

JAC LEIRNER AND RAFA SILVARES
ENSEMBLE

Esther Schipper, Berlin

November 14 – December 18, 2025



Esther Schipper

Jac Leirner



Jac Leirner was born in 1961 in Sao Paulo, where she lives and works. In 1984, she received her BFA in Fine Arts from the Fundação Armando Álvares Penteado, in Sao Paulo.

The artist was awarded numerous grants and residencies, among them: 2019 Wolfgang Hahn Prize; 2012 APCA Award: Best Exhibition of the Year – Estação Pinacoteca, Sao Paulo; 2012 artist in residence at the Yale University School of Art; 2001 John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship; 1998 visiting artist at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam; 1991 visiting artist at the University College, Oxford; 1991 visiting artist at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Arts, University of Oxford; 1991 artist in residency at the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford, and the 1991 artist in residency at the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

Jac Leirner is best known for her series of works employing specific everyday materials, such as bank notes, cigarette packaging, airline paraphernalia, business cards, and more recently items purchased in hardware stores. Her conceptually rigorous and formally beautiful works draw on a wide array of art historical and formal influences, as well as embracing the transgressive legacies of Dada, Constructivism, Pop and Conceptual Art, Arte Povera, and Punk, among others.

Selected solo exhibitions include: **Jac Leirner**, Swiss Institute, New York (2023); **Us Horizon**, Esther Schipper, Berlin (2022); **Jac Leirner. Wolfgang Hahn Prize 2019**, Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2019); **Jac Leirner: Add It Up**, The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh (2017); **Institutional Ghost**, IMMA Dublin (2017); **Borders are Drawn by Hand**, MoCa Pavilion, Shanghai (2016); **Jac Leirner. Functions of a variable**, Museo Tamayo, Mexico City (2014); **Jac Leirner: Pesos y Medidas**, Centro Atlantico de Arte Moderno, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria (2014), **Jac Leirner**, Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, Sao Paulo (2011); **Adhesive 44**, Miami Art Museum, Miami (2004); **Projeto Parede**, Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, Sao Paulo (1999); **Directions**, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C. (1992); **Currents**, ICA, Boston, (1991), and **Viewpoints**, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (1991).

Her work is held in the collections of: Art Gallery of Ontario, Ontario; Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas at Austin, Austin; Caixa Geral de Depósitos, Culturgest, Lisbon; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Centro Galego de Arte Contemporaneo, Santiago de Compostela; Coleção Cisneros, Caracas; Colorado University Art Museum, Boulder; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington D.C.; Instituto Itaú Cultural, Sao Paulo; MOCA | The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museu de Arte da Pampulha, Belo Horizonte; Museo Tamayo, Mexico City; MAM–Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, Sao Paulo; Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst, Ghent; The National Museum of Art, Osaka; Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix; Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo, Sao Paulo; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Städtische Galerie Villa Zanders, Bergisch Gladbach; Tate, London; The Bohlen Foundation, New York; University of Essex Collection of Latin American Art, Essex, and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis.

Rafa Silveares



Rafa Silveares was born in 1984 in Santos, Brazil. He studied fine arts at FAAP (Fundação Armando Alvares Penteado), São Paulo and received a BA in Language and Literature from the Faculty of Philosophy, Languages, and Human Sciences (FFLCH) at the University of São Paulo. The artist lives and works in Berlin.

In Rafa Silveares's work, time appears arrested and space collapsed onto itself. Amidst the seductiveness of their smooth surface and the visual pleasure of expanses of brilliant color, we have an intuitive understanding of the allegorical nature of his paintings. Their frozen movements evoke the end of the belief in the inherent benefit of progress. The static fluidity of their masses—be they natural formations (water, mud, or lava) or expelled from human-made machinery (pipes, pistons, or washers)—is in a kind of limbo. Caught in the paradox of agitated stillness, liquids overflow, bursting brightly from pistons, pipes, the ground, or the sky. The absence of human depictions in the paintings is counteracted by the feeling of looking at a human-made

world. And us: Silveares's paintings seem unusually aware of the onlooker's presence, even counting on it.

Solace can be found in the objects. Silveares lovingly paints the shiny metal of his human-made motifs with an eye for precisionist effect and the beauty of their abstract shapes. Together, triangles, rectangles, slivers of black, and shades of gray form the impression of seductive silvery surfaces. The metal is a recurring motif that exerts symbolic power; its hard, lustrous, reflective shell evokes the promise of modernity with its scientific notions of cleanliness and the antiseptic. As with the hyper-seductive surfaces of consumer objects in late capitalism, his paintings are knowing, perhaps even willfully complicit in the intermingling of pain and pleasure. And yet they have an affirmative quality: the silver lining on their melting horizons is a belief in color and shape as forces of renewal.

The artist was a Pipa Award Nominee in 2020. Among his residencies were in 2021 The Fores Project, London (2021); La Centrale residence, Paris (2018); and Pivô research, Pivô São Paulo (2016). In 2008 the artist participated in the 28th São Paulo Biennial, in collaboration with AVAF.

Recent exhibitions include: **Ganz konkret 2**, Kunstpalais, Erlangen (2025); **L'Almanach 23**, curated by Éric Troncy, Le Consortium, Dijon (2023); **Real Fake Door**, curated by Oli Epp and Mollie E Barnes, Arsenal Contemporary Art, New York (2023); **The Artists Contemporary Atelier**, London (2021); **Monster High**, Olhão, São Paulo (2020); **48th Luiz Sacilotto Art Salon**, Casa do olhar, Santo André (2020); **Bife**, Olhão, Sao Paulo (2019); **Traço**, Platô Studio, São Paulo (2016); **Pivô Art Research**, Pivô, São Paulo (2016); **I Scream, critical follow up of Galciani Neves and Regina Parra**, Galpão Glicério, São Paulo (2015); **21th Praia Grande Art Salon**, curated by Tobi Maier, Praia Grande (2014); **So Confused LOL**, curated by Gerardo Contreras, Beo Project, Belgrade (2012); **Dizzy World**, Paper Box, New York, NY (2013); and **Parahaus**, São Paulo (2011).

Silveares's work is held in the following collections: Amoca Museum, Wales, Fundacion Medianoche, Singapore, Kunstpalais, Erlangen, Le Consortium, Dijon, Sifang Art Museum, Nanjing, Space K Museum, Seoul, and Zuzeum Collection, Riga.

EXHIBITION TEXT

Esther Schipper is pleased to announce **Ensemble**, bringing together works by Jac Leirner and Rafa Silvas. The exhibition marks Silvas's first and Leirner's third with the gallery. The year Silvas was born some hundred kilometers inland, Leirner completed her artistic education; decades later, Silvas would study at the same institute in São Paulo. Continuing their rich correspondence, the exhibition is a result of the artists's exchange within each other's universes. Taking the habit to pick up, sketch, and keep quotidian items as a point of departure, the artists's dialogue echoes a ode to collecting.

