

Petzel

SARAH MORRIS

Midtown Paintings: 1998–2001

November 1, 2018 – January 5, 2019

Opening Reception: Thursday, November 1st, 6–8pm

35 East 67th Street

Petzel Gallery is pleased to announce New York-based artist, Sarah Morris's ninth solo exhibition with the gallery, and her first at our Upper East Side location.

The year is 1993: Sarah Morris, mid twenties, rents a studio between Times Square and Port Authority Bus Terminal on 42nd Street, a place, she says, where “urban decay and excess meet mainstream”. Drawn to explore the coded relationship she witnesses between people and architecture at this nexus of pornography and the corporate world, Morris records, surveys, absorbs fragments and particles of visual information: a flâneur's view of the mapping of power. Embedded in New York's real estate, redolent with the artist's trespassing eye, the *Midtown* paintings and Morris's first paradigmatic film, index the artist's unique vision of the city and its future.

Fast forward twenty years—the *Midtown* paintings and the eponymous nine minute, 16mm film have become the visual distillation of Morris's practice: precise, glamorous, de-familiarizing; portentous of dystopic futurism. *Midtown* is a harbinger of Morris' series to follow, as the artist situated herself and her subject matter in the cities of Washington D.C., Los Angeles, Beijing, Rio, Abu Dhabi among others. The *Midtown* paintings and film are also prescient of a world on the cusp of change and equally of the artist's role in relation to that. Michael Tarantino, then Head of Exhibitions at Oxford Museum of Modern Art, England, in an interview with Morris in 1999 (for her first Institutional show), describes the deconstructive nature of her work, parallel to the city and vision itself:

Walking down 42nd Street, the notion of a singular, coherent image is all but invisible—everything is multiplied—the lights, the shops, the roar of the traffic, the prostitutes, the dealers...Even the street banter seems multiplied, seems to be endlessly repeated, like a loop...¹

Seductive and alienating, trenchant and refined, the *Midtown* paintings unequivocally locate the inception of the arc of Morris's oeuvre—in which she tracks the transient nature of the politics of place, beginning with this dynamic metropolis.

Sarah Morris lives and works in New York.

Petzel Gallery is located on the third floor of 35 East 67th Street between Madison and Park Avenues, New York. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00 AM–6:00 PM. For press inquires, please contact Janine Latham at janine@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.

¹Tarantino, Michael. (1999). *Sarah Morris Interviewed*. Modern Worlds. Oxford, UK: MOMA, Oxford.