

**Southern Expressions:
Cheryl Goldsleger**

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Cheryl Goldsleger's paintings and drawings are more than representations of architectural spaces. They are invented worlds of isolation, privacy, and ambiguity, which, although executed with compulsive rationalism, often seem irrational.

Superimposing a combination of isometric perspective (a view from above at a 30 degree angle) and two-point perspective onto diagonal and horizontal grids, Goldsleger creates sweeping views of architectural space. Scattered wooden straightback and metal folding chairs provide references for scale, while stairways and halls are layered into labyrinthine paths. The result is a shifting sense of space, impenetrable and enveloping.

Expansive and deserted, Goldsleger's schematic spaces suggest secrecy, abandonment, even melancholia. Chairs appear to have been sat upon, but they face away from each other as if they were occupied by living dead rather than warm conversive-bodies. The lack of ornament gives an arid quality to the spaces. Institutional chairs and modular walls are used because of their anonymity, universality, and timelessness.

Goldsleger's world draws a thin line between societal and self-imposed anonymity. Forsaken, yet inviting, these spaces are retreats from the very alienation they represent. However, it is not only escapism that pulls the viewer into the works; the viewer finds that, although cluttered with lines, planes, and chairs, the spaces can be easily travelled.

Goldsleger generally avoids the use of single focal points. In works such as *Inverse Projection*, the viewer drifts aimlessly through the spaces. "You can't get out of the spaces," she says, "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 in just one room."

But just as the lack of a focal point in *Inverse Projection* permits spontaneity, the rectangular recess in *Segment / Fragment* directs the viewer toward the center of the painting. It is a forceful expression of absence. Like an empty swimming pool, it conjures spirits of human recreation and human presence.

In contrast to the desolate subject matter, Goldsleger saturates the surfaces of her paintings with layers of encaustic and oil. Executed predominately in white with tints of green and blue, and incised to reveal black undercoats, she achieves a luxuriant sense of light and texture that invites deeper interrelation. The relationship between the content of her paintings and their plastic nature suggests the connection between the modern spirit and the root of decadence. The opulence of the painted surface shields us from the harsh reality of the work's content.

Three of the works are drawings, representative of the bulk of Goldsleger's experimentation until 1984. These are much lighter, more direct, less labored in comparison to the thick, relief-like paintings, but no more convincing. They reveal her thought process more clearly, but the statement is not as strong.

As Donald Kuspit has noted, Goldsleger's "paintings and drawings seem out of place in the current art world, for they are neither photographically based manipulations nor expressionistically urgent and agitated images," concluding that "'expressivity' can be brought into being as much through rationalistic means as through impulsive painterliness." Yet, although Goldsleger's work is "rationalistic" in that the use of perspective is in some measure based on reason, her perspective is disconnected, dreamlike, emotionally charged, irrational. It is in this sense that her paintings and drawings are more than architectural renderings, they are eloquent expressions of a private world.

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