

Franz Thalmair
April 2019

ARTFORUM



View of Fernanda Gomes, 2019.
VIENNA

Fernanda Gomes

SECESSION

Friedrichstraße 12

April 12–June 16

Brazilian artist Fernanda Gomes's intervention here is minimal; those not paying close attention may well overlook the fact that there's an exhibition happening at all. Her untitled site-specific spatial immersions invoke the genius loci in which knowledge, history, and memory blend with intuitive perception and interpretation. As a prelude, Gomes has constructed a grid-like platform from commercial-quality wood and overlaid it with white-painted panels. Various small objects, including a bottle wrapped in packing paper, a pencil dangling on a string, wooden cubes and balls, crumpled paper, and strips of wood, accessorize its foundation. The artist has been transforming such commonplace and discarded materials into the protagonists of her ephemeral arrangements since the 1980s, with a minimalist approach that marries serious poetics with whimsical playfulness. Her installation of an obsolete carpenter's ruler marked with emulsion paint recharges the room, measuring the immaterial as artistic practice. The high point of the exhibition is a "painting" for which Gomes has partly altered the gallery's lighting to create highlights on the wall; elsewhere, a thin strip of wood casts an abstract shadow, as a kind of inverse of the light painting.

“I love arriving with bare hands, bringing nothing for an exhibition, having no transportation, no artworks,” Gomes has said of her practice. “When words fade out, the game starts seriously. . . . Before the word there is the world, intact in its mystery and fascination.” Here, form is function, and function is form, and the lightness of the luggage with which Gomes travels causes the spirit of the place to vibrate.

Translated from German by Diana Reese.

— Franz Thalmair