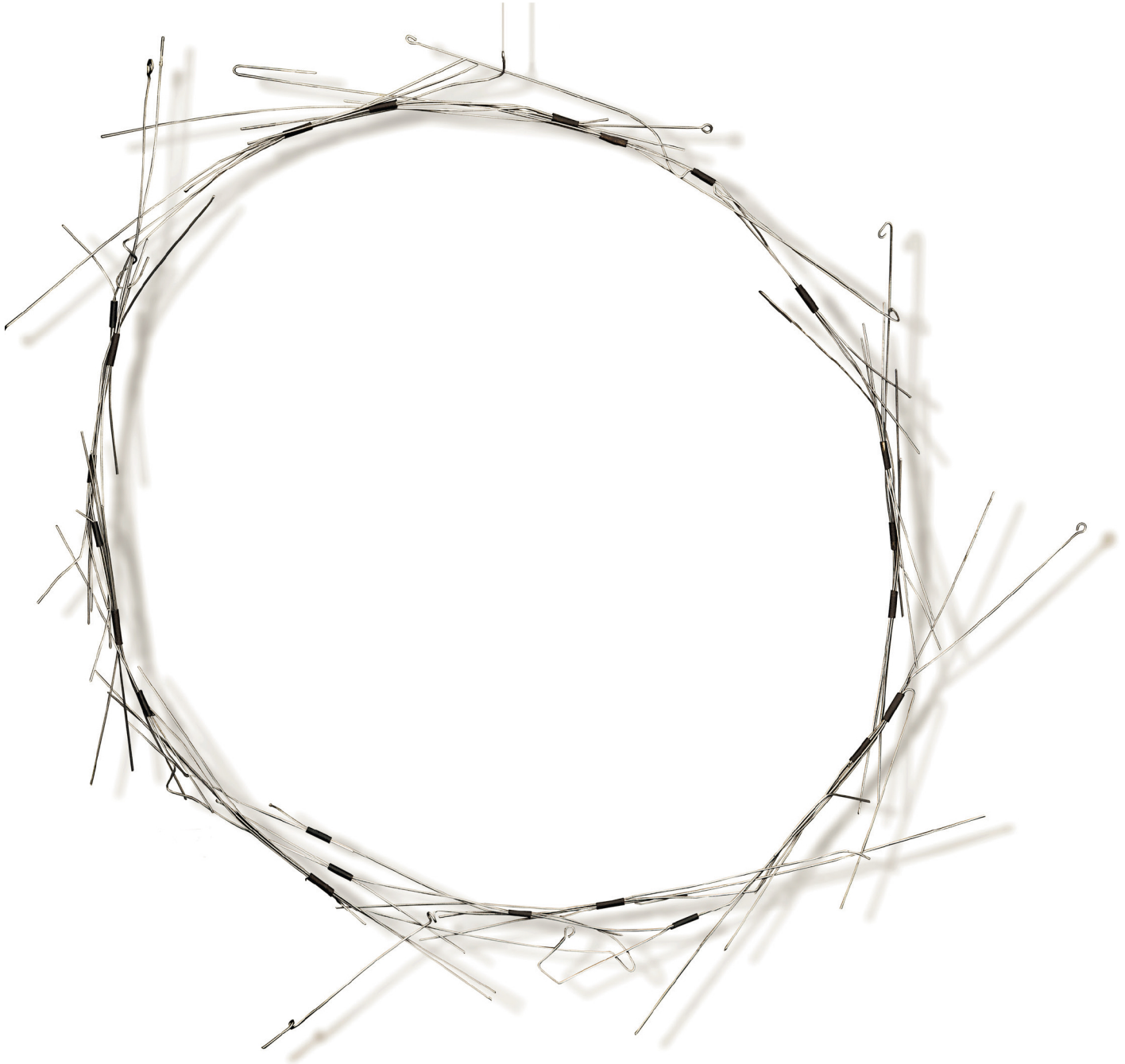


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Gego:
Lines here and there

January 26 to March 16, 2023



Dibujo sin papel 85/18, 1985. Steel, iron and plastic, Ø 19 5/8 in. (50 cm.)

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GEGO: Lines here and there

This small but representative group of works on paper by Gego signals her deep engagement with the multifarious quality of the line on a surface and in space. It also includes prints, which allowed the artist to explore an alternative spatiality of transfer, and a 1955 watercolor made while she lived in Tarma, a small coastal town west of Caracas where she launched her artistic career in dialogue with her partner, the designer Gerd Leufert. Before this liberating period (1953-1956), Gego, who had trained as an architect and engineer at the Technische Hochschule in Stuttgart and was forced to abruptly abandon her life in Germany, did some design work and ran a furniture workshop in Caracas. These experiences were key to her future aesthetic explorations and her role as a teacher at the school of visual arts, the school of architecture, and the school of design (which she and Leufert helped found) and are nicely represented in two untitled prints subtitled *Almanac* which, though playful, attest to Gego's dexterity with calculations and rational organization. It is of course not hard to see that this world of mathematical order and codification imploded in Gego's art.

