



Cheryl Goldsleger

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Essay by Lilly Wei

Rosenberg + Kaufman Fine Art  
New York



## Cheryl Goldsleger

### Points of Order, Points of View

Cheryl Goldsleger, in common with Uccello and other Renaissance masters, has always been enamored of that “bella cosa” perspective; more specifically, she has always been engrossed by the way shifts in perspective so radically alter our perception of relationships among objects, our perception of objects. Goldsleger is also fascinated by architecture, a fascination particularly evident in her drawings and paintings of the late 1980's and early 1990's. These works' exquisitely rendered, tightly framed, labyrinthine plans suggest partial views of classical sites or anonymous urban complexes filled with structures that resemble amphitheaters, agoras, temples, offices. Not utopian visions, these invented, airless precincts, empty of life, function instead like memento mori, with intimations of transitions, absence, temporality and, ultimately, mortality. Their subtle spacial distortions (they are often presented in isometric perspective, from its overhead point of view), their architectural anomalies (arbitrarily placed upright slabs and columns, sunken shafts, abandoned chairs, rooms without windows, exits or entrances, ramps and stairways that lead nowhere), and their sense of isolation and silence, evoke, for example, Piranesi's *Carceri*, de Chirico's *Mystery and Melancholy of a Street*, Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*, Kafka's claustrophobic, premonitory surroundings, Borges' surreal settings. Goldsleger's sleight-of-hand is her ability to formulate images and spaces that are rational yet coexist and slide into the irrational, that passes geometric clarity yet dissolve into mannered complexity, into psychological forces.

By the mid-90's Goldsleger began to compress her architectural renditions into mazes and labyrinths with their multiple associations and uses, ranging from the mythological and mystical to the diverting, to puzzles and games. This group of work was more diagrammatic, although the hard, brittle edge of geometry was tempered by material sensuality and by metaphor, quietly subverting their contained, measured semblance. Through the agency of impersonal geometry, Goldsleger arrives at the deeply idiosyncratic and urgent, an urgency that the eye reads, baffled and enticed as it follows the intricate, winding, angular lines of

drawing, losing its way, finding it. In effect, all her work is a labyrinth, an involuted continuum of space-time, and vision is the golden thread that takes us to its heart, to its secret chamber, to the Minotaur -- and back again. While Goldsleger describes her aesthetic formally, there adheres to all her work a sense of narrative; these precisely engraved squares, diamonds and triangles beg to be decoded and explained, like arcane symbols, arcane rituals, or the meaning of the mandalas or Minoan Linear B. Here, one secret may be, as other abstract artists have noted, that formalism at its core is mysterious, transgressive, a hybrid of reason and passion, not unlike the Minotaur.

Her latest mazes are even more concise although still linked to what came before. The architectural elements, submerged still more allow other aspects of her work -- line, shape, tone, color, positive and negative interaction -- to surface independently. From a distance, these works are self-effacing, modest in imagery and scale, their impact latent. The richness of the surface, the translucency of the wax and the subtle overlapping and interlocking of forms require a close view. The touched and burnished surfaces, the clean, crisp drawing, the drawing behind the drawing (which is often the same image rotated, seen from another point of view) slowly cast their spell. In order to extend the range of combinations and transitions, Goldsleger, at times uses a multiple-panel format hung in grid formation; in *Sequence* (1998) for example, the repeating motif of the frontal maze is presented as negative images (neutral in color, in the background) in the top row, then repeated as positive images (black, in the foreground) in the bottom row, intersected by cut-off depictions of mazes seen obliquely.

Goldsleger has always been committed to craft and to the labor intensive. Her basic repertory consists of reticulated squares, circles, ovals, triangles, diamonds, versions of Cezanne's cylinders, spheres and cones. There is almost always a space at the center of the painting or two spaces on either side of the center, as if the mazes had been pulled apart, their mid-points separated or in the process of being re-aligned. *Centrum* (1996) and *Overview* (1998) are examples of the former and *Interchange* (1997) and *Combination* (1998) of the latter. The support is either square or rectangular and is often partitioned internally into other squares or rectangles. These divisions overlay a grid of much smaller squares that is partly obscured. The surfaces are built up

