

**LYNNE COHEN**

**Opening:** February 18th 2014 at 20.00 h  
**Press Conference:** February 18th 2014 at 12.00 h  
**Dates:** February 19th to May 11th 2014  
**Venue:** FUNDACIÓN MAPFRE.  
Sala AZCA.  
General Perón, 40.  
**Curator:** Nuria Enguita Mayo  
**Production:** Exhibition organized by FUNDACIÓN  
MAPFRE

**Web:** <http://www.exposicionesmapfrearte.com/lynnecohen>  
**Facebook** [www.facebook.com/fundacionmapfreultura](http://www.facebook.com/fundacionmapfreultura)  
**Twitter** <https://twitter.com/mapfreFcultura>

MAPFRE FOUNDATION is proud to present an exhibition of photographs by Lynne Cohen, from February 19th to May 11th. This Canadian photographer has produced one of the most interesting and consistent bodies of work on interior spaces in recent years.

Lynne Cohen (Racine, Wisconsin 1944) began her career in 1971 by taking black and white photos of interior spaces, from the outset the artist aimed for direct, anonymous pictures that were as neutral as possible. Throughout her career, her photos have kept the basic elements



Living Room, Racine Wisconsin, 1971 © Lynne Cohen; courtesy of Stephen Daiter Gallery Chicago

that define her style. They give the impression of being anonymous and neutral, some seem kind of threatening, but at the same time they are ironic and critical. These features were taken to another level when she started to use colour.

In the 1970s Cohen started to focus on the psychological and sociological artifice of the burgeoning American middle class. She took photos of domestic spaces, living rooms, offices, meeting rooms, men's clubs and beauty salons. In the 1980s, Cohen went a step further and took an interest in the mechanisms to control and manipulate society. She started to



Factory, 1994 © Lynne Cohen; courtesy of the artist.

focus on more authoritarian institutions such as laboratories, training centres, classrooms and shooting ranges. In the 1990s Cohen introduced spas, and

from the year 2000, without changing her subject matter, she went on to take colour photos.

Lynne Cohen photographs spaces as they are when she finds them – she does not make any changes and even though these spaces really exist, it feels like we are looking at something that is staged. The large scale of her photos invites viewers to enter the picture, to examine it and to make their own interpretation of it. There are no people in the photos: the artist says she wouldn't know where to place them; but even so, her photos are filled with a persistent human presence.

Cohen works with an 8x10 inch camera, which enables her to have full control of the picture, in order to create a crisp composition and produce very clear and sharp photos. She uses flat lighting, symmetry and distance between objects. She also works with sensitive film, long exposure and a small aperture, giving the photographs



Warehouse, c. 1979 © Lynne Cohen; courtesy of Stephen Daiter Gallery, Chicago

great field depth. Over the years her works have become monumental and sculptural, an effect highlighted by the selection of frames made of various materials and of different colours, which blend in with the textures of some of the elements in the photos.

## THE EXHIBITION

The exhibition presents a wide selection of Lynne Cohen's works amalgamated for the first time in Spain, and through 86 photographs it tells us a story that changes subtly: from her initial interest in American popular culture in the 1970s, with domestic and public interior spaces, to training centres and social

engineering laboratories that the artist photographed in the 1980s and 1990s, leading to the spas, which are the subject of her photos in the late 1990s and early 21st century.

The exhibition narrative shows us how the photographer has used the same formal strategies from the start, based on neutrality. Her photographs are built upon symmetry, with a great depth of field that does not make certain spaces or details more important than others. This anonymity, this apparently neutral description – similar to that of postcards or annual company reports– is precisely what makes her photographs incredibly ironic and critical, which enables them to ‘speak for themselves’.



Laboratory, c. 1999 © Lynne Cohen; courtesy of Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto

The evolution of Lynne Cohen’s work, over the last forty years, is very subtle and is identifiable by looking at the way in which she takes photographs. In such, the viewer will be able to recognize a gradual evolution that goes from black and white to colour, and from a closer framing of objects to a more distant one. In her photos we also find a clear reference to a society based on control and surveillance. Her work becomes an essential testimony towards understanding the current complexity of certain built environments and architecture that are often part of our everyday lives controlling our habits and our relationships.



Untitled (Balloons) 2007 © Lynne Cohen; Courtesy of Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto

Cohen says her work lies somewhere between Jacques Tati and Michel Foucault. The aim of this exhibition is to explore this movement: from an ironic criticism of modernity to a lucid and committed approach to contemporary life based on the full control of people's bodies and their actions.

*'I've paid attention to formal strategies at least since 1971, when I started taking photographs. Back then I thought, as I still do now, that by using formal resources in a simple way I'd be able to deal with complex topics, that they could be introduced into onlookers in a subliminal way, rather than hitting them with a sudden blow. More specifically, it seems like the most silent, sober and even anonymous*



Spa, 2002, Copia cromogénica, 132 x 157 cm,  
© Lynne Cohen, Courtesy of Olga Korper Gallery, Toronto

*aspect of my photos could prove to be the most convincing. In fact, I found it interesting that the simplest of ways to recover or document a part of the world could offer the best chance for the quintessence of the subject to surface (assuming that there is one).'*

## **CATALOGUE**

The catalogue features all the works included in the exhibition, as well as contributions by Nuria Enguita Mayo, the exhibition curator, Jordi Costa and Antonella Pelizzari.

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