

Press Release

Rita Ackermann. The Chemical Alphabet

9 September – 17 October 2026

Hauser & Wirth New York, Wooster Street

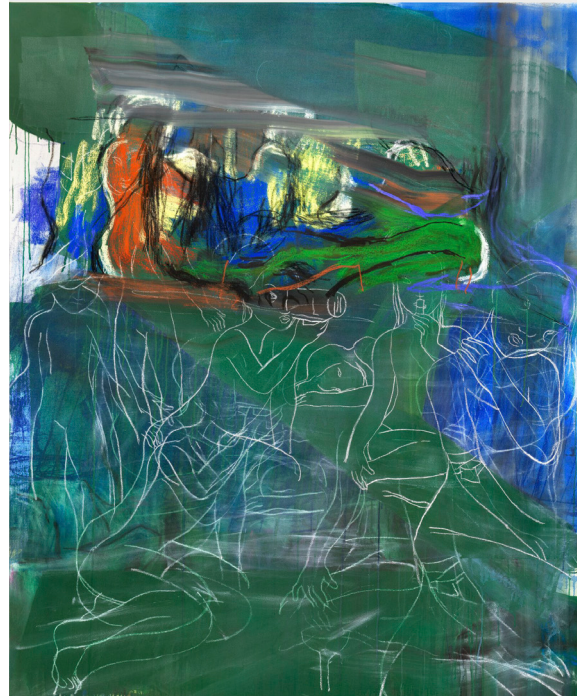


New York...In the Chemical Alphabet paintings, Rita Ackermann takes on a new source of vocabulary: letters from a Semitic alphabet. The structure of each symbol serves as an anchor for each composition.

The configuration of the letter, painted in acrylic green chalkboard paint on a canvas primed by multiple silkscreen prints, allows the surface to be built through Ackermann's chalkboard method: layers of pastel and chalk drawings are erased, washed away, and redrawn until multiple states of the painting coexist on the canvas.

Here, the picture advances through accumulation and erasure. At the center of this constructive destruction, the letter remains, its meaning shifting with the evolving image around it.

What stays visible is not the frozen image but the chronicle of its becoming.



Not as easy as 1, 2, 3...

If you define something, what something is, it is no longer that something.

My preference is not to talk about or put words to my work.

It either works for you or doesn't work for you and me explaining it isn't going to make it work for you.

When you see a drawing in orange, purple and green chalk scribbled up on a greenboard... there is some levity in those scribbles. Unexplainable doesn't mean inaccessible.

It might just mean inexplicable.

A good painting has the touch.

It also has rhythm which continues through a series into a melody.

There is little explanation for these paintings besides chemistry. You have chemistry with them or you don't.

They contain substances.

Their language is formed from the combinations of the unfamiliar elements with the familiar, evolving into something different, something that I haven't seen before.

The unfamiliar component is the alphabet. The familiar parts are my own tried methods .

Anchored by a letter of the alphabet, the picture stands in the epicenter of methodical deconstruction.

Whatever the cyclone of chance twists and wipes off the surface, it disappears.

The remains stay engraved.

Even if it is possible to break down the making of the Aleph-Bet paintings into 1,2,3, they ultimately resist definition and make themselves

— Rita Ackermann

About the artist

Born in Budapest in 1968, Ackermann studied at the Hungarian Academy of Fine Arts before moving to New York in 1992 to attend the New York Studio School. Immersing herself in the city's collaborative cultural landscape, her work, at once graphic, bodily and charged with the psychic textures of youth culture, quickly became associated with New York's raw artistic scene.

Over the past three decades, Ackermann's conceptual and recursive approach has allowed her work to move fluidly between figuration and abstraction. Drawing, painting, printmaking, music, and video coexist within her expanded practice, while improvisation, disruption, and formal negation drive images to disappear and re-emerge as unstable traces. Shaped in part by her engagement with cinema, her work treats sound as image and image as vibration, echoing Godard's proposition that one must sometimes 'listen to the image and look at the sound.'

Ackermann has exhibited internationally in museums and institutions. Her work is held in major public and private collections, including at the Dallas Museum of Art; the Denver Art Museum; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; the Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College; the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; Leeum Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul; the Long Museum, Shanghai; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Morgan Library & Museum, New York; the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; and the Speed Art Museum, Louisville.

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Caption and courtesy information:

Paintings in progress at Rita Ackermann's studio, July 2026

Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Photo: Dario Lasagni

Rita Ackermann

Boy Let Dog Out

2026

Acrylic, silkscreen print, chalk and soft pastel on canvas

210.8 x 165.1 cm / 83 x 65 in

© Rita Ackermann

Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Photo: Dario Lasagni

Rita Ackermann

Silent Type

2025

Acrylic, silkscreen print, chalk and soft pastel on canvas

210.8 x 165.1 cm / 83 x 65 in

© Rita Ackermann

Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Photo: Dario Lasagni