

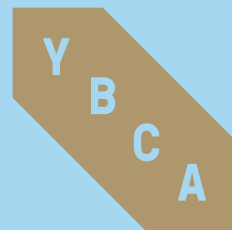
A TRAP IN NOISIAVID LEOS

SAMARA GOLDEN

YERBA BUENA
CENTER FOR
THE ARTS

MARCH 11 –
MAY 29 2016
DOWNSTAIRS
GALLERIES

YBCA.ORG/
SAMARA-GOLDEN
#SAMARAGOLDEN





Samara Golden, *Thank you, 2014. Made in L.A. 2014*, installation view at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Photo by Brian Forrest.



Samara Golden, *Mass Murder, 2014*
Night Gallery 2014, installation view of *Blue Room*
in *Mass Murder*. Courtesy the artist and Night Gallery.

ARRIVING AT THE INFINITE

CECI MOSS

Samara Golden says her works create “impossible spaces” that can’t exist otherwise. Using scenes partially derived from the artist’s own subconscious and personal memories, these environments contort, bend, and flex the viewer’s perception of their surroundings. As visitors navigate this expanse, Golden hopes that the emotions elicited create a shared sense of collectivity. Thus, the other “impossible” at play in Golden’s dense installations is a comprehension of the totality of human experience.

Newly commissioned by YBCA, the installation *A Trap in Soft Division* considers the phenomenon of widespread isolation, even as our devices interconnect us more than ever before. The work’s title suggests an act of violent enclosure, while “soft division” poetically gestures toward the separation implicit in solitude. Vignettes that profile separate individuals’ interiors are nestled into the gallery’s eighteen skylights, offering a view into each inhabitant’s room. Tossed clothing, half-eaten food, lamps, and other items allude to the everyday moments of those who reside in these quarters. Below, the gallery floor is covered in mirrors, surrounded by a railing. The ceiling’s sculptures reflect on this surface, and their repetition draws the viewer inward, producing a slight sensation of vertigo. Holding onto the railing while peering down into the illusion, we seem to look into an aerial depth from a distance, much like a mall atrium. Instead of seeing the floor, however, we view the ceiling. The skylights remain open, permitting the light in the gallery to naturally change throughout the day. Golden regards the sensation of looking down into the reflections or up to the ceiling directly as “attempting to physically describe a multiplicity of thoughts all in one space, like thoughts inside of thoughts, or poems inside of poems.” Recognizable but off kilter, these scenes transform the prosaic into a dazzling, and at times overwhelming, illusion.

The project asks us to reflect on the momentary community formed within and through this dreamlike alternate reality. Visitors confront a sensation of boundlessness that is both liberating and terrifying. The limit-defining quality of a horizon is often understood as a generative phenomenon. This grounding is powerfully swept away in Golden’s installations, and one feels suspended in a liminal space. The effects of shared viewing are also apparent in her ongoing project *Thank you*, begun in 2010, which was shown in the *Made in L.A. 2014* exhibition at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. The installation involves a collection of small busts—some made of clay, others cosmetology heads or dolls from thrift stores—that were altered by the artist to portray all the people that were involved with the initial installation, from the artist’s friends who discussed the concept with her to the people who viewed its first iteration. These portraits are presented in a mirrored room with a live video feed, so that the faces of visitors strolling through the installation appear on a monitor alongside the faces in the work, creating a sculpture that includes them all. In one space and at one time, in this shattered mass of reflected faces, *Thank you* attempts to bring together all the people who have ever looked at the work.

In a way, the dimension Golden reaches for in her practice is a subversion of the enduring promise of frontier within the American imagination. References to Americana in her works, such as the use of “country-style” curtains, abound, but are fragmented by the kaleidoscopic quality of her installations. By both presenting and destabilizing this aesthetic in a space void of the deterministic boundaries that define a frontier, Golden creates a place that is indeed impossible and magnificently unknown. Paradoxically, the ghosts of the West Coast’s obsession with frontier—the upending of figure and ground in the California Light and Space movement, the egalitarian aspirations of 1960s utopianism, and the superficiality of Hollywood spectacle—subsist and refract in Golden’s work. Her 2014 exhibition *Mass*

