

BERNARD COHEN

80TH BIRTHDAY EXHIBITION

22 MAY - 22 JUNE 2013

PRIVATE VIEW
TUESDAY 21 MAY 6 - 8PM

FLOWERS
21 CORK STREET
LONDON
W1 3LZ

WWW.FLOWERSGALLERY.COM

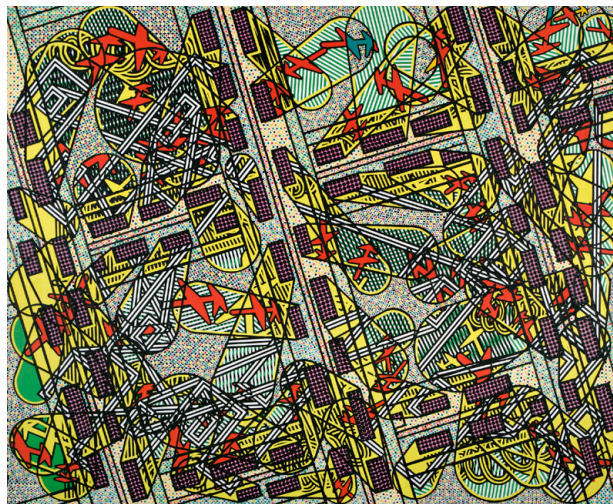


Fig 1

Bernard Cohen will turn 80 this year. In celebration Flowers Gallery are pleased to announce a forthcoming exhibition of his paintings spanning 1961 – 2013. The selection reflects his devotion to consistently subjecting the medium of painting to challenging and thought-provoking methods of development in a process that continues to this day.

Widely recognised for his contribution to contemporary painting since the 1960s, his work is known for tensely wrought and unpredictably complex colour fields and has been exhibited regularly both in London and internationally. In 1959 following a visit to his studio from art critic Lawrence Alloway, Cohen was invited to partake in the renowned 'Situation' exhibition to be held at Royal British Artists Galleries in 1960.

Today, it could still serve as a demonstration that abstract painting is not one sort of painting, let alone a genre, but a wide spectrum of activity much of which remains unexplored. [...] His painting is still vivid to me [...] in these instances and in others, Cohen had combined austere design with a disruptive intervention.

Norbert Lynton 2009

Throughout the 1960s Cohen's painting practice went through a 'campaign of exploration and invention [...] challenging his own assumptions about what a painting could be and do'. In 1966 he was chosen to exhibit alongside Robyn Denny, Richard Smith, Harold Cohen and Anthony Caro at the Venice Biennale. Flowers Gallery acknowledged this era of Cohen's work by exhibiting a survey of the decades painting and drawing in 2007. Ten works from this period will be included at the forthcoming exhibition.



Fig 2
Fig 3
Fig 4

During the late 60s Cohen accepted an invitation to teach at the University of New Mexico. He travelled around New Mexico, Arizona and Mexico then to New York. In 1972 the Hayward Gallery hosted a retrospective of his work. The exhibition's first gallery comprised of 170 selected unframed drawings 'to show the fluidity and unpredictability of his search for forms. This made a tremendously impressive overture to the paintings exhibition that followed.' After the Hayward show Cohen's extensive travels fed his creative sensibility seeking what he called 'constructed lyricism':

He wants his paints not to pile up physically, but to stay close to his canvas surface even when visually his forms run up against or over each other. [...] The aim, always, is clarity. We spectators are free to look at a path for it.

Norbert Lynton 2009



Fig 5

Since 1998 Bernard Cohen has been represented by Flowers Gallery, his opening solo show 'Paintings of the Nineties' demonstrated the longevity of his creative insight and influence. Over the last decade to the present day Cohen has continued to expand on a variety of working processes, ensuring his on-going relevance in contemporary art.

With the later works however (by which I mean from the Nineties onward), I can speak as a contemporary witness, and I don't think I am overstating the case if I claim for them a relevance to this age that is sadly lacking in so much contemporary art. Here is an art that stands up four square as an intellectually rigorous practice and it demands to be considered.

