

c h e r y l
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u t o p i a

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the City of Atlanta Bureau of Cultural Affairs, and the Fulton County Arts Council



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September 6 through November 1, 2003

The Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia
Atlanta, Georgia

Essay by Rex Weil

This exhibition is dedicated to the artist's father, Abraham Goldsleger, 1919 - 2003.

Foreword and Acknowledgements

MOCA GA is honored to present our fourth solo exhibition/Cheryl Goldsleger utopia/. This work is the result of two years of researching the contributions of women architects dating from 1869 to 1988. Each of the works in the show pays tribute to the designs and concepts of an important architect's work during this timeframe of more than a century. I have long thought of artists as researchers — looking for answers to questions that they themselves ponder. From her discoveries in researching this work, Goldsleger makes art that answers her 'questions.' I have known Goldsleger since the early '80s. She has consistently shown great skill and maintained a style of imagery that is all her own. She is an important artist that I admire.

On behalf of the board of directors of MOCA GA, I wish to thank the many and diverse individuals, foundations, and corporations that have made significant donations in support of our exhibitions and programs. Our membership is growing and has been encouraged with a challenge grant for new members through SunTrust Bank. The members themselves have created support groups that bring in new members. Along with us, these supporters encourage and applaud the vast creativity of the artists in Georgia. We are also very grateful for the contributions made by the artists themselves. They have created our Artists Resource Council (ARC) whose mission is to further MOCA GA's goal of connecting artists with the community-at-large and to bring programs for artists into our educational structure.

Our success has been the result of considerable support and hard work. A heartfelt thank you to MOCA GA's board of directors. They are strong, active and give generously of their time and talents to further the mission of this museum. Thank you to my incredibly energetic and creative staff — Amy Parry who has been with us since we opened our doors. She has been invaluable, taking charge of membership records and events and has organized ArtMerge and music events at MOCA GA — Lisa Dewberry, who began as an intern while an undergraduate at Agnes Scott College, is now our Collections Manager and has taken the initiative to create an on-line/CD catalogue of our major exhibition, *CLAY* — Joey Orr, our newest staff member, will manage our development and educational programs. And to our many volunteers and interns — thank you all.

Thank you to the Fulton County Arts Council, the City of Atlanta Bureau of Cultural Affairs, and the Rich Foundation for sponsoring this exhibition and catalogue. Thank you Rex Weil for the well-conceived essay on Cheryl Goldsleger's new body of work. And a special thank you to Fran Kaufman of Rosenberg + Kaufman Fine Art for putting us in touch with Mr. Weil and to Tom Smith of Kidder Smith Gallery for advertising the exhibition. Thank you to Sandler Hudson Gallery for encouraging Goldsleger to debut the new work at MOCA GA.

— Annette Cone-Skelton, Co-Founder and Executive Director



PLATE I

Kitchenless House, Llano del Rio, California
(based on the architectural work of Alice Constance Austin, early twentieth century)

2003

Wax, oil, pigment, resin, wood

40 x 40 x 2-1/2 inches

Alice Constance Austin, a utopian socialist, designed patio houses for a community in Llano del Rio in California in 1914. The houses were connected by an underground tunnel system to a central kitchen facility.

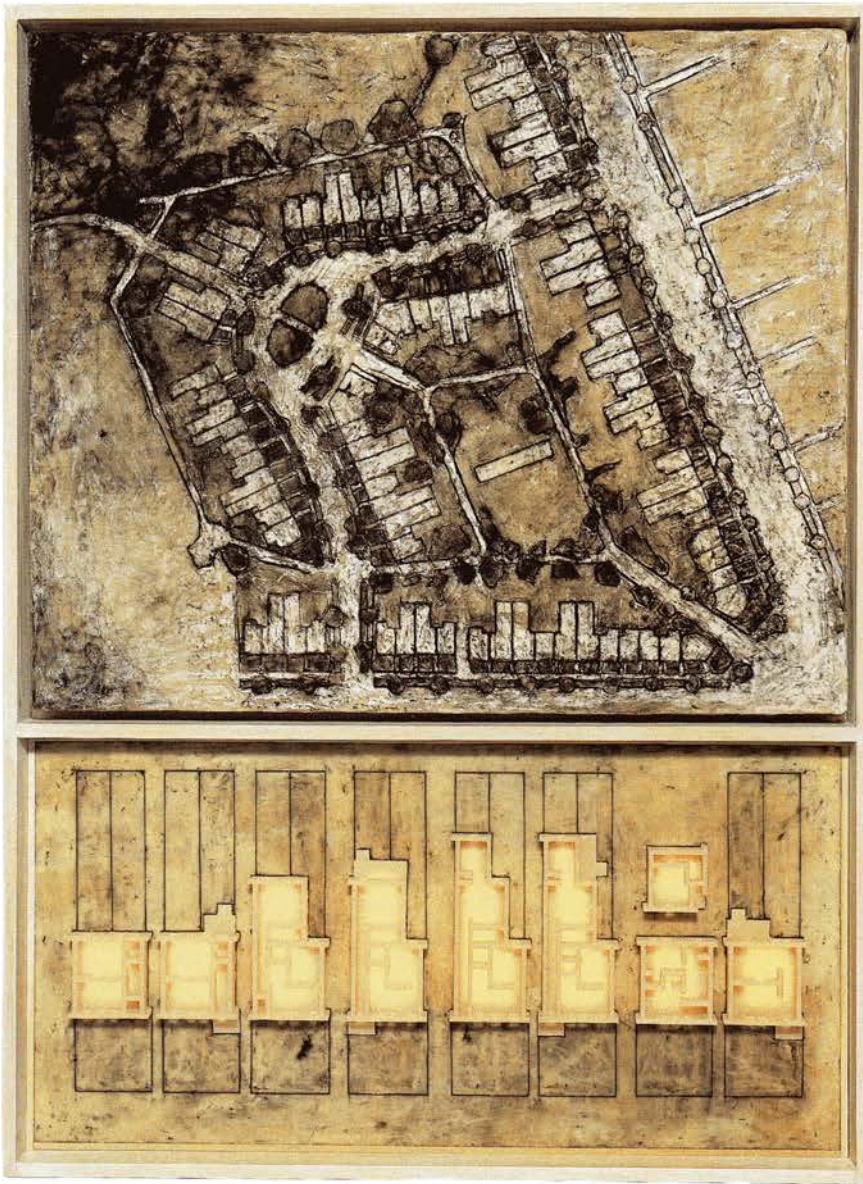


PLATE II

Connecticut Development for the Bridgeport Housing Company

(based on the architectural work of Anna Schenck and Marcia Mead, early twentieth century)

2002

Wax, oil, pigment, resin, wood, linen

42 x 32 x 2 inches

Anna Schenck and Marcia Mead started the first known women's architectural firm in New York City around 1912. The firm worked on many planned housing projects similar to this one.