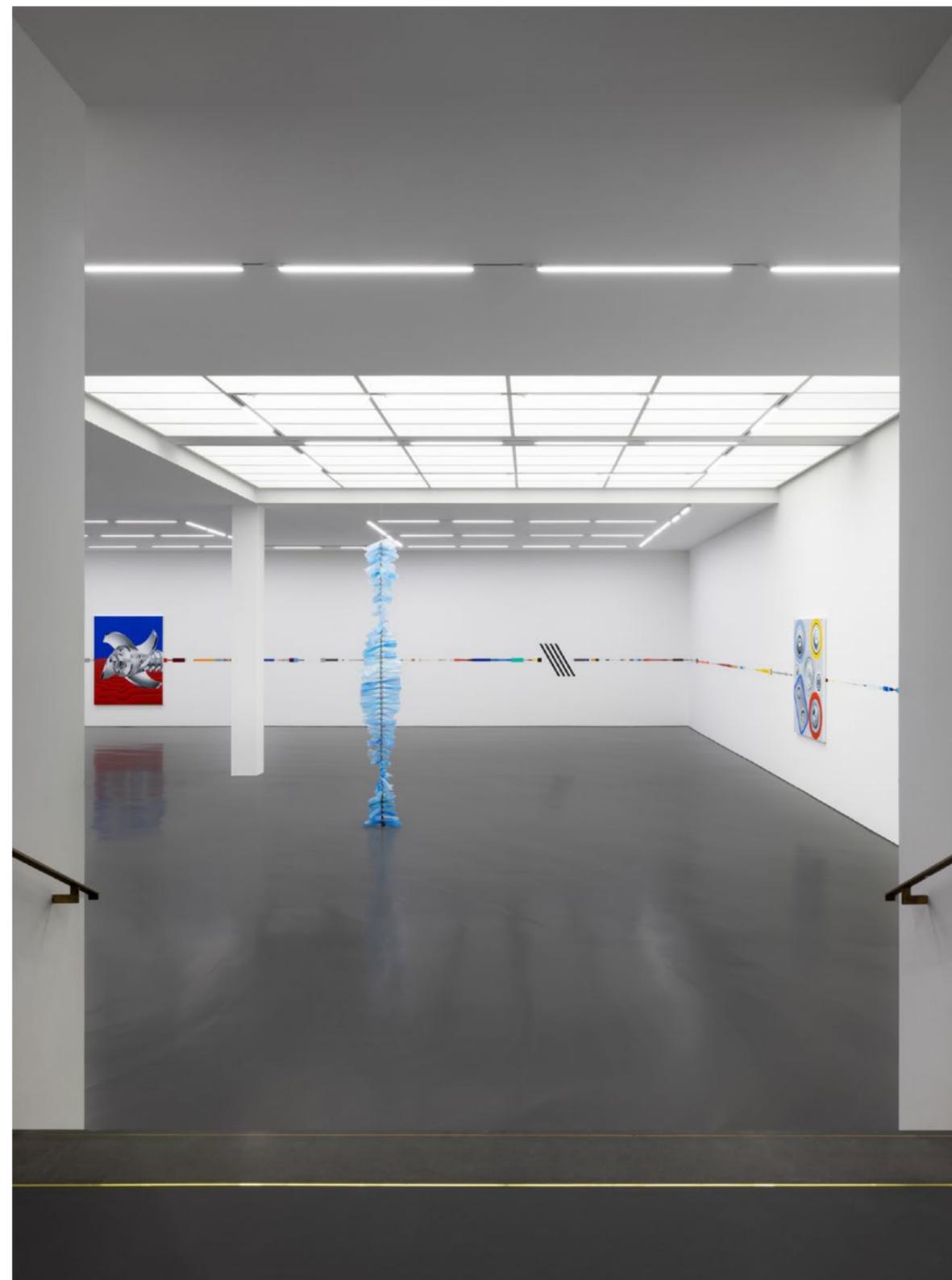
A new iteration of Leirner's groundbreaking work, **Hip Hop** (1998/2025), extends along the exhibition space's walls. Held in the Solomon R. Guggenheim collection, **Hip Hop** has been presented in seven institutions across continents. For this presentation, Leirner has produced a new version of the historic piece, adding a motif, "scratch," a sequence of four parallel, diagonal bars. The installation, while paying homage to Piet Mondrian's penultimate painting **Broadway Boogie Woogie** (1942–43), takes its name from the unruly beats that jumped from New York's Bronx onto the world stage. In its materiality, the work, comprised of a horizontal line made from hundreds of pieces of adhesive tape in different widths, colors and thickness, testifies to the music genre's sticky sociality: once emerging from Black and Brown block parties, today, hip hop continues to laud the intersection of drums, voice, and dance. By combining chromatic confrontation and square elongation, Leirner translates the phonetic of the name "hip hop" into space. Bouncy and saturated, the work resonates with the music genre's pulsating loops and highlights the importance of Leirner's musical background as a formative experience. Borne by the transgressive potential of music, **Hip Hop** recalls an adaptation of roaring frequencies into the optics of rhythm. Spun around its own axis, **Anthropomorphic** (2024), consisting of a metal chain through which blue plastic bags have been threaded, reiterates the motive force of rhythm within a sculptural grammar.

Six new paintings by Silvas are installed across **Hip Hop**, which runs through their core and resumes a connective horizontal line between them. Four large-scale paintings are hung sequentially; each depicts an abstract landscape comprised of viscous mounds that appear to unfurl slowly, interrupted only by the crisp contour of metallic objects. Metal is a recurring motif that exerts symbolic power; its hard, lustrous, reflective shell evokes the promise of modernity with its scientific notions of cleanliness and the antiseptic. In **Pillars** (2025), a finely polished pipe empties a bulge of viscid silver into the painting's foreground while **Mill** (2025) exhibits a helical screw blade. **Titanium** (2025) depicts a clenched tube facing it's squeezed-out white paint; the silhouette is reminiscent of an hourglass and idiosyncratic for the artist's seamless brush strokes. **Hyperlink** (2025) depicts interlocked snap hooks and pays tribute to Leirner's trademark gesture of tying, clipping, or otherwise attaching products bought at hardware stores into extensive installations. As a can in vivid red is crushed inside a hydraulic press, time appears to stand still in **Pole** (2025). Suggestive of a crumbling pillar, the work's vertical composition briefly halts **Hip Hop**, while tapping into **Anthropomorphic**'s tall, tranquil dynamic. Executed in oil, Silvas's **808** (2025), depicts shiny and perfectly round knobs in aluminum grey, embraced by intense shades of red, yellow, and blue that read as another nod to Mondrian. Another reference, indicated by the work's title, is the iconic drum machine Roland TR-808 Rhythm Composer, a bedrock of early hip hop samples.

As though sampled beats looped on Silvas's **808**, taking the shape of Leirner's **Hip Hop**, were bouncing back from the gallery walls, the exhibition stages the transposition of sound into color by uncovering their substantial form: frequency. Side by side, and one above the other, Leirner and Silvas extend their exploration of chromatic vibration into an ensemble of rhythmic interventions. Both artists draw on an untamed color palette, not shying away from vibrant hues, loud accentuation, or pointed contrasts. Yet, the deliberate placement of color in their respective work exhibits an aesthetic of sensorial fine-tuning. What drives the artists's parsing of color through spatio-temporal unfolding, then, is not the chilled metrics of containment, but rather an enduring attraction to intensity, rhythm, and frequency.

Photo: © Andrea Rossetti
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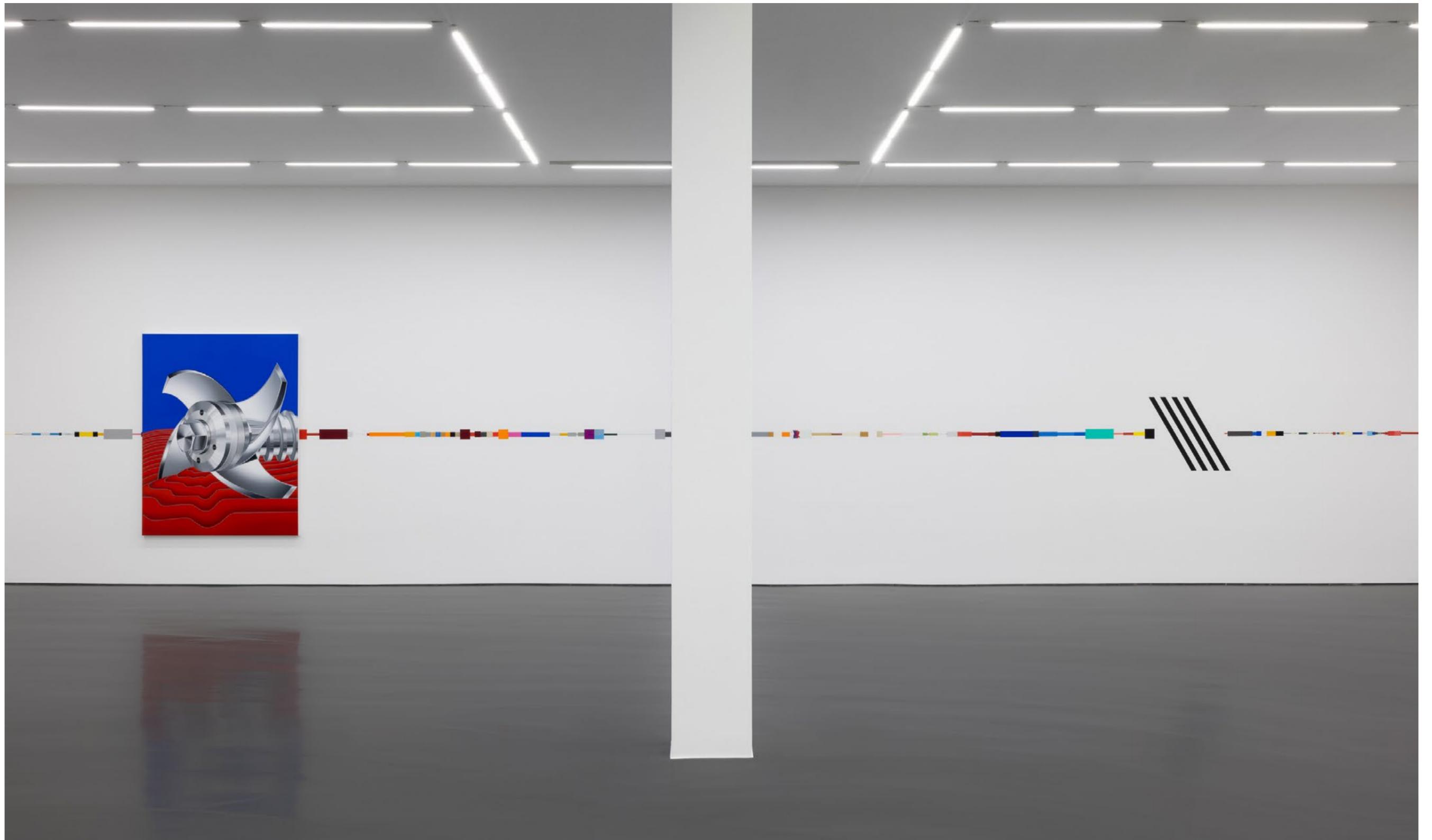
Cover image: Exhibition view, Jac Leirner and Rafa Silvas, **Ensemble**, Esther Schipper, Berlin (2025)



Exhibition view: Jac Leirner and Rafa Silvas, **Ensemble**, Esther Schipper, Berlin (2025)



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HIP HOP, 1998/2025

Hip Hop (1998/2025), a site-specific installation, is comprised of a horizontal line made from hundreds of pieces of adhesive tape, in different widths, colors and thickness. All iterations of the work vary, and are hence unique; on the occasion of the exhibition Ensemble at Esther Schipper Berlin (2025) Leirner introduced a new motif, „scratch,“ a sequence of parallel, diagonal bars.