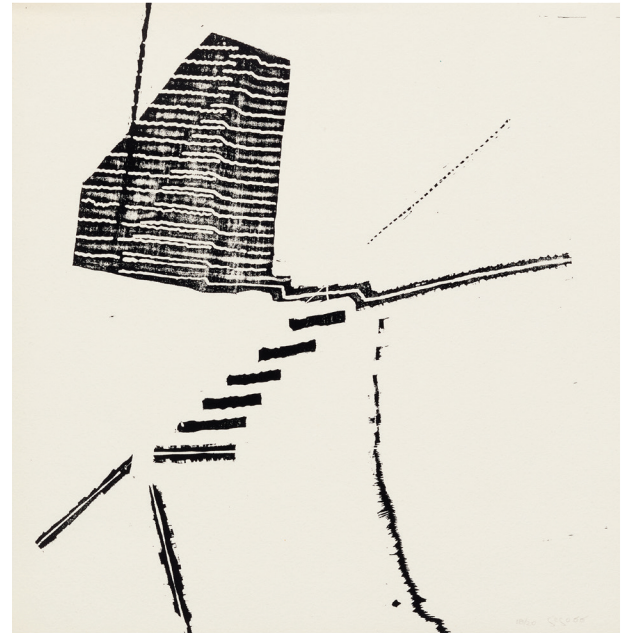
It was the artist's sustained exploration of line, not as the boundary of form but as mark, that led her to probe its multivalent identity: its capacity to flex, bend, twist, coil, direct, form, deform, alter, map,

diagram, construct, and undo fixed relations between figure and ground, inside and outside. In this body of work, it is more accurate to speak of lines as both medium and mediation, since this otherwise discrete element common to the fields of architecture, art, design, and writing is deployed by Gego to weave the space in-between these forms of knowledge. Writ large, line in this oeuvre refuses to settle within the confines of a discipline, technique, or support. Instead, it is topological and relational. Topological because, as with figures that can be deformed without losing their properties, Gego's line stretches, shrinks, knots, warps, and does many other things that even topology does not allow (it tears, interrupts, stops). However, like one of the most intriguing topological figures, the Möbius strip—which consists of a single strip, one end half-twisted and then attached to the other end so that the result is a one-sided surface with no inside and no outside—Gego's line slides from paper to space and back again as if producing a continuous virtual plane. This accords with the treatment of the in-between lines not as ground but as active space and as increasingly engaging the edge of the support to suggest the line's extension outside the limits of the plane.

Take the book of lithographs titled *Lines* realized at the Tamarind Lithography Workshop in Los Angeles in 1966. The lithographs feature a compendium of behaviors and modes of relating to the support that relish the spontaneity of the hand-traced line, the



Untitled, 1957. Watercolor on paper, 10 7/8 × 10 5/8 in.



Untitled [Tamarind 1893], 1966. Lithograph on paper, 11 × 11 in.

richness of effects that repetition and disruption can deliver, the various textures that the variable thickness of the trace and pressure of the hand can produce, and the contrasting outcomes that a light gray (used in five folios)—resulting in almost monochromatic surfaces—versus a bright red (used in seven folios) deliver.

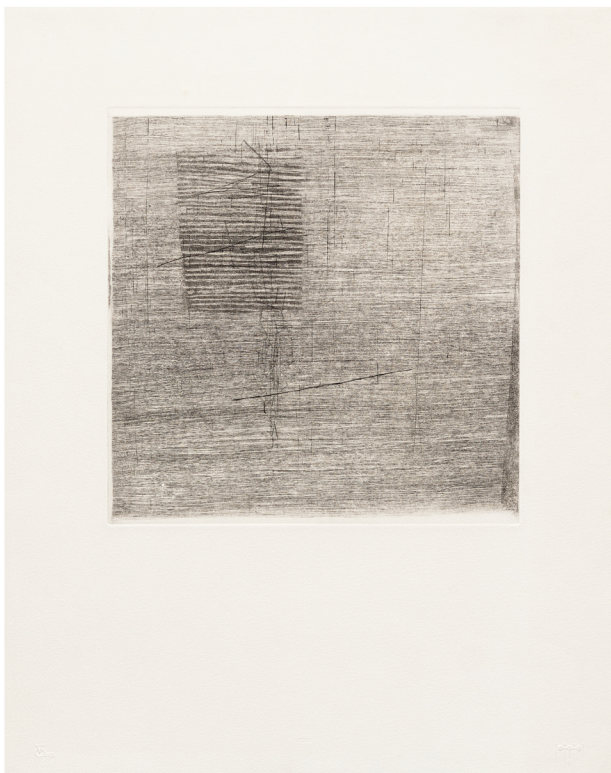
The *Drawings Without Paper* that Gego initiated in 1976 expand on these potentialities by furthering the displacement of lines latent in the printmaking process (from the stone to the paper) through the use of metal threads as lines in space. This series, intensely developed in the 1970s and 1980s, discards the pictorial plane and relishes ingenious forms of assemblage that increasingly included residual materials found in the artist's studio. The *Drawings Without Paper* were hung by Gego close to the wall—as if to give them paradoxical legibility: proper placement, improper support. With time, though, as suggested by the three-dimensional elements, which occupied the space of the viewer and

projected shadows that visually undermined the distinction between virtual lines and real lines, they were installed off the wall. The shadow became an index of the work's ontological instability and productive multiplicity. In making drawing a material line, the drawing acquired a weight—in Hanni Ossott's terms, a corporeality that negated bidimensionality.¹ But, on this matter of lines, we should give Gego the last word: "Relations of lines created neither from the reality of seeing nor from the reality of knowing."²

