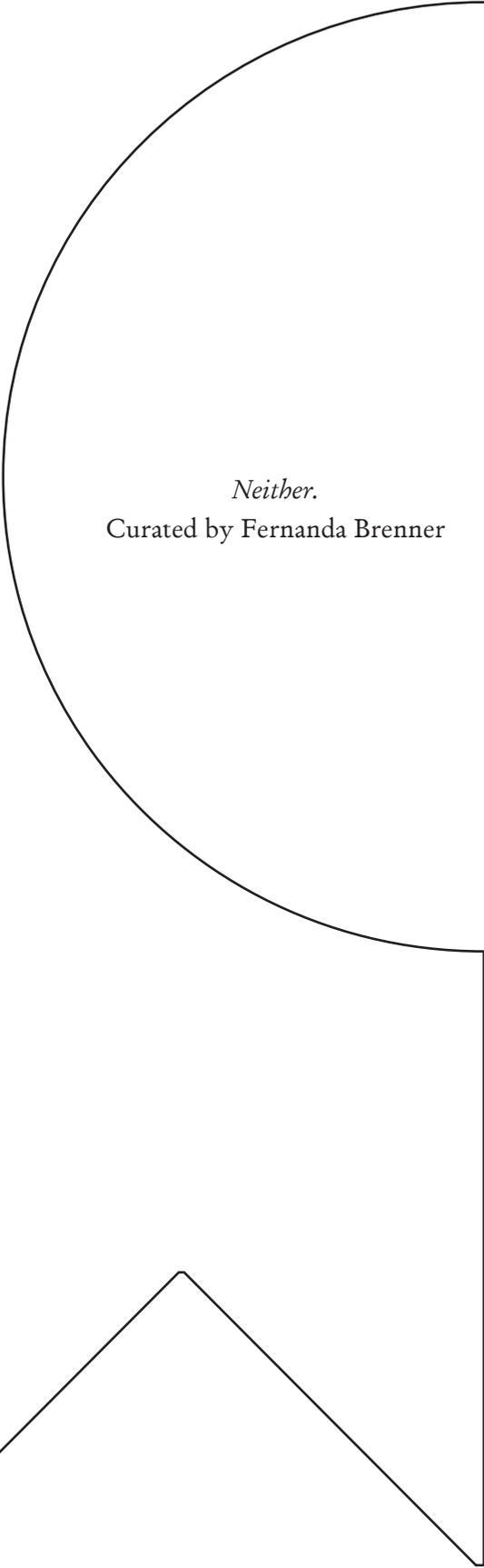


Press and Texts
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Neither.
Curated by Fernanda Brenner

Mendes
Wood
DM

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Galleries

Mendes Wood DM, the Cool Kids of the Brazilian Art World, Take on Brussels

The São Paulo gallery's founders tell us what drew them to the Belgian capital.

Henri Neuendorf, April 18, 2017

After opening an office and showroom in New York last year, São Paulo-based gallery Mendes Wood DM is expanding again. The gallery will open a new space in Brussels on April 18, during the city's art week.

With a growing international appetite for Latin American art and sky high import and sales taxes limiting growth in their home country's domestic market, the cool kids of Brazilian art are embarking on a strategy of international expansion.

Located in a historic Art Deco building built by the Belgian modernist Adrien Blomme in 1910, the gallery encompasses three exhibition rooms as well as a residence to house visiting artists, curators and critics.

Gallery founders Pedro Mendes, Matthew Wood, and Felipe Dmab tapped independent curator and Latin American art specialist Carolyn Drake as a partner to run the gallery's European operations from the Belgian capital.

The inaugural show features over 40 artists, including gallery artists Adriano Costa, Lucas Arruda and Michael Dean, as well as Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster & Manuel Raeder, Franz West, Jason Dodge, and Belgian fashion designer Dries Van Noten. Titled "Neither," the show is curated by Fernanda Brenner, director of the São Paulo-based non-profit Pivô, and revolves around French philosopher Roland Barthes' concept of the neutral.

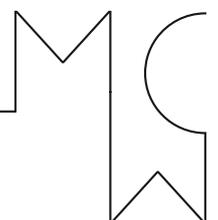
Ahead of the opening of the space, artnet News spoke to partners Matthew Wood and Felipe Dmab about their new venture in Europe.



Installation view of "Neither" at Mendes Wood DM, Brussels. Photo: courtesy of Mendes Wood DM.

