

WHITE CUBE

Sarah Morris

Machines do not make us into Machines

17 April – 30 June 2019

White Cube Bermondsey

South Gallery, 9 × 9 × 9

White Cube Bermondsey presents Sarah Morris's first solo show in the UK in six years. Featuring paintings, films, a site-specific wall painting as well as the artist's first sculptural work, the exhibition reflects Morris's interest in networks, typologies, architecture, language and the city.

Employing an architecture of colourful and abstract forms, Morris's paintings play on the viewer's sense of visual recognition. She incorporates a wide range of references, from the graphic identity of multinational corporations and the structure of urban transport systems to the iconography of maps, GPS technology, as well as the movement of people within urban areas. Morris sees her paintings as being part of a larger self-generating system, always remaining open and allowing for interpretation, motion and change. Within her practice, each canvas and each film can be considered as part of an index, offering a set of coordinates which point to a vast and constantly evolving network of visual, social and political connections. Morris has said 'I start the films with coordinates and it is not dissimilar with the paintings. There is a certain set of points, a certain set of coordinates: the places, situations, and rooms I want to be in, and the people I want to meet. It is literally that specific. It's creating an open system and letting it run.'

Her new series of 'Sound Graph' paintings continue to utilize the language of American abstraction, of minimalism and pop, while their forms are derived from the artist's sound files, using the speech from audio recordings as a starting point for the compositions. The paintings began when Morris conceptualised the film *Finite and Infinite Games* (2017), which is also presented in the exhibition. Titled after the cult novel by James P. Carse, the film was shot in Herzog & de Meuron's infamous and expensive Elbphilharmonie concert hall in Hamburg. It uses the voice of polymath Alexander Kluge, a German filmmaker, writer, poet, lawyer, philosopher and broadcaster, reading a script Morris crafted from the book, which, according to the artist, functions as a warning. Featuring hard-edged geometric shapes, the compositions in the paintings progress and recede in patterns that appear to fluctuate across the canvas, creating a sense of volumetric build-up and release, as if as a visual analogy of coding.

While they are derived from fragments of conversations, Morris's forms also reference concrete elements: digital files, the lights on audio equipment, the encoded information on bar charts and flow diagrams or the structures of mapping. Highlighting how language is a construct, particularly important in relation to art in our 'post-truth' age, they connect with the history of modernist abstraction while remaining conceptual in their process of production. Here language becomes image, attesting to the impossibility of a painting ever truly being abstract.

Shown in London for the first time, Morris's recent film *Abu Dhabi* (2017) explores the psycho-geography and undercurrents of this capital city through her signature style of creating layered and fragmented narratives. Commissioned by the Guggenheim, the film captures the country and in particular the city, in a horizontal slice; with scenes of grand spectacle such as 'The National Day' which celebrated the country's 46th anniversary, the 'non-spaces' of its much discussed workforce, its Falcon Hospital and archival footage of the city's history with British Petroleum. These scenes create a multitude of concealed stories that run through the film, without beginning, end or commentary.

Also presented for the first time is a new, large-scale site-specific wall painting titled *Ataraxia* (2019), after a philosophical concept meaning an end state of 'imperturbable calm' or, conversely, a means to an end; the ideal mental state for soldiers preparing for battle. For Morris the state of ataraxia is an impossibility, yet perhaps something that the paintings offer. The work references the visual iconography of the urban environment, allowing the viewer to reflect on the relationships between the space of the gallery, the surrounding city, the abstract space of the work, and speech and vision itself. Like her paintings on canvas, Morris's wall painting maintains an endless series of global connections, using the grid as a constantly expanding form beyond the viewer's immediate field of vision.

In juxtaposition to this, Morris's first sculpture, titled *What can be explained can also be predicted* (2019), is comprised of modular, glass tubes of various heights and colours, arranged on a gridded marble plinth. These staggered, vertical, colourful forms appear

resolutely minimal, musical, phallic and architectonic. Glass is also used as an urban sculptural material in Morris's new commission for New York's Metropolitan Transport Authority. Permanently installed around the corner from her studio, at the elevated 39th Avenue metro station, two large-scale panels frame each side of the train platforms and offer a fractured, geometric composition in which the commuter can see the city but also be seen from the street below. Entitled *Hellion Equilibrium*, its presence generates a further layer of reflection, fragmentation and transparency for the commuter moving within the city.

BIOGRAPHY

Sarah Morris was born in 1967 in the UK and lives and works in New York. She has exhibited extensively including solo exhibitions at Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing (2018); Espoo Museum of Modern Art, Finland (2017); M Museum, Leuven, Belgium (2015); Kunsthalle Bremen, Germany (2013); Wexner Center for the Arts, Columbus, Ohio (2012); Fondation Beyeler, Basel, Switzerland (2008); Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2006); Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2005); Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (2001); and Modern Art Oxford, UK (1999). Group exhibitions include Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2017); Tate Triennial, Tate Britain, London (2003); 25th Bienal de São Paulo (2002); and 4th Site Santa Fe Biennial, New Mexico (2001).

White Cube Bermondsey is open
Tuesday–Saturday, 10am – 6pm and Sunday, 12 – 6pm.
Admission is free.

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