



M VAN  
MUSEUM  
LEUVEN

Leuven, 16 october 2015

## SARAH MORRIS ASTROS HAWK

19.10.2015 <> 20.03.2016



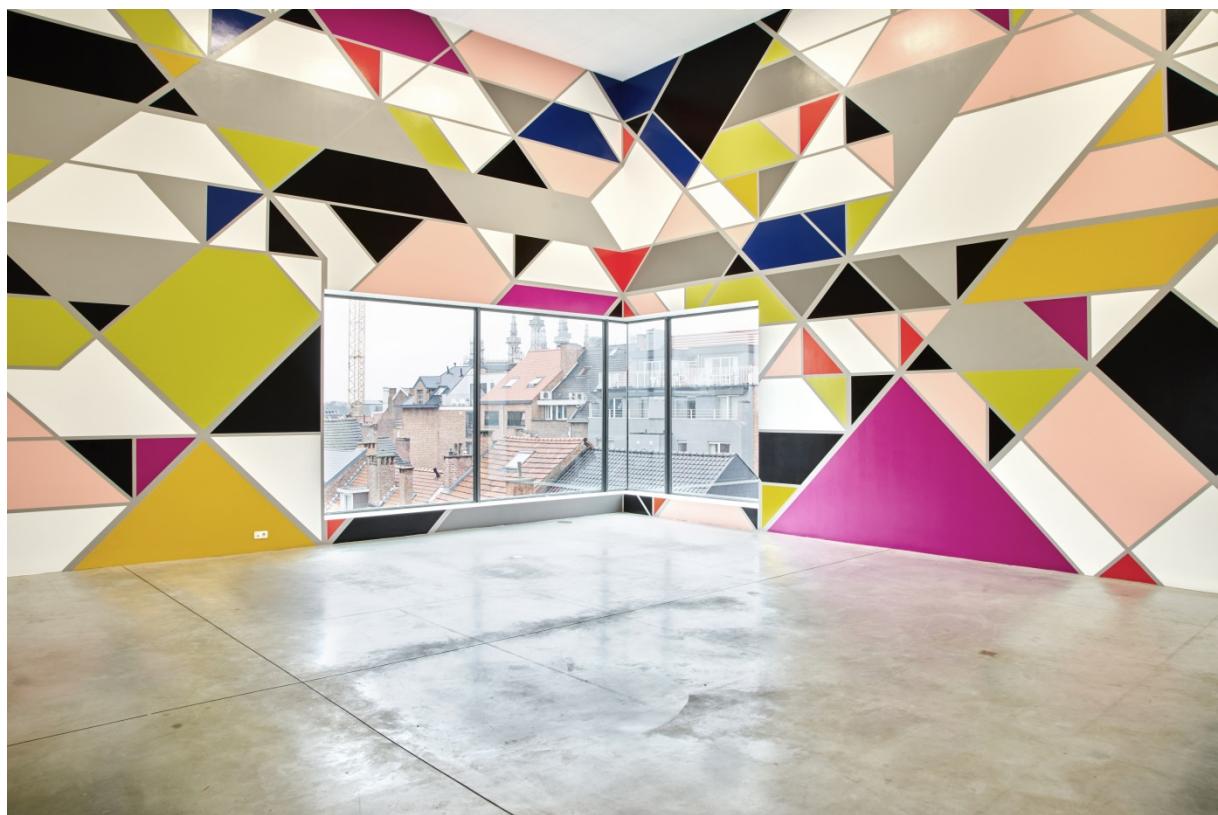
Annual Solar Eclipse [Rio] (2014)

## INTRODUCTION

M - Museum Leuven presents a solo exhibition by American artist **Sarah Morris** (°1967). Sarah Morris is an internationally recognized painter and filmmaker. She is known for her graphic abstractions, which play with the architecture and psychology of urban environments. The exhibition consists of several series of paintings and drawings, four films, including the most recent film, *Strange Magic* (2014), *Rio* (2012), *Beijing* (2008) and *1972* (2008), and a large-scale site-specific wall painting.

Her abstract, diagrammatic paintings employ and create a ‘virtual architecture’ that play with notions of social space, identity, and capitalism. Morris incorporates a wide range of references including Oscar Niemeyer, perfume distillation, airports, crowd control, Olympic Games, advertising, prostitution, the Eiffel Tower, Romy Schneider and Sambódromo among many others. Located at the crossroads of Pop, Conceptual art and geometric abstraction, Morris has been an influential force since the late 1990s, manifesting the complex conversation between the artist, society and power structures that govern them.