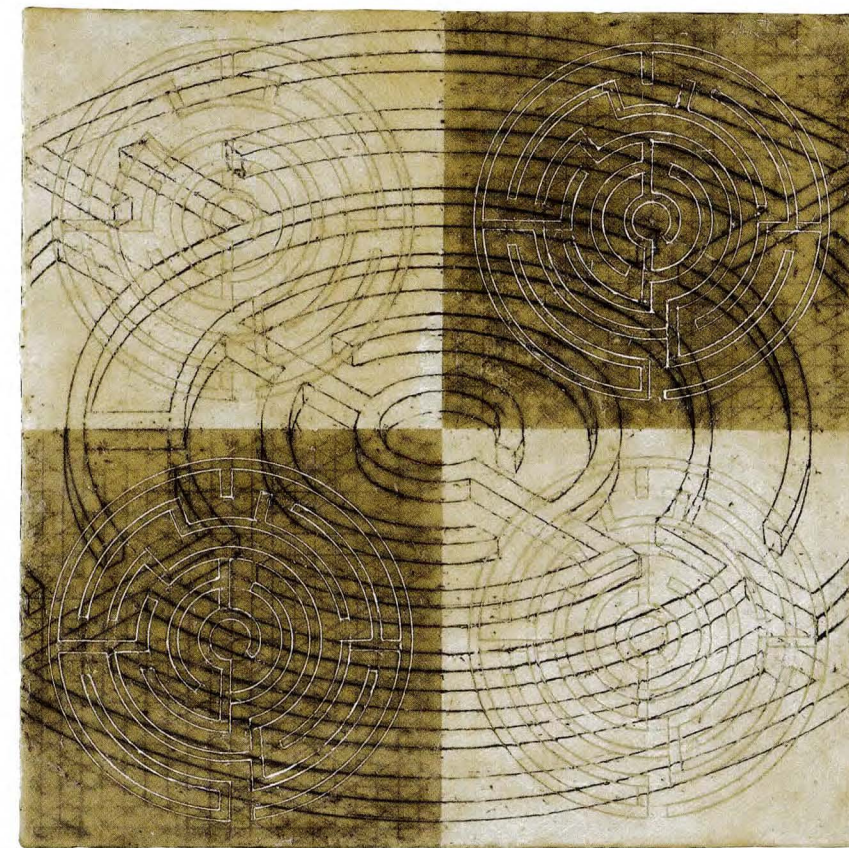
and scraped down, the colors limited to black and white pigments, the golden tint of the heated wax, the cool, almost imperceptible greenish cast of the linen. Making the surface more translucent these days, Goldsleger said she wanted to dematerialize the painting so that it was less solid, less established and more penetrable, which the greater transparency of the wax permitted. She continues to work with heated clear wax (which she began using some time ago as away to get back into painting, as a way to merge painting and drawing, after five years of only making drawings). When melted, she pours the wax onto the linen and while still liquid, scrapes and presses it into the support. Sometimes she draws on the linen first, then adds the layer of wax which she scores.

Goldsleger complements, balances, adjusts: the representational into the abstract; the asceticism of line (mind) into the voluptuousness of wax (flesh); the minimal into the replete; drawing into painting; dark into light; negative into positive; the plain into the beautiful; restraint into release; the pragmatic into the magical; the classic into the anti-classic in order to reach a state of equilibrium, of completion: as in Newtonian physics, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. It is these balancings and oppositions that add scope to her patterns, to her visual gambits. The physicality of her work takes them out of the conceptual and into the sheer substantiality of pigment, oil, wax, and linen, all traditional materials, where form itself is meaningful. In the context of abstraction today, Cheryl Goldsleger cleaves to modernist aesthetics infused with more private introspections and interpolations. Hers is an ordered, elegant mania, a formalism that is rubbed, glowing, resonant and ambivalent, possessing a careful beauty that is more European in its sense of finish and fabrication than American, removed from the gestural imperative and immediacy of much signature American painting yet too fraught to be minimalist. Cheryl Goldsleger's aesthetic proposes that order, measure, proportion -- with a difference -- once again be the standard and definition of art, of beauty.

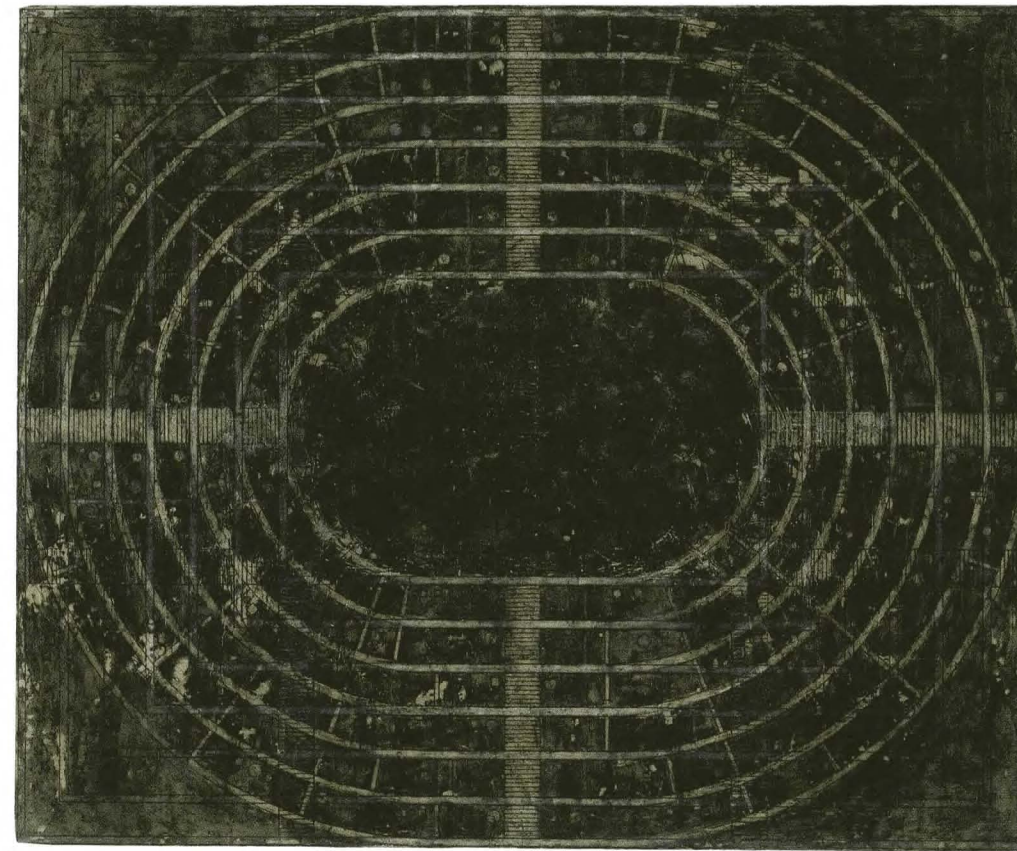
Lilly Wei  
December 1998



*Centrum*, 1996, wax, oil, pigment on linen, 20" x 20"

