

Léon Wuidar

18 April – 1 July 2018

North Galleries, Inside the White Cube

Organised by Mathieu Paris

White Cube Bermondsey is pleased to present an exhibition of paintings by Belgian artist Léon Wuidar. Born in Belgium in 1938, Wuidar has exhibited extensively in Europe. This is his first solo presentation in the UK and focuses on paintings from the late 1960s to the late 1980s.

Wuidar cites the ruined bridges and stark military architecture from his childhood in postwar Belgium as a formative memory, and his paintings, which were initially figurative before moving into abstraction, are charged with these sensory associations. Loosely affiliated with Concrete Art, Wuidar's particular exploration of form and colour can be traced back to his works from the early 1960s. His practice is marked by collaborations with architects, especially Belgian architect Charles Vandenhove, resulting in numerous architectural interventions, public sculptures and designs for elements such as panels, cladding and windows. During the 1980s and 1990s, his interest in typographic forms and the rhythm of language fed into works featuring colourful abstract forms, akin to a personal alphabet. These can also be seen in Wuidar's numerous sketchbooks and notebooks, several of which are included in the exhibition. Used almost daily, they contain successions of small-scale drawings, which are often reused in his larger paintings. Featuring sequential declensions of geometric forms, like ladders of primary coloured blocks, they suggest the beginnings of a unique, personal alphabet.

The paintings in this exhibition contain polygons, squares, rectangles and tubular forms, which are framed by bands of colour and often crossed by straight white lines. Wuidar employs symmetry and repetition to create compositions that hint at enigmatic three-dimensional structures, while forms suggestive of architectural features, such as windows, arches or doors, evoke the built world. In the painting *Décembre* (1988), for example, two black poles topped with yellow squares are set against a solid blue and grey background, as if the bars are columns of a facade. In *Auvent* (1969), a dark green rhomboid atop a complex series of triangular shapes creates a structure akin to a dwelling.

Through repetition and seriality, his paintings play on symmetry, mirror imaging and two and three-dimensionality. Most works are titled simply with a date, such as *16 avril, 1986*(1986) or *14 mars 1986* (1986), hinting at personal experience or the memory of light and shadow on the landscape at particular moments in time. Harmony and discipline are visible in Wuidar's balanced colour palette and compositional precision. In the painting *6 juin, 1986*(1986), the pure symmetry of the central black square with its soft yellow dome and thin white horizontal line suggestive of a horizon is captured by Tracey Burroughs's poetic reading of the work: 'We all harbour the dream of primordial, undisturbed harmony. A harmony that would have been withdrawn from us to abandon ourselves "here", in the reality of a world from which we could anytime fall.'

Léon Wuidar was born in Liège and lives and works in Esneux, Belgium. Recent solo exhibitions include *Bibliotheca Wittockiana*, Brussels (2010); *L'Espace du Dedans*, Lille (2009) and *Gesellschaft für Kunst und Gestaltung*, Bonn, Germany (2007). His work was also included in numerous group exhibitions including 'L'abstraction géométrique belge', Mouans-Sartoux, France (2015); 'Abstractions géométriques belges', BAM, Mons, Belgium (2014); 'Un siècle d'art abstrait', Musée René Magritte, Brussels (2010); 'François Jacqmin', Musée d'Art Moderne et d'Art Contemporain, Liège (2005); 'Meditazione, Uno sguardo su alcuni artisti belgi', Ville Ponti, Ricerca, Italy (2001); and 'Pure Abstract Art', Mondriaanhuis, Amersfoort, Netherlands (1999).

His work is held in international public collections including Musée des Beaux-Arts, Brussels; Bibliothèque Albertine, Brussels; Fernmeldetechnisches Zentralamt, Darmstadt, Germany; Dorstener Maschinenfabrik, Dorsten, Germany; and Fondation IDAC, Mondriaanhuis, Amersfoort, Netherlands; Musée d'Art Wallon, Liège; Cabinet des Estampes, Liège; Musée en plein air du Sart Tilman, Liège; Centre de la Gravure et de l'image imprimée, La Louvière, Belgium; Fondation Meeus, Louvain-la-Neuve, Belgium; Musée de Mariemont, Morlanwelz, Belgium; Musée des Beaux-Arts, Verviers, Belgium.

9 décembre 85, 1985, Oil on canvas, 23 5/8 x 31 1/2 in. (60 x 80 cm) 24 1/8 x 31 15/16 x 0 7/8 in. (61.2 x 81.2 x 2.2 cm)(framed)