



A 4

ARTHUR COHEN

AUGUST 22 to SEPTEMBER 4, 1997

*Opening Reception:
Friday, August 22, 8-10pm*

EAST END GALLERY

432 Commercial Street, Provincetown, MA 02657
(508) 487-4745

*"Elizabeth" ©1994 Arthur Cohen
4" x 6" oil on canvas*

MP26 P01



Cohen, Arthur A.Y

EAST END GALLERY
349 Commercial St. Provincetown, MA 02657
<http://www.eastendgallery.com>
PHONE (508) 487-4745 E-MAIL cstone@tiac.net



ARTHUR COHEN
A RETROSPECTIVE

*Provincetown
Library
330 Com St*

SEPTEMBER 4 - SEPTEMBER 25

Opening reception Friday September 4th 8 - 10

Screening Sunday September, 6th 8 - 10
Arthur Cohen Provincetown Home Movies
From the 60s and 70s

*Provincetown
M.A., 02657*

Front: Arthur Cohen "Provincetown Harbor" 1996 48 x 62

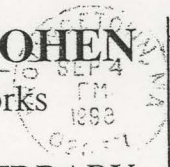
Opening reception Friday August 14th 8 - 10 PM

Front: Arthur Cohen, "Provincetown Harbor" 1996 48 x 62



ARTHUR COHEN

Recent Works



WELLFLEET LIBRARY

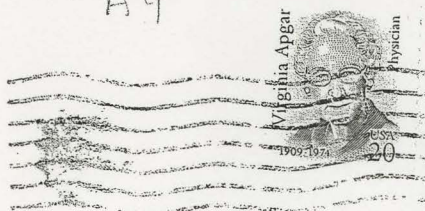
55 W. Main Street

Sept. 8 - 28, 1998

OPENING

Tuesday, September 8 2-4pm

A4



*Provincetown Library
330 Cowd*

*Provincetown
M.A., 02657*



EAST END GALLERY

(New Location) 491 Commercial Street
Provincetown, MA 02657
Phone 508-487-4745
Fax 508-487-8338
Bunny Pearlman, Director



ARTHUR COHEN

AUGUST 25 - SEPTEMBER 12

OPENING RECEPTION
FRIDAY AUGUST 25, 8-10 PM

A4
Debra Berry
Provincetown Public
Library -
Provincetown
MA., 02657



*A drawing by Arthur
Cohen (at Shore Galleries)
from a photograph of
Provincetown notables
including Mike Notaro,
Victor DeCarlo, Arthur
Cohen, Karl Knaths and
Salvatore Del Deo.*

9/3/09
BANNER A4

ARTHUR COHEN

Banner 8/14/10 pg.41 A4

Arthur Cohen, whose work may be seen at the Burke Gallery, at 385 Commercial Street, Gail Browne Gallery, at 364 Commercial Street, and the Berta Walker Gallery, at 204 Bradford Street, is at The Hirshhorn Museum in Washington, DC, as well.

As for the paintings and etchings, enough said.

The photographs, however, are a surprise. They are archival silver gelatin prints. Taken mostly in New York City starting in the 1940s and printed from 40 of some 20,000 negatives, they are at the Burke Gallery, 508-487-0646

Publishers including Rizzoli and Abrams are interested.

Arthur Cohen paints the moment Ay

By Kaimi Lum
BANNER CORRESPONDENT

The mystery permeating the work of Arthur Cohen may be unveiled in the words of Ralph Waldo Emerson, whose fierce individuality and independence find a modern incarnation in the Bronx-born, nationally noted artist. "Time and space are but physiological colors which the eye makes," Emerson wrote, "but the soul is light."

The soul of Cohen's painting is light. In a depiction of Provincetown Harbor, a subject he has painted hundreds of times, an immense blue sky feathered with the faintest strokes of white glows with muted light, as if the sun, stirring on the canvas, has not yet decided where to reveal itself. The sea below, gauzy and darkening to a deeper blue in the foreground, reflects the same irresolution. Only on the delicate, wharf-decorated horizon is the painting's wistful air dispelled and a focal point established. Charged with light, a small white building seems to gather the recumbent energy of sea and sky and project it back into the landscape.

"Provincetown Harbor II" is one of many works by Cohen featured in an exhibition that opens tomorrow at the East End Gallery. In addition to his maritime landscapes, the show includes city-



"Provincetown Harbor II (detail)," oil on canvas by Arthur Cohen.

scapes, portraits and Cohen's distinctive figure studies of musicians at play. It is his 14th annual exhibition at the East End Gallery, composed of works completed between 1971 and 2000. Cohen, who divides his time between New York and the Cape, has been painting in Provincetown for over 40 years.

