

An abstract artwork featuring a dark, textured background. Scattered across the surface are several irregular, brown, textured shapes that resemble fingerprints or wood grain. Interspersed among these are small, white, textured dots. In the center, there is a white geometric logo consisting of a stylized 'M' and 'K' combined. Below the logo, the names 'Mendes Wood DM' and 'Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato' are printed in a white serif font.

Mendes Wood DM

Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Popular, Modern, Brazilian

Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato is estimated to have produced between three and five thousand paintings depicting varied themes and drawing on diverse iconographies, all of which closely reflect his personal life and his strong bond with the city of Belo Horizonte, its landscapes, its environs, and its urbanization. His known works span from the 1940s, when he returns to Brazil after having spent almost thirty years living in Europe, to 1995, the year of his death. Lorenzato's unique painting style and technique hark back to his working-class origins, a condition that led him to combine his artistic ambitions with the need to earn a living for himself and his family with his work in construction. He would only dedicate himself exclusively to painting when he was well into his fifties, after retiring due to a work accident.

His work as a painter and decorator inspired him to develop a unique and original pictorial technique, employing and adapting tools that he had previously used for wall painting and decoration. Using a comb, he would repeatedly scrape the paint over a surface, creating a fusion of color and texture, lending the whole an impression of movement. He manipulated paint using easily available mineral pigments, and frequently applied them over a layer of white lead paint, heightening the vibrancy of the colors. The production of his own pictorial support medium, which played an important part in his economy of means, led him to reuse bits of sheet wood and packaging, which he would occasionally cover in canvas or paper, either by gluing or sewing them on manually. The artist preferred small or medium-format paintings — the longest axis measured one meter at most — denoting a certain sense of domesticity. His paintings have a rough aspect: they are opaque, tactile, sensorial.

Lorenzato's work, for years confined to a small circle of admirers — especially artists and art dealers from his hometown — has found a new audience over the past twenty years as a result of its continued and increased exhibition, especially in commercial art galleries, culminating in a series of international

shows in 2019. This renewed appreciation for his work eventually established him as an important figure among Brazilian modernist artists, thus contributing to the diversification of the Brazilian art canon. Like many artists who were prejudicially labeled as primitive or naïve, Lorenzato drew extensively on popular sources, reworking them within a nonhierarchical perspective and using erudite references. His work should therefore be seen as an example of Brazilian late modernism. However, despite the renewed commercial interest, the art system has repeatedly failed to provide equally favorable conditions for the examination and exploration of his work through institutional exhibitions and academic research.

Born in 1900, in the agricultural colony of Barreiro, in the outskirts of Belo Horizonte — Brazil's first-ever planned city, which had just been inaugurated — to a family of recently arrived Italian immigrants, Lorenzato spent the first twenty years of his life in Brazil. In 1920, fleeing the Spanish flu pandemic, he left the country for Italy, where he eventually received some formal training in painting. Together with a friend, he took an art study tour of several European countries, which he would often depict in paintings or mention in interviews, and which contributed to his almost mythical character as an outsider artist, a nonconformist, and a liberal. While in Paris, he positioned himself quite literally on the fringes of Modernism, observing Picasso and Matisse from afar in the trendy cafés and working as a laborer in the Exposition Coloniale Internationale, in 1931. He was married in Italy and, with the end of World War II, Lorenzato moved back to his home country with his wife and son, finally settling in the city of Belo Horizonte.

By that time, Brazil had undergone drastic changes. Lorenzato's return to his home country coincides with the end of the Vargas Era, which was marked by massive industrialization and the emergence of a working class, which was now under the protection of institutional policies overseen by the state,

based on the consolidation of labor laws and the newfound leverage of trade unions. During this time, modernism establishes itself as the official policy for the arts, reaching well beyond the regional and classist limits of the Semana de Arte Moderna [Modern Art Week]. The modern art salons run by the Ministry of Education promote the works of working-class artists and those from other regions of Brazil; groups such as the Santa Helena, in São Paulo, and the Núcleo Bernardelli, in Rio de Janeiro, for instance, also assimilate and support immigrant and working-class artists. Artists with no academic training who work on the fringes of the official art world, such as Djanira da Motta e Silva, José Bernardo Cardoso Jr., José Antônio da Silva, and Heitor dos Prazeres, start gaining visibility with museum shows and press coverage.

Isolated in Belo Horizonte, Lorenzato, at first, paints only during weekends. After his work accident, however, he starts painting full time. The capital of Minas Gerais had also seen its share of modernization under mayor Juscelino Kubitschek, with the construction of the Pampulha architectural complex and the creation of the Escola do Parque, spear-headed by Rio de Janeiro artist Alberto da Veiga Guignard. Lorenzato follows the development from a distance, but he was certainly not alienated from it. He meets Guignard briefly in 1952, but it is once more a rather distant interaction — he recognizes him at an exhibition. Thanks to a group of patrons, journalists, and culture impresarios, Lorenzato is given his first show in 1965, at the Minas Tênis Clube, a high-society club in Belo Horizonte. This marked the beginning of a career which would develop and mature over the course of the last thirty years of his life. His depiction of favelas, for which he achieved his early fame, can probably be traced back to personal experience, namely having witnessed the creation of a favela near his home, in an area used for the reforestation of eucalyptus trees. His choice of subject matter, however, coincides with an iconographic repertoire that had already been abundantly explored by Brazilian Modernism, and which was then seeing a high degree of commercial acceptance; despite one not being able to state that it had been calculated, this secured him an important platform

for the development of his work. Thus, his trajectory goes hand in hand with some crucial trends of the art market.

