

LISBON

Leonor Antunes

KUNSTHALLE LISSABON

For more than fifteen years, Berlin-based Portuguese artist Leonor Antunes has focused on such concepts as measurement, memory, and site. She assesses the space where her objects will be installed and constructs them in relation to its dimensions, character, and history. But her exhibition at Kunsthalle Lissabon, "*a linha é tão fina que o olho, apesar de armado com uma lupa, imagina-a ao invés de vê-la*" (the thread is so tiny that the eye, though armed with a magnifying glass, suspects it, rather than sees it), seemed to represent a move away from this approach. Antunes did not draw on the measurements of the rooms at the kunsthalle, nor did the history of the space play any particular role in the construction of the exhibition. The ornamented nineteenth-century

ceilings and oddly shaped rooms appeared to have provoked an emotional rather than rational response from the artist. Antunes relinquished her recurring concerns not only with modernist architecture and design but also with translation, replication, and proportions to produce a series of post-Minimalist sculptures that attempted a delicate but incisive dialogue with the space and especially with one another.

Rather than being a specific meditation on site, then, the show revolved around the play between seeing and imagining, light and shadow. In *Floor I*, 2011/2013, a stretchy golden cord drew a geometric sculptural pattern on the walls. Functioning almost as three-dimensional wallpaper, the thin string circled around small brass nails, creating oblique lines that ran parallel to or across one another, outlining diamond shapes. The installation filled three quarters of the room, leaving the rest empty, thus inviting the spectator to imagine how the work might fill the remaining volume. In this sense, the line, both visible and invisible, represents a thought that is constructed through our bodily experience of the space. Another work, standing in the middle of the room, consisted of a wooden structure resembling a doorframe, functioning as a sort of hanger from which a net was suspended. A neatly designed lamp illuminated this structure, which shared the exhibition's long title, and projected the shadows of the net onto *Floor I* while cast-



Leonor Antunes, *the thread is so tiny that the eye, though armed with a magnifying glass, suspects it, rather than sees it II*, 2013, agba wood, nylon thread, dimensions variable. Installation view.

ing shadows of that work's thread itself. This confluence of shadows and real objects creates a complex visual interplay.

Three similar wooden structures with nets constituted the sculptural installation in the second room, together making up another work whose title also coincides with that of the exhibition. A similar projection of shadows was also achieved with a lamp. Here, too, the nets could be considered a sculptural drawing projected onto the wall, paradoxically becoming part of it. The shutters in this room were open so that the amount of natural light determined the visibility of the shadow drawings. What is at stake in this work is the placement and presence of the structures and their relationship to one another as well as to the intersections of the shadows. Also relevant here is the translation from the wall into the three-dimensional meshes that are superimposed on the wooden structures. The precision of the wall drawing is juxtaposed with the fluidity and organic dimension of the hand-woven nets.

Materiality and repetition were important facets in the building of the sculptures and of the exhibition, but what was most striking was the sense of mystery the works evoked. Antunes chose each element meticulously, and the artisanal manufacture of the objects is a crucial aspect of the work, each element of the sculptures being produced by traditional techniques. She transforms rational designs into imperfect, emotional objects.

—*Filipa Oliveira*