

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Selections from the Collection of Helga and Walther Lauffs

MAY 2008 AT ZWIRNER & WIRTH AND DAVID ZWIRNER

(New York — April 14, 2008) On view for the first time in the United States, a selection drawn from the collection of Helga and Walther Lauffs, one of Europe's most important private collections of 20th century post-war art, will be exhibited in May at **Zwirner & Wirth** (32 East 69th Street) and **David Zwirner** (525 West 19th Street). This two-part exhibition comprises a focused overview of key examples of Pop Art, Arte Povera, Minimalism, Post-Minimalism, and Conceptual Art. Major works rarely shown outside of Germany by **Lee Bontecou**, **Christo**, **Joseph Cornell**, **Jan Dibbets**, **Lucio Fontana**, **On Kawara**, **Yves Klein**, **Joseph Kosuth**, **Sol LeWitt**, **Piero Manzoni**, **John McCracken**, **Mario Merz**, **Robert Morris**, **Bruce Nauman**, **Louise Nevelson**, **Giulio Paolini**, **Michelangelo Pistoletto**, **Fred Sandback**, **George Segal**, **Richard Serra**, **Richard Tuttle**, **Cy Twombly**, **Günther Uecker**, **Tom Wesselmann**, and **Douglas Wheeler** will be on view at David Zwirner, while a group of important works on paper by **Joseph Beuys**, **Mel Bochner**, **Hanne Darboven**, **Eva Hesse**, **Jannis Kounellis**, and **Claes Oldenburg** will be exhibited at Zwirner & Wirth.



Fig. 1 YVES KLEIN, *Anthropométrie (ANT 110)*, 1960

In the late 1960s, Bad Honnef-based industrialist Walther Lauffs and his wife Helga became interested in putting together an extensive collection of contemporary art. For guidance, they approached Paul Wember, who was known for the visionary program of contemporary art that he developed as the director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Museum in Krefeld from 1947 to 1975. Among the important exhibitions that Wember organized at the museum and its affiliated exhibition spaces at Mies van der Rohe's Haus Lange and Haus Esters were those that presented works by Yves Klein (1961), Robert Rauschenberg (1964), Marcel Duchamp (1965), Fred Sandback, and Sol LeWitt (both 1969), making Krefeld into one of the most interesting cities for contemporary art in Germany. The Lauffs proposed to Wember that, in exchange for his invaluable advice and guidance with the acquisition of artworks for their collection, these works would be made available on long-term loan to his museum so that new artistic perspectives and currents could be presented to the public. Thus, in 1968, Wember and the Lauffs set forth in a collaboration and friendship that would continue through

**ZWIRNER
& WIRTH**

32 E 69 St New York NY 10021

David Zwirner

525 West 19th Street
New York, NY 10011



Fig. 2 CY TWOMBLY, *The Castle*, 1958

would greatly influence artists and the public alike, with large-scale exhibitions such as *Documenta* in Kassel (the first of which was presented in 1955) and Harald Szeeman's seminal 1969 show at the nearby Kunsthalle Bern titled *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes Become Form*. To build their collection, Wember led the Lauffs to these exhibitions (from which they were often able to acquire work), to the Art Cologne art fair (founded by Hein Stünke and Rudolf Zwirner in 1967), to artists' studios, and to the growing number of pioneering gallerists that came to prominence in Germany (such as Alfred Schmela, Rolf Rieke, and Konrad Fischer). They also purchased artwork from influential gallerists outside of Germany, including Ileana Sonnabend in Paris. Parallels easily can be drawn between the Lauffs's collection and Sonnabend's well-known private collection, both having resulted from a similar visionary embrace of American and European avant-garde work of the 1960s and 1970s.

While contemporary art was the primary focus of the Lauffs's acquisitions, Wember suggested they begin acquiring earlier works of art to create a historic continuity in their collection. Following his advice, a foundational group of important works by **Yves Klein** was purchased directly from the artist's widow, including a significant example of Klein's "anthropometry" paintings, in which nude models pressed their blue-paint-coated bodies directly against the canvas (*Anthropométrie (ANT 110)*, 1960; fig. 1). Other works from the 1950s and early 1960s that would help form a basis for the collection include one of **Louise Nevelson's** painted assemblage "box" sculptures, titled *Black Secret* (1958); an exemplary work by **Cy Twombly** from 1958 titled *The Castle* (fig. 2); a folded canvas *Achrome* painting by **Piero Manzoni** from 1959; an important perforated work by **Lucio Fontana** (*Concetto Spaziale*, 1962; fig. 3); and a noteworthy three-dimensional wall construction by **Lee Bontecou** (*Composition*, 1965; fig. 4).

the 1970s, together building a singularly focused collection of art that represents the nexus of European and American artistic sensibilities of the post-war era.