Time, indeed, plays a large role in Cohen's significance both as an artist and as a member of the Provincetown community. Bunny Pearlman, director of the East End Gallery, stresses the value of having "a longstanding, well-known, respected and loved artist like Arthur" in a town that has seen radical changes in its recent history. "Artists who have been such a part of the

community for such a long time have an important role," she says.

And in his actual painting, time informs both process and product. What distinguishes Cohen's work, says Pearlman, is its ruminative quality, reflecting "the ongoing process of each piece, the layers of paint washed and scraped away each day and begun again the following day, week or year." He may work quickly on a painting, lavishing pigment on the canvas at the same tempo, directing the musicians he frequently portrays. He may spend painstaking hours perfecting the details of a landscape, sculpting tiny lines with tiny brushes and smoothing the paint to an airy texture. He may begin a piece and

leave it indefinitely.

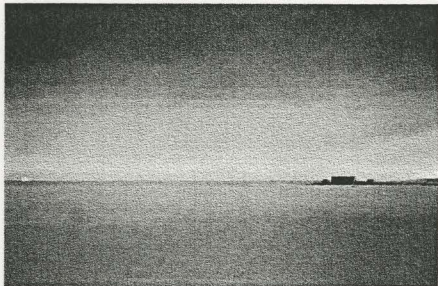
As a result, the finished piece, "built of layers of paint representing time and thought," is imbued with a sense of suspension. "Looking at a Cohen painting offers the experience of entering this time-space continuum," says Pearlman.

But light remains the guiding principle and inspiration of his work. "It's not as much about painting from the perception of objects as it is about light," Cohen says. "Light makes the whole difference in painting for me." Sitting in his Bradford Street studio, surrounded by stacks and shelves of unfinished paintings, he narrows his gaze to eliminate all but the brightest objects in the room: five cups hanging

over the kitchen sink and a few dishes propped nearby, off of which the sun is bouncing prettily.

The eye is attracted to bright instants in the scenery, he says, and "instants" is perhaps the key word. Cohen describes watching the play of light on Provincetown Harbor, where at certain times of the day — evening and morning, mostly — sun and landscape conspire to create brilliant tableaux. Boats and ripples reflect a dazzling yellow light. "It's so beautiful that you think, 'God, that's fantastic,'" he says. "And then 10 minutes later it's all gone. It really makes you think."

Though he ordinarily eschews explanations or justifications for **continued on page 38**



ARTHUR COHEN, "PROVINCETOWN HARBOR, 1988"

Arthur Cohen

BY BUNNY PEARLMAN

Arthur Cohen is 68 and has been painting for 35 years. Respected by painters, recipient of prestigious awards, he has not become fashionable in the manner of colleagues such as Wolf Kahn. His art, like the man, is eccentric, a separate genre. Yet he has managed to keep life and limb together, living quietly with his wife and family, painting every day. Lacking a university education and the associated rhetoric, he was reinforced in his alienation by his studies with Edwin Dickinson at the Art Students League. He saw he was an outsider both to the cult embracing abstract expressionism and to the illustrators of pop culture. I look closer and closer at the 40th painting of the wharf that he has otherwise painted several hundred times, and I am again caught in the magic, feeling or perceiving in his work the moment of stopping, rather than completion.

What about Cohen's painting puts him in the class of iconoclastic representational painters—Vermeer, van Gogh—painters who pursue their vision irrespective of art trends and fashion? What about his work is special? The answer may

PROVINCETOWN ARTS 1996 Page 87

be the ongoing process of each piece, the layers of paint washed and scraped away each day and begun again the following day, week, or year. Sometimes they sit for a long time before they are picked up again. The "ghost," as he explains it, is a hint, an indefinite image, that allows him to recreate from memory and imagination and then to return again to the spot where he started, but the light has changed, if only subtly, and it's another day and he has changed. His paintings are built of layers of paint representing layers of time and thought. Looking at a Cohen painting offers the experience of entering this time-space continuum. I feel myself being pulled into a deep space (composed of many thin layers) going back as far as the eye can see and then even more, to infinity, the way the universe continues to go on beyond where the eye can actually see. Though limited, the color in his work is important. He chooses a small range, mostly blues and grays and some pink or green. When he paints interiors, the colors are blacks, browns, and dark blues. The color is about the light. The pink is about the way the light is caught on the peak of the roof. It is not the color of the roof but the precise way the light is reflected on it. And then there is the part that one cannot put into words, except to say it is about mood and poetry, his love for the landscape and his family. His work captures, not the moment of perception (as in a photograph), but an ongoing moment to moment to moment to infinity, defying time, painting the forever, allowing us the belief that the moment will go on.