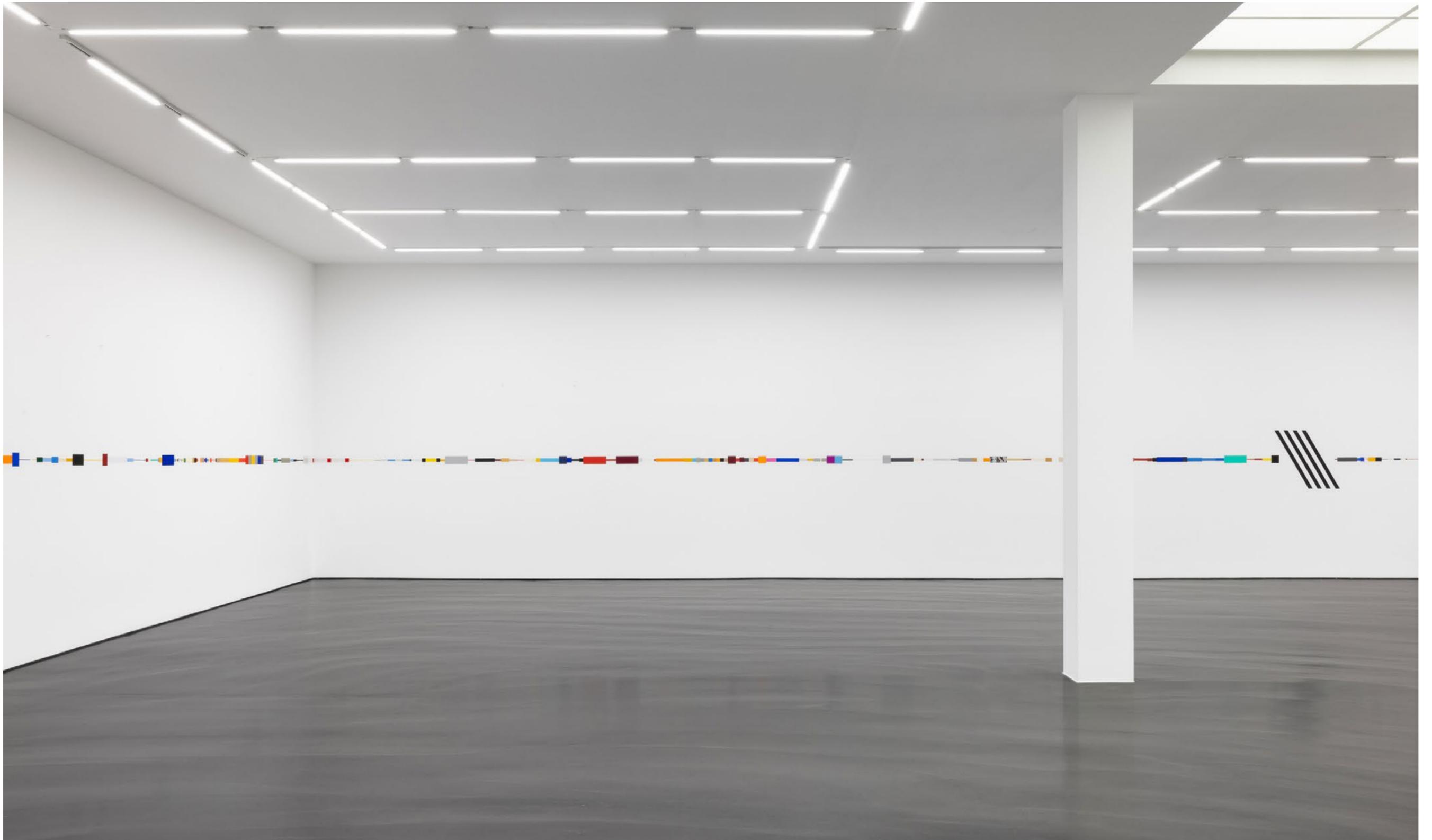
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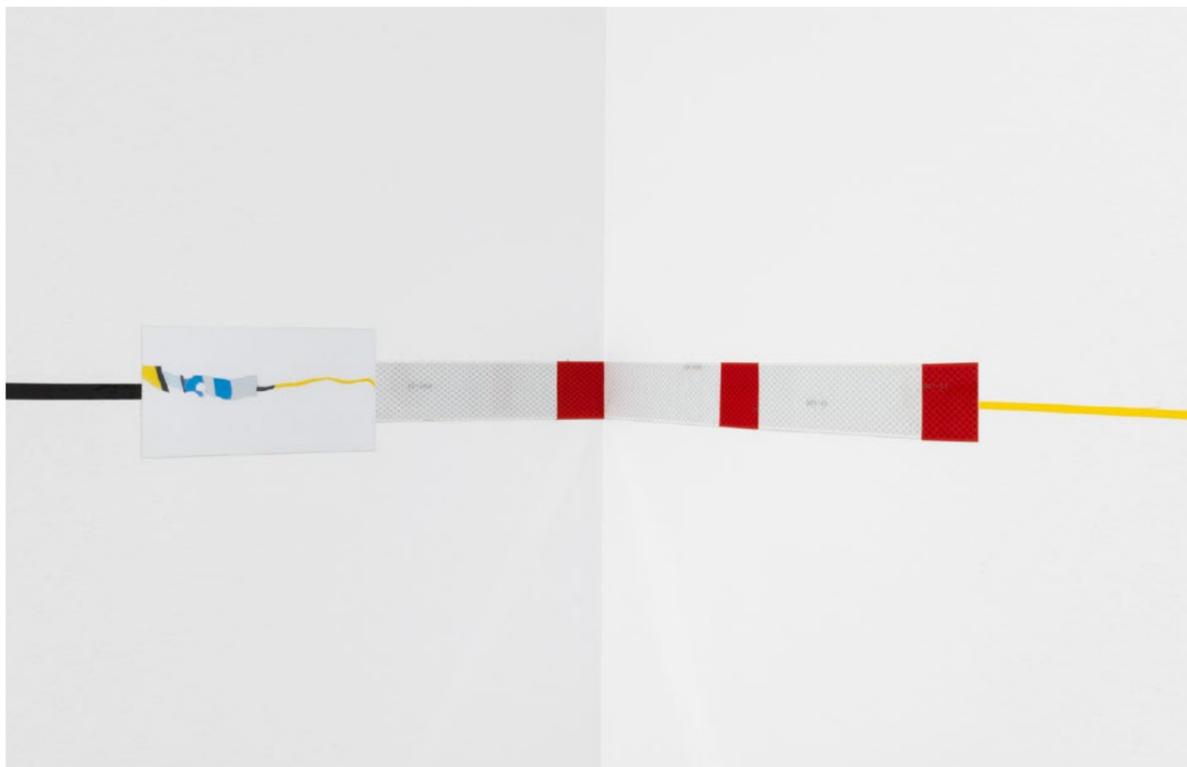
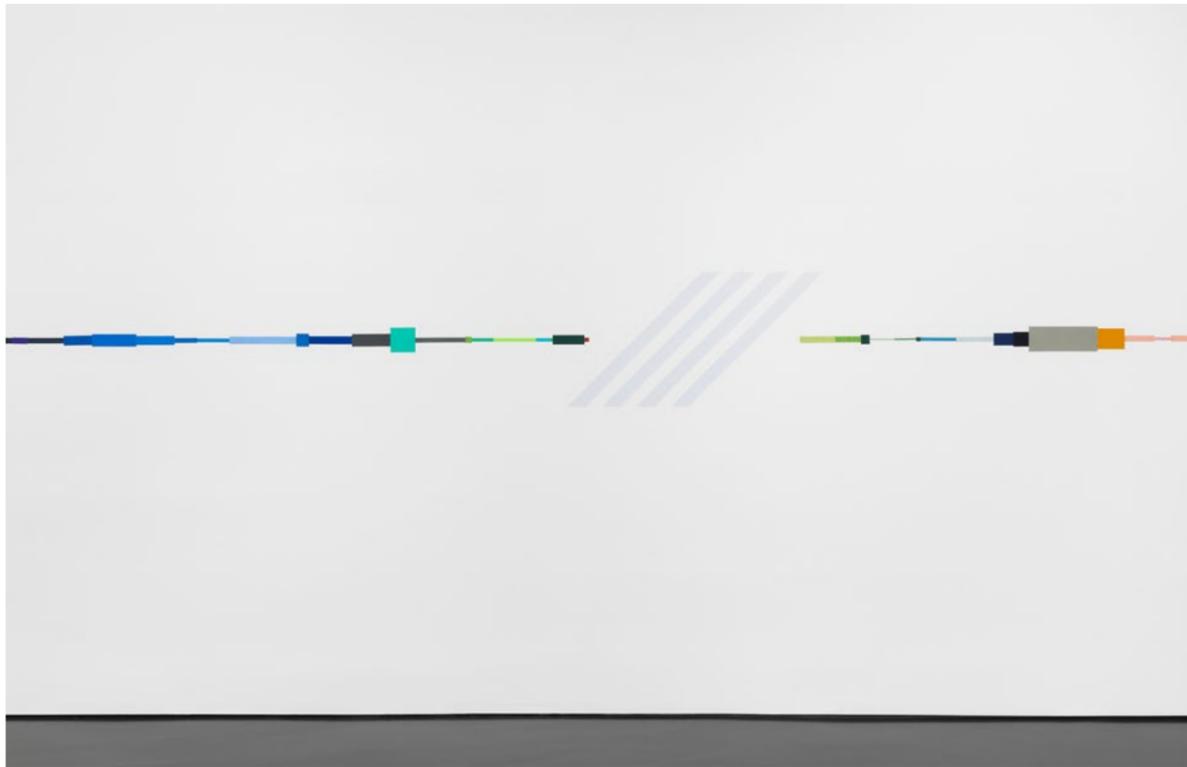
The first iteration of **Hip Hop** is held in the Solomon R. Guggenheim collection.



