

THINGS SEEN: BERNARD COHEN AT 90

6th September - 30th September, 2023

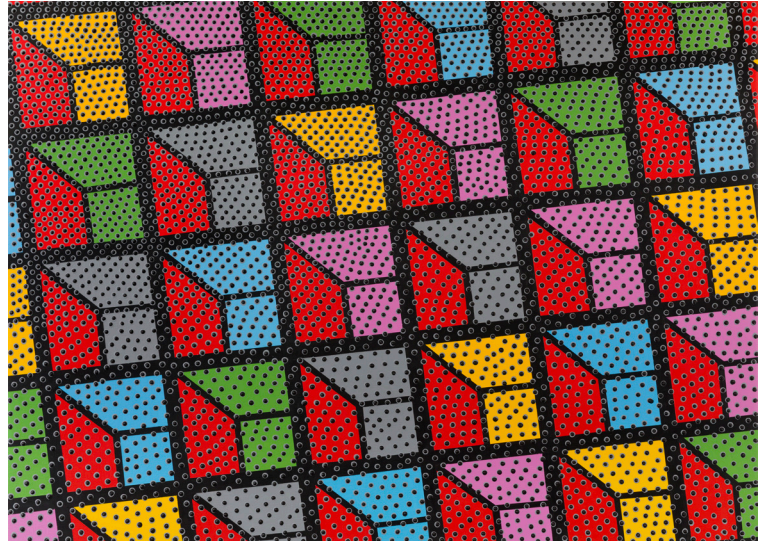
21 Cork Street
London
W1S 3LZ

T: +44 (0)20 7439 7766

press@flowersgallery.com
www.flowersgallery.com

Flowers Gallery is delighted to announce an exhibition of new and recent paintings by Bernard Cohen, one of Britain's most significant painters. This exhibition marks the occasion of the artist's 90th birthday.

The works in *Things Seen* demonstrate Cohen's continuing process of reinvention, in which each painting has a distinctive self-contained identity. The works are characterised by vivid planes of colour intersected by overlapping linear structures, often echoing forms and patterns seen in the surrounding world, relating to personal experience.



Come Morning, 2023, acrylic on linen, 105 x 145 cm

Living and painting in Paris in his early twenties, Cohen became enchanted by the luminous stained glass of Sainte-Chappelle and the monumental, loosely brushed *Nymphéas* of Monet. He was struck by how the leads within the glass both accentuated and disrupted the sacred images at Sainte-Chappelle. After many hours there he would walk to the Orangery and Monet's *Nymphéas* paintings, where he would wonder at what he has described as the "*seemingly relaxed and loosely applied web of colour*". For Cohen, the paintings manifested a universal view of nature, and like the stained glass, demanded long looking. Paintings in this exhibition, such as *Come Morning* (2023) evoke complex effects of this sustained study. Here, Cohen's use of line performs a unifying structural function, while overlapping and dissecting forms also introduce elements of chaos, reflecting the visual cacophony of everyday life.

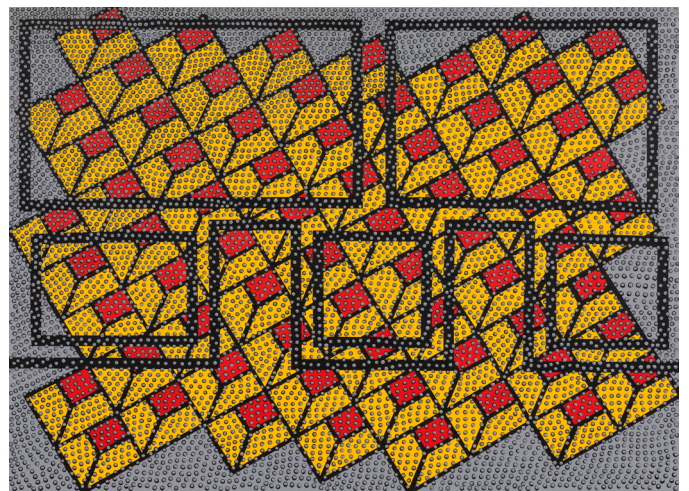
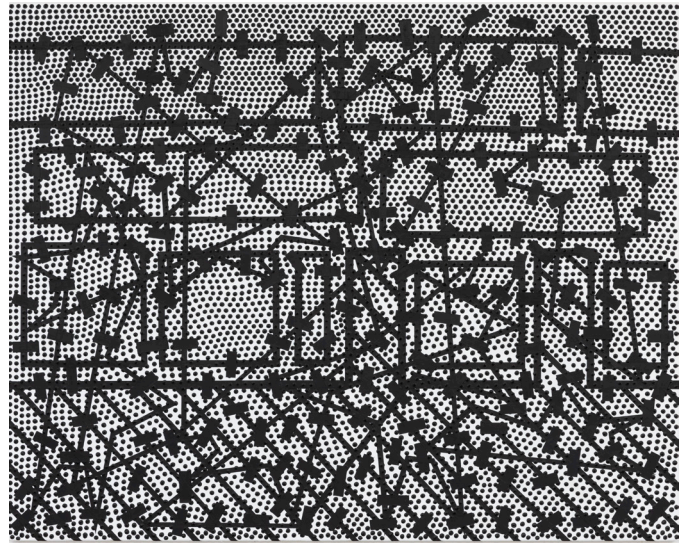
Looking at great art became an essential part of Cohen's life, from emblematic Hokusai prints and paintings to wall tiles from the Middle East, encompassing all types of art that were made to be visually accessible but that demanded much focused looking. Cohen's own aim as an artist has long been to create emblematic paintings that say many things, but are realised as one thing. This he describes as "*Complexity and singularity. Oneness.*"

