

EBECHO MUSLIMOVA

Ebecho Muslimova (b. 1984, Makhachkala, Dagestan, RU), known for her raucous and sexually uninhibited character “Fatebe” creates paintings and works on paper that beguile the eye as much as they humor the mind. Fatebe's physical contortions and unpredictable quandaries play themselves out like performances on the canvas: each work depicts a single event that uncannily combines self-consciousness, comedy and vulnerability. Muslimova's technical prowess as a painter helps to underscore the sheer delight of Fatebe's misadventures. “As her life continues, Fatebe is faced with newly articulated objects, stretched over landscapes that are populated with new temptations and ghosts. With adoring precision, Muslimova codifies the echoes of domesticity, luxury, nature, education, psychology, fetish, and art itself—images that have the capacity to haunt her. Nothing can deter Fatebe, though. From her gleeful smile, we can assume that her convictions only gain momentum with every new opportunity to test them.” (Quote from Natasha Stagg, *Cura Magazine*).

Muslimova received her BFA at Cooper Union in New York, NY in 2010. Muslimova has presented solo exhibitions at The Drawing Center, New York, NY; David Zwirner Gallery, London, UK; Magenta Plains, New York, NY; Galerie Maria Bernheim, Zurich, CH; White Flag Projects, St. Louis, MO and Room East, New York, NY. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at Kunstmuseum Basel, CH; ICA Miami, FL; Renaissance Society, Chicago, IL; Zuzeum, Riga, LV; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C.; Swiss Institute, New York, NY; Kunsthalle St. Gallen, CH. Her large-scale murals have been commissioned for biennials such as *The Dreamers*, 58th Edition of October Salon, Belgrade, RS and The 32nd Biennale of Graphic Arts: *Birth As Criterion*, Ljubljana, SI. In 2022 Muslimova was the recipient of the Borlem Prize, honoring artists whose oeuvre brings awareness to mental health issues & struggles. Her work has been featured in publications such as *Forbes*, *The New York Times*, *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *Mousse*, *Artnet*, *Hyperallergic*, and *Cura Magazine*, among others. Muslimova is included in Jeffrey Deitch's book, *Unrealism*, featuring 27 artists and major essays by Johanna Fateman, Alison Gingeras, and Aria Dean. The artist currently lives and works in New York, NY.

The New York Times

February 9 2023

The New York TimesArt Gallery Shows to See in
February

CHINATOWN

Ebecho MuslimovaThrough Feb. 25, Magenta Plains, 149 Canal Street, Manhattan; 917-388-2464;
magentaplains.com.

Ebecho Muslimova's "Fatebe Sunrise On Ice," 2022. via
Ebecho Muslimova and Magenta Plains, New York; Photo by
Object Studies

Fatebe, the fleshy, deathless doodle that Ebecho Muslimova created over a decade ago, is often referred to as the artist's alter ego, though that's not quite right. Fatebe is pure id, perpetually nude, hypersexed and overserved, her ample folds flapping unshyly and her orifices consuming or extruding wonder and horror in equal measure. A flat, fluid line drawing whose urges know no refusal, she's almost elegant, if you squint, like an Al Hirschfeld caricature on a bender. She exists somewhere between Cronenbergian body horror and complete liberation.

She returns here, in eight large-scale scenes on Dibond aluminum panels that read like history paintings or a hallucinatory Tintin adventure: Our heroine, rendered in jittering oil-slick strokes on sumptuously chromatic fields, is yoked to a stagecoach, vaults over a churning whirlpool and is plunged into a mammoth aspic kholodets swelling with cold meat. Her body remains endlessly elastic, able to gleefully disgorge a ghastly mountain of plastic e-waste or spit out its own skeleton.

These images are comically surreal but also inescapably dark: psychic pain worked out into the shape of a gag. Fatebe's death drive never stalls; she peers into the void or inflicts self-harm. Yet her flirtation with her own demise never comes to an unhappy end. Despite the increasingly baroque states of humiliation and Tex Avery-style violence Muslimova creates, Fatebe resists abjection. What she endures is no more absurd than what the rest of us must. The difference is she's found a way to laugh. **MAX LAKIN**

Artforum

September 10 2022

ARTFORUM**Ebecho Muslimova.**

September 10, 2022 at 2:58pm

EBECHO MUSLIMOVA WINS \$40,000 BORLEM PRIZE

Ebecho Muslimova has been named the 2022 recipient of the Borlem Prize, awarded annually since 2021 to an artist whose work draws attention to mental health issues. She will receive an unrestricted grant of \$20,000, with the same amount donated in her name to the charity of her choice, which the prize organizers stipulate must be in the service of suicide prevention or mental health advocacy. Muslimova selected the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline as the recipient of the donation. The prize was founded by collector, composer, and researcher Roberto Toscano in honor of his late brother, Fernando Toscano (1986–2018).

The New York–based Muslimova, who earned her BFA from Cooper Union, is well known for her work centering around the fictional character Fatebe, an alter-ego she created while in college to absorb her anxieties and to function as a surrogate, or avatar, for the artist in day-to-day life. Curvy, confident, exaggeratedly sexual, and always depicted in the nude, the cartoonish Fatebe

embodies both a zest for living and the rejection of societal standards attendant upon the female body and of the sexual mores imposed upon women.

“I am immensely honored to receive the Borlem Prize,” said Muslimova, citing the occasion as “a special opportunity to bring attention to the essential work of the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. The cruel illusion of suffering alone must be dispelled,” she continued. “Suicide only magnifies pain and creates a ripple effect of suffering.”

The prize jury this year was chaired by Alex Gartenfeld, artistic director of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, and additionally composed of Elena Filipovic, director of the Kunsthalle Basel; independent curator and historian Mark Godfrey; Hou Hanru, artistic director of MAXXI in Rome; Gianni Jetzer, curator-at-large for the Hirshhorn Museum & Sculpture Garden in Washington, DC; Luigia Lonardelli, a curator at MAXXI; and Evrim Oralkan, cofounder and CEO of online digital museum Collecteurs.

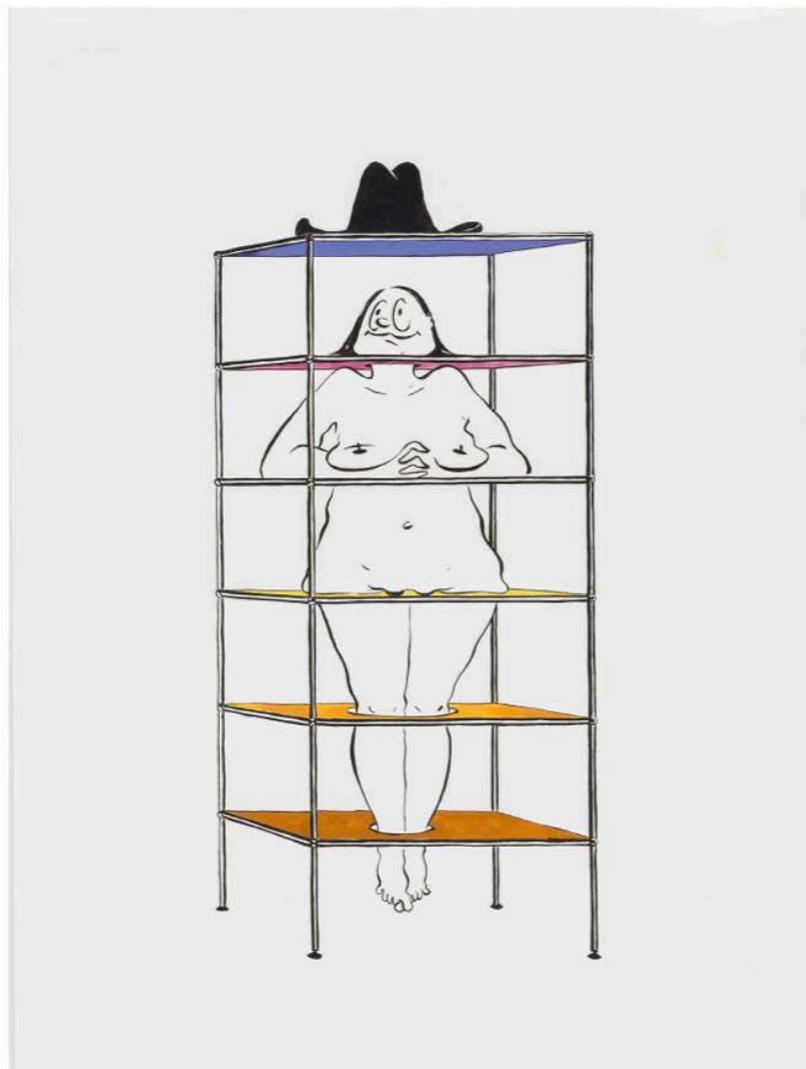
Describing himself as “delighted” that Muslimova was named the winner of the prize, Gartenfeld noted that her “work in drawing and painting provocatively explores complex psychological states. With humor, intelligence and invention, Ebecho’s work empowers viewers to ask questions and think critically about the body, intimacy, and the fraught experience of being alive.”

Tender, Freaky Vessel

Ebecho Muslimova
"Fatebe Digest"
David Zwirner
23 Nov – 23 Dec 2021

Swelling and star-assed, the protagonist of Ebecho Muslimova's (*1984) artwork guts feminist theory with comedic charisma. Her orifices leak uncontrollably, failing to contain the anxieties that escape them. Birthed from Muslimova's creative frustration as an art student, the caricature of Fatebe inherits her name from a portmanteau of "fat" and "Ebe", the artist's nickname. An unexpected anti-hero, her gargantuan flesh and goggle-eyes wreak havoc on respectability. A bulls-eye between her legs, Fatebe is an absurd gloryhole in the punchline of a Kleinian joke. Yet it is hard to discern exactly what the gag is – which, of course, is precisely the point.