Bunny Pearlman: Tell me about your first serious painting.

Arthur Cohen: It was actually my fourth painting in 12 years, but it was my first real painting.

BP: What were the 12 years?

AC: Eighteen years old till 30.

BP: And what happened at 30 that allowed you to make that painting?

AC: You got me. It was a 12-inch painting of some things on a table and I worked on it for half a year. I was interested in Harnett then, a late 19th-century *trompe-l'oeil* painter, who painted objects falling out of the painting. It was 1958. I was living in the East Village and I showed it to a busy-body friend, a painter who lived in the same building. He was into the hip scene and was an "explainer," to borrow Gertrude Stein's term. He talked about Zen and I listened. He was envious of my little painting. He belonged to a group of 10th-rate action painters that hung out at the Cedar Bar and name dropped. He brought over a friend, another painter, Max Spoerri, who asked me, "Why do you paint this way?" I had one painting. They kept looking around for more. Finally they decided I was a "magic realist." I wanted to bring it to a gallery and they said, "You know, they'll want to see more work." It was amazing I didn't know, that I thought I could bring one painting to a gallery.

BP: Does it matter if you paint the wharf or an apple or your wife playing the piano?

AC: It's something to start on.

BP: So what matters?

AC: That's what I don't know—paint, if you will, or illumination, not sunlight necessarily.

BP: You start with a subject?

AC: I am looking at something. I draw with a brush—usually ruin it after 15 minutes or an hour. I can never decide to stop, like a child never wanting to go to bed.

BP: Is there ever a moment of truth?

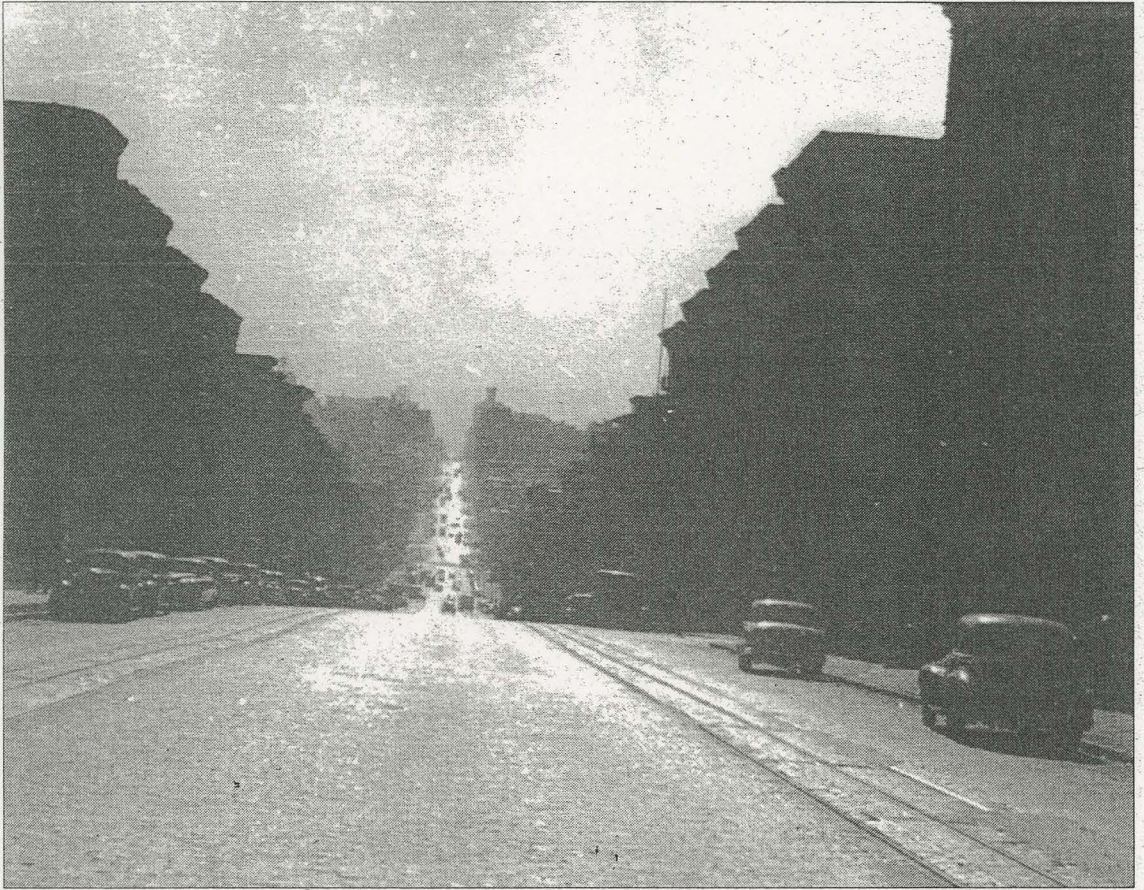
AC: Oh, yes. It comes and then it goes. It dissolves. It never does me any lasting good. Just when I think I've got hold of it, I wake up—like in a sexy dream, you wake before the end.

