

CHERYL GOLDSLEGER

*Vast Scale—Intimate Space*



Morris Museum of Art

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## Vast Scale—Intimate Space

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Common to all human beings is our temporary occupation of the earth. Throughout her career, Cheryl Goldsleger has explored the concept of place and how humans occupy interior and exterior spaces. As the way we inhabit the world continues to evolve, Goldsleger's interests persist, expanding from the study of architectural renderings to maps. Functioning not only as representations but also as concepts, maps, similar to lines drawn by the artist, represent the idea of a place.

Although Goldsleger's current works do not reference specific locations, they are also not imagined. *Vast Scale—Intimate Space*, her contribution to *Personal Structures-Identities*, presents three paintings *Tenuous*, 2019, *Coalescence*, 2019 and *Transient*, 2018 installed over a wall-covering created from a reverse printing of her drawing, *Independent*, 2015, reinforcing our shared existence within communal spaces.

Aided by a set of tools collected over time, she references geographical elements, the mathematical, and humankind's comfort with geometric forms. Her use of repeating motifs recalls modern landscapes and reinforces current reliance on systems and networks.

Capitalizing upon the provisions of a resist technique, Goldsleger selects a black ground for her paintings upon which jewel-toned colors highlight the beauty of connectivity, chaos, and order. Fluid lines traverse over one another, and meticulously rendered borders appear through them. Often sub-divided into smaller plots, they allude to humanity's ambition for ownership.

Goldsleger's use of an abstract vocabulary allows for multiple interpretations while conveying her sensitivity for the human experience. Her 'diagrammatic images' also suggest natural and societal orders and serve as a reminder of the transitory realities present within contemporary society.

Shannon Morris, Director of the Mary S. Byrd Gallery  
Curator for Vast Scale — Intimate Space  
European Cultural Centre  
2019 Venice Art Biennale  
Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy  
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Installation view, European Cultural Centre, Palazzo Bembo, Venice, Italy during the 58th Venice Biennale. Left to right: *Tenuous*, 2019; *Coalescence*, 2019, *Transient*, 2018

## Considering Cheryl Goldsleger's Paintings

Cheryl Goldsleger's paintings are investigations of aesthetic and philosophical dualities. At once luxurious and taut, her expansive compositions are articulated with delicate details, and while the content derives from many years of rigorous practice, it leads us to consider metaphysical uncertainties. During the past forty years, as the artist posited these oppositional concepts, she honed a distinct arena where her keen intellect achieves equilibrium with her awareness of global anxiety. As Goldsleger has stated, 'My work attempts to reflect and synthesize the pervasive moods of unquiet and apprehension that permeate our lives...'

As much a scientist as an artist, Goldsleger is inspired by research. She has explored the history of architecture, astronomical charts, ancient seafaring routes, chemical compounds, mapmaking and analytical systems. Using these technical languages as substrata, she methodically builds layered surfaces crafted of graphite, paint, encaustic, etched lines, resin, rubbings and scratches to make complex, airless worlds rooted in rational constructs, but also offering poetic renderings of the mind/body problem. From her signature isometric vantage point, Goldsleger establishes a tension between rational schema and psychic dread, leaving the viewer to vacillate from an omniscient, impartial locus where we survey dense space, to that utterly subjective place where the earthly somnambulist veil is lifted to reveal our tiny presence in the void.

Goldsleger's recent paintings are a crescendo in the long, thoughtful trajectory she has developed since the 1980s when she first exhibited her drawings and paintings based on historical architectural plans. During those decades, the artist has experimented with paint, resin, wax, Dura-Lar, graphite, Mylar, geographic information software, and 3D printing. Inquisitive and methodical, Goldsleger's scholarly tenor presides throughout her oeuvre as a steady undertone to even her most psychologically unsettling panoramas. With nary a human figure, the artist probes some of the most fundamental mind/body issues. Among them is her constant realization of her location as a singular being simultaneously located in her studio, in her country, in the world, and in the universe. In a Goldsleger painting we are at once hurtling through space and fixed in the limitations of self.

A careful study of *Coalescence*, completed in 2019, conveys many of the artist's most challenging objectives. When seen as the fifth in the series of spherically themed works dating from 2015 to 2019, *Coalescence* can be understood as a culminating effort. The large, square canvas elaborates on elements of the four previous paintings, titled respectively: *Tenuous*, *Transient*, *Resound* and *Refrain*. *Coalescence* is a particularly active composition, with subdued color playing an integral role in the rich matrix of linear ellipses that orbit across the canvas in an energetic array. Light flickers and retreats through the web, moving from the suspended foreground into deep, map-like details. The dense surface approaches and ebbs from the eye, circling an off-center vortex that leads into deep space. We never feel centered. Rather, we are compelled toward the ominous descent. Retreating from the celestial vista, we realize that we are perceiving the grand scene alone, untethered and in doubt, a mental adjustment we must accomplish repeatedly in everyday life. Goldsleger's gentle invitation to this dance of consciousness is the essence of her audacious program.

The complex content of *Coalescence* also conveys a temporal awareness. Markings suggesting traces of history are activated by neutral colored daubs that flicker through the layers of pigment. From our elevated vantage point, the scene appears like an archeological excavation site, with satellite measurements articulating a ghostly world. Memory has been supplanted by apprehension. Something happened here, but there is no apparent historical meaning. The vast landscape embodies forgotten events but at the same time it heightens the viewer's present. Like medieval paintings that entail multiple episodes of a Biblical story, or the lone figure in Caspar David Friedrich's *Wanderer Above the Sea of Fog*, the artist simultaneously refers to vast, anonymous concepts and active personal perceptions.

Goldsleger's ability to convey disquietude is particularly meaningful as we contend with current global uncertainties. As never before, we are seeking to regain our equanimity, to resume our roles as faithful supplicants to the future. But the paintings' divergent forces do not affect despair in the viewer. Rather, we sense that Goldsleger's respect for knowledge is always in tandem with her ambitious enterprise. With calm humility, she balances the hard, cold facts of an indifferent universe with a tenderness for the angst-ridden witnesses. Now, her maze of arcing lines seems like the contrails of souls traversing time.

Daphne Anderson Deeds  
Independent Curator  
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*Transient, 2018*

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