Cheryl Goldsleger's New House: A Constructivist Context

The time has come for art to be an organic part of life ... Constructively organized life is more than the enchanting and stifling art of magicians. The future is not going to build monasteries for priests or for the prophets and clowns of art ... Down with art as a showy gem in the dark, grimy lives of the poor ... Consciousness, experiment, function, construction, technology, mathematics — these are the [siblings] of the art of our age.

— Alexander Rodchenko

Cheryl Goldsleger's turn to specific subject matter — the work of innovative women architects — highlights a tendency in her work that up to now has been all but ignored. This exhibition, for the first time, makes it abundantly clear that she is aligned with a strong tradition of politically alert architectonic abstraction dating back to the Russian Constructivists. Importantly, this alignment allows her overall artistic project to be solidly located in both the modernist tradition and its progeny in post-minimalist/conceptualist contemporary practice.

Critics' ubiquitous references to Piranesi, Escher, and Kafka when writing about her work, though provocative, now seem largely beside the point. Goldsleger is not about neo-classicism, architectural fantasy, illusion, puzzles, or airless bureaucratic mazes.

Connecticut Development for the Bridgeport Housing Company (Plate II) was the first completed of these new works. It is based on a 1918 design for a workers' housing development by Anna Schenck and Marcia Mead. Although information on Schenck's training is unknown, Mead apprenticed for a number of years and attended Columbia's School of Architecture. (Many of the other architects referenced in this exhibition had been trained privately by Harvard faculty at a time when women students were not admitted to the school's architecture degree program.) In 1912, Mead and Schenck formed their own firm in New York — certainly among the first successful architecture firms started by women.

Goldsleger's version of the plan is a basically faithful reproduction of the architects' drawing as published in a 1918 edition of the *Architectural Record*. The upper portion is a bird's-eye view of the housing development that Goldsleger has rendered in encaustic on linen — using the painting, scraping, and incising techniques she has crafted for many years. The lower portion contains floor plans for various housing options, which are replicated with three-dimensional wax prototypes (a new process the artist has been experimenting with since 2001). The waxy yellow-orange walls of the prototypes suggest the encaustic paint muscling into actual, rather than pictorial space.

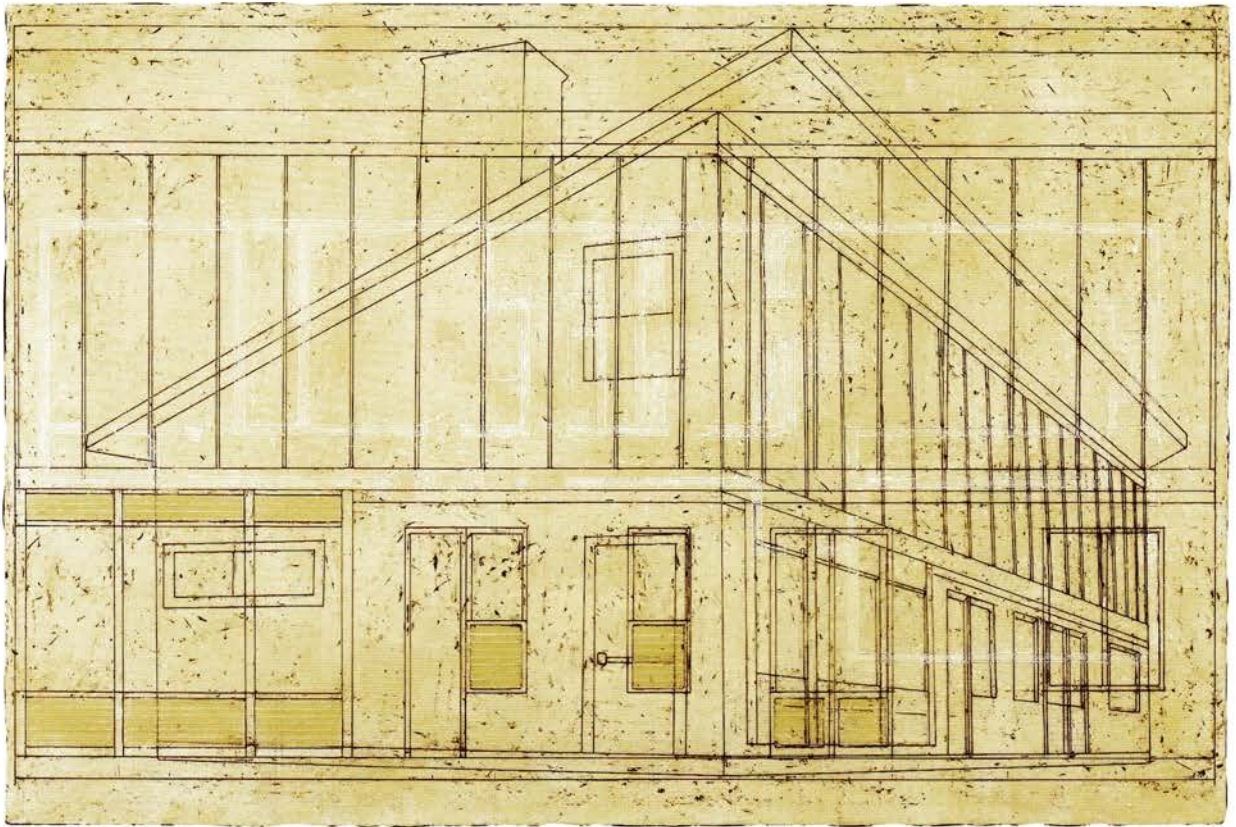


PLATE III
Solar House, Dover, Massachusetts
(based on the architectural work of Eleanor Raymond, mid-twentieth century)
2003
Wax, oil, pigment, resin, wood
40 x 60 x 2 inches

Eleanor Raymond graduated from the Cambridge School for Architecture and Landscape Architecture and was later a member of the faculty of this women's institution. This house was designed and executed for Amelia Peabody in 1948.

