

Harry Cohen Artist

Themes and Chronology



ABOUT THIS PRESENTATION

This collection is a Cohen/Coulter collaboration to identify and date the major thematic periods during Harry's 70 years, and counting, career. The first copy was presented on Cohen's 2014 90th birthday then refined together.



Harry Cohen

By Ronald Coulter with Mr. Cohen

As this collection emerges in the fall of 2014 Harry Cohen begins his 90th year. He was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1924 and describes himself as a ghetto kid who served in the army during World War II. The G I Bill supported his ambition to be an artist.

Art, for Harry, was and is a love affair. He explored galleries and museums, read Walter Poyton and lives of artists. He gave his heart, soul and life to art because he felt it is a high and noble quest. I'm told that's a self portrait behind young Mr. Cohen.

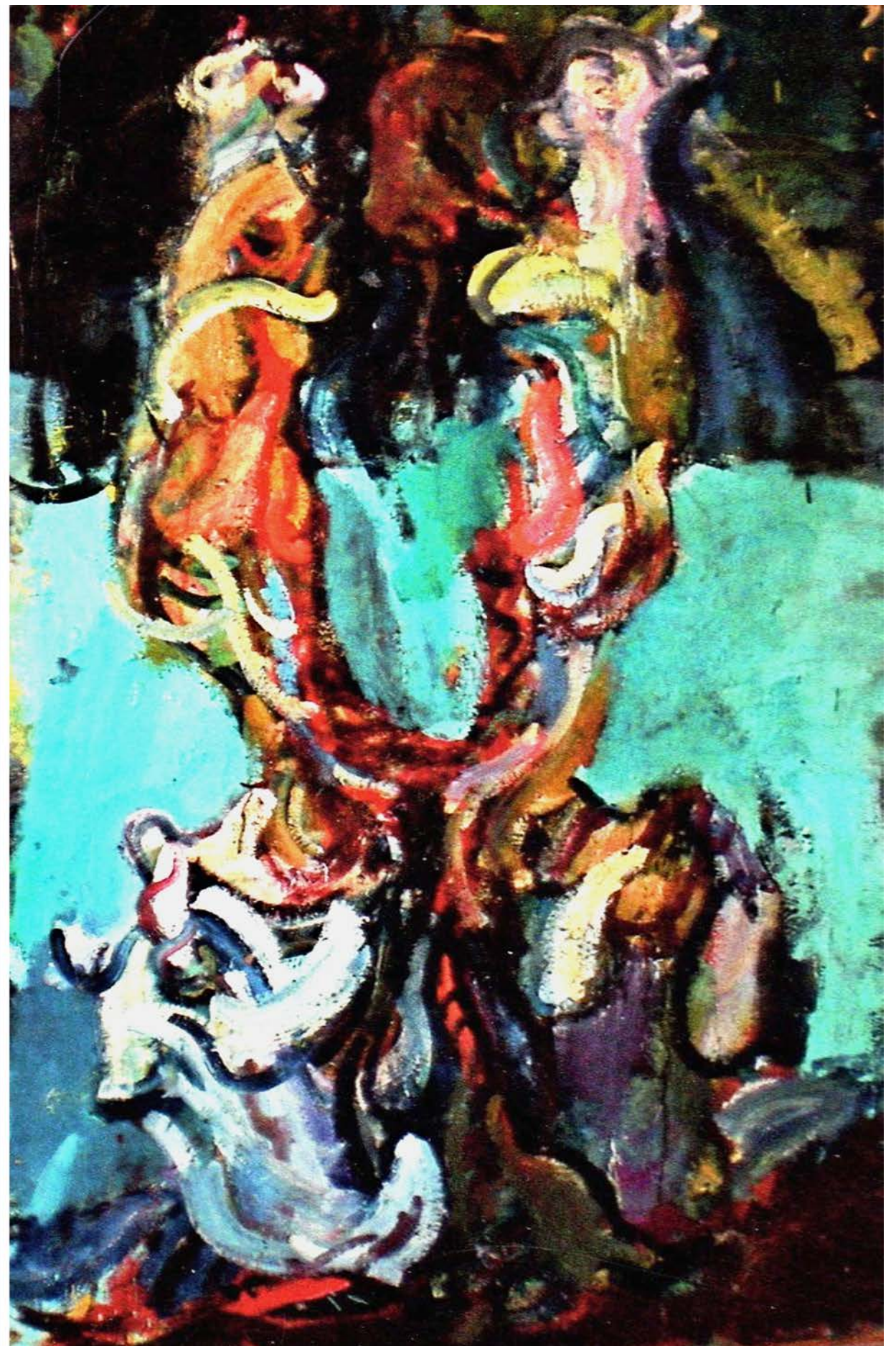
Harry selected one SIGNATURE WORK for each thematic period. I was surprised how often he knew immediately which it should be. Such terms as *best* or *favorite* were avoided in favor of *process* or *exploration*. Some dates are approximate.