### MURAL: Maqta [Abu Dhabi]



Maqta [Abu Dhabi] (2015), M - Museum Leuven

Sarah Morris has created a unique wall painting specifically for the last room of her exhibition at the top of M Museum. Here she looks to the future and draws inspiration from the emerging forms of Abu Dhabi. Five painters worked for four weeks on the piece, which consists of 11 different colours. The

imposing grid is 23 metres wide and 7 metres high. Sarah Morris has made several site-specific designs and murals in the past, including the Gloucester Road tube station in London (Big Ben, 2012) and one at K20 in Düsseldorf (Hornet, 2010).

## FILMS

### Beijing (2008)



Beijing (2008) Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube



Beijing (2008) Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

In '*Beijing*' (2008) Sarah Morris focuses on the city during the international spectacle of the 2008 Olympics. Morris was one of the few people allowed to look behind the scenes, a privilege obtained after a long dialogue with the International Olympic Committee. The parallel painting series to this project were titled '*Origami*' and '*Rings*'. The Olympic Games also gave Morris an opportunity to show other developments in contemporary China, such as the country's overwhelming economic growth and the cultural implications of that for the Chinese people. '*Beijing*' shows a country that is going through a radical transformation. The Olympics brought it sudden and intense visibility, during which the Chinese authorities attempted to control the image presented to the outside world. In this way, the film questions the truth of the spectacle. Who ultimately controls how an image is formed? And what role does the artist play in that process?

Morris's films are shot using a technique of *cinéma vérité*, capturing the various situations and narratives that are simultaneously transpiring. However, no sound is recorded. The musical elements are composed especially for the film but autonomous from the images, by the British artist Liam Gillick and then arranged sequentially by Morris during the editing.

*I definitely think that all cinema has the potential to be very efficient propaganda. But so does a bottle of Coca Cola Light. – Sarah Morris*

## 1972 (2008)



1972 (2008) Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

While she was in pre-production for the film 'Beijing', Morris had the idea to make the film '1972' in 2008. It focuses upon the terrorist attack during the 1972 Munich Olympics, infamously called Black September, and centres on the failure of system planning and Nationalism. The psychologist, and former choreographer, Dr Georg Sieber was responsible for the security of the Games and for the contingency scenario planning which he predicted in his infamous scenario #26. Sieber's sobering account of the events of September 4, 1972 belies the contradictory power of nationalism versus rational thought, in this case, to a tragic end.

Morris uses Günther Behnisch's Munich stadium and the events that happened therein to explore notions of control, security, system planning and the individual. Sieber's story offers an alternative view from the inside as he resigned his position that fateful day.

*'I really felt lost and started to think about the idea of failure'. – Sarah Morris*

## Rio (2012)



Rio (2012) Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

In the case of Sarah Morris's film 'Rio' (2012), it was the failed film 'It's All True' by Orson Welles that led her to start the project. The work highlights the dual character of Rio de Janeiro, from its beaches, fruit markets, football stadiums and the architecture of Oscar Niemeyer, to the favelas, police and municipal control. Brazil is one of the world's "emerging economies", Morris set out to explore to depict the dialectic of Brazil's complicated history. As always, she made a parallel series of paintings 'Rio', before creating another series 'São Paulo' based on Brazil's largest metropolis. Titles are a way for Morris to create a "virtual architecture", a term the artist calls a form of monopoly.



Rio (2012) Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

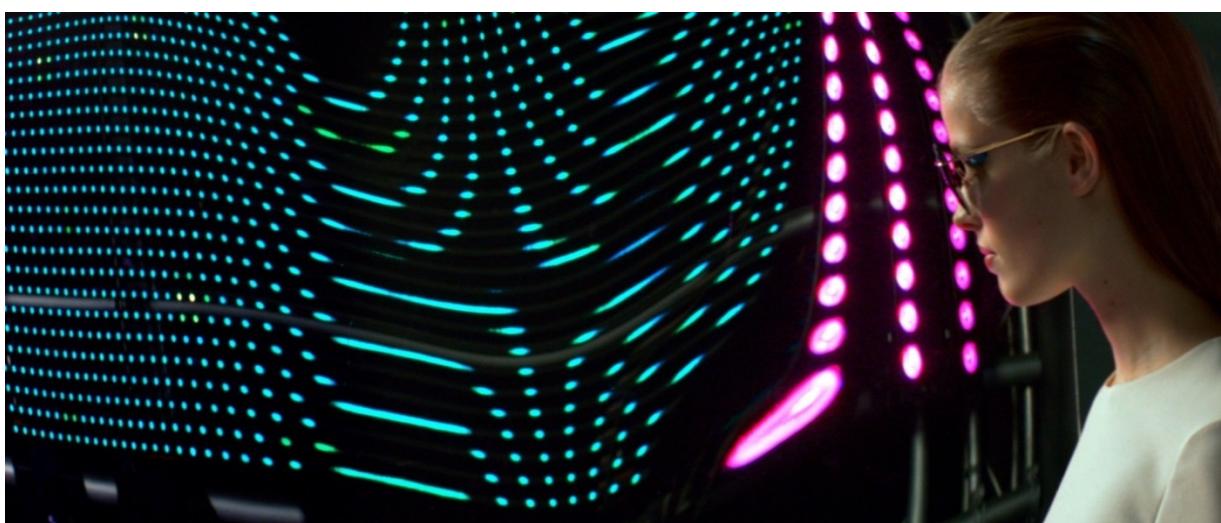
### Strange Magic (2014)



