

Mendes Wood DM introducing 'Linhas Tortas' | Chapter 2: How do we sign what we write into the world?

Mendes Wood DM presents *Linhas Tortas*, a multi-venue international group exhibition in São Paulo. Thread 2: *How do we sign what we write into the world?*

Linhas Tortas

curated by Diana Campbell

Opening September 2, 2023
Mendes Wood DM São Paulo
Rua Barra Funda 216
São Paulo, Brazil

Casa Iramaia

By appointment only

Mendes Wood DM is proud to announce [Linhas Tortas](#), a multi-venue international group exhibition in São Paulo that explores the entanglements of journeys and the power of storytelling, celebrating a decade of the gallery's existence. The exhibition takes inspiration from the Brazilian aphorism "deus escreve certo por linhas tortas," which literally translates to "god writes straight with crooked lines" and metaphorically to "god works in mysterious ways."

While many of the 100+ works of art in *Linhas Tortas* formally contain curving lines, *Linhas Tortas* does not take the aphorism which inspires its title at face value. The exhibition asks questions while proposing other ways to read this complex and ubiquitous phrase.

The exhibition contains five interconnected, overlapping, and often knotted curatorial threads that stretch across an intimate domestic space which is a masterpiece of Modern Brazilian architecture and an expansive industrial space that is the headquarters of Mendes Wood DM in São Paulo. These threads are held together by the idea that lines of solidarity bound by commitment, trust and friendship form a powerful, intangible currency that can enable radical change in previously unimaginable directions. Ones that aren't straight, narrow, expedient, or singular.

Thread 2

*What can the role of writing be in artistic expression?
How do we sign what we write into the world?*



Image: Paulo Nimer Pjota, *Cenas de casa com cacto*, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, New York. Photo Credit: Gui Gomes.

Last names are complicated entities - they tend to omit matrilineal histories, serve to reinforce class barriers, and often carry oppressive histories, such as the experience of many descendants of formerly enslaved people whose names carry the mark of their oppressors. **Shilpa Gupta**, an artist who exhibited in one of Mendes Wood DM's first group shows in São Paulo, traces the stories of individuals who changed their last names either to succeed, or to survive in *Altered Inheritances – 100 (Last Name) Stories*. This installation is made up of a series of framed photographs spliced in half, shuffled, and reinstalled along the horizon of the split, framing the complex interplay between alienation and the search for belonging. *Linhas Tortas* also sheds light on the many artists that have changed the names as part of their search for artistic freedom and creation of an artistic identity, such as **Bruce Conner** (who worked under many pseudonyms simultaneously, present in the show as **Emily Feather**, **Anonymous**, and **Anonymouse**), **Kishio Suga** (who wrote art criticism under a pen name), **Antonio Obá**, **Paulo Nazareth**, **Senga Nengudi** (who also worked under different names depending on which medium she was working with), **Naufus Ramírez-Figueroa**, **Paulo Nimer Pjota**, and many others.



Image: Shilpa Gupta, *Altered Inheritances - 100 (Last Name) Stories*, 2014. Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, New York.

The exhibition also traces the role of writing in artistic practice, with the practices of **Etel Adnan**, **Alvaro Barrington**, **Paloma Bosquê**, **Adriano Costa**, **Michael Dean**, **Lawrence Abu Hamdan**, **Paloma Contreras Lomas**, **Paulo Nazareth**, **Iulia Nistor**, **Rosana Paulino**, **Laure Prouvost**, **Mario Garcia Torres** and **Lawrence Weiner**, which contextualize the said and the unsaid in their unique artistic language. Artists such as **Guglielmo Castelli** use literary devices to create their artworks – such as the palindrome – a form of wordplay that employs phrases or sentences that can be read the same way, forward and backward. **Paloma Contreras Lomas** creates a series of fictions that come together in a monumental drawing, built around her past lovers that help her understand the many lives and deaths she has experienced in one lifetime. The work exists at the intersection between writing, poetry, graphic novella, political cartoons, and drawing.



Image: Guglielmo Castelli, *Ato Idiota*, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, New York.

A fulcrum point of the show is a recent embroidery work by **Paulo Nazareth**, that measures the world through the coordinates of *Fact, Fiction, Palmares, and Wakanda*; Palmares being a real location of Black uprising as a quilombo in 16th Century Brazil that is now lesser known than the fictional world of Wakanda in *Black Panther*. This work extends out of a retrospective hanging of works related to the role of the journey in Nazareth's work which leads visitors into the Barra Funda warehouse space of Mendes Wood DM.



Image: Paulo Nazareth, *Palmares-Wakanda*, 2023, embroidery on textile, 140 x 102 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, New York.

The curatorial threads within *Linhas Tortas* are:

Thread 1: Who has the power to write? Who do we imagine this writer to be? What lines might have not made it onto the page, only kept alive through oral traditions and memory, art and culture?

Thread 2: What can the role of writing be in artistic expression? How do we sign what we write into the world?

Thread 3: Can unexpected journeys change who we are? What is the impact of encountering and engaging with a place outside of mainstream itineraries?

Thread 4: Can certain life events or twists of fate that seem like limitations open up new directions for creative expression? What do geometries of liberation look like?

Thread 5: Can we visualize time and space in ways and forms other than linear?

