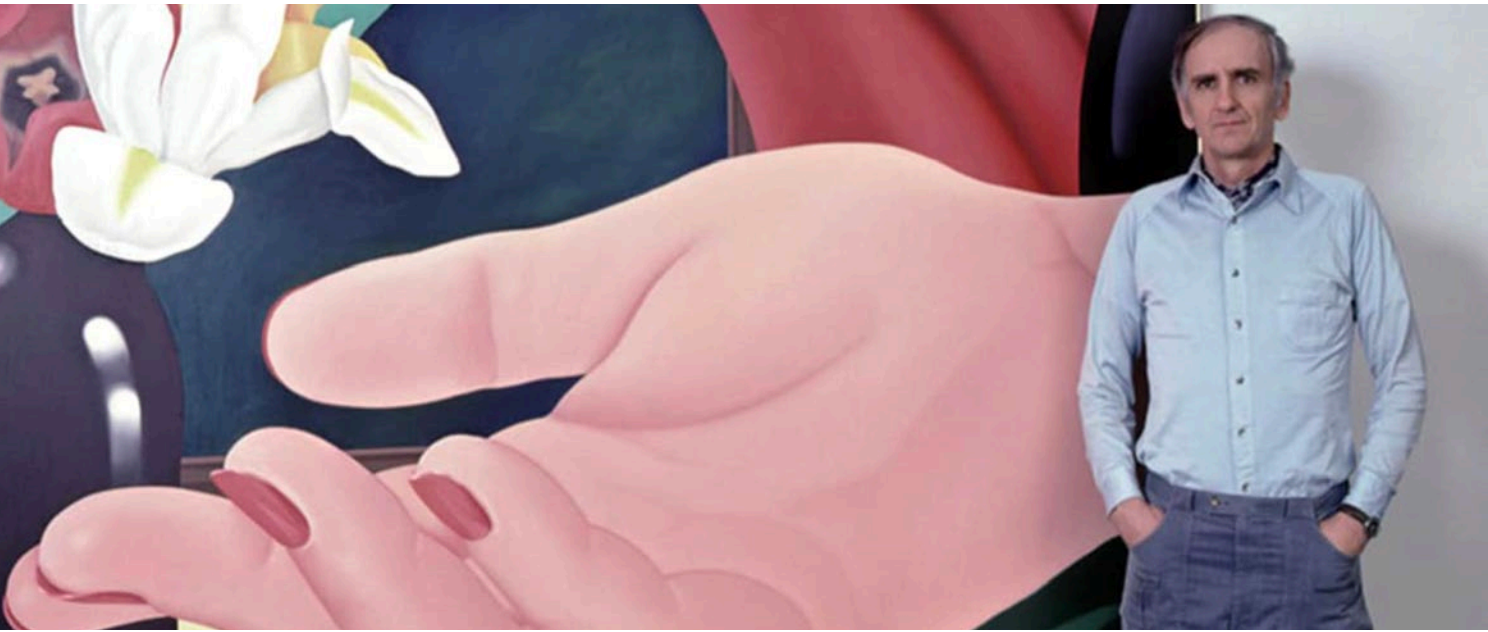
Blow-formed screenprinted vinyl  
8 x 16 in. (20.3 × 40.6 cm)



"The prime mission of my art, in the beginning, and continuing still, is to make figurative art as exciting as abstract art."

**Tom Wesselmann**

# HISTORY



**Tom Wesselmann** will undoubtedly be remembered for associating his erotic themes with the colors of the American flag. But Wesselmann had considerable gifts as a draftsman, and the line was his principal preoccupation, first as a cartoonist, and later as an ardent admirer of Matisse. That he also pioneered a method of turning drawings into laser-cut steel wall reliefs proved a revelation. He began to focus ever more on drawing for the sake of drawing, enchanted that the new medium could be lifted and held: “It really is like being able to pick up a delicate line drawing from the paper.”

The *Steel Drawings* caused both excitement and confusion in the art world. After acquiring one of the ground-breaking works in 1985, the Whitney Museum of



American Art wrote Wesselmann wondering if it should be catalogued as a drawing or a sculpture. The work had caused such a stir that when Eric Fischl visited Wesselmann at his studio and saw steel-cut works for the first time, he remembered feeling jealous. He wanted to try it but dared not. It was clear: 'Tom owned the technique completely.'

Wesselmann owed much of that technique to his year-long collaboration with metalwork fabricator Alfred Lippincott. Together, in 1984 they honed a method for cutting the steel with a laser that provided the precision he needed to show the spontaneity of his sketches. Wesselmann called it 'the best year of my life', elated at the results that he never fully achieved with aluminum that required each shape be hand-cut. "I anticipated how exciting it would be for me to get a drawing back in steel. I could hold it in my hands. I could pick it up by the lines...it was so exciting...a kind of near ecstasy, anyway, but there's really been something about the new work that grabbed me."



Henri Matisse  
*Odalisque*, 1926  
oil on canvas  
Baltimore Museum of Art

Tom Wesselmann  
*Reverse Drawing: Bedroom Blonde with Irises*  
charcoal and pastel on paper  
64.8 x 94.3 in.



*Bedroom Brunette with Irises* is a *Steel Drawing* masterwork that despite its uber-generous scale, utilizes tight cropping to provide an unimposing intimacy while maintaining a free and spontaneous quality. The figure's outstretched arms and limbs and body intertwine with the petals and the interior elements providing a flowing investigative foray of black lines and white 'drop out' shapes provided by the wall. It recalls Matisse and any number of his reclining odalisque paintings. Wesselmann often tested monochromatic values to discover the extent to which color would transform his hybrid objects into newly developed *Steel Drawing* works and, in this case, continued with a color steel-cut version of the composition, *Bedroom Blonde with Irises* (1987) and later still, in 1993 with a large-scale drawing in charcoal and pastel on paper.

Tom Wesselmann circa 1990