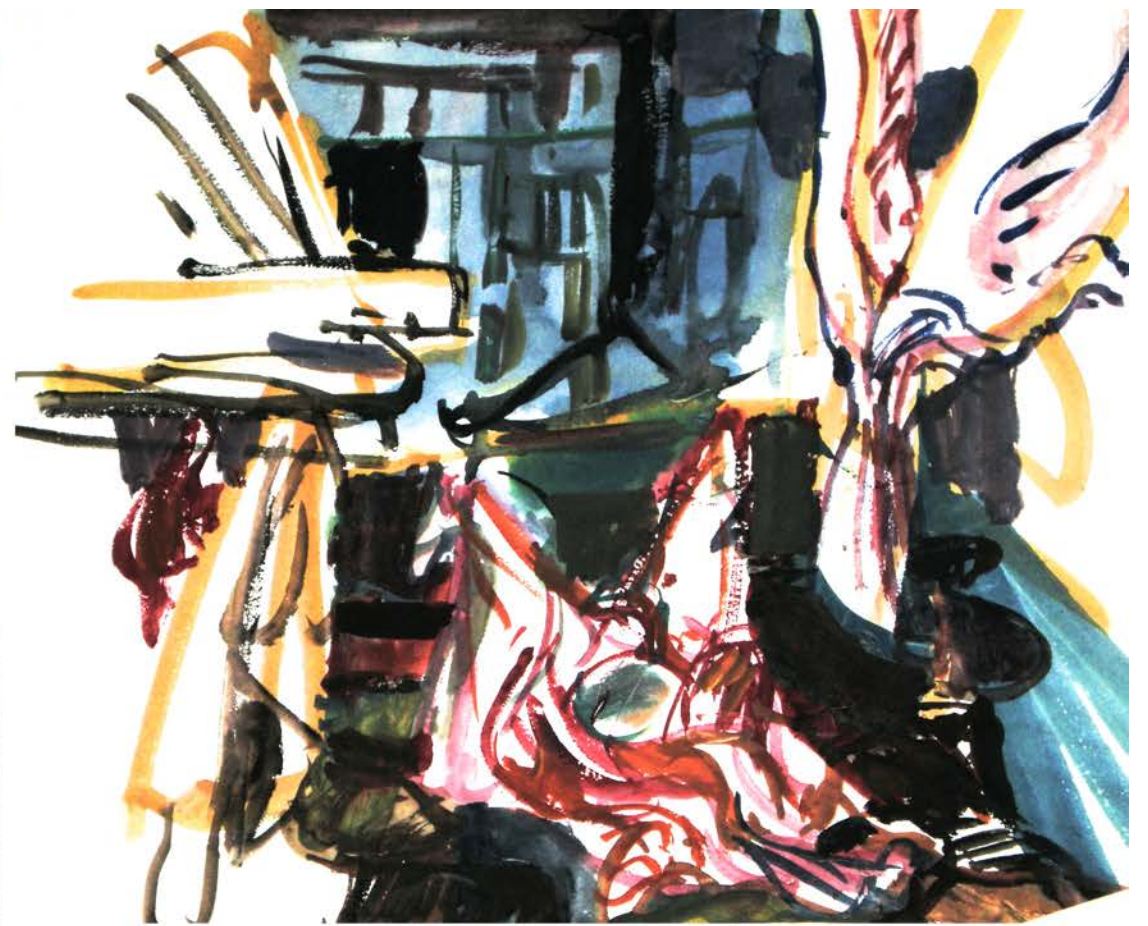
I took the liberty of adding related art to demonstrate the amazing range and variety. SIGNATURE WORKS are featured with correct proportions. Other examples may be altered to conform to the space available. I am distressed by the magnificence that is not included.

Skip Henderson, Beth Pewther, Nisha Coulter and Rick Johnson contributed content and/or photos.