The favela paintings not only provide him with a space for the exploration of form, in which he experiments with semi-geometric compositions but also with a space for the exploration of iconography, whereby he develops a deeper understanding of the landscape and the relationships between nature and culture.

In 1948, on the reverse of one of his paintings, he writes a prayer of sorts which, in a sense, will accompany him for the rest of his life:

*Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato
self-taught painter and
sharpshooter*

*submits to no school
nor to this or that trend
belongs to no church
paints whatever comes to mind
Amen*

The painting in which the above inscription is found depicts two butterflies fluttering against a tangle of tree trunks, a motif which is pregnant with symbolism related to transformation and ephemerality, and which shines a light on a different side of his relationship with nature painting. Working from his garden, Lorenzato found not only inspiration and motifs that he would incorporate in his paintings but also a way to experiment with them in space, letting them dry hanging from tree branches as if they were fruit. Upon analyzing this trend in his oeuvre, I wrote:

*In these paintings, we do not see the idealization of nature in its wildest state,
but rather its persistence within the urban space. Lorenzato, the painter of*

suburbs and front yards, was observing the butterfly from that very standpoint — from the place around which his whole universe revolved. In his front yard, in the line where Belo Horizonte’s urbanity and the rurality of Minas Gerais countryside meet, encountering a butterfly wasn’t only an expression of the search of a painter for an original narrative about nature, but a domestic encounter in which the scene actually takes place: nature shares a border with the neighbor’s fence....

This book, part literary essay, part visual essay, introduces Lorenzato’s oeuvre to a new public, in the span of five thematic chapters. These categories, which often overlap, were created with the intention of sketching out the artist’s extensive and complex aesthetic universe and helping us decipher his formal and iconographic inclinations. “*Construction Material*” deals with the constructivist quality of his work and the artist’s depiction and assimilation of vernacular architecture. “*East-West*” examines the artist’s wanderings and his landscape paintings. “*Wrapping Paper*” delves into the decorative and commercial sources of his still lifes. “*The Meanderings of a Snail*” addresses the relationship between the painter’s work and his front garden and the essential role of the observation of nature in his work. Lastly, “*Family Album*” looks at Lorenzato’s portraits and his close circle of friends and relatives.

The aspects of Lorenzato’s biography which are contained in this book are in no way meant as an exhaustive chronicling of his life. Rather, they are meant to help us understand his painting and as an introduction to the reception of his work, drawing on accounts of exhibitions and interviews with people who were close to the artist or who played a decisive role in the dissemination of his work. In addition to the more than 230 works reproduced herein, we have also included one or two personal documents which are of interest. By retracing Lorenzato’s life and works — which are, indeed, inextricable — we can better understand the contradictions which make him a unique figure in the Brazilian art of the 20th century.

— Rodrigo Moura



Untitled (self-portrait), 1983, oil on hardboard, 20 x 16.5 cm

Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato (b. 1900, Belo Horizonte; d. 1995, Belo Horizonte).

Some of the artist's solo exhibitions include: *Lorenzato En Conversation*, **Mendes Wood DM**, Paris (2024); **David Zwirner**, New York (2024); *Landscapes*, **Gomide&Co**, São Paulo (2021); **Mendes Wood DM**, Brussels (2020); **S|2 Gallery**, London (2019); **David Zwirner**, London (2019); **Mendes Wood DM**, New York (2019).

Additionally, his work was included in group exhibitions such as: *Reverie*, **Mendes Wood DM**, New York (2024); *A particular kind of heaven*, **KARMA**, Thomaston (2024); *Fukei-Ga*, **Taka Ishii Gallery**, Tokyo (2024); *The moth and the thunderclap*, Modern Art, London (2023); *Popular painters and other visionaries*, **El Museo del Barrio**, New York (2022); *Histórias Brasileiras*, **MASP**, São Paulo (2022); *AAA – Art and architecture anthology*, **Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel**, São Paulo (2020); *Veredas*, **Mendes Wood DM**, São Paulo (2019); *Minimum, multiple, common*, **Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo**, São Paulo (2018); *And you cannot even imagine that I am Epaminondas*, **Bergamin & Gomide**, São Paulo (2014); **Museu de Arte da Pampulha**, Belo Horizonte (1995); **Centro D'Arte La Bitta**, Roma (1989); **Petit Palais**, Paris (1973); **3rd Triennale of Bratislava** (1972).