The Lauffs's engagement with the art of their time was engendered within the context of a burgeoning German art scene that was marked by an interest in progressive art. There was a growing body of contemporary work coming out of Germany in the post-war years, with artists ranging from those who formed Group Zero to Joseph Beuys, who were interested in radically new modes of expression. There was, moreover, an influx of progressive international art that

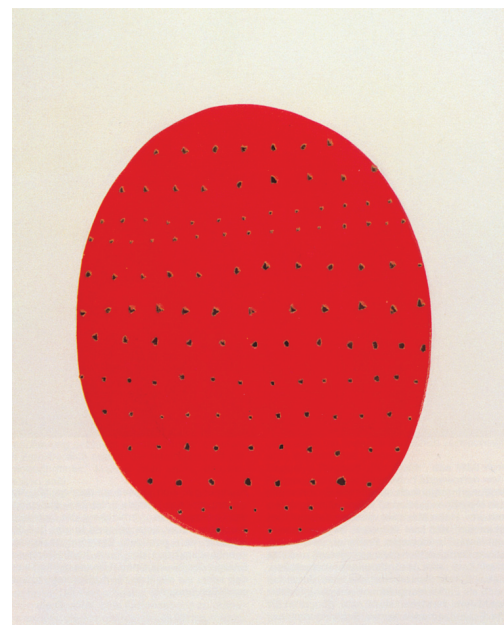


Fig. 3 LUCIO FONTANA, *Concetto Spaziale*, 1962

The Lauffs collected the work of certain artists in depth, including **Joseph Beuys**, one of the most influential German artists of the 20th century. Numerous works that span the years 1952-1974 comprise an important core of their collection. At Zwirner & Wirth, a group of over 15 significant works on paper that exemplify Beuys's unusual fusion of ideology and myth with formal invention will be exhibited. These inventive drawings include such works as *Akt (Nude)* (1952), made with pencil and chlorinated iron on paper, and a cascade of figures executed in pencil and gold bronze pigment titled *Artisten (Kaskade)*, ca. 1954 (fig. 5).

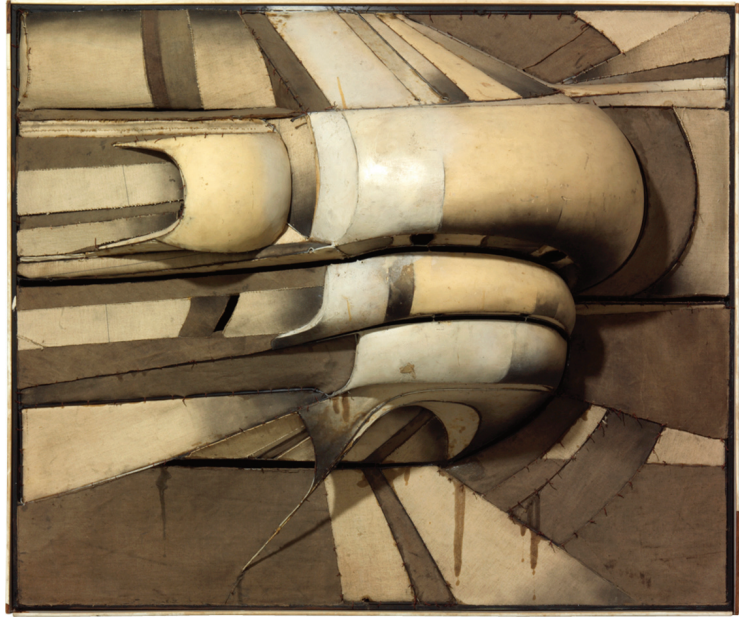


Fig. 4 LEE BONTECOU, *Composition*, 1965

The Lauffs's main focus, however, was avant-garde contemporary art, and their collection provides an exceptionally comprehensive overview of the key American and European artistic currents of the 1960s and 1970s. Examples of Minimalism are represented by the work of such artists as **John McCracken**, with *Think Pink* (1967), a highly-polished leaning pink plank that seems to fall somewhere between painting and sculpture and **Fred Sandback**, whose elastic cord and yarn constructions describe the outlines of imaginary solid

forms. On view will be the artist's *Untitled* "leaning" blue trapezoid from 1967-69 and *Untitled (Vertical two-part corner piece)* from 1968, which utilizes the 90-degree corner of a room to propose rectangular, three-dimensional forms.