Strange Magic (2014) Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

Sarah Morris's films and paintings decode the built environment, exploring cultural, economic and social typologies of the city, and this case, a nation. Her latest film, 'Strange Magic', originally commissioned for the opening of the Foundation Louis Vuitton in Paris, designed by Frank Gehry, surveys France's production and manufacturing of luxury goods as the source of capital for the construction of the museum itself. Morris deconstructs the machinery behind France's cultural currency – in this case, fashion, fragrance, champagne, and architecture – to probe its national identity and the inherent fantasy in the concept (and desire) of luxury.

"Liquidity" is a recurring element in this film. Not just physical liquids like fountains, the Seine, champagne and perfume, but also the liquidity or intangibility of money (capital) is referenced. The title refers to the almost alchemical processes depicted in the film, some of which are medieval yet industrialized. Morris shows wealth as well as poverty. She flirts with luxury, but also distances herself from it. A further dimension is added by the fact that the film shares the artist's initials, SM. Who is speaking here? The artist or the brand?



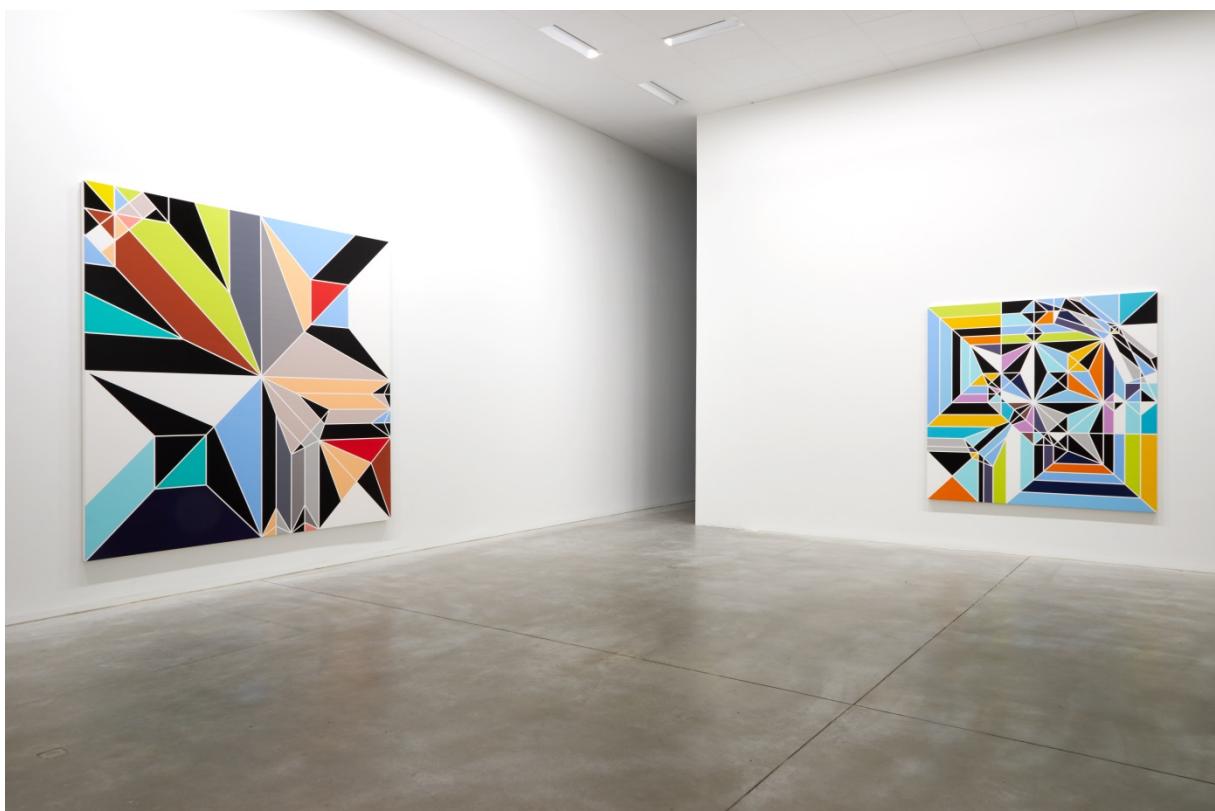
Strange Magic (2014) Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