His work has also been included in the **60th Venice Biennale** (2024).

Lorenzato's work features in collections such as **Fundação Clóvis Salgado**, Belo Horizonte; **He Art Museum**, Guandong; **MASP**, São Paulo; **Museu de Arte da Pampulha**, Belo Horizonte; **Nouveau Musée National de Monaco**, Monaco; **Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo**, São Paulo.



Sranieri Ovunque - Foreigners Everywhere, La Biennale di Venezia – 60th International Art Exhibition, Venice, 2024



Sranieri Ovunque - Foreigners Everywhere, La Biennale di Venezia – 60th International Art Exhibition, Venice, 2024



Lorenzato en conversation, Mendes Wood DM, Paris, 2024



Lorenzato en conversation, Mendes Wood DM, Paris, 2024



Lorenzato en conversation, Mendes Wood DM, Paris, 2024



Lorenzato en conversation, Mendes Wood DM, Paris, 2024



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, Mendes Wood DM, Brussels, 2024



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, Mendes Wood DM, Brussels, 2024



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, Mendes Wood DM, Brussels, 2024



Fukei-Ga (Landscape Painting), Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo, 2024



Fukei-Ga (Landscape Painting), Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo, 2024



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, David Zwirner, New York, 2024



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, David Zwirner, New York, 2024



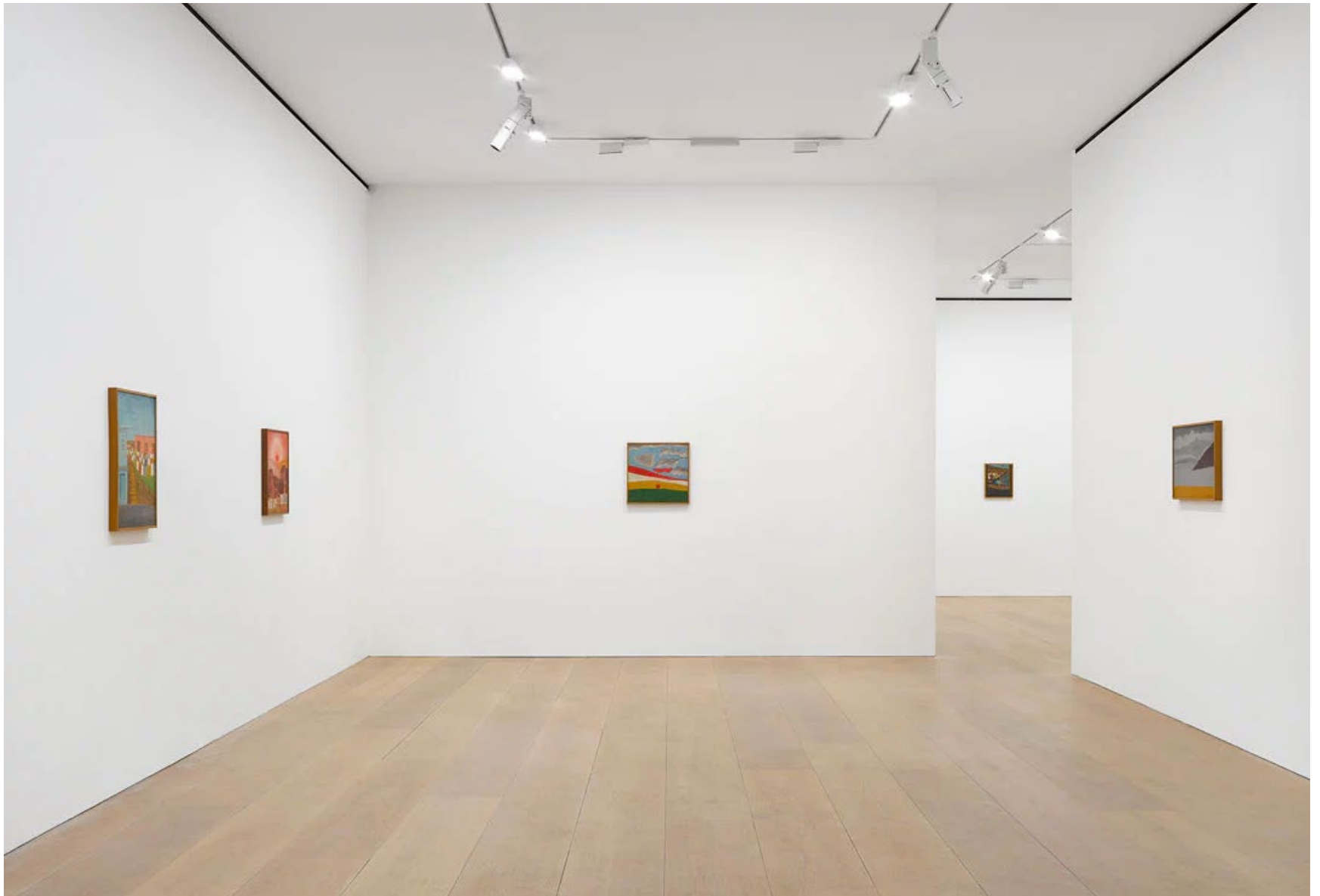
Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, David Zwirner, New York, 2024