BP: So when do you decide the painting's finished?

AC: Not often. It's like your life. It's not up to you when it's finished. Balance is about living in the moment and looking just ahead and not back and not at one's feet, like a tightrope walker. ■

Bunny Pearlman, an artist, is director of the East End Gallery in Provincetown.

A4



"Amsterdam Avenue, 1948-52," photograph by Arthur Cohen.

Two shows honor Cohen

Arthur Cohen will be honored with two openings for exhibitions of his work — paintings and photography — this Friday. His cityscapes and landscapes will go on display at the Provincetown Art Association and Museum, 460 Commercial St., and his photography will be shown at the East End Gallery, 491 Commercial St., which is already showing a series of Cohen's oils. Cohen is best known for his oil paintings of the wharf and harbor in Provincetown, views of the Brooklyn Bridge, and his wife at her piano. Both receptions will take place from 8 to 10 p.m.

Cohen studied painting under Edwin Dickinson at Cooper Union, and Robert Gwathmey and Reginald Marsh at the Art Students' League. A Bronx native, he splits his time between Provincetown and New York City.

Cohen's industrial cityscapes and landscapes have been exhibited in numerous group shows and his paintings are included in many public, corporate and museum collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of the City of New York, the Brooklyn Museum, Boston's Museum of Fine Arts, the Hirshhorn Muse-

um and PAAM. He is represented by the East End Gallery.

The East End Gallery show features 50 black-and-white photographs of New York City from the mid-'40s through the '60s. These photographs were taken with a camera purchased with his mustering out pay from the army and were prior to his career as a painter. The images are gritty but give a hint at the artist's future preoccupation with light and form.

Cohen's exhibition at PAAM will run through Oct. 13. The East End Gallery show hangs through Oct. 23.

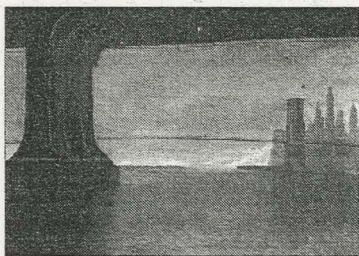
Cohen shows gritty cityscapes

Provincetown art collectors and gallery visitors, long entranced by Arthur Cohen's meticulously detailed, light-infused vistas of the bay and the town wharf, may be in for a bit of a surprise by his upcoming exhibition in the East End Gallery beginning with a reception on Friday. Rather than presenting seascapes, this show will feature paintings of his native New York, beginning in the '70s and continuing to the present day.

As gallery director Bunny Pearlman says, "Here we see his subjects range further to include the light reflected on buildings and rooftops in New York City. There are some 40 studies and paintings [of New York] — its light and darkness, its beauty and poetry."

Instead of views of Long Point or MacMillan Wharf, look for "Brooklyn Bridge," an oil on canvas which offers a distant glimpse of the Lower Manhattan skyline, albeit in Cohen's signature blues and lavenders, but dwarfed by the steely gray span of the famed bridge. Where his sea views are full of airy hope, this city scene seems somber and almost pessimistic.

Note also, two small oils, "West Broadway" which conveys a city uncharacteristically asleep, or "North from 108th Street," suggestive of a city slowly waking up. The scenes are rather gritty and



"Brooklyn Bridge"

dour. Perhaps these paintings explain why Cohen heads for the heart-stopping brilliance and optimism of Provincetown every summer.

Regardless of his subject, Arthur Cohen is a painstaking master. When Pearlman asks rhetorically, "What about his work is special?" The answer is found in "the ongoing process of each piece, the layers of paint washed and scraped away each day and begun again the following day, week or year." In Provincetown, the light reflected from sky or ocean dominates the canvas and makes the boat or pier or building seem tiny, insignificant by comparison. In New York City, the stolid anonymity of virtually windowless buildings subsumes the natural setting.

Painting at its best should never be predictable. Cohen's city scenes, although subdued, offer a fresh viewing experience. Visit "New York, 1975 to 2001" at Provincetown's East End Gallery, 491 Commercial St., from Friday through Sept. 21.