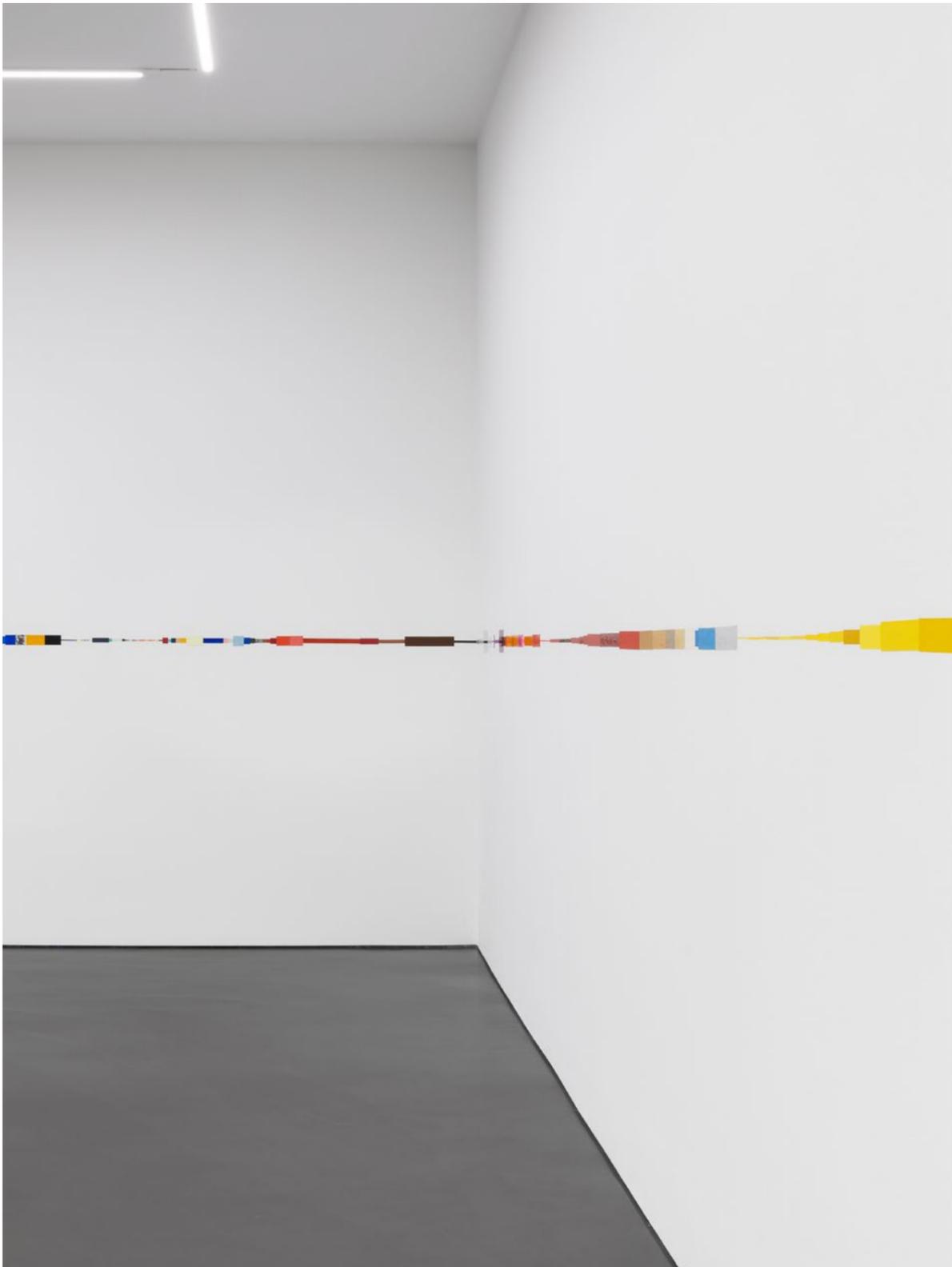
Detail: Jac Leirner, **Hip Hop**, 1998/2025, adhesive tape on wall, dimensions variable (JL 112)



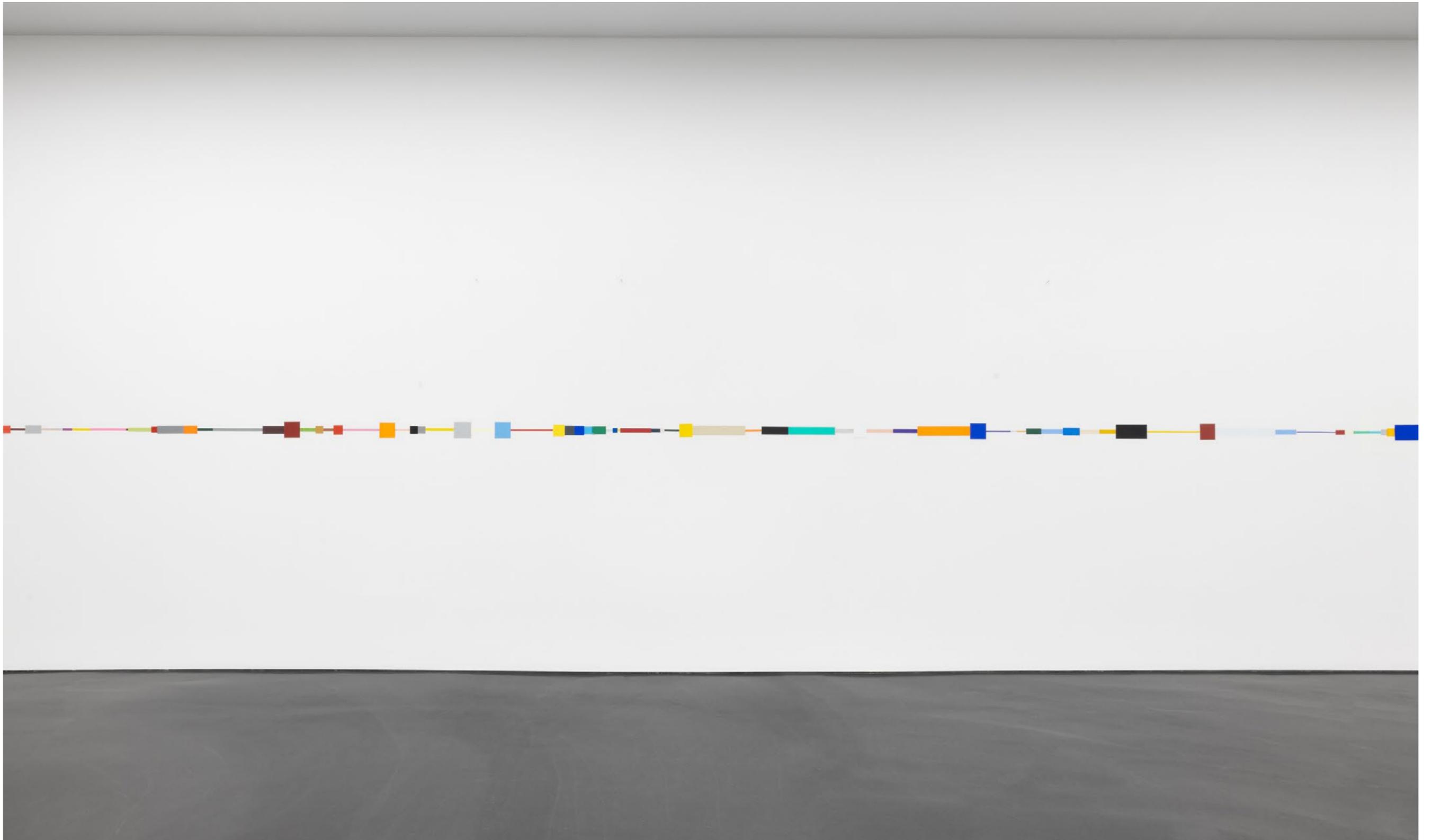
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SELECTED EXHIBITION HISTORY