## PAINTINGS

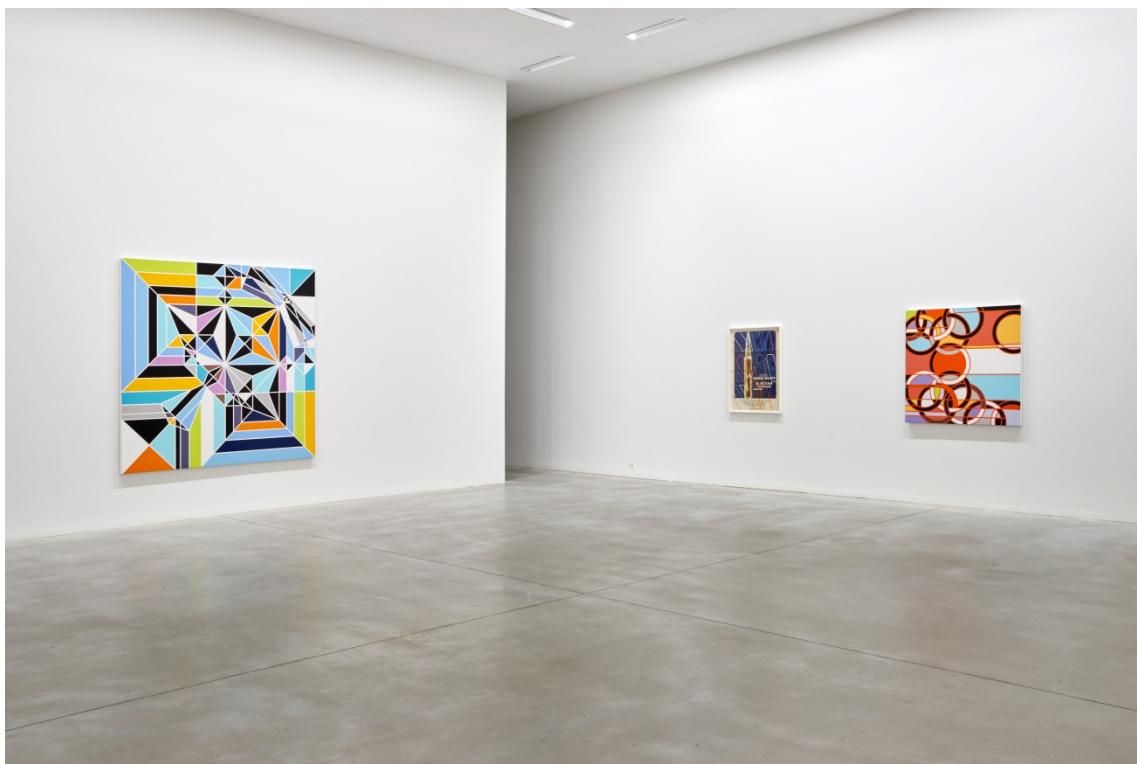
Morris sees the paintings and films as two sides of the same coin. Both depict social space. Whereas the paintings are slowly produced and constantly evolving, the films are bursts of activity involving much negotiation and many individuals. The two temporal speeds enable the other to exist. Both forms of art show the coordinates of a city. Morris is always revealing the power structures of cities, bureaucratic institutions, media and architecture. Morris's choice of color is a careful articulation, from diverse elements she encounters while visiting and moving through a place. Her painting '*Annual Solar Eclipse [Rio]*' (2014), which she based on the unique, visceral atmosphere of Rio de Janeiro, is a good example of complex geometric abstraction.

*I don't see the paintings actually that different. It's the same systematic approach. [...] I'm more interested in how people look in front of work. How people are effected by a work and become part of a larger grid.*