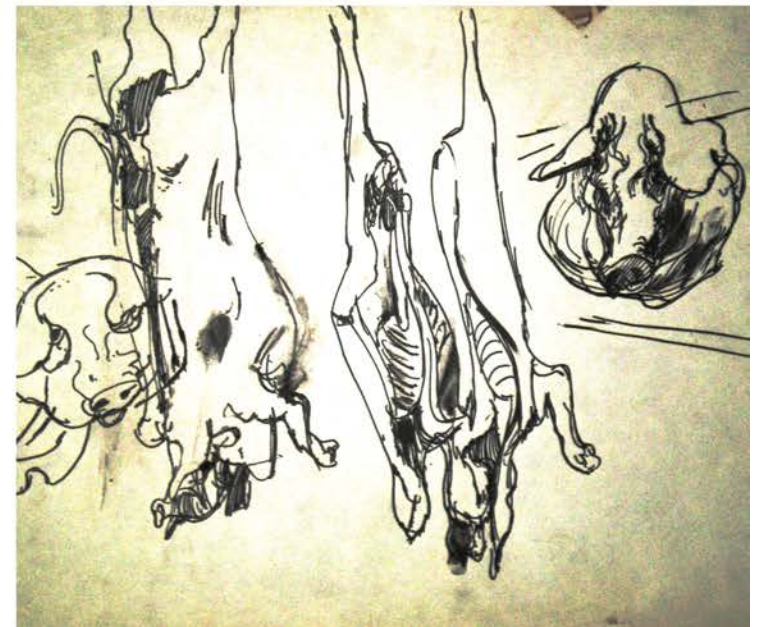
SIGNATURE WORK: Slaughter House Beef.

BOSTON MUSEUM SCHOOL OF ART,
1945-50. Impressed by Chaim Soutine he painted street people and works inspired by a slaughter house. Oskar Kokaschka was one of his teachers. The school's art director, Karl Zerbe, felt Harry had a good chance to win an art contest and trip to Rome. Harry selected one of his street people then withdrew from competition when it was suggested he choose a more appealing subject and clean up drips and runs. He felt then, as he does now, that such streaks are part of the creative experience of action painting. The fate of these works stored with his sister is unknown.





A life time later fellow student Joe Young admitted to retrieving what Harry threw away and returned watercolors and sketches.





SIGNATURE WORK: **Landscape**

LANDSCAPES. In 1950 Harry moved to southern California painting sunflowers, orange groves, trees and rocks.







THE BOAT STUDIO. Harry moved to Sausalito in 1958 painting docks and ships. He was given permission to paint in a large boat partly submerged in mud. It provided high ceilings with a mud floor. He completed 25 to 30 works that were later rolled and stored in a house he rented out. The renters decided they wanted the space and put the rolls outside. Most work was destroyed by weather.