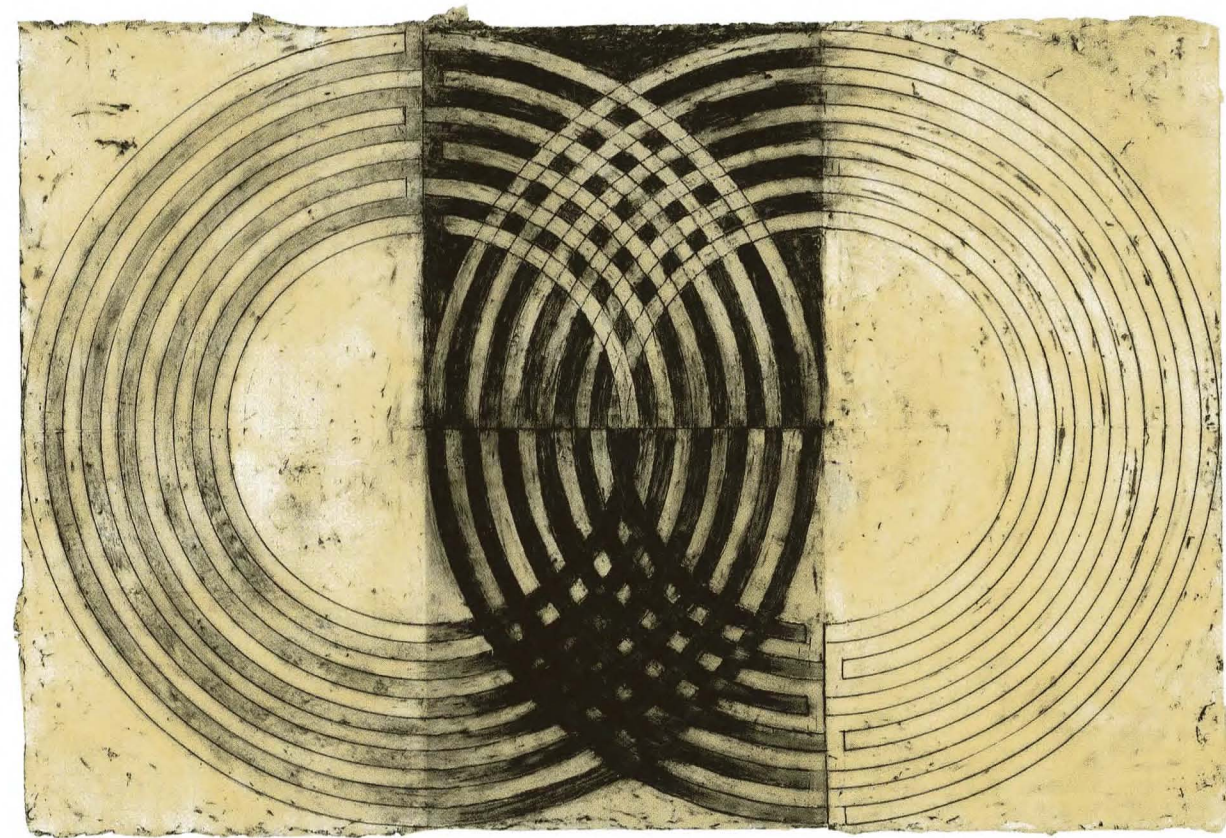


*Overview*, 1998, wax, oil, pigment on linen, 48" x 58"

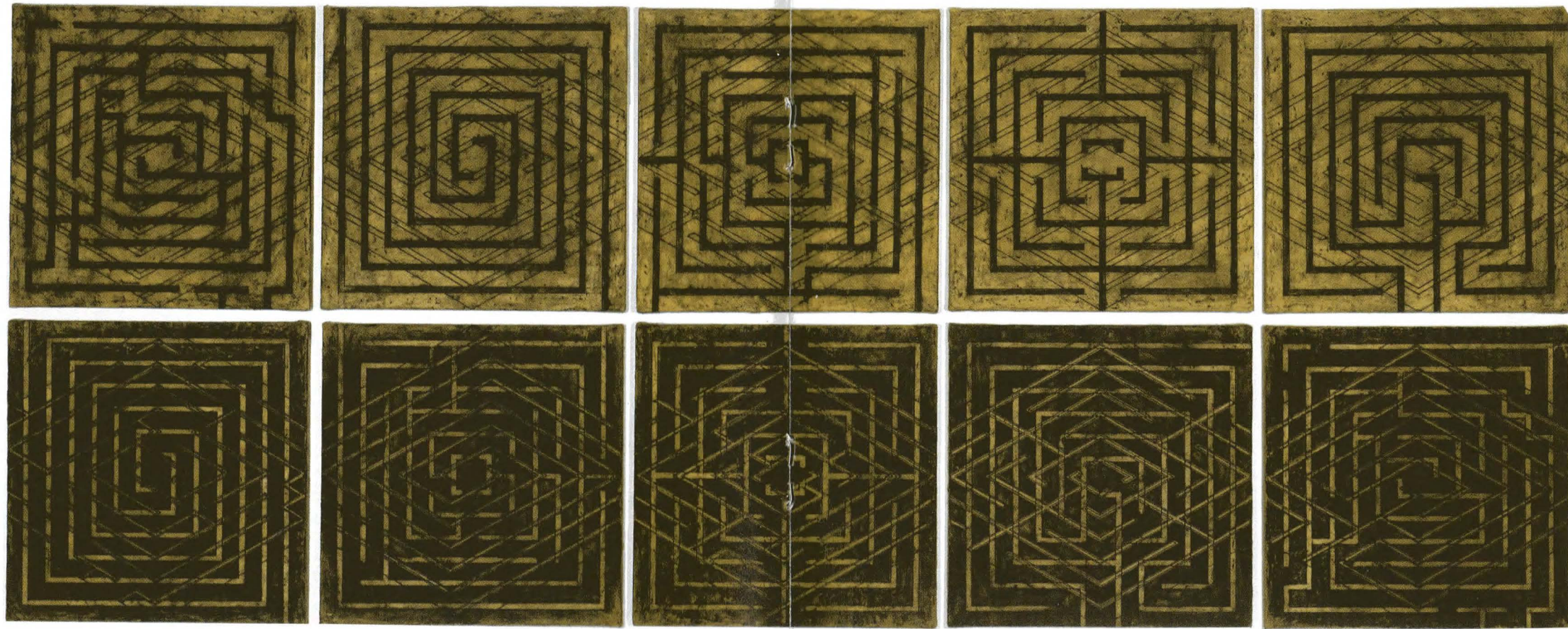




*Combination*, 1998, wax, oil, pigment on paper, 22" x 33"



