Nicole Cohen (b. 1970) was born in Falmouth, Massachusetts, (Cape Cod) and grew up in the Dupont Circle area in Washington, D.C. She had a commissioned solo exhibition at The J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles, California from 2007-09. She has exhibited at the Williams College Museum of Art (Williamstown, MA), the Fabric Workshop and Museum (Philadelphia, PA), and at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. She has also shown internationally in Berlin, Germany; Bergen, Norway; Denmark, Paris, France; Harajuku, Osaka, Kobe, and Tokyo, Japan; and Shanghai, China. “Driving in Circles”, 2011, is her third museum exhibition in the U.S. Nicole currently lives in New York City and in Berlin, Germany.

“... the world will fall topsy-turvy from its orbit, the magic chair will carry him at full speed through time and space, and when he opens his eyes again, he will imagine that he went to sleep months earlier and in some far distant country.”

Marcel Proust’s À la recherche du temps perdu (Remembrance of Things Past)
DRIVING IN CIRCLES PRESENTS NEW WORK BY NICOLE COHEN COMPRISING VIDEO PROJECTION, DRAWINGS, SCULPTURE, AND PHOTOGRAPHY.

THE EXHIBITION Focuses on EIGHT CIRCLES OR TRAFFIC ROUNDABOUTS IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

**CURATORIAL STATEMENT**

_**Driving in Circles**_ presents new work by Nicole Cohen comprised of video projection, drawings, sculpture, and photography. The exhibition focuses on eight circles or traffic roundabouts in Washington, D.C.

_**Driving in Circles**_ was influenced by French novelist Marcel Proust’s (1871-1922) _À la recherche du temps perdu_ (Remembrance of Things Past), an autobiographical novel described by Cohen as the way Proust’s “memory of the past and history relate as concepts to each other.” The play of memory and time is evidenced in Cohen’s work as a remixing of historical landscapes embedded with personal memories through technology.

Cohen, a native of Washington, D.C., recalls her experience as a time “when I learned to drive and not being able to leave the actual circle. It was then I realized these circles were actually parks or islands in the city. Now they seem to be axels of the machine of the city, which city planner L’Enfant designed with ongoing controversy and which eventually caused him to be fired for his great ambition and inability to compromise his vision.”

The city’s history and personal memory are two opposing forces that challenge the notion of the past and invite attention to Cohen’s layered imagery and infused hypnotic and tonal elements, all to amass a sound and movement that is completely volumetric and disorienting, lending to the creation of a new physical space in time.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

With _Driving in Circles_, as in many of my past projects, historical and contemporary technologies collide, overlay and merge so the viewer might feel displaced by the synthesis of two different time periods actively revealing themselves simultaneously. In this project, I use historical images of the land and the monuments in D.C. to create video mandalas or roundabouts that spin, causing us to look at them as abstract shapes and forms. Projections overlap video footage and stills from Google Earth with graphic designs of images to form one large-scale installation.

In this new body of work, I focus exclusively on the circles and roundabouts of Washington, D.C. Growing up in Dupont Circle, I had no idea about its history or who the memorial in its center represented. It just seemed like a nice park that was hard to get to. Now after many years, when I walk around the circle, I feel as though I am entering into a portrait of a virtue chosen by the original commissioners of the monument. Because each circle in D.C. features a different distinct historical figure, the virtue or concept of the circle is represented by what these figures once stood for. With the monument placed in the center, the statue acts as the subject of the portrait and the circle around it, as a matte, and the very exterior appears to me, as a frame. One drawing in the exhibition shows how all of the circles connect as a kind of motor in the urban landscape. It reveals how the axels of the city turn and spin to create the flow of traffic and the rhythm of the city at large. Next to this, the video projections move in a dynamic circular motion, as records spinning, gambling coronets, electric saws, rings of fire, and moving organic forms.

Nicole Cohen, Artist

Nicole Cohen's work is positioned at the intersection of contemporary reality, personal fantasy, and culturally constructed space. She consistently explores her interest in engaging the audience and challenging notions of lifestyle, domesticity, celebrity, and social behavior. Although trained in painting and drawing, Cohen most frequently uses video as her medium, playing upon its intrinsic capacities to manipulate time, distort scale and environment, and overlay imagery.

Curator Peggy Fogelman