"Fatebe Digest" is a voyage of sexual and emotional absurdity. The Russian-born, New-York based artist begins her exhibition with a series of inked works on paper, wherein Fatebe finds herself in a series of farcical quandaries. Nipples ever-erect, she is a solitary figure in a comic abyss. As we follow Fatebe's x-rated escapades, we feel hot shame. The character cork-screws her body, slotting into domestic architecture like a tired key. In *Fatebe Coat Rack* (2021), her drooping flesh hangs from a coat-stand, synonymous with the hide of a cow. Conversely, in *Fatebe 60° Anniversario* (2021), Fatebe is seated with an excremental companion in a beret, recalling Piero Manzoni's 1961 *Merda d'artista*, in which the Italian avant-gardist produced cans of his own faeces. The spectacular focal point of each drawing is the character's vaginal orifice, exaggerated to the point of ridicule so as to be penetrable by all. One might argue that Muslimova employs



Fatebe USM Sunset, 2021, sumi ink and watercolour on paper, 30.5 x 23 cm

abjection to dissect representations of female sexuality, in the vein of artists like Carolee Schneemann or Kiki Smith. Yet, it is hard to walk away from these erotic encounters with such political clarity. This is the paradox of the work: Fatebe invites us to consider our socially transgressive fantasies, while refusing to be easily digested as such. Instead, the character becomes a back-door to what queer theorist Jack Halberstam terms "low theory": eccentric forms of knowledge production, which risk being dismissed as ridiculous.

If Muslimova's ink drawings are an introduction to Fatebe's visual

world, her oil paintings are an expansion of the character's existential reckonings. In line with the artist's recent 2021 exhibition at the Drawing Center in New York, the paintings activate grotesque dramas pulled from sub-levels of the mind. In *Fatebe Octopus* (2021), the protagonist pantomimes as a sea creature, a hysterical smile plastered across her magenta face. In the painting opposite, *Fatebe BTS Mechane* (2021), she explodes into a crowd of delirious, multi-coloured skeletons, a skull gripped between her toes. The work adopts a trope known as the *danse macabre*, pointing to the

© Ebecho Muslimova. Courtesy: the artist; Galerie Maria Bernheim, Zurich; Magenta Plains, New York; David Zwirner

equalising force of death across humanity. Originating from medieval poetry, the visual allegory often depicted skeletons escorting humans to their graves in a playful waltz. Fatebe is well-versed in her own death-drive, both creating and escaping disastrous impasses with determined, brazen force. Her sexual exuberance is a vehicle to elicit emotional identification through humour, fear, and desire. Muslimova posits the buxom bimbo as a psycho-social subject worthy of our tenderness, a vessel for unabashed vulnerability.

The exhibition culminates in *Fatebe Theater Mural* (2021), the cen-

trepiece of the artist's melodrama. A hand painted installation foregrounds Fatebe's plump flesh, draped along the seats of a cinema, a urine-yellow light projected from her buttocks. It is no wonder Muslimova's satirical style has been likened to that of Iranian-American artist Tala Madani, who adopts projections and abject imagery to critique dominant power structures. Like Madani, Muslimova has the sharp wit of an editorial cartoonist-turned-psychoanalyst, excavating the depths of obscenity in search of meaning. The mural depicts Fatebe, puckering her lips to embrace the feet of an infant clutching

a skull. Pleasure, failure, and melancholy are all present in this fateful meeting. The artist draws on the Russian term жертва (zhertva) to describe Fatebe, which denotes victim, prey, and sacrifice all at once. Her extreme care for, and symbiosis with, the experiences of her caricature are evidence that empathy is essential to critical frameworks of thought. Muslimova's work is not to everyone's liking, and that is fine. It is a form of indigestion; an attestation that a vulgar joke can encompass more cultural weight than the theoretical musings it points to.

Tamara Hart

Fatebe Theater Mural, 2021, acrylic paint and charcoal on plaster wall, 280 x 590 cm
Installation view, David Zwirner, 2021



Courtesy: the artist and David Zwirner. Photo: Anna Arca

Frieze

April 21 2021

FRIEZE**Ebecho Muslimova's Alter-Ego Devours the Patriarchy**

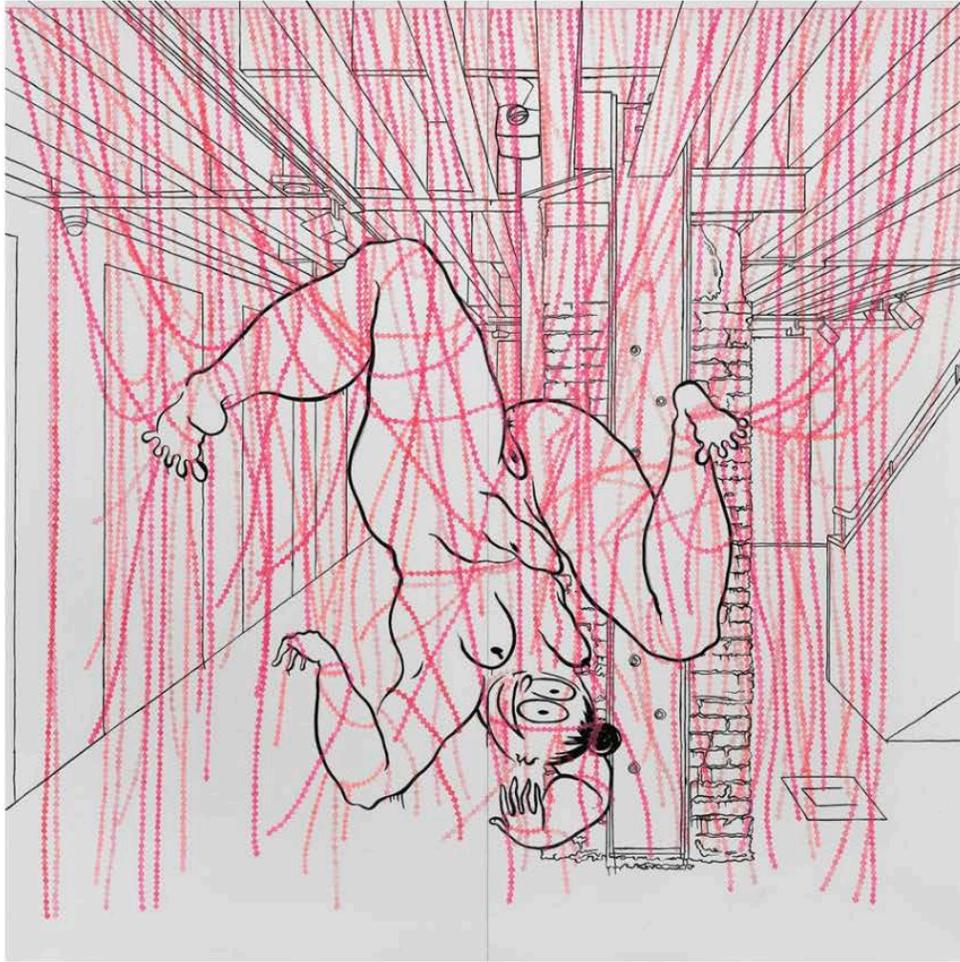
At The Drawing Center, New York, the artist presents a site-specific installation of large-scale drawings showcasing the bodily contortions of her crass cartoon counterpart, Fatebe

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BY ANTHONY HAWLEY IN REVIEWS | 21 APR 21



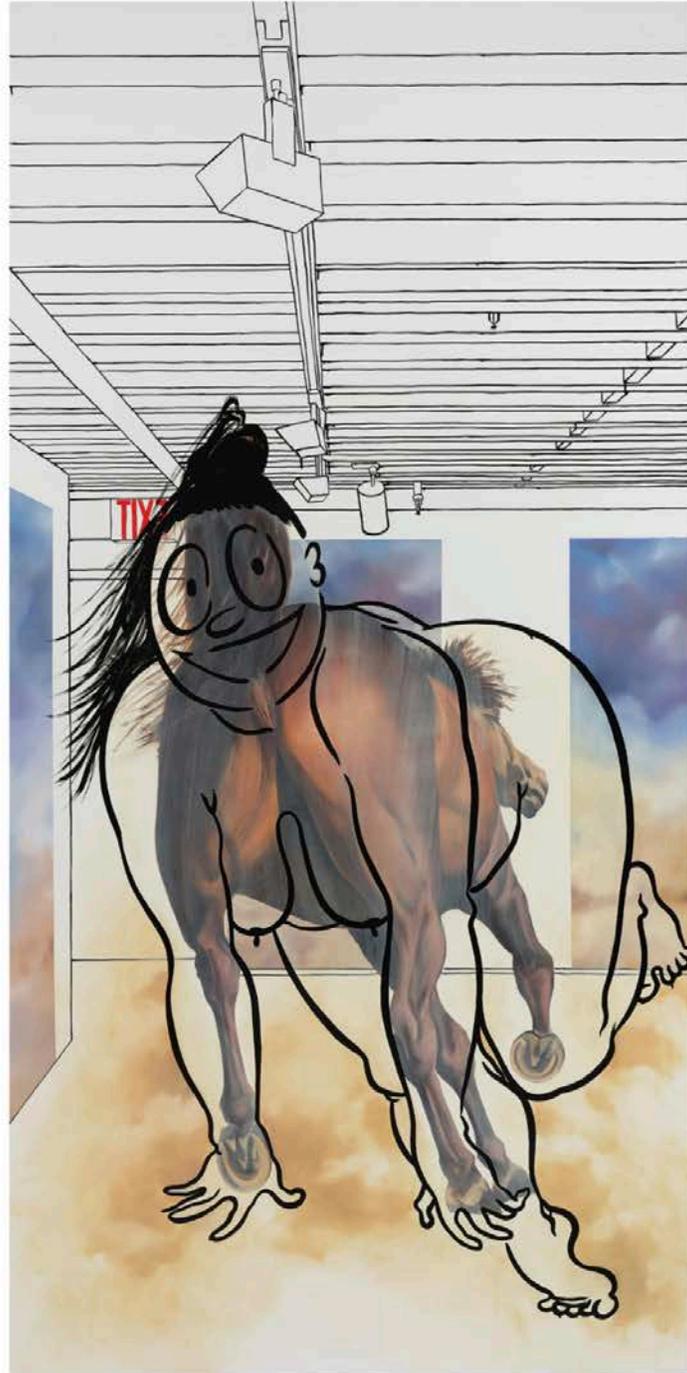
In *Fatebe Heirloom* (all works 2020), the artist Ebecho Muslimova's cartoon alter-ego – Fatebe – folds herself around a giant beanstalk. Her fingers and toes cling to the trunk as she squeezes her elastic frame into the form of a voluptuous heirloom tomato. But she's a bit overripe: her flesh oozes juice, dripping into a black hole beneath. In the adjacent diptych (*Fatebe Sister Booth A* and *Fatebe Sister Booth B*), Fatebe exudes and ingests two huge red vintage leather couches: her vagina and mouth stretched out, birthing and swallowing respectively. Is she in discomfort? It doesn't look like it. Fatebe grins mischievously as always, delighted with her uncanny ability to consume, contort, expel and become alternative forms.



Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe Beaded Curtain*, 2020, enamel on Dibond aluminium, 2.5 × 2.5 m. Courtesy: the artist, Galerie Maria Bernheim, Zurich, and Magenta Plains, New York; photograph: Shark Senesac

These recent works by the Russian-born artist are just some of the succulent spectacles in ‘Scenes in the Sublevel’ at The Drawing Center, New York – Muslimova’s first institutional solo show – a site-specific installation of ten, large-scale drawings. The exhibition’s biggest panel (*Fatebe Phantom Cage*) presents two Fatebes: one sits contentedly on a set of stairs, leisurely watching her second self, enlarged and engorged, having fit a bird cage inside her torso and releasing colourful fledglings from her smiling mouth. Organ-less, her body fits snugly over the wiry tiers of the aviary’s various levels. Fatebe is always a bit inside out.

In another panel (*Fatebe Wet Mold*), she is daisy yellow, mopping up her own urine, naked as she always is, but wearing little cloth booties. It seems her body is disintegrating into smaller Fatebes, marbled into the swirling floor of piss. Next to this is *Fatebe Downstairs*, where she's on her back, spread eagle, pulling back her butt cheeks to release colourful translucent balloons from her orifices. The room goes a little wobbly, funhouse-like – her inferred flatulence causing the space to shake.



Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe Reverse Gallop*, 2020, enamel and oil paint on Dibond aluminium, 2.5 × 1.2 m. Courtesy: the artist, Galerie Maria Bernheim, Zurich, and Magenta Plains, New York; photograph: Shark Senesac

Muslimova's character is crass, to say the least, but her scatological body play and vulgar humour represent a much-needed deflation of the paternalism, individualism and self-assuredness of patriarchy. Fatabe willingly breaks herself down. Her contortions remind us that all bodies fail at some point, so perhaps there are new ways to see and be in our surroundings if we just let loose. Looking at these works, I wonder: why do we persist with all our tired, rigid orders? Who needs all these ancient men and their insistence upon governance, normalization? In this way, Fatabe poses the best threat: no more borders or binaries. No more stability, perfectionism or hierarchies. No more demure acquiescence. No more locker-room talk – she's swallowed the locker room itself. Who knows what she'll devour next? Maybe, like Christo and Jeanne-Claude did in 1995, she'll wrap the Reichstag. Maybe it will be a whole nation state.

Collapsible, convertible, unflappable and somatic, Fatabe is Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's wet dream, a visual manifestation of their essay 'How Do You Make Yourself a Body without Organs?' (1947). She opens her body, as they write, 'to passages and distributions of intensity and territories and deterritorializations'. She revamps species, dislodging human-object symbiosis, dumping self-respect and asking us to guffaw (and wet our pants!) along the way. In a sense, Fatabe might be perfectly cephalopodic – sinuous, invertebrate, tentacular, squirty – her billowing folds morphing almost seamlessly with her environs as she sprays smokescreens to keep enemies at bay. This is where she is so wonderfully tricky: her *joie de vivre* isn't (thankfully) politically correct, but politically abject.

Ebecho Muslimova's 'Scenes in the Sublevel' at The Drawing Center, New York, runs through 23 May 2021.

Main image: Ebecho Muslimova, 'Scenes in the Sublevel', 2021, exhibition view, The Drawing Center, New York.

Courtesy: the artist and The Drawing Center, New York; photograph: Daniel Terna

The New Yorker

April 21 2021



ART

Ebecho Muslimova

The character Fatebe—a portmanteau of “fat” and Muslimova’s first name—is an alter ego for the ages, a lewd and goofy jester-protester whose hectoring pudendum is also a picket sign. Muslimova, who was born in Dagestan, Russia, and lives in New York, has portrayed her floppy, nude cartoon figure in countless comically surreal vignettes, presenting Fatebe as a lusty, hapless saboteur. In the artist’s new series, conceived specifically for the sublevel of the Drawing Center, Fatebe has become a structural intrusion. Large, mixed-media compositions overwhelm the low-ceilinged basement, evoking “Looney Tunes” absurdity, W.P.A. murals, and the sardonic punk figuration of Raymond Pettibon. In one panel, Fatebe gaily endeavors to vaginally subsume a tufted banquette; in another, the hindquarters of a running horse are overlaid with an image of our antiheroine on all fours. Fatebe is unquestionably the butt of every joke here, but Muslimova always ingeniously manages to give her the last laugh.

—*Johanna Fateman*

Feb. 5-May. 23

 The Drawing Center
35 Wooster St.
Downtown

212-219-2166



The New York Times

March 18 2021

The New York Times

3 Art Gallery Shows to See Right Now

Ebecho Muslimova

Through May 23. The Drawing Center, 35 Wooster Street, Manhattan. 212-219-2166; drawingcenter.org.



Installation views of "Ebecho Muslimova: Scenes in the Sublevel," at the Drawing Center. Daniel Terna

For almost 10 years, the young Brooklyn artist Ebecho Muslimova has been putting a naked, obese alter-ego called Fatebe — “fat Ebe” — through every feat of exhibitionist excess she can think of. In “Scenes in the Sublevel,” a series of 10 specially commissioned portraits on door-size panels of Dibond aluminum, she’s bigger than ever and more exuberant, appearing in elaborate fantasy vistas set in the Drawing Center’s own basement.

In a pair of adjoining panels, Fatebe appears on two red sofas, swallowing one and having sex with the other. Another scene has her dragging puddles of urine down endless corridors and a third superimposes her on the rear end of a beautifully painted horse. Her eyes, as always, are egg shaped and innocent, and her own pony tail echoes the horse’s.

On her surface, Fatebe seems to suggest that women’s bodies, female sexuality and appetite in general are, at best, ridiculous. The fact that her escapades are set in the very room where the works are hung — look for drawings of the basement’s track lighting atop most of the panels — reminds you that the artist’s role these days is to bring some color to the staid white walls of New York’s art institutions, whether or not, like Muslimova, the artist in question happens to be an immigrant from the Russian republic of Dagestan. The drawings might even make you think that there’s something unhinged and sinful about the simple pleasures of bright color and sinuous line.

But because it’s all delivered with a pretty broad wink, you’re free to take it or leave it. You can think seriously about portrayals of women in American visual culture, the treatment of female artists and your own implication, as a visitor, in the structural problems of the art world. Or you can just look at the pictures and have fun.

WILL HEINRICH

Flash Art

14 April 2021

Flash Art



•FEATURE

Narcissus and Echo: The Singular Multiverse of Ebecho Muslimova by [Mitchell Anderson](#)

April 14, 2021



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Ebecho Muslimova, *First Suicide Attempt*, 2012. Screenprint. 30.5 x 22.9 cm. Courtesy of Privat Collection. © Ebecho Muslimova.

She reinvents herself as furniture, flora, or fauna; examines herself in any reflection she can find and dances the macabre; in a multitude of ways, Fatebe, the ample line-drawn alter ego of Ebecho Muslimova, redistributes the limits of the body, reality, and decency. Whether rendered in ink or inhabiting a lexicon of graphic painting, the cartoon character is a constant in a body of work that tackles not just immediate issues of bodily anxiety, possibility, and pleasure, but the meaning of imbuing two dimensions with imagined and replicated content and space. Over the past decade much press has been given to a gendered reading of the central element in Muslimova's work, but the varied executions, placement, and scale are also central to a total project that reflects on the ridiculousness of life and art and the ways in which one manages to physically and emotionally survive.

Muslimova's ink-drawn vignettes of Fatebe (pronounced Fat E-Bee), a portmanteau of the artist's nickname and the represented body, began in 2010. The initial impact of the character is her shamelessness, like Adam and Eve before the fall. Fatebe's abstracted double-circled vagina and starry asshole appear across her oeuvre, not as elements of shock but as elements seen when an active body is on view, sexually or not. If norms are being shattered, it's by the reentrance of the comic strip into high art, which, even after Roy Lichtenstein, Joe Brainard, Keith Haring, or Takashi Murakami, continues to hold a transgressive power over our expectations of what art, and especially art created by a woman, should be. Muslimova, Tala Madani, and Joyce Pensato come to mind as some of the few, and vastly differing, recent female artists harnessing these aesthetics. These small-scale drawings situate Fatebe in singular situations against a white expanse: burning a hole in her forehead with a magnifying glass in *FATEBE FIRST SUICIDE ATTEMPT* (2012) or her body oozing like mortar between a stack of bricks in *FATEBE BRICK HOLDER* (2015). If at times the situations seem humiliating, she never admits it. All shame resides within the viewer's expectations. Fatebe is especially interested in the limitlessness of her orifices, stretching and inserting in amazing ways. These drawings are too elegant for a public bathroom stall, but too scatological for the pages of the *New Yorker*. Class boundaries, exposed through sex, are crossed freely, settling uneasily.



