

Doug Ohlson: Private Values

November 16, 2024 – January 11, 2025

Louis Stern Fine Arts is pleased to present a series of rarely seen works by Doug Ohlson (1936-2010), created during 1969 and the first half of the 1970s. The paintings, consisting of brilliant orbs of brushed and aerosol paint that hover on richly colored backgrounds, represent a transitional phase in the artist's career. Acting as a vehicle for his developing investigations of chromatic relationships, these process-based works facilitated Ohlson's changing focus to color as his primary subject matter.

The works on view grew organically from the concerns of Ohlson's celebrated late-60s *Panel* paintings, monumental arrays of thin vertical canvases which examined tension, harmony, and their resolution through perfectly refined placement of colored square forms. As he continued to create studies for the series, the squares gradually morphed into loose circles and their geometric arrangements became less rigidly defined. The complex relationships among the colors captured Ohlson's attention as he began to experiment with aerosol, which allowed for purer and denser applications of the paint spots and an alchemical interaction between the fuzzy outer halos and their background hues. As the artist continued to experiment with this modality, his forms began to overlap and abut one another, creating overall cohesive color fields with complex internal movement.

Over the course of a long career embodying numerous artistic phases, Ohlson maintained a commitment to personal, romantic expression in his work. Critic Lucy Lippard declared Ohlson's paintings "stubbornly poetic...retaining relational, private values, what Judd calls 'old' values." This series of works may be arguably some of Ohlson's most intimate. Painted as his marriage to fellow artist Jane Kaufman was coming to a close, they embody a period of great pain, reflection, and personal growth. Mirroring the concepts he was exposed to during his concurrent Jungian psychoanalytic therapy, the paintings are individual, progressive steps in a continuous and lifelong artistic journey of discovery – not ends unto themselves, but isolated moments within a constant process of evolution and reinvention.

Works by Doug Ohlson have been exhibited widely throughout the United States and internationally, and are included the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art, NY; the Metropolitan Museum of Art, NY; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; Dallas Museum of Art; and the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C., amongst others. A long-time faculty member at Hunter College, Ohlson was the recipient of numerous awards including a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation fellowship and a National Endowment for the Arts grant.

Louis Stern Fine Arts is the representative of the Estate of Doug Ohlson.