

Press release

Julie Mehretu, Albert Oehlen, Luis Gordillo | *The Spiral of Painting*

12.09.-26.10.2024

Opening: Thursday, 12 September, 2024, 2 - 10 pm

carlier | gebauer is pleased to announce *The Spiral of Painting*, an encounter-exhibition with three touchstones of contemporary painting: Julie Mehretu (1970, Ethiopia), Albert Oehlen (1954, Germany), Luis Gordillo (1934, Spain).

This intergenerational dialogue begins with Gordillo, a pioneer of multi-media painting who paved the way for subsequent developments that Oehlen, and later Mehretu, brought to the realm of painting.

“Painting runs through everything: it has always unfolded and manifested itself by establishing a dialogue with all forms of experience and representation. What best identifies it is the form of the spiral, a line that circles around a point, and in doing so moves away from that point. The spiral of painting, through its dynamism, activates its artistic presence in its variety and its echoes, through time and through the different spaces of life and action.

This synthesis of the spiral is a central and convergent feature in three great painters. With all the nuances and differences in the work of each of them, we can find a common nexus of dialogue, which has to do with the use of diverse expressive techniques: photography, performance, video and digital supports, with which the pictorial expression is open and plural, in a profound and continuous contrast with what life and experience tell us.

This is how painting remains in time. In the works of the three artists, with different modulations, we see the play of lines, planes, and colours, always with an open representation in their forms and in the various spheres of meaning, which converge in a desire for a profound interrogation of what we see and what we feel, of the experience of life beyond the merely immediate... Mehretu, Oehlen, Gordillo: on entering their works we come to see in the spiral mirror that painting is part of our bodies and our minds, of the questions about who we are and where we are going.”

- José Jiménez, 2024.

Julie Mehretu makes large-scale, gestural paintings. Her work conveys a compression of time, space, and place and a collapse of art historical references. Known for a deep political and social engagement, Mehretu’s dynamic compositions have been lauded for their capacity to convey the energy, chaos and urgency of our globalized world. Over the years her works have made reference to architecture, traffic patterns, wind and water currents, migrations, military plans, border crossings, and travel. Her signature sharp lines and geometries have softened as she probes deeper into the visual language of abstraction.

She was named one of the “100 most influential people” by Time Magazine in 2020. *Julie Mehretu: Ensemble* opened in 2024 at the Palazzo Grassi-Pinault Collection, Venice, Italy and in November 2024 the first exhibition of Mehretu’s work to be shown in Australia and the Asia-Pacific region will open at Museum of Contemporary Art Australia. The Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York co-organized a mid-career survey of Mehretu’s work, which also traveled to the High Museum, Atlanta, and opened at its last venue, The Walker Museum in Minneapolis on October 16, 2021. She is featured in public collections such as MoMA, New York; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; LACMA, Los Angeles; Pinault Collection – Palazzo Grassi, Venice; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk; National Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington D.C.; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco.

One of the most respected painters today, **Albert Oehlen** constantly questions the methods and means of painting to raise a sense of awareness of the medium, which he aims to reinvent

and to reshape, always in opposition to traditional hierarchies. Albert Oehlen has been continually colliding various styles, orders or mediums since the 80's, expanding the notion of painting to 'what he wants to see'.

Oehlen's work has been shown in numerous solo exhibitions in international institutions, such as Serpentine Gallery, London (2019–2020); Palazzo Grassi, Venice (2018–2019); Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, Havana (2017); The Cleveland Museum of Art and Guggenheim, Bilbao (2016); New Museum, New York and Kunsthalle Zürich (2015); Museum Wiesbaden (2014); mumok, Vienna (2013); Kunstmuseum Bonn (2012); Carré d'Art de Nîmes (2011); Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris (2009); Whitechapel Gallery, London (2006); MOCA, Miami and Kunsthalle Nürnberg, Nuremberg (2005); Musée Cantonal Des Beaux Arts, Lausanne, Domus Artium 2002, Salamanca and Secession, Vienna (2004), among others. Oehlen's work is in the collections of the Museum Brandhorst, Munich; The Broad, Los Angeles; Centre Pompidou, Paris; The Cleveland Museum of Art, Cleveland; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; Institut Valencià d'Art Modern, Valencia; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles; MUDAM, Luxembourg; Musée d'art moderne de la Ville de Paris, Paris; Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain Strasbourg; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Museum of Contemporary Art – MOCA, Los Angeles; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt/Main; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Tate, London; Staatliche Kunstsammlung Dresden; and The Museum of Modern Art, New York, among others.

Luis Gordillo established himself as a pioneer of artistic experimentation with his unique use of figuration and color. He has a deep interest in psychoanalysis and is constantly looking for new ways of expression, utilizing photography and other image reproduction methods alongside traditional painterly techniques. Over his fifty-year career Luis Gordillo has risen to become one of Spain's most prolific painters and one of the leading figures of abstract art in the country.

Luis Gordillo has participated in major international exhibitions, including XXXV and XXVII Venice Biennial; XI and XVIII São Paulo Biennial; Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris; Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisboa; Kunstmuseum, Düsseldorf; MASP, São Paulo; Museo de Bellas Artes de Caracas, Caracas; Museo Nacional de Bellas Artes, La Habana, National Gallery, Copenhagen; Fine Arts Museum, Taipei, and Serralves Museum, Porto. His work has been shown in retrospective exhibitions at: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Kunst Museum, Bonn; MACBA, Barcelona; Meadows Museum, Dallas; Folkwang Museum, Essen; Museo de Arte de Zapopan, Jalisco; Lunds Kunsthall, Lund; IVAM, Valencia; Artium, Vitoria; CAAC, Seville; CGAC, Santiago de Compostela; MACA, Alicante; CCCC, Valencia; and his most recent anthology at Alcalá 31, Madrid.