

Jahn und Jahn  
Rua de São Bernardo 15  
1200-823 Lisboa

Jahn und Jahn  
Baaderstraße 56 B und C  
80469 München

Albert Oehlen  
desenhos  
25.5.– 5.7.2025

Opening: Saturday, May 24, 4–8pm

My work has a lot to do with improvisation, and as I have to pay attention to many requirements and the work process is many-layered, I need, if possible, all parameters at my disposal. I don't have these as a list in my head, I don't have boxes to tick. You can only have them at your disposal if you kept them warm earlier, or at least have hung on to them. In the best case, they're fresh in your mind, then of course you understand them best. <sup>1</sup>

Jahn und Jahn is pleased to present "desenhos", the first solo exhibition of Albert Oehlen's works in Portugal, the leading figure in postmodern painting whose iconoclastic methods continue to challenge and expand the limits of visual language. Spanning the gallery's four exhibition rooms, the show brings together five larger drawings on acrylic glass, which belong to the artist's acclaimed "Conduction" series – a body of lyrical, hand-painted abstractions influenced by the improvisational music of jazz conductor Butch Morris – along new works on paper.

The "Conduction" paintings signal Oehlen's decisive move away from the computer-generated lines of the 1990s toward entirely hand-painted, rhythm-driven structures. While the artist's method is felt here in the play between control and chance, rigor and rupture, so too is the prominence of the gesture and the human hand in a digital age. As Jenny Graser notes:

In the digital age, Oehlen still invokes the human hand as the instrument that guides the graphic process. Drawing is and remains the medium that allows humans to leave an immediate, perhaps even the most immediate trace. Their thinking and feeling speaks from this trace with greater directness than from any other mark. The manually drawn line, that is to say, bears witness to the human being's mental as well as physical presence. <sup>2</sup>

Scale and support are set in deliberate tension. On the one side, intimate drawings reveal swift notations, chromatic jolts, and erased passages – fragments that hover between diagram and after-image. On the other, the mirror-bright surface of acrylic glass amplifies every gesture, folding the viewer and the room itself into the composition. The result is a shifting field where lines buckle, collide, and disperse like overcharged cables or improvised musical staves, refusing hierarchy or equilibrium.

Oehlen's concern is less with image than with perception under pressure: how a picture is built, disrupted, and rebuilt in real time. The "Conduction" works substitute the erratic digital line with motifs borrowed from the artist's own collage-drawings, enlarged and repainted so that each stroke carries the energy of its smaller source. Lyrical, abrasive, they echo Morris's "structure-free" scores – painting as a set of cues for visual improvisation.

The paper works, though modest in scale, press the same questions. Ink veers from whisper-thin tracings to dense knots; areas of pigment bloom, then fade; occasional motifs flirt with figuration only to dissolve back into abstraction. Taken together, the drawings form an open system of repetitions and refusals, a grammar of marks that privileges ambiguity over closure.

"desenhos" reflects the artist's continued interest in the limits and possibilities of the medium of drawing – not in search of the new, but in the sustained exploration of its internal contradictions. His process is informed as much by music as by visual art. Improvisation, rhythm, and dissonance recur throughout the exhibition, both structurally and metaphorically. In place of resolution, Oehlen offers the restless present tense of making: an art that stays live, provisional, and deliberately unresolved.

"I am prepared to refute every statement on painting, provided I haven't done so already. Including, and especially, my own," Oehlen says as Kito Nedo recalls, adding:

Do his and all other pictures speak for themselves? What does that mean in a contemporary situation in which "abstract" is not infrequently played off against "concrete"? Oehlen's pictures have a distinctive way of eluding technological reproduction. They are not really suitable as circulating particles in our present hyperconnected age. Cryptic rather than 'crypto,' they would seem to exist in a continuum, on a timescale, unto themselves. Perhaps they are not altogether unlike  $\pi$ , the sixteenth letter of the Greek alphabet. As an irrational number,  $\pi$  runs to infinitely many digits after the decimal point and cannot be computed with definitive certainty. Oehlen's pictures have a similar quality: their indeterminacy is part of the game.<sup>3</sup>

The exhibition opening will be accompanied by the release of the new Albert Oehlen catalogue (with texts by Jenny Graser and Kito Nedo, and a preface by Matthias Jahn and Anka Ziefer) published by Jahn und Jahn in collaboration with Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König.

