

Samara Golden

Teaching Resource

if earth is the brain then where is the body / September 28, 2024 - January 12, 2025

About Samara Golden

Pronounced: sa-MAH-ra GOL-den

In 2016, the New York Times stated, "...the artist Samara Golden works within the limitations of physical materials to conjure intangible realities and disorienting environments, an approach similar to how magicians embrace the tools at their disposal to create illusions." Golden was born in Michigan in 1973, and earned her MFA from Columbia in 2009. Her work is in noted permanent collections such as at The Whitney Museum, New York, and LACMA and MOCA in Los Angeles. Golden's installation, *The Meat Grinder's Iron Clothes*, was chosen for the 2017 Whitney Biennial.

Adjectives often used to describe Golden's work are ephemeral, disorientating, illusionary and intangible. Search online and look at some images of her work.

As you look at Golden's work, is there anything you see that supports the use of these adjectives? Which other adjectives would you use?

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For her exhibition at the Nasher, Golden has created a new installation designed for the Lower Level Gallery—a room with large windows that can be seen when descending a staircase. Visitors entering the gallery will encounter a seemingly infinite and fantastic space evoking a pool of water filled with submerged objects and figures.

How is the Lower Level Gallery different from the galleries on the floor above? Why do you think Golden chose this location for her installation?

Golden has visually reshaped the space of the Lower Level Gallery using mirrors set at precise angles. To understand this installation, it might help to think of a paper snowflake which is folded into a wedge shape then cut with shapes that repeat when the paper is opened.

Look throughout the space for repeated elements. Which portion of this installation is physically present and which portions are reflected?



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Samara Golden, *if earth is the brain then where is the body* (detail), 2024.

Nasher Sculpture Center

Read, Discuss, Create

Read this story about Golden's childhood:

Like many children, when she was young, Samara Golden liked to lie with her legs over the back of the sofa and look at the room upside down. She was fascinated by the space that appeared: when the ceiling became the floor, the room became strange, much bigger, more exciting – large items of furniture now dangling down from above and all the clutter lofted up there too – and though physically real, it was only accessible from Golden's singular, inverted viewpoint.

