

# Mendes Wood DM introducing 'Linhas Tortas' | Chapter 3: Can unexpected journeys change who we are?

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**Mendes Wood DM presents *Linhas Tortas*, a multi-venue international group exhibition in São Paulo. Thread 3: *Can unexpected journeys change who we are?***

## ***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 3**

*Can unexpected journeys change who we are?*

*What is the impact of encountering and engaging with a place outside of mainstream itineraries?*



Image: Runo Lagomarsino, *Mapa Mundi*, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, New York. Photo credit: Daniel Zachrisson

Life is a journey, and *Linhas Tortas* delves into how transformational transnational encounters come into the artistic practices of many artists of the gallery and those who inspire and influence them. When you go somewhere unexpected, the journey takes you somewhere you never could have imagined; an external experience can completely transform your internal world. While speaking in its own voice, this curatorial thread weaves together **Édouard Glissant's** words on errantry, where individuals gain fuller identities based not only on their roots but also their relations with others, and **Saidiya Hartman's** words on waywardness, "*the untiring practice of trying to live when you were never meant to survive.*" The show follows complex trails (of thought and of life) that unfold when one sets off with intention but without an end in sight.

**Mendes Wood DM's** own growth from São Paulo (2010) to Brussels (2017) to New York (2022) and Paris (2023) - with stops in offsite locations in Retrenchment (since 2019), Villa Era (since 2020), and in Upstate New York at the Luss House (2021) and Archipelago Hudson Valley (2022), can also be better understood through this curatorial thread. This unfolding international journey of Mendes Wood DM is a reflection of a longtime dream to create spaces of artistic exchange in sites and with communities that both nourish and inspire the gallery and its artists.



Image: Paulo Nazareth, *One Rupee For My Country*, 2006. Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, New York.

One of the first sections of the show that visitors will encounter is a wall charting the role of the journey across the practice of **Paulo Nazareth**. Nazareth is the first artist of the gallery (who began working with the partners in 2007 before the gallery was formally founded), and has walked across more than a dozen countries collecting stories, objects, people, and purpose along the way. Among the photographs, video, and installation works by Nazareth featured in *Linhas Tortas is A Rupee For My Country* (2006), a work that the artist created during his first trip abroad which was to India, where he staged a game speaking to the complexity of identity and what cultural capital/currency might mean.

**Pacita Abad, Lynda Benglis, Antonio Dias, Antony Gormley, Matthew Lutz-Kinnoy, Daniel Steegmann Mangrané, Hana Miletić, Senga Nengudi**, and the curator **Diana Campbell** are among the many protagonists in the exhibition who also had transformational encounters in Asia that can be experienced in their artistic work.

Born 77 years before Paulo Nazareth in 1900, the self-taught artist **Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato** from Belo Horizonte had to move to Italy with his Italian immigrant parents in the late 1920s when the Spanish Flu broke out in Brazil, where he later worked as a wall painter as part of reconstructing Italy after the First World War. In 1925, he embarked on a life-changing year-long bicycle trip across Europe with a Dutch painter that he had met, expanding his horizons and engaging with European art before the Second World War brought him back to Brazil and eventually back home to Belo Horizonte. He worked in construction until a leg injury made him focus full time on painting, an experience you can see in the physicality of his artistic practice through highly textured surfaces created with self-made pigments, transformed by hand-made tools such as brushes, combs, and forks.



Image: Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato *Untitled / Sem título*, 1992. Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, New York. Photo credit: Bruno Leão.

Stories of migration and transnational encounters are not limited to humans. The Los Angeles based artist **Calvin Marcus** is the fifth generation of descendants who have cared for begonias that derive from a cutting that Marcus's great great grandfather carried with him from England when he emigrated to the United States. While the begonia species is native to Brazil, and memories of its journey from South America to when begonias met Marcus's ancestors in England are lost, Marcus sees these plants as a growing and evolving family crest. He zooms in and out of these plants in his painting, where we find ourselves tangled in a familiar yet ungraspable world, which is here, there, everywhere; yesterday, today, tomorrow.

