



Bernard Cohen (1933-)

Nationality

British

Studied

1954-6: Paris,
1950-51: St Martin's School of Art,
1951-54: Slade School of Fine Art



Taught

1988: appointed Slade Professor of Fine Art. Later made Emeritus Professor and Fellow of University College London.

Background

Born to a Jewish family of Russian and Polish parentage, Bernard Cohen is a British artist whose travels have had a significant impact on his artistic work and who has enjoyed a considerable reputation both as a painter and as a professor of fine art. His brother, Harold (1928–), is also an abstract painter and a noted exponent of computer art.

The artist

From the early 1960s Cohen showed a concern with process that had its roots in both the Abstract Expressionism of Jackson Pollock and the sense of ritual characteristic of Cohen's Orthodox Jewish upbringing.

He was a member of the Situation Group, on which a note is included in the History and Context section of this microsite

In 1988 Bernard Cohen was appointed Slade Professor of Fine Art, and was later made Emeritus Professor and Fellow of University College London.

First Print & Second Print

These are the first in a series of six etchings made in 1973, in which coloured inks are used. (*The following is based on notes provided by Dr. Adrian Lewis, c2003.*)

Bernard Cohen's paintings of the early 1960s were filled with sprayed and overlaid meandering lines. His work embodies a sense of ritualistic process that he relates to his Orthodox Jewish background. Responding to what was known as 'action painting', the artist established a staged process of painting, each act giving meaning to the next, leading to a decisive moment of physical completion.

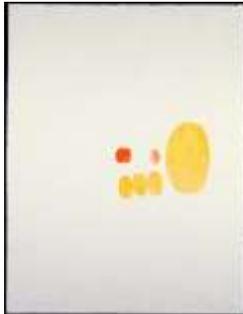
The two prints present images action: the laying down of fingerprints. The physical layering of Cohen's paintings is echoed in his use, in the printing process, of embossing, and also of the use of photography to play with scale. As a result, *First Print* presents images resulting from a physical process in formal groupings that suggest some social or familial relationships. In 1978 Cohen told the art historian Adrian Lewis about the impact a decade earlier of the culture of the Pueblo Indians in New Mexico.

I felt at home in the Pueblos, and I felt at home during the Pueblo ceremonies . . . It has related to everything I've done since . . . The big discovery is that the home is the creative act . . . the home the place where you eat, the table you eat off of, the house in relationship to its environment ... in relationship to meeting-places, in relation to the foothills, in relationship to the mountains.



Second Print has five fingerprints dancing around an oval, perhaps reminiscent of religious and dance ceremonies that had so fascinated him earlier in New Mexico. One thing is clear: in his own thinking, Cohen connects the procedures of painting with social rituals, producing an art that offers different levels of reading in terms of physical process, structure and metaphor.

Metadata: *First Print*



Accession number:	N316
Artist:	Bernard Cohen
Artwork type:	Colour etching, signed
Material:	Ink, paper
Measurements:	63.5 x 49.0 cm
Technique:	Etching, signed
Date:	1973
Rights owner:	Bernard Cohen
Rights status:	UK HE use only
Institution:	Council for National Academic Awards/University of London

Metadata: *Second Print*



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