Fig. 5 JOSEPH BEUYS, *Artisten (Kaskade)*, ca. 1954

Several artists who expanded upon the possibilities set forth by Minimalism are represented in the collection, including **Richard Tuttle**, whose *Yellow Curves* (1965; fig. 6) evokes simplified glyph-like forms while also radically altering the traditional format of the canvas. The collection includes a rare early large-scale sculpture by **Bruce Nauman** (*Untitled*, 1965; fig. 7). Leaning at a diagonal and mounted on the wall, this work represents a key example of the artist's process-oriented cast fiberglass and polyester sculptures. Another radically-innovative sculptural work in the collection is **Richard Serra's** *White Neon Belt Piece* (1967; fig. 8), made of tangled vulcanized rubber strips and neon tubing, suspended together from a hook on the wall.

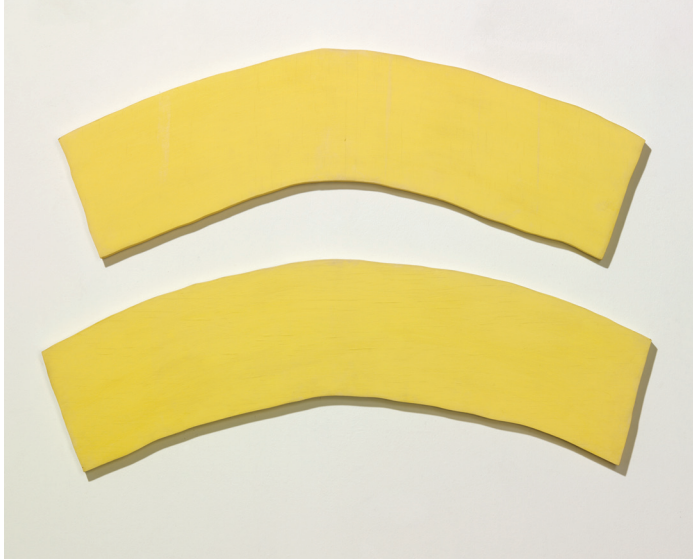


Fig. 6 RICHARD TUTTLE, *Yellow Curves*, 1965

that bridges the gap between European and American artistic sensibilities. The Collection of Helga and Walther Lauffs includes a focused overview of art produced around the 1960s and 1970s, offering connections among its diverse artworks, while pointing forward to the work of successive generations of artists.

The exhibition will travel to Hauser & Wirth, Zürich in June 2008.

For inquiries, please contact David Zwirner or Kristine Bell at Zwirner & Wirth, 212-517-8677

For press inquiries, please contact Julia Joern at David Zwirner, 212-727-2070 or julia@davidzwirner.com

A range of European and American Conceptual Art is represented in the collection with works by **Mel Bochner**, **Hanne Darboven**, **Jan Dibbets**, **On Kawara**, **Joseph Kosuth**, and **Sol LeWitt**. These include a *Modular Structure* from 1966 by LeWitt and Kosuth's *Lamp (one and five)*, 1965, a primary example of the artist's "Proto-Investigations" series, in which the relationships between an object (in this case, a household lamp) and its visual and linguistic representations are examined.

In its vision and scope, which is made evident by the rigorous and broad selection of the art of their times, Helga and Walther Lauffs succeeded in building a collection

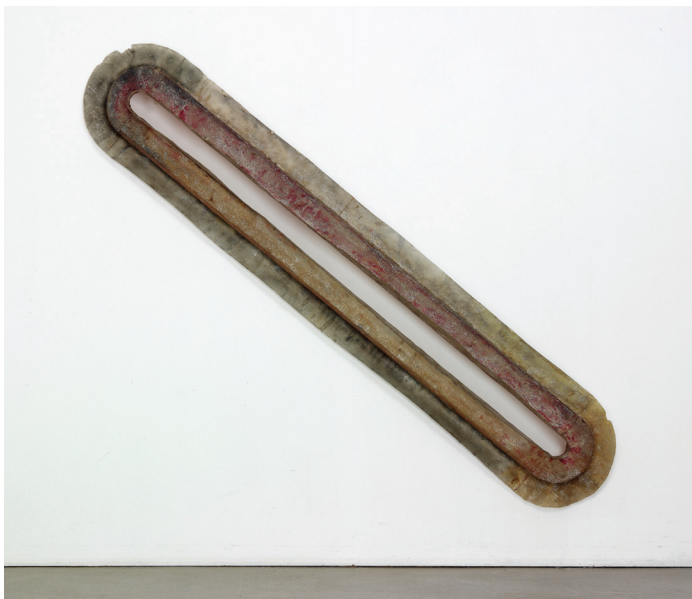


Fig. 7 BRUCE NAUMAN, *Untitled*, 1965



Fig. 8 RICHARD SERRA, *White Neon Belt Piece*, 1967