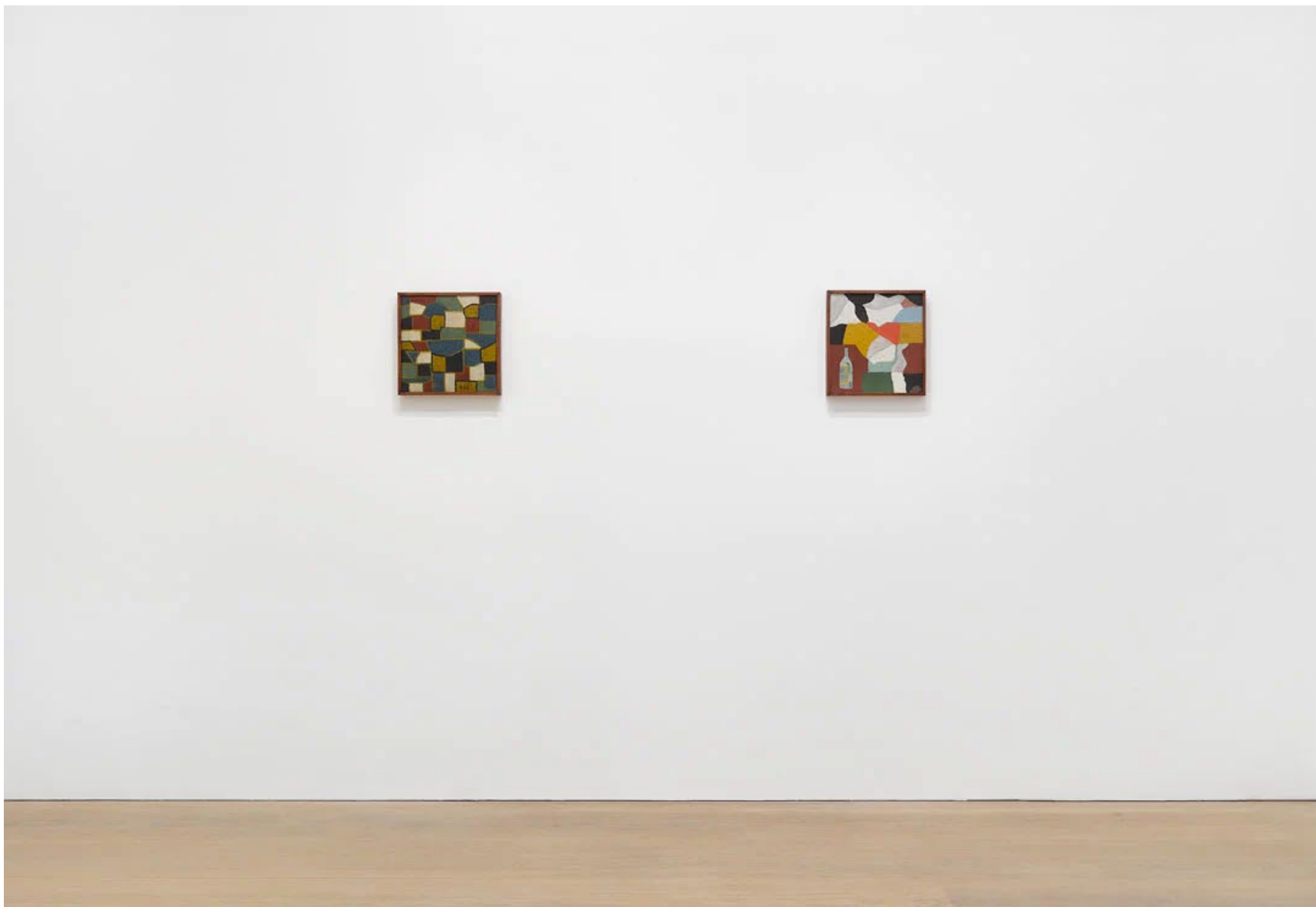
Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, Mendes Wood DM, Brussels, 2020