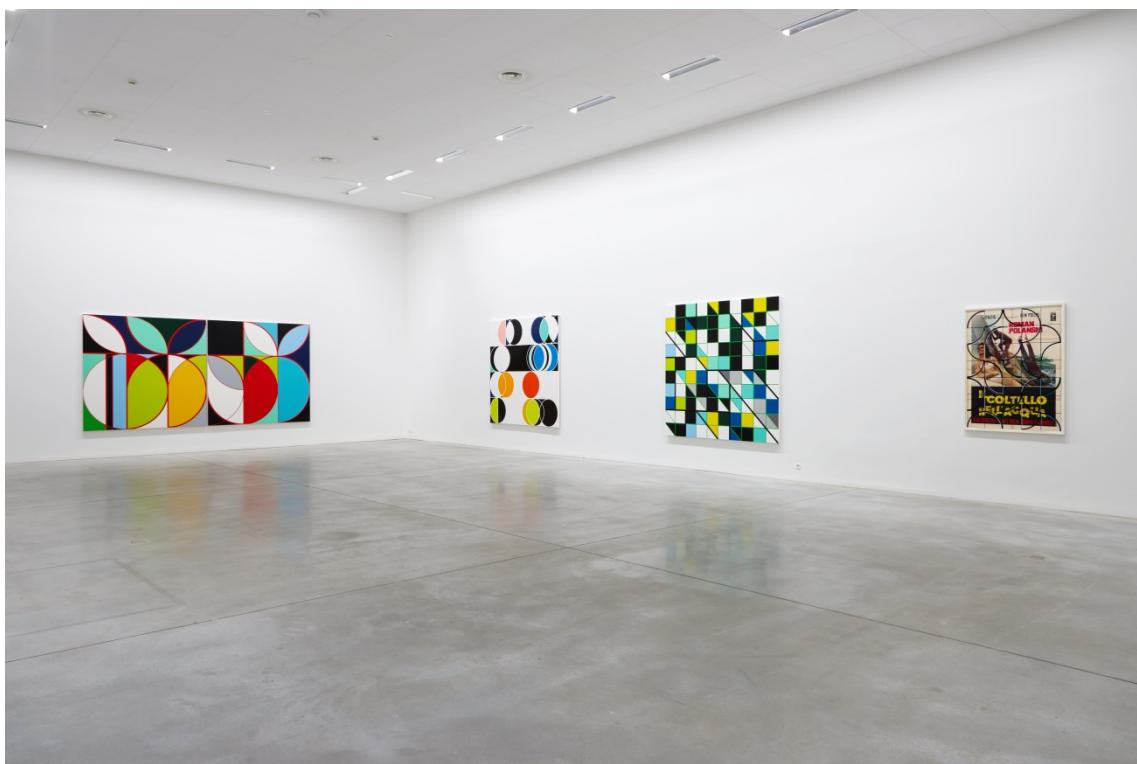
— Sarah Morris



From left to right: Rockhopper [Origami] (2009) & Angel [Origami] (2009)



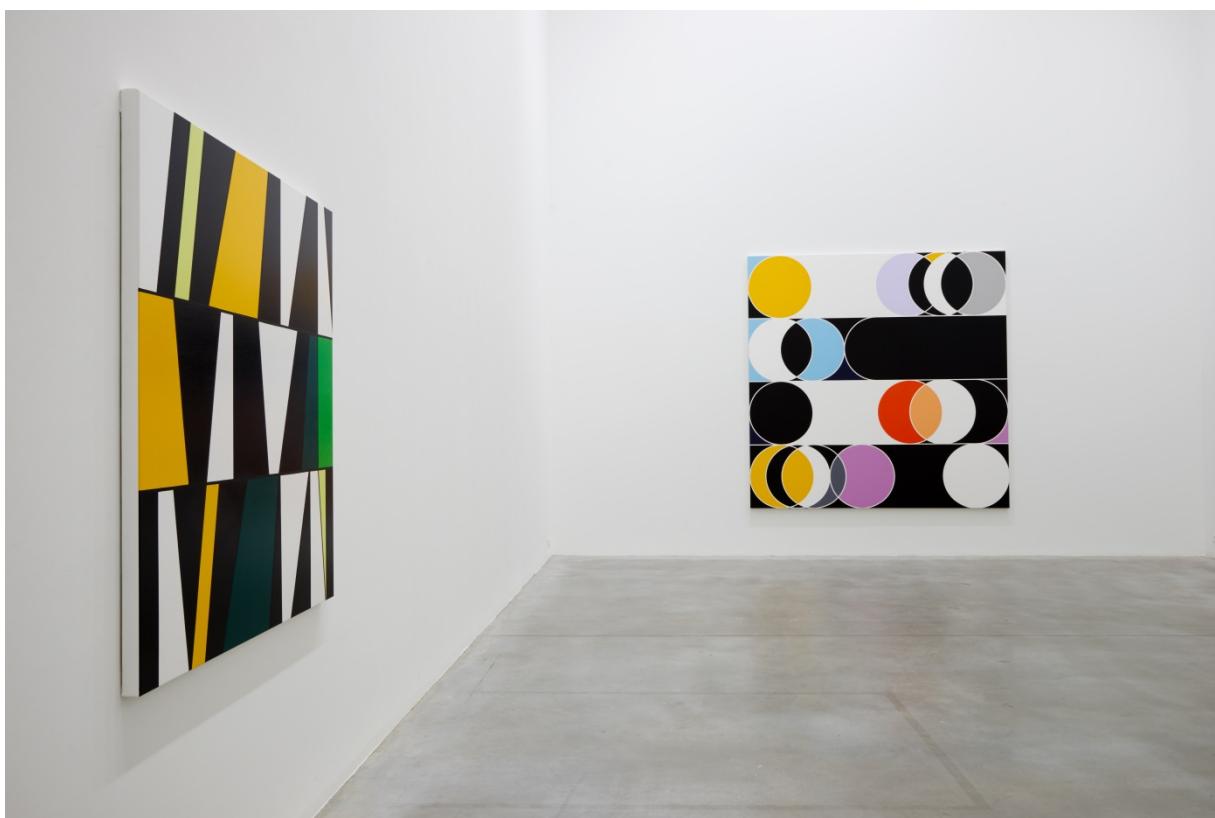
From left to right: Angel [Origami] (2009) & El Ultimo Testigo [The Parallax View] (2013) & 1976 [Rings] (2008)



