



**Project Gallery: Leonor Antunes**  
**August 22, 2014 – January 18, 2015**

Leonor Antunes  
b. 1972, Lisbon; lives in Berlin

*a secluded and pleasant land. in this land I wish to dwell, 2014*  
Hemp rope, brass, wengue wood, cotton rope, nylon yarn, hemp yarn, leather, leather cord, silk yarn, bamboo sticks, brass and iron lamps, electric cable, and lightbulbs  
Courtesy the artist; Air de Paris; Galeria Luisa Strina, São Paulo; and Isabella Bortolozzi Galerie, Berlin




**Project Gallery**

# Leonor Antunes

**P** **Pérez**  
**Art**  
**Museum**  
**M** **Miami**

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**Pérez**  
**Art**  
**Museum**  
**Miami**

English



*a secluded and pleasant land.  
in this land I wish to dwell*

In recent years, Leonor Antunes's research-based projects have developed a particular material vocabulary through her recurring use of rope, leather, unusual woods, and brass. The artist places these and other natural materials in dialogue with both international modernist design and architecture from the 1950s and 1960s and indigenous craft traditions from European and non-Western cultural contexts. Involving measurement, repetition, and mirroring, her sculptural installations revisit these sites and forms, imbuing them with subjectivity and a renewed energy that places them in conversation with diverse contemporary art practices.

The title *a secluded and pleasant land. in this land I wish to dwell* is derived from a legend related to the creation of the Naikū Ise Shrine, a Shinto shrine dedicated to the goddess Amaterasu-ōmikami in southeastern Japan. The series of wooden buildings that make up this holy site are dismantled and then rebuilt in exactly the same manner every 20 years in a ritual designed to preserve traditional construction techniques and to act as a symbol of impermanence. Through this cyclical recreation, these structures are both continually ancient and renewed. This practice speaks to Antunes's own interest in repeating the constructions of past forms, and through these recreations, her critique of modernist values related to linear time and originality. The title also references the concept of “dwelling”—inhabiting a space both physically and psychologically through one's particular bodily proportions and emotional engagement—which deeply informs the artist's thinking.

This installation, which creates a space that invites viewers to walk around and through it, is made of multiple individual sculptures, all of which were created specifically with this Project Gallery space in mind. Several of the installation's elements relate to research that Antunes has undertaken in Brazil over the last decade. Most recently, the artist's investigations have involved the work of Brazilian modernist architect João Batista Vilanova Artigas (1915–1985). In 2013, she visited the house he built for his family in São Paulo in 1949 and was able to carefully measure and record the dimensions of its rooms. A screen made from thin tubes of brass, hung in front of the glass walls that enclose this gallery, reproduces the linear pattern and exact measurements of a parquet floor in the main living space of Vilanova Artigas's home. Two wooden

grid structures that hang from the ceiling also relate to the proportions of the architect's home, to a central patio around which the building is constructed.

From these two wooden grids the artist has hung a spiraling sculptural piece. Made from hundreds of small bamboo sticks, the work is held together by a single silk thread that has been woven across the center of each stick, creating a spinelike structure. This unusual form is an enlarged version of an ornamental object designed by the indigenous Kuikuro tribe who inhabit the Xingu National Park in the state of Mato Grosso in Brazil. Antunes visited this remote group last year and was drawn to the simple elegance and gentle movement of these objects, which were traditionally crafted for ritual purposes and are now made for the tourist market.

The designs of the Brazilian architect Lina Bo Bardi (1914–1992) have also influenced several works by Antunes. Here, Bo Bardi's creative experiments with form and proportion have influenced a series of screens made from the African wood *wengue*, cut into vertical pieces and threaded together with white cotton rope. These forms are based on a wall design made of concrete slabs that Bo Bardi built in 1988 for the Casa do Benim in Salvador de Bahia, in northeastern Brazil. When placed side by side, Antunes's screens measure the exact length of Bo Bardi's original wall.

The grid plays an important role in Antunes's practice and she engages the form using several different materials in this work. Her interest in this structure is derived not only from its role in architectural practice, but also its prevalence in the work of several postwar artists. Most directly, her sagging grids, which combine a sense of mathematical order with references to spiderwebs and nests, recall similar structures used by the Venezuelan artist Gego (Gertrud Goldschmidt, 1912–1994) and the American artist Eva Hesse (1936–1970). Antunes's grids are also directly related to her interest in preserving and celebrating craft traditions of her native Portugal, particularly handmade fishing nets. She has apprenticed with several older practitioners of this dying craft, learning how to weave these objects by hand. Reflecting these influences, several densely woven nets are hung in this installation, made from hemp rope and black nylon yarn. These are woven without the use of knots, engaging a technique used to produce hammocks that



the artist learned from another Brazilian indigenous tribe from the Amazon. Yet another grid, constructed from interlocking horse bridles, also a craft native to Portugal that is nearing extinction, has been produced by the artist in black leather.

This project both informs and is informed by the architecture of the Pérez Art Museum Miami. Similar to Antunes's investigations, the museum's design, by architects Herzog & de Mueron, reflects an interest in tropical architecture and the legacies of Brazilian modernism. A dynamic play between transparency and opacity is evident in both aesthetic practices. The warmth of the materials of this building, its concrete and wood, dialogues directly with the character of the materials used in Antunes's handmade sculptures. The contrasts between reflective glass, smooth concrete, and the organic textures of the museum's hanging gardens highlight similar sensual juxtapositions in this expansive artwork. Both this project and its site invite viewers to truly dwell in the rich enclosures they provide.

**Tobias Ostrander**  
Chief Curator and Deputy Director for Curatorial Affairs



**Biography**

Leonor Antunes was born in 1972 in Lisbon and currently lives in Berlin. Solo exhibitions of her work include an upcoming presentation at CAPC, Bordeaux (2015); *The Last Days in Chimalistac*, Kunsthalle Basel (2013); *Sculptures for Travelling*, Kunstverein Harburger Bahnhof, Hamburg (2012); *Discrepancies with M.G.*, Museo Experimental el Eco, Mexico City (2011); *casa, modo de usar*, Serralves Museum, Porto, Portugal (2011); and *Walk Around There, Look Through Here*, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid (2011). Her recent group exhibitions include *Behind the Supersquare*, Bronx Museum of Arts, New York (2014–15); the 8th Berlin Biennale (2014); *Ökonomie der Aufmerksamkeit*, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna (2014); *Decorum: Carpets and Tapestries by Artists*, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris (2013–14); *Textiles: Open Letter*, Museum Abteiberg, Mönchengladbach, Germany (2013); *The Space of the Window*, Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris (2013); and *In the Holocene*, MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge, MA (2012–13). Her works are in numerous collections, including the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco; Fundação Caixa Geral de Depósitos - Culturgest, Lisbon; Musée d'Art moderne de la Ville de Paris; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; and Pérez Art Museum Miami.

Images: Leonor Antunes, *a secluded and pleasant land. in this land I wish to dwell*, 2014. Installation view: 8th Berlin Biennale, May 29–August 3, 2014. Courtesy the artist; Air de Paris; Galeria Luisa Strina, São Paulo; and Isabella Bortolozzi Galerie, Berlin. Photo credit: Nick Ash