

GEGO (Gertrud Louise Goldschmidt)

[1912 – 1994, Germany/Venezuela]

“Art is firmly rooted in spiritual values. The creator is involved in a continuous process of discovery—not of himself, but of the roots of the universe which he has been able to discover within himself.”

As a young woman, Gego (Gertrud Goldschmidt) worked as a draftsman in several architecture firms, painting workshops, and carpentry shops in her native Germany while completing a degree in architecture from the University of Stuttgart in 1938. To escape the increasing anti-Semitism in her home country, she emigrated to Venezuela in 1939, where she worked as a freelance architect and industrial designer until the mid-1940s. In 1953, she moved to the coastal town of Tarma and began her artistic work, producing drawings, watercolors, monotypes and xylographs; the majority of these early works were figurative and expressionist. She returned to Caracas in 1956, and there, using pure abstraction as her starting point, she began to address problems of sculptural space in her work; in 1957, along with artists Carlos Cruz-Diez, Alejandro Otero, and Jesús Rafael Soto, Gego participated in the exhibition *Arte abstracto en Venezuela*. By 1959, the Museum of Modern Art in New York had begun to acquire her work; she moved to New York in 1960 and remained in the United States until 1967.

Gego taught at the school of architecture of the Universidad Central de Venezuela and at the Escuela de Artes Plásticas Cristóbal Rojas. Her first individual show was held at the Museo de Bellas Artes in Caracas in 1961; in 1962 she installed a sculpture at the headquarters of the Banco Industrial de Venezuela. She helped found the Instituto de Diseño Neumann in Caracas where she taught from 1964 to 1977. In 1969, with Gerd Leufert, she completed murals for the headquarters of the Instituto Nacional de Cooperación Educativa (INCE). From the 1970s to the 1980s she completed important, architecturally-integrated sculpture for public buildings, residences, and shopping malls. In 1972, for example, she constructed *Cuerdas* (Cords), a sculpture-installation consisting of suspended nylon and stainless-steel strips, for the Parque Central architectonic complex in Caracas.

Gego eventually began to use random procedures and “poor” materials such as industrial scraps and metals. Her series of suspended sculptures *Dibujos sin papel* (Drawings without Paper) and her series *Bichos* (Creatures) also date from the 1980s, as does her *Reticulárea ambiental*. Her last, extremely significant work was *Tejeduras* (Weavings), in which small fields of orthogonal lines were interwoven with strips of paper.

Gego’s works are represented in several major collections including Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros, New York, New York, USA; Daros Latinamerica Collection, Zürich, Switzerland; Fundación Banco Mercantil, Caracas, Venezuela; Museo de Arte

Contemporáneo de Caracas, Caracas, Venezuela; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo Francisco Narváez, Porlamar, Venezuela; Museo de Arte Moderno Jesús Soto, Ciudad Bolívar, Venezuela; Museo de Barquisimeto, Barquisimeto, Venezuela; Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas, Venezuela; New York Public Library, New York, New York, USA; Pratt Graphic Art Center, New York, New York, USA; Taller de Artistas Gráficos Asociados (TAGA), Caracas, Venezuela; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH), Houston, Texas, USA; The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York, New York, USA; The University of Texas at Austin, Texas, USA; and The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, New York, USA.