

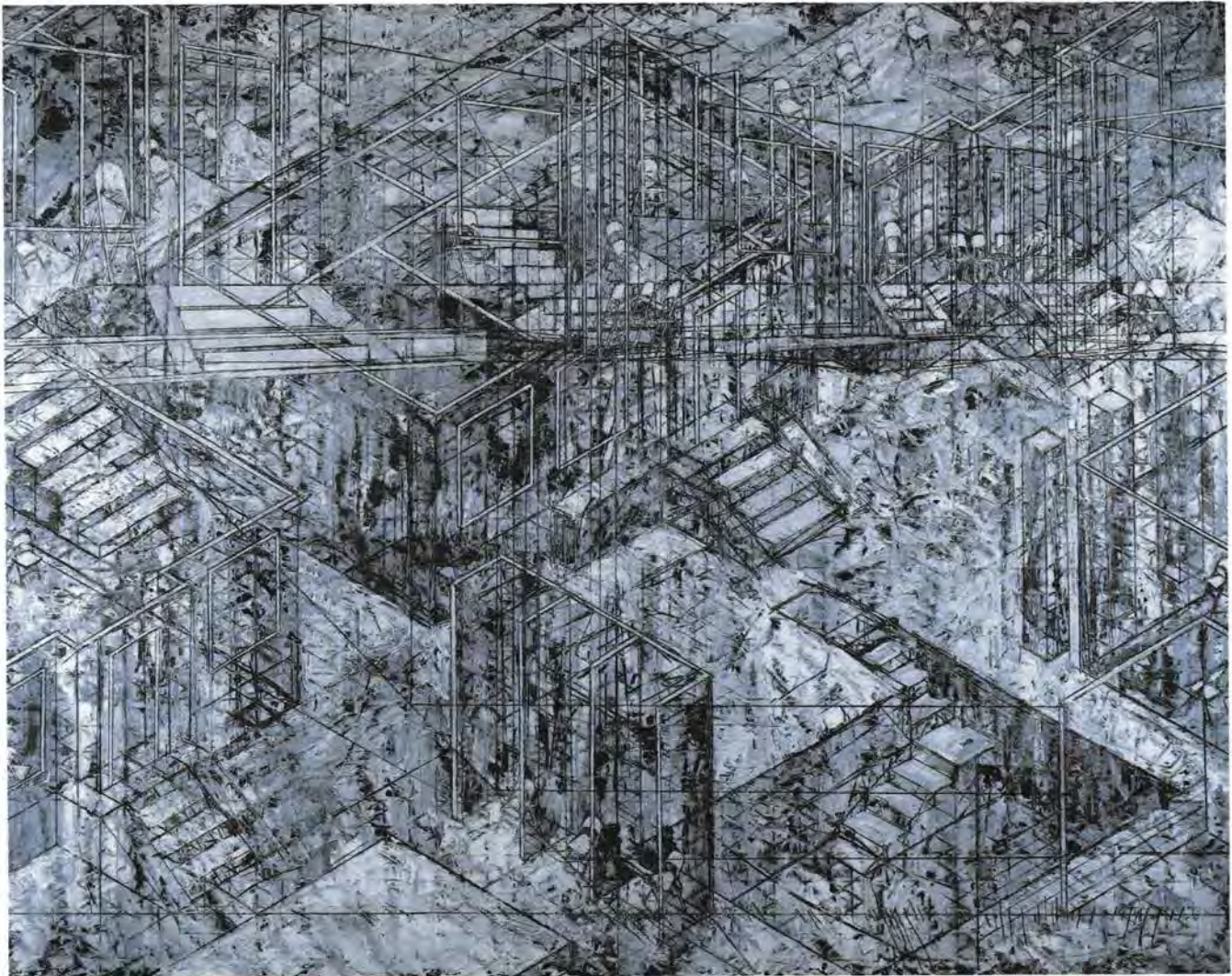
HMA

**HIGH MUSEUM OF ART
ATLANTA, GEORGIA**

CHERYL GOLDSLEGER

Architectural Drawings and Paintings

December 10, 1985-February 9, 1986



SOUTHERN EXPRESSIONS
THE KIDDER PEABODY SERIES

AN INTERVIEW WITH CHERYL GOLDSLEGER

by Peter Morrin

Morrin: You've done architectural drawings since 1978. How did you arrive at this format?

Goldsleger: When I was in graduate school at Washington University in St. Louis, I did some paintings of interiors that were influenced by Richard Diebenkorn. I knew that what I was doing was basically decent student work, but there was something I liked about it and I continued to do it.

At about the time I moved to Georgia, I realized there wasn't enough of me in this work. I decided to do some experimental drawings, although I had been painting before. I always liked drawing and drawing was a more immediate way to work. I decided that whatever I might do, I would not edit. I would just do the work, and whether I liked it or not was a later decision. I spent about a year doing drawings, and by the end of twelve months I was doing drawings of rows of chairs.

Morrin: How did your involvement with perspectival systems start?

Goldsleger: When I started doing the chair drawings, I decided I wanted to expand the spatial illusion in the works; it took me a while to figure out how. I didn't want single point perspective because I didn't want overlapping. The isometric system, which sees objects from above at a 30° angle, allows the viewer to sense a field rather than one focal area. I wanted there to be the sense that the space continues beyond the limits of the piece.

Morrin: But one of the key issues in twentieth century art has always been the issue of deep space, and how the illusion of deep space is something that has to be reconciled with the two-dimensional support of the surface. In a sense, your isometric spaces seem to take us back to the age of Brueghel, where one makes one's mental pathway across a mountain pass.

Goldsleger: If I go back, I go back to the Middle Ages, when things were very flat in pictures, and there was no interest in a sense of deep space. I like it purely formally. But I think there is a twentieth century feeling to my work. I think we have changed our concept of space and it's no longer just a linear or aerial perspective. There are so many simultaneous things happening to us, several levels of distraction which we carry with us at all times. I knew I didn't like linear perspective; I didn't like the overlapping and obscuring. With isometric perspective, you tend to experience a lot of diverse information. It took me a while to figure out that what I liked about isometric projections is that you visually walk around it to get a sense of the whole space. You can't take it all in and understand the space all at once. In a way that's how we go through the world these days.

Morrin: Is the notion of a labyrinth important to you? You know, the surrealists thought of a labyrinth as the metaphor for the human psyche.

Goldsleger: I didn't know that. But it may be related to my new work, which deals with both two-point and isometric perspective. Initially, the two systems were very isolated. The isometric was on the top, and the two-point was on the bottom. More recently the whole thing has gotten intermeshed, and one space overlaps another space. I keep thinking I just want to take it further and further until they're totally intertwined and yet you can still barely make out one system versus the other. I think that might relate to the surrealist idea: this kind of total maze, total labyrinth, and total connection in the world.

Morrin: Is it important for you to be mentally able to move through spaces?

Goldsleger: Yes. There needs to be some logic and some kind of pathway between buildings, between walls. I find myself thinking: nobody could get by if I did this.

Morrin: But ultimately the mental traveller through your spaces is trapped.

Goldsleger: Well, no, not totally trapped. Because you're always looking down, there's no exit — a sense of closure, possibly. You can't get out of the spaces. But I don't see them as uncomfortable spaces or a place you really wouldn't want to be. If you were in this particular space you could go from place to place in that space. You wouldn't have to stay just in one room.

Morrin: It occurs to me that, insofar as one is invited to imaginatively *walk through* your abstractions, the viewer is both the observer and the observed — that in one's mind one watches oneself in the spaces. Have you ever thought about this? The notion of being inside and outside of the work simultaneously?

Goldsleger: The idea of being inside and outside of the work at the same time has occurred to me. If the viewer is actually to perceive the work this simultaneous experience must happen. That idea of a simultaneous perception of the space occurs in the works that include isometric and two-point perspective: the isometric perspective representing a conceptual view of space, and the two-point representing a perceptual view of space.

A viewer's "walk-through" in one of my pieces is a conceptual exercise which must be experienced in order for the work to be understood. I am trying to structure works in which being inside and outside the pieces simultaneously happens on many levels.

That contrast between perception and conception interests me. For instance, you know where your office is in this building but you can't see it from where we are. So you know the layout and how to get there. I like that kind of function that can happen in a layout of the mind: you can know about things that aren't right out in front of you.

Morrin: Let me take another tack. Your spaces always show evidence of habitation. Chairs are never neatly lined up, they're set in disarray, as if there had just been a three-hour meeting and people are so relieved to get out of that meeting that everything is left in a kind of mess and people are just ready to split.

