

Medium
Date
Event
Web address

Web
January 2nd, 2026
36th São Paulo Biennial
<https://www.newcitybrazil.com/2026/01/02/marcia-falcao-shows-bodies-in-revolt/>

Publication
Author
Artist

New City Brasil
Cynthia Garcia
Márcia Falcão



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Márcia Falcão Shows Bodies in Revolt

For the latest edition of the Bienal de São Paulo, the Rio painter exhibits daring paintings that confront beauty standards.

BY CYNTHIA GARCIA | JANUARY 2, 2026



The work of Márcia Falcão at the 36th Bienal de São Paulo, 2025/Photo: Eduardo Ortega. Courtesy of Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro

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“It takes courage to be courageous.”—Gertrude Stein

From the inaugural edition of the São Paulo Biennial, in 1951, to the fourteenth Biennial, in 1977, the event awarded prizes to the best works. I’ve been going to the benchmark exhibition since 1981, when I was first astonished by greats such as Tunga, Cildo Meireles and Gilbert & George. The current show, its thirty-sixth edition, is one of my least preferred. Pity. However, the set of five grand nude expressionistic paintings on the second floor by Márcia Falcão explodes with energy from the canvas. The forty-year-old artist bravely portrays her fleshy, dark-skinned self in unflattering positions and grotesque contortions. They made my heart pound.

An admirable sense of intimacy, solitude, despair and overwhelming power prevails in its unity subdued by a narrow color scheme of browns bursting from the expansive, energetic gestural brushwork of this contemporary Venus of Willendorf from the violent outskirts of Rio who boldly exposes her full physique.

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Artist Márcia Falcão/Photo: Eduardo Ortega. Courtesy of Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro

I never liked Botero's rotund figures that chic Parisians paid thousands for; on the other hand, I love Titian's fleshy women and, of course, Jenny Saville, who once said: "I'm not painting disgusting, big women. I'm painting women who've been made to think they're big and disgusting." Like Saville, Falcão's spectacular canvases are very serious work. Her paintings of volcanic attitude express a powerful confrontational stance, igniting tension, disturbance and unease. Not only do they scream boldness, but they also attack rigid beauty standards to unshackle deep-rooted sexism, racism and sizeism haunting our hypocritical society. If she continues surfing this wave, blending body and boldness, Falcão has everything to top the pantheon as one of the rising stars of her generation.

I had fun with the untranslatable titles of her paintings that carry a beat of slang verses seemingly out of a blaring funk-carioca sound groove jammed with sexy, sweaty moves at a Saturday Rio rave past sunrise.

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Márcia Falcão, "Espuma na arrebentação," "Monumentais" series, 2025, oil and oil stick on canvas, 118" x 98" /Photo: Rafael Salim. Courtesy of Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro

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Márcia, how long have you been an artist?

I began painting when I was nineteen, when I got into art school in college. To make ends meet, I flickered through odd jobs until I was twenty-eight. By 2020, it became easier to live solely off my paintings, more so after I signed with Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel.

Tell us about your participation in the 2025 São Paulo Biennial.

By the end of 2024, when I was invited to show in the Biennial, I was ecstatic. The theme of the Biennial, “Nem todo viandante anda estradas —Da humanidade como prática” (Not All Travelers Walk Roads—Of Humanity as Practice), has everything to do with my research in painting. It's about a personal journey, the choices we make along the way, accepting our doubts related to the development of our works. Painting is a lot about answering to veiled, unnurtured questions, and trying to recognize what mistakes can turn out to be positive additions to the work. The Biennial series has the body as the starting point to investigate these concerns by incorporating mistakes in the process to the final aesthetic result with invented anatomies.

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Márcia Falcão, "Passinho trajetória marginal," 2025, oil and oil stick on canvas, 118" x 98" / Photo: Rafael Salim.
Courtesy of Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro

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What pushed you to dive into the difficult path of painting yourself nude?

Nudity has always been something normal in my life. I don't see the body as taboo, maybe because in my family we never saw it as such. Even when I'm fully naked, painting my own body, I don't feel weird. I forget it is an issue for so many people. When I'm working, what I see is the paint, the area I'm going to work on, the lines, I don't see nipples, the backside or whatever. The fact that I paint my own body has more to do with availability than any other reason. I can paint myself in the nude whenever I feel like.

Who are the artists you admire?

When I think about painting, I put quality above anything else. I admire those I feel share the same interest as mine: Velázquez, Goya, Rembrandt, more recently, Paula Rego and Jenny Saville.

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Márcia Falcão, "Posição 22," "Ioga Psicológica" series, 2025, oil and oil stick on canvas, 118" x 98" / Photo: Rafael Salim.
Courtesy of Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel, São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro

Any advice for young artists who feel menaced by prejudice or discrimination of any kind?

Be true to your dreams. People like us, from the edges of society, are always targeted, no matter what. We must be the first ones to believe in ourselves, in our strength, in our potential. Don't waste time expecting validation from others; you'll only hear things to put you down. Try to be around those who encourage you, where you can get constructive criticism. Stay strong!

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Plans for 2026?

I'm focused on my solo show for the second half of the year in São Paulo. I feel very happy to be able to show my production since 2022, like I did at the Biennial, where I showed parts of several series: "Ioga Psicológica," "Capoeira em Paleta Alta," "Monumentais," "Passinho" and "Malandra não Para." For now, my full attention is to develop my painting on what interests me the most: the body.

Marcia Falcão at the 36th Bienal de São Paulo

Through January 11

Ciccillo Matarazzo Pavilion

Avenida Pedro Álvares Cabral, s.n., Ibirapuera Park, São Paulo