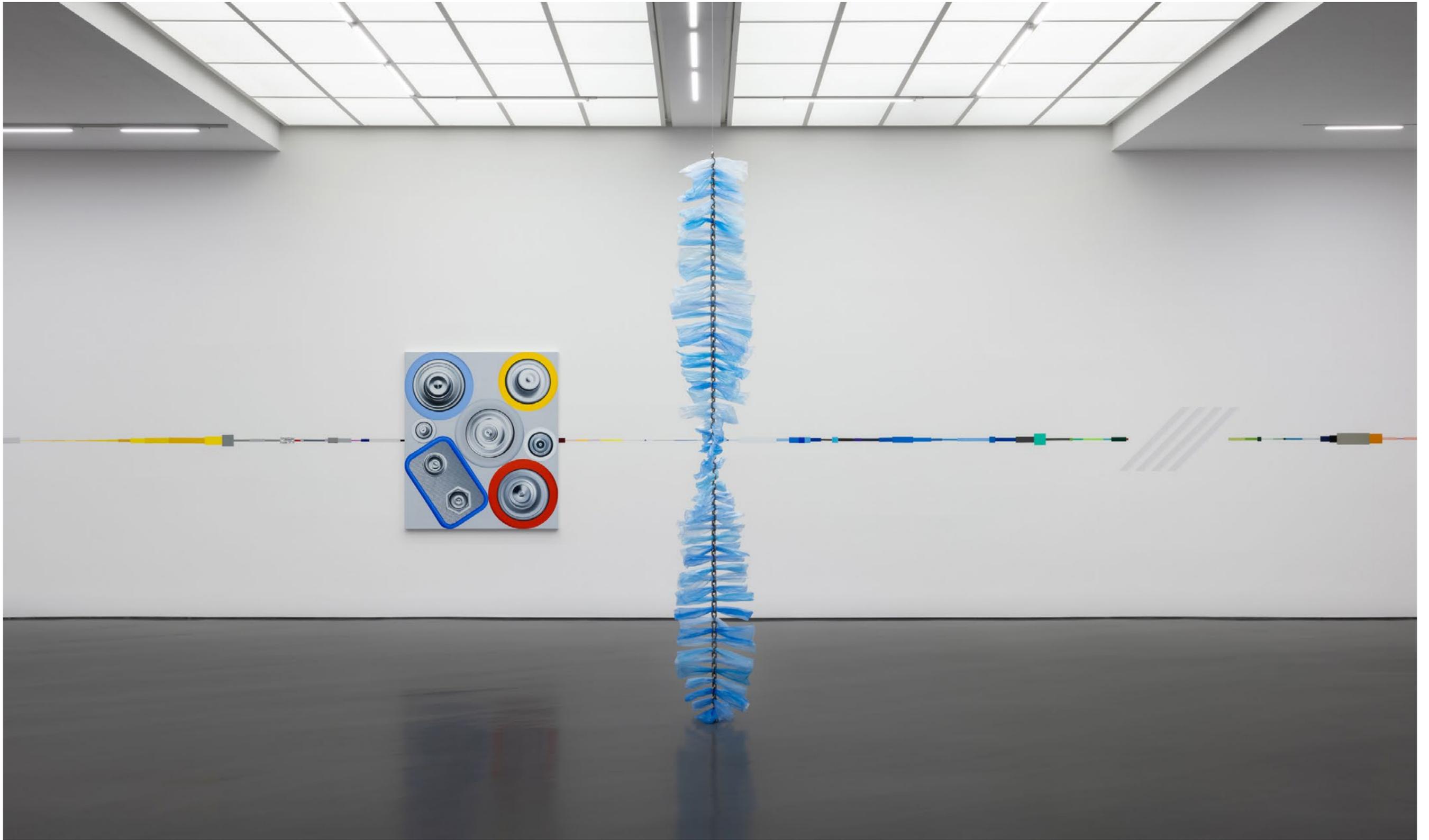
Exhibition view: **Jac Leirner**, Centro Universitário Maria Antonia, São Paulo, 2001



Exhibition view: Jac Leirner, **Hip Hop by Jac Leirner and Other Recent Acquisitions**, The Bohem Foundation, 120 Wooster Street, New York, (1998). Collection Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, Gift of The Bohem Foundation, 2001.



Exhibition view: Jac Leirner, Sala Mendoza, Caracas (1998)



Exhibition view: Jac Leirner and Rafa Silveas, **Ensemble**, Esther Schipper, Berlin (2025)

ANTROPOMORPHIC, 2024

Jac Leirner's large-scale work **Antropomorphico** consists of a metal chain through which blue newspaper bags have been threaded. Suspended from above with its lower part just touching the floor, the chain with its protruding bags takes on the appearance of a figure, perhaps, as the title suggests, a human shape. The recognition, despite the blatant dissimilarity to a human figure, can be a point of departure to wonder about the fleeting, poetic connection made in everyday life.

Plastic bags play an outsized role in Leirner's oeuvre. Her most iconic historical works consisted of large amounts of found shopping bags orderly arranged to cover walls and entire rooms.

The works of Jac Leirner are often created from mundane or formally unremarkable materials such as bank notes, blankets, cigarette paper, or store-bought items such as rulers, levels or wires. Her large-scale installations recall the formal stricture of minimalist seriality and the evocative use of found materials characteristic of Arte Povera, while at the same time offering commentary on social codes.



Jac Leirner, **Antropomorphico**, 2024, metal chain, plastic bag, 310 x 50 x 50 cm (122 x 19 3/4 x 19 3/4 in) (JL 111)



Detail: Jac Leirner, **Antropomorphico**, 2024, metal chain, plastic bag, 310 x 50 x 50 cm (122 x 19 3/4 x 19 3/4 in) (JL 111)

