

Mendes Wood DM introducing 'Linhas Tortas' | Thread 5: Can we visualize time and space in ways and forms other than linear?

Mendes Wood DM presents *Linhas Tortas*, a multi-venue international group exhibition in São Paulo. Thread 5: Can we visualize time and space in ways and forms other than linear?

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 5

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



Image: Anusha Alamgir, *How To Alter The Architecture Of The Body*, 2022, video. Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, New York.

Linhas Tortas refutes a linear/straight-line reading of the past in favor of unearthing an ongoing network of meandering lines that come together through the works of artists who markup and annotate the seemingly endless scrawl of history. They visualize often hidden undertones that impact how the history of the world has been written, and propose other ways of registering life that cannot be reduced to the common denominator of linear time. For one of many examples, algorithmic lines influence how we perceive beauty on social media and in video games, and inspire the work of the emerging Bangladeshi artist **Anusha Alamgir** who looks at the links between geometry, proportion, and subsequent self-fashioning to please others. The 100+ artists in the show all play with the idea of line in diverse ways: bloodline, life line, timeline, all kinds of lines one can imagine; even lines that one cannot yet find the words for.



Image: Luana Vitra, *Untitled*, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, New York.

In some indigenous cultures, including the Chamoru culture of the curator, our ancestors are ahead of us rather than in front of us. They entered another realm beyond “the living” before us “living people” did, and they can still be present with us in the room. For many, ancestral space cannot be reduced to three dimensions. Artists such as **Castiel Vitorino Brasileiro**, **Mariana Castillo Deball**, **Paulo Nazareth**, **Solange Pessoa**, **Tunga** and **Luana Vitra**, among others, bring ancestral space into the room to accompany their artworks. *Linhas Tortas* is marked by sentiments of haunting and elements of the uncanny. Many collapses between space and time found across the show enable the visitor to feel grounded in São Paulo in 2023, but simultaneously pulled into other zones where the distances between places like Brazil and Bangladesh collapse and thirty years on the street of Barra Funda dissolve. Just as we understand that dogs, as in **Daniel Steegmann Mangrané’s** *Fog Dog*, as well as other more-than-human-beings can perceive sounds, sights, and smells that humans cannot, we become cognizant of other registers and frequencies that we might try to tune into, guided by the work of artists.



Image: Marina Perez Simão, *Untitled*, 2023, fresco. Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, New York.

Visitors enter Casa Iramaia and encounter a seemingly floating fresco by the Brazilian painter **Marina Perez Simão**. In this new work, the artist seeks to bring visitors into a universe that we do not yet know to exist, also nodding in its technique to Brazil’s history with Venetian-style frescoes created by the artistry and hands of Italian immigrants at the turn of the century. In a world where we are supposed to know everything through the touch of a screen, Simão tries to conjure the wonder and awe that comes with experiencing a sense of being that was previously unthinkable. Her paintings open up possibilities for new states of matter beyond known solids, liquids, gasses, and plasmas. What colors might suffuse the smoldering gasses of yet-to-be-discovered atmospheres in far-off extraterrestrial landscapes? How “out-of-this-worldly” might Brazil have felt when immigrants, such as Simão’s Lebanese family, or Gregori Warchavcik himself, felt when they arrived in the country before making it feel like home?



Image: Lucas Arruda, *Untitled* (from Deserto-Modelo series), 2022. Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, New York.

Continuing on the idea of how we experience life in orbits as we spiral up the stairs in Casa Iramaia, or experience his paintings as a panorama in Mendes Wood DM's Barra Funda gallery, **Lucas Arruda** revisits a work from nearly ten years ago which he developed while in residency at Pivô: a new carousel of painted slides that speak to the artist's ongoing inquiries into the space between time and timelessness. This work is installed in dialog with a trio of monoprints by **Luc Tuymans**, which reference three large canvases painted in 2002 on the occasion of Documenta depicting, in the words of Caroline Bourgeois, "*imageless rectangular halos cast by a slide projector*" where the slide's image are absent. These works inspired Arruda in his ongoing explorations of light as a protagonist of painting, and *Linhas Tortas* collapses the distance between inspiration and authorship in how it brings the audience into the kinds of conversations that the artists in the show are having with each other in private.



Image: Lawrence Abu Hamdan, *For the Otherwise Unaccounted*, 2020, series of 17 thermographic prints on paper and 4 text panels. Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, New York.

Many artists in the show try to open up conversations with the past that we might have thought to be impossible. For example, **Lawrence Abu Hamdan**'s series of thermographic prints, *For the Otherwise Unaccounted*, highlights ways in which testimony can be stored in the body and carried across lifetimes, taking the form of raised ink renderings of birthmarks photographed and published in 1997 by the psychiatrist and professor Dr. Ian Stevenson in his life's work, *Reincarnation and Biology: A Contribution to the Etiology of Birthmarks and Birth Defects*. This book was the result of Stevenson's fieldwork in Asia, Turkey, Lebanon, Africa, and Alaska, where he interviewed and investigated claims of reincarnation with particular attention to the correspondence of birthmarks on the reincarnated subject to the circumstances of their death in their previous life. In focusing on the claims to reincarnation rather than ethnography, it chronicles a collectivity of people who exist at the threshold of the law and for whom injustices and violence have otherwise escaped the historical record due to colonial subjugation, corruption, rural lawlessness, and legal amnesty. Hamdan's work isolates the birthmarks from the bodies, and in this way archives the only surviving remnants of historical erasures such as forced religious conversions, destruction of language and property, colonial occupation, and territorial annexation.



Image: Candice Lin, *Transition Demon*, 2023. Courtesy of the artist and Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, New York.

Similarly interested in stories that carry forward between visible and invisible realms, **Candice Lin's** animated video and installation at Casa Iramaia originates from the artist's fictional short story about a sex demon's attempt to return to their lover in a lithium battery factory. This narrative personifies a phenomenon studied by anthropologist Aihwa Ong, where Asian women working in multinational electronics factories in the United States (who existed in real life) felt that they experienced demonic possession. Lin's story extends this factual historical documentation into fiction, drawing from various Asian myths, including Chinese hungry ghosts (*ègui*), Japanese shit-eating ghosts (*gaki*), and Malay *penanggal*, which feed on menstrual blood. Lin's work intertwines accounts of toxicity, labor politics, queer love, and the materiality of our modern world in a new work that hints of other worlds that only some of us can see. Installed in dialogue with Hamdan and Lin, **Neha Choksi's** video of animated text pairs final words with newborn cries, also blurring life-death thresholds and linear visions of what constitutes a lifetime: "I'd hate to die twice. It's so boring."

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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