

# FRIEDRICHS PONTONE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Joseph Cohen

### *To Be Here*

**October 9 – November 14, 2026**

Opening reception with the artist: Friday, October 9, 6–8 PM

Friedrichs Pontone, 273 Church Street, New York, NY 10013

NEW YORK — Friedrichs Pontone is pleased to present *To Be Here*, a solo exhibition of new paintings by American artist Joseph Cohen, on view from October 9 through November 14, 2026. An opening reception with the artist will be held on Friday, October 9, from 6 to 8 PM.

Cohen's practice begins from a simple but enduring question: how do we live meaningfully in a world shaped by change, contingency, and limits? His answer is the title of the exhibition. Each painting is built from countless gestures, accumulated over time. Each gesture marks a moment when the artist chose to remain present: attentive, engaged, accountable, even as conditions shifted. Presence, in these works, is not a mood but a practice. Every mark stays in the painting, visible or buried, and the finished surface is the record of how long, and how completely, someone stayed.

"These paintings are not proclamations but records of showing up, layer after layer, mark after mark: evidence of a decision to participate in the world rather than merely comment on it," Cohen says. "I am interested in that hinge where restless making yields an experience of stillness, and where stillness, in turn, reveals the effort that produced it."

The resulting surfaces are records of sustained attention, translating restless activity into an experience of stillness. That interplay between accumulation and calm is made literal in the paintings' materials. Drawn from Cohen's ongoing *Proposition* series, the works incorporate separated carbon nanotubes whose specific chiralities fluoresce in the short-wave infrared spectrum. Under certain optical conditions, the paintings emit light beyond the range of human vision. The effect is not a technical flourish but a conceptual analogue to the work's central concerns: the coexistence of what is visible and what is not, of what can be apprehended directly and what must be inferred. Just as accumulated actions shape a life in ways not always immediately legible, felt in the body before they are acknowledged by the mind, the fluorescence allows the paintings to remain present beyond the reach of ordinary sight: here, even when unseen.

These materials are structural, not decorative. Cohen develops and tests them himself, through laboratory processes supported by material science fellowships and long-term research partnerships.

Historically, the work sits within a longer history of practices that use repetition, accumulation, and material sensitivity to rethink perception, from minimal and post-minimal strategies to Light and Space, Mono-ha, and Dansaekhwa. What unites these lineages for Cohen is not style but a conviction that meaning arises through encounter: through the meeting of action and restraint, viewer and work in time.

In a culture defined by acceleration and distraction, *To Be Here* creates conditions in which viewers may slow down and register the quiet accumulation of choices that shape a surface and, by extension, a life. The exhibition foregrounds effort, duration, accountability, and inner life, qualities often eclipsed in contemporary experience. It proposes that complexity, uncertainty, and beauty are not contradictions but fundamental conditions of being alive. The paintings ask of the viewer only what they themselves record: presence. To be here is the work.

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### **About Joseph Cohen**

Joseph Cohen lives and works in Houston, Texas. His practice exists at the intersection of painting, material science, optics, and the limits of human vision, and is grounded in the ongoing *Proposition* series, in which materials such as separated carbon nanotubes, quantum dots, tracer dyes, and doped pigments are developed and adapted by the artist through laboratory processes. His work has been presented in gallery, academic, and scientific research contexts in the United States and internationally.

### **About Friedrichs Pontone**

Established in 2022, Friedrichs Pontone is located at 273 Church Street in New York's Tribeca gallery district, across from Barnett Newman Triangle. The gallery's program reflects a commitment to a diverse range of contemporary art and represents artists from Europe, Korea, and the United States. Led by founders Martin Friedrichs and Domenic Pontone, whose combined experience spans more than four decades, the gallery presents emerging and established artists within an international contemporary context.

### **Press Contact**

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*High-resolution images available upon request.*