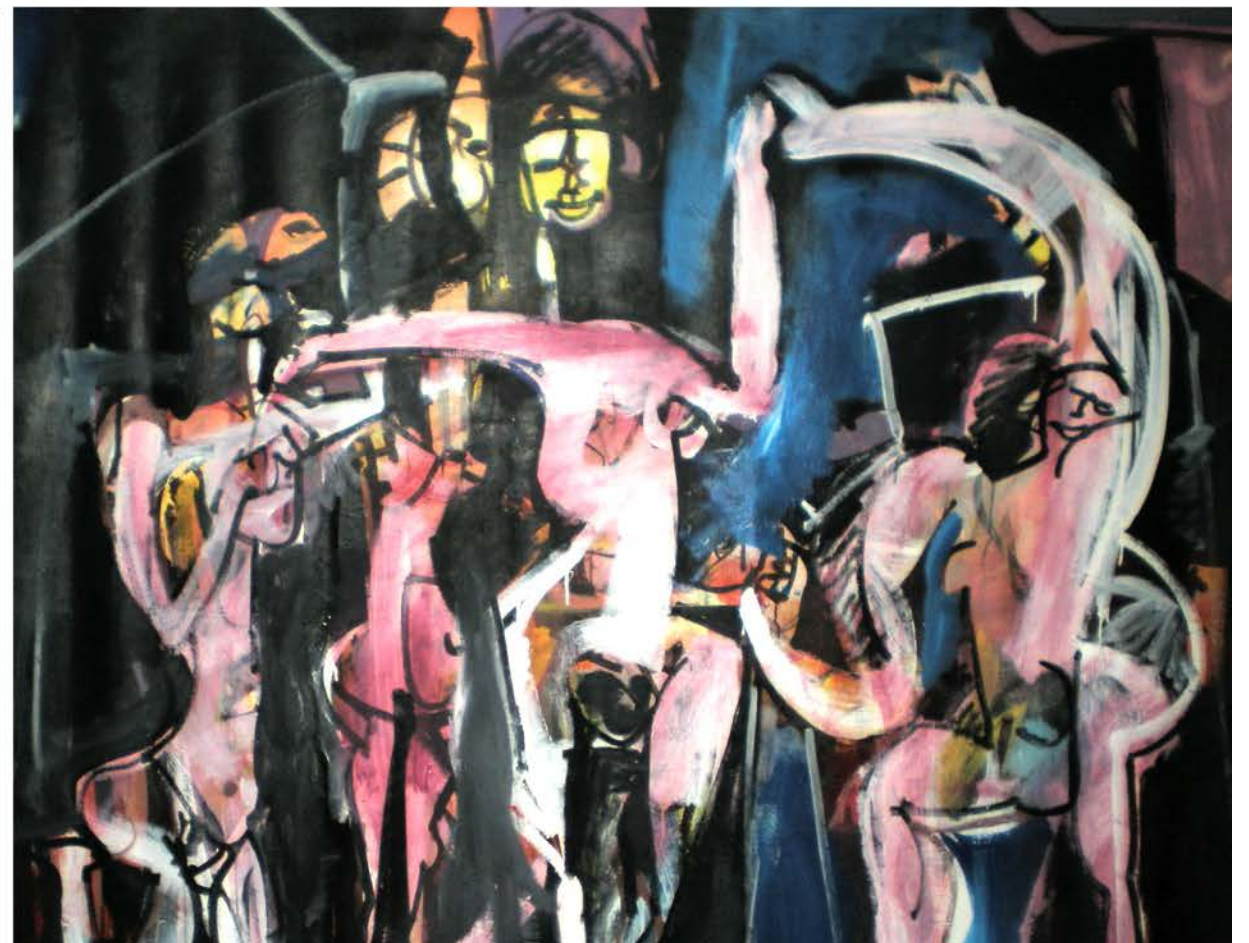
SIGNATURE WORK: Dry River Boat, 7 X 7 feet.
Next page.





ROMANTICISM'S LAST GASP, 1959-60s. Harry considers this period a culmination that exhausts youthful aspirations and urges one to explore and experiment. This is his final period working with oils.