Neither. Curated by Fernanda Brenner
Press and Texts / Imprensa e Textos

Artnet, online, April, 2017
<https://news.artnet.com/market/mendes-wood-dm-brussels-927194>



Why did you chose Brussels as the location for your third gallery?

Felipe Dmab: Brussels is the understated cosmopolitan heart of Europe—it casually blends a rich and dynamic history with a discrete vigor and charm that is all its own. The Belgians have a long tradition of art patronage that involves a real fascination for plural, multicultural visions of art and art practice. Their capital was always—and continues to be—an incredible crossroads of European cultures; and within the context of volatile and inward-looking contemporary politics manages to hold on to the promise of the European integration project.

What can visitors expect out of the new space?

Matthew Wood: Our gallery is a fully outfitted 1910 family townhouse. We have managed to adapt the space to the necessities of a contemporary art gallery while maintaining the original details. The floors creak and the walls are white between eccentrically-colored wainscoting and the windows look out onto the 15th century Notre Dame du Sablon.



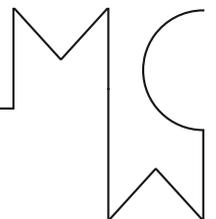
Installation view of "Neither" at Mendes Wood DM, Brussels. Photo: courtesy of Mendes Wood DM.

gallery here has a studio which will receive artists so that they are able to have the experience of living in Brussels and engaging with its people and ideas. We hope to invite many artists who have never had European exposure—for us and for Brussels, I guess that we can expect the unexpected.

How has the interest in Latin American art developed in Europe?

Dmab: Significant and long-overdue retrospectives of Latin American artists have recently begun to hit home in Europe, sparking the realization that the modernities of Brazil, and Latin America more largely, were the crucible of avant-garde ideas that continue to hold vital importance for our actuality. Now, we have to work on the recognition of younger artists—avoiding both the easy classification of 'Latin America' as well as market trends which seek to commercialize cultural identity. That in itself is a long and interesting conversation.

"Neither" runs from April 18 – June 17, 2017 at Mendes Wood DM, Brussels.



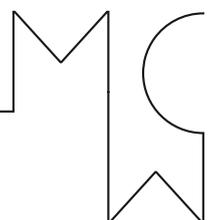
‘Neither.’

Mendes Wood DM, Brussels, Belgium

BY ELLEN MARA DE WACHTER

The inaugural exhibition at the Brussels branch of Brazilian gallery Mendes Wood DM is a group effort. A partnership with curator Carolyn Drake, who also runs the non-profit space A Tale of a Tub, in Rotterdam, the new venture already has the air of an enterprise that values collaboration and experimentation at least as much as it does sales. Its first show, ‘Neither.’, is curated by Fernanda Brenner, director of the independent art centre Pivô in São Paulo.

Brenner has installed work by 47 artists throughout the gallery’s four rooms in a house built by Belgian art deco architect Adrien Blomme in the Sablon area of Brussels. Hung by a bay window is a small painting by Brazilian artist Patricia Leite depicting a colonial-style church, its modesty striking in contrast to the grandeur of the 15th-century gothic church visible across the street. In the same room, slabs of sandstone appear to hover on the floor in a deconstructed grid. On one of them, a felt bowl, its interior coated with sand, appears to be on the verge of rolling over and spilling its contents. This is Katinka Bock’s *Winterlandschaft mit Hut* (Winter Landscape with Hat, 2011), a work that evokes the ordered disorder of a Japanese garden. The stone is reclaimed from historic buildings, a memento mori to structures like the church outside. In an alcove, Nina Canell’s *Brief Syllable* (2017), from a series of works made with segments of high voltage electricity and communications cables, is an upward curve perched on thin metal stilts. It resembles a torii, a type of gate found at the entrance to a Shinto shrine. On either side of the fireplace, Dan Coopey’s *Untitled (Xia) | Untitled (Sinai)* (2017), twin hand-woven rattan baskets enclosing organic materials, evoke a museological display of ethnographic treasures. But these objects are not architectural structures, nor, for all their associative powers, are they indigenous artefacts. They are contemporary art, a highly defined and prized category to be sure, but one that, almost by definition, encroaches upon and attempts to undo other forms of classification.



Brenner says she was guided in her selection of works by Roland Barthes's writings on the neutral, a notion he understood as describing that which evades categorization, or, as he put it, 'baffles paradigm'. It's a seductive way to think about the art one finds intriguing, but because the predominant expectation of contemporary art is that it should exceed conventions, the concept's critical capacity is somewhat diminished here, especially in the context of a commercial gallery. Isn't the question then one of taste? I didn't see anything in the exhibition that exceeded or even that baffled my understanding of the paradigm of contemporary art, although I did see many works that held my attention and pleased my senses.