Goldsleger: In my mind it's always conversations; nothing like a boring meeting or a lecture, not an organization thing . . . when I place the chairs, they lean toward each other and it's never anything monumental. I always think about some kind of dialogue.

Morrin: Let me just pick up on the notion of the chairs. The chairs are standard metal folding chairs and straightback wood chairs, so these are institutional chairs, right? Is there some sense in which these are translations of the institutional experience, be it school, prison, or hospital?

Goldsleger: Not really. I used those particular chairs because they're anonymous. If I would make a Charles Eames chair or a bentwood rocker, a Chippendale something, it would get too specific and be time-located and become decorative. I couldn't put an anonymous wall against a bentwood rocker and get that same kind of feeling, so that's why I choose those particular chairs; they seem both universal and anonymous.

Morrin: The chairs are probably what create a sense of absence in your work — a feeling of deserted places, as in DeChirico or Hopper. Have you thought about or looked at their work?

Goldsleger: I associate Hopper with a kind of melancholy I see in my own work . . . the distancing. Even his paintings with people in them are very removed. I liked DeChirico's work but he's not somebody that I admire or think of, although I like Italy and have been there three times. Have you been to E.U.R. in Rome?

Morrin: The Citta Nova?

Goldsleger: Yes, the Roman-style suburb built by Mussolini. I liked the space. I thought it had a kind of eerie feeling. It's like looking at ancient Rome . . . only brand new . . . I see a lot of that in DeChirico's work.

Morrin: The experience of European spaces or city planning has special meaning for you?

Goldsleger: It does. I went to Pompeii and Herculaneum last summer. At Herculaneum there's a ramp that you walk down and you look over into the city. Like the isometric perspective of my drawings, you can see all of these houses and you can get into them.

Morrin: How do you incorporate those experiences into your art?

Goldsleger: I'm influenced by a lot of architecture, but I tend to like to keep my influences to what I remember as opposed to actual visual sources. If I remember something, then obviously I really liked it, and if I don't remember, then maybe it wasn't that important. I do look at pre-Columbian architecture, medieval architecture, and even contemporary architecture.

Morrin: Classical architecture?

Goldsleger: Classical architecture, obviously. And some of my forms could originate from that looking. They get translated into my sketches. I go through hundreds of sketches until I get to the composition that I am interested in. Initially there are just many lines; I watch and respond to how they coalesce into walls — walls structure pathways, buildings, and empty spaces that make the composition. After the walls begin to take shape there are several stages of rethinking the space from different standpoints — directional ways to move through it; introduction of new forms; "empty" versus "full" space; levels or tiers used; and, of course, whether I think it "works" or not.

Morrin: How do the paintings come about?

Goldsleger: For four or five years I only did the drawings. However, about 1981 or '82 I began to think seriously about painting, and I did some black drawings and these helped me to get back into the physical thing of doing the painting. It took me a while to take up encaustic. I like the fact that it's a drawing approach to painting more than a painting approach to painting.

Morrin: The surfaces of your paintings are very rich. Perhaps because the lines are scored and incised in the encaustic paintings, the surface incident seems to be a contrasting element in tension with the spatial perspectives.

Goldsleger: Oh?

Morrin: It seems to me that's one way in which your work stays modernist. As you create these recessions and meandering stairways one is always brought back to the wonderful fact of this encaustic surface.

Goldsleger: It's always been an interest of mine to have that play between two and three dimensions. The density of scored lines makes the space a little more solid in certain areas, but then it also kind of confuses it in other areas. I've liked that kind of ambiguous pulling of the shapes back up to the surface ever since I was in high school.

The encaustic stays wet for a long time, and that's necessary because I have to manipulate for a long time. I'm willing to start a painting with an area that I'm still undecided about, hoping that it will resolve itself, and sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.

Morrin: You leave some things open?

Goldsleger: Yes, to push and pull things around. The idea of exploring and making my way through an unknown space is part of my process. There are also recurring and necessary elements that have appeared in previous work. I hope there is exploration on many levels.

Morrin: Are these ultimately abstract or representational works?