① 2 3 4

Ebecho Muslimova, *THE BIG SLIP*, 2018. Enamel on aluminum dibond. 366 x 244 cm. Courtesy of Privat Collection.

Since 2017 Muslimova has depicted more complicated settings that cosplay as paintings. Ombré stenciling and photorealistic effects suggest paint-by-numbers. Muslimova never allows the wet movement of pigment to take control. Sometimes glossy enamel is laid on aluminum panels, as in the massive *THE BIG SLIP* (2018), whose patterned decoration is materially related, yet resists Christopher Wool's 1980s and '90s straightening of mid-century gay and feminine aesthetics.

The flatness of Fatebe is important. Muslimova's insistence on her cartoon qualities allows the impossible, stressing that this is not a caricature of fatness but another being living her own reality. Like Jessica Rabbit's "bad," Fatebe isn't fat, she's just drawn that way. A suite of paintings shown last year at Galerie Maria Bernheim in Zurich saw her interacting with skeletons executed like photorealistic stickers. Skeletal is in opposition to obese, and Muslimova renders it in her own opposition. Much more than memento mori, they are celebrations, their creepiness dismissed by a worry-free attitude. They highlight the conceptual and figurative depth being played with. In *FATEBE TRUMPET* (2020), she and a skeleton musically perform with alternate vanishing points, the sound of her instrument not registering on her partner's bones as her body wobbles along sound waves. In *FATEBE DARK BANNISTER* (2020) she stretches down the titular structure as a skeleton reaching the top presses its voluminous fingers into the flat flesh of her leg. The tension of illusion is felt in both, which is to say it forces the viewer to confront the meaning and, especially, the feeling of being both a thinker and a corporal thing in space.



① 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Ebecho Muslimova, "TRAPSI". Installation view at Magenta Plains, New York, 2019. Courtesy of Magenta Plains, New York.

This spatial play is more than a painterly bag of tricks. Muslimova confuses her character's relationship to our actual world. As an artwork she is always on performative display. At Magenta Plains in New York, *FATEBE 2017 SHOW* (2017) pictured Fatebe dipping her nipples in the gallery's septic-flooded basement. At Kunsthalle St. Gallen, a gigantic wall of the institution became both wall painting and spatial installation. *FATEBE BIG FOOT* (2018) graphically mirrored the exhibition and then set a gigantic Fatebe within that space, smiling as she mooned the IRL room. These gestures are more in line with Bruce Nauman's studio films of the late 1960s than with Brian Donnelly's ubiquitous "Companions" (1999–ongoing). Muslimova publicly considers the creative bargain of representation when one plays both actor and director in one's art. This is most overt when Fatebe is inserted into cinematic situations, from Tim Burton (*FATEBE SCISSORHANDS*, 2012) to Alfred Hitchcock and Stanley Kubrick (*FATEBE SELF POSSESSION*, 2017) to James Cameron (*FATEBE T2*, 2018). All are auteurs who famously controlled the actresses they worked with. Other times a connection between paintings hints at a multiplicity rather than an ongoing saga, as in *FATEBE DEEP FROG ORGANZA* and *FATEBE BENT GRILLE* (both 2019), the latter showing Fatebe approaching and observing herself in the composition of the former. Bound to live their lives as luxury objects away from each other, they hint at a complicated reality in Muslimova's multiverse of self-reflection (realization).



① 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

Ebecho Muslimova, "Scenes in the Sublevel". Installation view at The Drawing Center, New York, 2021. Photography by Daniel Terna. Courtesy of The Drawing Center, New York,

These complications are on full display now at Muslimova's exhibition "Scenes from the Sublevel" at the Drawing Center in New York, as each of the ten densely hung works form a surrounding mirror of the exhibition space. The title refers to both the show's physical basement location (the curators at the institution have unexpectedly and thoughtfully paired her with a survey of David Hammons's "body prints" upstairs) as well as something of the endless subconscious that Muslimova always mobilizes. Hung touching the floor, each, as with the wall painting in St. Gallen, graphically reflects the room before them. The three-panel *FATEBE PHANTOM CAGE* (2020) emulates the staircase as one descends, and is a survey of the possibilities of Muslimova's drawing and painting, as brushy balloons float behind a flock of birds that read as large decals erupting out of the mouth of her loose sumi-style Fatebe. On the walls are depictions of four other works in the exhibition, something seen throughout, so that the viewer becomes the true absence in this prismatic yet statically repeating house of mirrors. That these works will maintain the parallels of their initial display is a powerful conception. What does it mean for this institution's architecture to live on elsewhere, replicated like the artist's alter ego? All ten works are self-sufficient tableaus within a unified site-specific installation, an update of Titian's six-panel *poesie* (1551–75) depicting Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. From Fatebe tangled in Felix Gonzalez-Torres's *Untitled (Blood)* (1992) in *FATEBE BEADED CURTAIN* (2020) or pissing against an Ettore Sottsass mirror in *FATEBE ULTRAFRAGOLA* (2020), references pop up everywhere, in action, in prop, and in infrastructure. Muslimova suggests that the phantoms of culture and norms affect our possibilities at every step of creation and life. They leave echoes. She places her practice, as an artist, into the world of the viewer rather than the antisocial safety of the studio. She invites a group questioning of the imagined and the illusioned. The true charm of Fatebe and Muslimova's constantly depicted hyper-narcissism is the way in which this transgressively free and boundless character, mishaps and perceived humiliations and all, isn't just a desired alter ego of the artist but, at some sublevel, a depiction of the ambitions and realities of each of us as we create and negotiate our way through the world.

Ebecho Muslimova's solo show "Scenes in the Sublevel" at The Drawing Center, New York will be on view until May 23rd.

The Guide

March 2021

THEGUIDE.ART



Ebecho Muslimova

By Walter Scott*Photography* Emiliano Granado

Ebecho Muslimova and Walter Scott have never met but they share a habit. Both artists ground their drawing-centered practices in a Dr. Jekyll-like (or, perhaps more contemporarily, Anna Delvey-like) activity of embellishing and maintaining an alter ego. These alter egos, Fatebe and Wendy, respectively, act almost as scouting parties sent out ahead into the dangerous thick of their creators' most embarrassing fears and desires. Muslimova and her foil, Fatebe, landed their first institutional solo show this in an exhibition curated by Rosario Güiraldes at the Drawing Center in New York.

On the occasion of the show, the Brooklyn-based Muslimova agreed to delve into Fatebe's world with fellow alter-ego tripper Scott, who like Muslimova swerves the line between fine art and cartoon. Together the two artists find common ground in their love of *Roger Rabbit*, the clarity that comes with the sting of embarrassment, and the undeniable intelligence of being kind to yourself and others.

WALTER SCOTT: What's interesting to me about Fatebe is that she never seems to be at the mercy of anybody. The situations that she's in are of her own making. There never seems to be another figure. She is always performing these things for herself.

EBECHO MUSLIMOVA: She's performing for herself and also for me, but she's also always thinking of the perfect angle because he knows she's being seen.

SCOTT: So she is still performing but for a viewer.

MUSLIMOVA: Exactly.

SCOTT: I realized that the original desire to create Wendy, my alter-ego that performs all of these acts of embarrassment and mortification, was my own desire to somehow ratify or turn my own humiliation into something else. There is something weirdly empowering about being able to humiliate yourself publicly, but also have control over it.

MUSLIMOVA: Creating an alter ego character that then you can place in these compromised situations is the ultimate control issue. You have to literally invent another self to control.

SCOTT: Yes and that's what's fascinating. It's the flickering between what seems to be images of lack of control and what it actually is at the same time, this hyper controlled act. I think it has a lot to do with the conundrum of the artist that we're always toeing the line between hopeless abandon and tight self control. We go in between these spaces all the time. It is a productive tension that I see in your work.

MUSLIMOVA: [Fatebe] is a solution to a problem in many ways including the problem of the image. She solves whatever situation she's in. The beginning, middle, end and climax all in one.

SCOTT: I'm thinking about prickles and goo philosophy of which I know very little about. It's a quote by Alan Watts and it's about two kinds of being. Prickly people are precise, rigorous, and logical and goo people are vague and creative. I feel like literally and figuratively Fatebe is goo and that it's probably a good idea to have more goo in the system because her gooey body is able to, sometimes literally, envelope concepts and thereby solve them.

The situations you are putting her in seem to be also increasingly real from your early black and white drawings to these more 1-to-1 reality to fiction panels at the Drawing Center.

MUSLIMOVA: I think for me it felt like the *Roger Rabbit* effect was the best way to expand things around her without just cartooning everything.

I don't come up with the image before I start painting, so of course that translates into this kind of gerrymandered world. If reality is a little too real maybe her gooey body processes that information through collage.

SCOTT: I love that. I've been thinking a lot about *Roger Rabbit* lately. There is this scene that I posted on Instagram where the detective and Roger Rabbit are handcuffed together. And the detective is trying to saw the handcuffs off so that they could separate. And I thought it was a profound image. It resonated with me that there's this representational, cartoony world or cartoony self, and then your own self and they're kind of intertwined and stuck together. That's why these new things that you're making resonate with me specifically, because I also feel like it's almost like the compositions were there without her.

MUSLIMOVA: Sometimes that's true but sometimes the gesture of [Fatebe's] body comes first. She's like this lock that activates in any situation.

SCOTT: She's an adhering agent. She's malleable. She operates herself like furniture. She could operate as a platform, but she also can operate as an actor. She has this way of being an object herself.

