

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cora Cohen
A Decade: 2012–22

September 12 – November 1, 2025
Ground Floor

Cohen's work...is expansive, challenging and feisty; engaged with impurity, with challenges of aesthetic choice and the robust surprises that dripped, flung pigment can produce on the canvas.

— Linda Nochlin

From the 1970s until her death in 2023, Cora Cohen widened the net of gestural abstraction's possibilities. A highly regarded painter's painter who lived and worked between New York and Cologne, Cohen remained dedicated to the medium despite errant (but oft-repeated) claims of its demise. Alongside peers such as Louise Fishman, Joan Snyder, Pat Steir, and Stanley Whitney, Cohen found new outlets for abstraction, inventing forms to assert that "modernism has the possibility to be about beginnings and not endings."

This focused survey—Cohen's first at Greene Naftali—centers on the final decade of her career, juxtaposing the chance operations unleashed in her late paintings with the layered deliberations of her works on paper. "The beautiful and the sublime are not uninteresting," she once remarked, "but my urgency is for a different experience," and her calibrated play of control and abandon allows for such complexities. Opposition becomes a mobilizing force in her barely corralled tensions between figure and ground: the near-transparent washes offset by thickets of rough impasto, the licks of a loaded brush against the skittering drag of a dry one. Rejecting the histrionics of the expressive mark—its penchant for angst and personal disclosure—Cohen opted for a loose, pulsing visual rhythm that implies a tacit structure: what one critic likened to "an alien calligraphy dilated in water." The resulting works have a tactile grit and exert their own kind of emotional weather, cued to natural cycles but with a city-dweller's respect for the built and made over the purely found.

Highly attuned to the gravitational pull of pigment as it absorbs into or sits atop the canvas, Cohen relished the action of the broadest range of materials put to experimental use. Atmospheric scrimms seep into the weave of raw linen; scraps of wood veneer cling to the surface; paint vies with colored pencil, ink, pastel, and graphite in a push-pull of productive conflict. The variety of Cohen's touch affirms that, as her friend Joan Mitchell liked to say, "abstraction is not a style," but rather a fierce commitment to capturing the material world as seen from a particular point of view.

Born in New York City in 1943, Cora Cohen studied painting at Bennington College in Vermont, where her instructors included Lawrence Alloway and Paul Feeley. Her extensive exhibition history began with a solo presentation at the Everson Museum in Syracuse in 1974. She showed regularly at New York galleries—including Wolf, Holly Solomon, and Jason McCoy—and solo institutional exhibitions have been held at Omaha's Joslyn Museum of Art and the Museum Insel Hombroich in Neuss, Germany, among others. Cohen's work is in the collections of Bennington College, Vermont; Bryn Mawr College, Pennsylvania; Harvard University Library, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Neuberger Museum of Art, Purchase, New York; Sarah Moody Gallery of Art, Tuscaloosa, Alabama; Swedish Arts Council, Stockholm; Wayne State University, Detroit; Weatherspoon Art Museum, Greensboro, North Carolina; and Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut.