



ISMAEL
NERY'S
CIRCLE

1901

Murilo Mendes is born on 13 May in Juiz de Fora. Some of his earliest memories foreshadow his later career as a poet and art critic, as he recalls in a letter to Maria Helena Vieira da Silva (13/11/1943):

I first became an art lover at around five years of age, when I began to explore my bedroom wallpaper in Juiz de Fora. If I remember correctly, it contained images of the Orient... There were tigers and panthers, houses with curved roof tiles, minarets and elaborate bridges, princesses with their faces veiled, and so forth. It was very colorful - and yet there were no colors. There were countless lines contorting themselves into labyrinths. It took months, years, for me to succeed in tracing the course of these lines with my eyes...

1910

The passage of Halley's comet makes a profound impression on the young boy. He claims not to have slept a wink throughout the three nights on which the comet appeared in the night sky and that, the first time he saw it, he was touched by poetry.

1916-19

Enrolls in Pharmacy School in Juiz de Fora but withdraws from the course to take up a place at the Salesian College in Niterói, from which he also drops out. While still at this college, he plays truant to watch the ballet dancer Vaslav Nijinsky perform at Rio de Janeiro's Municipal Theater. He returns to live in Juiz de Fora and unsuccessfully tries his hand at various jobs.



YOUNG MURILO WITH A PALE HAT AND BLACK SUIT, LEANING SIDEWAYS, 1927 B&W PHOTOGRAPHY – REPRODUCTION PHOTO: UNKNOWN AUTHOR COLLECTION MUSEU DE ARTE MURILO MENDES – UFJF

1920

Moves to Rio de Janeiro and gets a job as an archivist at the National Heritage Board. He contributes regularly to the “Crônica mundana” [Worldly Chronicle] column in the Juiz de Fora local paper *A Tarde*.

1921

In late 1921, Mendes first makes the acquaintance of Ismael

Nery, who was returning from a trip to Paris. Nery is hired by the Department of Architecture and Surveying at the Ministry of Finance's National Heritage Board. Years later, in *Memoirs of Ismael* Nery Mendes will recall the occasion:

Ismael had recently returned from Europe, where he had spent one year furthering his studies in painting. I remember him

talking passionately about the various exhibitions and museums, but he did not mention any specific painter of the time. He was expecting there to be some major change in the way artists are conceived, or perhaps a return to the classical concept, because he saw the artist as a being in perfect harmony, blessed with wisdom and foresight, and not merely a cultivator of temperament; he saw painting as being in a state of crisis, with the emergence of cinema.

In the 1920s, up to Nery's death in 1934, Mendes attends meetings at his friend's house in Botafogo. Antônio Bento, Mario Pedrosa (after 1924), Alberto da Veiga Guignard (after 1929), Antônio Costa Ribeiro, and Jorge Burlamaqui, among others, are also present.



MURILO MENDES AND ISMAEL NERY, 1920S
B&W PHOTOGRAPHY –
REPRODUCTION
PHOTO: UNKNOWN AUTHOR
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MURILO MENDES – UFJF

1922

Ismael Nery paints his first portrait of Murilo Mendes.

1924

In his room in the guesthouse where he is living, Murilo Mendes mounts an “exhibition” of the work of Ismael Nery. Antônio Bento and José Lins do Rego recall that Mario Pedrosa took them to see these works. Pedrosa, for his part, will recollect, in 1966, that it was Antônio Bento who took him to Nery's house.

1927

Ismael Nery travels once again to Europe, where he meets André Breton and befriends Marc Chagall.

Mendes is introduced to surrealism by Ismael Nery. He is especially drawn to Max Ernst and Giorgio De Chirico. He will later comment as follows on his relationship to surrealism in a text on De Chirico in *Retratos-relâmpago* [Snap Portraits]:

In the very early years of surrealism, I began avidly absorbing

information on this new avant-garde style, which, although I did not adopt it systematically, fascinated me and compelled me to create an uncanny atmosphere, and to renounce facile predictable schemas. This was a matter of cultural duty. Brazil, according to Jorge de Sena, was surreal by birth, and my “conversion”, albeit partial, was therefore not that difficult.



MURILO MENDES
BESIDE A PAINTING
BY ISMAEL NERY, 1939
B&W PHOTOGRAPHY –
REPRODUCTION
PHOTO: JORGE DE CASTRO
COLLECTION MUSEU DE ARTE
MURILO MENDES – UFJF

1928

Publishes a poem in the São Paulo magazine *Revista de Antropofagia*.

After visiting Murilo Mendes in Rio de Janeiro and seeing Ismael Nery's work for the first time, Mário de Andrade lavishes praise on Nery in an article for *Diário Nacional* (10/04).

First exhibition of the work of Cícero Dias in Rio de Janeiro, at the head office of the Polyclinic, on the occasion of the 1st South American Congress

of Psychoanalysis, through the intercession of Graça Aranha.

1929

Ismael Nery exhibits for the first time at the Belém Palace Theatre in the Brazilian State of Pará and, shortly thereafter, at the Palace Hotel in Rio de Janeiro, in a show put together by Murilo Mendes and Antônio Bento.

This year also sees Tarsila do Amaral's first solo show in Rio de Janeiro, then the capital of Brazil, and

Murilo Mendes will recollect the occasion years later in an essay on the artist in *Snap Portraits*:

Oswald de Andrade sported a broad red sash under his tuxedo, bearing the slogan "The world marches left". This is what the early anarchic poems communicate to us, the ones about Pagu of the Oriental eyes. Fair-armed Elsie Houston sings the rhythms and overabundance of Brazil; Benjamin Péret films the Rio carnival, studies our folklore, visits an indigenous community. Ismael Nery comments on life in general and in particular, re-inventing a kind of high-level philosophy without books... Everyone

brings a good stock of dreams, projects, irreverence. Yes, I saw, touched and heard these people and others who surrounded Tarsila in those magical times.

Le Corbusier lectures at the Brazilian Institute of Architects (IAB) (5 and 7 December). Mendes meets the Swiss architect on this occasion and/or during Le Corbusier's second visit in 1936 to design a project for the Ministry of Education and Culture. After the death Le Corbusier, whose funeral Mendes attended, he will write in *Snap Portraits*:

I met Le Corbusier in Rio, in the early 1930s. We met at the homes of mutual acquaintances. He surrounded himself with aspiring young architects led by Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer... I was

already a great admirer of the founding father, along with Ozenfant, of the Purist movement. I was familiar with the magnificent periodical they both edited, *Esprit Nouveau*... One day, when I was walking with him along the seafront, he traced out in the air, with methodical

deliberation, a sketch of his highly original plan for a single sweeping horizontal block of buildings, connecting Praia Vermelha to Ponta do Calabouço.

Max Ernst publishes *La femme 100 têtes* [The Hundred Headless Woman], a collage-novel which

will become the main source of inspiration for the photomontages produced by Murilo Mendes and Jorge de Lima the following year. In testimony to the high regard in which he held Max Ernst, Mendes will write in 1965-1966 in *Snap Portraits*:

Currently having no permanent place of residence, Marx Ernst receives me in a Paris hotel. He probes me with his blue eyes... I confess how much I am indebted to him, the coup de foudre that his work represented for the development of my own poetry and my discovery of his remarkable book of photomontages *La femme 100 têtes*, comparable, in the world of literature, only to the text of

Les Illuminations. In fact, I believe that Max Ernst is a descendent of Rimbaud, in so far as he creates a magical atmosphere, juxtaposing disparate elements, the violent cut of the poem or the frame, the passion for enigmas (which had primarily been aroused by the oeuvre of De Chirico). Ernst is a visionary.

1930

Publishes his first book *Poemas* [Poems] (1924-1929) and receives, along with Cecília Meireles and Cícero Dias, the Graça Aranha Foundation Prize. In "Poetry in 1930" (1931), Mário de Andrade pays tribute to the book, which he describes as being the most important literary event of the year, and compares Mendes's poetry to the paintings of Cícero Dias:



MURILO MENDES AND
CÍCERO DIAS, 1930
B&W PHOTOGRAPHY –
REPRODUCTION
PHOTO: UNKNOWN AUTHOR
COLLECTION MUSEU DE ARTE
MURILO MENDES – UFJF

The Rio style, the blurring of dreams and reality, the independent nationality and accomplished lyrical complexity bear comparison only with Murilo Mendes, and, in drawing, with the Pernambuco artist Cícero Dias....In the work of Murilo Mendes, as in that of Cícero Dias, we no longer detect any trace of the possibility of a masterpiece, the work complete unto itself and unforgettable as an object.

Meets Jorge de Lima and Alberto da Veiga Guignard, who paints his portrait.

Publishes the article "Notes on an exhibition", in which he criticizes the exhibition brought from France of the work of artists of the "Paris School," put together by Vicente do Rego Monteiro and Géo-Charles (*O Jornal*, RJ, 25/05).

1931

Candido Portinari paints the poet's portrait.

In May, Mário Peixoto's film *Limite* (1930) is shown for the first time at the Capitólio Cinema in Rio's Cinelândia district.

Publishes "Painting at an Impasse" in *Boletim de Ariel* (n.1, Oct.) drawing parallels between painting, architecture, and film:

Painting is in crisis. The photographic camera and cinema, as everybody knows, have greatly transformed the conditions of its existence... Wall-decoration painting is tending to disappear, because the spirit of modern architecture rejects decoration - or rather, decoration is created by the distribution of volume and light... Cinema will not replace painting, but, painting, in movement, will succeed it.

1932

Takes a job at his cousin Aníbal Machado's notary office, in Copacabana.

1933

Publishes a collection of poems *História do Brasil* [History of Brazil], with cover illustration by Di Cavalcanti.

1934

Ismael Nery dies of tuberculosis at the age of 33. His friendship with Nery and his friend's death cause Murilo Mendes to make changes in his life. He turns his back on the Bohemian lifestyle and moves closer to Catholicism, in the particular version adopted by Nery, which the poet will call Essentialism. Mendes publishes an article titled "Ismael Nery, essentialist poet" in *Boletim de Ariel* (Year 3, 10/07).

1935

Organizes a retrospective exhibition of Ismael Nery's work at the São Nicolas Salon, in Rio de Janeiro. He and Jorge de Lima publish *Tempo e Eternidade* [Time and Eternity]. The poems written by Mendes included in this collection are dedicated to Ismael Nery.

Mendes will go on to publish poems by Ismael Nery in *A Ordem* magazine, along with an essay titled "Abstraction of Time and Space," in which Jorge Burlamaqui explains essentialist philosophy.

Mario Pedrosa publishes an article entitled "Portinari and painting" in the March edition of *Espelho* magazine, in which he lavishes praise on Portinari but is critical of Ismael Nery. Mendes replies in "Painting and politics" published in *Revista Cruzeiro* (16/11).



1936

Quits his job at the notary office, having been appointed Inspector of Secondary Education in the city of Rio de Janeiro.

1937

Makes his first contributions to the *Dom Casmurro* periodical, intervening in disputes between fascists, communists, and Roman Catholics.

His book *O Sinal*

de Deus [The Sign of God], the exact date of publication of which remains uncertain (it may be 1936 or 1938), is withdrawn from circulation. According to some sources, this was at the behest of Murilo Mendes himself, while others claim that it was at the request of Adalgisa Nery.

