

# Léon Wuidar

## *A Retrospective*

29.10. –  
17.1.2021

MEDIA ORIENTATION  
27.10.2020, 11 am

OPENING DAYS  
29 and 30 October,  
11 am – 5 pm: free admission

Museum Haus Konstruktiv  
Stiftung für konstruktive, konkrete und konzeptuelle Kunst  
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Squares, rectangles, polygons with curved edges, circles and circle segments, reflected, multiplied and placed opposite each other with various color contrasts – these are the key elements of the compositions that Léon Wuidar has been developing since the 1960s. On two floors, Museum Haus Konstruktiv is hosting a comprehensive retrospective devoted to this Belgian painter. It is his first exhibition in Switzerland and features selected works from his oeuvre, which encompasses not only paintings but also sketchbooks, art-in-architecture projects and book cover illustrations.

Léon Wuidar (b. 1938 in Liège, lives and works in Esneux) has spent over sixty years dedicated to the medium of painting. This trained drawing teacher, who began painting as a self-taught artist in 1955, can point to several key moments that motivated him to produce art: In 1952, when he discovered two abstract paintings by Ben Nicholson in a magazine, their reductionist language of forms enthused him. Egyptian art, which he came to know through books, fascinated him as well, as did the works of Belgian surrealists Paul Delvaux and René Magritte, which he saw in a Liège exhibition. A visit to the 1957 Paul Klee retrospective at Palais des Beaux-Arts in Brussels and his love of architecture also continue to have an effect on him to this day.

In 1955, Wuidar began to paint his first still lifes and landscapes, in which he tried out various figurative styles. Around 1963, he began to get increasingly closer to geometric abstraction, even though the resulting paintings still have something surreal about them; for instance, figurative motifs such as an eye (of Horus), a bird, or a spider-like creature can be made out in works presented at Museum Haus Konstruktiv (*Arlequin à l'œil, 21 mai 66, Au fou, mai 1968* and *Grand air, 21 avril 65; février 1968*). His paintings from this period are characterized by shades of gray, brown and black, which contrast with lighter shades of ochre, white, russet and pink.

The works he produced at the end of the 1960s and in the 1970s are dominated by stylized architectural elements, such as columns, roofs or windows. One example of this is the painting *Les images quotidiennes, 24 sept. 69*. At the same time, an independence of forms emerged, leading to geometric compositions made up of lines, curves, triangles, diagonals, ovals, quadrangles or polygons, which are mirrored, repeated or shifted on the picture surface and unite as one overall composition. This was supplemented by a painted frame of one or two colored lines, surrounding the picture surface and harmoniously coordinated with the painting's internal coloring.

The works from this period, which present a broad spectrum of colors, demonstrate Wuidar's interest in constructivist-concrete art, as well as in architecture, space, volume, perspective and light. He was particularly fascinated by brutalist architecture, as conveyed in *Tige, 20 juillet 77*, for example. In this regard, he was especially stimulated by Belgian architect Charles Vandenhove, whom he met in the mid-1960s and remained on

friendly terms with until the architect's death in 2019. Vandenhove designed Wuidar's Esneux studio house in 1972. On several occasions, he also invited Wuidar to make artistic interventions in his brutalist-style buildings, including the interior of the university hospital CHU de Liège, for which the artist created enameled paneling.

In the 1980s, Wuidar's vocabulary of forms started to become more minimalistic, while his color palette shifted from natural to brightly colorful hues.

He began to give his works only dates as titles, whereas the titles of earlier works contain references to the real world. "I believe these titles [of the early works] were well chosen," states Wuidar, "but they already revealed too much. I preferred to leave them out and give the observer the freedom to see what they want. I even think that the date as a title is disappointing and a little sad. However, it has the advantage that the painting can easily be put in the right place in a catalogue raisonné."

Flashes of the subtle humor that resonates in this statement appear in many of the works in this exhibition – particularly in those produced from the 1990s onward, some of which are painted using pastel colors, and in book covers based on sophisticated wordplay. "For each letter," remarks Wuidar in reference to these works, "I like to find the right form, which it can assume in the context of my paintings."

Word games, an alphabet of his own, notes on color scheme issues and numerous pictogram-like designs come together in the enchanting "Carnets" presented in display cases in this exhibition: Since the 1970s, this artist has kept a record of many of his ideas in a diary-like manner, along with potential painting compositions, in a miniature 3 x 4 cm format. Most of these designs remain unrealized, while others are implemented in larger formats, ranging from 30 x 22 cm to 50 x 60 cm and through to 120 x 120 cm, in oil on canvas. The "Carnets" provide Wuidar himself with an important overview of his work's various developmental stages and thus form a core element of his artistic practice.

The retrospective at Museum Haus Konstruktiv traces Léon Wuidar's artistic development and presents his as-yet little-known oeuvre to the Swiss public for the first time. Simultaneously, the exhibition confronts the Zurich Concretists' strictly systematic art with a freer interpretation of concrete painting.

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalog in English, featuring numerous illustrations, an in-depth text by Sabine Schaschl and an interview that Hans Ulrich Obrist conducted with Léon Wuidar.

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#### **PUBLIC GUIDED TOUR IN ENGLISH**

Sun 22 Nov, 11.45 am – 12.45 pm: with Linda Christinger

#### **DIGITAL PROGRAM**

Our digital program is independent of our opening hours and accessible from all over the world. Whether as a preparation, as a supplement or to deepen your visit at Museum Haus Konstruktiv. Further information: [hauskonstruktiv.ch](http://hauskonstruktiv.ch)

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#### **PRESS CONTACT**

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