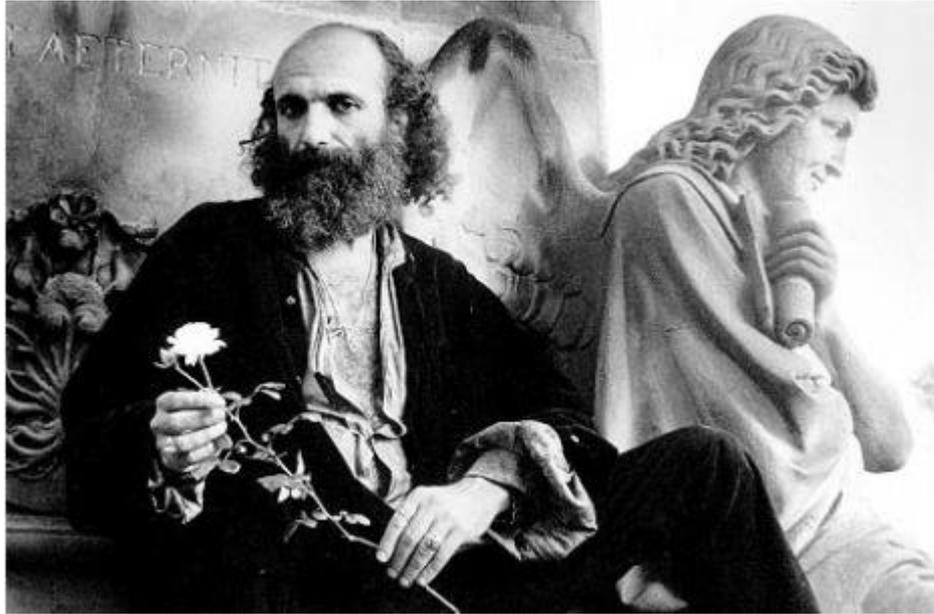


Shaman of the Lower East Side: Ira Cohen R.I.P. | Posted by Marc Campbell



Poet, musician, film maker, photographer, publisher, world traveler, spiritual seeker and cosmic New Yorker, Ira Cohen has died at the age of 76

Author of dozens of books of poetry and “The Hashish Cookbook” (under the pseudonym of Panama Rose), Cohen also published the works of his friends William Burroughs, Gregory Corso, Paul Bowles, Brion Gysin, Jack Smith Harold Norse and many others.

Cohen made many pilgrimages to India and Kathmandu (where he ended up living for several years) and chronicled his journeys in extraordinary photographs. His travels took him to Morocco, Tunisia, Afghanistan, Spain, Japan...but all roads eventually lead back to New York City’s Lower East Side.

As a film maker, Cohen developed a style distinctly his own by photographing images reflected in Mylar plastic. *The Invasion Of Thunderbolt Pagoda* and *Brain Damage* were directed by Cohen in the late 1960s using this mirror effect. *The Invasion Of Thunderbolt Pagoda* was released in 2006 on [DVD](#) by the folks at the late lamented Arthur Magazine. Cohen conjured some of the same cinematic spirits as his peers Jack Smith and Kenneth Anger.



Jimi Hendrix photographed by Ira Cohen

In certain artistic and literary circles, Mr. Cohen was a touchstone. "Ira was a major figure in the international underground and avant-garde," Michael Rothenberg, the editor of Big Bridge magazine, an Internet publication, said in an interview. "In order to understand American art and poetry post-World War II, you have to understand Ira Cohen."

If you spent any time in downtown New York's art scene during the past five decades you would have undoubtedly crossed paths with the open-hearted and wise gentleman who described himself as a "multi-media shaman." Ira Cohen stayed relevant throughout his life, never square and never predictable. He was magic. His sphere of influence only grew larger as he grew older. His International reputation as a world class artist and wizard continued to flourish right up to his death on April 26.



<https://vimeo.com/5071537>

Scenes from Ira Cohen's film *Brain Damage* with a score by by Pete Fowler, Mike Blackwell and Alex Oriet. The film was shot in Cohen's Lower East Side loft in the late 1960s.



<https://vimeo.com/7041212>

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