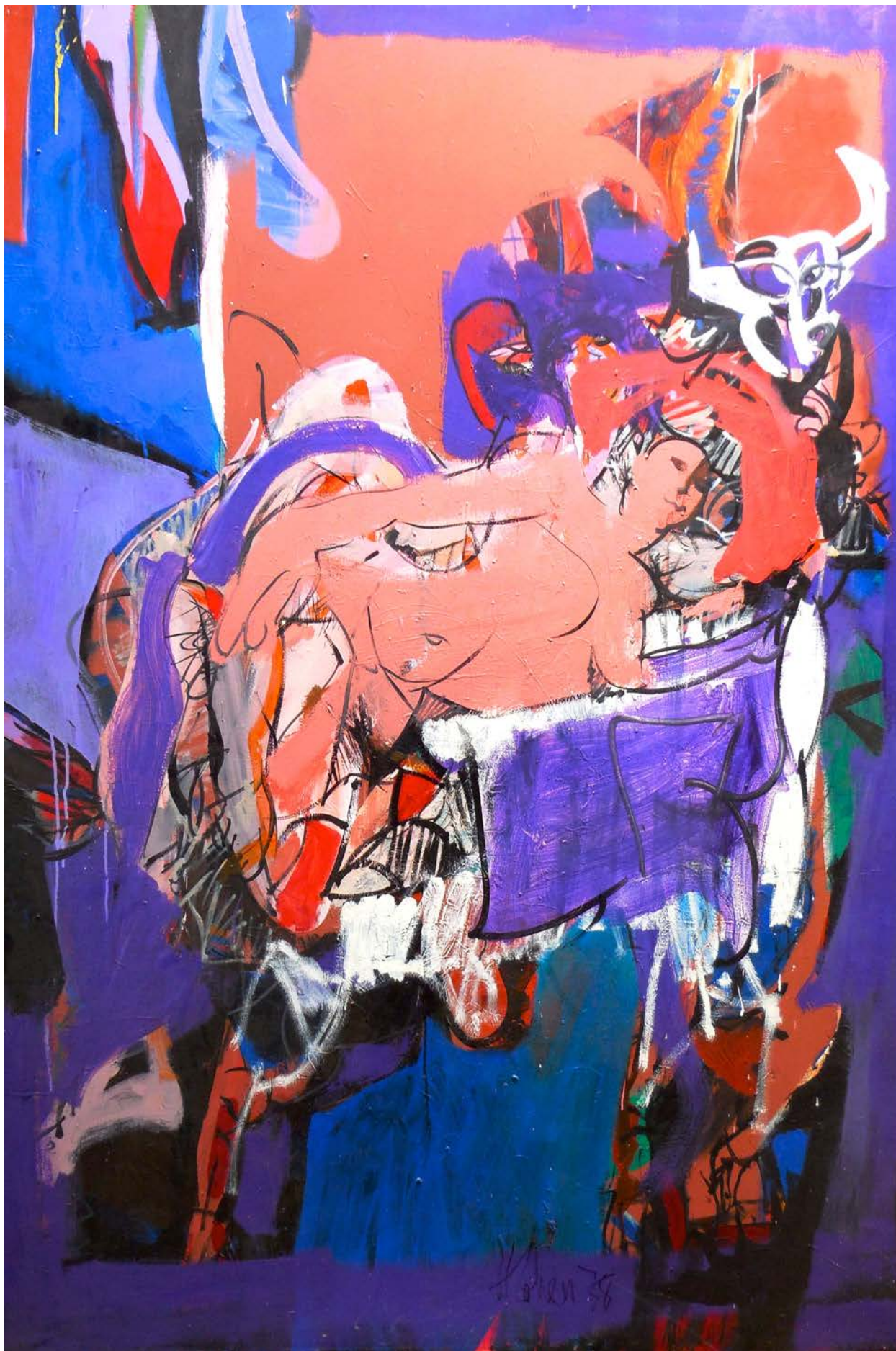
The upper left is **Prometheus**. The title for the upper right is **Who Am I? Where Am I Going?** **Dancers** are to the right.





SIGNATURE WORK: Banquet Table

Marge, Harry's wife as of 1958, considered this painting a gift to her. This was a second marriage for both and brought two fine daughters, Ronnie and Melva, into Harry's life.



“His paintings reflect his personality, gregarious and exuberant, full of a passion for life, yet also capable of subtlety and gentleness.

Harry comes to art as a precious and sacred calling that leaves those of us with more practical natures a little astonished...”

Beth Pewther

EUROPA, 1960s. This is a time of “new thinking” and doing it by returning to the masters in terms of subject, composition and color. Acrylics allow Harry to work faster and looser creating 15 to 20 works. He frequently returned to this theme for example the 2007 nude top left on next page.

SIGNATURE WORK: Europa. It is 4 by 7 feet and required four years to complete.





CRUCIFIXION, late 1960s to early 70s. Harry explains that all the artists he admires had painted Christ and often the church was their patron. It was time for his "shot" at the subject.

Harry and Marge were setting up an exhibit of his art at Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley, Calif. I was a student. His painting said everything I was thinking and reading. I had to have it. Rug money was the down payment the rest through the years.

SIGNATURE WORK: Crucifixion. Next page in the collection of Ronald Coulter.







SIGNATURE WORK: **Earth Madonna**. Nisha Coulter owner.

MEXICO, 1971. After six months in Mexico the Cohen's returned to Marin county with 24 rolled canvases.





ATHLETICS, early 1980s.

A gallery said they could sell to the 49ers. Football was featured in several canvases with many powerful drawings. In the army Harry did weight lifting and boxing because, as a Jew, he had to defend himself. Drawings of body builders date to the early 1970s.

SIGNATURE WORK: **Three Graces**, next page.



JAZZ, 1982-83. 200 drawings and canvases. In Boston there were 4 to 5 Jazz clubs that would let kids under 21 sit quietly at a corner table if they bought a drink.

SIGNATURE WORK:
Piano Player in the collection of Mel and Jan Schockner.

"Harry paints for the eye what Jazz is for the ear."

Ronald Coulter

Harry and Marge toured Europe for six months in 1975 and 76. The work of master artists received considerable attention. The collection of sketches from that trip has disappeared.







“If de Kooning had been a happier man he would have painted like Harry Cohen.”

Skip Henderson

SIGNATURE WORK: **Reverie In Abstraction**. This page.