MURILO MENDES WITH A PORTRAIT OF ADALGISA NERY, 1937[?] B&W PHOTOGRAPHY – REPRODUCTION PHOTO: UNKNOWN AUTHOR COLLECTION MUSEU DE ARTE MURILO MENDES – UFJF

"PINTURA E POLÍTICA" [PAINTING AND POLITICS], TEXT BY MURILO MENDES, 16 NOV. 1935 MAGAZINE *O CRUZEIRO* (RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL), YEAR 8, N. 2, P. 27 – REPRODUCTION PHOTO: ARQUIVO O CRUZEIRO/ D.A PRESS COLLECTION OF THE FUNDAÇÃO BIBLIOTECA NACIONAL – BRAZIL

MURILO MENDES AND ADALGISA NERY IN FRONT OF PORTINARI'S HOME, 1937 B&W PHOTOGRAPHY – REPRODUCTION PHOTO: UNKNOWN AUTHOR COLLECTION MUSEU DE ARTE MURILO MENDES – UFJF





MURILO MENDES WITH
A GROUP OF FRIENDS
GATHERED IN A BANQUET
FOR PORTINARI, 1934
B&W PHOTOGRAPHY -
REPRODUCTION
PHOTO: UNKNOWN AUTHOR
COLLECTION MUSEU DE
ARTE MURILO MENDES -
UFJF

ISMAEL NERY
*RETRATO DO ARTISTA COM
MURILO MENDES*, 1930
WATERCOLOR ON PAPER -
B&W REPRODUCTION
COLLECTION MAM RIO

Jorge de Lima produces what may be one of his first photomontages for the cover illustration.

Mendes also edits Adalgisa Nery's first book of poems. The frontispiece contains a portrait of the poet by Portinari. Mendes and Adalgisa cowrite a letter to representatives of the Spanish government in Brazil, protesting the threat of fascism in Spain.

1938

Publishes *A poesia em pânico* [Poetry

in Panic]. The cover illustration is a photomontage produced in collaboration with Jorge de Lima.

1939

On behalf of Brazilian artists, Mendes makes a speech paying tribute to Getúlio Vargas on the occasion of then President Vargas's visit to a large retrospective exhibition of the work of Candido Portinari at Rio's National Museum of Fine Arts.





MURILO
MENDES
CRITIC
**AND ART
COLLECTOR**



MURILO MENDES AND
MARIA DA SAUDADE
CORTESÃO, C. 1947
B&W PHOTOGRAPHY –
REPRODUCTION
PHOTO: UNKNOWN AUTHOR
COLLECTION CARLOS
AUGUSTO CALIL

1940-41

Meets Maria da Saudade Cortesão, daughter of the Portuguese historian Jaime Cortesão, who is living in Brazil, exiled by the Salazar dictatorship in Portugal. Many European artists in a similar situation arrive in Rio, fleeing the Second World War. These include

Emeric Marcier (from Romania), Axl Leskoschek (from Austria), and husband and wife painters Maria Helena Vieira da Silva and Arpad Szenes, who became very close to Mendes. The couple lived for a time in the “Russian Guesthouse”, on Rua Marquês de Abrantes, in Flamengo, where Mendes also resided.

1942

Murilo Mendes and Cecília Meireles stage the first ever exhibition of work by Maria Helena Vieira da Silva at the National Museum of Fine Arts, in Rio de Janeiro. Mendes writes the introduction to the catalogue, which is also published in *Revista Acadêmica* (n. 61):

In Maria Helena the exercise of plastic realization has taken on an ascetic character. Day and night, her lights are on, and the indefatigable worker sets about her labor with brushes and pencil, without the outside world intruding to disturb or cajole her. Her freedom as a visionary is served by sound technical skills. A vast array of highbrow elements is combined with others from popular culture without producing any sensation of conflict,

Later on, Szenes and Vieira da Silva move to a chalet belonging to the Hotel Internacional, in Santa Teresa. A whole community of intellectuals and artists formed around the Hotel Internacional and the nearby Mauá Guesthouse. Apart from Murilo and Saudade, these included Maria Helena and Arpad, Milton Dacosta, Djanira, Carlos Scliar, Ione Saldanha, Fayga Ostrower, the poets Cecília Meireles and Manuel Bandeira, and the critic Ruben Navarra.

Mendes publishes “Portinari: Instantaneous” in *Revista Acadêmica* (Rio de Janeiro, n. 48, Feb.). From the 1940s onwards, he writes more regularly about art in major newspapers and journals.



OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION
OF VIEIRA DA SILVA AT RIO DE
JANEIRO'S MUSEU NACIONAL
DAS BELAS ARTES, 1942
B&W PHOTOGRAPHY –
REPRODUCTION
PHOTO: UNKNOWN AUTHOR
FASVS ARCHIVE, LISBON



Jorge de Lima
publishes a book of
photomontages ti-
tled *Painting in Panic*
with a “Liminal Note”
by Murilo Mendes.

in the numerous
drawings and
canvases that she
produces, almost
always managing
to achieve a combi-
nation of grace and
gravitas, obtained
generally through
the use of blues
and earthy tones.

1944

Begins to write
regularly for *A
Manhã* newspaper
on art, literature,
music, religion, and
cultural matters in
general. He publishes
As metamorfoses
[Metamorphoses]
with illustrations by
Portinari and a cover
designed by Santa
Rosa. The book is
dedicated to Mozart.
He writes “Marcier
the painter” (9/7)
and “Maria Helena”
(10/12) on the latter’s

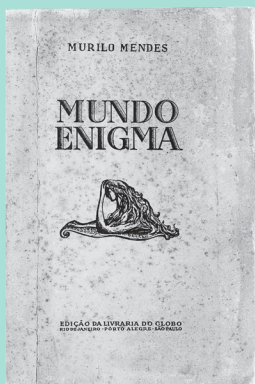


ARPAD SZENES, MURILO
MENDES AND MARIA HELENA
VIEIRA DA SILVA, RIO DE
JANEIRO, 1941
B&W PHOTOGRAPHY –
REPRODUCTION
PHOTO: UNKNOWN AUTHOR
FASVS ARCHIVE, LISBON

MURILO MENDES WITH
EMERIC MARCIER AND
HIS CHILDREN, 1950
B&W PHOTOGRAPHY –
REPRODUCTION
PHOTO: UNKNOWN AUTHOR
COLLECTION MUSEU DE ARTE
MURILO MENDES – UFJF

1943

Mendes's father
dies. He is admitted
to a sanatorium
to be treated for
tuberculosis.