MUSLIMOVA: At the Drawing Center, it shows. I made the architectural drawings of the room panel by panel and then that was my blank piece of paper.

SCOTT: There seems to be this burgeoning interest in architecture in your work that wasn't there before. Or were you always sort of interested in these super realist looking architectural spaces?

MUSLIMOVA: I have always been, but it floated in lately. Maybe it's like the goo and the prickles thing. The intimidation of architecture appeals to me. My parents are architects. I don't know. The concreteness of structures is something that [Fatebe] can stand up against.

SCOTT: Do you ever feel like the art world is intimidating and that there's a way that Fatebe can contort herself around the art world to reveal how intimidating it is?

MUSLIMOVA: It can be very intimidating. For a long time, I didn't show Fatebe at all. The first couple years, it was like I had this sick joke with myself where I would only do this for the rest of my life. I wanted to have this weird drawing practice that no one was going to think of as art. Art school fucked me up and Fatebe was a way to own something.

SCOTT: I relate. I drew Wendy on a placemat one day because I was tired of feeling like I needed to behave in a certain way as an artist. Wendy was like the least conceptual thing I could think about doing, but it was sort of the most honest in the end.

MUSLIMOVA: That's why I started [Fatebe]. I realized you know nothing and to front like you know anything is posturing. So why not just do the thing that you know you like and humiliate it and see where that goes. It turns out to be a lot of places.

SCOTT: It gets you all the way to the Drawing Center.

MUSLIMOVA: *[laughs]* Yes. Fatebe reveals things to me that I can only access through the process of unlocking her.

SCOTT: Creating Fatebe is a way to examine yourself. I've looked back at volumes of Wendy and realized she's a lot wiser than I gave her credit for at the time. She actually went through a lot of shit and figured it out because she actually is very emotionally intelligent so I guess I am too.

MUSLIMOVA: As you say, Fatebe is part of my emotional intelligence. I learn about how I feel through drawing her. But I don't know if all art does, maybe it does.

SCOTT: I like the slippery territory that your work exists in where if you look at it in a feminist lens it's interesting because it's not the type of work that proposes some sort of politically progressive solution, per se. It sort of just expresses the contours of a lived experience that it's kind of solution-less, but not in a negative way. This is true with Wendy too because I never set out to create like an empowered character who had her shit together.

MUSLIMOVA: Because that's reality. I don't know anyone who has their shit together.

SCOTT: I actually find that like a lot of art that proposes itself as a solution to a political issue doesn't seem very honest.

MUSLIMOVA: Plus, what kind of solutions can we have anyway? Things are so complicated.

SCOTT: Yes. It's empowering to just create work that expresses the details of living in a problem.

MUSLIMOVA: Before you had the nerve to think that you had a solution, why don't you just get good at describing the problem?

SCOTT: For myself, I have these fictional characters and they all have different subjectivities where they all face their own issues. I have an identity that feels not fractured, but multi-faceted. And so I get to create characters that express different parts of my identity and just send them into a little pit together to communicate.

MUSLIMOVA: Ever since I began drawing Fatebe, I've been trying to also kill her off. There's been dark moments where enough is enough. You have nothing left and then I find myself making a drawing about her death and that leads me back in.

SCOTT: I'm starting to feel like I've made like a Netflix series or something where it could go on forever.

MUSLIMOVA: It's because they live in their own world. The more you add to the character, the more dimensional they become. And then you're just kind of a custodian to these entities. You no longer have to just water it but arrange it and clear the path for it to grow wherever.

SCOTT: I feel a little stuck because I need to write the next Wendy and there's things that I want for her. And then it makes me wonder if maybe there's things I want for myself and there's actually things in my life that need to change.

MUSLIMOVA: The closest I feel to pure misery is when I have to come up with things. I can't. The only way to make a new work is to just do it. But perhaps because you have a storyline, there is a different need.

SCOTT: I think there is a narrative quality to Fatebe too, in a way.

MUSLIMOVA: Yeah, but she's a one-liner. She has to be the set-up and the punchline in the same form. She's a bit like a standup comedian.

SCOTT: I see that. I'm remembering that piece where she's eating the asparagus and peeing. You have it all in one shot. You see an expression of both cause and effect. You see what she's eating and then you see how it affects the toilet paper. Something about like the color gradient reminds me of the act of looking at art. I feel like she's literally taking on the act of perception. Here is her body, creating a gradient on this field. It's funny that I'm looking at this ombre pattern, which is very artful, but it comes from her urine. It's confrontational at the same time as being an aesthetic gesture. There's a belligerence there. Is Fatebe angry?

MUSLIMOVA: No, she's just an innocent. She gets angry when he stubs her toe but she doesn't have baggage. Her anger is like the anger of an animal.

I would say that I don't like to draw her angry. I also don't like to hurt her and that's how I know I love her because it's not intellectual. That's the only thing that she doesn't do is get really hurt.

SCOTT: Perhaps it's also because she's so malleable. She's generous in the way that she can envelop things and then remake, reconfirm, reconstitute them just with her own body. And it's always with a child hearted openness.

MUSLIMOVA: She withstands. She's not able to be humiliated.

SCOTT: She seems like she realizes that the problem is not the problem. The resistance to the problem is the problem. And that's pretty profound. She's the water that flows around the rocks.

MUSLIMOVA: Definitely. When I'm able to be the water, my reward is her. When you're making art, it's always a condensed version of that lesson.

Published: March 19, 2021

Ebecho Muslimova's "Scenes in the Sublevel" is on view at the Drawing Center, 35 Wooster Street, through May 23, 2021.

Walter Scott is an interdisciplinary artist and writer, his most recent graphic novel, "Wendy, Master of Art," was published by Drawn and Quarterly in 2020.

New American Paintings

February/March 2020

New
American
Paintings

JURIED EXHIBITIONS-IN-PRINT

Ebecho Muslimova

Brooklyn, NY

917.388.2464 (Magenta Plains)

<http://www.magentaplains.com/exhibitions/ebecho-muslimova/> / @Ebecho

b. 1984 Makhachkala, Dagestan, Russia

Education

2010 BFA, The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art, New York, NY

Solo Exhibitions

2019 *TRAPSI*, Magenta Plains, New York, NY
 2018 *Ebecho Muslimova: 2017*, Magenta Plains, New York, NY
 2016 White Flag Projects, St. Louis, MO
 2015 Room East, New York, NY

Group Exhibitions

2019 *Life and Limbs*, Swiss Institute, New York, NY
Throwback Jack, Fredericks & Freiser, New York, NY
Wars: 20th and 21st Centuries, David Nolan Gallery, New York, NY
A Detached Hand, Magenta Plains, New York, NY
 2018 *No Fear of Fainting in a Gym*, Kunst Halle Sankt Gallen, St. Gallen, Switzerland
 2017 *Birth as Criterion*, 32nd Biennale of Graphic Arts, Ljubljana, Slovenia

Publications

2018 Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe: Volume 2* (Three Star Books)
 2015 Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe: Volume 1* (Onestar Press)

Collections

Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC
 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY

Represented by

Magenta Plains, New York, NY
 Galerie Maria Bernheim, Zurich, Switzerland

Ebecho Muslimova, known for her raucous and sexually uninhibited character Fatebe, creates paintings and works on paper that beguile the eye as much as they humor the mind. Fatebe's physical contortions and unpredictable quandaries play themselves out like performances on the canvas: each work depicts a single event that uncannily combines self-consciousness, comedy, and vulnerability. Muslimova's technical prowess as a painter helps to underscore the sheer delight of Fatebe's misadventures. "As her life continues, Fatebe is faced with newly articulated objects, stretched over landscapes that are populated with new temptations and ghosts. With adoring precision, Muslimova codifies the echoes of domesticity, luxury, nature, education, psychology, fetish, and art itself—images that have the capacity to haunt her. Nothing can deter Fatebe, though. From her gleeful smile, we can assume that her convictions only gain momentum with every new opportunity to test them."

—Natasha Stagg, *CURA*.

