

# NICELLE BEAUCHENE GALLERY

**Alex Bradley Cohen**

*Public Works*

December 16, 2023–February 10, 2024

Nicelle Beauchene Gallery is pleased to present *Public Works*, a project-space exhibition with Chicago-based artist Alex Bradley Cohen. This is his fourth show with the gallery.

In *Public Works*, Alex Bradley Cohen roots his compositions in collectively held experiences of care and community. Working from a long-held practice of utilizing figuration to explore the complexities of identity, Cohen's five latest acrylic paintings decentralize the picture plane by shifting focus from the individual to the social while using the city as a framing device. While examining the built environments and social life of his Chicago neighborhood—roads, buildings, vehicles and those who populate them—Cohen constructs scenes that mine the infrastructures of daily movement.

Taxis, buses, trains, cars, planes, and mail carriers—means of both private and public transportation—call our attention to journeys between physical and metaphoric spaces. In *Public/Private*, Cohen juxtaposes the privileged privacy of the taxi against the social contact experienced on a public bus. In *Social Construct #4*, Cohen renders the iconic imagery of the US Postal Service within the landscape of the city, depicting the institution and physical activity involved in communication.

Looking to working-class social histories and the artist's own upbringing (such as in *The Stadium*), Cohen collages disparate scenes within one painting to piece together the complex realities of the present. Through subtle segmentations of the composition—distinguished by a bent sign post or a playfully curved roadway—Cohen connects fragmented realities with a surreal sensibility into a cohesive narrative landscape. In *Public Works*, the artist's subjects populate the built environment to connect human experience and labor with sites of care and solidarity. It is a shift that builds unified portraits of places, representing our interdependency rather than foregrounding our individuality. Here Cohen thinks through the ways that everyday people build political and social solidarity amongst their social, cultural, and economic differences.

**Alex Bradley Cohen** (b. 1989) lives and works in Chicago, IL. Recent exhibitions include *Scenes from the Collection*, The Jewish Museum, New York; *Love & Anarchy*, Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University, Durham, NC; *Friends & Lovers*, FLAG Art Foundation, New York; *See/Think/Shape*, Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York; *State of the Art 2020*, Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, AK; and *Triple: Alex Bradley Cohen, Louis Fratino, and Tschabalala Self*, University Art Museum at the University of Albany, NY. Other exhibitions include SULK, Chicago, IL; The Luggage Store, San Francisco, CA; Mana Contemporary, Chicago, IL; Carrie Secrist Gallery, Chicago, IL; The Studio Museum of Harlem, New York, NY; The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL; Elmhurst Art Museum, Elmhurst, IL; Socrates Sculpture Park, Long Island City, NY; and The Craft and Folk Art Museum, Los Angeles, CA, among others. He received his MFA from Northwestern University in 2020 and is an alumnus of the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture.

Cohen's work can be found in the public collections of the Jewish Museum, New York; Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville, Arkansas; and the Nasher Museum of Art at Duke University.