<sup>1</sup> Alexander Klar and Albert Oehlen, "The Same Thing Twice Isn't Twice the Success," in "Albert Oehlen", 2017, p. 108.

<sup>2</sup> Jenny Graser, '...more than form, color, surface, and line – Albert Oehlen's Drawings and Collages from the 1980s to the Present' in "Albert Oehlen". Published by Jahn und Jahn. Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König, 2025.

<sup>3</sup> Kito Nedo, 'Cut and Paste: On Albert Oehlen's "Ömega" Collages', in "Albert Oehlen". Published by Jahn und Jahn. Cologne: Verlag der Buchhandlung Walther und Franz König, 2025.

## Biography

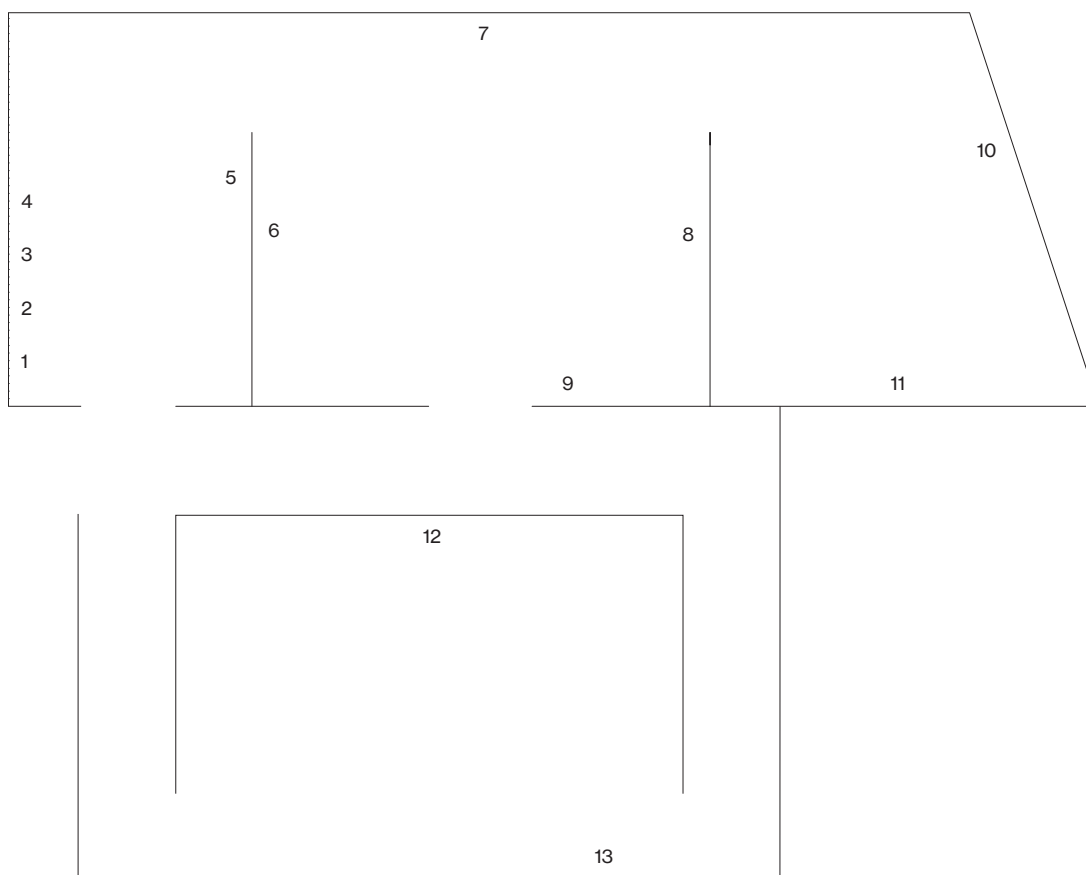
Albert Oehlen, who was born in Krefeld in 1954 and lives in Switzerland, emerged as a key figure on the contemporary art scene in the 1980s. His graphic and pictorial oeuvre combines abstraction, figuration, collage, and computer-generated elements for a creative reflection on the history of painting. The defining quality of his compositions is the reduction to essential components such as colour, gesture, motion, and time.

