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FEATURE

Women Painters Lead Brazil's New Wave of Figuration

Panmela Castro, Agrade Camíz, Márcia Falcão, Maya Weishof, and Gokula Stoffel are five artists at the helm of the revival.



Ela Bittencourt

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After years of institutional exhibitions of [Brazilian painting](#) often limited to early-modernist figuration and mid-century abstraction — and the work of Tarsila do Amaral, Anita Malfatti, Lygia Clark, Lygia Pape, and Mira Schendel being feted internationally — a new wave of Brazilian artists is injecting the medium with a sense of urgency and vigor.

Brazil previously saw a “return to painting” with the Geração 80 ('80s Generation) and abandonment of strict geometric abstraction; though, as evidenced by some of that era's artists, including Luiz Zerbini, Beatriz Milhazes, Leda Catunda, and José Leonilson, abstraction never fully went away. Instead, it fused with the materiality of the medium, resulting in a hybrid approach still present in contemporary painting.

While [Brazilian women artists](#) have certainly challenged stereotypes of beauty and womanhood before — Anna Bella Geiger and Lenora de Barros immediately come to mind — the frankness with which Brazilian women painters depict eroticism today, be it through their dogged, unvarnished portrayals of the female body and desire, or their bracing examinations of violence against women, seems uniquely of the moment.

Here are five artists to know.

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Márcia Falcão



Márcia Falcão, "Cuidado," from the *Monumentais* series (2025) (photo Rafael Salim, courtesy the artist and Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel, São Paulo/Rio de Janeiro)

Kineticism underpins Falcão's monumental, mostly female nudes, exhibited at [the 36th São Paulo Biennial](#) in 2025 and in her 2025 solo show, [Corpo de Cor \(Body of Color\)](#), at Contemporary Fine Arts in Berlin. [If the female body is a landscape](#), as Diana Ruzova wrote about Falcão's work for *Hyperallergic*, it is often a somber one.

In her painting "Cuidado" (Care, or Careful) (2025), Falcão depicts a Black woman merged with a rocky terrain. And in "Pêndulo" (Pendulum) (2025), which anchored the Berlin exhibition, she subsumes the body of a Black woman under frothy, off-white clouds, using classical foreshortening to exaggerate the work's uncanny, alienating effects. The body is also a (re)generative force in this series, entitled *Monumentais* (Monumentals) (2024–), showing bodies dancing, doing yoga, or practicing capoeira.

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Gokula Stoffel



Gokula Stoffel, "Um lugar para a cabeça" (2025) (photo Eduardo Ortega, courtesy the artist and Fortes D'Aloia & Gabriel, São Paulo/ Rio de Janeiro)

“Engulfed by her landscapes, she becomes the animal of her own thoughts,” curator Ariana Nuala writes of Stoffel in her essay for the artist’s 2025 solo show, *Um lugar para a cabeça* (A place for the head), at Fortes D’Aloia & Gabriel in São Paulo.

Stoffel, whose color palette is as whimsical as Weishof’s, and whose sensibility is particularly surrealist in comparison to other Brazilian figurative women painters, creates ecstasies as real as they are imaginary.

The animals that proliferate across Stoffel’s paintings include yellow bats with voracious bright-red tongues (“Morcego” (Bat) (2025)), frog-like creatures made of rope, leaping from the canvas surface (“Um lugar para a cabeça” (A place for the head) (2025)), and luminescent, toothy dragons (“Entranhas da Terra” (Bowels of the Earth) (2025)). The female body features obliquely in her works, too, yet often as a mortifying *materia prima*, or raw material, haunted and devoured by its surroundings. And yet, her works can also exude a wondrous, almost childlike energy; for example, her sparkly and vibrating oil painting, “Pirilampo” (Firefly) (2026), or in the magnetic sunset of another oil painting, “Euphonia [Eufonia]” (2026), where expressionistic colors and agile lines bring to mind the dreamy landscapes of Vincent van Gogh.