

# VAN DOREN WAXTER

## LOUISE FISHMAN

*always stand ajar*

April 10 – June 27, 2025



*Loose the Flood*, 2009, oil on jute, 66 x 39 in (167.6 x 99.1 cm) (LF 48)

Van Doren Waxter is delighted to announce *LOUISE FISHMAN: always stand ajar*, an exhibition of paintings and works on paper by the venerable American painter organized with the Louise Fishman Foundation. This is the gallery's first exhibition of the artist since the announcement of representation in 2024. Accompanied by a fully illustrated catalog that includes an essay by poet Nathan Kernan, this exhibition highlights Fishman's works titled after Emily Dickinson and Wallace Stevens' poems and the artist's long-standing curiosity about the synthesis of paintings and written language.

Over six decades, Louise Fishman dedicated her career to the pursuit of original, complex, and sincere imagery. As painter Amy Sillman wrote, Fishman was "a serious-ass painter" who held herself to the highest standard of experiment and self-reflection in her studio, tackling each painting with the fullest intention to connect with the surface, the paint, and the movement of her body. Alongside her rigorous and disciplined studio practice, Fishman nurtured friendships with writers and activists such as Bertha Harris, Jill Johnston, and Esther Newton, who created pioneering works in lesbian and queer studies which informed the multifariousness of Fishman's identity as an artist. While Fishman resonated with the gestural and geometric language of abstract painting, she persistently challenged the boundaries of Abstract Expressionism and averted the disposition towards the removal of personhood in the movement. She maintained consciousness of her state of being, in her own words, "a working-class Jewish Lesbian" and of the impossibility of separating the paintings from her greater experience as a human. Fishman's energetic yet precisely organized brushstrokes are an advertent extension of her athleticism, caring hands, and earnest inquiry into the mystery of what makes a painting.

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The exhibition showcases Fishman's refined and magisterial works from the final twenty years of her life, which she titled after phrases from poems by American poets Emily Dickinson and Wallace Stevens. She was first introduced to poetry by her paternal aunt, Razel Kapustin, who was also a painter. During her time at Tyler School of Fine Arts, Fishman learned from poet Gerald Stern, with whom she became lifelong friends. She took inspiration from the works of poets, as Grace Hartigan did with Frank O'Hara and Jane Freilicher with John Ashbery. Intuitively and profoundly, Fishman understood the pictorial roots of language and the parallel between text and brushstroke, the legible and illegible.

## **About the artist**

Louise Fishman was born in 1939 in Philadelphia. In 1956, she began studying art at the Philadelphia Museum School of Art, then at Stella Elkins Tyler School of Art, where she earned her BFA in Painting and Printmaking and a B.S. in Art Education in 1963. She completed her MFA in Painting and Printmaking at the University of Illinois in Champaign/Urbana and headed directly to New York in 1965, where she lived and worked until her passing in 2021.

Her work is represented in many public collections, including: the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL; the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburg, PA; the High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia; and the Jewish Museum, New York, among many others.

## **Gallery Information**

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