Characteristic of Oehlen's work is the intensive collaboration with fellow artists since the late 1970s, among them Werner Büttner, Heimo Zobernig, Martin Kippenberger, Jörg Immendorff, Georg Herold and his brother Markus Oehlen. Oehlen's painting style is characterized by expressive brushwork and ironic pictorial references. He is considered one of the protagonists of the neo-expressionist movement "Neue Wilde". His impressive oeuvre includes paintings, drawings, collages, prints and computer graphics.

In recent years, alongside his work in painting, Oehlen has increasingly turned his attention to the medium of film. As a director and screenwriter, he has created projects that translate his visual language into moving images. His films reflect a similar approach to that of his painting: they challenge traditional conventions, are formally daring, playful, provocative, humorous, and intellectually engaging. In doing so, he extends his influence far beyond the realm of classical visual art and is regarded as a key figure in contemporary art.

Selected museum exhibitions: 2024 Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg; 2021 & 2018 Marciano Art Foundation, Los Angeles; 2019/2020 Serpentine Galleries, London; 2020 Sprengel Museum, Hanover; 2019/2020 Kunsthalle Düsseldorf; 2019 Museum Brandhorst, Munich; 2018 Palazzo Grassi, Venice; 2017 Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana, Cuba; 2016 Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland, Ohio; 2016 Guggenheim Bilbao; 2015 Kunsthalle Zürich, Zurich; 2015 New Museum, New York; 2013 Museum Moderner Kunst, Vienna; 2013 La Casa Encendida, Madrid; 2011 Musée d'Art Contemporain, Nîmes; 2009 Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris; 2009 Museo di Capodimonte, Naples; 2005 Museum of Contemporary Art, Miami.

His works are included in numerous public collections, such as The Broad, Los Angeles, CA; Daimler Contemporary, Berlin; de la Cruz Collection, Miami; Essl Museum, Klosterneuburg; FRAC Auvergne, Clermont-Ferrand; FRAC Île-de-France Le Plateau, Paris; Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg; Inhotim Centro de Arte Contemporânea, Brumadinho, Brasil; Kunstmuseum Bonn; MMK Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, CA; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Museum of Modern Art, New York; MUMOK Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna; Staatliche Graphische Sammlung, Munich; Saatchi Gallery, London.



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|---|---|--|
| <p>1<br/><i>Untitled, 2024</i><br/>Indian ink, acrylic and paper on handmade paper<br/>50 × 38.1 cm, framed</p>   | <p>6<br/><i>Untitled, 2025</i><br/>Oil and lacquer on acrylic glass<br/>228 × 179 × 7 cm, framed</p>              | <p>10<br/><i>Untitled, 2025</i><br/>Oil and lacquer on acrylic glass<br/>170.5 × 228 × 7 cm, framed</p>            |
| <p>2<br/><i>Untitled, 2024</i><br/>Indian ink, acrylic and paper on handmade paper<br/>50 × 38.1 cm, framed</p>   | <p>7<br/><i>Untitled, 2024</i><br/>Indian ink, acrylic and paper on handmade paper<br/>65.1 × 50.1 cm, framed</p> | <p>11<br/><i>Untitled, 2025</i><br/>Oil and lacquer on acrylic glass<br/>228 × 179 × 7 cm, framed</p>              |
| <p>3<br/><i>Untitled, 2024</i><br/>Indian ink, acrylic and paper on handmade paper<br/>50 × 38.2 cm, framed</p>   | <p>8<br/><i>Untitled, 2025</i><br/>Oil and lacquer on acrylic glass<br/>228 × 179 × 7 cm, framed</p>              | <p>12<br/><i>Untitled, 2025</i><br/>Oil and lacquer on acrylic glass<br/>170.5 × 228 × 7 cm, framed</p>            |
| <p>4<br/><i>Untitled, 2024</i><br/>Indian ink, acrylic and paper on handmade paper<br/>50 × 38.2 cm, framed</p>   | <p>9<br/><i>Untitled, 2024</i><br/>Indian ink, acrylic and paper on handmade paper<br/>56 × 47.4 cm, framed</p>   | <p>13<br/><i>Untitled, 2024</i><br/>Indian ink, acrylic and paper on handmade paper<br/>65.1 × 50.1 cm, framed</p> |
| <p>5<br/><i>Untitled, 2024</i><br/>Indian ink, acrylic and paper on handmade paper<br/>49.5 × 42.9 cm, framed</p> |   |  |