Goldsleger: The work is not abstract but it talks that language. I don't think of myself as a representational artist, and don't think of the works that way. When I think of art that I like and artists that I emulate, Giacometti, Morandi, and Twombly are the ones that come to mind. I come from a formal, abstract background, and so I think about the spaces and the movement and the whole compositional thing, and the narrative comes later. But I wouldn't think of myself as a pure abstractionist either. Each of these spaces represents to me a fragment of a vast urban/civilized plateau. I am drawing segments of a larger place . . . I don't know the whole picture.

November 1985

CHECKLIST

Levels of an Exterior Space, 1984

oil, wax, pigment on linen

56 x 72 inches

Courtesy Bertha Urdang Gallery, New York

Projection: Expansion, 1985

oil, wax, pigment on linen

30 x 38 inches

Lent by David C. Heath, Atlanta

Inverse Projection, 1985

oil, wax, pigment on linen

38 x 48 inches

Lent by Mr. and Mrs. John Wieland, Atlanta

Segment/Fragment, 1985

oil, wax, pigment on linen

48 x 60 inches

Courtesy Heath Gallery, Inc., Atlanta

Sector, 1985

oil, wax, pigment on linen

50 x 60 inches

Courtesy Bertha Urdang Gallery, New York

Projection: Transparency, 1985

graphite on paper

30 x 38 inches

Courtesy Heath Gallery, Inc., Atlanta

Inverse Elevation, 1985

graphite on paper

30 x 38 inches

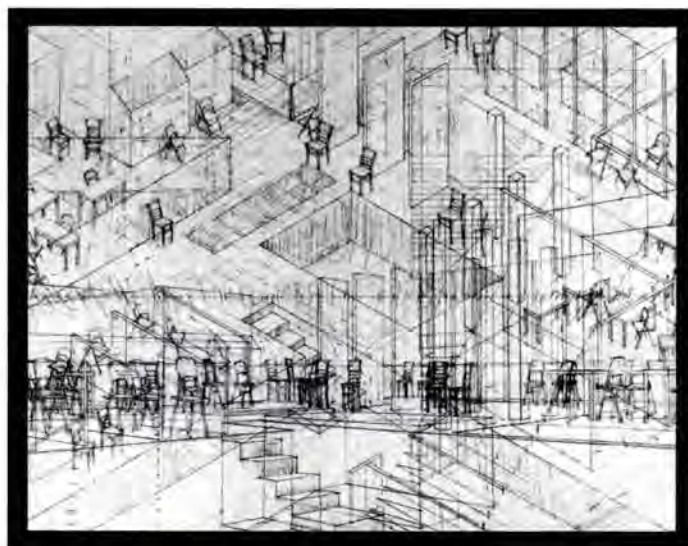
Courtesy Bertha Urdang Gallery, New York

Progression, 1985

graphite on paper

26 x 50 inches

Courtesy Heath Gallery, Inc., Atlanta



Projection: Transparency

CHERYL GOLDSLEGER

BIOGRAPHY

Born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1951
Lives in Athens, Georgia

EDUCATION

Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri, MFA, 1975
Philadelphia College of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, BFA, 1973
Tyler School of Art, Temple University, Rome, Italy, Summer, 1971

SELECTED GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND AWARDS

SECCA/RJR Fellowship, Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, 1986
Georgia Council for the Arts Grant, 1983
National Endowment for the Arts, Artist's Fellowship: Drawing, 1982
Ohio Arts Council, Artist's Fellowship, Drawing, 1982
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, Artist's Fellowship: Drawing, 1981