DIAGONALS, 1990s. Wall charts in a doctor's office got Harry's attention. Their geometric shapes, bright colors and distorted figures became fascination. Works in this period moved from human shapes displaying inner and outer realities to exploring then current art's interest with geometry. The **DIAGONALS** became pure abstraction exploring non-figurative forms.





TRANSITIONAL,
2000-08. Harry says this
period lasted 5 to 10 years.

A time of extreme
experimentation with
collage and stencils which
has continued to influence
Harry's work to the present.
He would paste news paper
and other things on canvas
before painting to challenge
composition.

Harry fears and struggles to
avoid what he calls "self-
seduction."

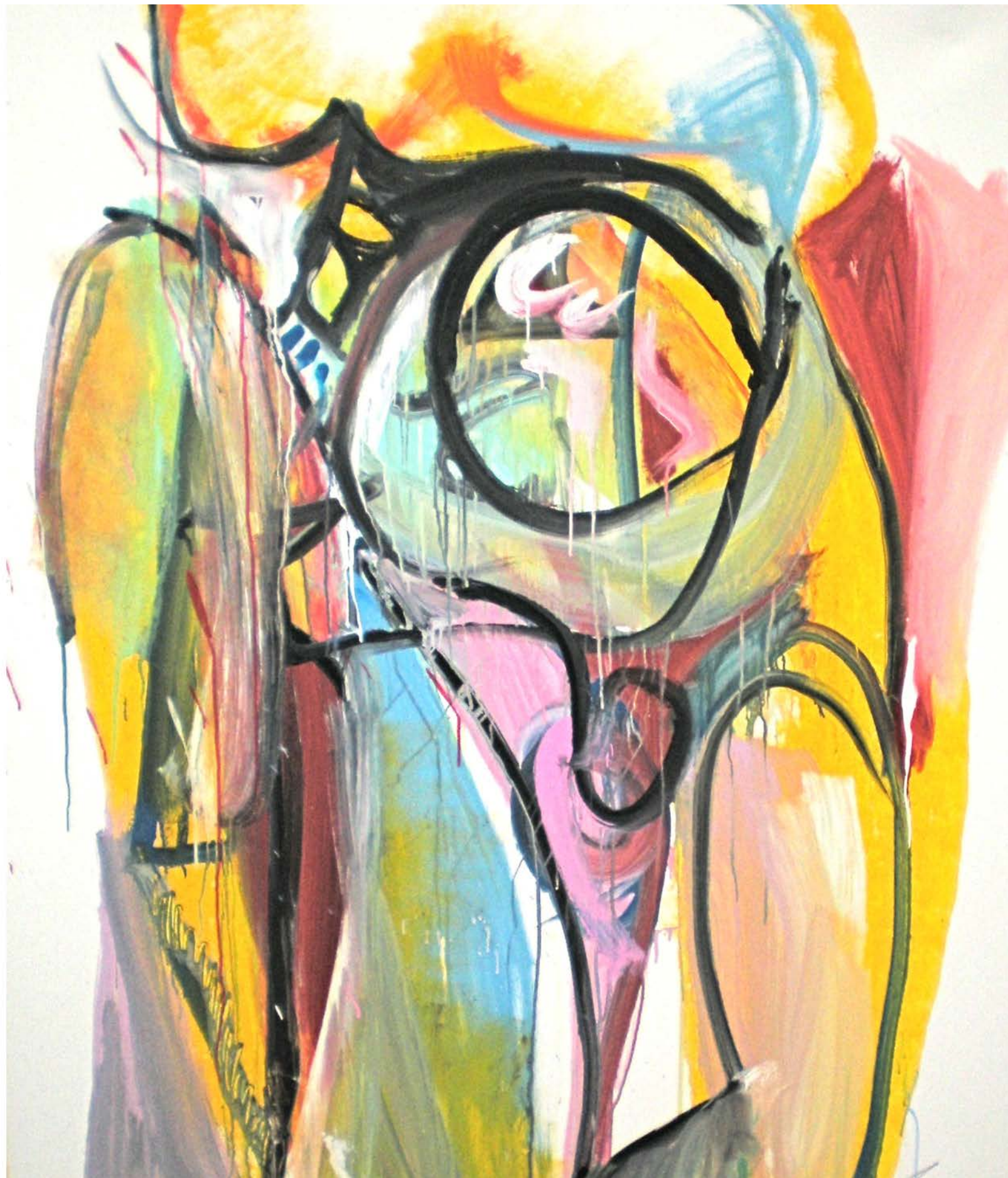
SIGNATURE WORK:
Woman In Window at left.
More new forms on next
page.