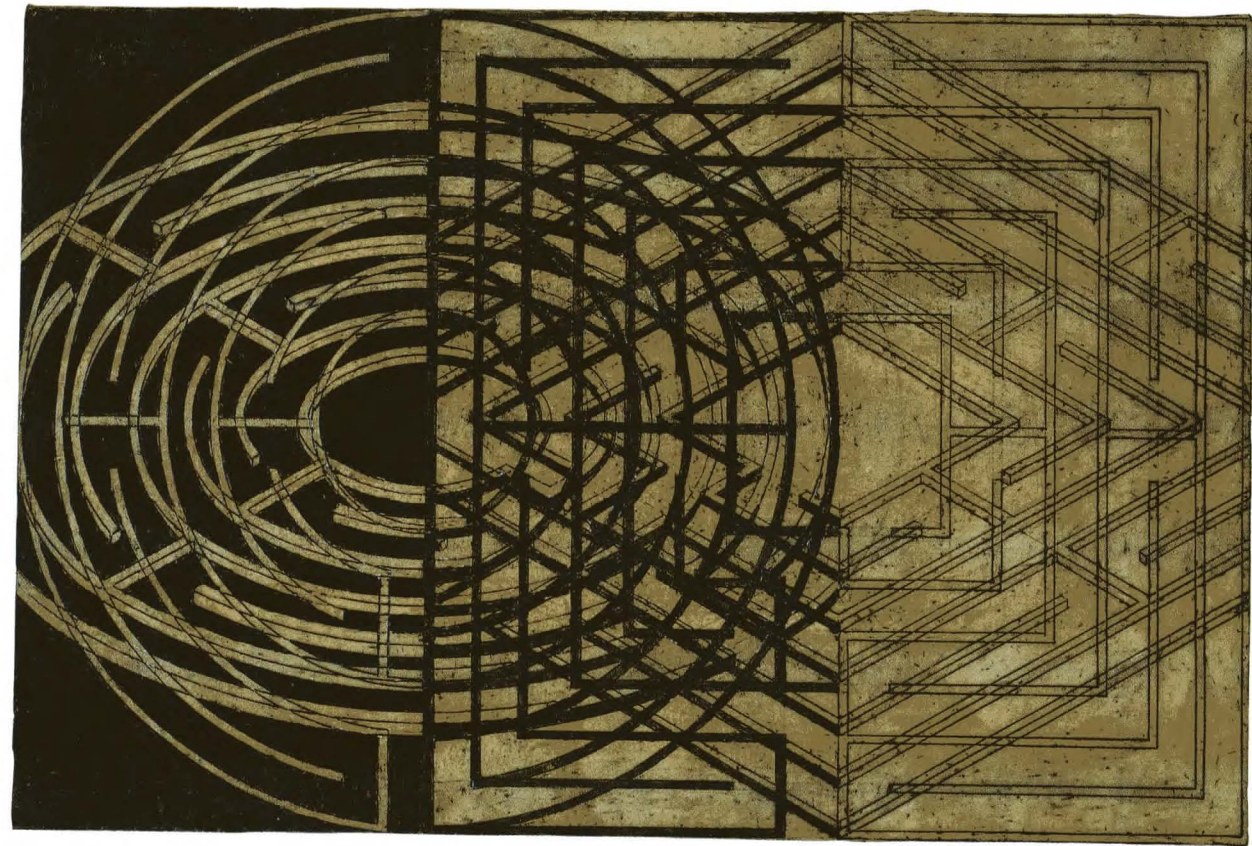




*Sequence*, 1998, oil, wax, pigment on linen, 42" x 108" (10 panels – 20" x 20" each)



*Interchange*, 1997, wax, oil, pigment on linen, 24" x 36"