Muslimova





Ebecho Muslimova

Fatebe Wet Attic, 2019 | oil and acrylic on canvas, 42 x 54 inches

130

Topical Cream

January 31, 2020

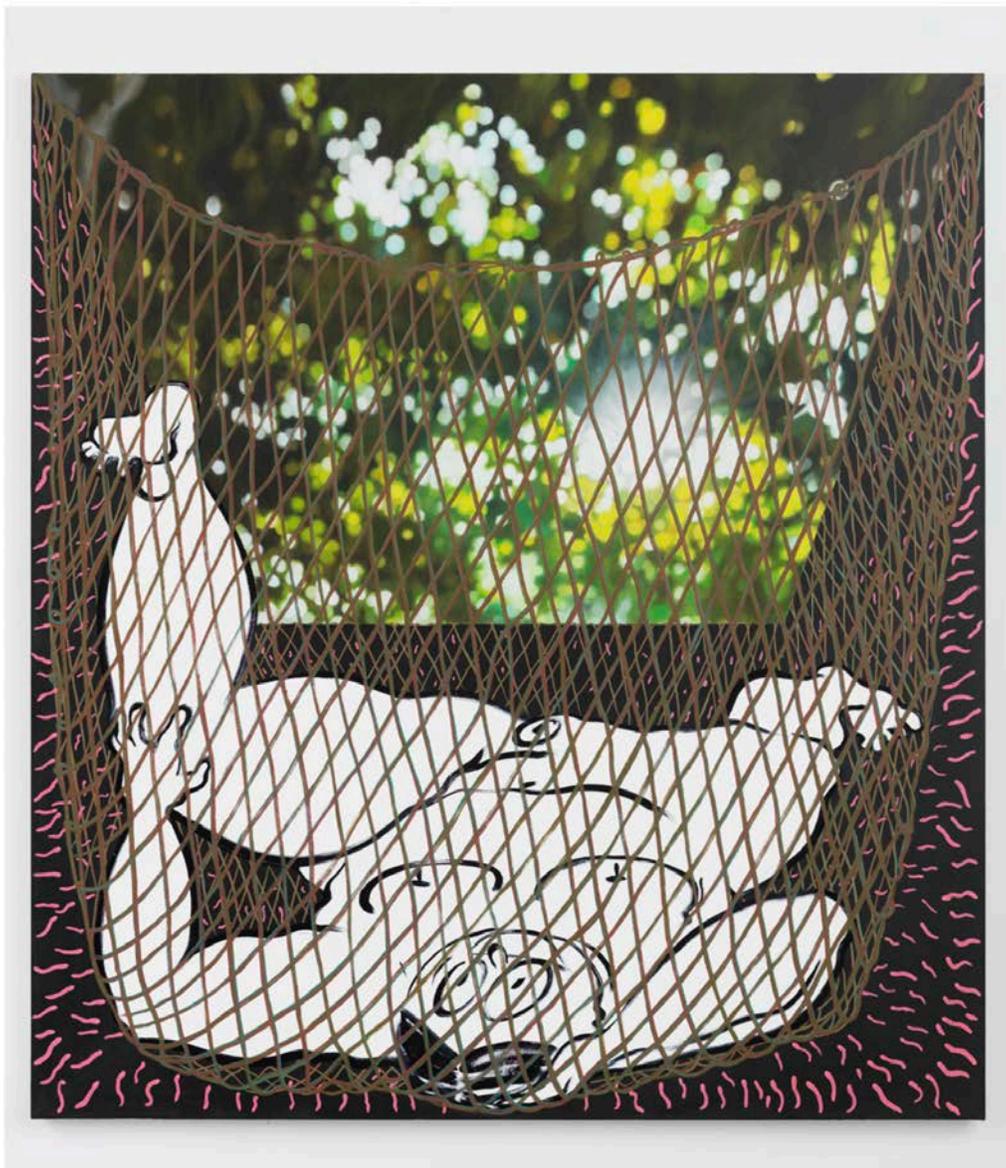
TOPICAL CREAM

01.31.2020

EBECHO MUSLIMOVA: TRAPS!

By Meri Simonyan

Fatebe is Ebecho Muslimova's anxiety transcribed into the "structure of a joke." The cartoon's increasingly physical comedy tableaux are divided into three scenarios: the set-up, the punchline, and the expectation of surprise. Unlike other Fifth Wave icons, Fatebe's body is all she is, everything she has to say comes from a figurative gesture. Ebecho Muslimova's second show with Magenta Plains titled *TRAPS!* is a continuation of Fatebe's outrageous circumstances with a stoic twist.



Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe Net*, 2019. Oil and acrylic on canvas, 66h x 60w in. Photo courtesy of the artist and Magenta Plains.

For *TRAPS!* large oil canvases have taken over the gallery space with striking colors that seem to be a new dimension of Fatebe's universe. Muslimova picked up oil as "an excuse to paint and experiment with new textures." The new textures and different spatial environments of the brightly colored oil paintings help Fatebe redefine herself as a flat line on a white surface. She is becoming more real as if she is "redefining her own flatness through color and dimension." The stillness of an oil painting versus a drawing has undoubtedly seeped into Fatebe's psyche, and she has become more stoic even when caught in a trap.



Ebecho Muslimova, *TRAPS!*, 2019. Installation view, New York, NY. Photo courtesy of the artist, Magenta Plains, New York, and Galerie Maria Bernheim, Zurich.

When asked who Fatebe is to her, Ebecho stated, "She is a surrogate body – a fantasy of me as a person...of my anxieties, depression, pain. I can't fall into a hole and stay there – that's not how we function in reality. We climb as fast as possible. We try to. But she gets to lay down and explore it all." According to the ethics of Fatebe, each failure is an opportunity to start over. As an alter ego of the artist, Fatebe is nothing if not a utopia.

The New York Times

November 11, 2019

The New York Times

ART REVIEWS

New York Galleries: What to See Right Now

“Postwar Women” at the Art Students League; “Japan Is America”; Howardena Pindell’s “Autobiography” series; Man Ray’s paintings; and Ebecho Muslimova’s comic, fearless muse.



Ebecho Muslimova's "Fatebe Deep Frog Organza," from 2019. Ebecho Muslimova and Magenta Plains

Ebecho Muslimova

Through Dec. 18. Magenta Plains, 94 Allen Street, Manhattan; 917-388-2464, magentaplains.com.

Bawdy, crude, exuberant and empowering, the paintings in [Ebecho Muslimova's "Traps" at Magenta Plains](#) are designed to shock. They are also individual feats of virtuoso drawing and craft, and they demonstrate how painting can serve as catharsis, personal narrative and raucous joke, all wrapped into one.

The subject of the Russian-born, New York-based Ms. Muslimova confronts you fully exposed. Facing the gallery entrance is “Fatebe Bent Grill” (all works are from 2019), in which Ms. Muslimova’s alter-ego (that is, “Fatebe”) thrusts her buttocks at the viewer, so the first thing you see is an elegantly drawn pair of labia and an anus drawn with flick-like brush strokes. The rest of the painting, however — like several here — is a Gestalt fantasy of gates and [M.C. Escher](#) frogs that echo a painting across the room, “Fatebe Deep Frog Organza.” Another eye-catcher is “Fatebe Lightning in the Mezzanine” (2019), in which the artist’s doppelgänger lies naked in an armchair, with lightning striking outside, seemingly flowing through her body.

More than mere provocation, there is a luminous body-positive politics to these paintings. Fleshy, female and flagrantly nude, “Fatebe” is simultaneously comic, absurd and fearless. Painted with obvious love and rigor, she becomes a kind of Everywoman superhero.

MARTHA SCHWENDENER

New York Times 11-20-19

Elephant

November 25, 2019

ELEPHANT

5 QUESTIONS

**The Artist Acting Out Her
Anxieties Through an Alter
Ego Who Refuses to Die**

When Ebecho Muslimova first started drawing the character “Fatebe”, it was as a joke and a distraction from art school critique. Ten years on, Fatebe’s become the star of the show—and of the artist’s life. Words by Emily Gosling

Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe Bent Grille*, 2019

www.magentaplains.com

917-388-2464

Since 2011, Ebecho Muslimova has led a double life: her own, and that of her sort-of-alter-ego, Fatebe (pronounced “Fat Eebee”), who has manifested through her artwork over the years—initially in the form of thousands of quick notebook drawings, and more recently in a series of paintings, some of which are currently on show at Magenta Plains in New York in a show entitled *Traps!* Fatebe is both glorious and grotesque; hilarious and unsettling as she settles into a series of strange, often logic-defying surreal scenarios.

Born in Russia and raised for the most part in New Jersey, Muslimova studied sculpture at art school, and didn't have a particularly easy time of it: she says that during her senior thesis project, she "kind of had a nervous breakdown" and ended up throwing out the sculptures she'd been working on for the whole of her final year. That was when Fatebe came into her own: the drawings Muslimova had been making as a sort of personal joke, and to show to friends, ended up as her final piece when tacked onto the wall together. She passed the course, but decided that she now "wanted nothing to do with the art world".

For a brief time after graduation, Fatebe went back to being, as Muslimova puts it, "this tragic joke I'm going to do for the rest of my fucking life and never show anyone." However, that "immature tantrum" passed, Fatebe persisted and has been not just the central concern of Muslimova's work, but of her life: artist and subject have a symbiotic relationship that feels incredibly real for a fiction rendered in ink and paint. I spoke to Muslimova about her less-than-great experiences at art school, presenting the female form, the inherent problems with the "fat" prefix and overcoming anxiety.



Ebecho Muslimova, Fatebe Deep Frog Organza, 2019

Tell me more about your experience at art school: you studied sculpture, so where did Fatebe come in?

I had always drawn since I was very young, then in art school, I didn't draw or paint and I now understand that I did sculpture because I wanted to, on an artistic level, occupy physical space. Fatebe started as a sort of base joke on the back of a notebook, to entertain myself and my friends and offer a sort of relief from art school critiques. I never expected to be so continuously involved with Fatebe: I tried to kill her off a few years ago, just thinking, "Oh God, how many more of these are you gonna do?" But killing her off can't just happen: she just refuses to quit. By now, it's a very important relationship in my life—it's the only thing that I've done for about ten years. It's funny, like the joke became real. I need to keep her, I want to—I'm like her custodian.



Ebecho Muslimova, Fatebe Landing Failure, 2019

With your second solo show at Magenta Plains you've moved on to working in oil paint. Why did you decide to make that transition from drawing? How far did it feel like a "difficult second album" of sorts?

This is my second painting show, and I'm enjoying it more now. When I started drawing that character ten years ago I set up these tight parameters and rules for her: one frame, no narrative, black and white, no shading... I had a natural sense that I had to tighten the space in order for her personality to take up more space. Somehow formal possibilities of more freely drawing her would have distracted from her entity. Then I forgot that I'm the one who set up those rules to begin with.

For years I was like, "I wonder what it's like to use colour? I wish I could use colour!" I'd sort of made my own prison, then I started to learn painting. I've been painting for two years now and I'm really enjoying how to figure out painting with oils. I'm going to do some wall drawings in future; I'm working on another body of work right now for a show in Zurich in March with Maria Bernheim gallery so in my brain I'm on vacation but actually I'm already behind!



