**ALBERT OEHLEN**

Albert Oehlen was born in Krefeld, Germany in 1954. He attended the Hochschule für Bildende Künste in Hamburg, where he studied under Sigmar Polke until 1981.

During the early stages of his career, Oehlen’s artistic inclinations and thematic interests were diverse, ranging from music to painting. Neo-Expressionism became the prevailing aesthetic in the 1980s, inspiring him to combine abstract and figurative elements throughout his paintings. He established a close friendship with German artist Martin Kippenberger and dedicated himself completely to abstract painting.

As early as a decade ago, Oehlen set up a studio in a tower of the city walls of Segovia, where he began to work on computer generated images that would become integral to his paintings. Oehlen’s spatially complex works use the collision of figuration and abstraction as a strong reminder of the multiple forces involved in the resurgence of painting at the latter part of the 20thcentury.

Albert Oehlen has exhibited extensively throughout the United States and Europe. Recent solo exhibitions of his work have been held in institutions such as the Palazzo Grassi in Venice in 2018, The Cleveland Museum of Art and Guggenheim Bilbao in 2016, The New Museum in 2015, Museo di Capodimonte in Naples, Italy and the Musée d’ Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris in 2009. He has also participated in exhibitions in major institutions such as the Musée Cantonal Des Beaux Arts in Lausanne, the Renaissance Society in Chicago and at the Kunsthalle in Basel. Oehlen’s show at MOCA Miami in 2005 marked his first major solo exhibition at a museum in the United States. In 2009 Taschen published an oversized artist’s monograph as part of its XL series that covers the entire scope of Oehlen’s oeuvre. Albert Oehlen lives and works in Switzerland.

The Art world considers Albert Oehlen as part of the ‘New Wilds’ and as protagonist of Neo-Expressionism.

The Project

Under the direction of legendary director OLIVER HIRSCHBIEGEL (‘Downfall’ / ‘Der Unter- gang’), Actor BEN BECKER (Key Credits) on screen impersonates the famous contemporary painter ALBERT OEHLEN and re-creates a painting that Oehlen himself and in parallel is creating step by step in the background, with the actor improvising the process in front of the camera. The finished on-screen painting is an original ‘Oehlen’ on which the artist himself never laid hands. The off screen blueprint painting was destroyed after principal shooting had finished.

Originally planned to be a performative statement the projects developed into a fully fledged feature film of 92 minutes, crossing formal boundaries and questioning the meaning of the creative process and the struggle for authenticity on various levels.

**THE PAINTER** follows the artist/actor as he is struggling and suffering along this process with us watching in joyful despair and what might happen next until the white canvas has turned into a finished painting.

The outcome is a one-man rollercoaster that appears to be a documentary but in fact is a staged and guided improvisation with the ‘real’ process happening behind the camera. THE PAINTER is a constant flow of the artist’s journey with elements of farce and comedy topped with emotional moments of truth....in front of and behind the camera and leaving it up to us to decide what is real and/or authentic.

Being one of the most significant, contemporary painters, Albert Oehlen’s approach is complete refusal of the common art circus. In its own way the Film reflects this very stance.

Likewise, it questions the purpose of obsolete thinking patterns created by white straight male artists of a certain age that have dominated the art world for centuries. It explores the idea of authenticity & original and subsequently the concept of copyright and ownership which manifests the very basis of capitalism.

It is up to us, the audience to decipher the THE PAINTER’S amalgam of true and false / silly and serious, real and surreal.

Oliver Hirschbiegel and Albert Oehlen are longtime friends and both studied at the ‘Hochschule der Bildenden Künste Hamburg’ with ‘The Painter’ being there first artistic collaboration in a long while.