

# UAM CSULB

"Anything is a legitimate area of investigation."  
— Jenny Holzer

## **Tom Wesselmann: The Intimate Images August 26- October 12, 2003**

University Art Museum  
California State University, Long Beach  
College of the Arts  
1250 Bellflower Boulevard  
Long Beach, CA 90840-8401  
T: 562.985.5761  
F: 562.985.7602  
[www.csulb.edu/uam](http://www.csulb.edu/uam)

Tom Wesselmann was born in 1931 in Cincinnati, Ohio. Hoping to become a cartoonist, he concurrently studied art at the Art Academy of Cincinnati while earning a B.A. in psychology from the University of Cincinnati. In 1956, he received a scholarship to Cooper Union School of Arts and Architecture in New York, where he completed an M.F.A. In 1959, he was inspired by Willem de Kooning and Wassily Kandinsky and engaged in the Abstract Expressionist revolution as a painter in his final year at Cooper Union. Initially a source of inspiration, the work of the Abstract Expressionist masters proved, ultimately, to be a source of inhibition. Attempting to find a new direction, Wesselmann anticipated a figurative subject, which led him back to the classical subjects of art—portraits, the nude, still life, interiors, and landscape. He began to make small collages of torn paper and found materials, as in his series of *Portrait Collages* of 1959 followed by his breakthrough series of *Little Great American Nudes*. Initially, Wesselmann felt he was destined to be a miniaturist, but soon discovered that his imagery could successfully be transformed into monumental scale. His large-scale compositions brought him fame and notoriety as a founder of American Pop Art—a label Wesselmann does not encourage, but accepts. His work is among the collections of several prestigious institutions, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and the High Museum of Art, Atlanta. Wesselmann died in New York on December 17, 2004.