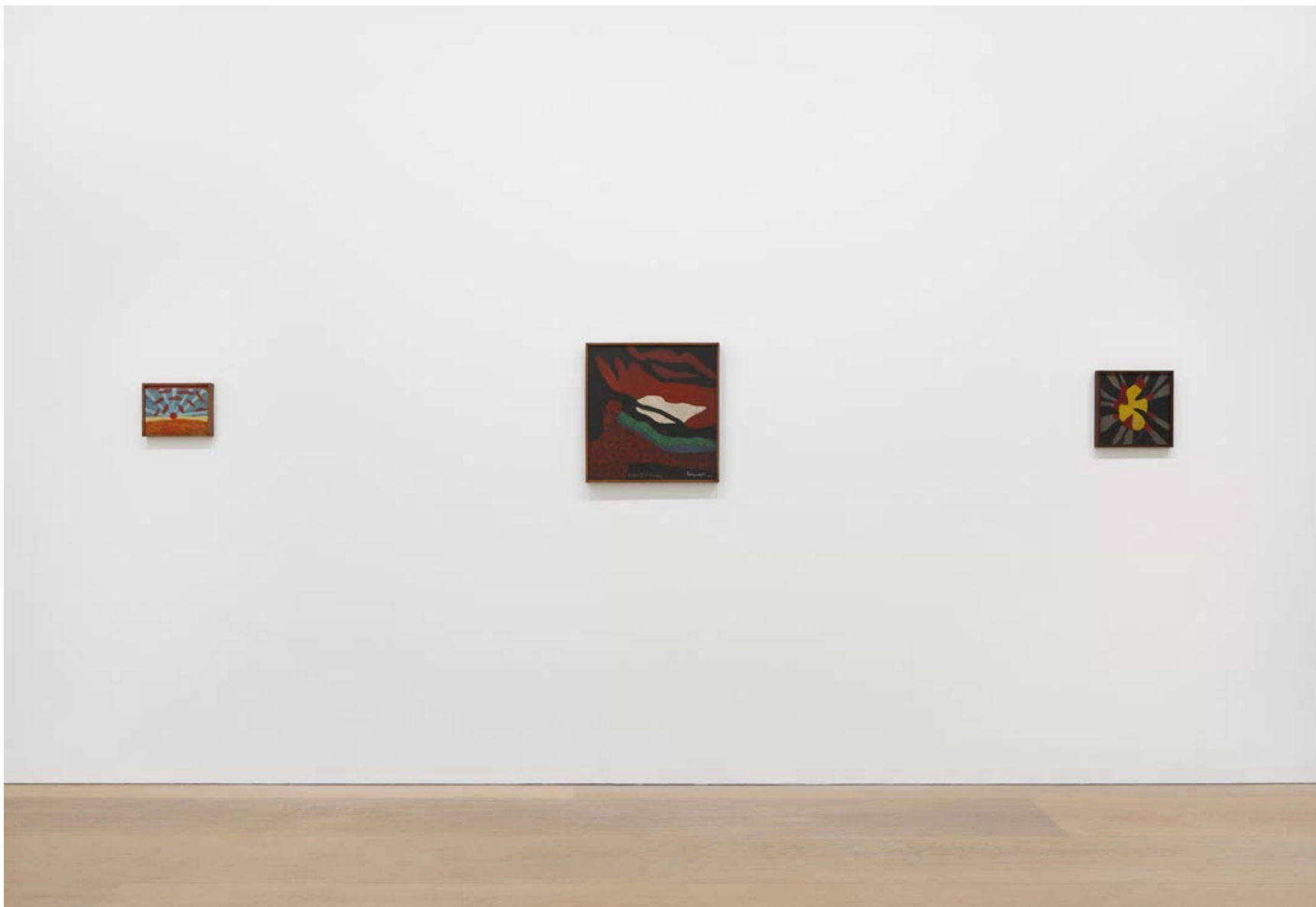
Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, Mendes Wood DM, Brussels, 2020



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, David Zwirner, London, 2019



