

Nucleo Storico
Italiani ovunque
Italians
Everywhere

Linda Kohen fled from fascism as an adolescent in 1939, and the Italian-born Jewish artist began her six-decade-long career in Montevideo, Uruguay. Supported by her family, Kohen first embraced painting as her vocation in the studios of Pierre Fossey and Horacio Butler, both active in interwar Paris, then as one of the few female members of Taller Torres-García. In 1973, with the advent of military dictatorship in Uruguay, Kohen abandoned early career cityscapes and Constructivism. She turned to almost monochromatic, intimate studies in what Augusto Torres, son of Joaquín Torres García and among Kohen's mentors, termed her "white period". Expressing what Kohen called a need to "fix my whole world, which I felt was going to disappear", the artist continued to paint quotidian objects and spaces in a uniquely reserved, confessional style during years spent in Brazil - the second political exile of her life - and after returning permanently to Uruguay in 1985.

In *El Sillón* (1999), one in a series of studies, Kohen constructs a plain white armchair from curving volumes, foreshortened but unambiguous. The subdued palette of whites and ochres and the sketchy translucency of diluted paint pare the subject down to its essentials. Painted from memory, Kohen's minimalist approach to representation communicates the ordinariness of the everyday and the intimacy of private life. Kohen's idiosyncratic style, born out of an anxiety to record and remember, was developed after decades of forced displacement and loss. Empty chairs, beds, and dining tables in uninhabited interior recur in Kohen's work like portraits of absent sitters. Stark and silent, *El Sillón* was painted only months after the death of Kohen's mother in 1998. With a deceptively simple composition, Kohen paints absence, observing the transformation of familiar domestic settings by memory into spaces charged with solitude and longing.

This is the first time the work of Linda Kohen is presented at Biennale Arte.

Lucía Neirotti

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—Lucia Neirotti

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