

# REGEN PROJECTS

Hudson, Suzanne. "Rebecca Morris: #34." The Brooklyn Rail (October 8, 2025) [online]

## BROOKLYN RAIL

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### Rebecca Morris: #34

By Suzanne Hudson



Installation view: *Rebecca Morris: #34*, Regen Projects, Los Angeles, 2025. Courtesy Regen Projects. Photo: Flying Studio.

*#34* is Rebecca Morris's first solo exhibition with Regen Projects, but as befits its numeric designation, the thirty-fourth of her career. Morris has long avoided descriptive titles for her shows, and she leaves the abstract paintings that populate them comparably untitled. (These untitled-titles are subtitled with their position within the sequence of what she made in a given year, e.g., the installation-opening *Untitled [#25-25]* is the twenty-fifth work Morris finished in 2025.) Interpretation necessarily happens independently of textual directives. Yet the compositions themselves are structured by a kind of compensatory surfeit of framing devices that direct attention within the bounds of a single image field and then across them. In Los Angeles, Morris left the gallery without the walls that typically sub-divide it, her new works (all 2024–25) encircling what became a massive, light-suffused room. This meant that one could see most of what was on view

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at once and register the wonderfully perverse overabundance of borders and edges, the concentric elements stuttering or floating in clusters as though on a single if indeterminate plane. Both large and intimate, they flatten at a distance into graphic patterns that dissolve up close. And then there was the visible eccentricity of the canvases' dimensions: largely vertical, nonstandard sizes, and to a piece, distinctly so.

The exception proving the rule was a pair separated to the side, twinned paintings with spindly, drawn, gold-grid tracery atop but not holding watery undulations of pinkish red-brown ground-work beneath. Inchoate form emerging from below the would-be surface here is as close as Morris comes to courting the metaphoric. But these paintings additionally make clearer than most just how Morris works: with the textile on the ground, she applies oil paint diluted by solvent to the point of functioning like—and in turn evoking—watercolor. She then takes hold of the canvas and tilts or shakes it, establishing a soaked primary layer for the wet-on-wet paint application of the next. Aleatory but not liberatory—these are paintings of boundary-states that adhere to self-generated rules and ad-hoc restraints—the first stains produce spore-like deposits against which to conjure what comes next. Morris will only add to what she has already applied, enacting sequences of causation and consequence. In this way, the paintings are recursive to their own making as well as to earlier versions, the set of “Morris” designs to date, scrambled in every new adaptation (as with what she calls her “claw” paintings, a typology bearing a repeated hook motif, seen in *Untitled* [#22-25] [2025]).



Rebecca Morris, *Untitled* (#26-25), 2025. Oil and spray paint on canvas, 63  $\frac{1}{8}$  x 63  $\frac{1}{8}$  x 2  $\frac{1}{8}$  inches. © Rebecca Morris. Courtesy the artist and Regen Projects. Photo: Flying Studio.

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Morris labors to preserve contingencies—paint pooling disproportionately, marks overshooting their targets, edges sketchy where they could be sharply cut—defining them as central features that necessarily distinguish one case from another. *Untitled* (#20-25) (2025), a massive, ceiling-skimming pointillist accumulation of primary and pastel marks, differently evidences process. A giant gessoed canvas tarp running the length of Morris's studio serves as a repository for the leftover paint that she used to make the show, it supplies a retroactive inventory of so many potential arrangements: canary yellow along with evergreen, turquoise beside dove grey, apricot and malachite and a shade of coral-red that I cannot name. (It also recalls Robert Ryman's durable notion of paintings as accumulations of "used paint.") Accentuating the shifts in scale, to its left was *Untitled* (#26-25) (2025), among the smallest works on view at 63  $\frac{1}{8}$  by 63  $\frac{1}{8}$  inches. An iteration of a painting in a painting, its thick, ratio-upsetting border is as focal as what it rims. This outer section is made up of a mottled admixture of light flesh tones, giving the impression of a foundation-saturated make-up sponge, though to no greater extent than it recalls plaster walls or the effect of zoomed-in sections of damp, mottled fresco. The central region holds space for figures, simultaneously unmoored and set into thicker passages that encroach at their limits—the additive becoming the subtractive.



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Others likewise play with tools and tropes of organization: beyond grids or frames in frames, there are scene-cueing proscenium edges, portholes or cameos, and all manner of thresholds. *Untitled* (#24-25) (2025) offers a sort of infinite regress. An elongated oval set within a border of that unnamable, perfect red opens to still more boxes, as well as shapes with irregularly scalloped rims. The latter appear to slide side to side (rather than to recede or project), confounding incipient spatial logic to say nothing of stasis. *Untitled*

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(#23-25) (2025) is bisected at the horizontal not-quite-midline, sectioning two discrete environments that stack without really suggesting the continuation of a unified whole. And within each, divisions further disambiguate out of varying techniques, from drawn outlines to splotches to drips. These recall Morris's earlier paintings, including those on view in the city as recently as 2022, at her survey at the ICA LA; they also model latter-day samplers, part handwork, part digital image aggregator. This is to say that they collect on their surfaces instances of possibilities—of style, palette, form, and maybe even reference—that abut without hierarchy. It is hard not to think of, say, Henri Matisse's *The Red Studio* (1911) when looking at *Untitled* (#24-25), and to consider more broadly traditional images of picture galleries. Morris is not so much interested in narratives of history (much less their assumed telos) than in combinatory logics. I think what Morris shows us, then, is how relations were always already embedded in abstraction, if situationally.