From left to right: Eletrobas [Rio] (2013), Total Lunar [Rio] (2014), Cosan [Rio] (2013) & Il Coltello Nell'Acqua (2014)



From left to right: January 2014 [Rio] (2014), Pulp Fiction (2013), Banco Alliança [Rio] (2013)



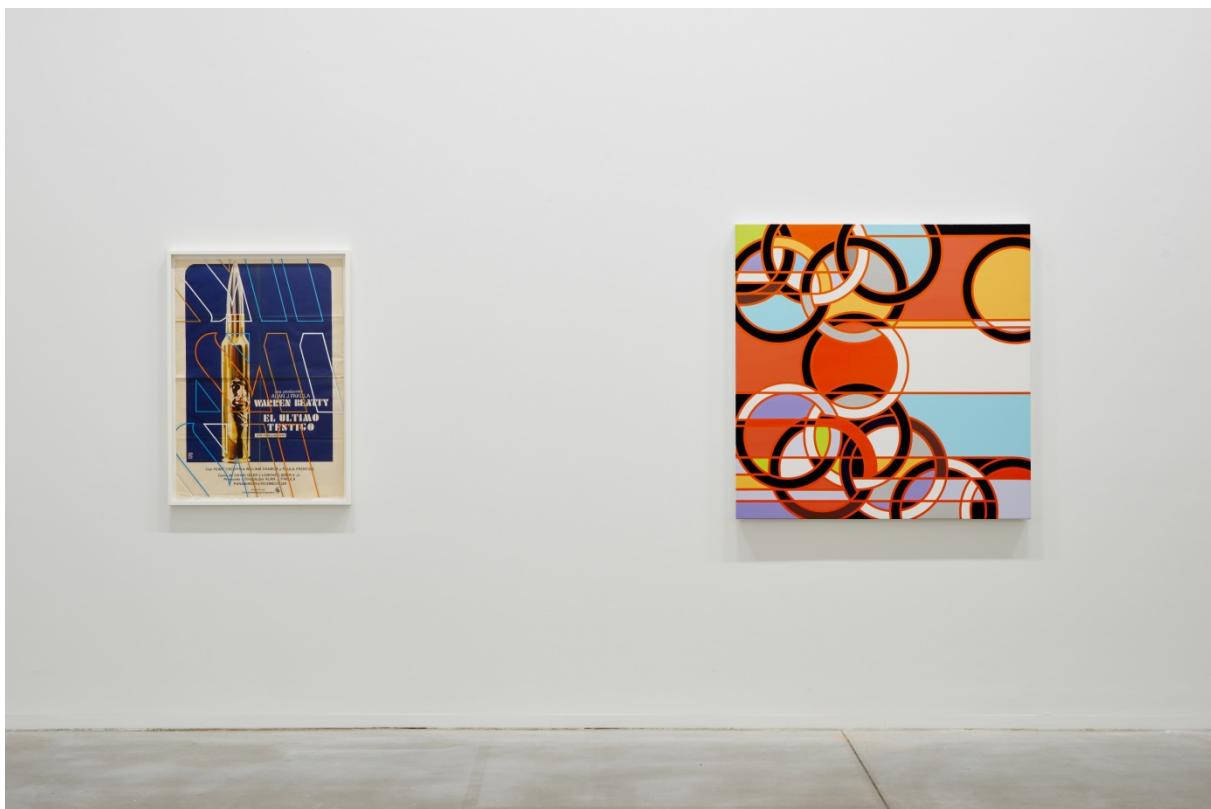
From left to right: Esther [São Paulo] (2014) & Annual Solar Eclipse [Rio] (2014)