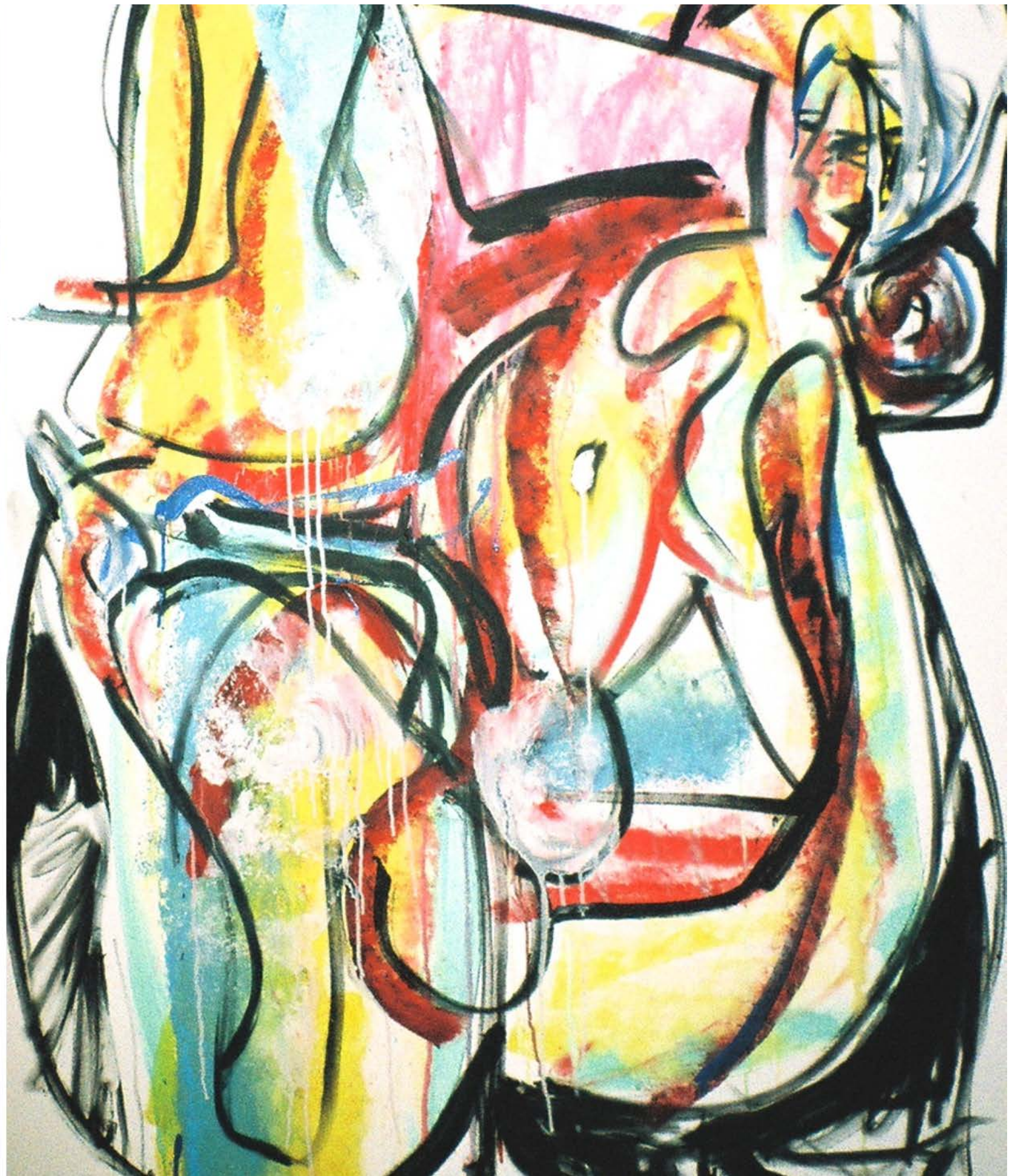




LES FEMMES, 2007. Lyrical works celebrating a woman's curves, flowing without being literal.

SIGNATURE WORK: Softick. At the right. The name is Yiddish and refers to female allure and male longing.