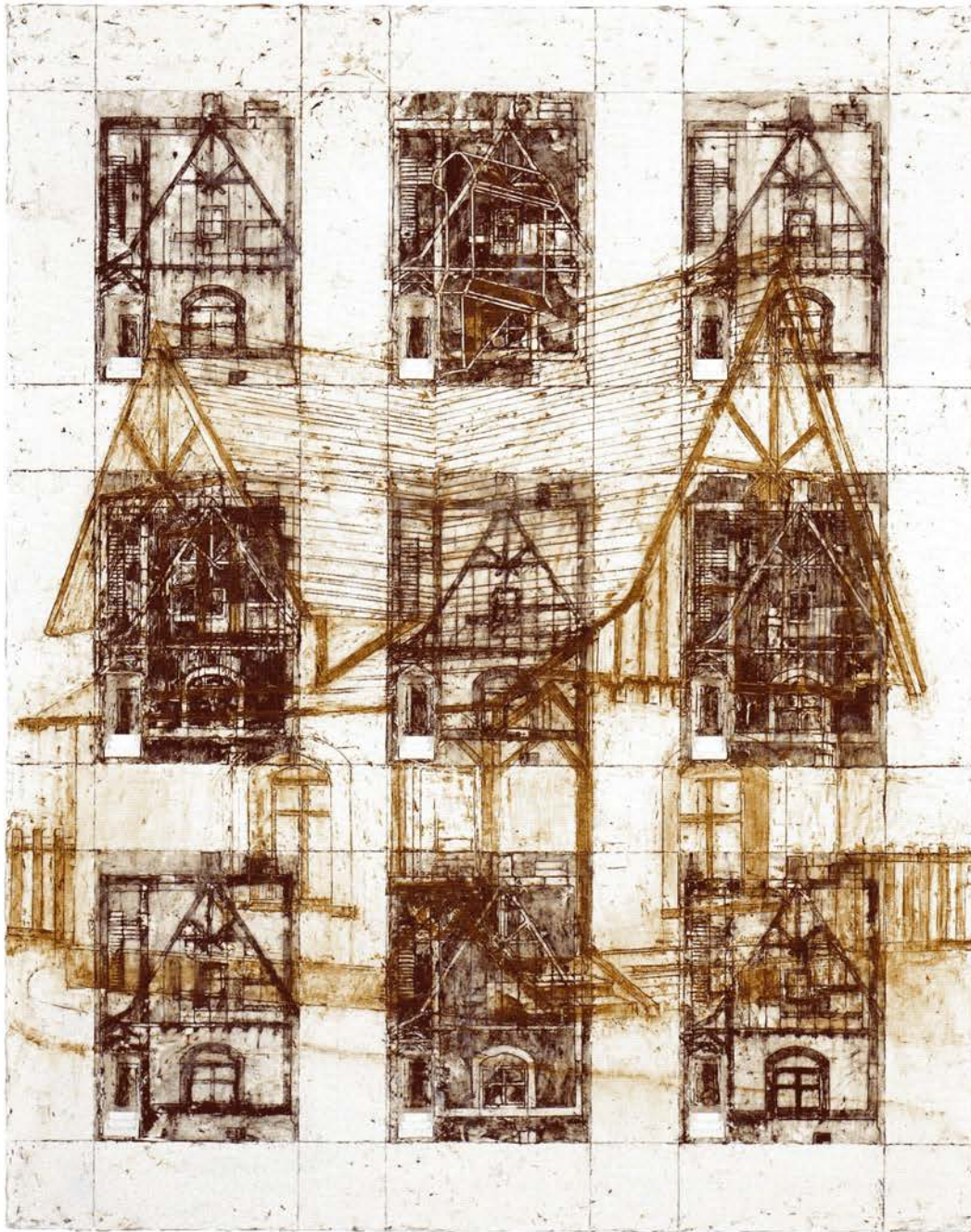


PLATE IV
Workman's Cottage
(based on the architectural work of Margaret Hicks, late nineteenth century)
2003
Wax, oil, pigment, resin, wood
42 x 33 x 2 inches

This was a project Margaret Hicks completed as a student at Cornell University in 1878 and was the first published architectural drawing by a woman architect. It was published in *The American Architect* and *Building News*.

Architectural drawing is, of course, nothing new to Goldsleger's methodology. It has been her point of departure at least since the early 1980s. But here, the blunt quotation of an existing plan flatly contradicts the idea that her principal interest is architectural fantasy, like Piranesi's *Inventions*. Moreover, with its delicate, sensuous surfaces, *Connecticut Development* must be read as considerably more than a mere homage to these pioneering architects.

Three elements point in an entirely different direction: The progressive nature of Schenck and Mead's underlying project; Goldsleger's implicit feminist motive; and the constructed architectural forms embedded in the surface of the work. These elements combine to demonstrate Goldsleger's fascination with the relationship between artistic practice and the texture of everyday life — the most prominent concern of the Russian avant-garde. It is no coincidence that, for the Russians, architecture also seemed to provide a cue for the effective transformation of visual art's imaginary space into concrete structure and specific social function.

Higher Secondary School II for Girls, Chandigarh, India (Plate V) is based on one of architect Jane Drew's contributions to Chandigarh, a pre-eminent twentieth century experiment in urban planning. Shortly after India's 1947 independence from the United Kingdom, Nehru's government decided to build a new city from scratch. Le Corbusier, along with Drew, her husband Maxwell Fry, and Pierre Jeanneret were commissioned to draw up plans. Chandigarh was conceived as a symbol for an independent India and for a new post-colonial social order. Focusing on Drew's School for Girls, Goldsleger depicts the classrooms, pavilions, and open corridors as an upside down 'L' shape. An outdoor theatre is harbored in the crux of the 'L' and is represented by a three-dimensional prototype.

Goldsleger's overview of Drew's plan recalls El Lissitzky's architecture-based drawings and paintings of the early 1920s. El Lissitzky invented the word Proun (a contraction of Project for the Affirmation of the New) for these works — many of which were intended as studies for three-dimensional objects. El Lissitzky proselytized for an advanced art that would synthesize art and industry, combining super-charged imaginary space and concrete reality. Goldsleger's exploration of the prototype process seems particularly pertinent. In fact, it is a constructivist's dream come true. Goldsleger draws a 'blueprint' of the form with computer software. The computer program, in turn, transposes from her sketch additional views that collectively describe the form in three-dimensions. A three-dimensional 'printer' called a Rapid Prototype Machine (RPM) — invented for industrial applications — sprays wax from nozzles or catalyzes layers of resin onto a platen, slowly building up the actual form. (What a fantastic project it would be to feed Prouns into the RPM!)

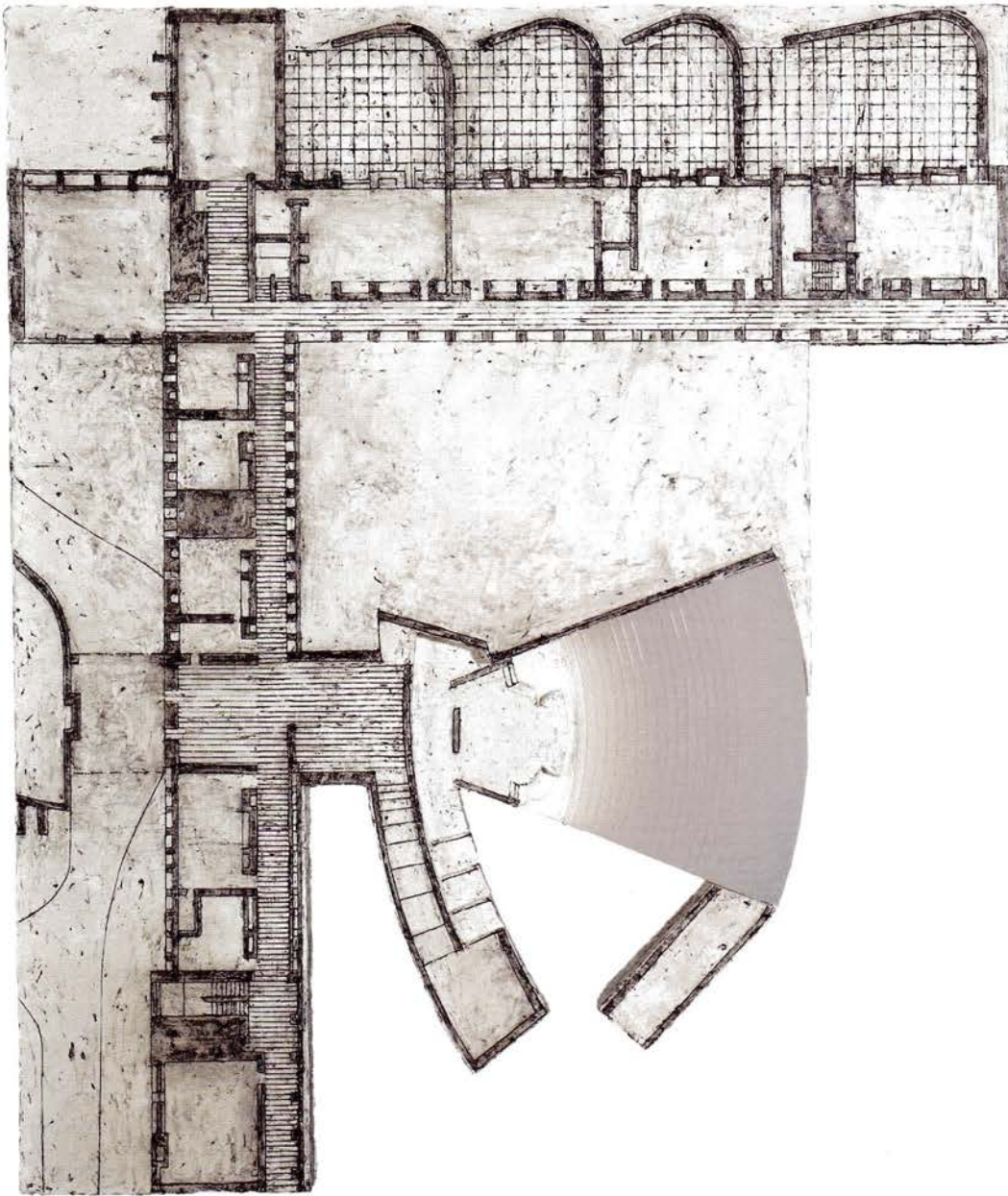


PLATE V
Higher Secondary School II for Girls, Chandigarh, India
(based on the architectural work of Jane Drew, mid-twentieth century)
2003
Wax, oil, pigment, resin, wood
42-1/2 x 36 x 2 inches

Jane Drew was one of three architects in the 1950s who went to Chandigarh, India to continue the building of the new capital started by Le Corbusier. Drew, who was British, received considerable credit for improving housing quality for low income government employees and for designing 'cheap houses' to meet the needs of the very poorest in the society.

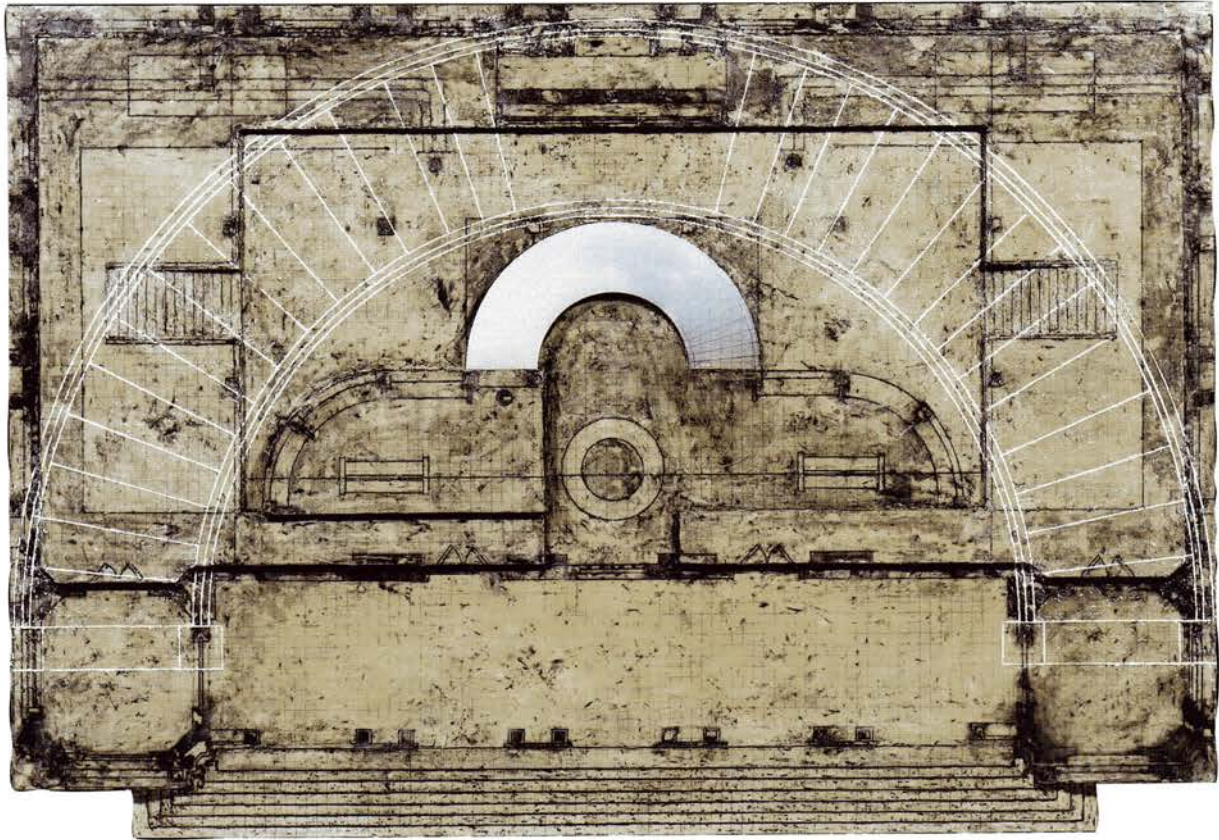


PLATE VI
Floor Plan for the YWCA Building, Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco, California
(based on the architectural work of Julia Morgan, early twentieth century)
2003
Wax, oil, pigment, resin, wood
40 x 58 x 2-1/2 inches

Julia Morgan was asked to design the interior of this collaborative structure. It served as a women's building for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1915. Although this was a temporary building, Morgan was commissioned to build many more YWCA's throughout California. Her most famous and longest running project was the William Randolph Hearst residence at San Simeon, California.

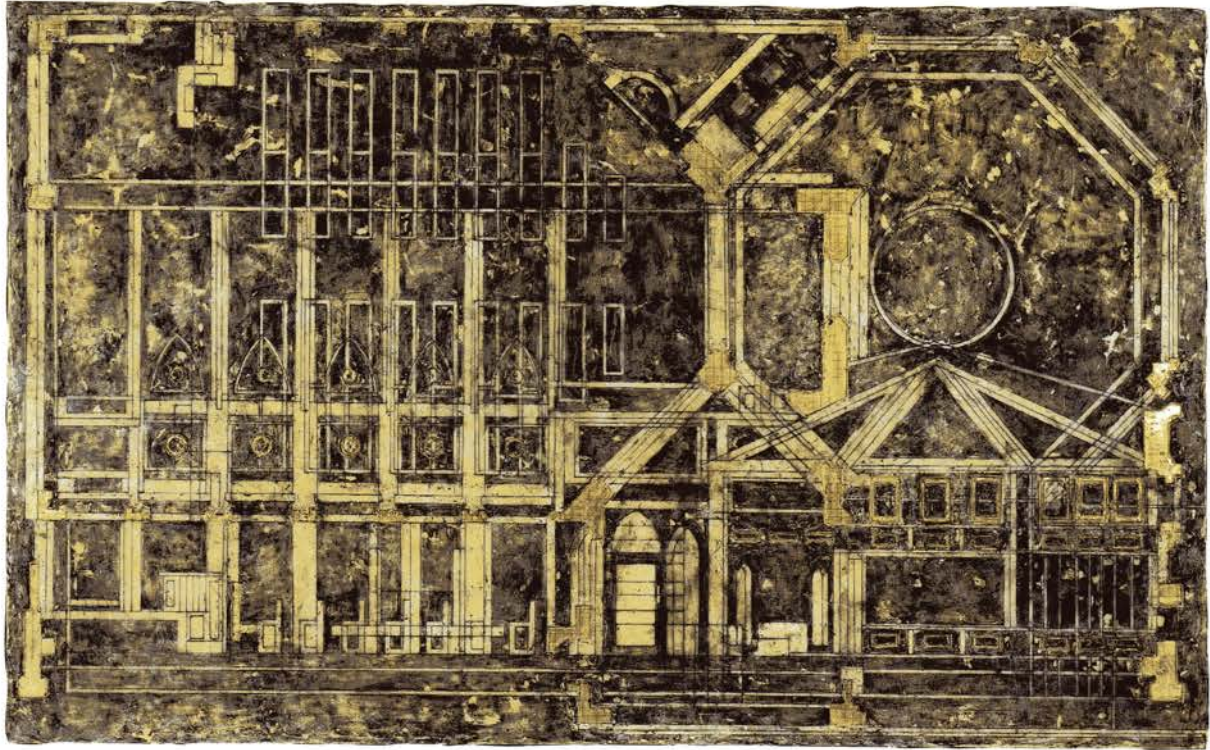


PLATE VII
All Souls Unitarian Church, Evanston, Illinois
(based on the architectural work of Marion Mahoney, early twentieth century)
2002
Wax, oil, pigment, resin, wood, linen
48 x 72 x 2 inches

This design from 1902, which was never executed, was one of the few architectural designs fully credited to Marion Mahoney. She was renowned for the beauty of her architectural drawings and worked for many famous Chicago architects including Frank Lloyd Wright.

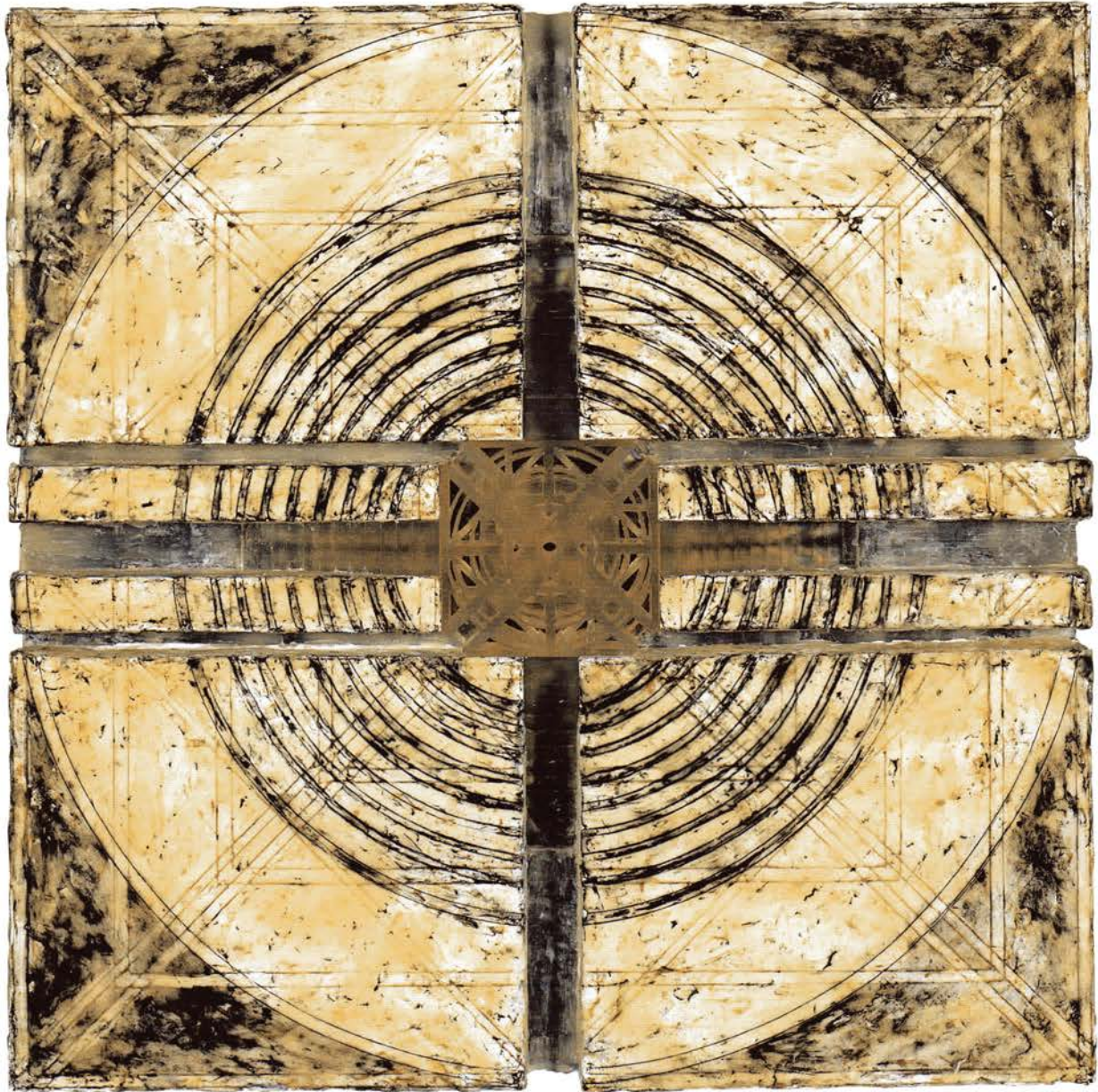


PLATE VIII
Villa nel Bosco
(based on the architectural work of Gae Aulenti, mid-twentieth century)
2002
Wax, oil, pigment, resin, wood
20-1/4 x 20-1/4 x 1-3/4 inches

Gae Aulenti, an internationally known Italian architect and designer, worked on a variety of projects throughout her career. This is one of several private housing designs from 1963 that focused on a compound of buildings with a geometric influence. She was the architect selected to transform the old Gare d'Orsay train station in Paris into the beautiful Musée d'Orsay.