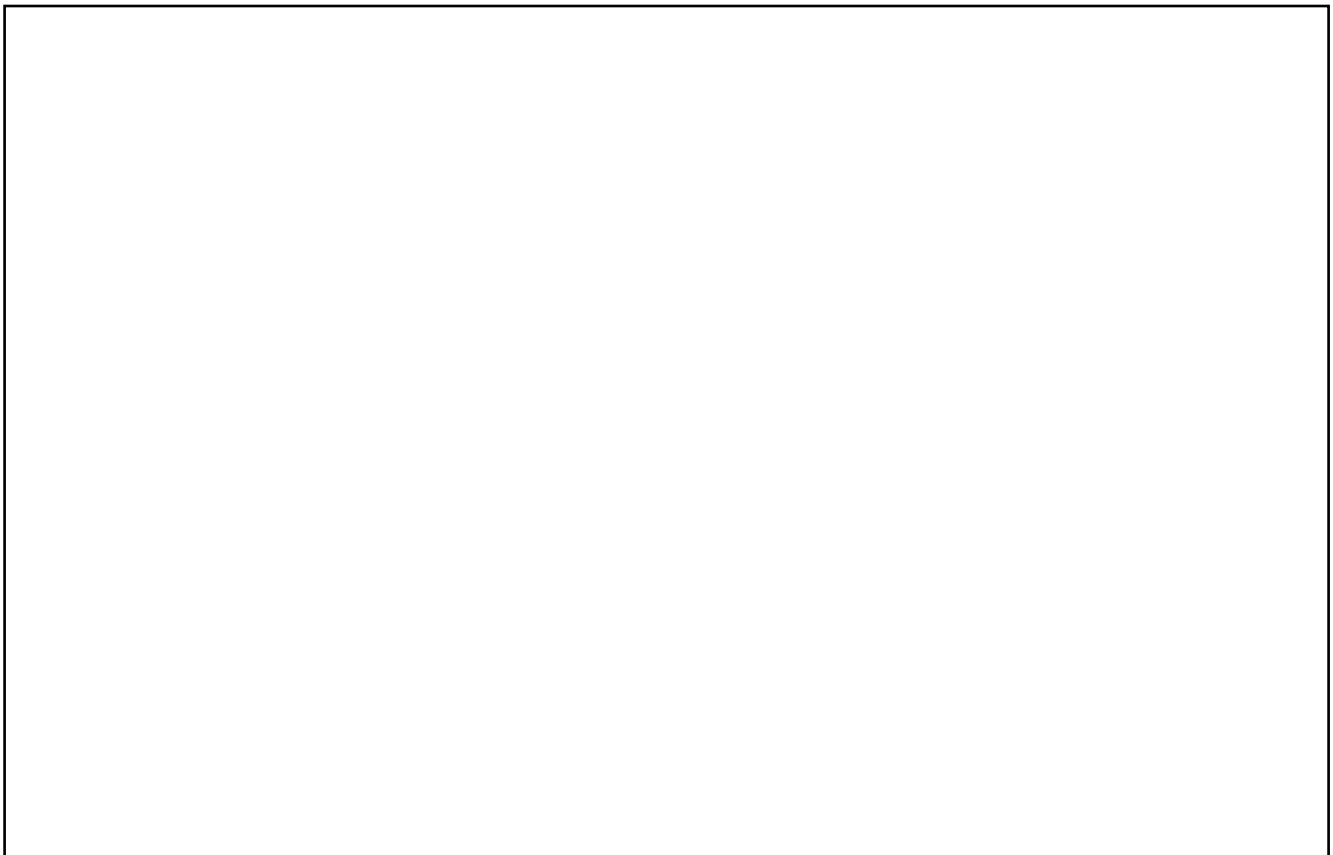
Excerpt from "In Focus: Samara Golden," *Frieze Magazine*, 21 March 2014, by Jonathan Griffin.

1. Discuss with someone else:

As a child, did you ever hang upside down? Where were you when you did this? What did you hang from? What do you remember seeing? Did you enjoy the sensation?

2. Drawing challenge:

Draw the room you are in, but upside down. Then add in a few interesting details to suggest a story that happened in your room. Share your drawings with a partner or with your class. See if they can guess the story.

A large empty rectangular box with a black border, intended for a drawing challenge. The box is oriented horizontally on the page, but the drawing itself should be oriented vertically (upside down) relative to the page's orientation.

3. Golden often adds a soundtrack to set the mood for her installation. Which soundtrack would you put to enhance your illustration? What mood do you hope the soundtrack sets?

Reflection and Reality

Golden often uses mirrors to distort/change your sense of space. At the Nasher, she(also) uses the appearance of water to distort objects.

Sometimes carnivals have mirrors that distort your appearance. Have you seen them? How did your appearance change? What do you know about convex and concave shapes?

Try looking through a clear glass of water. How does it alter what you see? Do you know which laws of physics are causing this distortion?



Samara Golden, *The Meat-Grinder's Iron Clothes*, insulation foamboard, extruded polystyrene, epoxy resin, carpet, vinyl, fabric, acrylic paint, spray paint, nail polish, plastic, altered found objects and mirror 14 x 33 1/12 ft. (4.3 x 10.1 m), installation at the Whitney Biennial, 2017.

Additional Resource

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3OYk2XoAvZw>

Golden speaks at the Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design about Psychological Architecture. Using the physical space as an allegory for psychological space, Golden considers the idea of impossible space, and the role of the subliminal. November 2018.

Suggested Curriculum Connections (TEKS)

Fine Arts: Historical and Cultural Heritage, Critical Evaluation | §117.302. Art, Level I (c) (3) and (4)

Social Studies: Culture | §113.41. United States History Studies, (c) (2)

English: Reading Comprehension of Literary Nonfiction | §110.31. English I (b) (6)

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