Leonor Antunes

walk around there. look through here

In Greek myth, Daedalus, the builder of the Cretan labyrinth, was the first architect. However, he never came to understand its structure, for his way of escaping from it was to fly out on wings he made for the purpose. According to Beatriz Colomina, it was Ariadne who conceived the first work of architecture when she gave Theseus the ball of thread with which he found his way out of the labyrinth after killing the Minotaur. "The thread of Ariadne is not merely a representation of the labyrinth. It is a project, a veritable production, a device that has the result of throwing reality into crisis."[1]

[1] Beatriz Colomina, ed. "Introduction: On Architecture, Production and Reproduction," in *Architectureproduction* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1988).

The project I am presenting at the Museo Reina Sofía within the *Fissures* program has several readings and starting points. On the one hand, I am interested in the relationship of the body with constructed space, and I use an element that develops in this space when it is manipulated and unfolded. This element is a thread, a string whose successive knots and displacements establish planes which in their turn define volumes in space. On the other hand, I have also tried to situate this project within a decisive context for the history of Spanish art, the decade of the 1950s. In 1951, a group of artists led by José Luis Fernández del Amo decided to create a contemporary art museum, the Museo Nacional de Arte Contemporáneo, to bring together all the trends of modern art, whose holdings would later pass to form part of the future Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. In the same decade, in 1957, Oteiza won the Grand Prix at the fourth São Paulo Biennial.

The next year, the Spanish Pavilion at the World's Fair in Brussels, designed by the architects Corrales and Molezún, was awarded the Gold Medal. In 1959, the pavilion was transferred to the parkland of the Casa de Campo in Madrid, where it still stands, but the hexagonal modules which make it up were not arranged in the same manner as on its original site at the World's Fair. The pavilion's design utilizes a hexagonal element that is repeated in space to generate the plan. Its alveolar structure makes it easily adaptable to other sites, regardless of topography or perimeter, by maintaining the structure but changing the alignment of the modules. The building is a modular concept consisting of 130 equal elements in the form of hexagons with 3-metre sides, and therefore constitutes a model that is mutable and flexible. The transparency of the constructed interior space and the somewhat kaleidoscopic spatial quality of the pavilion reveal certain characteristics of modern thought – ideas of repetition and normalization, of structures that can be dismantled, and of the use of "old" materials, such as brick, divested of their traditional meaning.

String Travel, 2011. 16 mm film, color, silent movie (6')

On the floor of the exhibition space, with a triangular grid covering the whole room, are two hexagons placed side by side. The pattern serving as the basis for these two pieces is found on a number of panels and displayed elements that were intended for use inside the Spanish Pavilion. The design has been enlarged in scale with the space, so each of the triangular elements has gained in thickness. They can be fitted together like a jigsaw, and corresponding to every color, as in the original project, is a particular material giving each of these triangular elements its own matter and weight: cork, brass, rubber and ceramic. A triangular mesh envelops the two hexagons placed on the ground. Reproduced to full scale are the elements of the original paving of the pavilion, a ceramic pavement based on triangles with 50 cm sides. We also find some pieces of leather hanging from the ceiling on a rope whose entwined pattern reveals the form of a hexagon and its respective triangular subdivisions.

In *String Travel*, a 16 mm film (6′), the same sculptures are seen suspended from a different viewpoint. These sculptures are in another space, as if they had existed somewhere else, perhaps

inside an apartment, and had suddenly been adapted to this room. This change of context or ubiquity could be taken as a reference to the *Sala Negra* (Black Room), where the first Informalist exhibitions were held, which was ceded by the Huarte family and transferred to the Museo Español de Arte Contemporáneo, then in its early years.

Another starting point for the project is the film *Witch's Cradle*, directed in 1943 by Maya Deren in collaboration with Marcel Duchamp. In it, Maya Deren films the interior of the space designed by Frederick Kiesler for Peggy Guggenheim's collection of avant-garde European and American art. Frederick Kiesler devised a new way of exhibiting art works that materialized as *The Art of this Century*, inaugurated in New York in October 1942. Kiesler designed a flexible display system in which he applied his theory of unity between art and context. He planned three distinct spaces – the abstract room, the surrealist room and the kinetic room – as extensions of an imaginary space and a receptacle for the art works in themselves.

Maya Deren's film appropriates a space that had a temporary existence, for *The Art of this Century* was open only from 1942 to 1947. The Spanish Pavilion in Brussels, as we saw earlier, was moved to another site. Both spaces were relocated in different contexts and different places. Kiesler's space was later resurrected in an exhibition at the Centre Georges Pompidou.