COVER PAGE OF *MUNDO ENIGMA*, 1942
BOOK BY MURILLO MENDES
PUBLISHED BY LIVRARIA DO GLOBO (RIO DE JANEIRO, BRAZIL) IN A JOINT EDITION WITH *OS QUATRO ELEMENTOS* (1935) IN 1945
PHOTO: JOÃO GUILHERME SANTOS
COLLECTION MUSEU DE ARTE MURILLO MENDES – UFJF

second exhibition in Rio de Janeiro, both for *A Manhã*.

1945

Publishes *O discípulo de Emaús* [The Disciple from Emmaus], a book of aphoristic prose writings, and *Mundo enigma* [Enigmatic World] with a drawing by Vieira da Silva on the cover and a portrait of Mendes by Arpad Szenes as an illustration.

Writes “Mário de Andrade” on the occasion of the writer’s death (04/03/1945) for the *A Manhã* newspaper. Mário de Andrade was a friend of Mendes.

1946

Takes a job as a clerk at the Fourth Family Court.

The *A Manhã* newspaper creates the “Letters and Arts” supplement, which will continue until 1954. The supplement, with its bold design, will provide an important forum for interaction between visual artists and writers. Mendes will feature regularly up to 1951, contributing poems and art and music criticism.

Inauguration, in September, of the painting workshop at the Engenho de Dentro Psychiatric Hospital under the coordination of Almir Mavignier. In the same year,

Mavignier begins painting lessons with Arpad Szenes.

1947

Publishes *Poesia liberdade* [Freedom Poetry]. Marries Maria da Saudade.

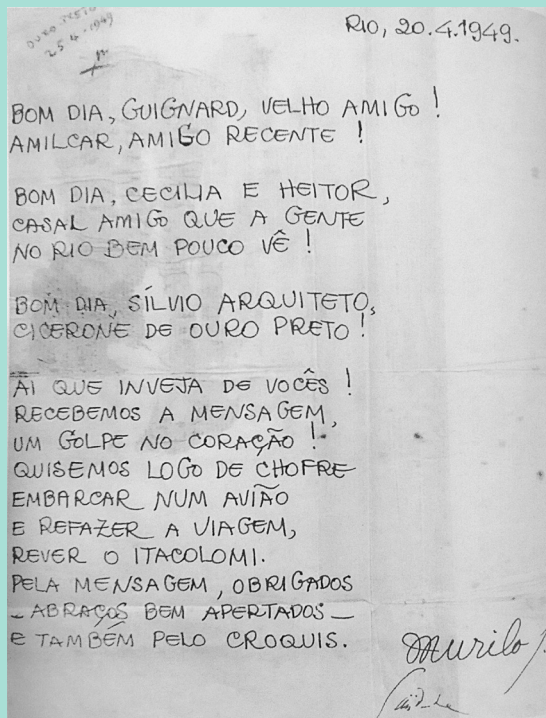
1948

Begins work on *O infinito íntimo* [The Intimate Infinite], a book of “meditations”

that will remain unpublished until 1994. Starts to publish the texts contained in *Memoirs of Ismael Nery* in the “Letters and Arts” supplement of the *A Manhã* and *O Estado de S.Paulo* newspapers. Exhibition of artists from Engenho de Dentro at the

RAPHAEL DOMINGUES
RETRATO DE MURILLO MENDES, 1949
CHINA INK ON PAPER – REPRODUCTION
COLLECTION MUSEU DE IMAGENS DO INCONSCIENTE





LETTER FROM MURILO MENDES TO ALBERTO DA VEIGA GUIGNARD, 20 APRIL 1949
COLLECTION MUSEU CASA GUIGNARD/DIRETORIA DE MUSEUS/SECRETARIA DE ESTADO DE CULTURA E TURISMO DE MINAS GERAIS

Ministry of Education in Rio de Janeiro, reshown in 1949 at the MAM São Paulo and in the lobby of the Rio de Janeiro City Council Chamber, presided over at that time by Jorge de Lima. With the support of Mario Pedrosa, the young artists Ivan Serpa, Almir Mavignier and Abraham Palatnik form a fraternity. Geraldo de Barros joins them in 1949.

1949

Publishes a text about the painter Djanira, in the “Letters and Arts” supplement of *A Manhã* (9/1).

He also writes about Di Cavalcanti for the same newspaper (6/2).

Travels to Ouro Preto and comes up with the ideas for the first poems in *Contemplação de Ouro Preto* [Contemplation of Ouro Preto],

published in 1954.

Writes “Ouro Preto under threat” for *A Manhã* (21/8).

The poem “Janela do caos” [Window of Chaos] is published in Paris, with lithographs by Francis Picabia.

Also, for *A Manhã*, Mendes writes “The Arts in Bahia” (4/12), in which he comments on the First Fine Arts Salon of Bahia, after a brief trip to Salvador.

1951

Writes articles on Lasar Segall after a visit to the artist’s studio in São Paulo (published on 20 and 27 May and 3 June in the “Letters and Arts” supplement):

The art of Segall bears witness to the clash between the individual and the collective. The individual artist resolves the conflict of forces by interpreting social reality, transposing it to a higher aesthetic and philosophical plane, in which beings crushed by the enormous steam roller receive their justification.

