

Press Release

Rebecca Morris
#33

September 14 – October 26, 2024
Tuesday–Saturday, 11am–6pm

Trautwein Herleth is pleased to announce a solo exhibition by Los Angeles based painter Rebecca Morris. Straightforwardly titled, #33, this exhibition is Morris's 33rd solo exhibition. It is also her fifth solo exhibition with the gallery, marking two decades of collaboration.

In this latest body of work, Morris pushes onward in her rigorous interrogation of abstraction. Her commitment to the non-objective is the essence of her practice and the expansiveness of this devotion is reflected in the paintings on view here. The six large-scale canvases rise to the task of accommodating Morris's gleeful multivalence – towards materials, composition, color, craft, art and design history, and the spectrum of good and bad taste. Like the title of the exhibition, the paintings' titles are also products of a sequential numbering system, but this systemization belies the freewheeling spirit of Morris's work. Openness and embrace of improvisation run through her painterly approach. Working with highly diluted oil paint, Morris drips and pools color, embedding it in the grain of the canvas and letting it diffuse around the edges or bleed into a neighboring shape. There is no chance for erasure, each fluid mark is preserved in the final composition – deliberate, but never didactic.

"I am an additive person. I can lump and add things on, but I can't cut. So I have my own systems."

The gestures and techniques that Morris has developed as arenas for experimentation are all on view here: the segmentation of space (be it through scaffold-like grids, nebulous cut-outs, or abutting shapes); rich and unexpected color combinations; and metallic paint sprayed on top of impasto, resulting in gleaming, rippling texture that stands in contrast to the viscous, turpentine diluted oil paint. The possibilities of her visual language are tested in both highly considered and accidental ways. As a painting develops, often section by section, Morris allows the interacting components to dictate her next steps – giving curiosity enough say in the matter to override ideas of convention or even taste. She takes risks, placing swaths of acidic pea soup green just a few centimeters away from cloudy Beaujolais pink. She lets impediments generate form and then searches for new impediments.

"There is always a bit of ambiguity as to whether I am painting the background, or the foreground, or painting the flicker between these two possible spaces. I like that in-betweenness more than deciding."

Abstract painting carries with it specific historical baggage and Morris's selective reverence for the canon allows her practice to push abstraction into new territory. With nonchalance she finds constellations between the very narrow history of Western Modernist painting and the whole of visual experience at large. She seeks out colors and forms that have been maligned by art history and rehabilitates them. Irreverent, but never cynical, Morris's capacious well of inspiration overrides dogma, giving life to imaginative new approaches to the constantly evolving and expanded field of painting.