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

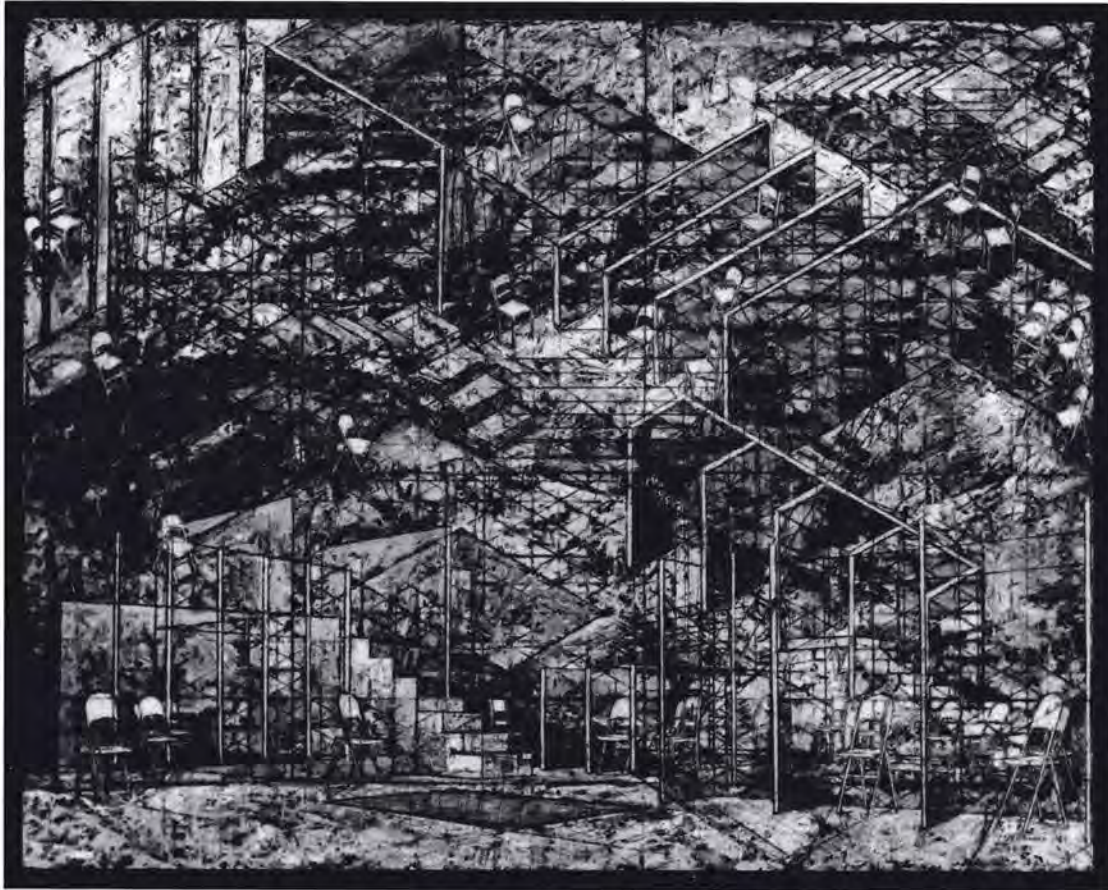
Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, North Carolina, 1985
Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, Mississippi, 1983
Bertha Urdang Gallery, New York, New York, 1982, 1984
Heath Gallery, Inc., Atlanta, Georgia, 1980, 1983, 1985
Virginia Intermont College, Bristol, Virginia, 1980
Western Carolina University, Cullowhee, North Carolina, 1979
North Carolina State University, Raleigh, North Carolina, 1979
Philadelphia College of Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1973

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

Artists of the Southeast, Alternative Museum, New York, New York, 1985
Places, Greenville County Museum of Art, Greenville, South Carolina, 1985
Drawing, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, Virginia (traveling exhibition), 1985-1987
Contemporary Art Acquisitions, The Equitable Gallery, New York, New York, 1984
Artist-in Residence/Faculty Show, The University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia, 1979, 1984
Connections, The Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1983
Ohio Selections: I, The New Gallery of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, Ohio, 1982
Members' Gallery Exhibition, Albright-Knox Gallery, Buffalo, New York, 1981
Art on Paper, Dayton Art Institute, Dayton, Ohio, 1980
Regional Faculty Exhibition, Asheville Art Museum, Asheville, North Carolina, 1976

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York
Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York
Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, Mississippi
McDonald Corporation, Oak Brook, Illinois
Elkay Properties, Atlanta, Georgia
Chase Manhattan Bank, New York, New York
Equitable Life Assurance Company, New York, New York
Miller Brewing Company, Albany, Georgia
Aaron Rents, Atlanta, Georgia
John Wieland Homes, Atlanta, Georgia
Northern Telecom Corporation, Atlanta, Georgia
The Progressive Corporation, Cleveland, Ohio



Above: *Projection: Expansion*

Front: *Inverse Projection*

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Published by the High Museum of Art, Atlanta.

Printed by National Graphics, Decatur, Georgia.

Designed by Walton Harris, Atlanta.

Southern Expressions is a series of exhibitions
made possible by Kidder, Peabody and Company, Inc.