## WORKS ON PAPER

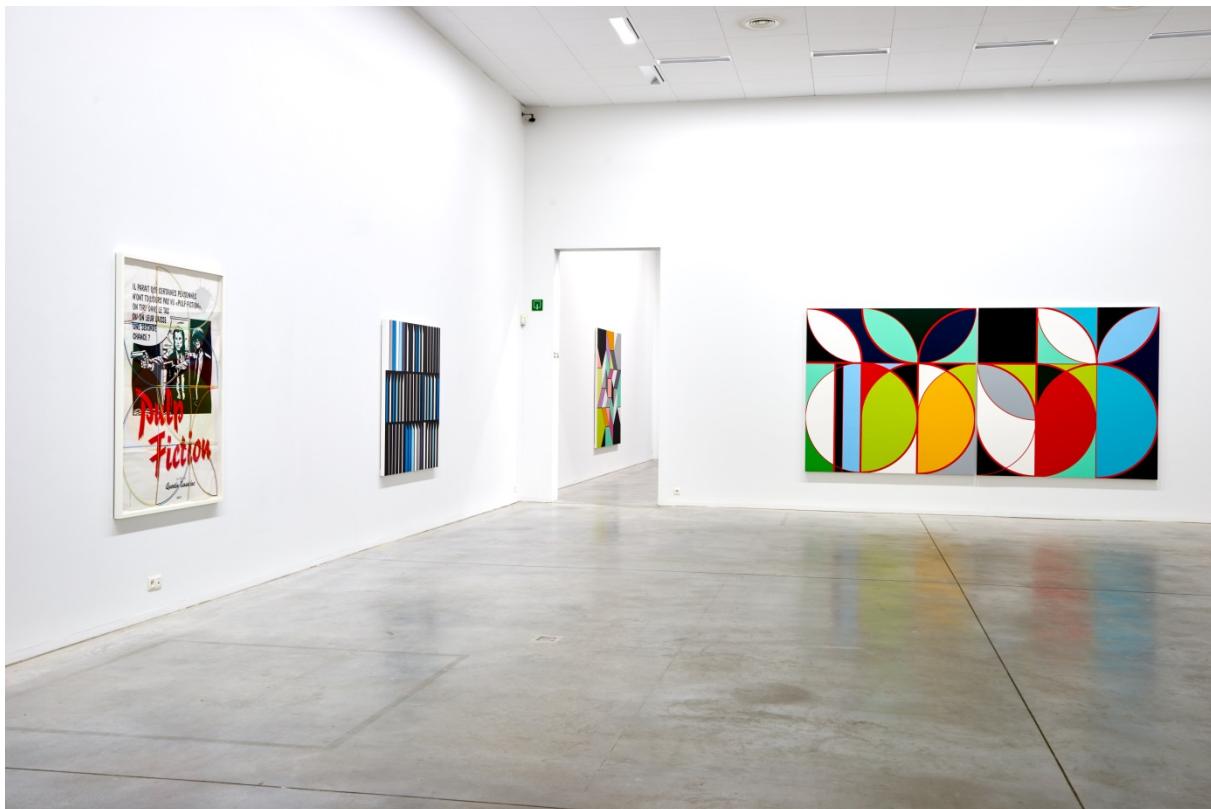
Sarah Morris's interest in film also comes to the fore in her works on paper. She has painted, in her signature graphic style, on posters of important films, such as *Pulp Fiction* or *The Parallax View*. The exhibition at M also presents four posters that she has designed for each of the films presented in the show: *Strange Magic*, *Rio*, *Beijing* and *1972*.



From left to right: Esther [São Paulo] (2014) & Annual Solar Eclipse [Rio] (2014)



From left to right: El Ultimo Testigo [The Parallax View] (2013) & 1976 [Rings] (2008)



From left to right: Pulp Fiction (2013), Banco Alliança [Rio] (2013) & Eletrobas [Rio] (2013)

## **SARAH MORRIS: BIO**

Sarah Morris (born in the UK in 1967) lives and works in New York. Having studied philosophy and semiotics at Brown University and Cambridge University between 1985 and 1989, Morris participated in the Independent Study Program of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. She was strongly influenced by artistic movements like pop art, minimalism and conceptualism. Morris worked as an assistant for a while to the American artist Jeff Koons. She set up her own studio in the mid-1990s, calling it Parallax (after the 1974 film *The Parallax View*, starring Warren Beatty).

She has been exhibited internationally including solo exhibitions at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford (1999), Kunsthalle Zürich (2000), the Nationalgalerie im Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (2001), Kunstforeningen, Copenhagen (2004), Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2005), Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2005), Kestner Gesellschaft, Hanover (2005) and Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam (2006), Fondation Beyeler (2008), Lenbachhaus, Munich (2008), MAMbo, Bologna (2009), MMK, Frankfurt (2009), K20 Sammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen (2010), Wexner Center for the Arts (2012) and Kunsthalle Bremen (2013).

Previous monographic publications include *Bye Bye Brazil*, White Cube, London (2013); *An Open System Meets an Open System*, Springer-Verlag/Wien, Austria (2013); *Beijing*, Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna, Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Witte de With, Rotterdam, Walter König, Cologne (2009); *Lesser Panda*, Jay Jopling/White Cube, London (2008); *Los Angeles*, Galerie Aurel Scheibler, Cologne (2005); *Bar Nothing*, Jay Jopling/White Cube, London (2004); *Capital*, Oktagon, Cologne (2001); *Sarah Morris*, Kunsthalle Zürich (2000); and *Modern Worlds*, Museum of Modern Art, Oxford, Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig and Le Consortium, Dijon (1999).