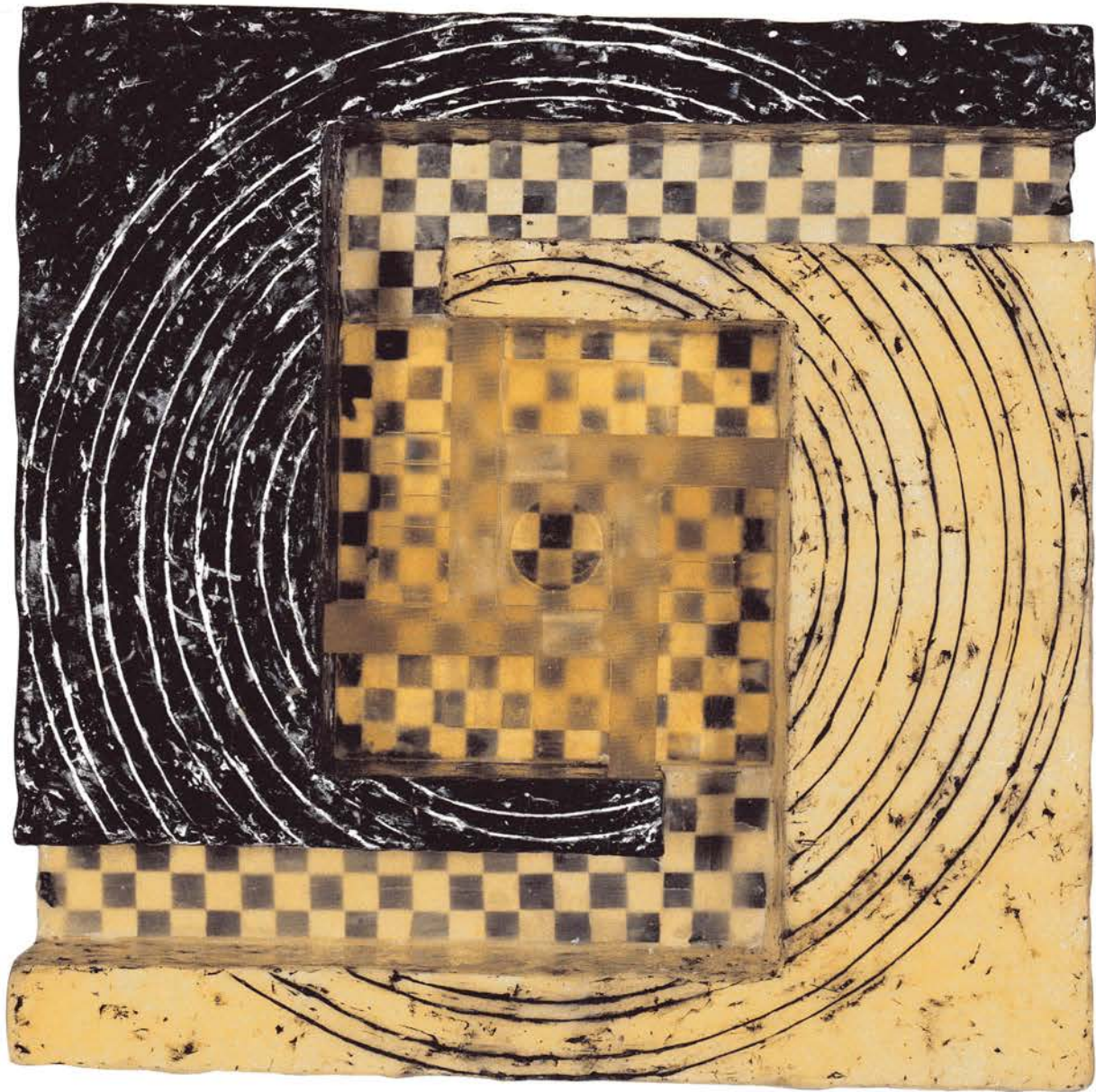


PLATE IX
Kitchenless House for Pacific Colony, Block Design
(based on the architectural work of Marie Stevens Howland, late nineteenth century)
2002
Wax, oil, pigment, resin, wood
10.3/4 x 10.3/4 x 2.1/2 inches

Marie Stevens Howland was a proponent of collective housekeeping as described in her novel *Papa's Own Girl*. She worked with Albert Kimsey Owen and John Deery on this housing design for the Pacific Colony of Sinaloa, Mexico in 1885. Four private houses made up one housing unit. All houses were connected to a central kitchen and laundry building.

Kitchenless House for Pacific Colony; Block Design, (Plate IX) a more complete abstraction, has its origin in a design by Marie Stevens Howland. A nineteenth century feminist, socialist, and novelist, Howland is remembered principally as an advocate of collective housekeeping. Goldsleger chose Howland's 1885 work with architects Albert Kimsey Owen and John Deery on row houses and suburban homes in Sinaloa, Mexico. These dwellings were linked to communal kitchens and laundry facilities. Seizing a motif from the paths to the cooperative kitchen, Goldsleger created a concentric maze of black and cream colored encaustic. Checkerboard encaustic painting on a recessed wood section resembles a linoleum floor and an amber prototype in the center forms the kitchen walls. *Kitchenless House for Pacific Colony; Block Design* stands as a near perfect integration of the fundamentals of Goldsleger's earlier architectonic paintings and her new interest in women's architecture. Without abandoning her new work's political tendency, she allows the immediate aesthetic experience of the surface, shape, and texture to override the composition's source.

In this regard, the work of another constructivist provides an important precedent: Liubov Popova's *Painterly Architectonics* of 1918. Popova's journal records a painting strategy that might well describe aspects of Goldsleger's: 'Surface is fixed but forms are volumetrical ... Line [is used] as color ... [A] plane participates in, and directs the forces of construction ... Texture is the content of all painterly surfaces.' For Popova, as for Goldsleger, the aesthetic transformation of space both represents the inherently repressive nature of actual architecture and reveals a horizon of free space — an analog for political liberation. From Popova, it is a short stride to the strong currents of geometric and architectonic abstraction in Latin American art. Especially pertinent in connection with Goldsleger's new work are the constructed spaces by the Brazilian Lygia Clark, under the rubric of Neo-Concretism (for example, her 1955 *Build the Space Where You Live*). And Clark, for her part, explicitly acknowledged her constructivist roots with *Counter-Relief in Homage to Tatlin* (1958-59).

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The Constructivist's concern with the nexus of art and life re-emerged with a vengeance in the 1960s and culminated in the post-minimalists' and conceptual artists' uses of nature, found objects, industrial materials, and processes, the human body, mass media, and information — all aimed at freeing art from strict formalism and sharpening its social function. In this respect, Goldsleger's new work can be seen in a broader context — as beneficiary to works as different as Sol LeWitt's geometric sculptures, Eva Hesse's latex sculptures, even Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* and Vito Acconci's forays into architecture. And, in her own generation, her work resides quite comfortably alongside Rachel Whiteread's architectural fragments, Guillermo Kuitca's blueprint-like paintings, Joel Shapiro's houses, Robert Gober's architectural sculptures, and Jennifer Bartlett's grids, among others. With her incursion into the work of women architects, Goldsleger has continued to build the house where she lives.