Mendes also visits the First São Paulo Biennial and writes at least two articles about the show (“Suggestions from the Biennial” and “Views of an Exhibition”), in which he addresses the debate over figuration versus abstraction that was underway at the time, claiming that “abstract art is not opposed to reality; it expands it”.

He writes the preface of the catalogue accompanying the exhibition of paintings that marks the opening of the exhibition



GOELDI, MURILO MENDES AND MARIA DA SAUDADE, 1952
B&W PHOTOGRAPHY –
REPRODUCTION
PHOTO: AGÊNCIA JB
COLLECTION MUSEU DE ARTE
MURILO MENDES – UFJF

room of the new head office of the Brazil-United States Institute in Rio de Janeiro. The show features Djanira, Milton Dacosta, Maria Leontina, Guignard, Iberê Camargo, Roberto Burle Marx, Santa Rosa, among others.

1952

Murilo Mendes and Maria da Saudade

travel to Europe. The cities they visit include Paris, where Mendes meets André Breton, Marc Chagall and Alberto Magnelli, about whom he will write on various occasions.

1953

In September, the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs appoints him Professor

of Brazilian Culture at the University of Madrid. However, he is declared a *persona non grata* on account of his opposition to General Franco. Shortly thereafter, he is appointed to another post in Brussels, where he remains for another two years, lecturing in the city and also in Paris and Amsterdam.

1955

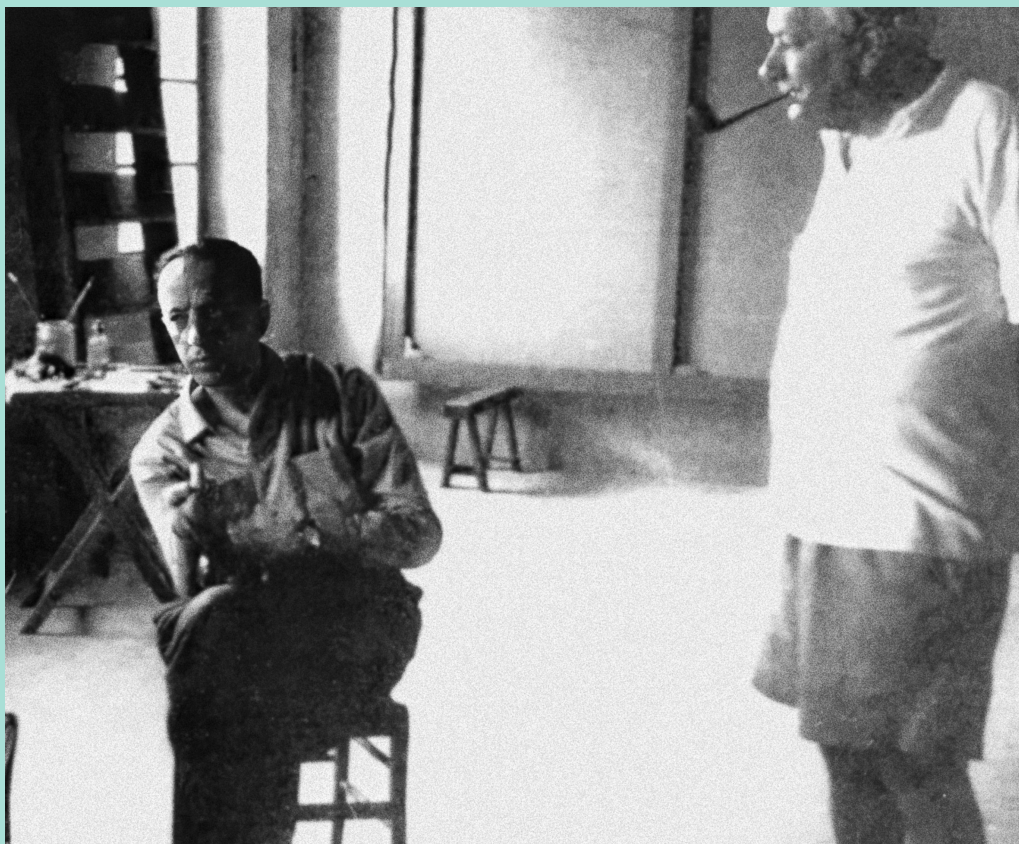
Visits a grand retrospective exhibition of the work of Alberto Magnelli in Brussels and publishes his first article on the artist in *Habitat* magazine.

The *XXe Siècle* periodical publishes, in French, an article by Murilo Mendes titled “Magnelli à Bruxelles” [Magnelli in Brussels].

1956

Sits on the panel of judges at the 5th National Modern Art Salon, in Rio de Janeiro. Writes an article on the selection of paintings for the competition’s exhibition for *Para Todos* (Year 1, n.3, in the first fortnight in June), in which he discusses a variety of subjects, including concrete painting:

The concrete artists must be taken seriously, since they are now in the vanguard of new developments. It is not fair, however, to demand that they deliver something they are not yet capable of... They have just been born, and the more correct approach, in my view, would be to receive them sympathetically, even when they diverge from one’s own aesthetic credo. They are looking for a new plastic



language, like those musicians who are researching relations of sound based on atonality, or those poets who seek to use poetry in a way that eschews or transcends the system of ordering words that has prevailed hitherto, within a tradition of strict logical rigor.

He also stages the first retrospective exhibition of the Brazilian artist Maria Martins at the Museum of Modern Art of Rio de Janeiro and writes the main text accompanying this exhibition:

With a view always to expressing the violent tensions between magic and functionality,

between Eros and death, between the dynamism of clearly defined forms and an ambiguous dreamlike atmosphere, in his quest for a language that is at the same time barbarous and flexible, Maria, dissonant and theatrical, is the latest in the long line of those who have researched and interpreted an augmented reality.