Upstairs hangs a life-size portrait of Drake, shot in 2009 by Dutch photographer Rineke Dijkstra. The gallerist's frank expression and casual pose, with hands tucked into jeans pockets, are a reminder of the relaxed presence of the art market in this gallery. On the adjacent wall, *Fair Trade* (2015) by Alexandre Da Cunha, is another indication that the protocols of the business of art can, and will be, flexed. The work is part of a series made by Da Cunha in collaboration with his dealer Luisa Strina, in which he charged her with the task of cross-stitching jute canvases that she would then put up for sale in her gallery, implicating her in both the material and commercial aspects of production.

Brenner told me that she wanted the show to evoke 'the time between bringing boxes into an empty house and it becoming a home.' The multiple aesthetic, conceptual and anecdotal components of this exhibition indicate that the unpacking is already well underway.

Main image: 'Neither', 2017, installation view, Mendes Wood DM, Brussels. Courtesy: Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, New York

ELLEN MARA DE WACHTER

Ellen Mara De Wachter is a writer and curator based in London. Her book *Co-Art: Artists on Creative Collaboration* is published by Phaidon.



VOGUE TO DO LIST EXPO

- DOOR SOFIE VAN DE VELDE

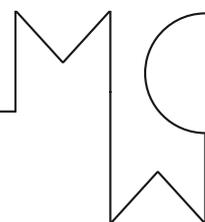
Probeer

Mendes Wood, de Braziliaanse galerie die in 2010 werd opgericht en sinds 2016 ook een vestiging heeft in **New York**, opent nu ook in **Brussel**. Een uitzonderlijke galerie, gericht op Braziliaanse kunst, met een link naar Europa. Naast een exoruimte wordt er ook residentiemogelijkheid voorzien; een tijdelijke plek voor kunstenaars, historici en curatoren.

Partner van deze galerie wordt kunstverzamelaar en kunsthistorica **Caroline Drake**; zij zal de Braziliaanse kunst in de Belgische kunstscene verankeren, o.a. met werk van **Sonia Gomes**, **Paulo Nazareth**, **Solange Pessoa** en **Djordje Ozbolt**. Exotische, vooralsnog onbekende namen misschien, maar ga hen zéker ontdekken tijdens hun eerste tentoonstelling *Neither* - een aanrader.

Mendes Wood, Zavelstraat 13, Brussel, mendeswooddm.com

VOGUE BELGISCHE EDITIE — 9



Previous

"Transmissions from the Etherspace" at La Casa Encendida, Madrid

Next

"Waiting for the Sun" at SpazioA, Pistoia

EXHIBITIONS

"Neither." at Mendes Wood DM, Brussels

Share

When contemplating an exhibition that launches the new venue of a Brazilian born gallery in Brussels, my first thought was: what do I think of when I think of Belgium?

Searching for a concept for the exhibition, I remembered a conversation I had with my grandfather. My grandparents were avid explorers, in the 1980s they left Brazil and embarked on a world tour that covered four continents. Many years later, while talking about the experience, I asked my grandfather which place he liked most. Surprisingly his answer was: Brussels. He told me it was because they have French food in German portions.

While wandering about my grandfather's anecdote and the Belgium he experienced in the 80s, the little I know about the countries' fragmented history brought to mind the concept of neutrality. The term 'neutral' associated to state policy is disconcerting. To what extent is it possible to remain impartial in the name of stability? Lets instead think of the "neutral" as experiencing a state of nuance in the margins of language and thus culture.

In Roland Barthes' seminar on the Neutral (1978) he describes his work methodology as follows: "To prepare for this course, I took the word 'neutral' for a series of walks along a certain number of readings, relying on the procedure of topic (...) I didn't take 'neutral' for a walk in a grid of words, but a grid of readings, that is, a library'. It was not by chance that the library chosen by Barthes was in his countryside home in rural France, which, according to the author, was a time-place where the loss of methodological rigor was offset by the intensity and joy of free reading.

New website online:
Vdrome.org



To suggest a reflection on the idea of Neutral by transposing this concept to an art exhibition is, above all, a free exercise of looking for a different way to make oneself present in the struggles of our time. This is a time when taking sides is urgent – as it has always been – but the routes and methods to do so need revision. Barthes' Neutral is neither a consensus, nor indifference, nor taking sides. On the contrary, it is active. It is a way of 'baffling' the paradigm before it leads us to one side or the other. If there is meaning, there is paradigm, and Neutral is the desire to stay in the moment just before the crystallisation of any concept, idea or recognizable category. The Barthesian Neutral is nuanced; it is always searching for a third term that offers a new kind of awareness – removed from binary oppositions.

