Artist Resources – John Wesley (American, 1928-2022)

Wesley at Fredericks & Freiser

Wesley at MoMA

Wesley at Waddington Custot

Wesley at Chinati Foundation

Wesley’s first major retrospective was at the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam before travelling to Portikus Frankfurt in 1993.

Wesley notoriously did not give interviews or studio visits. Read about Paul Hasegawa-Overacker’s experience in Artnet.

The 2001 exhibition John Wesley: Paintings 1961-2000 was on display at MoMA PS1. Alanna Heiss, the exhibition’s curator, wrote: “Wesley’s work stands eerily apart...he mixes images of traditional emblems, historical figures, comic book personalities, animals, sexy women, athletes and showgirls into surreal daydreams, prompting the viewer to rejoin her own private dream-world.”

John Wesley: Love’s Lust was installed by the Harvard Art Museums on the heels of the artist’s MoMA PS1 retrospective, but instead focused on Wesley’s pictorial strategies and process.

Wesley had a blockbuster retrospective at the Venice Biennale in 2009 that was organized by the Fondazione Prada. The exhibition included over 150 works spanning from 1961 to 2007. Read a review of the installation in the New York Times.

Read an article in Frieze about the exhibition Jo and Jack: Jo Baer and John Wesley in the Sixties at Matthew Marks Gallery in 2010. The exhibition explored the work of both artists, who were married from 1959 until 1970.

Carl Andre/John Wesley: Serial Forms at Mitchell-Innes & Nash was on display in 2012, juxtaposing the two artists’ works in terms of seriality, repetition, and modularity.

David Kordansky Gallery installed John Wesley: Objects and Paintings in 2013. The exhibition included rarely seen sculptures by the artist in addition to his iconic paintings.

Wesley passed away at the age of 93 in 2022. Read obituaries in the New York Times and Glasstire and an article by Brad Phillips reflecting on the artist’s legacy in Office Magazine.
John Wesley (American, 1928-2022)

*Show Girls*, 1996  
Acrylic on canvas

Private Collection; L2022:134.1

The hard-edge, comic-strip style of John Wesley aligned with the Pop Art movement in the 1960s, but he felt more affinity with Minimalist artists in his approach to production. Wesley was interested in the American psyche; his paintings are often intimate or personal representations of fear, desire, and joy. In the 1990s and 2000s, Wesley began painting women in extremely cropped views sharing moments of erotic or emotional intimacy. *Show Girls* is one example of this theme. The two subjects look beyond the frame, perhaps sharing a secret or piece of gossip.

*On view January 18 – April 23, 2023*