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The Winter Show Re-imagines Art History, Kicks Off With Celebrity-Studded Party, Raises Money For East Side House Settlement

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Installation view of Galerie Gmurzynska booth at The Winter Show, featuring 'Smoking Cigarette #1' by Tom Wesselmann

The silver plume of cigarette smoke contorts as if forming an expressive eyebrow that aptly frames Tom Wesselmann's *Great American Nude #18* (1961). *Cigarette #1* (1980), a monumental oil on wood and masonite with formica base sculpture embraces the oil, wax crayons, and printed paper collage on two joined panels, creating a witty, flirty narrative on the evolution of Wesselmann's celebrated *Smokers* series.



TOM WESSELMANN (1931-2004) Smoking Cigarette

The eclectic curation of pristine works by French painter Georges Braque, German-Dutch painter Heinrich Campendonk, Russian-French-Jewish artist Marc Chagall, Russian painter and art theorist Wassily Kandinsky, Czech painter František Kupka, Lithuanian-French sculptor Jacques Lipchitz, Spanish painter and sculptor Joan Miró, French painter Odilon Redon, Austrian painter Egon Schiele, and Russian painter Alexej von Jawlensky, with Wesselmann front and center is another clever turn for **Galerie Gmurzynska's** debut at **The Winter Show**, which opened to the public yesterday and is on view through February 2 at the Park Avenue Armory New York City.

Eschewing the art world designation as one of the founders of Pop Art, Wesselmann regarded his work as Modernist. No doubt Wesselmann (1931-2004) would have appreciated being the only American artist contextualized alongside work of European masters spanning nearly seven decades in the Galerie Gmurzynska presentation. Despite an emotional connection to Abstract Expressionism, Wesselmann believed there was no way for him to advance the movement and turned to subject matter, such as still lifes, landscapes, and nudes, and an inquiry into color, form, and composition.

Wesselmann embarked on his *Smokers* in the late 1960s, examining the intimate relationships between cigarettes and the mouths, lips, and hands that ignite them, and the smoke that emanates from them. Inspired by a model on a cigarette break, the *Smokers*, with an array of disembodied plump, gleaming crimson pouts and fleshy pale pink tongues and delicate hands with freshly polished nails, is arguably the Wesselmann's most (or iconic) work, serving as shiny examples of American Pop, despite his shunning of that label. Gmurzynska reimagines and deconstructs art history by pairing *Great American Nude #18* and *Cigarette #1* (1980) and places Wesselmann in dialogue with his predecessors. In this way, the booth serves as a microcosm of a fair that showcases a wide range of museum-quality fine art, antiques, and jewelry by more than 70 exhibitors.

Conveying the lust of drawing a cigarette to your lips evokes myriad emotions, especially in the global art world capital where smoking in public has been phased out 15 years after *Cigarette #1* was executed. In a world of widespread vaping and smoking bans, Wesselmann's is far more subversive, and thereby erotic, now. Even without luscious body part engagement, *Cigarette #1* exudes sensuality with the smoldering orange of the burning end.