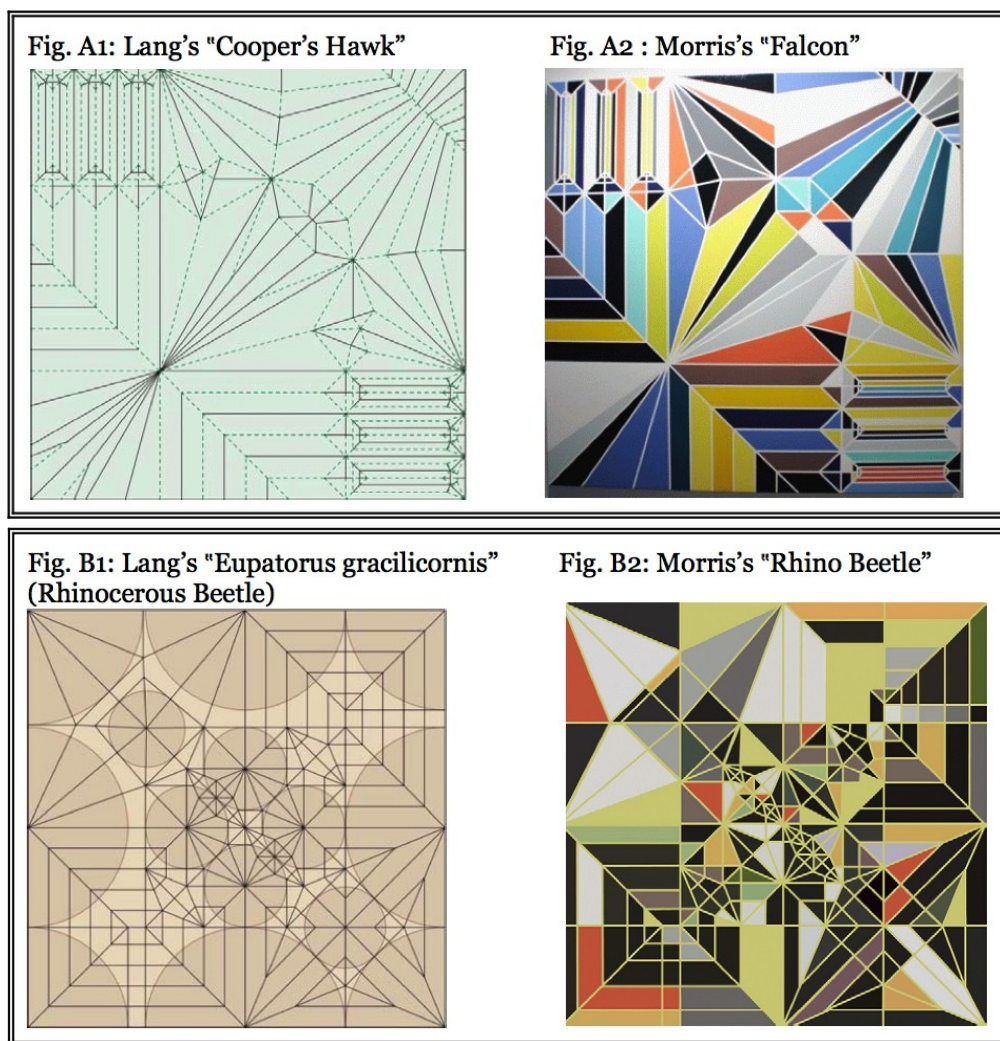


# Sarah Morris Copyright Infringement

2013-03-21 Update: The dispute has now been settled. See details below.

For several years, American artist **Sarah Morris** created a series of paintings on the theme of origami in which she took origami crease patterns by several international origami artists, changed the color scheme, made up her own names for them, and then sold and exhibited them internationally without obtaining permission or giving credit. Six of the origami artists whose work was so used have filed suit for copyright infringement against Ms. Morris in Federal Court in Oakland, California.

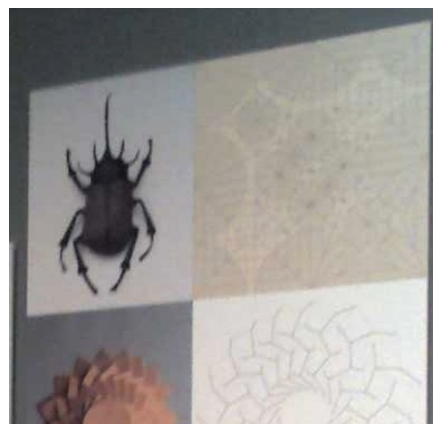
For example, here are two side-by-side comparisons between the original origami artwork (on the left) and Ms. Morris's painting (on the right).



These are excerpts from our complaint. For many more examples, please [see the filed complaint](#), as well as the [first set of exhibits](#) and the [second set of exhibits](#).

Crease patterns have a beauty and interest far beyond their role within origami. I have exhibited and sold my original crease patterns as standalone artworks for nearly a decade in venues ranging from commercial galleries to the Museum of Modern Art (see right); many other origami artists have done so too. We view our artwork as, well, art. (Yes, the top right figure from MOMA is the same as Figure B1.)

Why did we take this step, you might ask? Among other reasons, under American copyright law, the original artist has the right to control derivative works of our original works. ("Derivative works" are those works that are based



upon our original works, but do other things to them—such as coloring them, in this case.) As the original artists, we recognize that copyright law gives artists substantial rights regarding use of their artwork. Although we published our crease patterns, that does not mean we gave up our ownership rights to the original art works we created.

I first contacted Ms. Morris about this in 2009. After two years of repeated (but futile) attempts to get her to acknowledge our rights, we filed suit. We have identified 24 of her works (listed in the complaint) that are unauthorized copies of origami crease patterns by modern origami artists. [Update 2013-03-21: [more eventually turned up](#).]



For further information, please see the [Bay Oak Law blog entry on this case](#).

You can also read an interview I gave on this topic [on the art blog Hyperallergenic](#).

## Settlement

After further grinding of the legal wheels (including a re-filing that moved the case from California to New York), we origami artists and Ms. Morris have amicably resolved our dispute. Among the terms of the agreement, [a number of works will carry revised attribution](#). We agreed that further terms and conditions will remain confidential.

It's fair to say that I and my fellow origami artists are pretty happy with this resolution and that we found a solution that was agreeable to all concerned. I've posted some further thoughts on my blog. I'd like to thank our legal team, Caroline Valentino and Laura Koch of [Haims Valentino, LLP](#) and Andrew Jacobson of [Bay Oak Law](#) for helping to bring the matter to resolution.