FLOWERS, 2012-13. Ronnie, their daughter, brought a vase with flowers and it sparked hundreds of works. Harry seldom painted only one of anything. In this case we're talking hundreds of interpretations.

SIGNATURE WORK: Soft Vase to the right.







HOSS OPERA, 2013 to present. This is how Harry refers to his current fascination and experimentation with Buttermilk the horse, cowboys and indians. Marge had a Texas historian cousin who rekindled Harry's passion for his childhood cowboy films and heroes.

SIGNATURE WORK: To soon to select.





SIGNATURE WORK: **Marge Cohen's Portrait.**

PORTRAITS of family, friends and other artists continue to emerge with amazing clarity and character. His self-portrait is on the cover. Examples on the next page are artist and long time friend Lenard Breger, ventriloquists Coulter and Star plus Ronnie's cat.







Harry Cohen's accomplishments must include projects that continue through out his career and those that interrupt. **PORTRAITS** were mentioned.

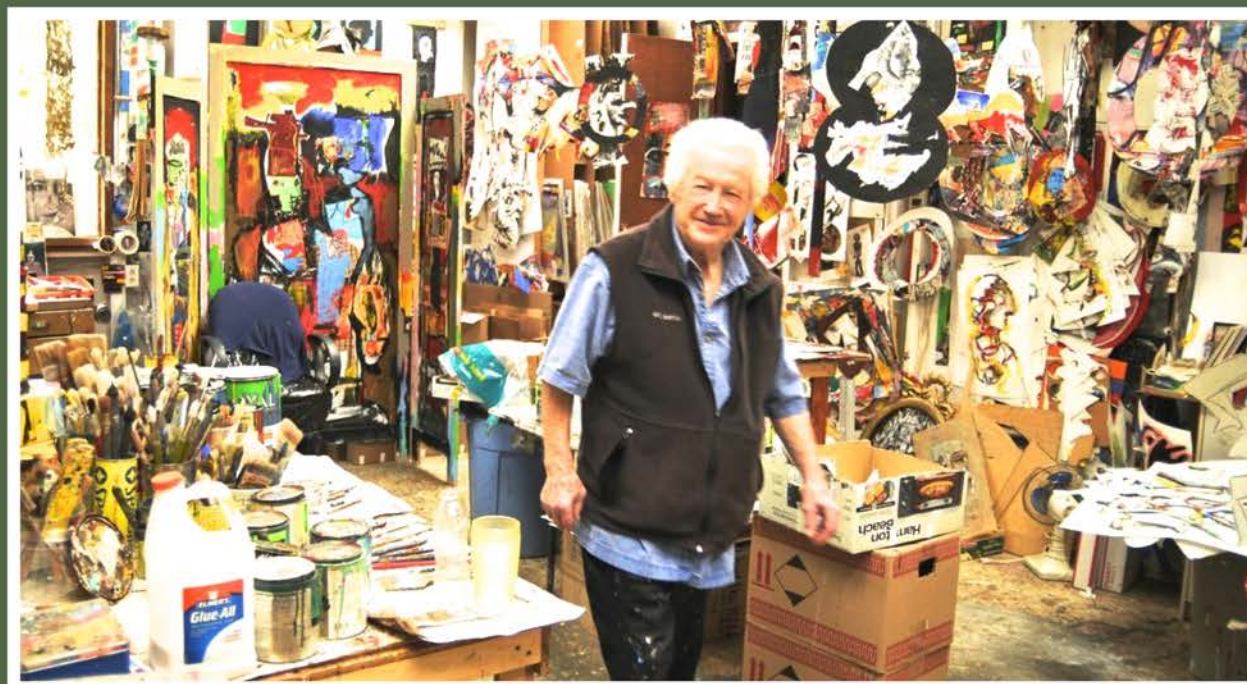
HANGINGS (above) demonstrate his fascination with both sculptural shapes and mobil possibilities. **THEATER** has benefited from three lobby posters for Oakland's Myth and Magic Factory production of **Wayward Saints**. He designed and painted marionettes and set for **The Hour Glass** by William Butler Yeats. Both **BANNERS** and posters have emerged for Harry's own exhibits and various art festivals.

COLLABORATIONS artists join forces on a canvas for exploration and recreation. There are many Cohen/Bregers. An early one is pictured to the right.





This outline and collection is dedicated to Skip Henderson, Harry's agent and friend, and Marge Cohen. Her life ended this year but her influence and advocacy will never pass.



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and/or his representative.
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