MURILO MENDES AND
ALBERTO MAGNELLI AT THE
ARTIST'S STUDIO, 1958
B&W PHOTOGRAPHY –
REPRODUCTION
PHOTO: UNKNOWN AUTHOR
COLLECTION MUSEU DE ARTE
MURILO MENDES – UFJF



MURILO
MENDES
IN ITALY

1957

Moves to Rome, in January, to assume the Chair of Brazilian Studies at the University of Rome, a post linked to the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During his period of residence in the city, he also works with the Embassy's cultural sector, organizing exhibitions, publishing books, and giving talks.

In October, he attends the Congress of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA), in Naples.

Mendes moves from his first apartment into a permanent home at Via del Consolato 6, in Rome's city center. This is where he will store his collection of artworks. Luciana Stegagno Picchio writes as follows about Mendes's arrival in Rome:

Early on, Murilo, a poet and a friend

of painters, with in-depth knowledge of and a deep appreciation for artists, was asked to write the introductions to their works. These were precious, beautifully printed objects, normally with a reproduction of a painting on the front cover. At that time (in the 1960s and 1970s) they were almost all informal. Almost all the major artists living in Rome at the time visited Murilo. These included Dorazio, Perilli, Accardi, Corpora, Turcato, Franchina, and Sanfilippo, and they were frequently joined by artists from Brazil and other countries who were passing through.

1958

Donation of portrait of Giuseppe Ungaretti by Flávio de Carvalho to Rome's National Gallery of

MURILO MENDES STANDING IN HIS APARTMENT, 1973
B&W PHOTOGRAPHY – REPRODUCTION
PHOTO: GIOVANNA PIEMONTE
COLLECTION MUSEU DE ARTE MURILO MENDES – UFJF



MURILO MENDES AT HIS WORK DESK, 1972
FULL-COLOR PHOTOGRAPHY – B&W REPRODUCTION
PHOTO: BRUNO ANDREOZZI
COLLECTION MUSEU DE ARTE MURILO MENDES – UFJF



Modern Art. Mendes is invited by the ambassador to pay tribute to Ungaretti.

1959

Helps his friend, the critic Mario Pedrosa, who is Vice-President of the AICA, to organize a meeting of the association in Brasília, suggesting the names of visual artists, critics, and architects, and establishing contacts. These include, among others, the architects Bruno Zevi and Pier Luigi Nervi, and the painter Piero Dorazio.

Publishes *Siciliana*, with a preface written by Ungaretti. Two further books are published: *Poesias* (1925-1955), in Brazil, and *Tempo espanhol* [Spanish Time], in Portugal.

Giulio Carlo Argan becomes Professor of Modern Art at the University of La Sapienza, where

Mendes teaches. The pair will engage in many important discussions.

1960

The 9th of January sees the opening of Antonio Corpora's exhibition at Galleria Pogliani in Roma. Murilo Mendes writes the artist's introduction to the catalogue:

...Corpora effects some kind of conversion of space into a new category, with a vitality in which pinks, blues, blacks and greens function as plastic metaphors. What does this mean? It means that the painter has transformed nature through his own consciousness, as the artwork gains its own autonomy and is transformed into a fable in and of itself.

1962

Visits Almir Mavignier in Ulm, where he also meets Max Bill.

Writes the introduction to the exhibition at L'Obelisco gallery (in Rome) of sculptures by Aldo Calò, winner of the sculpture prize at the 31st Venice Biennale. Lygia Clark's work is exhibited at the same Biennale and Murilo Mendes has his photograph taken alongside one of her objects.

Luigi Dallapiccola composes *Pregchiere* for baritone and chamber orchestra, using poems by Murilo Mendes translated by Ruggero Jacobbi.

1963

Organizes exhibitions of the work of Almir Mavignier, Alfredo Volpi, Oswaldo Goeldi, Bruno Giorgi, Franz Weissmann, and others at the Brazilian Embassy's

Brazil House Art Gallery.

Mendes writes as follows about Mavignier in an article in *Habitat* (n. 71, March 1963):

Mavignier made the most of the courses at the Ulm School. He learnt about painting but also conducted an in-depth study of industrial design, and has now become a proficient poster designer.... Mavignier's posters demonstrate complete mastery of the craft. He combines his own personal skills as a craftsman with typographic techniques, thereby helping to dispel the myth that it is impossible for a humanistic spirit to co-exist with industrial civilization.... I consider these posters "substantial", in the sense that they possess fundamental qualities that transcend the merely circumstantial.



MURILO MENDES
IN ULM, 1962
B&W PHOTOGRAPHY –
REPRODUCTION
PHOTO: ALMIR MAVIGNIER
MAVIGNIER 75 (MAM SÃO
PAULO, 2000)

MURILO MENDES WITH
MAX BILL IN ZURICH, 1962
B&W PHOTOGRAPHY –
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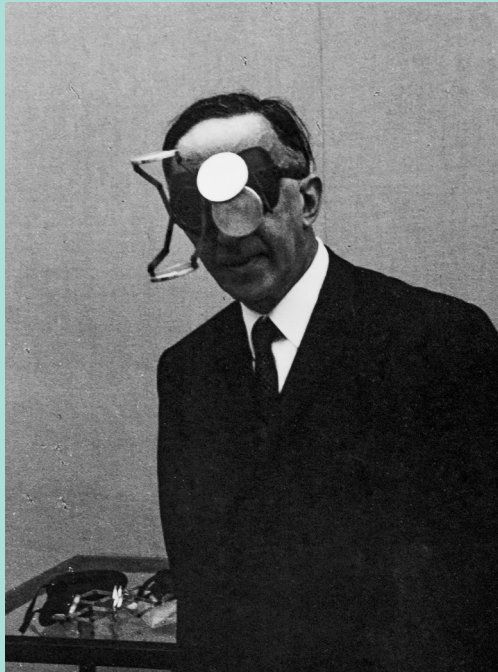
They are highly charged with visual culture, enticing the viewer to participate directly in the system of signs that derives from perfect coordination of hand, eye, and brain.