Sarah Morris is represented by White Cube, London; Air de Paris, Paris; Petzel, New York and Capitan Petzel, Berlin.

## **EXHIBITION**

Every year, M focuses on an artist from abroad who has become a key figure in contemporary art, but has not yet received significant exposure in Belgium. M gives the public a chance to make his or her acquaintance. The American artist Sarah Morris (1967, United Kingdom) follows earlier exhibitions by Markus Schinwald, Ugo Rondinone, Sol LeWitt and Pedro Cabrita Reis. Sarah Morris's work has previously been seen in Belgium at group exhibitions, including SMAK in Ghent and de Singel in Antwerp. Her most recent solo exhibition in Europe was in 2013 at the Kunsthalle Bremen.

Curator: Eva Wittcox

## **PUBLICATION**

M - Museum with August Verlag - Buchhandlung Walter König is publishing a new book on Sarah Morris, CAPITAL letters read better for Initials, featuring an essay by Frédéric Paul (1959), curator at the MNAM-CCI/Centre Georges Pompidou, which offers an overview of her work and her beguiling position as an artist.

[ENG/FR, 174 pages, 14 euros]

## **ASTROS HAWK: LIST OF WORKS**

### **FILMS**

#### **Strange Magic (2014)**

Red / HD Digital, Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

#### **Rio (2012)**

Red / HD Digital, Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

#### **Beijing (2008)**

35mm, Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

#### **1972 (2008)**

35 mm, Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

### **PAINTINGS**

#### **January 2014 [Rio] (2014)**

Household gloss paint on canvas, Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

#### **Banco Alliança [Rio] (2013)**

Household gloss paint on canvas, Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

#### **Esther [São Paulo] (2014)**

Household gloss paint on canvas, Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

#### **Annual Solar Eclipse [Rio] (2014)**

Household gloss paint on canvas, Sarah Morris

#### **Casa das Canoas [Rio] (2013)**

Household gloss paint on canvas, Friedrich Petzel Gallery

#### **Eletrobas [Rio] (2013)**

Household gloss paint on canvas, Kevin P. Mahaney

#### **Cosan [Rio] (2013)**

Household gloss paint on canvas, Private Collection, Washington, DC

#### **Total Lunar [Rio] (2014)**

Household gloss paint on canvas, Air de Paris, Paris

#### **Rockhopper [Origami] (2009)**

Based on a crease pattern 'Penguin' by Noboru Miyajima

Household gloss paint on canvas, Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

**Angel [Origami] (2009)**

Based on a crease pattern ‘Harpy’ by Noboru Miyajima

Household gloss paint on canvas, Sarah Morris

**Rose [Origami] (2014)**

Based on a crease pattern ‘Rose’ by Noboru Miyajima

Household gloss paint on canvas, Sarah Morris

**1976 [Rings] (2008)**

Household gloss paint on canvas, Merlin Carpenter

**WORKS ON PAPER****Il Coltello Nell’Acqua (2014)**

Ink and gouache on film poster, Courtesy of the artist and Air de Paris, Paris

**F for Fake (2013)**

Ink and gouache on paper, Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

**El Ultimo Testigo [The Parallax View] (2013)**

Ink and gouache on paper, Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

**Pohled Spolecnosti Parallax [The Parallax View] (2011)**

Ink and gouache on paper, Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

**Pulp Fiction (2013)**

Ink and gouache on paper, Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

**SM Outlined (2011)**

Ink and gouache on paper, Private collection

**Rio (2013)**

Silkscreen on paper, Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube

**Beijing (2009)**

Silkscreen on paper, 116,7 x 172,2 cm, *Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube*

**1972 (2008)**

4/25, Eight colour silkscreen on 250gsm paper, *Courtesy of the Artist and White Cube*

**Strange Magic (2015)**

Ink Jet Print Prototype, 120 x 176 cm, *Courtesy M/M*

## PRACTICAL INFORMATION

### OPEN

**Monday > Sunday 11:00 <> 18:00**

**Thursday 11:00 <> 22:00**

**Wednesday closed**

### TICKETS

|                         | Tickets reception desk | Online tickets (°) |
|-------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| + 26 year               | €12*                   | €9*                |
| + 26 year & concessions | €10*                   | €7*                |
| 13-25 year              | €5                     | €3                 |
| 0 - 12 year             | free                   | free               |

\*audio tour included | (°) + €1,50 per reservation

### PRESS CONTACT

Veerle Ausloos | Communication and press M - Museum Leuven

T. + 32 (0)16 27 29 38 | M +32 499 67 76 11 | [veerle.ausloos@leuven.be](mailto:veerle.ausloos@leuven.be)

### PRESS IMAGES

Can be downloaded from the online press room of M – Museum Leuven: <http://mleuven.prezly.com>

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