PRESS RELEASE

PHILIPP LACHENMANN – ERLKÖNIG

Opening: November 12, 6 pm
Duration of the Exhibition: November 13 - Dezember 22, 2026

Under the title ERLKÖNIG, Galerie Andreas Binder presents Philipp Lachenmann's eighth solo exhibition.

At its center is his exploration of industrial camouflage patterns: computer-generated patterns used in the automotive industry to conceal the forms of newly developed vehicle prototypes and protect their designs from unwanted scrutiny and imitation. Lachenmann liberates this machine-generated Dazzle Decor from its technical constraints and functional limitations, making it a subject in its own right within art. The principles of visual disruption, concealment, and deception merge in his new silver MirrorPaintings with questions about space, image, form, color, and time, as well as the art-historical foundations of painting and sculpture.

The mythological figure of the forest spirit Erlkönig, known from Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's poem of the same name, serves as the exhibition's namesake. In this way, the industrial purpose of a camouflaged car prototype undergoes a poetic transformation. In Lachenmann's body of work, the Erlkönig once again becomes a "king": the graphic concealment of forms and the dissolution of recognizable object structures return the understanding of surface and space to the realm of artistic inquiry.

The visual language of the ERLKÖNIG series develops through the repetition of a limited pool of visual elements, forming a strict alphabet of shapes. Spirals, galaxies, vectors, paths, inversions, fractures and connections are intertwined, condensed and layered on top of one another. This creates a distinct visual language that evokes hidden narratives and opens seemingly hermetic image structures to a broader context. Center and periphery, motif and background, foreground and secondary elements begin to dissolve into one another.

The reflective silver surfaces of the MirrorPaintings intensify the depth of the pictorial space to the point of the unfathomable. They mirror the surrounding environment and directly incorporate viewers into the work. The closer one approaches the canvas, the more one's own surroundings become part of the image – proximity paradoxically brings about disappearance.

The color scheme also draws inspiration from iconic works of art and the collective visual memory of art history. Raphael, Leonardo, Van Gogh, Picasso, Piero della Francesca and Philip Guston form an indirect frame of reference. Color introduces time and historical distance. Some works are executed in a special version of Ultra-Black, known under the protected designation Vantablack.

The sculptures appear to have emerged from the intricate networks of forms found in the image motifs. Two-dimensional, computer-generated camouflage elements, originally designed to render a prototype's forms invisible, now break free from the picture plane and occupy space as independent objects. In an increasingly technology-oriented, AI-driven present, in which structures and developments are often no longer immediately comprehensible, the layers in Lachenmann's works tell of paths and detours, visual hierarchies, and at the same time evoke the "Democratic Forest," as the American photographer William Eggleston described the equality of motifs.