The same year, he is invited to write the introduction to exhibitions by Alberto Magnelli at Galleria La Strozzi, in the Palazzo Strozzi (in Florence), and by Giuseppe Capogrossi at Galleria del Naviglio (in Milan).



1964

April sees the much belated appointment of the board responsible for the selection of artists for the 32nd Venice Biennale, at which Brazil will open a new pavilion, designed by Henrique Mindlin. At the recommendation of the Venice Biennale itself, Mendes is invited to sit on the board, along with Antônio Bento, Clarival do Prado Valladares and the diplomat Mário Dias Costa, representing the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (news report in the Santos newspaper *A Tribuna*, 16/4/1964). The Biennale opens in June, and the Brazilian artists selected are Tarsila do Amaral, Alfredo Volpi, Franz Krajcberg, Abraham Palatnik, Franz Weissmann, Almir Mavignier, Glauco Rodrigues, and Maria Bonomi. Krajcberg wins the Città di Venezia Prize. Mendes writes the



introduction to the catalogue.

Le metamorfosi [The Metamorphoses] and *Alberto Magnelli* are published in Italian with texts by Murilo Mendes.

1965

Mendes joins Pablo Neruda, Pier Paolo Pasolini, Rafael Alberti, Ted Hughes, and Ezra Pound, at the 7th Festival dei Due Mondi, in Spoleto (Italy). He publishes a book

titled *Italianissima* (7 murilogrammi) [Very Italian Indeed. Seven Murilograms]

Opening at the New York MoMA of an exhibition titled *The Responsive Eye* dedicated specifically to kinetic and optical art in the United States. Soto features in the show, along with Mavignier and Dorazio. Mendes pays homage to the exhibition with an eponymously titled poem, which will later be included in *Conversa Portátil* [Portable Talk].

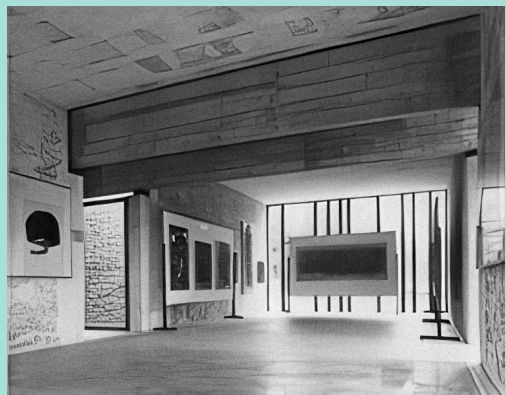
1967

Participates in the International Poetry Meeting at the Montreal Universal Poetry Exposition (in Canada). In the Exhibition Pavilion, he sees Jesus Soto's *Penetrável* [Penetrable]. Later on, in 1974, he writes a text on this experience, which is then included in *The Invention of the Finite*:

MURILO MENDES WITH "ARMED EYE" BY LYGIA CLARK, 1968 B&W PHOTOGRAPHY – REPRODUCTION PHOTO: MARIA DA SAUDADE CORTESÃO COURTESY OF ALINE MACEDO

BRAZILLIAN PAVILLION AT THE 32nd VENICE BIENNALE, 1964 B&W PHOTOGRAPHY – REPRODUCTION PHOTO: FOTO FERRUZZI COLLECTION FUNDAÇÃO BIENAL DE SÃO PAULO / ARQUIVO HISTÓRICO WANDA SVEVO

BRAZILLIAN PAVILLION AT THE 32nd VENICE BIENNALE, 1964 B&W PHOTOGRAPHY – REPRODUCTION PHOTO: FOTO FERRUZZI COLLECTION FUNDAÇÃO BIENAL DE SÃO PAULO / ARQUIVO HISTÓRICO WANDA SVEVO



Soto turns the labyrinth into a way out to the other side, where the horizon is broad and clear, the information is exact, communication sensitive and obedient to poetry, where problems are not annulled, but evolve in accordance with the givens of a higher spiritual training.

1968

Publication in Brazil of *A idade do serrote* [The Age of the Handsaw], written in Rome between 1965 and 1966.

Puts together the first version of *Ipotesi* [Hypotheses], revised in 1970, containing poems written directly in Italian. These include tributes to Old Masters (Eyck, Bruegel, and Joachim Patinir) and modern ones (Magnelli, Klee, Arp, De Chirico, and Morandi). The book will be published posthumously in 1977.

1970

Convergência [Convergence] is published in Brazil.

Edits the book *Janelas Verdes* [Green Windows], with illustrations by Maria Helena Vieira da Silva. However, only a partial print run will be released in 1989, in Portugal, with drawings and silk-screen prints by the artist, before being included in the poet's volume of *Collected Works, Poesia completa e prosa*.

The introduction to the catalogue accompanying Arpad Szenes's exhibition, at museums in Rouen, Rennes, Lille, Orléans, and Dijon (France), is written by Murilo Mendes.