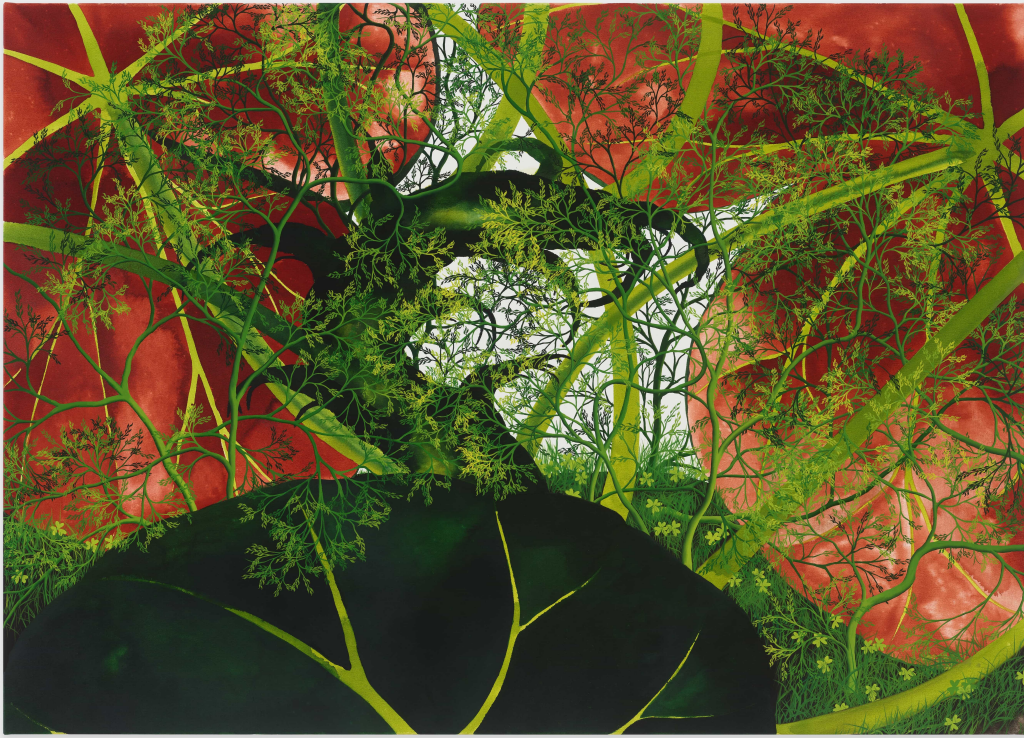


Image: Calvin Marcus, *Untitled / Sem título*, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, New York. Photo credit: Marten Elder.

Another early artist of the gallery, **Daniel Steegmann Mangrané**, had a transformational experience visiting Brazil for the first time after a profound encounter he had with a **Lygia Clark** exhibition at the Fundació Antoni Tàpies in 1997, a country which he later made his home in 2004. The curator and the artist have been exploring undercurrents linking Bangladesh and Brazil through ecology and architecture, and *Linhas Tortas* will present *Fog Dog* (2019–2020) for the first time in Brazil in Casa Iramaia, linking the 1950s staircases of Muzharul Islam in Bangladesh and **Gregori Warchavchik** in Brazil through the scenography around the film. The artist's first narrative film brings us into a community of human and inhuman inhabitants of Charukala, the Faculty of Fine Art, University of Dhaka, designed by Muzharul Islam in 1953–55. Mixing fiction and contemplation, this work explores the past and future ghosts that haunt present-day Bangladesh from the viewpoint of the stray dogs who live in and among its shared spaces. While life revolves around the art school for the protagonists in this film, the horrors of climactic and political violence elsewhere in the world appear and speak to the interconnectedness of seemingly disparate contexts.

Beyond Steegmann and Clark, *Linhas Tortas* draws out lines of artistic influence across cultures, linking practices such as **Lucas Arruda** and **Luc Tuymans**, **Solange Pessoa** and **Aleijadinho**, **Alma Allen** and **Louise Bourgeois**, and other pairings that speak to how artists move each other in their ongoing and evolving creative process.



Image: Daniel Steegmann Mangrané, *Fog Dog*, 2019-2020. Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, New York.

Also located in Casa Iramaia, the Poland based Ukrainian artist **Veronika Hapchenko** collapses the distance between Brazil today and what is now Ukraine, where **Gregori Warchavchik** also originated from before building his artistic legacy in Brazil. The artist's process relies on archives from all over the world to reconstruct images of ceramic reliefs by the Ukrainian artist Ivan Litovchenko (1921-1996) which were made in Pripyat – an abandoned worker's town in the north of Ukraine that once serviced the Chernobyl power plant. Litovchenko's large-scale painterly and spatial works – illustrating the key myths of the USRR – were finalized only a few years before the tragic atomic explosion, and seem to hint at the death and destruction to come. The Soviet myth of enlightenment through electrification has been challenged and re-written by Hapchenko in a new work for *Linhas Tortas*, which represents a nation fleeing from darkness, led by an allegorical light radiating from a torn out heart of a Soviet mythological figure present in the literature of Maxim Gorky.

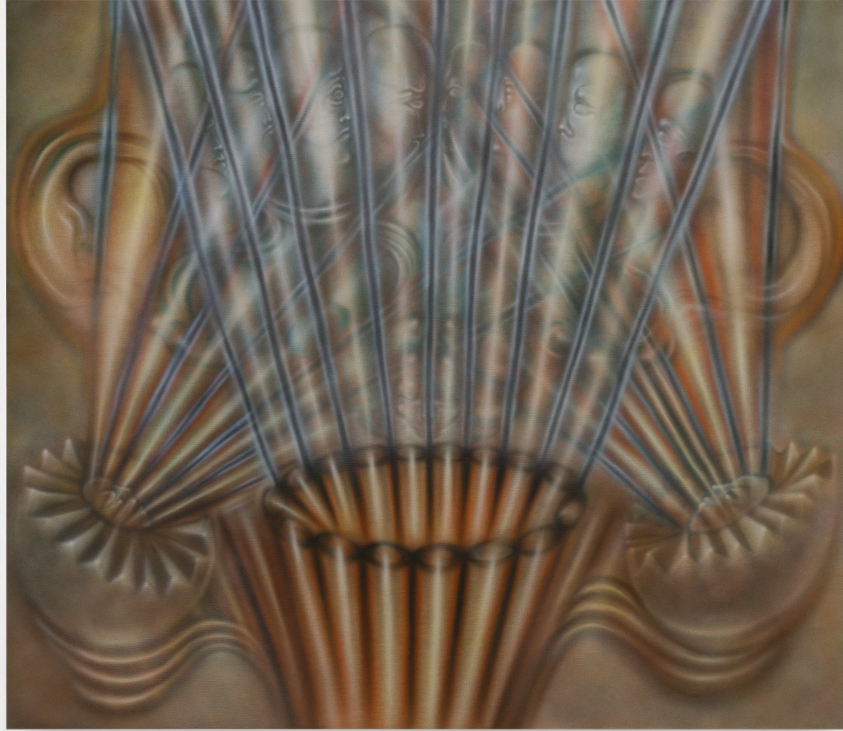


Image: Veronika Hapchenko *into the light, after Ivan Litovchenko* 2023 Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, New York. Photo credit: Veronika Hapchenko Studio.

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?*

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