Ian McKay 2009

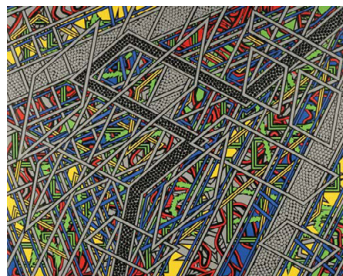
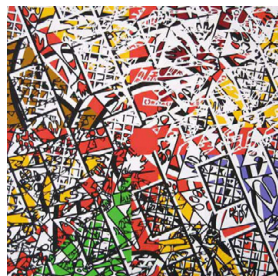


Fig 6
Fig 7
Fig 8

I have found that most artists search for a formula, find it, stick to it – and make their reputation based on it. Yet Bernard develops his visual language in every work he takes on.

Matthew Flowers 2009

Throughout his career Cohen's oeuvre has gone through many extraordinary, extensive and influential developments. Educated in the post-war climate of change and cultural upheaval, this era, charged with the reverie of reconstruction would come to inform his work for the remainder of the century. During a lecture in 1996 Cohen recalled poignant experiences which shaped his dedication to his artistic vocation. Namely two instances: a statement from Kenneth Martin that Cohen set against the violence and consequence wrought upon London during the second world war, 'It doesn't matter what you do in your painting so long as you build something [...] and Art Historian and longstanding Slade Professor Rudolf Wittkower who informed Cohen 'He revealed to me the humanity that lay within created objects, and the humanity and value of discussing created things'.

Notes to Editors

In the 2009, Flowers Gallery published the extensive monograph *Bernard Cohen, Work of Six Decades* to accompany a major retrospective exhibition. The book contains over 170 illustrations of his work, essays from Norbert Lynton and Ian McKay and Cohen's own extensive writing on his work as a painter.

Bernard Cohen was born in East London in 1933, despite little evident interest in art within his family, both Bernard Cohen and his brother Harold became painters. On graduating from the Slade School of Fine Art in 1954, many of his fellow graduates were ex-servicemen and women. Upon receiving a French Government Scholarship, Cohen went on to live in Paris, subsequently spending time in both Rome and Madrid, he returned to London in 1956.

Cohen has since exhibited widely at galleries, institutions and art fairs, including the Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, The Victoria & Albert Museum, London, British Council, CAS, London, BBC, London, Tate Gallery (48 works), London, The Museum of Modern Art, NY, and National Gallery of Canada. Bernard Cohen's distinction as a teacher parallels his eminence as an artist. He has been connected with the Slade since 1967, becoming Slade Professor and Director of the Slade School in 1988. He is now Emeritus Slade Professor and Fellow of University College, London.

Ian McKay (born 1962) is an English writer, critic, publisher, and translator. He has written for publications including Artline International, Art Monthly, Apollo, Arts Review, The Independent on Sunday and Private Eye.

Norbert Lynton who during his life had been an Art Critic for *The Guardian*, Director of Exhibitions at the Arts Council, Great Britain and Professor of Art History at the University of East Sussex, did not indulge in theories of art. He saw himself as a bridge between a viewer and a painting. His first thoughts were for his subject and his audience. Although I had known Norbert for many years, it was not until we sat down to discuss my work in the quiet of my home, that I understood how modestly he saw his role.

Bernard Cohen 2009

The Vanderbilt University Fine Arts Gallery in Nashville, USA is currently exhibiting four of Bernard Cohen's prints from the series *6 Images for J* in FOUR HUNDRED YEARS OF BRITISH ART: HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY FINE ARTS GALLERY COLLECTION. The exhibition is on view from March 13, 2013 through June 15, 2013. Other artists exhibited include: Patrick

Fig 1: **Octet** 2011

Fig 2: **Untitled #1** 1963

Fig 3: **Untitled** 1962

Fig 4: **Untitled** 1963

Fig 5: **Retrospective Exhibition, Hayward Gallery, London** 1972

Fig 6: **In Black and White Time** 2004

Fig 7: **Study 1** 2008

Fig 8: **Pictorial II** 2001

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For further information and images please contact Ceri Stock on 020 7920 7777 or email ceri@flowersgallery.com