

Esther Cohen's work explores the relationship between nature and man by means of rituals, narratives and cultural heritage. Her paintings portray a deep rooted contemporary debate on cultural legacy and tradition. Her work, via the act of mapping in a detailed and refined drawing with a simple ballpoint pen on paper, deals with defining physical and symbolic boundaries while investigating the disciplining domestication of the wild.

While documenting the process of growth and withering, she corresponds with the old masters paintings and botanist drawings, as it once was a part of colonialist processes, and currently viewing it in a criticizing and contemporary point of view.

In her latest "**Atlas for student**" series Cohen brings together old Atlas papers in Hebrew, English and Arabic versions, sharing various floral motifs, sacred and cursed plants in Islam Judaism and Christianity, talismans made of natural motifs, medicinal plants and other religious and folkloristic man-made rituals. Esther Cohen's drawing enables to trace and contemplate the territorial entanglements of the land of Israel /Palestine, and the ways in which the borders have rapidly changed over the years. By painting and drawing on maps, she erases and overrides the map's original function, transforming it from a structured consensus of symbols, to a personal narrative. Even more, the creation process in itself is an act of erasure. By painting on the map, lines and places on the map are "lost" forever.

The flower is the embodiment of temptation and beauty as well as of pain and death. Transience, as a motif, manifests itself in the choice of flowers, and the decision to draw them on old geographical maps of Israel/Palestine. Looking at these maps provides a window into the past, to places and borders that no longer exist, to the wide-open fields which have over time become urban or industrialized zones, and to the altered names and functions of sites. The works it seems, do more than merely confront us with our mortality; they emphasize the evolving process of perception and points of view. The linear manner in which the flowers are rendered is patterned after the way flowers grow naturally, contrary to topographical lines and charted boundaries on maps. The way the drawing trespasses over the mapped borders, representing loss of control, creates an explicit and a subliminal conflict between order and chaos by drawing within lines and outside the lines. The act of painting redefines the map, creating a new code to decipher, one that traces the fields of blossoming wildflowers stubbornly surviving, season after season, demanding their ability to reappear. The drawing distorts the map's scale, as the flowers are life-size, and therefore suggests a new method of representing reality, allegorical of Jorge Luis Borges's map; the flowers cover the map, creating an absurd dynamic between the signified and the signifier.