What interests me about the two projects is the way they intertwine by means of a "construction" that makes use of a "thread" or a line, whether by modulating physical space, as in the case of the pavilion, or by appropriating a physical space through film, as with *The Art of this Century*.

Leonor Antunes

Biography

Leonor Antunes (Lisbon, 1972) graduated in Visual Arts/ Sculpture from the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Lisbon. In 1998 she moved to Germany to pursue postgraduate studies at the Staatliche Akademie der Bildenden Kunste, Karlsruhe. Her work focuses on certain aspects that determine our environment, particularly those related to architecture and town planning, which she investigates, documents and transfers to the language of sculpture, emphasizing the experiential tension of space-time. Among the key aspects of her work are technical and methodological rigor, observation of detail, duplication, measurement, the human scale and the sense of proportion, as well as the choice of materials for their physical and expressive qualities. She presently lives and works between Berlin and Lisbon. Antunes has exhibited at art galleries and public institutions in Berlin, Lisbon, London, Paris and Rio de Janeiro. In 2011, besides carrying out this project specifically for the Museo Reina Sofía, she is taking part in the Singapore Biennial and will be exhibiting at the Museu Serralves in Oporto, the Kunstverein in Düsseldorf and the Museo Experimental El Eco in Mexico City.

Museo Nacional
Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

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Santa Isabel, 52
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(with Emperador
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Museum hours
Monday to Saturday
from 10:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.
Sundays
from 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Closed Tuesdays

Galleries close 15 minutes
prior to Museum closing

Leonor Antunes
walk around there. look through here

10 June – 5 September 2011

Images
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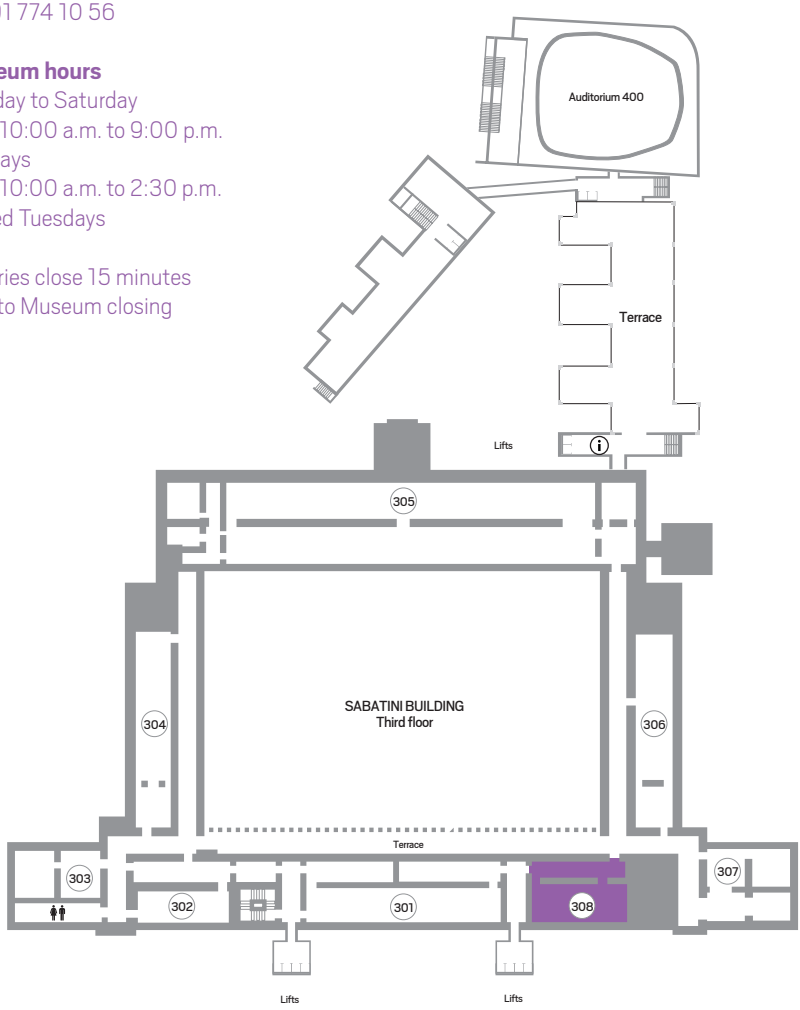

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