

# OSCAR NIGHT INSIGHT

ITINERARY

Hailing from the world of contemporary art, Sarah Morris offers an unusual view of the Academy Awards

As soon as Bob Evans called, Sarah Morris knew it'd be good. This was February, the week before the 76th Academy Awards, when Morris was shooting a film about Los Angeles. She already had commitments from Brad Pitt, Warren Beatty, Dennis Hopper, Charlize Theron, Jake Bloom, producer Sid Ganis and CAA's Richard Lovett. And like those industryites, Evans agreed to appear in her film on one condition: He had to set the time and place.

That was fine with Morris. As it turned out, Evans invited her to his house where he instructed his then girlfriend to give him a shave — topless.

"That's his own representation," says Morris, a 37-year-old, New York-based painter who relied on her industryite collector base to get her into showbiz circles. "I just said, 'Can I film you for 10 minutes doing whatever you'd normally do?' And that's when the process becomes fascinating to me, when I can capture that psychological space, which ultimately becomes a portrait of a city."

Best known for her colorful, hard-edge paintings — think 1960s grid patterns with bold color fields — Morris has been translating the dizzying graphic language of the urban sprawl into two-dimensional canvases for the better part of the past 10 years. But since 1997, when she made "Midtown" for Cologne's Ludwig Museum, she began to see the value of film as an adjunct to her



**HALL OF MIRRORS** Bob Evans in a scene from Sarah Morris' film, "Los Angeles"

painterly process. "Many people think that my paintings are instantly recognizable in the films," she says of her distinctive compositions. "(Conversely) the films provide a context to the paintings, and that's very important to me."

Technically, the 26-minute "Los Angeles" is a documentary in the tradition of Dziga Vertov's "Man With the Movie Camera." Yet in truth her tapestry of sunshine and noir plays more like a lyrical, slightly surreal fever dream. There's Brad Pitt hitting himself in the face over and over during a rehearsal; Brett Ratner changing clothes in the back of a car with the help of a butler; and CAA's reception desk, which looms like a veritable rampart. All of this takes place in the context of the Oscars, where cameras stare at cameras on an ocean of red carpet.

It's that glossy, narcissistic, hermetic world Morris attempts to capture in her film, without commentary or prejudice. "Every time I'm in L.A. I'm intrigued by the level of ambition there," explains Morris, whose gallery sells her films in editions of three. "But it becomes even more obvious during the Oscars ... I just wanted to see if I could capture that — that element of display." —PAULYOUNG

"Los Angeles" will be presented at New York's Friedrich Petzel Gallery Jan. 29-Feb. 26; [www.petzels.com](http://www.petzels.com)