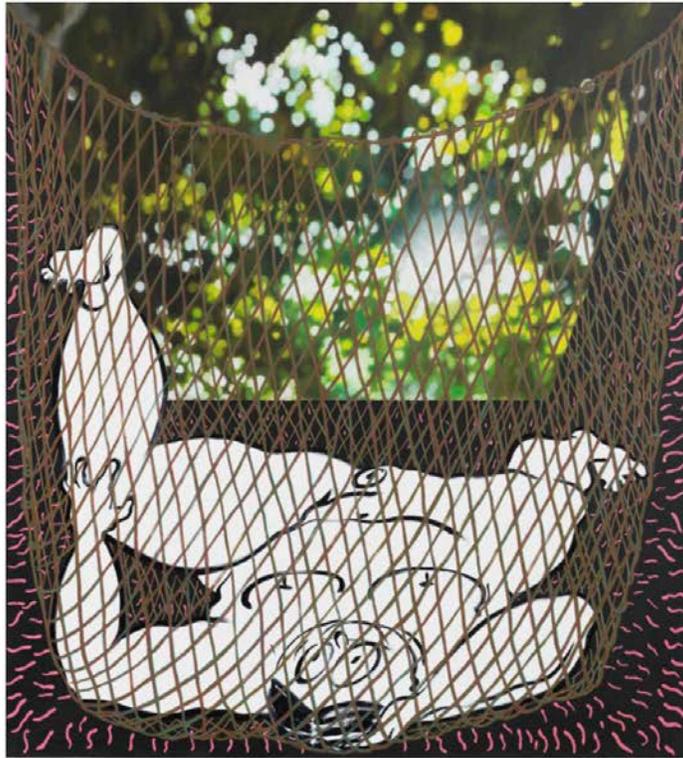
Ebecho Muslimova, Fatebe Lightning in the Mezzanine, 2019

How do you overcome those anxieties about showing work, or making new work?

Through Fatebe; it's this relationship I have with her where anxieties about work are resolved. I feel like I'm always trying to clarify something through her, and when that doesn't work for some reason it feels like there's a big misunderstanding between what should be on the page and what isn't. That anxiety gets resolved by making a Fatebe that's satisfying to me.

Have you had any backlash about the name Fatebe as an "alter ego" name, seeing as you are a not-fat-girl living in Brooklyn? How far is she really an alter ego of you?

Maybe there were initially conversations about that, but then we're just talking about "who's fat and who's not" and it just becomes so stupid that it falls apart. She is her own thing. I'm actually surprised that it hasn't come up more, but I think that she's really a distinct personality: I'm not making fun of someone has some curves. They're just her attributes—she looks like a lot of people look, and from the point of view of drawing a body, I feel like there's a reason fleshy women have always been painted. It's more fun to render—you can do more, it's more expressive. Fatebe doesn't speak, so her gestures and her body are her language. I think of her as being more like a self-portrait, but not me—like I'm rendering a different self, but she's a friend. She's like a surrogate sister who can do amazing feats that I physically or socially can't.



Ebecho Muslimova, Fatebe Net, 2019

There's been a lot of discussion around the fact that in your drawings of a woman, there's never a man present, and the idea of challenging how women's bodies are portrayed in art in the absence of the male gaze. Is that a deliberate stance?

I'm drawing her body, because I'm familiar with a woman's body, because I have one. So it's not a purposeful thing: why would I do any other form? There are definitely parts of her that are like me: the creases of her knee, that's my crease, and that detail isn't important to anyone except me; and my eyes get really wide in certain situations, for instance. So there are physical similarities. Also, she's always seemingly on the verge of some anxiety attack, but she's enduring in it. It's not like I'm always on the verge of that, but she's just like an expression of my mental state, so in that way she very much relates to me.

Filthy Dreams

November 26, 2019

**filthy
dreams****In Fatebe, Ebecho Muslimova Has Created
An Abjected Double, A Vessel Of Curiosity
And A Kind Of Superhero**

Posted on November 26, 2019 by ADAM LEHRER

[Leave a comment](#)

Installation view of Ebecho Muslimova's TRAPSI, Magenta Plains, New York, NY, 2019 (all images courtesy the artist and Magenta Plains)

Fatebe ("FAT-E-be") is in the midst of the Lacanian Mirror Phase. "She's starting to interact with her own image and own sense of self versus the drawing of herself," says her creator, the New York-based artist Ebecho Muslimova. "[The film] *Ex-Machina*, popped in my mind; she's looking at herself in a mirror, self-realizing. I feel like I'm drawn more and more into the relationship between her and her own image."

But the Mirror Phase is supposed to be traumatic, correct? The child looks in the mirror and thinks, "That.... is.... me?" Well if not traumatic exactly, then it's certainly dramatic. On the inside, we are chaotic, polysexual, formless. On the outside, we are a stable entity, more or less. But Fatebe, as rendered by Muslimova, appears totally unfazed by the realization of her own image. A viewer can intuit a wish fulfillment of sorts. Fatebe is Muslimova's curiosity without limits.

"Fatebe" is the absurdist, zaftig imagistic alter-ego of Muslimova, and is now the subject of a stunning series of oil paintings and drawings at Muslimova's current solo show *TRAPSI!* at **Magenta Plains**. Muslimova has been obsessively drawing her since enduring a trying period towards the end of her education at Cooper Union (around 2011). Frustrated and struggling to meet the demands placed upon her by professors to make the kind of "difficult" conceptual artwork that is catnip to the up-their-own-asses art world elites—Muslimova literally tore up a number of works she made during the period—and enduring other assorted life anxieties, the early illustrations of Fatebe were born of Muslimova's desire to make truly "earnest" work. "There has to be some kind of 'trauma drama' in order to make something earnest," she explains in the back room of Magenta Plains. "It has to come from a place in which you weren't feeling very earnest. You wouldn't draw cartoon pussy if you weren't in some way blocked."



In short, Fatebe was born of her creator's dejection. When she started drawing Fatebe—always naked and exposed, often humiliated—she had given up on the art world. She didn't want to show her work to anyone. She imagined the lifelong obsessive drawing of this abjected alter-ego as a cosmic joke on her life. "[Fatebe] literally came out of a juvenile tantrum that I was having," says Muslimova. "I decided that I was going to draw this one character my whole life, and people would see me hobbling down the street at 80 years old and would say, 'That's Ebe she's drawn the same thing her whole life.' And the joke became real. I can't do anything else. It's funny."

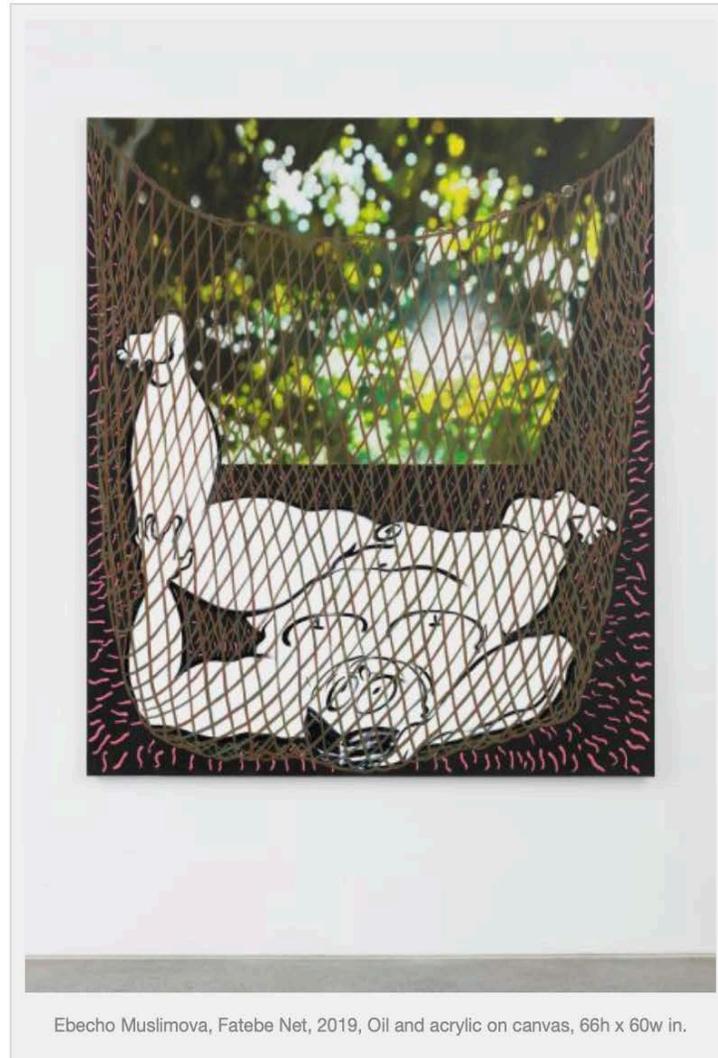
The twisted irony of the joke is that Muslimova has found real success with her countless illustrations and paintings of the character (it appears that the Magenta Plains exhibition currently up has sold out of all the pieces). In a contemporary art culture saturated with boring, serious artists making boring, serious works dealing with relational aesthetics or identity politics and so on, Muslimova's direct, frank, occasionally shocking, and most importantly, hilarious Fatebe works truly stand out in a crowded group show. It would appear that we all crave the kind of clarity of image and directness in communication that Fatebe evokes. In *Fatebe Bear Trap*, for instance, Fatebe is trapped in a bear trap. Make of that what you will.



From a psychoanalytic standpoint, what is most fascinating about Muslimova's work with Fatebe is that the artist has, what she describes as, a very real relationship with her creation. She talks about her like she's a real person who is enduring an in-real-time life on a chronological continuum. In a lecture at [Swiss Institute](#) in which Muslimova described her trajectory in creating Fatebe, she showed a number of slides of early drawings of Fatebe and said that each represent a new experience, a new memory, in the life of this character: "first date," "first fart," "first snake," and so on. All artists, of course, have deep relationships with the works that they create (or they should, assumedly), but I'd wager that very few have relationships as deep as the one between Muslimova and Fatebe.

