

Carroll Dunham | Albert Oehlen

First Floor, 41 Dover Street, London W1S 4NS

4 May – 16 June 2021

“For decades, Albert Oehlen and Carroll Dunham have subjected painting to a constant stress test, breaking it down into its components: colour, materiality, and brushwork, line, structure, layering, technique, title, pathos, iconography, and the disappointment and expectation of the recipient.” – Olga Nevzorova

Galerie Max Hetzler, London is pleased to announce *Carroll Dunham | Albert Oehlen*, a joint exhibition of paintings which explores the stylistic diversity of two of the most innovative painters of our time. This will be the first presentation of Carroll Dunham’s work in the UK since 2006 and follows the artists’ travelling exhibition *Carroll Dunham / Albert Oehlen: Trees* at the Kunsthalle Düsseldorf (2019) and Sprengel Museum, Hanover (2020).

As leading painters of their generation, Carroll Dunham (*1949, New Haven, Connecticut) and Albert Oehlen (*1954, Krefeld) are celebrated for their independent and highly distinctive oeuvre. Over the last decades, both artists have continuously tested the conventions of painting while working in unique and radically opposite pictorial languages. Whereas Albert Oehlen shifted from figuration towards “post-non-representational” painting in the late 1980s, Carroll Dunham’s anthropomorphic abstraction of the 1970s has evolved into a surreal universe foregrounding human figures.

Dunham’s series *Proof of Concept* marks a new development in the artist’s oeuvre, uniting male and female figures in the composition for the first time. In the four paintings included in the exhibition, the nude limbs are geometrically splayed out across the composition, actively breaking through the confines of the drawn frame. With the figures’ faces turned away, the viewer is confronted with the charged physicality of their bodies, assuming the role of the voyeuristic outsider. The foreshortened and cropped depiction of the body, reminiscent of both Modernist nudes and antique bas-relief friezes, reflects Dunham’s acute knowledge of art history. Catalysed by formal vibrancy and repeated symmetry, the subject’s intense physicality is brought to the fore. The dynamism of the figures is further accentuated by acidic block colours and bold outlines set in opposition to swirling, delicate lines, revealing the painting process through visible *pentimenti*. Uniting male and female archetypes in a psychedelic utopian vision, *Proof of Concept* exposes and questions stereotypes about gender, sexuality and human nature, providing insight into the subjects’ complex internal world.

Albert Oehlen’s series of *Baumbilder* (Tree Paintings) epitomises the artist’s ongoing exploration of abstraction in painterly form. A recurring subject throughout Oehlen’s oeuvre, the tree first emerged in the artist’s work in the 1980s. Since 2013, the artist has systematically re-examined the tree motif, using it as a programme, a tool to probe the formal and conceptual foundations of painting. In the exhibited works, the tree is stripped down to its essential geometric structure, its bare and leafless silhouette extending in black lines across blocks of magenta colour on white ground, seemingly suspended mid-air. The acidic magenta hue, traditionally used in inkjet printing and characterised as a “hysterical colour” by the artist, is evocative of Oehlen’s ongoing engagement with



Left: Carroll Dunham, *Proof of Concept (II)*, 2020, acrylic, graphite, coloured pencil, wax crayon and watercolour crayon on linen, 152.4 x 121.9 cm.; 60 x 48 in. / 168.5 x 138.3 cm.; 66 3/8 x 54 1/2 in. (framed)
Right: Albert Oehlen, *Untitled (Baum 49)*, 2016, oil on Dibond, 250 x 125 cm.; 98 3/8 x 49 1/4 in.

Press contact:

Natalia Fuller
london@maxhetzler.com
 +44 20 7629 7733

www.facebook.com/galeriemaxhetzler
www.instagram.com/galeriemaxhetzler
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digital aesthetics. Executed on panels of Dibond—aluminium-coated sheets frequently used for printing—the Tree Paintings appear as though digitally manufactured, only revealing their painterly nature upon closer observation. In an assortment of painted, stencilled and sprayed lines, mechanical forms clash with hand-made gestures. Integrating both organic and structural elements, Oehlen's *Baumbilder* are elegant yet uncanny, bringing together form and content, abstraction and representation.

The show is concurrent with *unverständliche braune Bilder*, a solo exhibition of new paintings by Albert Oehlen at Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin in April 2021. A solo exhibition of Oehlen's work will be on view at MASI, Lugano from September 2021 to February 2022.

About the Artists

Carroll Dunham (*1949, New Haven, Connecticut) lives and works in New York City and Connecticut. Dunham's work has been presented in several solo exhibitions at international institutions, including the Denver Art Museum, Denver (2014); University Art Museum, Albany (2010); Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2009); Allen Memorial Art Museum, Oberlin College, Akron and Addison Gallery of American Art, Phillips Academy, Andover (both 2008); Drammens Museum, Drammen (2006) and New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (2002), among others. Works by Dunham are held in major public collections including the Astrup Fearnley Museet, Oslo; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Tate Gallery, London; The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, among others.

Albert Oehlen (*1954, Krefeld) lives and works in Switzerland. Oehlen's work has been shown in numerous solo exhibitions in international institutions, including the Serpentine Galleries, London; Kunstmuseum St. Gallen, St. Gallen and Museum Brandhorst, Munich (all 2019); Aïshti Foundation, Beirut and Palazzo Grassi, Venice (both 2018); Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana (2017); Cleveland Museum of Art and Guggenheim, Bilbao (both 2016); New Museum, New York and Kunsthalle Zürich (both 2015); Museum Wiesbaden (2014); mumok, Vienna (2013); Kunstmuseum Bonn (2012); Carré d'Art de Nîmes, Nîmes (2011); Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris (2009); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2006); MOCA, Miami and Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Nürnberg (both 2005); Musée Cantonal des Beaux Arts, Lausanne; Domus Artium 2002, Salamanca and Secession, Vienna (all 2004), among others. Paintings by Albert Oehlen are held in the collections of prominent international museums including Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris; Tate Gallery, London; Kunstmuseum Bonn, Bonn; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt; Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg; Museum Moderner Kunst Stiftung Ludwig, Vienna; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco and The Broad, Los Angeles, among others.

Further exhibitions:

April - August 2021

Albert Oehlen: *unverständliche braune Bilder*

Goethestraße 2/3, 10623 Berlin

Bleibtreustraße 15/16, 10623 Berlin

April - June 2021

Raymond Hains

Bleibtreustraße 45, 10623 Berlin

April - June 2021

Darren Almond

Dark Light

57, rue du Temple, 75004 Paris