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WESEL

Memories
Jewels Sculptures Paintings

Retrospective exhibition
of Belgian goldsmith Claude Wesel

At Sotheby's Brussels
From April 3 to 25, 2025



“Jewels are one of the first messages humans receive from the world around them, an art object that is preferably displayed on the human body. It reflects the essence of an era, a society, a culture.”

- Claude Wesel -

A spring full of nostalgia

Sotheby's Brussels, Collectors Gallery, and Fabienne Wesel invite you to join an unforgettable journey through more than 50 years of Claude Wesel's career (1942-2014), goldsmith and pioneer of contemporary jewelry. This exhibition highlights his innovative art, a reflection of his creative genius and forward-thinking approach, and celebrates the exceptional output of this craftsman.

Claude Wesel is not only a talented goldsmith but also a sculptor, painter, and jeweler. His craftsmanship knows no bounds. From lost wax to sculpture, from enameling to stone setting, from precious woods to colored acrylics, he explores and creates bi-mechanical languages where technique and the organic meet.

With his expertise, he reinvented the art of jewelry, combining gold and precious stones with new materials that were previously unknown in jewelry-making: steel, titanium, bone, horn, rubber, and plexiglass, transparent or colored.

This bold fusion of materials, combined with a technical and mechanical vision, while remaining rooted in biological principles, made him one of the most unique and innovative designers in the field, redefining the boundaries of jewelry creation.

"Jewelry-ornaments evoke the eternal fascination of yellow gold, the softness of pearls, the velvety texture of coral, or lapis lazuli or hematite—polished materials that invite the eye and finger to caress. The jewelry-sculptures, designed during the same period, are rather the result of a patient intellectual search and a rejection of the bourgeois tradition of jewelry. Stainless steel, rubber, and plexiglass interweave complex and rational connections to create objects that no longer seek the warmth of a body to come alive. Unlike jewelry-ornaments, which only acquire their full meaning when there is a symbiosis with the person who owns or wears them, jewelry-sculptures are autonomous and are content with a distant and objective admiration. The jewelry-ornament is social, even if it contains a hint of aggression. It draws the gaze and quickly charms those who cannot resist it. Jewelry-sculptures, on the other hand, do not evoke desire, and if they seduce, it is because of a spiritual harmony, a unity of thought, and intellectual affinity." Christiane Geurts-Krauss, Art Historian

The story of an artist

Claude Wesel was born on February 5, 1942, in Ixelles. He began his training at the École des Métiers d'Art of the Abbey of Maredsous, where he was introduced to the craft of goldsmithing before studying graphic design and advertising at La Cambre. His strong personality and modernist vision quickly earned him recognition in the world of jewelry. At only 20 years old, he joined the Demaret jewelry shop, where, over 8 years, he designed more than 3000 models, contributing to the reputation of this iconic address on Avenue Louise in Brussels. His unconventional and striking designs made him a reference figure in the jewelry world.

From 1970 to 2014, Claude Wesel exhibited his works at numerous international exhibitions in iconic cities such as Tokyo, New York, Hong Kong, Berlin, and Paris.

"My role is to create the chemistry between the spirit and the material. From the beginning, I synthesized nature, meaning animal and plant forms, into abstract mechanical forms. My jewelry is not a figurative expression of reality, but rather an emanation of my personal vision of beauty." – Claude Wesel

More than deserved recognition

In 1983, during the 'Belgian Jewels Today' exhibition in Washington DC, Claude Wesel received several first prizes, including those from the Ambassador, the press, and the public. He was also awarded multiple times at the prestigious De Beers competitions in Antwerp.

Recognized for his exceptional talents, his works are now housed in world-renowned museums, including the Diamond Museum in Antwerp, the Schmuckmuseum in Pforzheim (Germany), and the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston (USA). His creations are regularly exhibited in prestigious institutions, proving the lasting impact of his art on the international scene.

Claude Wesel's bolo-ties

The bolo-tie, invented in the 1930s by Native American tribal goldsmiths from the Arizona and New Mexico regions, is an iconic accessory of the Zuni, Hopi, and Navajo tribes. Made from solid silver, these bolo-ties featured symbols and sacred tribal markings. Over time, this traditional ornament was adopted by cowboys, who saw it as a more casual alternative to the tie, which was considered too formal for their lifestyle.

Claude Wesel reinterpreted this legendary accessory of the American West in 1995. Unable to tolerate traditional ties, he restored the bolo-tie's status, incorporating it into both casual and elegant outfits. Between 1995 and 2014, he designed several unique bolo-ties made of gold, silver, plexiglass, steel, and precious stones.

Fabienne Wesel: The living memory of a vanished genius

Claude Wesel was above all a father. One of his daughters, Fabienne, chose to dedicate her career to preserving and passing on his work.

From an early age, she spent much of her time in her father's workshop. At the age of 18, Fabienne organized her first exhibition in Maredsous, a symbolic place where her father's artistic path began, alongside graduates from this school. At 21, she convinced her father to open a gallery in Waterloo dedicated to his creations. The success of this project led her to open a second gallery in the heart of Brussels 14 years later.

Today, Fabienne Wesel is the curator of the exhibition "Memories" Jewels Sculptures Paintings, which shines a spotlight on the art of Claude Wesel.

Throughout her career, she worked closely with her father, not only as his daughter but also as his muse.

Betty De Stefano and Collectors Gallery at Sablon celebrate the art of Claude Wesel

Since 2020, Betty De Stefano, founder of the renowned Collectors Gallery at Sablon, has represented the exceptional creations of Claude Wesel. Her collection is permanently displayed in this gem of art and elegance.

Betty De Stefano, with an academic background, has always had a deep passion for the applied arts of the 20th century and the world of jewelry. Since 2005, she has invited lovers of beauty and craftsmanship to discover Collectors Gallery, her gallery-boudoir. This intimate space is fully dedicated to "body adornment," offering a selection of creations from modernism to contemporary pieces.

Modernist jewelry is showcased alongside masterpieces by Scandinavian designers, including the prestigious Danish house Georg Jensen. In addition to these international creations, Collectors Gallery also highlights Belgian designers, particularly those from the École des Métiers d'Art of Maredsous, with special attention to Claude Wesel.

This subtle fusion of styles and eras reflects the artistic vision of Betty De Stefano, a true ambassador of timeless elegance and bold design.

Practical information

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