

ROCHELLE GOLDBERG

The sculptures of Rochelle Goldberg are structured by the logic of intraction—the artist’s term for an unruly set of relations in which the boundary between one entity and another is continually undermined.

Across Goldberg’s body of work, intraction operates in tandem on the levels of form and content. The residue of the encounter between material and touch is significant for Goldberg: “The indentation on the surface of the ceramic material is the registration of the raw ceramic moving away from you while you are in the act of touching it.... [It] will continue to recede until you remove touch from it. The fingerprint arrives at the termination of this contact.”

Handmade ceramic coils imprinted with synthetic snakeskin masquerade in a variety of forms: pelicans, fish, crocodile-skin briefcases, Madonnas. Clusters of grapes merge with snakes and fins in oil-slick glazes suspended from barbed hooks. Crude oil pools bordered by glaze reflect their surroundings and become continuous with them. Plastic liners suggest the containment of organs and the disposal of waste, but these leaky sacs hold little more than errant fiberoptic light.

Sprouting chia seeds planted in carpet undergo rapid growth under seemingly hospitable conditions, offering momentary refuge to local flora and fauna before sliding into swift decline. Others have been duped into growth by a toxic membrane steeped in crude oil, itself compressed plant matter caught between changes of state. An encrustation of seeds mixed with glitter, or dirt, or metal filings creates a border at 17” from the base of the architectural container—a high water mark that continues to entice efflorescence and oxidization.

Rectilinear steel frames in tripartite formations act as mirrors and thresholds. They test our psychological attachment to barriers by conjuring porous boundaries, shimmering veils, and glass panes that move in and out of the realm of perceptibility alongside the body’s movements. For Goldberg, these frames operate as self-suturing cuts: in one move, they divide space and conjoin it, like the edge sliced off of a Möbius strip.

A set of dark cavities punctuates the periphery. Surveillance apparatuses? Shallow receptacles? Concealed portals? Panoptic decoys? These Tans of Cuna, cans sunk into opposing walls, bracket the exhibition space. Their military-spec coatings—mirrored or superblack—deflect or absorb unlimited information while disclosing nothing of their own motives.

In the space of Goldberg’s intraction, interiors are externalized and exteriors are internalized—boundaries and thresholds are set up only to be crossed. These sculptural forms are ontologically unreliable, casting into crisis some of Western culture’s deepest attachments to the body: that it occupies only one place at a time; that the space it occupies is mutually exclusive with space occupied by other bodies; that vision is the privileged mode of access to knowledge. Goldberg’s work calls for a reevaluation of these sedimentations by staging a situation in which duplicity and uncertainty maintain the upper hand.

— Leah Pires

Text excerpted from Leah Pires, “The Space Between Two Mirrors,” in *Rochelle Goldberg: Cannibal Actif* (New York: Totem/Sequence Press, 2017).

Rochelle Goldberg (b. 1984, Vancouver, Canada) currently lives and works in Berlin. She received a B.A. from McGill University, Montreal in 2006, and an M.F.A. from Bard College, New York in 2014. Goldberg's work has been the subject of several solo exhibitions, most recently at Contemporary Art Gallery, Vancouver (2024); Mercer Union, Toronto (2023); Commercial Street, Los Angeles (2023); Galleria Federico Vavassori, Milan (2022); Kunsthalle Lingen, Germany (2022); Miguel Abreu Gallery, New York (2022, 2020, 2017); The Power Station, Dallas (2019); Catriona Jeffries, Vancouver (2019); Casa del sol at Casa Masaccio, San Giovanni Valdarno, Italy (2018); GAMeC, Bergamo, Italy (2017); and SculptureCenter, New York (2016), among others. Recent group exhibitions with her work have been held at the Pinault Collection at the Couvent des Jacobins, Rennes, France (2025); La Traverse, Marseille, France (2022); a two-person exhibition with Veit Laurent Kurz at Haus zur Liebe, Schaffhausen, Switzerland (2022); Art Hub, Copenhagen (2021); Centre international d'art et du paysage de Vassivière, Beaumont-du-Lac, France (2021); the Berkley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, California (2021); a two-person exhibition with Rebecca Brewer at the Oakville Galleries, Ontario (2019); the first Frieze Sculpture at Rockefeller Center, curated by Brett Littman (2019); Éclair, Berlin (2018); and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2016). In 2016, Goldberg participated in the Okayama Art Summit, a biennial exhibition organized by Liam Gillick across multiple venues in Okayama, Japan.

In 2023, Goldberg was selected by the National Bank of Canada for a newly commissioned sculptural installation, Monkey, Monroe, permanently on view in its Montreal-based headquarters.

Goldberg's work is held in the collections of the National Bank of Canada, ICA Miami, GAMeC, the Philara Collection, and the Celine Collection. In 2018, she was the recipient of the Chinati Foundation Residency and the Battaglia Foundry Sculpture Prize, as well as the Louis Comfort Tiffany Award in 2015. Cannibal Actif, the artist's first monograph, designed with Geoff Kaplan, was co-published by Totem and Sequence Press and her second monograph, born in a beam of light, was published by The Power Station in spring 2020.