

ARTFORUM

Gego and Chiharu Shiota

GOFF + ROSENTHAL

537B West 23rd Street

November 5–January 9

This exhibition is thoughtfully conceived as a discourse between two women from different generations who hail from diverse backgrounds and artistic perspectives and who never met. The artists, Gego (Gertrude Goldschmidt, 1912–1994) and Chiharu Shiota, are ostensibly brought together because of affinities in their work, notably their use of three-dimensional linear elements (wire and string, respectively) to create latticed sculptural formations. However, it is the distinctions in the juxtaposition, rather than the broad similarities, that make for the true dynamism of the pairing.



View of “Gego and Chiharu Shiota,” 2009.

Titled “Drawn Together,” the show features four wire sculptures and one drawing by Gego (who was born in Germany but fled the Nazi regime in 1939 for Venezuela, where she lived and worked for the rest of her life). Responding to Gego’s work, the Berlin-based Shiota has created *Untitled*, 2009, a sprawling site-specific installation that features her signature black wool yarn affixed to the floor, ceiling, and walls of the gallery. In addition, the chock-full exhibition commingles many of Shiota’s latest drawings and sculptures with Gego’s works from the 1960s through the 1980s.

Shiota effectively takes over the entire front wall and two corners of the gallery, devouring prime real estate in a complex network of black thread. Several strands emanating from the main entanglement connect the piece—via the ceiling—to opposite ends of the gallery, ultimately spawning two smaller satellite webs. The implied progeny emphasizes the organic quality of Shiota’s work, as well as the artist’s propensity to permeate a given space. Fortunately, Shiota exercised restraint with this installation, and it does not overwhelm Gego’s work (all on loan from the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and Fundación Gego). Though pointedly intrusive, Shiota’s presence enhances certain qualities of Gego’s sculptures, making them appear refreshingly buoyant and untethered. For instance, the palpable upward momentum of Gego’s *Three Streams*, 1970—five willowy, gravity-defying rectilinear wire sculptures—acts as a foil of levity and kineticism to Shiota’s tightly entwined and firmly rooted weavings.

— Mara Hoberman