

LÉVY GORVY

A RARE INSTALLATION BY ALBERT OEHLEN ON VIEW FOR
THE FIRST TIME IN LONDON DURING FRIEZE WEEK

Ride the Wild **Oehlen | West | Wool**

2 October – 28 November 2019

Lévy Gorvy
22 Old Bond Street
London W1S 4PY

Opening Reception: Wednesday 2 October, 6-9 PM



London—Opening on 2 October 2019, Lévy Gorvy is pleased to present ***Ride the Wild***, an exhibition exploring the relationship between three renegades of the European and American avant-garde: **Albert Oehlen**, **Franz West**, and **Christopher Wool**. These artists were shaped by the radical urban scenes of their youths—post-punk Berlin, Actionist Vienna, and No Wave New York—and subsequently became key progenitors of the ‘punk’ sensibility now prevalent in contemporary art. *Ride the Wild* will consider their shared emphasis on practical and formal dissent, inherited from their respective backgrounds and developed in ways that resonate yet remain unique. Taking a rare installation by Oehlen, *Untitled* (2005), as its starting point, and featuring landmark works from the 1980s to the present day, the exhibition marks the first instance Oehlen (b. 1954), West (1947–2012), and Wool (b. 1955) will be exclusively presented together.

United by their experimental uses of materials and techniques not conventionally associated with ‘high art’, Oehlen, West, and Wool have nurtured long-standing relationships and demonstrated intimate knowledge on each other’s oeuvres. Indeed, the exhibition will feature a work by Wool, *Untitled* (1989), once owned by West. West and Oehlen were both shown by gallerists Max Hetzler and Peter Pakesch, in Cologne and Vienna respectively, in the mid-80s, and Oehlen and Wool have been friends since they met in Berlin in 1988. Since then, the latter two have frequently been interviewed together, sustaining a multifaceted dialogue about painting in a time when the medium’s relevance is constantly questioned. Both seek to push the boundaries of painting; Wool by turning to reproductive technologies such as stamps and screen-printing, Oehlen by actively working with unconventional colours and compositions. West similarly sought to undo notions of legitimacy in art by taking the path least expected. His long-time studio manager Ines Turian recalled of his approach: ‘Franz’s original idea was to “build something ugly” in contrast to the beauty of nature, but in the end it always turned out looking good, and Franz was amused.’ *Ride the Wild* will celebrate this extraordinary group of artists, centring on their constant detraction from aesthetic norms and immense importance to art in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Exclusively during Frieze week, Oehlen's seminal installation *Untitled* (2005), will be on view for the first time in the United Kingdom. This work is a replica of the artist's bedroom in Cologne, complete with yellow wallpaper, a carpet, a bed, and a potted plant. Personal artefacts litter the space: a record player and hi-fi system with LPs sit next to a bright orange set of hot plates and a small macchinetta coffee maker. In the bed, even the artist is present; a painted self-portrait lays tucked under the covers, a phantom hand poking out from under the duvet, clutching a paintbrush. Shifting attention from painterly compositions to a space associated with their creator, the installation gives the viewer a glimpse of the artist's life. The stacked records reflect his interest in music and a poster on the wall indicates a previous exhibition at the Secession in Vienna. Yet turning to the bed, the self-portrait inverts this scene, bringing the viewer back to the undermining forces of satire and parody ubiquitous in Oehlen's work. This unique installation was originally exhibited at Galeria Juana de Aizpuru in Madrid and has accompanied his recent retrospectives at mumok, Vienna; the New Museum, New York; and Palazzo Grassi, Venice.

Oehlen, West, and Wool have continually renounced paradigms of 'good taste' and embraced the multisensory impact of an era in which images and technologies reproduce uncontrollably. Visual allure stays at the heart of their practices, but underlining emphases on contemporary music, advertisements, literature, and graffiti introduce non-traditional, counter-cultural elements into their work. *Ride the Wild* will follow the three artists' common search for aesthetic disobedience while accentuating their independent approaches, each grounded in rigorously applied methods and strong conceptual frameworks. Staging an extended discourse between Oehlen, West, and Wool, the exhibition will further their central notion that art can simultaneously engage, provoke, and confound the viewer.

About Lévy Gorvy

Lévy Gorvy cultivates a program devoted to innovation and connoisseurship in the fields of modern, postwar, and contemporary art. Founded by Dominique Lévy and Brett Gorvy, Lévy Gorvy maintains gallery spaces at 909 Madison Avenue in New York, in Mayfair, London, and in Central, Hong Kong. The gallery fosters continued dedication to the living artists and artists' estates that it represents and offers a robust program of exhibitions and multidisciplinary events. The gallery also produces ongoing art historical research and original scholarship, publishing exhibition catalogues, monographs, and other key publications. Our Zürich office, Lévy Gorvy with Rumbler, offers bespoke private advisory services to collectors and institutions around the globe.

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IMAGES: FRANZ WEST. *Untitled* (large sculpture with can), 2010. Papier mâché, styrofoam, acrylic lacquer, can, 52 x 41 x 37 3/8 inches (132 x 104 x 95 cm). Private Collection.
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