

CORKIN GALLERY

Leopold Plotek

In the Eighties

October 4 – January 30, 2025

Leopold Plotek, *In the Eighties*, features monumental canvases, expressive of the artist's intellectual engagement with architecture, art history, and philosophy. A modern Renaissance man, Plotek bridges the geometric and lyrical traditions while embracing deeply referential content.

The paintings in this exhibition, nearly a half-century old, retain a vitality, charm, and wit which keep them endlessly vigorous. Plotek, whose career bridges the abstraction hard-won by his mentors, Montréal artists Yves Gaucher and Roy Kiyooka, and the mannerisms that were a reaction against it, chose no part of either. He has remained an éminence grise on the Quebec scene: acknowledged for the seriousness of his achievement and standing apart from trends and movements.

This body of work represents Plotek's declaration of independence. While it owes a debt to their masters, it is a debt paid with humour. These paintings could only have been made after Plotek's deep engagement with Italian architecture—with its fusion of hand-crafted masonry and classical form—but they also reflect a lifelong devotion to music and literature, evident in their earliest gestures.

The 1980s marked a period of confidence and optimism for Plotek, which is felt in the balance of rigour and ease within these works. This followed an earlier phase of searching in the late 1960s, during his time at the Slade School and his immersion in London's rich collections. Back in Montréal, he turned his eyes increasingly to New York and the refined painting of Barnett Newman. It was at this moment that Plotek discovered the work of Larry Poons. The link to Newman was a direct lineage, since Roy Kiyooka had spent a summer with him at Emma Lake.

Corkin Gallery is delighted to present paintings alive with the spirit of modernism as it was felt by one of our best painters. The paintings on view breathe an air of confidence.