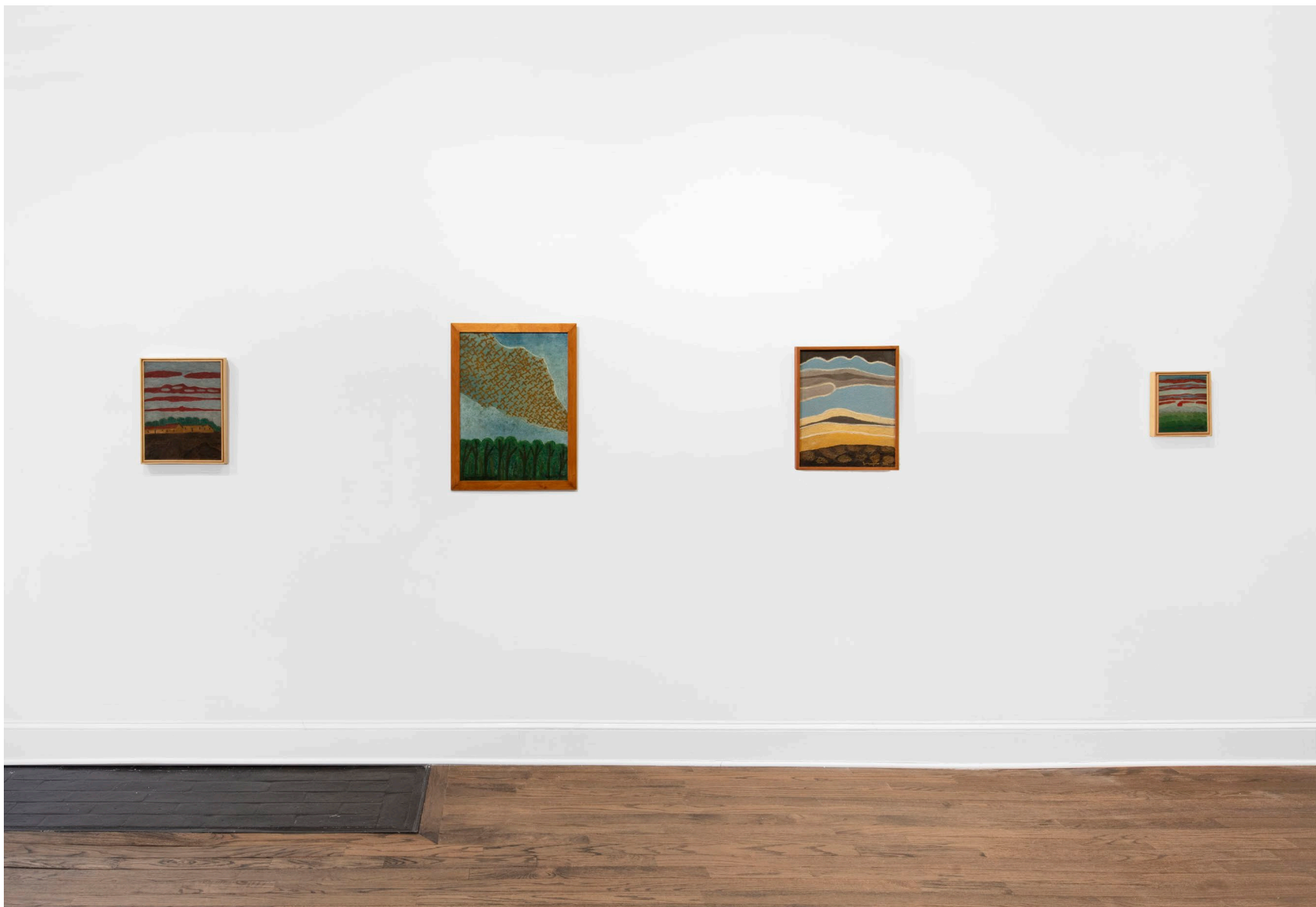
Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, David Zwirner, London, 2019



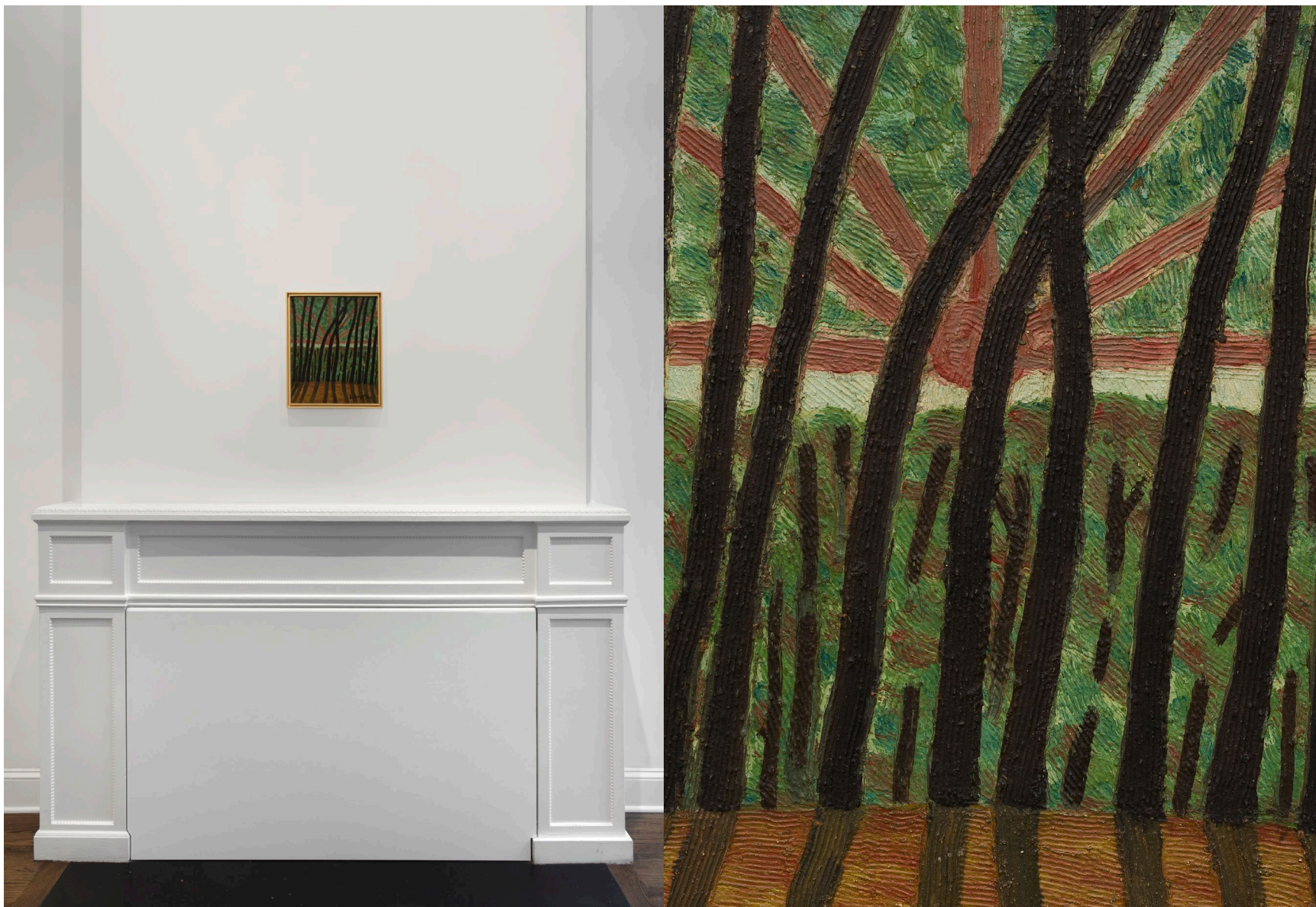
Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, David Zwirner, London, 2019



