

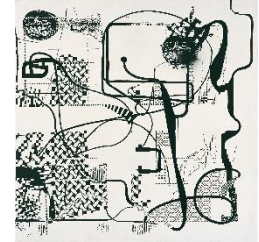
Press release / 12 September 2024

ALBERT OEHLEN Computer Paintings

13 September 2024 to 2 March 2025

The Hamburger Kunsthalle is presenting its first solo exhibition devoted to the painter Albert Oehlen (b. 1954), featuring 20 large-format images, the »Computer Paintings«. Oehlen painted the first of these images in the early 1990s, and a second series in the early 2000s. They were based on drawings he made with a computer notebook purchased in 1990 which he then transferred to canvas. The technological aesthetic of the computer screen would become a momentous point of departure for a complex of works combining the austere tonality of a fabric of black-and-white lines and digits on a white ground with fantastic formal exuberance. Born out of the meagre technical possibilities offered by the early drawing program, the limitations Oehlen imposed on his own creativity resulted in a group of works that was misunderstood for a long time. Today, 30 years after Oehlen began his artistic exploration of the new medium of the computer, creating art with the aid of graphics software is a widespread method. And yet, Albert Oehlen is not and has never been a digital artist, but rather a painter. In order to make the computer paintings a productive part of his practice, he first printed them out and transferred them to canvas, finishing what he had begun with painterly means. The images combine acrylic and oil painting with screenprinting techniques, gaining their unique character from an oscillation between experimental freedom and strict regularity. Oehlen's computer paintings are not only thrillingly contemporary in an aesthetic sense but also allow us to draw a number of conclusions with regard to today's debate on artificial intelligence. Here, the computer is still merely an aid, unable to either act as author or achieve results independent of the humans operating it and making creative use of its possibilities. In the face of a growing debate about the value and possibilities of artificial intelligence, the realisation that humans must be at the beginning and end of work with computers is an essential insight.

Albert Oehlen studied under Sigmar Polke at the Hochschule für bildende Künste in Hamburg from 1978 to 1981. He had his first exhibition at Hilka Nordhausen's »Buch Handlung Welt« at Marktstrasse 12. In 1983, the Hamburger Kunsthalle acquired Oehlen's painting *Gerippe*, and in 1984 a series of drypoint etchings by the artist. Reason enough for the Hamburger Kunsthalle to present the artist's outstanding work in a solo exhibition. *Computer Paintings* was organised in close collaboration with the artist and was conceived for the second floor of the Galerie der Gegenwart. The strict geometry of architect Oswald Mathias Ungers's light-flooded galleries offers an ideal setting for a form of painting that hints at analogies to musical composition techniques as well as questions about the cross-fertilisation between technology and artistic expression.



Albert Oehlen (*1954)
Untitled, 1992
Screenprint, acrylic and oil on canvas, 200 x 200 cm
Private collection
© Albert Oehlen / VG-Bildkunst, Bonn 2024
Photo: Lothar Schnepf

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A publication with comprehensive views of the galleries and texts by Ifee Tack and Alexander Klar will be published in October 2024 to accompany the exhibition.

Albert Oehlen (born in Krefeld) lives and works in Gais in the canton of Appenzell Ausserrhoden, Switzerland. His first solo exhibition, »Bevor ihr malt, mach ich das lieber« (Before you paint, I'd better do it myself) at Galerie Max Hetzler in 1981, launched his career as one of the most prolific painters of the present day. From 2000 to 2009, Oehlen was a professor at the Düsseldorf Art Academy. In 2015 he received an honorary doctorate from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. Oehlen's art is regularly featured in solo exhibitions at museums and galleries worldwide.

Curator: Prof. Dr. Alexander Klar

Assistant Curator: Ifee Tack

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