

Press Release

Rebecca Morris
Il Gattopardo

April 29 – June 17, 2017
Opening Friday April 28, 6–9 pm
Gallery hours, Tue–Sa, 11 am – 6 pm

“Abstraction never left, motherfuckers,” wrote Rebecca Morris in her *Manifesto (For Abstractionists and Friends of the Non-Objective)*, published on the occasion of her first solo show at Galerie Barbara Weiss in 2006. “If you can’t stop, don’t stop.” Now, ten years later, we are pleased to present the Los Angeles-based painter’s (*1969) fourth solo exhibition at the gallery, comprising new, medium- and large-format, non-objective paintings.

The paintings, which vary significantly in terms of appearance, have one thing in common: splotches of paint. Sometimes blurry, other times clearly defined against the painted ground, either gently dabbed on, dripped, or sprayed, they are characteristic for the artist – a means of structuring the painting’s flatness, while also lending her mostly geometric compositions a kind of ease and something of the organic. In such a way, the largest painting in the show – *Untitled (#05-17)*, 2017, 249 x 257 cm – depicts an enigmatic form flecked with beige and black paint splotches. It resembles a stencil, and some color shapes extend beyond the murky brown speckled background across the seemingly strict, light lines of the stencil-like form’s surface. In another painting, a large, cloudy white monochrome with a metallic silver border – *Untitled (#04-17)*, 2017, 239 x 239 cm – is patterned over with black dabs made with a paintbrush. In yet another work – the different mauves and reds of *Untitled (#08-17)*, 2017, 175 x 178 cm – the artist set various color shapes, all flecked with splotches of paint, to collide with one another like in a collage. And in another painting, this one taller than it is wide – *Untitled (#06-17)*, 2017, 228 x 203 cm – from behind a silver-green fog of color and flanked by a corner painted in black-and-white checkerboard, a field of color patterned with a variety of hues moves forward into view; a small area of it contains brown drops against a yellow background.

It’s not much of a leap to think of drawings of animal skins. Be they giraffes, zebras, or the leopards referenced in the exhibition’s title. *Il Gattopardo*, after all, is not just the name of a large cat with black, ring-shaped spots that serve as both camouflage and a type of distinction; it is also the title of a famous film by Luchino Visconti about the Italian nobility’s thirst for power during the *Risorgimento*. Morris is particularly fascinated by the abnormally long – even epic – camera work and pans in the film’s original version. Slowly, patiently, they allow crowded scenes or the sweeping, hot, dry Italian landscape to unfold. Also referenced by the exhibition’s title is the Italian restaurant of the same name in Midtown Manhattan, where Rebecca Morris and Barbara Weiss liked to meet when both were in town.

With the phrase “Making You the Leopard”, Rebecca Morris recalls, on top of everything else, her faux leopard coat, which was her ‘signature garment’ in the years after she graduated high school. If you read it alongside Christian Dior’s statement for *Leopard* – “If you are fair and sweet, don’t wear it!” (in *The Little Dictionary of Fashion*, 1954) – you can hear, indirectly, Morris’s above-mentioned manifesto ring out: “BE A FORCE ... Strive for deeper structure ... Fight monomania” – that’s what it says. Let’s follow in that vein!

Barbara Buchmaier