In the same year, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation stages an exhibition of the work of Vieira da Silva. Murilo writes as follows in the catalogue:

I can walk about freely in these paintings, since the lower plane corresponds to the higher: entrance and exit are identical in meaning. I am delighted to be involved in this process, which, taking to the extreme the refinement that is the enduring mark of cubism, shows itself to be even

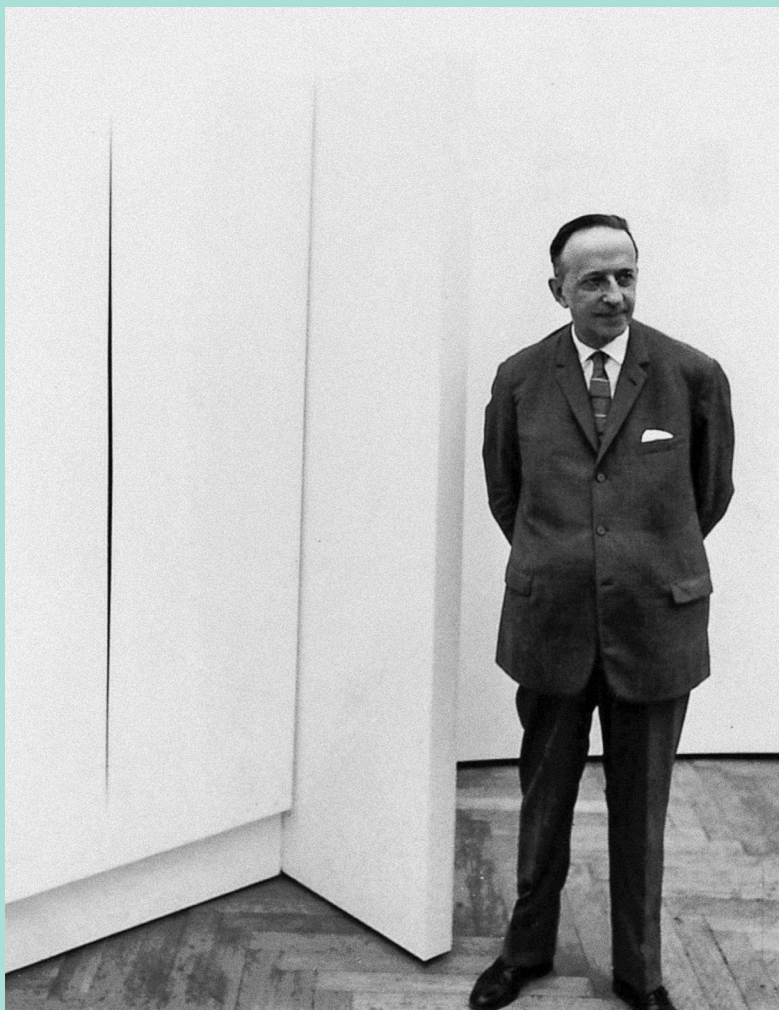
more alive than perception. The brush directs the color, bending it to its visual will. The color collaborates to form the general plane, which is precisely predicated upon a particular poetics: that is, a poetics based on the architecture of memory, a fairytale set in a modern city.

JOÃO CARLOS HORTA FILMS
MURILO MENDES ON THE
BRIDGE LEADING TO THE
SANT'ANGELO CASTLE, IN
ROME (STILL OF THE FILM
"MURILO MENDES: A POESIA
EM PÂNICO"), 1971
FULL-COLOR PHOTOGRAPHY
– B&W REPRODUCTION
PHOTO: ALEXANDRE EULALIO
COLLECTION CARLOS
AUGUSTO CALIL

1971

Writes the text accompanying the series of silkscreen prints *I collages di Magnelli* published by the Roman gallery





MURILO MENDES BESIDE A
WORK BY LUCIO FONTANA, N.D.
B&W PHOTOGRAPHY –
REPRODUCTION
PHOTO: AGÊNCIA JB
COLLECTION MUSEU DE ARTE
MURILO MENDES – UFJF

Italian-Latin American Institute in Rome:

The act of the artist that consists of cutting the canvas or ceramic corresponds to the following concept rich in consequences: the universe is forever opening its doors ever wider. Behold the infinite become intimate and quotidian, within reach of hand, eye, and palette knife.

Il Collezionista d'Arte Contemporanea.

In January and February, the same gallery publishes the poem "Arp" in the catalogue accompanying the artist's exhibition.

Publishes the collection *Poesia libertà* [Freedom Poetry].

Filming starts, in Roma, of the documentary *Murilo Mendes: A Poesia em Pânico* [Murilo Mendes: Poetry in Panic], written and directed by Alexandre Eulálio, which will be concluded in February 1977, in São Paulo.

1972

Receives the 11th Etna-Taormina International Poetry Prize for *Poesia libertà*. Visits Brazil for the last time.

Writes the text for the catalogue accompanying Lucio Fontana's show at the

1975

Publication of *Mendes Soto*, a book-object with images of Soto and a text titled *Labirinto per Soto* [Labyrinth by Soto] by Murilo Mendes.

Murilo Mendes dies in Lisbon on 13 August.

1976

Mundo enigma
[Enigmatic World]
is published.

1977

Maria da Saudade
Cortesão donates
a portion of Murilo
Mendes's private
library to the Federal
University of Juiz de
Fora (UFJF).

1980

The book of prose
texts *Transistor*,
edited by Saudade
Cortesão, is pub-
lished in Italy.

1987

O olhar do poeta
[The Eye of the Poet]
exhibition at the
Calouste Gulbenkian
Foundation, Portugal,
is the first public ex-
hibition of the Murilo
Mendes collection.

1993

The Federal
University of Juiz de
Fora acquires the
Murilo Mendes art
collection.

1994

*Poesia completa e
prosa* [Collected

Poems and Prose],
edited by Luciana
Stegagno Picchio, is
published by Aguilar.

Opening of the
Murilo Mendes Study
Center (CEMM),
linked to UFJF.

First exhibition of
the Murilo Mendes
collection in Juiz
de Fora.

2001

Publication in Italy,
with preface by
Giulio Carlo Argan,
of *L'Occhio del
Poeta* [The Eye of
the Poet], a collec-
tion of critical essays
written by Mendes
in Italy.

Staging of the *Murilo
Mendes 1901-2001*
exhibition at CEMM
to commemorate
the centenary of the
birth of the poet. The
show later moves on
to the Chácara do
Céu Museum, in Rio,
and the Lasar Segall
Museum, in São Paulo.

2005

Opening, in
December, of
the UFJF's Murilo
Mendes Museum
of Art (MAMM).