PLATE X
 30-36 Wagenaar Straat, Amsterdam, Holland
 (based on the architectural work of Magreet Duinker, late twentieth century)
 2003
 Wax, oil, pigment, resin, wood
 15-1/2 x 130 x 2-1/2 inches
 Each panel is: 15-1/2 x 16-1/2 (depth and space between panels variable)

Margreet Duinker currently owns a practice with Michiel van der Torre in Amsterdam that specializes in social housing that is spacious and flexible with good daylight. This particular plan involves sliding walls allowing a large space to be divided or opened up as needed.

bibliography

- Battista, Giovanni, *Piranesi: The Complete Etchings* (Taschen, 2000)
 Bois, Yve-Alain, et al., *Geometric Abstraction: Latin American Art From the Collection of Patricia Phelps de Cisneros* (Yale University, 2001)
 Cooke, Catherine, *Architectural Drawings of the Russian Avant-garde* (Abrams, 1990)
 Dabrowski, Magdalena, *Liubov Popova* (Abrams, 1991)
 Joshi, Kiran, *Documenting Chandigarh* (Mapin Publishing, 1999)
 Lodder, Christina, *Russia Constructivism* (Yale University Press, 1983)
 Nisbet, Peter, *El Lissitzky 1890-1941* (Harvard University, 1987)
 Rose, Margaret, *Marx's Lost Aesthetic* (Cambridge, 1984)
 Rotzler, Willy, *Constructive Concepts: A History of Constructive Art from Cubism to the Present* (ABC Zurich, 1977)
 Torre, Susana, *Women in American Architecture: A Historic and Contemporary Perspective* (Whitney Library of Design, 1977)

about the essayist

Rex Weil is an artist, writer, and educator living and working in Washington, DC. At the Corcoran College of Art and Design, he teaches Contemporary Art and Theories of Art. He is a contributing editor for *ARTnews* and has written essays and criticism about contemporary art for *ARTnews*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *New Art Examiner*, and *Washington City Paper*, among other publications.

Cheryl Goldsleger

Selected Solo Exhibitions

Kidder Smith Gallery, Boston, Massachusetts, 2003
Rosenberg + Kaufman Fine Art, New York, New York,
2003, 2002, 2001, 1999, 1998, 1996
Sandler Hudson Gallery, Atlanta, Georgia, 2003, 1999
Halsey Gallery, College of Charleston, Charleston,
South Carolina, Traveling Exhibition, 2002-2003
Heath Gallery, Atlanta, Georgia, 1994, 1989, 1983, 1980
Palazzo Casali, Cortona, Italy, 1993
Bertha Urdang Gallery, New York, New York, 1993, 1991,
1989, 1987, 1984, 1982
High Museum of Art, Atlanta, Georgia, 1985
Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art,
Winston-Salem, North Carolina, 1985
Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, Mississippi, 1983

Selected Group Exhibitions

Krannert Museum, University of Illinois, Champaign,
Illinois, *Drawings of Choice from a New York
Collection*. Traveling Exhibition. 2002 - 2003
North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, North Carolina,
Interiors, 2000
Pratt Institute of Art, New York, New York, *Women and
Geometric Abstraction*, 1999
The Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, New Jersey,
Waxing Poetic: Encaustic Art in America, 1999
C. Kermit Ewing Gallery, University of Tennessee,
Knoxville, Tennessee, *An Affinity with
Architecture*. Traveling exhibition, 1998-1999
Islip Art Museum, East Islip, New York, *A Walk in the
Woods*, 1996
New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, Louisiana,
New Orleans Triennial, 1995, 1986
American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters,
New York, New York, 1994, 1987
Il Centro Espositivo della Rocca Paolina, Perugia, Italy,
Presenze, 1991
Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel, *Drawings in the
Museum Collection*, 1989
Corcoran Gallery, Washington, DC, *41st Biennial
Exhibition of American Painting*, 1989
Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York, *Recent
Acquisitions*, 1986

Mint Museum, Charlotte, North Carolina, *Southern
Comfort/Discomfort*, 1986
The Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia,
Pennsylvania, *Connections*, 1983

Selected Public Collections

Ackland Art Museum, University of North Carolina,
Chapel Hill, North Carolina
Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York
Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock, Arkansas
Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York
Brunnier Gallery and Museum, Ames, Iowa
The Columbus Museum, Columbus, Georgia
Greenville County Museum of Art,
Greenville, South Carolina
High Museum, Atlanta, Georgia
Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel
Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Cornell University,
Ithaca, New York
Macon Museum of Arts and Science, Macon, Georgia
Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia,
Atlanta, Georgia
Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, Mississippi
New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, Louisiana
North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, North Carolina
Rhode Island School of Design Museum,
Providence, Rhode Island
Tel Aviv Museum, Tel Aviv, Israel

Selected Awards

The Fifth Floor Foundation, New York, New York,
Artist Grant, 1999
La Napoule Foundation Fellowship,
La Napoule, France 1995
American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters,
New York, Purchase Award, 1994, 1988
US/France Fellowship, Cite Internationale des Arts,
Paris, France, 1993
National Endowment for the Arts, Artist's Fellowship
1991, 1982

My sincere gratitude goes to Larry Millard, my husband, for his encouragement and assistance during the preparation for this exhibition. Thank you to Andrew Layton at the Rapid Prototyping and Manufacturing Institute of the Georgia Institute of Technology for working with me on the prototypes. The libraries of Georgia State University, the University of Georgia, the Georgia Institute of Technology, and interlibrary loan services facilitated the research for the work in this exhibition. My deepest thanks go to the authors of the books on women in architecture. The support from Fran Kaufman, Stephen Rosenberg, Tom Smith, Becky Kidder, Debbie Hudson, and Robin Sandler for this exhibition is greatly appreciated. I also wish to thank the Ernest G. Welch School of Art and Design of Georgia State University for the summer research funding in support of this exhibition. Finally, I would like to thank Annette Cone-Skelton for her belief in my work that led to this exhibition. The hard work of Cone-Skelton and her staff at MOCA GA has been invaluable.

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