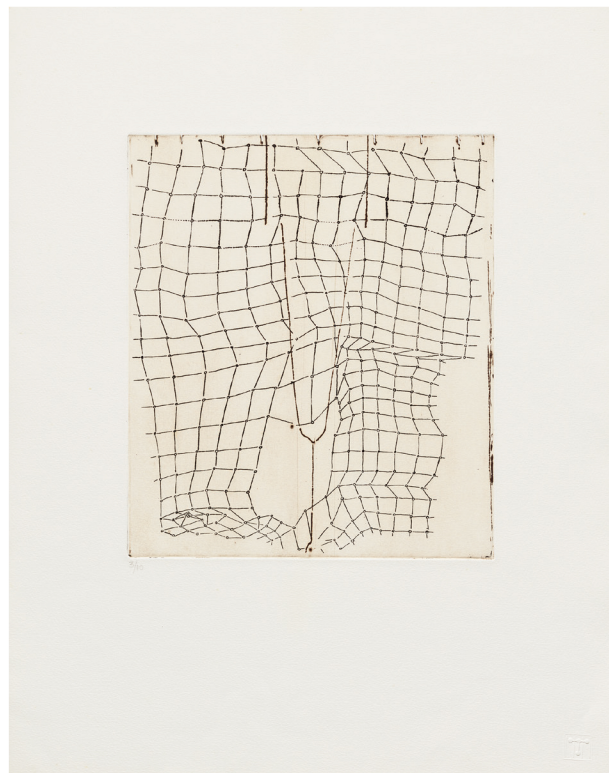
Mónica Amor, art historian, critic and curator

1 Hanni Ossott, *Gego*, exh. cat. (Caracas: Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Caracas, 1977), 131. Ossott too speaks of the projected shadows as an element that negates any suggestion of planarity.

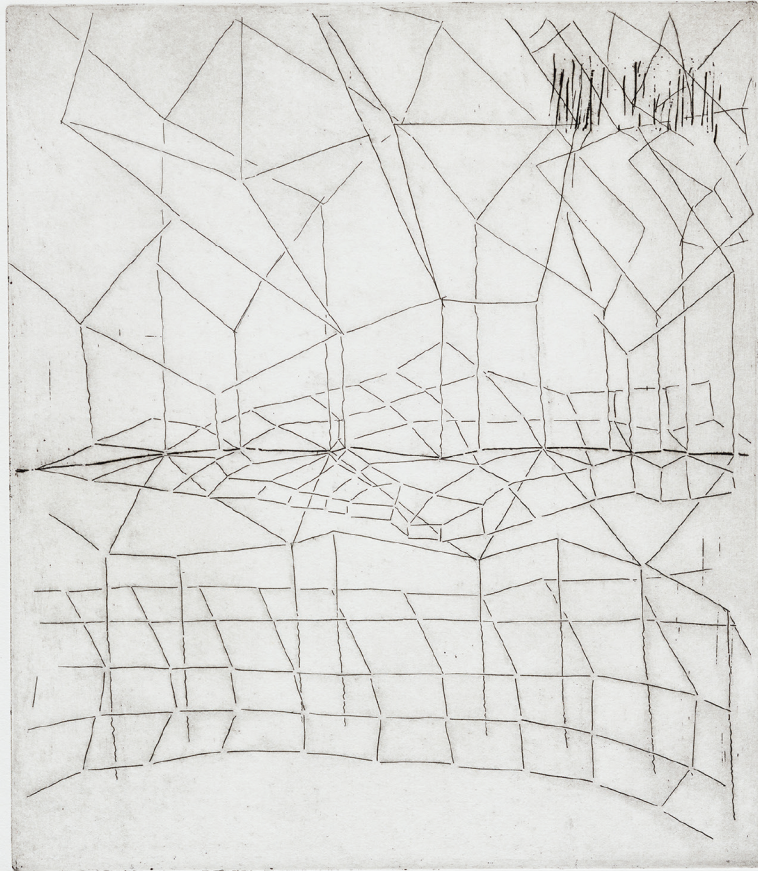
2 Gego, "Sabidura 1," undated, in Huizi and Manrique, *Sabiduras*, 33.



Untitled, 1963. Lithograph on paper, 22 1/4 × 17 7/8 in.



Untitled, 1988. Lithograph on paper, 26 × 19 7/8 in.



Imp.
Benjamin D.



Untitled. Lithograph on paper, 25 1/2 x 19 1/2 in.