

Albert Oehlen

12 June – 8 August 2026
Bleibtreustraße 45, 10623 Berlin

Opening: Friday, 12 June, 6 – 8pm



Albert Oehlen, *Untitled*, 2025, photo: def image

Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin, is pleased to announce a solo exhibition of works on paper and paintings on acrylic glass by **Albert Oehlen**.

Spanning more than a decade, the exhibition presents works from Oehlen's 'Computerbilder' (Computer Paintings) and 'Conduction' series. Combining rhythmic lines with varied motifs, the exhibited works convey an intricate network of black contours against crisp white grounds. Oehlen's fluid, looping forms trace pathways which lead the viewer's eye across the compositions in a lyrical dance. In the 'Computerbilder', first created between 1991–2008 and revisited by the artist from 2024 onwards, Oehlen foregrounds computer-generated imagery, merging printing, painting and collage in a symbiosis of digital and analogue, human and machine. By contrast the 'Conduction' works, initiated in 2009, are executed entirely by hand. Rendered with pencil, ink and collage on paper, the present works are distinguished for their conflation of geometric patterns, meandering lines and organic forms. The series is further extended with a new body of work from 2025, composed in oil and lacquer on acrylic glass.

Echoing the pixelated patterns found in digital imagery, the curving black lines in Oehlen's monochromatic works simultaneously recall Surrealist automatism, as well as the emotive energy of Abstract Expressionist painters, from Jackson Pollock to Franz Kline. In several of the works on paper, certain passages are covered with collaged paper or smears of white paint, creating a pentimento effect. Brimming with free-flowing forms, letters and movement, the works read like cyphers, graphs or musical scores. Enacting a push-and-pull, these systems seem to indicate paths to reading the works, no sooner followed than they are interrupted. Layering and unfurling over one another, the lines convey a sporadic musicality akin to the syncopated rhythms of jazz – a longstanding influence on Oehlen's practice. On this, the late art critic Pierre Sterckx noted: 'Oehlen tries to do with painting what others (Coltrane, Zappa) have attempted in jazz or rock: to immerse the listener in a burst of overlapping, saturated and expansive strata, getting rid of any story-line since there is no beginning nor end.'¹

¹ P. Sterckx, 'Albert Oehlen: Junk Screens', in *Albert Oehlen*, exh. cat., Clermond-Ferrand: Frac Auvergne, 2005.

² J. Corbett, *Painthing On The Möve*, exh. cat., London and Chicago: Thomas Dane Gallery and Corbett vs. Dempsey, 2011.

Underscoring the parallels between musical composition and artistic composition in Oehlen's work, the 'Conduction' series was named after a pioneering type of structured improvisation developed by American musician and composer, Lawrence 'Butch' Morris (1947–2013). This method involves a mix of systems and structures, intuition and improvisation, whereby the composer and the instrumentalist initiate a real-time alteration of harmonies and melodies, referred to as 'controlled freedom'. Across his own practice, Oehlen similarly adheres to a set of self-imposed conceptual or formal parameters, whilst simultaneously embracing elements of indeterminacy and chance as key components of his creative process. As writer and curator John Corbett has stated: 'It's not chaos. It's order without dominion'.² In the exhibited works, sprawling forms snake across the surfaces of the compositions. Like a visual stream of consciousness, they bloom at times into hazy anamorphic shapes or recede into thin lines and pointillist dots. Some end abruptly; others extend to the very edges of their parameters. Whereas the works on paper seem to absorb the light around them, the glass surfaces of the large-scale paintings warp and reflect the surrounding environment, imbuing them with an additional layer of dynamic movement.

In the exhibited works, Oehlen offers a striking representation of the contradictions at the heart of his practice, combining constraint and intuition, order and improvisation, structure and formlessness. The artist's approach to image-making is at once pragmatic and questioning, finding original expression and endless possibility in the tension and release which extends across his freely structured improvisations.

Albert Oehlen (b. 1954, Krefeld) lives and works in Switzerland. He has been exhibiting regularly at Galerie Max Hetzler since 1981. Oehlen's work has been the subject of numerous exhibitions in international institutions, most recently including Hamburger Kunsthalle (2024–2025); Espace Louis Vuitton, Beijing (2024); Friedrichs Foundation, Weidingen (2023); Sprengel Museum Hannover (duo show with Carroll Dunham, 2020); Serpentine Gallery, London (2019–2020); Aïshti Foundation, Beirut (2018–2019); Palazzo Grassi, Venice (2018–2019); Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana (2017); The Cleveland Museum of Art; Guggenheim, Bilbao (both 2016); New Museum, New York (2015); Kunsthalle Zürich (2015); Museum Wiesbaden (2014); mumok, Vienna (2013); and Kunstmuseum Bonn (2012). Oehlen's work is in the collections of The Broad, Los Angeles; Centre Pompidou, Paris; The Cleveland Museum of Art; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Valencia; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; Mudam, Luxembourg; Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain Strasbourg; Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris; Museum Brandhorst, Munich; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main; Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden; and Tate, London, among others.

Further Exhibitions and Events

BERLIN

Konrad Klapheck
12 June – 8 August 2026
Potsdamer Straße 77–87
10785 Berlin

PARIS

Eddie Martinez
Purple Flopper
28 May – 1 August 2026
46 & 57, rue du Temple
75004 Paris

LONDON

Ida Ekblad
EAT AN EGGPLANT
3 June – 8 August 2026
41 Dover Street
London W1S 4NS

MARFA

Rinus Van de Velde
The Dinner
24 May – 6 December 2026
1976 Antelope Hills Road
Marfa, Texas

Press Contact

Galerie Max Hetzler

Honor Westmacott
honor@maxhetzler.com
+49 30 346 497 85-0

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