

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**IN COLLABORATION WITH THE FUNDACIÓN GEGO, DOMINIQUE LÉVY
LONDON TO CELEBRATE THE ARTIST'S LEGACY WITH SECOND
INSTALMENT OF *AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A LINE***

Gego: Autobiography of a Line

25 May – 19 August 2016

Dominique Lévy

22 Old Bond Street

London



Columna (Reticulárea cuadrada), 1972, Stainless steel fence, metallic beads, iron washers, four sinkers (weights), and nylon. 137 3/4 x 51 1/4 x 51 1/4 inches (350 x 130 x 130 cm) © Fundación Gego

London—Dominique Lévy is pleased to present *Gego: Autobiography of a Line*, the second in a pair of exhibitions celebrating the legacy of German-born Venezuelan artist Gego (Gertrud Goldschmidt [1912 – 1994]). Organised in collaboration with the Fundación Gego, *Autobiography of a Line* is the artist's first solo exhibition in London, and includes a selection of works spanning her career. Notably, three monumental sculptures made in the 1970s, which embody the palpable sense of entropic geometry and spatial play for which Gego's work is internationally recognised, will be on view. These sculptures find their parallel in the artist's towering wire *Chorros*, which were displayed in the New York exhibition last autumn. Also in the London instalment are a selection of ink drawings on paper and late works that complicate and question the relationship between drawing and sculpture such as *Dibujos sin papel* (Drawings without paper), *Acuarelas* (Watercolours), and *Tejeduras* (Weavings). The exhibition includes loans from the Museu d'Art Contemporani de

Barcelona (MACBA), the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH), and the Fundación Gego.

Originally from Hamburg, Gego immigrated to Venezuela in 1939 after finishing her training as an architect; she was the last member of her Jewish family to flee Nazi Germany. Physically displaced from her homeland, Gego's fragmentary wire sculptures reflect this state of separation, using the vocabulary of abstraction to mobilise the gaps between lines, languages, and modes of perception. Throughout a career spanning four decades, Gego continuously rejected the categorisation of her work as part of a particular movement or as comprised of a definitive medium, writing in her notebook, 'Sculpture: three dimensional forms of solid material. NEVER what I do!' Like other Jewish-German émigré artists such as Mira Schendel in São Paulo and Eva Hesse in New York, Gego refused to participate in pre-established local artistic discourses. Instead, she dedicated herself to an intensive investigation of both the

drawn and the sculptural line, frequently defying conventions of linear geometry to introduce a quiet but profound sense of formlessness into her work.



Sin título, 1958. Ink on paper, 8 1/2 x 5 5/8 inches (21.6 x 14.3 cm) © Fundación Gego

In the 1950s, at the start of her career, Gego worked mainly in watercolour, drawing, printmaking, and handmade books. Among her books is a slim volume titled *Autobiografía de una Línea* (Autobiography of a Line), which contains a collection of the artist's minimal etchings from 1965. The marks in this book, from which the exhibitions at Dominique Lévy and their accompanying catalogue, take their name, seem to either converge or branch away from each other depending on the object's uncertain orientation. In this way, *Autobiografía de una Línea* is a precursor to the concerns that Gego would continue to engage in her later work. The exhibition features two early works on paper, executed around the same period in 1958 and 1964, which similarly depict a central form made of repeating, parallel marks and lines delicately composed in ink.