A central structure within several of the paintings, including *Light After Dark*, *And Scatter*, and *Fool's Home*, is a sequence of linear shapes recalling the composition of Velázquez's *Las Meninas*, a painting that Cohen describes as "*taking place in the space that the viewer occupies*". Cohen applies similarly complex pictorial strategies, using raised dots of paint to emphasise the significance of the space in front of the canvas, in contrast to the scene reflected beyond the picture plane.

Working at a large scale was and remains a sign of his belief in a future. He says: "*The 50's, those post-war years, called for one to open one's arms, take a deep breath and work to make a wide and deep space. In short, something that expressed the joy of moving beyond war.*"

When setting out to start a new painting, Cohen finds it useful to have a sketchbook at hand. He draws and says, "this is what I want to make and it will look like this", but he goes on to draw several more possible forms. He concludes, "Commitment to a final form for the painting, depends not on drawings, but upon the moment when I get out of the chair and make my first mark on the canvas. The outcome of the painting is then inevitable."

For more information and images please contact
Ellie Jeans: ellie.jeans@flowersgallery.com
or Hannah Hughes: press@flowersgallery.com
+44 (0)20 7920 7777



Captions clockwise from top: *Fool's Home*, 2020-21, acrylic on linen, 101.5 x 127 cm; *And Scatter*, 2022, acrylic on linen, 105 x 145 cm; *Portrait of a Painting*, 2021, acrylic on linen, 105 x 145 cm

ABOUT BERNARD COHEN

Born in London in 1933, Bernard Cohen studied at the Slade School of Fine Art from 1951-1954. In 1988 he was appointed as Slade Professor and Director of the Slade School of Fine Art, University College, London. Cohen came to prominence during the 1960s and has since exhibited widely. His first solo exhibition with Flowers Gallery was in 1998. In 2007 the gallery hosted *Bernard Cohen: Paintings from the Sixties*, focusing on an important period in Cohen's artistic development, followed by *Work of Six Decades* in 2009, which celebrated his career by bringing together a selection of key works and the publication of a comprehensive book. A subsequent survey exhibition titled *About Now: Paintings and Prints 2000-2015* took place at Flowers Gallery in 2015, accompanied by the book *About Now* by Ian McKay. Other important exhibitions include *Artist in Focus, Six Paintings from the Tate Gallery Collection*, The Tate Gallery, London in 1995; *Stroll on! Aspects of British Abstract Art in the Sixties*, Mamco, Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain, Geneva in 2006; *Abstraction and the Human Figure* at CAM's British Art Collection, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon in 2010; and a solo retrospective *Spotlight Display* at Tate Britain in 2017-18. Bernard Cohen lives and works in London. Ten of Cohen's paintings are in the Tate collection, and his work is included in numerous public collections worldwide.

Opening Hours: Tuesday - Saturday 11am - 6pm or by appointment.

Image credits: All images © Bernard Cohen, courtesy of Flowers Gallery.

Twitter @FlowersGallery

Facebook @FlowersGalleries

Instagram @FlowersGallery