Press release

WIELS

Lutz Bacher

Burning the Days

28.03 — 09.08.2026
WIELS, Brussels



WIELS presents the first posthumous survey exhibition of artist Lutz Bacher. *Burning the Days* offers an expansive view of Lutz Bacher's five decades in art.

Lutz Bacher (1943–2019) lived in Berkeley, California and New York City. She began making art in the 1970s under this assumed name. Her earliest artworks were still made with a camera. She took her own pictures, as well as transformed found photographs, drawing resonance out of them by distorting them, editing and combining them, or uncovering half-hidden details about them.

Her approach often depended on chance or discovering the accidental, an openness that later grew to include sculpture, video and eventually museum-sized installations. She believed that artists can confront art and life through what is already made, permitting it to show her many sudden intrusions of beauty, comedy or violence. This approach to art embraced the art-historical tradition of the 'readymade', while also muddying its logic, using

a wide range of found materials—texts, archival fragments, music, and objects—in wild relation.

As an artist, Bacher spent her life grappling with the political and psychic tensions of the past century in America. A number of the subjects in Burning the Days are troubled 'Americana' symbols: a president and his widow, celebrities, soldiers, bison, could-be assassins and sites of historical ruin. Her art was animated from this violent outside, but much also emerged from questions inside, twinkling with a more intimate, affective and existential register: Who might Lutz Bacher be? What might she do as an artist? What might her art mean right now, or later?

The exhibition title, *Burning the Days*, is Bacher's own. It is the title she gave to an unfinished book that now exists as a binder in her archive. The book is a chronological compilation of the artist's work from 2013 until nearly the day she died in 2019. The title cites the expression used by soldiers during the Vietnam War to describe time spent off duty but still deployed. The exhibition too could be thought of as a draft, as, much like the book itself, it remains unfinished or unfinishable.

Exhibition highlights include:

Early works from the 1970s, including *Men at War* and *The Lee Harvey Oswald Interview*, highlight her interventions into the instability of images and the political mythologies they create.

A rare reunion of a substantial number of the iconic *Jokes* series (1985–88) and *Playboys* paintings (1991–93), in which appropriated image/text combinations expose the psychological undercurrents of mainstream cultural codes.

Installations such as *In Memory of My Feelings* and *Yamaha*, as well as other sound and sculptural works, map the terrain of embodiment with an emotional depth but a mechanized fragility.

Other large-scale installations such as *Black Beauty* and *The Celestial Handbook* annunciate Bacher's perennial interest in outer space and our own perilous journey through it.

Through its non-chronological, associative layout, the exhibition evokes Bacher's archival impulse—where stories are partial, archives overflow, and meaning remains in motion.

Curator: Helena Kritis, with co-curator Solveig Øvstebø

Biography

Lutz Bacher (1943–2019, US) lived and worked between Berkeley and New York. Solo exhibitions include: Astrup Fearnley Museet (2025), Oslo; Raven Row (2023), London; Fridericianum (2021), Kassel; Treize (2022), Paris; K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen (2018), Düsseldorf; Lafayette Anticipations (2018), Paris; KADIST (2017), San Francisco; Secession (2016), Vienna; Greene Naftali (2015-16), New York; Kunsthalle Zürich (2013); ICA London (2013); and MoMA PS1 (2009), New York. Her work is in the collections of major museums around the world. Her archive, organised from the 1970s onward in what she titled *The Betty Center* is installed in New York City and maintained and overseen by Galerie Buchholz (Berlin, Cologne, New York) in conjunction with the Estate of Lutz Bacher.

Public programme

25/04, 16:00–17:00
Look Who's Talking with Helena Kritis (EN)

23/05, 15:00–16:00
Look Who's Talking with Sara Deraedt (NL)

03/06 19:00–20:00
Lecture by Alex Kitnick (EN)

06/06 15:00–16:00
Look Who's Talking with Athony Huberman (EN)

13/06 15:00–16:00
Look Who's Talking with Madeleine Planeix-Crocker (FR)

Every first Wednesday of the month, 18:00–21:00
01/04, 06/05, 03/06, 01/07, 05/08
Free nocturnes: guided tours, chess tournaments and screenprinting workshops.

13/06, 27/06, 11/07, 25/07, 08/08, 14:00–15:30
Visit & Practice (NL/FR/EN)

Every last Friday of the month, 09:00–11:30
24/04, 29/05, 26/06, 31/07
Morning Routine

Every first and third Sunday of the month, 14:00–15:00
Family Funday (NL/FR)

Stay updated on the programme through wiels.org/events

Publication

A comprehensive monograph designed by Julie Peeters and published with Roma Publications will be released in June 2026. It features newly commissioned essays by Kate Nesin, Emily LaBarge, and Juliane Rebentisch, alongside a curatorial foreword.

Credits

Curator: Helena Kritis, with co-curator Solveig Øvstebø.

The exhibition is organised in collaboration with Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo, where it first opened on September 26th 2025.

This project was made possible thanks to the generous support of The Terra Foundation for American Arts.

Practical information

WIELS is open from Tuesday to Sunday from 11:00 to 18:00 and every first Wednesday of the month until 21:00

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WIELS
As one of the leading institutions for contemporary art in Europe WIELS presents temporary exhibitions by national and international artists, both emerging and more established. WIELS is a site of creation and dialogue, in which art and architecture form the basis for a discussion about current events and issues, not only through its exhibitions, but also through an international artist-in-residency, an education and community-oriented programme and complementary activities.
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