In 1969, Gego's career took a radical turn when she created the first *Reticulárea* (a combination of the Spanish words for 'net' and 'area') as a site-specific installation for the Museo de Bellas Artes in Caracas. The woven wire sculptures which comprise this work are remarkable for their expanding and collapsing net-like structures that encompass the entirety of their surrounding space. This meditative and ever-changing environment acts as a metaphor for various social and natural universes of interconnecting beings and ideas. Gego subsequently produced a number of works based on the mesh or matrix, to which she gave the same name. *Autobiography of a Line* is centred on three large-scale sculptures from the 1970s each made up of a wire framework, which either form part of the *Reticuláreas* or are closely related to them: *Columna 71/9* (1971), from a private collection and recently on long-term loan to MACBA; *Columna (Reticulárea cuadrada)* (1972), which was acquired from the artist shortly after it was made and has been in the same private collection ever since; and *Tronco no. 1* (1974), from a private collection. From this important series the artist developed new bodies of work predicated on the same system, including *Dibujos sin papel*, which have been interpreted as attempts to wrest the three-dimensionality of the *Reticuláreas* onto a two-dimensional plane. The exhibition will present five *Dibujos sin papel*, including a large work from 1989 of harmoniously overlapping square gridded structures. These works are flatter than the *Reticuláreas*, and are hung closer to the wall, thus further challenging the boundaries between the media of drawing and sculpture.



Sin título, 1964. Ink on paper, 10 1/2 x 7 inches (26.8 x 18 cm) © Fundación Gego

Gego considered the act of line drawing—both on a surface and in space—to be '*un trabajo meditativo*' (a meditative work), and noted that in these works 'sometimes the in-between-lines are as important as the line itself.' The concept of 'in-between-lines' can be read doubly as an assessment of the negative space between physical lines and as a meditation on the different technical modes of connection at work in her sculptures and drawings. In this idea the foundation of Gego's practice—with her fervour for creating connections, breaking them apart, tracing wandering lines, and entwining disparate materials and ideas—comes into focus. By presenting works spanning Gego's career across two exhibitions in New York and London, *Autobiography of a Line* seeks to highlight the constancy of these important precepts in her oeuvre and position the artist in an international discourse in which her work remains imminent today.

About the Artist

Gego (Gertrud Goldschmidt) was born on August 1, 1912, to a liberal Jewish banking family in Hamburg, Germany. She studied under Paul Bonatz at the University of Stuttgart, where she graduated with an architecture and engineering degree in 1938. As a student she was influenced by the innovations of the Bauhaus, a creative laboratory of design that operated for over two decades in pre-Hitler Germany. She was forced to leave Germany shortly after finishing her degree and immigrated to Venezuela in 1939. There she worked as a graphic designer and operated her own furniture workshop. She became a Venezuelan citizen in 1952 and lived there for the remainder of her life.

In 1953, Gego began to develop her artistic practice full time. Encouraged by the support of Alejandro Otero and Jesús Rafael Soto, she started to create three-dimensional works in 1956. During these three years, Gego operated at the margins of the Venezuelan kinetic and op art movements, and continued to study mathematics, architecture, and philosophy. In 1957 Gego participated in the exhibition *Arte abstracto en Venezuela* and by 1959 the Museum of Modern Art in New York had begun acquiring her work. She lived in New York briefly in 1960 and made several extended visits to the United States until 1967. In New York, she attended the Pratt Institute, where she took engraving and printmaking classes. She also worked in the Tamarind Lithography Workshop in Los Angeles before returning to Venezuela in 1967. For most of her career, she worked at a home studio in Caracas, creating a prolific and varied output consisting of sculptures and works on paper. She died in Caracas on September 17, 1994.

Recent solo exhibitions of Gego's work include *Gego: Between Transparency and the Invisible*, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (2005), and *The Drawing Center*, New York (2007); *Gego: Defying Structures*, Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves,



Dibujo sin papel, 1989. Steel and metallic washers. 40 1/4 x 24 3/4 x 7 inches (102 x 63 x 17.7 cm) © Fundación Gego

Porto; and *Gego: Line as Object*, Hamburger Kunsthalle, Kunstmuseum Stuttgart, and the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds (2013). Her work is in the collections of, among others, the Tate Modern, London; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Art Institute of Chicago; the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona; the Museo de Arte Latinoamericano de Buenos Aires; the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas; the Museo de Bellas Artes, Caracas; and the New York Public Library.

###

For additional information please contact:

Mackie Healy, mackie@dominique-levy.com, +1 212 772 2004

Andrea Schwan, Andrea Schwan Inc., info@andreaschwan.com, +1 917 371 5023