Within the exhibition space, Barthes' Neutral takes form by freely replicating his predilection for fragmented writing, described as the result of a stubborn affection rather than a rigorous methodology. Every artwork in the exhibition holds the seed of this floating 'neutral' in itself. Some do not subscribe to any specific category, deliberately staying in the margins of language. Others echo the 'figures' or 'twinklings' quoted by

Barthes as possible embodiments of the Neutral, as androgyny, sleep, displacement, drift, weariness or colourlessness.

What are the necessary elements to create an atmosphere a home or any active propositional space – the exhibition as a welcoming environment? The gallery space is shared by both the hosts and the guests and Barthes' concept is like the first chair placed in an empty house, in relation to it, each element negotiates their position accordingly. "I don't construct the concept of Neutral, I display Neutrals," Barthes states. It is not a definition he – or we – are after, but a gathering of instances.



1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

"Neither." at Mendes Wood DM, Brussels, 2017

This new space that now binds us rests between moving in and feeling at home, in a place within Brazil and Belgium, that is no longer a family home and is not yet a fully-functioning commercial gallery. By taking this conscious pause – respecting the distance and the journey – the show recognizes harmony and conflict while taking the time for this gallery to become – once again – what it already is.

Fernanda Brenner

Curated By Fernanda Brenner.

Participating artists: Adriano Costa, Alexandre da Cunha, Ana Mazzei, Anna Zacharoff, Christina Mackie, Christodoulos Panayiotou, Cibelle Cavalli Basto, Coopey, Daniel Steegmann Mangrané, Djordje Ozbolt, Dominique Gonzalez Foerster & Manuel Raeder, Dries Van Noten, Erika Verzutti, f.marquespentead, Francesco João Scavarda, Franz West, Giulio Delvè, Hamza Halloubi, James Ensor, Jason Dodge, Joëlle Tuerlinckx, Kasper Bosmans, Katinka Bock, Laure Dupont, Lawrence Weiner, Lucas Arruda, Luiz Roque, Mariana Castillo Deball, Matthew Lutz-Kinoy, Mauro Restiffe, Meriç Algün Ringborg, Michael Dean, Ne Beloufa, Nick Mauss, Nicolas Deshayes, Nina Canell, Otobong Nkanga, Paloi Bosquê, Patricia Leite, Paul Sietsema, Rineke Dijkstra, Robert Janitz, Rodrigo Hernández, Rosemarie Trockel, Runo Lagomarsino, Sonia Gomes.

at Mendes Wood DM, Brussels
until 17 June 2017

Neither. Curated by Fernanda Brenner
Press and Texts / Imprensa e Textos

Mousse Magazine, online, May, 2017

<http://moussemagazine.it/neither-mendes-wood-dm-brussels-2017/>



Braziliaanse galerie Mendes Wood DM opent vestiging in Brussel

Nieuwe galerie in oud pand

De Brusselse artistieke cartografie blijft zich hertekenen. Nadat een aantal galeriën de deuren hebben gesloten, anderen zijn verhuisd (C L E A R I N G, Waldburger Wouters, ...) zijn er ook een aantal nieuwkomers. Zoals het Braziliaanse Mendes Wood DM dat met de inhuldigingsexpo 'Neither' een mooi visitekaartje aflevert.

Sam STEVERLYNCK

We staan er soms van te kijken waarom al die grote buitenlandse galeriën een vestiging in Brussel willen openen. Maar toen we de nieuwe locatie bezochten van de Braziliaanse galerie Mendes Wood DM, pal op de Zavel, begrepen we al beter waarom. Het gebouw, met tuintje waar een werk van Lawrence Weiner in drie talen op de muur is aangebracht, is niet alleen groot, het heeft ook charme. Een monumentale trap, krakende houten vloeren en ingebouwde kasten geven het een ouderwets cachet. Probeer maar eens zo'n plek te vinden in New York – waar de galerie overigens een kleine 'project space' heeft.

Felipe Dmab die de galerie eind 2010 in Sao Paulo opende met partners Matthew Wood en Pedro Mendes licht zijn beslissing toe. "We hebben altijd al Braziliaanse kunstenaars in het buitenland willen tonen en buitenlandse kunstenaars naar Brazilië willen halen. We proberen zo een dialoog op gang te trekken.

