

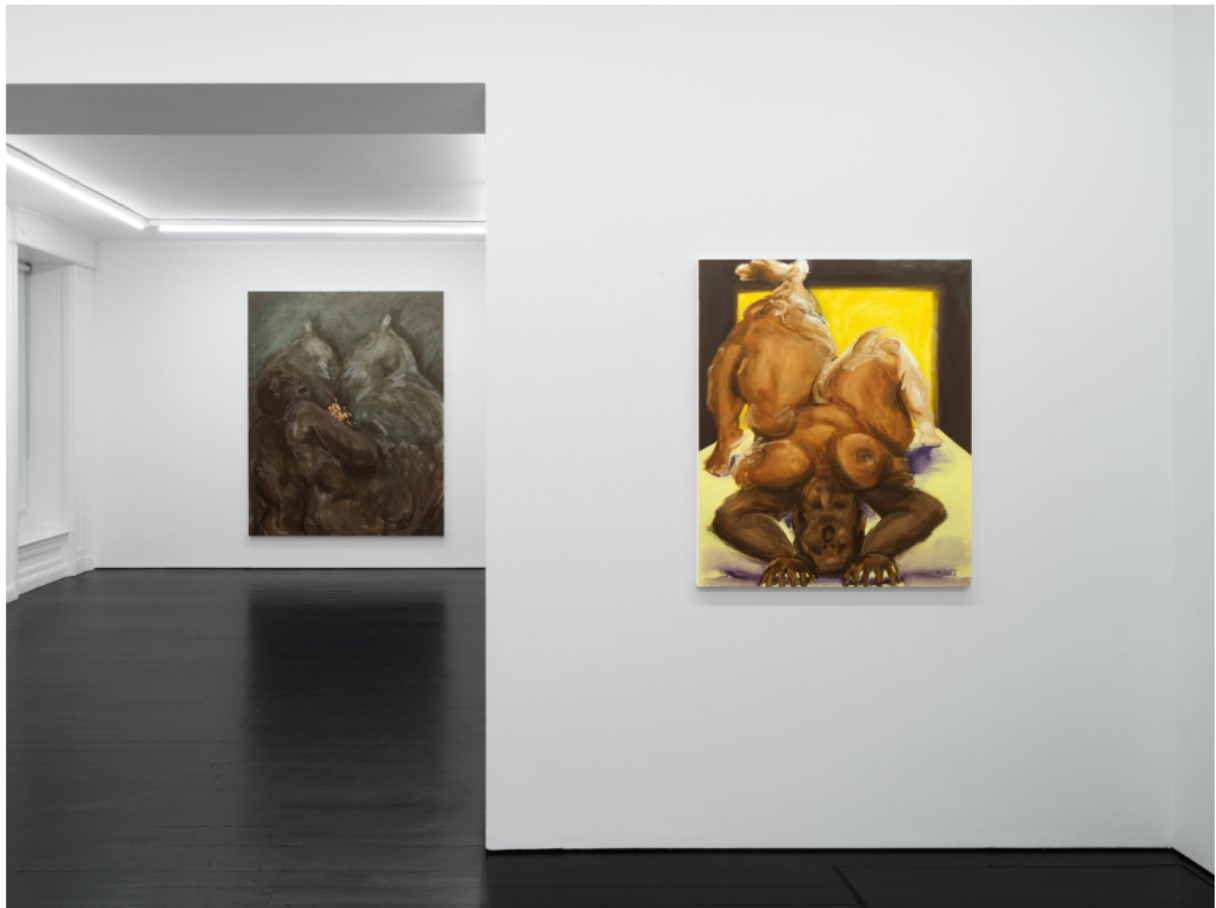
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September 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
Corpo de Cor  
<https://elephant.art/marcia-falcao-canvas-is-a-box-and-her-containment-is-not-neat/>

Publication  
Author  
Artist

Elephant Art  
Mia Butter  
Márcia Falcão

# Márcia Falcão's Canvas is a Box, and Her Containment is Not Neat



Márcia Falcão, *Corpo De Cor*, Installation View. Courtesy of Contemporary Fine Arts. Photo by Nick Ash.

