

ARTFORUM

Berardini, Andrew. "Andrew Berardini on Samara Golden." *The Online Edition of Artforum International Magazine*, 1 May 2022, <https://www.artforum.com/print/reviews/202205/samara-golden-88405>.

Samara Golden (Review)

Samara Golden's got guts. The manifold meanings of this terse visceral word—whether it refers to one's corporeal intuition, a vigorous form of bravery and conviction, a gnawing anxiety that twists inside the belly, or that cathartic moment when a torrent of emotions and stories erupt from one's body—were marvelously uncoiled and spilled across "Guts," the artist's solo exhibition at Night Gallery.

For more than a decade, Golden has been making spaces in what she has called the "sixth dimension" via her otherworldly installations, where mirrors reflect this realm and those beyond. Foam-insulation panels cut and angle into impossible architectural interiors and the furniture that fills them. Memories collide, combining disparate points in space-time, while the past, present, and future impinge upon and bleed into one another. Ghosts and guardians silently cluster; emotional, spiritual, and psychological states become uncanny rooms and untouchable illusions. These handmade scenes shimmer with tattered romance, a heartbroken tenderness.

Many of Golden's past installations featured interiors with atmospheric narratives: *Take Rape of the Mirror*, 2011, a rendering of a mythical luxury den teetering on the edge of an ocean cliff, or *Mass Murder*, 2014, conflating two of the artist's grandmothers' living rooms into an impossible dream space of memory (both of these works debuted at Night Gallery). Of course, this was also the case with the sprawling "Guts," but the world created by the artist here was utterly uninhabitable. The show's centerpiece, which could be best viewed from the second-floor balcony of the gallery's new exhibition space, was a four-tiered edifice with a mirrored ceiling and floor that caused the insides (the guts) of Golden's enclosed, makeshift skyscraper to stretch into infinity. The looking-glass panels reflected the various tableaux the artist created within the structure, some of which featured sofas and knocked-over chairs (calling to mind a house after it's been ransacked). Viewers saw a scintillating flow of water crafted from paper and plastic; clusters of humanoid creatures lying on a sheet of gold as if strafed by nuclear weapons; a sinister pit of tangled snakes; and an even more foreboding welter of intestines in pastel pinks, yellows, and purples.

Along with a few large paintings of festively colored guts and a smallish mirror box containing a cottony mushroom cloud, the whole exhibition felt more like a psychic state than like any



Samara Golden, *Guts*, 2022, glass mirror, expandable spray foam, acrylic paint, dichroic vinyl, wood, fabric, plastic, paper, nail polish, wire, vinyl floor tile, LED lights, XPS foam board, latex paint, 17 × 26 × 31".

particular location. Moments of liquid placidity that spilled into scenes of totally tumultuous domesticity seemed to represent everything we've lost over these lethal pandemic years and what we might continue to lose as we hover near the threshold of a new world war.

I was gutted. I looked around at others, both in the streets and in the galleries, and everything felt like a messy cacophony, a vomitously disorienting cataclysm, with spasms of occasional glee that quickly got drowned out by an abyssal exhaustion. As with the artist's infinity mirrors, I often could not tell which way was up or down. Golden artfully captured the tense layers of stillness and horror in these strange days with keen intuition, remarkable courage, palpable anxiety, and revelatory honesty—or, more simply, with guts.