

PRESS RELEASE

Louise Fishman

Opens Thursday October 22 from 6–8 pm
Exhibition continues through November 21, 2015



Rookery 2014 oil on linen 66 x 57 inches

Cheim & Read is pleased to announce an exhibition of new paintings by Louise Fishman. The work will be accompanied by a catalogue with an essay by Alex Greenberger. Her last show with the gallery was in 2012.

Brushed, scraped, layered and smeared, the dynamic surfaces of Louise Fishman's paintings radiate with energy. Many of them measure over six-feet tall, and are notable not only for their size but for their physical expression of Fishman's working process. Her work conveys the focus and intensity of her approach to the canvas, and makes tangible the moment between inspiration and realization. Though the proportions of the painting's physical support are its initial catalyst (as she says: "It dictates the choice about how I am going to make a mark"), Fishman's personal experiences are its driving force, constantly renewed and evolving with her own individual, cultural and political understandings. Made in the moment, the abstractions are also about the moment—an intuitive cycle of cause and effect. As she says, "If I couldn't introduce new experiences, materials and ideas into my work...there would be no reason for me to continue."

Born in 1939 in Philadelphia, Fishman grew up during the height of Abstract Expressionism and its male-dominated hierarchies. Both her mother and aunt were artists, and her childhood was steeped in art history and artistic discourse. She attended Tyler School of Art and was an active participant in the feminist movement of the 1960s and 70s. After explorations with other materials and methodologies, Fishman embraced painting at a moment when many claimed it was 'dead.' Her decisive re-appropriation of gestural abstraction was an affront not only to Ab-Ex's patriarchal lineage, but to postmodernism's didactic conceptualism. It also consciously rebelled against the trend of incorporating craft-based "women's work" or techniques. Her 1973 "Angry Women" series was seminal not only for the merging of text and abstraction, but for its pure emotional expression, as told from a woman's point of view.

Her newest work has not lost this edge, nor its fragile balance of opposing forces. In the paintings shown here, all made in 2013–2015, the formalism of the grid and its geometry strain against the organic and calligraphic marks which fight it, resulting in compositions of complex spatial interplay. In works like *Nama-Rupa*, 2014, and *These Lines, These Colors, This Silence*, 2014, the grid structure is visible but distorted by swaths and scrapes of saturated color. In *As Near as Memory*, 2014, and *Rookery*, 2014, the grid itself seems torqued and unhinged. Others, like *Arcanum*, 2015, and *Bel Canto*, 2014, are stabilized by strong, vertical stripes of paint. Color—mostly blues and reds, with some yellow and green—is many-hued, and has its own particular meanings and associations for Fishman, originating from influences as varied as Titian to the color of her partner's eyes. *Image and Witness*, 2015, with its windowpane of gray and black, speaks to the core of Fishman's practice: as the title states, it is at once image and witness, providing testimony, however elusive, to her experiences. However, the viewer, too, is witness. Standing before it, peering into its striations of color and light, one is reminded of the force of our own emotional lives, and the collective energy we share.

Fishman lives and works in New York City. Widely shown, her work is represented in many important museum collections, including: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; the National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.; and the Jewish Museum, New York, among others. She has received many awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, and has participated in several artists' residencies, most recently at the Emily Harvey Foundation in Venice, Italy. Fishman has a major retrospective, curated by Helaine Posner, opening on April 3 at the Neuberger Museum of Art. In addition, an exhibition of her small-scale work, curated by Ingrid Schaffner, will open at the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia on May 4. A major monograph, published by DelMonico Books/Prestel, will accompany the exhibitions. She has been represented by Cheim & Read since 1998.

Donald Baechler: Early Work 1980 to 1984 opens November 24 and runs through December 30.

Cheim & Read 547 West 25 Street, New York