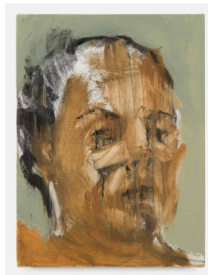
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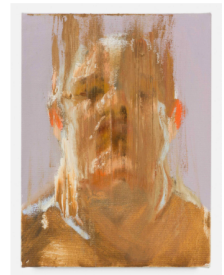
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The first thing I look at in a painting is the edges. Are they left white and neat, or does the work continue to the perimeter of the canvas? It's more of a habit to check than a judgment thing, but it can be quite telling. Entering Berlin's CFA, I spot two monumental works in the room to my left, but turn right instead to the nearest work and B-line to its side. In the case of Márcia Falcão, her canvases show a few dribbling, passionate flicks of paint on their edges, continuing past their faces. Confined to the surface of their unframed canvas, Falcão's figures dance and bloom into existence – but not without restraint.



Malandra não para III – XXII (2025). 5 of 12 works. Courtesy of Contemporary Fine Arts. Photo by Nick Ash.



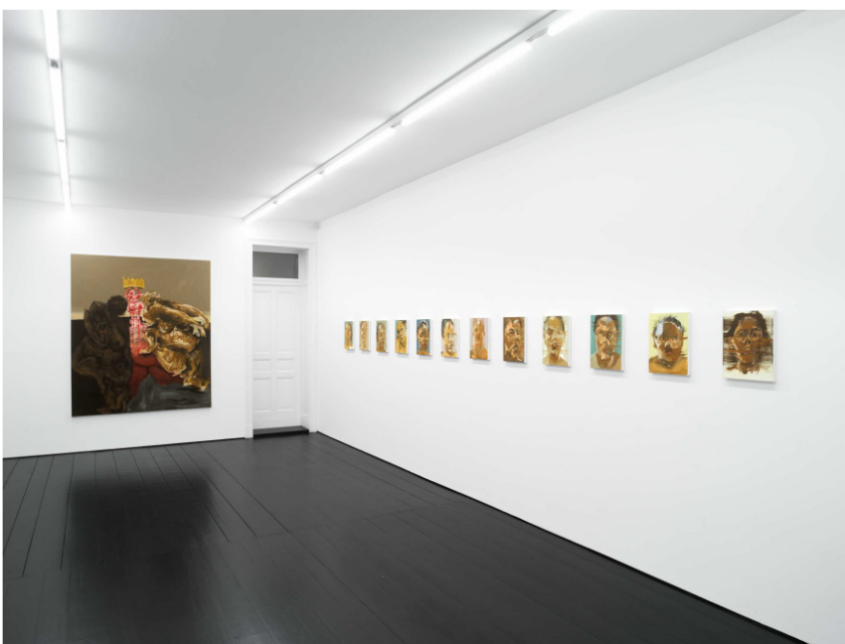
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Falcão, a Black Brazilian woman, paints Black Brazilian bodies – often her own. Born and raised in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro, she paints (and scrapes and scratches) her lived experience, using paint as a translator between her body and environment. Racial- and gender-based violence enters her works because it is a present force, but so is motherhood, and a complex relationship between a Carioca and her home. With over twenty years under her belt as an artist, her current solo show and European debut, *Corpo de Cor*, is an accumulation of knowledge and research from the past two decades. With five series, and just under thirty works on show, Falcão's pieces are tender, frustrated, empowered, and graphic.



