

Nick Oberthaler
Bruxelles
November 7 – December 20, 2025

After several years, Brussels has once again become Nick Oberthaler's temporary place of work. At the same time, it is a central European point of intersection and convergence - of cultures, political interests, and nationalities. This specific mix resonates in the works on view through formal analogies. In the small-scale abstract paintings, the gestural merges with the geometric; sharply delineated forms are paired and balanced with indeterminate, fraying fields of color.

Together with the large-format works conceived in a rigorously geometric mode, the paintings construct a vast and decidedly risky apparatus of reflection and reference: with them, the long history of abstraction inevitably enters the space, along with the question of how an artist inscribes themselves into it - or even moves beyond it.

Oberthaler is well acquainted with these questions and risks; he knows the genealogies of abstract painting intimately, and above all, he understands that these lines of tradition are anything but linear - they meander, intertwine, and loop back on themselves. The resulting thicket of references leaves barely more than two possibilities for painterly self-positioning and self-assertion: retreat into irony, or an eruption into the open field of (post-)Pop.

The walls painted in a radiant deep orange, and their chromatic doubling and fusion with iridescent aluminium paint within the works, point toward the latter. They echo the color scheme of Brussels' public transport system. Even here, there is no escaping the logic of reference: Stephen Prina's postmodern gag *Monochrome Painting* from 1989 comes to mind - 14 canvases uniformly coated in the dark green automotive paint used by Volkswagen for many of its models in the mid-1980s.

One painting in the exhibition seems to gesture towards an exit, if only temporarily: it reveals the framing silhouette of a deep-blue window which, however, opens only onto a monochrome orange ground and offers no further view (of a landscape, for instance). Once again, it is a grid - the primal form of modernism - from which there is no escape. What remains is the acknowledgement of the images' ambivalence: held in a state of unresolved tension between Pop and discourse, low and high, irony and seriousness.