David Nolan Gallery is pleased to present The Eighties, a survey of drawings by an international group of artists who received particular attention during this decade in New York. On view from February 28 through April 13, the exhibition follows Drawing Space: 1970-1983, which the gallery presented in 2018, and focused primarily on art from the previous decade. Like Drawing Space, the exhibition does not purport to offer a conclusive overview of a given period, but rather brings together key figures – many of whom have been foundational in the gallery’s history – who are known for their contributions within the medium of drawing.
In the early 1980s, New York City retained its grittiness in many neighborhoods, including below 42nd Street. At the same time, business began expanding and money began to flow more freely. Art making during this period became more expressive and immediate. This influenced a generation of younger artists and the contemporary art scene flourished with an unprecedented number of galleries presenting art from around the globe. The increasing visibility of German artists, such as Georg Baselitz, Sigmar Polke, and A. R. Penck preceded an “Italian wave” led by Francesco Clemente and Enzo Cucchi, whose work started being shown with greater regularity in New York. In this context, a group of American artists that included Carroll Dunham, Mel Kendrick, Terry Winters, and Elizabeth Murray, formed a counter movement (termed "New Biomorphism") which focused on non-verbal references to nature.

The 1980s was a time of political and social upheaval – the era of Ronald Reagan, feminism, and the deadly advent of AIDS. In differing ways, the artists knowingly or unknowingly responded this climate, producing radical work that challenged much that had come before it. The gallery would like to thank the artists’ studios and their galleries for enabling their participation in this exhibition.