

A room with a view: Samara Golden's installations in San Francisco

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Artist Samara Golden unveiled her new installations entitled 'A Trap in Soft Division' at San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. Pictured: *Curtain vault I*. Courtesy of the artist

1 OF 4

INFORMATION

'A Trap in Soft Division' runs until 29 May 2016. For more information, visit the YBCA website (<http://www.ybca.org/samara-golden>)

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For the past decade, Samara Golden has translated her memories and reflections, friends and family, interiors and architecture (both iconic and kitschy) into immersive sculptural installations. Showcasing them at venues ranging from Los Angeles's Night Gallery and Hammer Museum, to MOMA PS1 and CANADA Gallery in New York, she has upended the way we view art. Her work incorporates foam replicas of grand pianos and grand salons (which deal with illusion through an exterior application of the abalone-like insulation material known as Rmax); functional objects (wheelchairs, guitars, candles), found pieces (wristwatches, cell phones) and the fantastical (brain hats, ghostly visages carved into watermelons, foam suicide masks); and a host of embedded sound and video projections that probe and enliven her dark, deceptive, and utterly unforgettable environments.

'For a long I felt like there wasn't really a place for me in the art world,' says Golden. 'I struggled a lot because I was always trying to make sculptures and then take pictures of them to find a way for them to be seen the way I wanted them to be seen. The thing I was making didn't really exist anywhere.'

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While Golden felt most comfortable mediating her work at the time — arranging and cutting photos of her paintings — during the first few weeks of her Master of Fine Arts training she (quite literally) built a basis for her current practice. 'I built a 7ft loft in my studio and that whole year I made installations that you would look down into from that loft,' recalls Golden. 'They were pictures printed from the internet of stuff I wanted to put into an installation but couldn't buy. I made all these illusions happen. At that time I was trying to make work about confusion.'

However, that early work only illustrated confusion rather than embodying the 'multifaceted beast I was trying to create,' admits Golden, who unveiled just such a beast, titled 'A Trap in Soft Division', this past weekend at San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center for the Arts. Comprised of 18 separate rooms — six Plain; six Stained Glass; six Curtain quarters — tucked inside the light chambers of the Fumihiko Maki-designed building.

'The space itself was a really big factor in me figuring out what I wanted to do, which was also the case with PSi,' says Golden. 'At first I wanted to make 18 rooms that were all exactly the same, almost like from [the Terry Gilliam film] *Brazil*, with all the sameness and disconnection, but then I realised I needed to complicate it, contradict it and undermine it.'

As such, the rooms – all made in diminutive half or three-quarter scales – some with stained glass panels (made with metal garden trellis, contact paper, coloured lighting gels and black caulk) and Tiffany style lamps hewn from plastic bowls with lighting gels, are filled with tiny objects. Minimalistic foam chairs and tables; laptops; gifts; goblets; piles of thrift store clothes; white cotton fabric curtains dipped in white glue to stiffen them into shape; faux plants straightened with wires; plates, pots, and pans of 'rotting' epoxy resin food all can be viewed from a pool of mirrors that are cordoned off like a reflective skating rink.

'It's like toxic food... a lot of my work is a balance of finding a peaceful place and having it be crazy and violent,' says Golden, noting the stained glass windows were sort of an homage to the jeweled landscape mosaics her mother makes from glass and gemstones. 'She makes them so she can remember something.'

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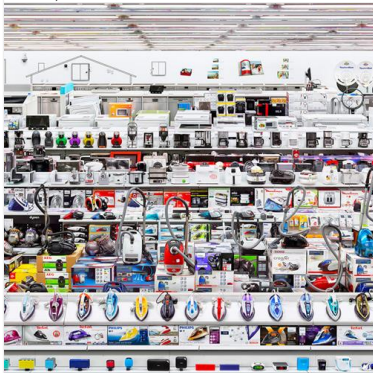
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