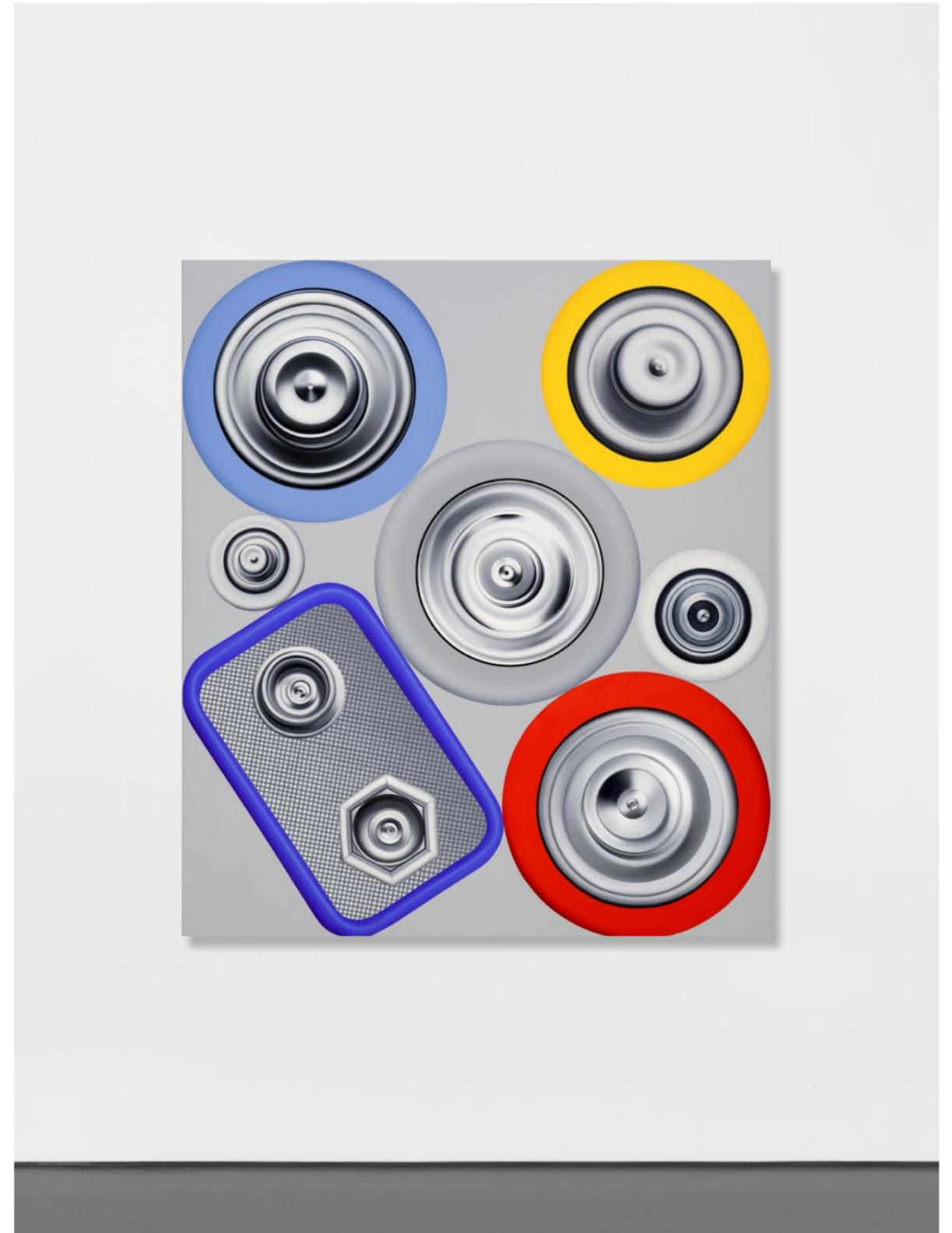


Detail: Jac Leirner, **Antropomorphico**, 2024, metal chain, plastic bag, 310 x 50 x 50 cm (122 x 19 3/4 x 19 3/4 in) (JL 111)

808, 2025

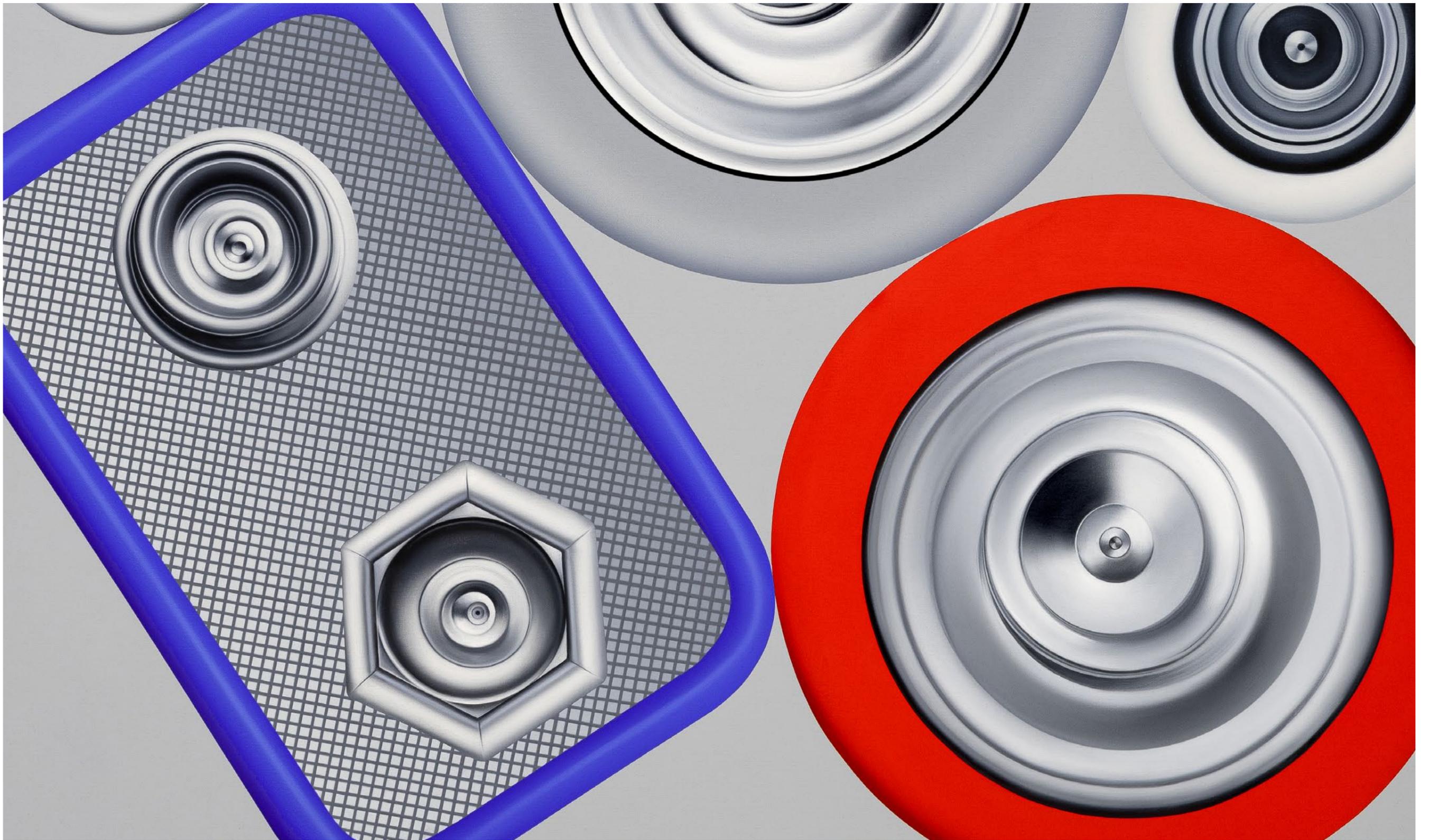
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Rafa Silvares, **808**, 2025, oil on linen, 150 x 130 cm (59 x 51 1/8 in) (RAS 001)

[High-res jpeg download link](#)



Detail: Rafa Silveira, **808**, 2025, oil on linen, 150 x 130 cm (59 x 51 1/8 in) (RAS 001)



Exhibition view: Jac Leirner and Rafa Silveas, **Ensemble**, Esther Schipper, Berlin (2025)

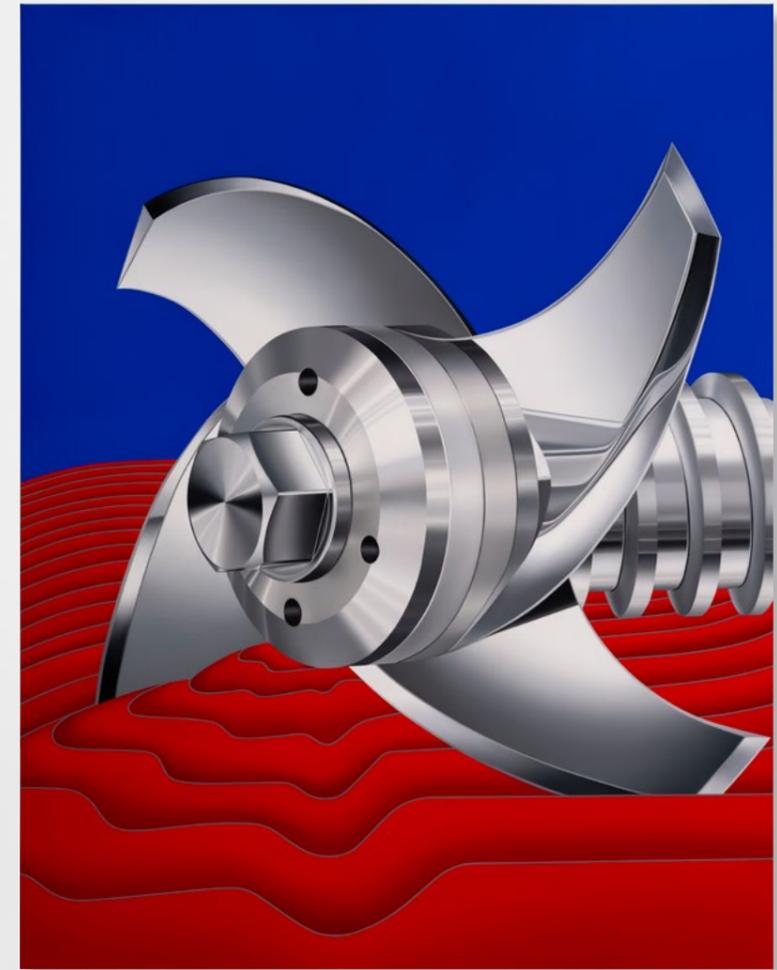


Exhibition view: Jac Leirner and Rafa Silveiras, **Ensemble**, Esther Schipper, Berlin (2025)