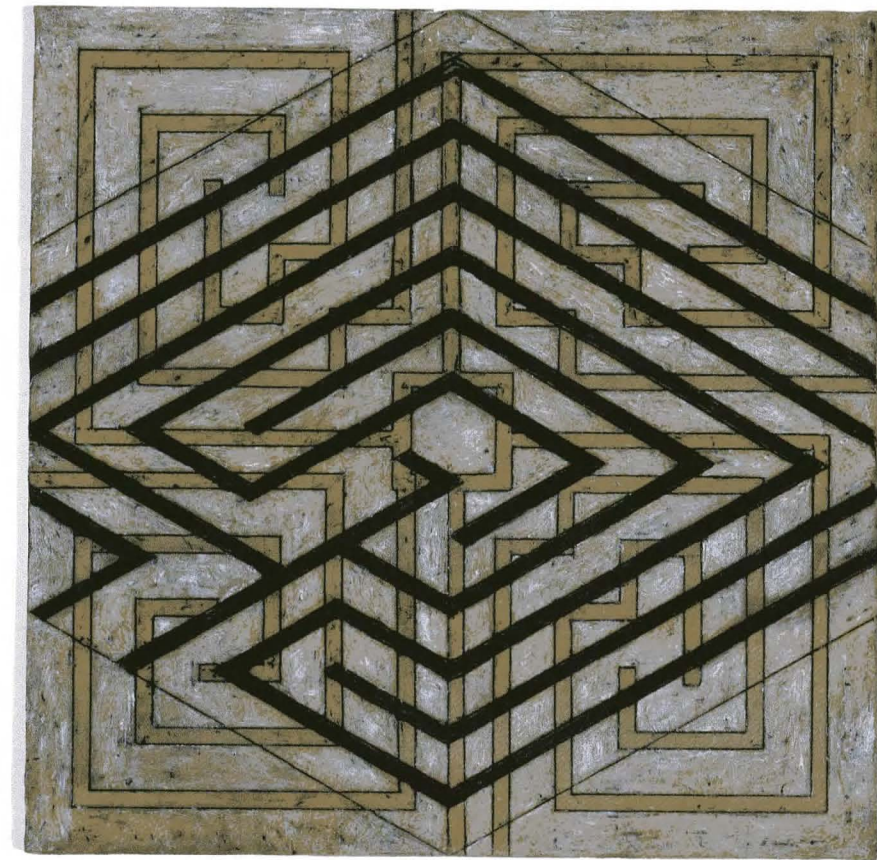


*Direction*, 1998, wax, oil, pigment on paper, 47" x 30"





*Investigation*, 1998, wax, oil, pigment on linen, 20" x 20"



## Cheryl Goldsleger

Born in Philadelphia, 1951

### EDUCATION

- 1975 MFA, Washington University, St. Louis, MO
- 1973 BFA, Philadelphia College of Art, Philadelphia, PA
- 1971 Tyler School of Art, Temple University, Rome, Italy

### SELECTED AWARDS

- 1995 La Napoule Foundation Fellowship, La Napoule, France
- 1993 US/France Fellowship, Cite Internationale des Arts, Paris, France
- 1991 National Endowment for the Arts, Senior Artist's Fellowship, Washington, DC
- 1982 National Endowment for the Arts, Senior Artist's Fellowship, Washington, DC

### SELECTED EXHIBITIONS

- 1999 *Waxing Poetic: Encaustic Art in America*, Montclair Art Museum, Montclair, NJ  
Cheryl Goldsleger, Rosenberg + Kaufman Fine Art, New York, NY
- 1998 *Affinities with Architecture*, C. Kermit Ewing Gallery, The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN  
*Visible*, Rosenberg + Kaufman Fine Art, New York, NY  
*Cheryl Goldsleger*, Sylvia Schmidt Gallery, New Orleans, LA
- 1996 *A Walk in the Woods*, Islip Art Museum, East Islip, NY  
*Nine Women in Georgia*, National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC  
*Cheryl Goldsleger*, Rosenberg + Kaufman Fine Art, New York, NY

