

Samara Golden

YERBA BUENA CENTER FOR THE ARTS

701 Mission Street

March 11–May 29

Approach and peer down into an abyss. Wreathed in matte white—a tech-world fetish color—the parapet begs to be bent over. Do so and dive into an aerial view of eighteen chambers, neatly parceled into three rows of six. Each chamber contains a rectangular couch oriented toward a large window—or is it a screen?

This compressed, airless cosmos is Samara Golden's *A Trap in Soft Division*, 2016. For her largest installation to date, the artist showcases the antiseptic, adolescent bravado of minimalist lifestyle porn. The first row of rooms is punctuated by blouses shrugged off, laptops abandoned, and red cups knocked over; the third adds frilly curtains, laundry baskets, and a stray blue afghan. Nestled in the middle of the lineup are scenes distinctly more saturated—faux stained glass made of lighting gels and black caulk, Tiffany lamps, more afghans, more cups, more stuff. Though

familiar, their occupancy here is that of invaders in an inhospitable land. Likewise, this center aisle is overgrown with houseplants, mostly *Epipremnum aureum*, also known as devil's ivy. Something sinister is indeed afoot: That cavernous maw is not an orifice, but a mirror; the rooms are not below, but above and upside down; those windows are not even screens, but skylights, flushing the gallery with rosy light, then edging it in blue.

Golden's notion of a "sixth dimension," in which past, present, and future inhabit the same space, can perhaps be likened to the archives of a digital backup. Yet what she captures best is the desperation for those files, the sense that the bits of life they contain are constantly under threat. To protect them, from a fire for instance, one protocol is Halon suppression, an extinguishing agent that leaves no residue. The result is a room with the oxygen sucked out.

— Catherine Damman



View of "Samara Golden: A Trap in Soft Division," 2016.