MILL, 2025

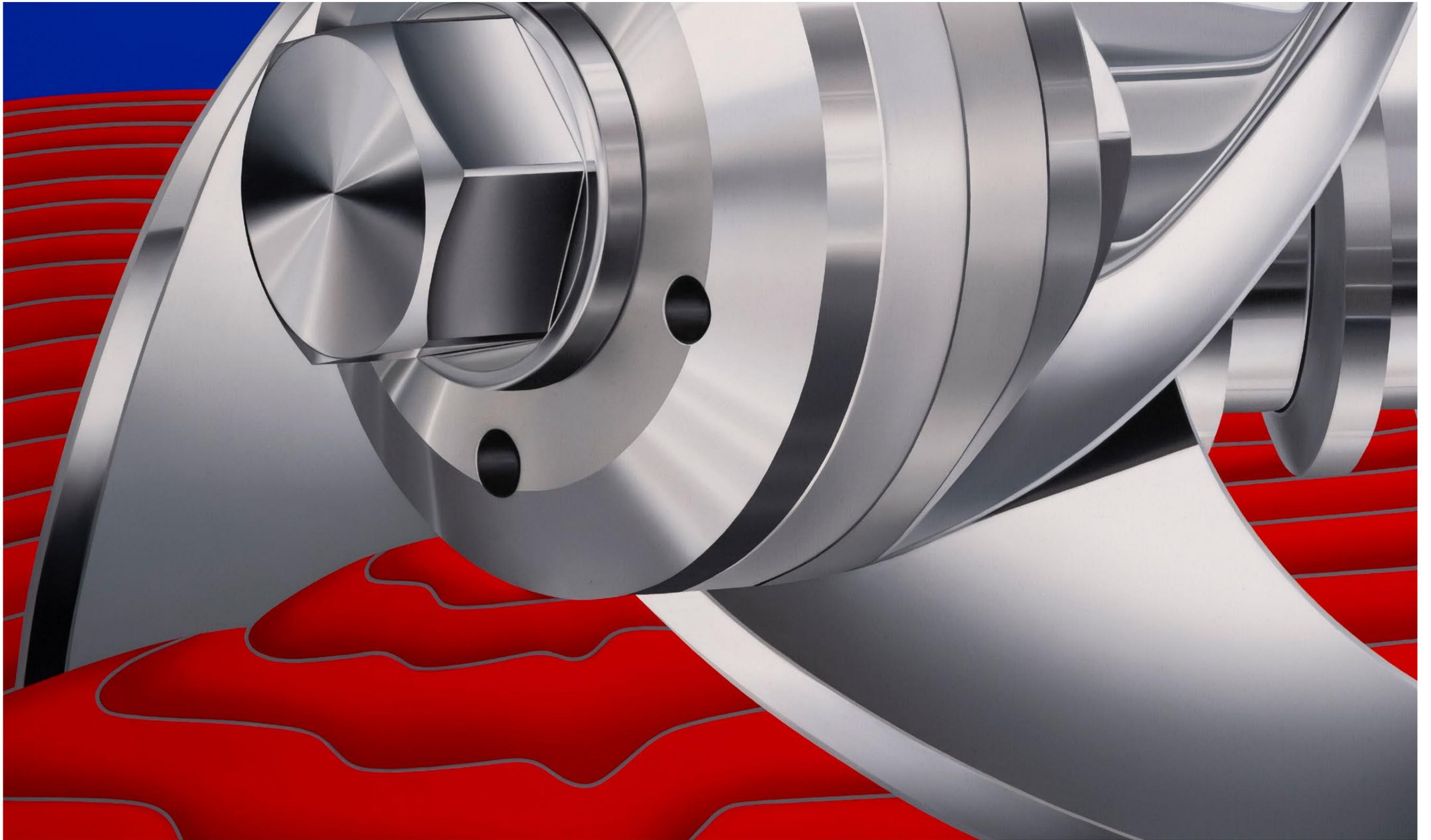
Executed in oil on canvas, the large scale work depicts an abstract landscape comprised of viscous mounds that appear to unfurl slowly, interrupted only by the crisp contour of a metallic object: a helical screw blade.

In Rafa Silvaes's work, time appears arrested and space collapsed onto itself. Amidst the seductiveness of their smooth surface and the visual pleasure of expanses of brilliant color, we have an intuitive understanding of the allegorical nature of his paintings. Their frozen movements evoke the end of the belief in the inherent benefit of progress. The static fluidity of their masses—be they natural formations (water, mud, or lava) or expelled from human-made machinery (pipes, pistons, or washers)—is in a kind of limbo.



Rafa Silvaes, **Mill**, 2025, oil on linen, 200 x 155 cm (78 3/4 x 61 in) (RAS 005)

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Detail: Rafa Silveiras, **Mill**, 2025, oil on linen, 200 x 155 cm (78 3/4 x 61 in) (RAS 005)



Exhibition view: Jac Leirner and Rafa Silveiras, **Ensemble**, Esther Schipper, Berlin (2025)



Rafa Silveira, **Pillars**, 2025, oil on linen, 200 x 155 cm (78 3/4 x 61 in) (RAS 006)

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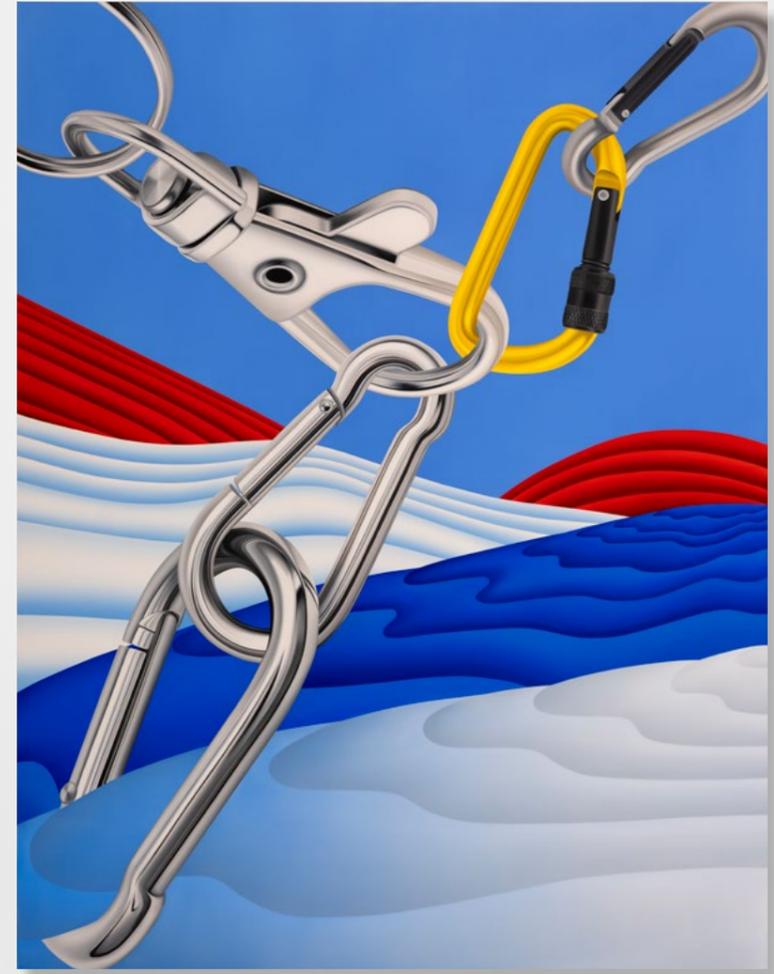


Exhibition view: Jac Leirner and Rafa Silveiras, **Ensemble**, Esther Schipper, Berlin (2025)

HYPERLINK, 2025

The large scale work depicts an abstract landscape comprised of viscous mounds that appear to unfurl slowly, interrupted only by the crisp contour of a metallic object: interlocked snap hooks.

The work was produced for Silvaes's first exhibition with the gallery, where his work was presented alongside Jac Leirner's. **Hyperlink** pays tribute to Leirner's trademark gesture of tying, clipping, or otherwise attaching products bought at hardware stores into extensive installations.



