

GAGOSIAN

THE CUT

A Celebrated Pop Artist's Gigantic Still Lives
Art works by Tom Wesselmann

Morgan Sykes



Still Life #59, 1972. Photo: © The Estate of Tom Wesselmann/Licensed by VAGA; New York. Courtesy Gagosian

At nearly 30 feet across, *Still Life #60* is an engulfing arrangement of brilliant color and shape. They are six individual, jewel-toned objects whose proximity smacks of an erotic intimacy. The lipstick tube and matchbook, jumbled with a pair of sunglasses and a ring, seem discarded by an appearance-conscious giantess. The implicit suggestion of narrative and a saturated palette is carried throughout *Standing Still Lives*, an exhibition of nine colossal works by the late influential pop artist Tom Wesselmann, shown together for the first time at Gagosian in Chelsea.



Still Life #60, 1973. Photo: © The Estate of Tom Wesselmann/Licensed by VAGA; New York. Courtesy Gagosian



Still Life with Blue Jar and Smoking Cigarette (Still Life #65), 1981. Photo: © The Estate of Tom Wesselmann/Licensed by VAGA; New York. Courtesy Gagosian

Wesselmann was born in Cincinnati in 1931. He was celebrated as a pioneer of Pop Art, and known for his abstract, large-scale collages and installations as well as paintings. He lived and worked in New York City for nearly four decades before passing away in 2004.

In “Standing Still Lives,” the giant scale of everyday objects dwarves approaching viewers, who must consider an emerald green toothbrush, a coiled black belt, or set of keys double their own height. Some of the canvases are anchored and others hang from the wall. These hulking installations are composed of canvases shaped to the outline of the objects they represent, a technique Wesselmann first exhibited in the 1960s. There are other continued explorations here: Some motifs, like the orange and radio and vase full of flowers, appear throughout Wesselmann’s body of work. And yes, that is a framed portrait of Mary Tyler Moore smiling beside crumpled tissues from *Still Life #59*.



Still Life #61, 1976. Photo: © The Estate of Tom Wesselmann/Licensed by VAGA; New York. Courtesy Gagolian