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10 Brazilian Artists Who Are Shaping Contemporary Art

Ela Bittencourt

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The 35th São Paulo Bienal, which opens on September 3rd, promises to highlight tensions in Brazilian and global contemporary art. Its title, “Choreography of the Impossible,” echoes the last biennial’s reference to the Martinique philosopher Édouard Glissant and his emphasis on the Global South’s art and political potential. The team of Brazilian and European curators cited diasporic film histories as a conduit for exploring the many possibilities of agency and movement, outside the notion of “freedom,” as defined by Western neoliberal economies.

It’s an apt direction for 2023. As the Brazilian art scene shakes off the ultra-conservative culture wars, Afro-Brazilian, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, and women artists are gaining a foothold in what’s traditionally been an art scene dominated by white male artists. Across a vast territory, Brazilian art looks to futurism, to ecological and post-human frontiers, as much as to its own utopian modernist past to shape this new art movement.

Here are 10 trailblazing Brazilian artists everyone should know.

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Bárbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca

B. 1980, Brasília, Brazil, and 1975, Munich, respectively. Both live and work in Berlin and Recife, Brazil.



Bárbara Wagner & Benjamin de Burca
Grupo La Máfia (from Swinguerra), 2019
Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel
Price on request

Bárbara Wagner and Benjamin de Burca have had an explosive rise since they started collaborating some 10 years ago. Their survey show “Five Times Brazil,” at the New Museum in New York in 2022, showed many of their video works that delve into race, religion, class, and ideological affiliation — with a keen eye to gender performance and power dynamics.

One of their video works in that show, *Holy Tremor* (2017), delves into the Evangelical music and performance traditions, with a close attention to form, ritual, and self-representation, and a slightly fantastical bend. Another notable work, *Swinguerra* (2019), originally commissioned for the Brazilian pavilion in the 58th Venice Biennale, refers to a musical style, depicting a standoff between competing dance groups — part record of a vibrant cultural expression, part fantasy.