Toen we merkten dat onze kunstenaars steeds meer tentoonstelden in Europese instituten, leek het ons logisch om een plek in Europa te openen. We hebben nagedacht over verschillende steden maar uiteindelijk viel onze keuze op Brussel. Het is een multiculturele stad die, ook door de verschillende talen, internationaler aanvoelt dan andere steden. Je voelt de combinatie van verschillende invloeden. De ligging is ook zeer handig. Je hebt zoveel boeiende steden in de buurt die gemakkelijk met de trein bereikbaar zijn. De levenskwaliteit is zeer hoog en het is aangenaam om in een kleinere stad te werken, want Sao Paulo is een gigantisch groot monster."

Met 'Neither', een tentoonstelling die werd samengesteld door Fernanda Brenner rond een term van Roland Barthes en die meer overtuigt dan de wat wollige tekst doet vermoeden, wordt de nieuwe locatie feestelijk ingezet. De letters EUROPA zijn in het groot aangebracht op een gouden achtergrond – een werk van Runo Lagomarsino die ook de knappe solostand van de galerie op Independent voor zijn rekening nam. Maar wat na die verwelkoming volgt is minder duidelijk.

Het thema van de expo blijft nogal flou – met of zonder de legitimatie door Roland Barthes – ook al spelen een aantal werken mooi in op de bijzondere ruimte en haar huiselijk karakter. Zoals de oude objecten die van de rommelmarkt lijken te komen en op een schoorsteen staan. Laurent Dupont heeft ze in het bruin overschilderd waardoor het stukken chocolade zouden kunnen zijn van een nabijgelegen shop uit de Zavel. Of de antropomorfe stoelen van Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster & Manuel Raeder en dito salontafel – met daarin een been en whiskyfles verwerkt – van Rosemarie Trockel. Het vogelschilderij van Djordje Ozbot past hier mooi boven de ouderwetse schouw, net zoals de legendeschilderijen van Kasper Bosmans en zijn fascinatie voor oude ambachten en technieken.



p. 20 (1)

Heel wat van de andere werken hebben echter een vrij hoog hipster-gehalte. Maar het geeft de expo tegelijk een brutale energie die past als openingsstatement. We zijn alvast benieuwd naar wat de galerie in de toekomst te bieden heeft.

'Neither', tot 17 juni in Mendes Wood DM, Zavelstraat 13, Brussel. Open di-za van 11-19 u.
www.mendeswooddm.com





"Neither"

Mendes Wood DM
18.4. – 17.6.2017

The São Paulo-based gallery Mendes Wood DM recently moved into one of Brussels's finest gallery spaces: an elegant turn-of-the-century townhouse designed by modernist architect Adrien Blomme. Curated by Fernanda Brenner, director of the independent art centre Pivô in São Paulo, this inaugural exhibition takes the building and its architectural specificity as its subject, while its concept is based on Roland Barthes' concept of the Neutral.

The show features work by forty-seven artists, spread across the gallery's two floors. In the downstairs hallway are shoes by Jason Dodge, apparently made for someone with three legs. On the adjacent wall, a squiggly coat rack by Franz West creates a sense of domesticity from the start. In the adjoining room, Katinka Bock's composition of slabs of limestone evokes the architectonics of a landscape or garden, while Nina Canell's *Brief Syllable* (2017), a piece of cable installed in a niche, points inward, exploring the usually invisible material base of communication, speech and human relations. On the second floor, a mannequin wearing

Installation views



an outfit by designer Dries Van Noten looks toward an embroidery made by Alexandre da Cunha in an unusual collaboration with his gallerist Luisa Strina. Many other artists in the exhibition – among them Adriano Costa, Joëlle Tuerlinckx, Kasper Bosmans, Neil Beloufa and Otobong Nkanga – also dissolve the separation between contemporary and applied art; together their works explore what it means to create a home or a space of belonging, albeit from very different angles.

The show neither fits the definition of a classic gallery presentation following market trends, nor does it simply serve

to decorate of the house. Rather, the works on view seem to adjust slowly to the gallery's architecture, location and identity, exploring its corners and functions, showing the way for many future possibilities for the Brazilian gallery in its new location. Although the invocation of Barthes comes over as a little pompous in the context, and it's never quite clear how it applies, the works are brought together in a seductive and elegantly installed exhibition – the kind you rarely get to see in commercial galleries in Brussels.

Laura Herman

Photos: Kristien Daem. Courtesy: Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brussels, New York

