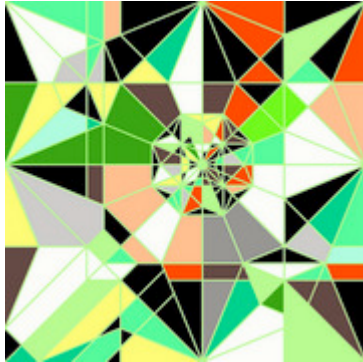


ARTFORUM

Sarah Morris

GALERIE MAX HETZLER
Zimmerstrasse 90/91
November 3–December 22



Praying Mantis (Origami), 2007, household gloss paint on canvas, 84 1/4 x 84 1/4".

China, in particular the boomtown Beijing, host of the 2008 Summer Olympic Games, is the cultural framework of Sarah Morris's recent painting series, "Rings" and "Origami," both 2006–. In her fourth solo show at Max Hetzler, the artist, known for cinematographic films and multicolored glossy geometric paintings that up to now have referred to major American cities, presents three new works in each series. The "Ring" paintings map agglomerations of intertwining circles atop colored backgrounds. They reference Beijing's trademark ring roads while evoking the glamour of the Olympic logo. The networklike forms in the "Origami" paintings enlarge the flat shapes of found origami diagrams. By referring to origami, a cultural symbol of change, Morris reflects on the emergence of new structures from old, perhaps most dramatically embodied in Beijing's rapidly morphing urban landscape. Although the "Origami" pictures are clearly recognizable as Morris's work, their playful approach stands in clear contrast to the artist's "American" paintings, which scaled down the grids of already existing modernist building facades.

Additionally, Morris's sixth film, *Robert Towne*, 2006, is screened in the gallery's new outdoor space. In this intimate, quasi-documentary portrait of the Hollywood figure Robert Towne, who won an Academy Award for his screenplay for *Chinatown* (1974), he discusses conspiracy, paranoia, and corruption in the film business. Although the film's settings are unspectacular, it is nonetheless fascinating to follow Towne's statements and facial expressions. In contrast to Morris's earlier films, here the words of an individual near the center of a system of power allow her to explore a city not from the outside in, but from the inside out. By choosing the title "Chinatown" for an exhibition combining paintings about "Chinese" subjects and this film, Morris may be reminding viewers that Los Angeles in the 1930s (when the film *Chinatown* is set) was a boomtown of its own and host to the 1932 Olympics. The juxtaposition offers a striking parable about the forces of development operating in China today.

—Barbara Buchmaier

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