Rafa Silvaes, **Hyperlink**, 2025, oil on linen, 200 x 155 cm (78 3/4 x 61 in) (RAS 003)

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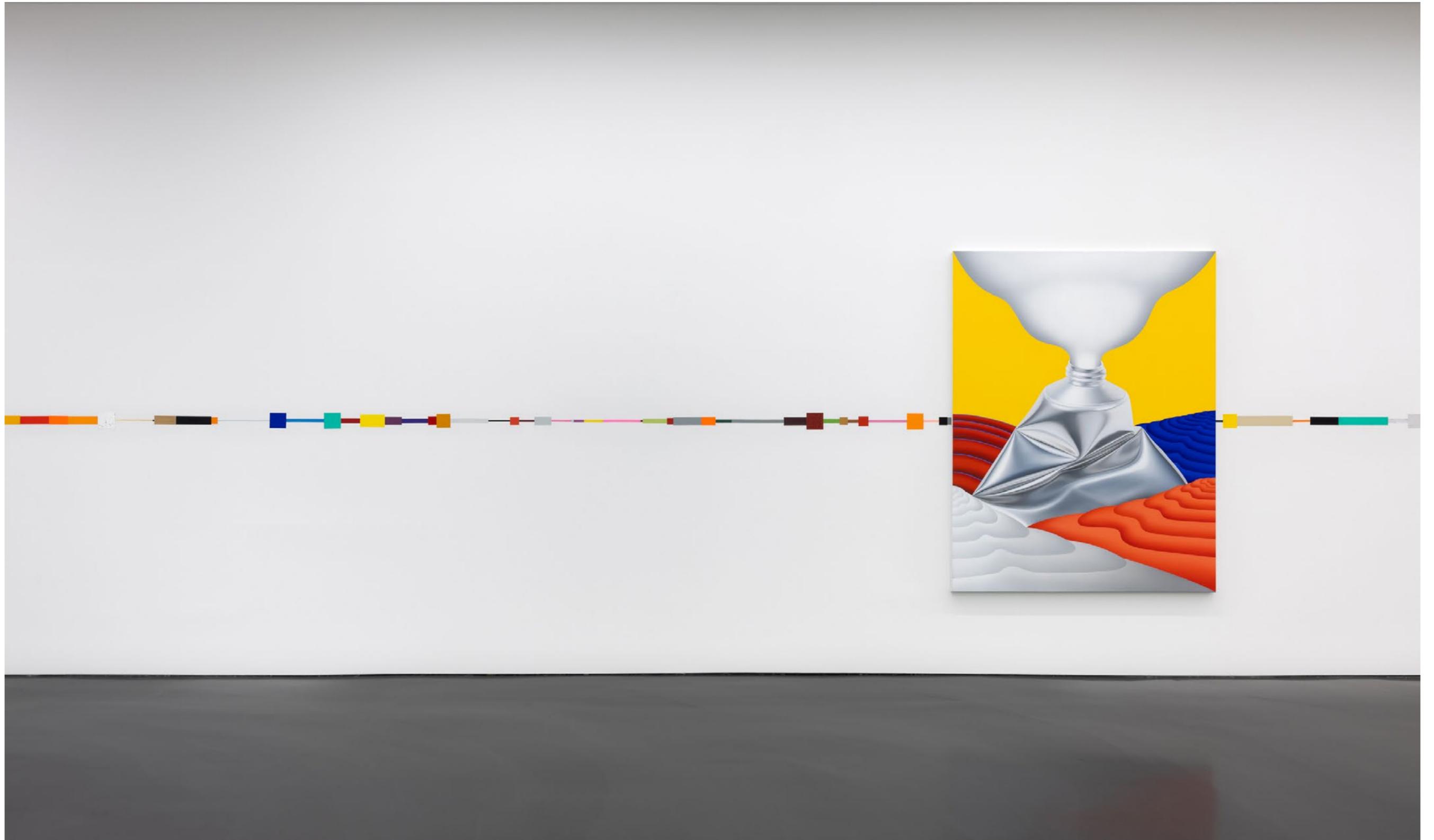
Detail: Rafa Silveira, **Hyperlink**, 2025, oil on linen, 200 x 155 cm (78 3/4 x 61 in) (RAS 003)



Rafa Silveiras, **Titanium**, 2025, oil on linen, 200 x 155 cm (78 3/4 x 61 in) (RAS 004)

[High-res jpeg download link](#)





Exhibition view: Jac Leirner and Rafa Silveiras, **Ensemble**, Esther Schipper, Berlin (2025)



Exhibition view: Jac Leirner and Rafa Silveiras, **Ensemble**, Esther Schipper, Berlin (2025)

POLE, 2025

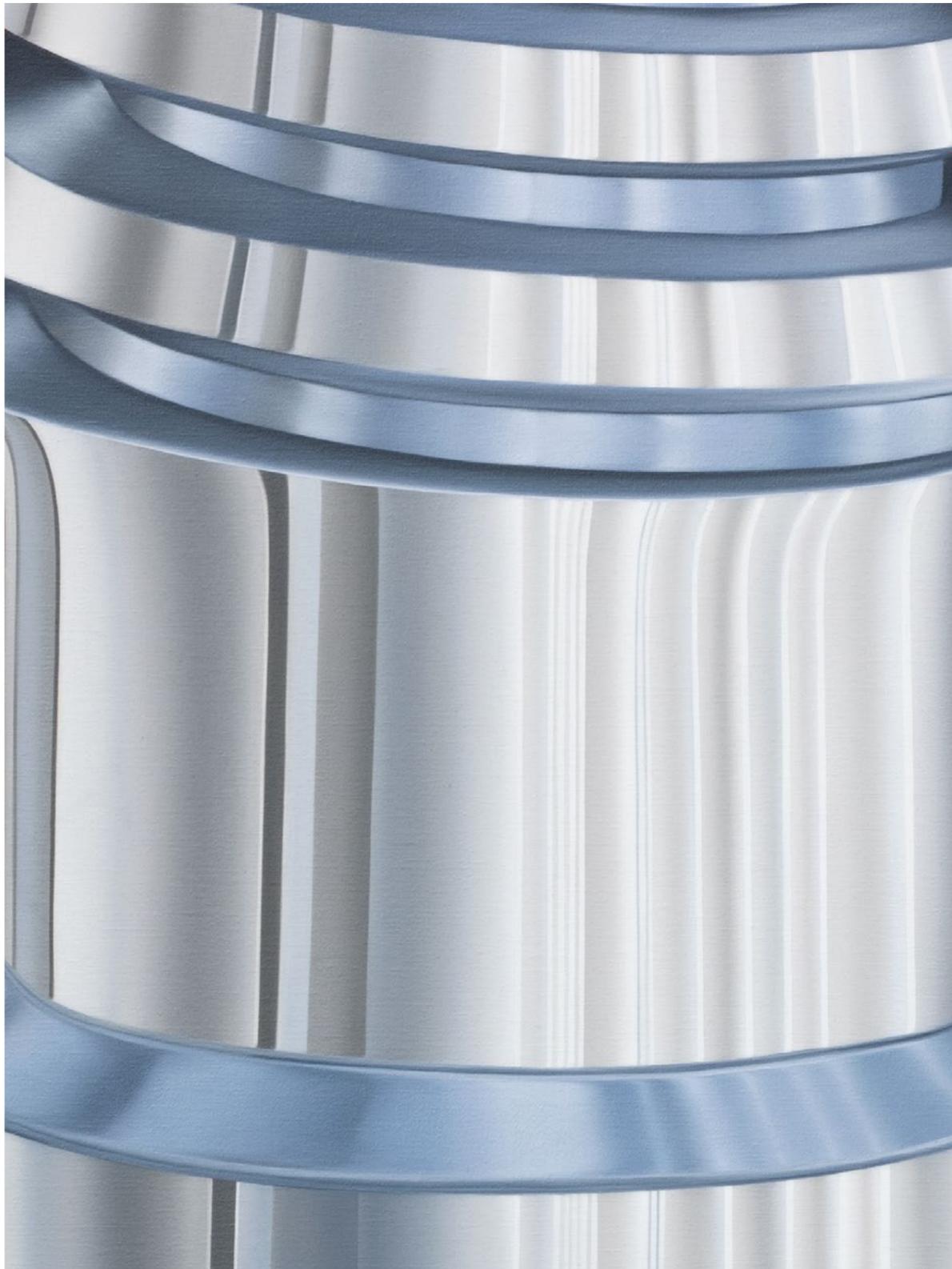
Pole (2025) captures a moment of suspended time, evoking the image of a melting pillar. The painting juxtaposes vivid scarlet and electric blue, the latter literally stepping out of the frame. Notably, Silvaes departs from the typically smooth and perfectly even surfaces of his canvases, employing a molding paste to raise the foamy blue volume splayed across the silvery hue of a large drill.

With **Pole**, Silvaes introduces a new element to his practice: molding paste. This technical twist imparts a subtle relief-like quality to the painting's surface while simultaneously alluding to Jac Leirner's **Hip Hop** (1998/2025). The work was produced for Silvaes's first exhibition with the gallery, where his work was presented alongside a new version of Jac Leirner's installation **Hip Hop**, comprised of a horizontal line made from hundreds of pieces of adhesive tape in different widths, colors and thickness. Echoing the tactile and adhesive qualities of Leirner's work, **Pole** marks Silvaes's exploration of a novel textural technique.



Rafa Silvaes, **Pole**, 2025, oil on linen, 200 x 100 cm (78 3/4 x 39 3/8 in) (RAS 002)

[High-res jpeg download link](#)



Detail: Rafa Silveiras, **Pole**, 2025, oil on linen, 200 x 100 cm (78 3/4 x 39 3/8 in) (RAS 002)



Detail: Rafa Silveiras, **Pole**, 2025, oil on linen, 200 x 100 cm (78 3/4 x 39 3/8 in) (RAS 002)



Exhibition view: Jac Leirner and Rafa Silveas, **Ensemble**, Esther Schipper, Berlin (2025)

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