



Cheryl Goldsleger's 'Scale: Projection,' currently on view at Heath Gallery in Buckhead.

Goldsleger's Works Suggest a Wealth of Possibilities

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It says everything about the intellectual caliber of Cheryl Goldsleger's work that the Athens artist can present what is essentially the same picture over and over without losing its cerebral edge.

Ms. Goldsleger is at or near the top of the short list of first-rank artists working in this region. Her show at Heath Gallery, "Recent Paintings and Drawings," is running concurrently with a similar exhibition at Bertha Urdang Gallery in New York City.

All of the works in the Buckhead gallery are isometric projections of interior spaces, the standard features of which are folding chairs and staircases to nowhere superimposed over more or less visible one-inch grids. These squares are actual cuts in the paintings' surfaces and graphite lines on the drawings.

The paintings are composed of layers of wax on linen grounds. Powdered pigment and oil paint incorporated into still more wax cover these subtle surfaces with either Prussian blue or dull gray-green. For Ms. Goldsleger, whose low-key hues were veiled in past work by a final layer of white, this amounts to a color explosion. Still, the core of the work re-

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mains unchanged, teasingly fluid and mysterious.

In the large, roughly square painting titled "Scale: Interior Passage," for example, the dominant staircase floats visually on and above its dense ashen-blue ground. The skeletal architecture and chairs hovering across the picture plane are, uncannily, weighty and weightless at the same time. As one's eye enters the spaces and passageways of this non-building (without exterior walls or ceilings, it's easy to slip dreamily in and out of it), one's exploration is largely cerebral throughout the upper two-thirds of the picture. But along the bottom, one finds oneself staring into the illusion of a hole, where the layers of wax and pigment seem to come to life as a churning ocean in a night storm.

"Stations: Sectioning" is technically a slight variant among the pictures, but conceptually, it's a significant one. A small horizontal work, it is not as emotionally distant as the other pictures, because the scale of its walls and chairs has been enlarged, and its perspective cropped. The incisions of the grids and the elements' outlines are either more

numerous or possibly only more apparent, and they look impatient — even violent. From a single perspective, which allows the viewer to observe the interiors from above, below and straight-on all at once, the scene becomes chaotic.

The colored grounds of the paintings look rich and subterranean, not sinister or empty, even though there is no trace of humanity. By incising the structures and grids into the wax, the artist elevates precision and order into sacraments celebrating rationality, turning the detailed interiors into metaphors for the human psyche. Too austere to be expressionist, the works are also too vibrant to be minimalist.

One might think that repetition would cause these pictures to lose their intellectual appeal, but the intricate possibilities they represent — human isolation, vulnerability, yearning and the struggle between emotion and intellect — have yet to be exhausted in Ms. Goldsleger's work. It's like trying to watch time pass or someone think: The clock ticks, the electroencephalograph charts, but those are the traces, not substance.

"Cheryl Goldsleger: Recent Paintings and Drawings," Heath Gallery, 416 East Paces Ferry Road. Through Feb. 18. 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesdays-Saturdays. 262-6407.