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Art **Reviews**

Three Women Artists Take Back the Landscape

Clare Woods reinterprets the genre through oil on aluminum, Coco Young shows pastel-toned pastoral scenes, and Márcia Falcão presents curvaceous figures.



Diana Ruzova May 27, 2024



Márcia Falcão, "A Ponte, da série Paleta Utilitária" (2024), oil and oil stick on canvas, 70 7/8 x 86 5/8 inches (photo by Paul Salveson, courtesy the artist and Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel, São Paulo / Rio de Janeiro)

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LOS ANGELES — Fleeting landscapes of the natural world and the body in motion are currently tucked away on a dead-end street in an industrial area of Downtown Los Angeles. In three solo exhibitions at Night Gallery, Clare Woods reinterprets the still-life genre through oil on aluminum, Coco Young shows pastel-toned, oil-on-linen pastoral scenes, and Márcia Falcão presents curvaceous figures on canvas and paper.

In Woods's "Time Slip" (2024), sinister-looking black and orange clouds — inspired by images of Russia's war in Ukraine — move across the sky to turn day into night. The artist depicts clouds in the exhibition's title painting, "I Blame Nature" (2023), as well, but this time they are reflected in a brass mirror, blurring the distinction between still life and landscape, interior and exterior, to freeze a surreal, Magritte-like moment in an otherwise fleeting world. This effect also occurs in her paintings of sagging faces and desserts, whose layers recall earthen, geological strata. In "Mr Softee" (2023), for instance, soft serve ice cream suspended in clear glass transforms into a snow-peaked mountain, so packed at the center that it appears to be on the verge of an avalanche.

"Landscape is the foundation of my practice," Woods explained in a forthcoming interview with Darian Leader. "It's the place I feel alive." She works out of a studio in rural England and pulls inspiration for her paintings from a personal archive of photographs, amassed over three decades. Her process involves selecting a handful of these images and creating simple line drawings on aluminum panels, removing most of the information from the original image. She then paints from memory in an improvisational act that creates the effect of colors in motion, inserting herself into the landscape and giving static images new life.

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Early in her career, Márcia Falcão depicted the landscape of her hometown, Rio de Janeiro, where she still lives and works. Now, across her canvases, the body becomes its own kind of terrain, and vice versa. For her first solo exhibition with Night Gallery, featuring works from her *Yoga*, *Capoeira*, and *Monumentais* series (2022–ongoing), the artist’s mostly brown and red-toned paintings and sketches all feature large nude women in motion. In these various poses, the bodies become their own landscapes.

In “A Ponte” (2024), which translates to “The Bridge,” a larger-than-life brown nude body rendered in oil and oil stick on canvas is draped over a cracked landmass, becoming the literal bridge between the two broken pieces of land. Other nude curvaceous female brown bodies make up the base of the mass. Pressed against one another, violated and resilient, they are a nod to generational resistance to colonialism. The figures in Falcão’s paintings gradually reveal their shapes and colors, sometimes swallowed by the landscape, sometimes becoming it.

“Streetdance” (2024), from her *Capoeira* series, features a nude female body in charcoal and oil, as large as the canvas itself. She is temporarily suspended in the air as she practices the Afro-Brazilian martial art dance of Capoeira. Here, the body is a site of joy, free to exist happily in motion without physical or societal restraint.

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Márcia Falcão, "Canivete, da série Capoeira em Paleta Alta" (2024), charcoal, oil, and oil stick on canvas, 63 x 47 1/4 inches (photo by Paul Salveson, courtesy the artist and Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel, São Paulo / Rio de Janeiro)

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In Coco Young's debut solo show at the gallery, *Passage*, her oil on linen pastoral paintings reconsider the landscapes of her youth in the south of France, depicting the region that so inspired male predecessors such as Monet and van Gogh. These paintings portray rites of passage between childhood and adolescence, and their corresponding dismantling of naivete.

"Yasmin" (2024) centers a daydreaming, androgynous child resting lazily on their stomach in a peaceful meadow, bursting with yellow flowers, a scene of youth and innocence. In "Bog at Dawn" (2024), however, a glassy body of water surrounded by wispy shrubs appears calm and quiet at first glance, but the dangers of drowning are implicit in the edgeless peat-filled bog. "The Pond" (2024) takes the loss of innocence to the next level with an ominous image of a pond, on which floats somber-looking crimson swans, reimagining the masculine, Impressionist landscapes with a more emotional eye.

Unlike the quaint seaside villages or green countrysides depicted by artists such as Paul Cézanne or Camille Pissarro, which suspend time like an insect in amber, Young, Falcão, and Woods play with movement in their paintings, reminding the viewer of nature's fleeting nature. Everything, these works suggest, can change in an instant.

Márcia Falcão: Flesh Monuments, Clare Woods: I Blame Nature, and Coco Young: Passage continue at Night Gallery (2276 East 16th Street, Downtown, Los Angeles) through June 8, June 15, and June 15, respectively. The exhibitions were organized by the gallery.