

GAGOSIAN



ALBERT OEHLER

New Paintings

Opening reception: Thursday, September 12, 6–8pm
September 12–November 9, 2019
7/F Pedder Building, 12 Pedder Street, Central, Hong Kong

Albert Oehlen, *Untitled*, 2019, watercolor on canvas, 84 1/4 × 72 1/4 inches (214 × 185.5 cm) © Albert Oehlen. Photo: Jeff McLane

August 5, 2019

These paintings are made in such a way that they accept order only very reluctantly. Eventually there is some form of order, but they strive against it.

—Albert Oehlen

Gagosian is pleased to present a series of new paintings in watercolor on canvas by Albert Oehlen, his first exhibition in Asia.

Oehlen approaches painting as a perceptual challenge, a puzzle set within the unpredictable arena of the picture plane. He often imposes specific rules or limitations on his work—keeping to a certain palette or beginning with a straight line—as a way to interrogate the infinite possibilities that the act of painting presents. By continuously flipping between chaos and control, he opens up new relationships between pictorial space, color, and gesture.

In these new paintings, Oehlen emphasizes the importance of spontaneity within his artistic method. Diverging from his recent works created with oil or lacquer on aluminum or the aluminum

composite Dibond, Oehlen's decision to use watercolor in this series marks a stylistic return to his hazy, blended, almost impressionistic oil paintings dating from 2016 and earlier.

Oehlen begins with a chalky white ground, across which he flicks and stains splashes of fluid color. Hues dart between canvases: the same intense shade of magenta—a color he previously referred to as “hysterical” in the context of his *Tree Paintings* (2013–16)—meanders snakelike from painting to painting, puncturing through the murky veil of watercolors in a vivid streak before resurfacing elsewhere as a series of dots peppered down the canvas. Oehlen revels in the dynamism of his lines, allowing them to come to life and dictate each twist of his ever-shifting compositions.

Nevertheless, Oehlen's frenzied brushstrokes are tempered by moments of painterly control. Interspersed between splotches and swipes of color are lines, curves, and gradients, all delineated with satisfying uniformity. While his paintings initially appear to lack geometric regularity, they are in fact filled with clean-cut right angles—including a recurring L-shaped motif, which recalls the artist's yellow-and-black paintings from his 2018 exhibition *SEXE, RELIGION, POLITIQUE*. These forceful right angles—along with rectangular window-like apertures and eerie humanoid forms—are enshrouded deep within the canvas, their watery facture only adding to their frustrating, tantalizing ephemerality. Swallowed up by the slashes of pigment surrounding them, these loose strands of figuration ultimately dissipate within a churning whirlwind of colors.

The exhibition will be accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue with a text by art historian Christian Malycha.

Albert Oehlen was born in Krefeld, Germany, and currently lives and works in Gais, Switzerland. Collections include the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Cleveland Museum of Art; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art North Miami, FL; Broad, Los Angeles; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, Germany; Centro de Arte Contemporáneo de Málaga, Spain; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Tate, London; Istanbul Modern; and Museo Jumex, Mexico City. Recent institutional exhibitions include Museo di Capodimonte, Naples, Italy (2009); *Réalité Abstraite*, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris (2009); *Terpentin*, Kunstmuseum Bonn, Germany (2012); *Malerei*, Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig Wien, Vienna (2013); 55th Biennale di Venezia (2013); *Die 5000 Finger von Dr. Ö*, Museum Wiesbaden, Germany (2014); *Home and Garden*, New Museum, New York (2015); *An Old Painting in Spirit*, Kunsthalle Zürich (2015); *Behind the Image*, Guggenheim Bilbao, Spain (2017); *Woods near Oehle*, Cleveland Museum of Art (2017); *TRANCE*, Aïshti Foundation, Beirut (2018); *Cows by the Water*, Palazzo Grassi, Venice (2018–19); and *Unfertig*, Lokremise Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, Switzerland (2019).

An exhibition of Oehlen's work curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist will open at the Serpentine Galleries in London on October 2, 2019.

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