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*Corpo de Cor*, translating to “Body of Colour,” feels like an exploration of acceptance. Described as an exploration of the body, there is a more reflective, meditative take; it’s not self-discovery as much as it is a permission slip. The fact that Falcão can recognise and reflect on her experiences is abundantly clear in the works, though what’s more interesting is the self-approval and self-acceptance that oozes out of each portrait. Here, reinterpreting her features always feels like play, rather than an exaggeration or mockery; having three feet and jagged curves is a defiant act of love and resistance. In her series *Ioga Psicológica* (“Psychological Yoga”), Falcão paints women engaged in back-breaking positions, knotting their bodies to fit inside box-sized rooms. With six fingers gripping the floor, or two faces moaning in agony, their bodies are trapped within the confines of the canvas – not a toe over the edge. Suffering neatly, like a messy internal dialogue disguised by a composed exterior, feels oddly relatable and disconcerting.



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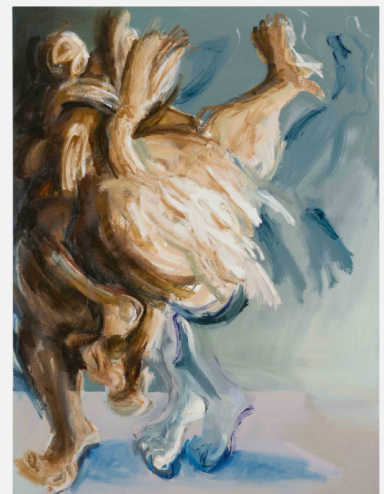
When the body is politicised, so is the mind, neither one more free to express itself than the other. This is where the artist contemplates dark, existential realities in a tone of abstraction, and even humour, but never reduction. These paintings feel like expressions from necessity, discovery through doing what's honest and not what's asked of you, and it's exciting to witness. It's probably why the transition to more dynamic bodies of work like her *Capoeira em Paleta Alta* series feels so natural. Sketching the same heavy, Black bodies, but now as Capoeira dancers, Falcão's liberal use of oil sticks creates a cartoon-like motion blur paired with a Saville-esque swash of paint, resulting in an energy seen in few other works. It's captivating, and yet I'm still distracted by the forty-by-thirty centimetre portraits that line opposing walls of the back room.



Posição (2025). Courtesy of Contemporary Fine Arts. Photo by Nick Ash.



Passinho Real (2025). Courtesy of Contemporary Fine Arts. Photo by Nick Ash. Posição (2025). Courtesy of Contemporary Fine Arts. Photo by Nick Ash.



Chapa (2025). Courtesy of Contemporary Fine Arts. Photo by Nick Ash.



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Falcão paints her body, with her body – the wide gestural brushstrokes and occasionally half-mixed colours show a ferocity that mirrors her subject. In the series of twenty small portraits, *Malandra não para*, the use of texture rivals that of every other work in the show. Coily hair is scratched beautifully into the thin wash of oil in *Malandra não para XI*, paint is pushed à la Francis Bacon in *XVIII*, and the eyes, Chico, they never lie... As you walk along the wall, meeting each *Malandra's* eyes, they are detailed and loaded with torment. It's striking how Falcão's large-scale works don't overshadow the smallest of the bunch, and her move from larger-than-life to screen-sized canvases doesn't feel out of character, either. Her extensive knowledge of art history is as profound as her dexterity with paint. The Lucian Freud and Jenny Saville resemblances mentioned in the exhibition text ring true, but fail to reflect the honesty and authenticity of Falcão's works in the same way. She exceeds the honourable comparisons.

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On my final loop around the exhibition, I look out for my favourite detail in a painting: the brush hairs. As a painter, I understand the frustration of caking in rogue hairs that went unnoticed two layers ago which, after failing to inconspicuously remove it, you end up leaving in. Though it might look like a blemish, I see it as a sign of life and fervour – and, honestly, it's kind of charming! I relish in finding one amid a sea of umber, trapped on the canvas like Falcão's subjects, encrusted under layers of paint and oil stick. The canvas is like a glorified box, a label; it can confine or empower, be brutal or beautiful. A canvas painted by Márcia Falcão is all of these things, from edge to edge.

*Written by Mia Butter*