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, Mendes Wood DM, New York, 2019



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, Mendes Wood DM, New York, 2019



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, Mendes Wood DM, New York, 2019

Selected works



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato *Untitled*, 1985, oil on hardboard, 15 × 30.5 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1972

oil on hardboard

36.6 × 26.6 cm



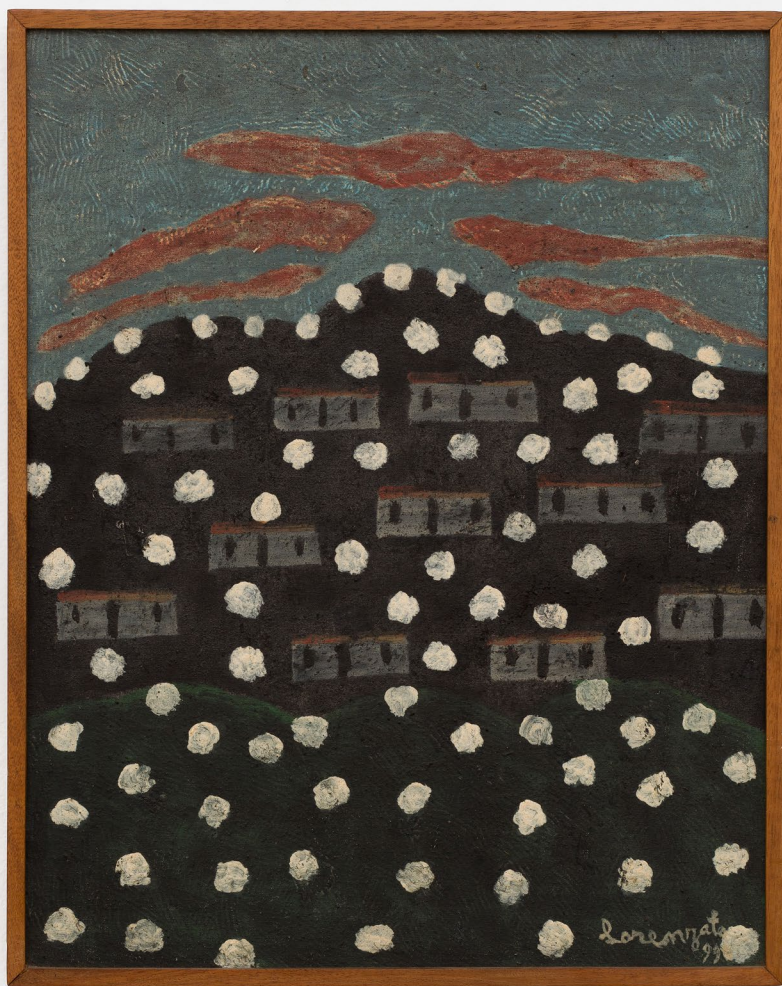
Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1983

oil on hardboard

34 × 30 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1990

oil on canvas

50 × 38.5 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1989

oil on canvas

100 × 80 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1984

oil on canvas

50 × 41 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1975

oil on hardboard

38 x 34 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1982

oil on hardboard

32 × 24 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1975

oil on hardboard

38 x 34 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1986

oil on hardboard

50 × 40 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1977

oil on hardboard

58.5 x 44.5 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1975

oil on hardboard

38 x 34 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1984

oil on hardboard

48.5 × 39.5 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1990s

oil on hardboard

50 x 40 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1991

oil on canvas

61.3 × 53.3 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1976

oil on hardboard

35 × 30 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

n.d.

oil on hardboard

30 × 24 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

n.d.

oil on hardboard

34 × 31 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1980

oil on hardboard

35.5 x 30.5 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1987

oil on hardboard

48 x 38 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1987

oil on hardboard

50 × 40 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1983

oil on hardboard

34 × 30 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1960s

oil on hardboard

31 × 28 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1984

oil on hardboard

33 × 30 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

n.d.