- 1995 *New Orleans Triennial*, New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA  
*Paint and Paper*, Stephen Rosenberg Gallery, New York, NY  
*Cheryl Goldsleger*, Arden Gallery, Boston, MA
- 1994 American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, New York, NY  
*Cheryl Goldsleger*, Heath Gallery, Atlanta, GA
- 1993 *Artists and Objects*, Galerie Natkin-Berta, Paris, France  
*Cheryl Goldsleger*, disegni e dipinti, Palazzo Casali, Cortona, Italy  
*Cheryl Goldsleger*, Bertha Urdang Gallery, New York, NY
- 1991 *Presenze: An Exhibition of Foreigners Working in Italy*,  
Il Centro Espositivo della Rocca Paolina, Perugia, Italy
- 1989 *Drawings from the Collection*, Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel  
*41st Biennial Exhibition of American Painting*, Corcoran Gallery of Art, Washington, DC  
*Beyond Minimalism*, Ringling School of Art, Sarasota, FL
- 1988 *Cheryl Goldsleger*, Arden Gallery, Boston, MA
- 1987 *Recent Acquisitions*, Lannan Museum, Lake Worth, FL  
*RJR/Southeast Seven 10 Fellowship Exhibition*,  
Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, Winston-Salem, NC
- 1986 *Recent Acquisitions*, Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY  
*Drawing Invitational*, An Exhibition from New York,  
Ivan Dougherty Gallery, City Art Institute, Sydney Australia  
*Southern Comfort/Discomfort*, Mint Museum, Charlotte, NC  
*New Orleans Triennial*, New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA  
*A Sense of Place: Contemporary Southern Art*,  
Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Minneapolis, MN
- 1985 *Cheryl Goldsleger*, High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA  
*Artists of the Southeast*, Alternative Museum, New York, NY  
*Drawings: Seven Points of View*, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA



- 1984 *Hard Line*, Islip Art Museum, East Islip, NY
- 1983 *Connections*, The Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia, PA  
*Cheryl Goldsleger*, Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, MS  
*Cheryl Goldsleger*, The Progressive Corporation, Cleveland, OH
- 1982 *Ohio Selections: I*, The New Gallery of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, OH  
*Cheryl Goldsleger*, Bertha Urdang Gallery, New York, NY
- 1981 *Members' Gallery Exhibition*, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY  
*Lisbon Drawing International*, Museum of Modern Art, Lisbon, Portugal

#### SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

##### Catalogues:

- Nine Women in Georgia*, essay by Gudmund Vigtel, The National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, DC, 1996
- Cheryl Goldsleger, disegni e dipinti*, essay by Marco Scotini, Palazzo Casali, Cortona, Italy, 1993
- A Sense of Place: Contemporary Southern Art*, essay by Eleanor Heartney, Minneapolis College of Art and Design, Minneapolis, MN, 1986
- 1986 New Orleans Triennial*, essay by Douglas G. Schultz, The New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA, 1986
- Connections*, essay by Janet Kardon, The Institute of Contemporary Art, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA, 1983

##### Reviews:

- Helen A. Harrison, *A Walk in the Woods*, The New York Times, October 27, 1996
- Marcia Vetrocq, *Report from New Orleans: Dixie Buffet*, Art in America, September, 1995
- Donald Kuspit, *Cheryl Goldsleger, Bertha Urdang Gallery*, Artforum, vol. XXXII, no. 3, November, 1993
- Edward Sozanski, *Journeys in Space and Time...*, Philadelphia Inquirer, April, 1992

- Diane Mead, *Passing through Space: An Interview with Cheryl Goldsleger*, Art Papers, vol. 15, no. 1, January/February, 1991
- Ronald Jones, *Irreconcilable Differences*, Art Papers, vol. 10, no. 3, May/June, 1986
- Dan Cameron, *Springtime on the Fringe*, Arts, vol. 60, no. 1, September, 1985
- Jan Avgikos, *Festival Exhibits Show off Rich Community of Artists*, The Atlanta Journal and Constitution, May 17, 1985
- Donald Kuspit, *Cheryl Goldsleger at Bertha Urdang Gallery*, Art in America, vol. 73, no. 3, March, 1985
- Patricia C. Phillips, *Cheryl Goldsleger at Bertha Urdang Gallery*, Artforum, vol. XXIII, no. 5, January, 1985
- Gerrit Henry, *Cheryl Goldsleger/Donald Shambroom: Bertha Urdang Gallery*, ARTnews, vol. 81, no. 2, February, 1982

#### SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

- Ackland Art Museum, The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC
- Albright Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY
- Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock, AR
- Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, NY
- Brunner Gallery and Museum, Ames, IA
- The Columbus Museum, Columbus, GA
- High Museum, Atlanta, GA
- Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel
- Herbert F. Johnson Museum, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY
- Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, MS
- New Orleans Museum of Art, New Orleans, LA
- North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh, NC
- Rhode Island School of Design Museum, Providence, RI
- Tel Aviv Museum, Tel Aviv, Israel

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C.G.



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