

**Sarah Morris
at Friedrich Petzel**

Sarah Morris creates bold geometric paintings that derive their architectonic structures from specific urban environments. In earlier bodies of work, Morris abstracted the buildings of Midtown Manhattan, Las Vegas and Washington, D.C. A recent show of eight large canvases, all painted with household gloss, was inspired by the city of Miami.

Morris also produces short films and photographs of each metropolis she examines. This imagery typically functions as a visual archive, allowing Morris to distill certain colors and perspectives for use in her paintings. Nine such photographs (all works 2003) were displayed at the entrance to the gallery and offered impressionistic glimpses of life in Miami. Some of the pic-

tures, like those of women swimming and sunbathing, are obvious images of tropical leisure. Others resist geographic specificity, as does a close-up of Diet Coke bottles in a plastic carton. Collectively titled "Color Referents (Miami)," the photographs contain passages of aqua blue, lemon yellow, melon pink and other striking hues that reappear in the paintings.

Morris continues to paint precise, hard-edge grids that appear to recede into space according to the rules of linear perspective. But while her paintings of New York and Las Vegas offer oblique, exterior views of skyscrapers and casinos, the Miami works feel more contained, as if the artist were painting inside subterranean chambers. The titles help explain this interiority by suggesting that hotel swimming pools, not architectural elevations, are the focus of this investigation of the urban scene.

In *Pools, Nassau Suite (Miami)*, a grid of brown, white and aqua rectangles rises sharply in the foreground before receding along a raised plane, as if to distinguish the deep and shallow ends of an empty swimming pool. A similar volume is excavated in *Pools, Century (Miami)*, where bright yellow orthogonals pull the viewer inside a deep cubic space tiled with black, gray and pink squares.

Other works are less coherent and contrast logical spatial recession with irregular geometric shapes that emphasize the painted surface. In *Pools, The Tides*

(Miami), for example, a lime green grid imposes a distinct horizontal plane well "within" the painting, while numerous crisscrossing diagonals break the rest of the canvas into two-dimensional shards of aqua, pink, mauve and tangerine. This prismatic treatment may describe rays of light penetrating water or colorful reflections of the surrounding city playing on the surfaces of its ubiquitous and emblematic swimming pools.

—Matthew Guy Nichols

Sarah Morris: *Pools, The Tides (Miami)*, 2003, household gloss on canvas, 84 inches square; at Friedrich Petzel.