Murder at Night Gallery in Los Angeles epically brought these elements together. An enormous looped video of the sun setting over the Pacific Ocean reflected through the installation's many mirrors, suspended in scenes ranging from a suburban Arizona home (complete with a baby grand piano rendered in silver insulation foam) to a facsimile of the artist's grandmother's Midwestern kitchen. A stalled, crashed car greeted visitors entering the show, while a dissonant soundtrack, including a backward rendition of the beginning of *Apocalypse Now*, wafted through the cavernous gallery, adding layers to the work's delirium and psychological tenor. Launching the viewer into such prismatic fragmentations, Golden's installations feel like a spatial expression of the infinite, and at the same time ask what sort of space and connection infinity can produce.

At YBCA the reflection of the vaults' repetitive structures and the personalized rooms in *A Trap in Soft Division* plunge into the gallery's mirrored floors while simultaneously physically sweeping across the ceiling. Each room's details, whether a living room with stained glass reflecting the light of the day or a towel hanging to dry, create a picture of isolation, frozen in time. As audiences peer into these lived-in-yet-empty interiors, Golden hopes to open a "window into a complexity that is always around us, but one we have to block out so that we can live our everyday lives." The installation chisels into this intricacy, like visualizing every human emotion occurring globally within each second. Conceptualizing such a thought is overwhelming, and this is what Golden means when she describes "complexity." By placing us in front of it, the work effectively breaks through the solitude it is meant to depict, fleetingly carving out a space that brings visitors together through a joint experience. This gesture is impressive, and beautiful. It channels the ingredients of our shared humanity and consciousness. Like many of Golden's past works, *A Trap in Soft Division* creates a glimpse into a state that indeed exists and is possible—a multifaceted, unfinished understanding of an "us."

ARTIST BIO

Samara Golden (b. 1973, Ann Arbor, Michigan) has been featured in solo exhibitions at MoMA PS1, New York; Night Gallery, Los Angeles; CANADA, New York; and she was awarded a Frieze Projects commission for Frieze New York. Group exhibitions include MOCA, Los Angeles; Sculpture Center, New York; Zabudowicz Collection, London; and the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. MOMA PS1 released Golden's first book, *The Flat Side of the Knife*, in December 2015. She is represented by Night Gallery, Los Angeles, and CANADA, New York.

samaragolden.com

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Samara Golden, *A Fall of Corners*, 2015, installation view at CANADA New York. Courtesy CANADA New York.



PROGRAMS

OPENING NIGHT PARTY

FRIDAY, MARCH 11, 7–10PM
GRAND LOBBY & DOWNSTAIRS GALLERIES
\$12 advance / \$15 at the door
Free for members & YBCA:You

Celebrate the openings of *Take This Hammer: Art + Media Activism from the Bay Area* and *Samara Golden: A Trap in Soft Division*. Enjoy a signature cocktail inspired by Samara Golden's installation, meet artists and activists involved in *Take This Hammer*, and watch the Great Tortilla Conspiracy as they screen print onto tortillas to create edible works of art.

VISITING ARTISTS AND SCHOLARS LECTURE SERIES

TUESDAY, MARCH 29, 7PM
SAN FRANCISCO ART INSTITUTE
LECTURE HALL
800 Chestnut Street,
San Francisco, CA 94133
Free & open to the public

A lecture by artist Samara Golden is co-sponsored by the San Francisco Art Institute (SFAI) and YBCA, and presented as part of the Visiting Artists and Scholars Lecture Series (VAS). The VAS provides a forum for engagement and dialogue with major figures in international contemporary art and culture. Through lectures, screenings, and performances, the series creates intimate connections between SFAI and the public, and invites individuals to contribute to the spirit of curiosity that drives the SFAI community.

Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (YBCA) is one of the nation's most innovative contemporary arts centers. Founded in 1993, YBCA's mission is to generate culture that moves people. Through powerful art experiences, thoughtful and provocative content, and deep opportunities for participation, YBCA is committed to creating an inclusive culture that awakens personal and societal transformation. YBCA presents a wide variety of programming year-round, including performing arts, visual arts, film/video, and civic engagement. YBCA venues include the Forum, Screening Room, Galleries, and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts Theater. For tickets and information, call 415.978.ARTS (2787).

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