

Gabriel DE LA MORA

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Gabriel de la Mora: Lepidoptera at Perrotin*

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Installation view: Gabriel de la Mora, Lepidoptera. Courtesy of Perrotin.

Gabriel de la Mora: *Lepidoptera*

Perrotin, New York

November 3 through December 23, 2021

By **ROBERT C. MORGAN**, November 2021

Two weeks ago while sitting on a friend's porch, I noticed a spider in the process of constructing a web. The more I studied it, the more the web began to suggest a manifestation of a computer program. Shortly after, I

took notice of a butterfly perched on a wooden rail. I could not help focusing on the colorful complexity of its wings. It soon took off and flew away. Moments later it re-appeared in a garden of wild flowers. In either case, whether it be the precise structure of the spider's web or the multi-color butterfly wings, there was a kind of intelligence at work.

I finally decided that the kind of harmony associated with spiders and butterflies came from another source of intelligence, that being the pervasive forms of nature. This happened shortly after I had seen an exhibition, titled *Lepidoptera*, by the Mexican artist, Gabriel de la Mora. For those unfamiliar with this term (which I was not), *lepidoptera* refers to butterflies hatched in the larva of caterpillars that possess four large-scale wings, each of which carry distinctive markings.



Gabriel de la Mora, 900 II - P.G, 2021. Papilio gambrisius butterfly wings mosaic on museum cardboard. Framed : 35 x 35 x 6 cm. 13 3/4 x 13 3/4 x 2 3/8 inch. Courtesy of Perrotin.

Although the artist collects wings from sources world-wide, most of the wings in this body of work were acquired in Peru, which is known for its

extraordinary butterfly population of which there are eight different species. For the current exhibition, De la Mora's butterfly wing mosaics fill the downstairs gallery space at Perrotin. Among the 33 mosaics on view, each measures 36 x 36 x 6 centimeters (cm) on museum cardboard within a unified series of frames. Most of the mosaics are presented in the form of either a clearly deployed grid or an intense overall pattern. Some of the works reveal a nearly invisible grid hiding the source of the overall pattern. One such work, *900 II P.G.* (2021), extracts the wings from a species known as *Papilio Gambrisius*, which are then adhered side-by-side allowing the specs of color to emerge metaphorically in a way comparable to asteroids. drifting through a darkened galaxy.

Such a work, among others, projects a magnificence in De la Mora's exhibition that clearly surpasses design. In contrast, the wings are constructed in such a way that allows them to retain a heightened sense of aesthetic awareness borrowed from nature. (It is worth noting that the life-span of butterflies ranges anywhere from two weeks to a month, once they leave the cocoon.)



Gabriel de la Mora, 720 II - M.D., 2021. Morpho didius butterfly wings mosaic on museum cardboard Framed : 35 x 35 x 6 cm. 13 3/4 x 13 3/4 x 2 3/8 inch. Courtesy of Perrotin.

Each mosaic appears unique. For example, there are several wings in various hues of the color blue, i.e. *7,200 I M.D.* (2021) and *1,444 M.D.* (2021), the former laid out as a triangular grid, and the latter in a grid of

horizontal sections. The chromatic elements in the first are taken from a butterfly species known as *Morpho didius*.

It is intriguing to try and decipher where the artist, Gabriel de la Mora fits into this work. Based on other works shown in recent years, the artist has the occasion to work with materials outside of those associated with art, yet concomitantly function in relation to painting. Indeed, there is little doubt that the 33 mosaics included here attest to optical, if not expressionist forms of painting. In any case, there is a geometric underpinning in these mosaics that feels natural, in fact, that emanates from that source. **WM**