oil on hardboard

38.5 × 28.5 cm



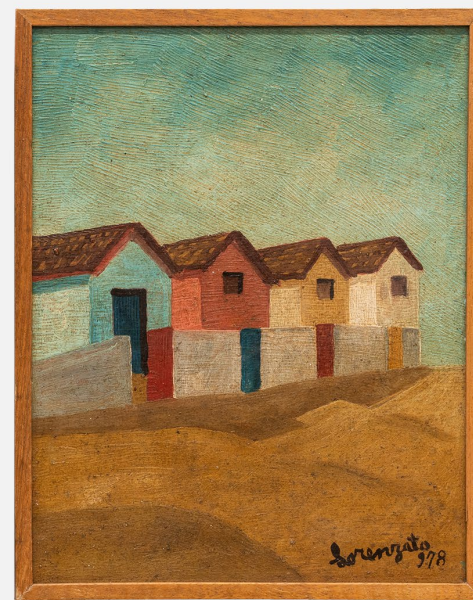
Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1976

oil on hardboard

40 × 34 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1978

oil on hardboard

30 × 22 cm (each)



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

O Pensador

1972

oil on hardboard

56 × 48 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1988

oil on canvas

40 × 30 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1981

oil on hardboard

60 × 45 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Musgo

1985

oil on canvas

26 × 20 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Musgo

1985

oil on canvas

26 × 20 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Noite chuvosa

1979

oil on hardboard

40 × 30 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Noite chuvosa

1979

oil on hardboard

40 × 30 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

n.d.

oil on cement plate

32 × 25 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1950s

oil on hardboard

25 × 20 cm



Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato

Untitled

1950s

oil on hardboard

25 × 20 cm



Unfired self-portrait, 1983, oil on hardboard, 20 x 16.5 cm



Education

1925 Reale Accademia delle Arti, Vicenza, Italy

Selected Shows

2024

Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, David Zwirner, Hong Kong

Lorenzato En Conversation, Mendes Wood DM, Paris, France

A Particular Kind of Heaven, KARMA, Thomaston, USA

Reverie, Mendes Wood DM, New York, USA

Stranieri Ovunque, 60th Biennale di Venezia, Venice, Italy

Fukei-Ga, Taka Ishii Gallery, Tokyo

Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, David Zwirner, New York, USA

Lorenzato & Rubem Valentim, Mendes Wood DM, Brussels, Belgium

2023

The moth and the thunderclap, Modern Art, London, UK

Never just this mind, never just this world, Carpintaria, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Linhas Tortas, Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brazil

Paper Trails, Mendes Wood DM, Retranchement

2022

Popular Painters and Other Visionaries, El Museo del Barrio, New York, USA

Histórias Brasileiras, MASP (Museu de Arte de São Paulo), São Paulo, Brazil

2021

Landscapes, Gomide&Co, São Paulo, Brazil

2020

Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, Mendes Wood DM, Brussels, Belgium

Workspaces: redesigned through time, Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brazil

EnormousBalls, Mendes Wood DM, Brussels, Belgium

AAA – Art and architecture anthology, Fortes D’Aloia & Gabriel, São Paulo, Brazil

2019

Veredas, Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, Brazil

Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, S|2 Gallery, London, UK

Amadeo Luciano Lorenzato, David Zwirner Gallery, London, UK

Lorenzato, Mendes Wood DM, New York, USA

2018

Natura Naturans, Mendes Wood DM, New York, USA

Minimum, multiple, common, Estação Pinacoteca, São Paulo, Brazil

2017

Lorenzato: Simple Singular, Minas Tênis Clube, Belo Horizonte, Brazil

2014

Lorenzato, the grandeur of modesty, Galeria Estação, São Paulo, Brazil

And you cannot even imagine that I am Epaminondas, Bergamin & Gomide, São Paulo, Brazil

2000

100 anos de Lorenzato, Casa dos Contos, Belo Horizonte, Brazil

1995

Lorenzato e as cores do cotidiano, Museu de Arte da Pampulha, Belo Horizonte, Brazil

1989

Centro D’Arte la Bitta, Roma, Italia

1984

Casa dos Contos, Belo Horizonte, Brazil

1980

Gente da Terra, Paço das Artes, São Paulo, Brazil

1976

Salão do Pequeno Quadro, Galeria da Escola Guignard, Belo Horizonte, Brazil

1972

Petit Palais, Paris, France

Third Bratislava Triennial, Bratislava, Czechoslovakia

1967

Minas Tênis Clube, Belo Horizonte, Brazil

1964

Minas Tênis Clube, Belo Horizonte, Brazil

Public Collections

He Art Museum (Guangdong, China)

Museu de Arte da Pampulha

Museu de Arte de São Paulo (MASP)

Nouveau Musée National de Monaco

Pinacoteca de São Paulo

Mendes
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