Kant believed that to humiliate someone was to deny that person's very humanity. And yet, despite the closeness between Muslimova and Fatebe, Fatebe endures all manner of physical and psychological humiliations at the mercy of Muslimova's libidinal imagination. But there is a kind of wish fulfillment going on. Fatebe is, in a sense, a guinea pig for Muslimova's most based curiosities. Fatebe caught in a net, Fatebe shitting pasta, and Fatebe swallowing frogs en masse are just a few of the humiliating scenarios Muslimova has cooked up for her alter-ego in her most recent exhibition. Illustrations of the character allow the artist to expel some very bizarre notions from her consciousness. But simultaneously, Muslimova has empowered her character, forming a unique communicative flow between the artist and her creation, in which the artist can humiliate the character but the character can seemingly endure any humiliation without breaking a sweat.

"She's relishing in [humiliation], because she's my surrogate," says Muslimova. "There's real consequences to falling in holes for me or whoever, so she can explore these surreal degradations in a way that I wouldn't allow myself to. She's vulnerable, and kind of a puppet. But she's just grinning through these trials I'm putting her through, and she can stand up to her creator." Slavoj Zizek said that the true measure of love is the ability to insult one another, and if this is true, it's clear that Muslimova truly adores Fatebe.



Muslimova's Fatebe illustrations have garnered comparisons to other artists that use/have used illustration: Raymond Pettibon, Peter Saul, early 20th Century French satirist Honoré Daumier, and others. Beyond a shared medium, however, it's hard to see how. While those artists respond in real time to current events, Muslimova reaches into the recesses of her mind. There are evocations of the naughty black ink drawings of late 19th century British erotic illustrator Aubrey Beardsley in the sheer distaste and decadence of the images. Suspiciously, critics have failed to detect connections between Muslimova and the Swedish artist Marie-Louise Ekman. Though Ekman is a painter, the cartoonish figures that populate her paintings delight in corporeal and sexual debasements similar to the ones endured by Fatebe. On Ekman's work, [Johan Deurell writes](#): "Her work is consistent, emotional and humorous; and perhaps even a bit repetitive – if the subject matter of personal relations ever can be." Like Ekman's debased figures, Fatebe offers a broadly debauched understanding of what it means to inhabit a body.

But Muslimova has also achieved something that none of these artists have. "Fatebe is Muslimova's invention, which is every cartoonist's dream—to make a memorable character," writes [John Yau for *Hyperallergic*](#). In contrast to the aforementioned artists, Fatebe is the sole vessel for Muslimova to explore the recesses of her subconscious mind. It's hard not to infer psychoanalytic implications from Muslimova's decision to continuously render the same character, her self-described alter-ego, into all manner of surrealist emotional and corporeal disturbances. Fatebe could be viewed, from a certain perspective, as a manifestation of what theorist Julia Kristeva would have called "the double" in her text *Powers of Horror: Essay on Abjection*: a place where boundaries between subject and object begin to breakdown. Kristeva believes that we are continuously drawn to the abject, which could psychologically explain Muslimova's enduring fascination with drawing Fatebe—a character that was literally birthed from an abject period of her life.



But, as Kristeva says, “Abjection is above all ambiguity.” Though a viewer can infer some psychoanalytic level in Muslimova’s paintings and drawings of Fatebe, it is rather impossible to discern what, if anything, these works say about Muslimova’s psychology or emotional state specifically. On the contrary, Fatebe has given Muslimova a creative technique of self-exploration while providing a buffer between her psychology and the audience. She can give her viewers a window into her mind without ever allowing them to see anything specific about her mind. Muslimova’s psychology takes on a formlessness in these works: we understand that it’s present, but can’t see the thoughts, experiences, and traumas that shape and drive it. Muslimova says that the choice to render Fatebe in black line drawings is that the process and shading of painting can infer subtext, which she actively sought to avoid. “What Pettibon does is almost more revealing of who he is because to react to current events is to reveal his own inner feelings about those events,” observes Muslimova. “Drawing is an evidence of thought because it’s so immediate, but like the dark well of my own psyche, no one can see that [in these drawings]. [Fatebe] allows me a sense of privacy somehow.”

TRAPS! is testament to the riveting formal evolution of Fatebe’s illustrative existence. Though the show still features a number of black ink drawings, Muslimova has also rendered Fatebe on large-scale canvases in a number of oil paintings, each sumptuously detailed and emphasizing the character in exciting new ways. But it should also be noted, the paintings only offer vibrant backgrounds, Fatebe remains a monochromatic line illustration. Muslimova credits the choice to render Fatebe to larger canvases to the desire to expand the space around her. “The different textures and illusions of space in the painting reinforce her black and white flatness around her, so she, herself, as a drawing has more intention and dimension in her entity,” she says. But on a more emotional level, she notes, “I also just wanted to try painting because it scares me.”



In *Fatebe Landing Failure*, for instance, we see her caught in a leaf-less tree, visually distorted to stress the delirious confusion of the situation, while her failed parachute is pictured off below the branches. The larger canvases provide the audience a clearer relationship between Fatebe and the audience. But the overall approach is the same. Fatebe is never the subject of a cartoon or animation, her image is always frozen in time, a picture. Roland Barthes, of course, wrote that photographs were little deaths, still lifes that freeze present moments into eternal pasts, prefiguring the stillness of the corpse. Fascinatingly then, Muslimova is making photographs of Fatebe from this imagined, nonexistent cartoon. This concept elevates the notion that we are being allowed to watch the life of this character through still images, and that every image that Muslimova creates alludes to the inevitability of the character's demise. This technique yields a heightened relationship between the viewer and Fatebe; we empathize with her, we root for her, she's the hero of this implied narrative. "I freeze her in the ideal angle that I want her to be seen in," says Muslimova. "It's important that she's frozen and that we are seeing her from the angle that we are seeing her."

What Muslimova implies here is that it's not just the situations in which Fatebe finds herself that communicate meaning to the viewer, but Fatebe's body gestures as well. And not just the placement of her limbs, and her poses and positionings, but the folds of her belly and the lines of her curves are all exploited as expressive tools. Much like Butoh dancing, the body is used as the primary performative tool in drawings of Fatebe, and Muslimova retains hyper-focus on how the body is depicted in each of the works. "The folds of her elbows, even those can be expressions," she explains. "Whenever things are happening with the body, it's a performance in a way, right?"

While some artists spend careers trying to find their aesthetics and voices, Muslimova has created one singular image that is able to inhabit so many of the avenues artists seek to explore. Fatebe is a rumination on the expressive potential of the human form, an abjected alter-ego that allows Muslimova self-exploration without the risk of over-exposing herself, a source of humour, transgression and absurdity, and—let's face it—kind of a superhero. It is simply impossible to get bored looking at drawings of her. We want her to persevere, we want her to win, and we want Muslimova to keep drawing her. This “psychotic version of herself” that was once a tool for Muslimova to “nourish her creative urges” without exposing herself to the exhausting scrutiny of the art market is now on its way to becoming something that Muslimova never intended to create: a contemporary visual icon. Muslimova's fascinating Fatebe drawings prove that artists should learn to stop worrying and love their mindless doodles.

artnet

October 29, 2019

artnet news

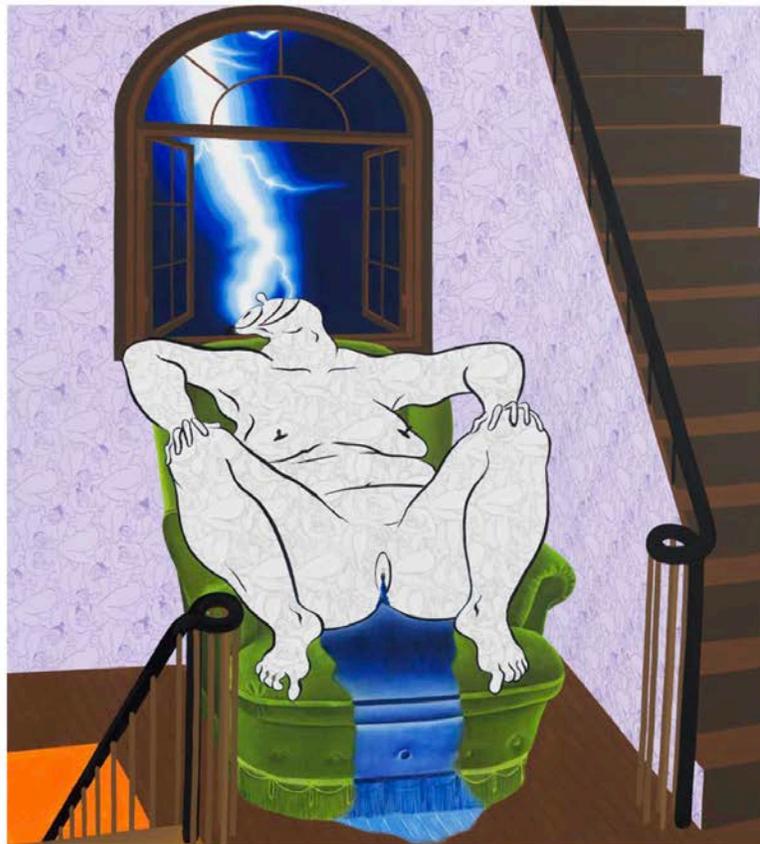
Art World

Editors' Picks: 19 Things Not to Miss in New York's Art World This Week

Here's our weekly rundown of what to catch in the Big Apple.

Sarah Cascone, October 29, 2019

Wednesday, October 30–Wednesday, December 18



Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe Lightning in the Mezzanine* (2019). Courtesy of Magenta Plains.

7. **Ebecho Muslimova: TRAPS!** at Magenta Plains

For anyone who has not been blessed to stand in front of an Ebecho Muslimova work, make it a priority to see this show. In Muslimova's surreal, multi-color, multi-textural works, a character named Fatebe often performs amazing—and humorous—feats with her body. For the artist's second show at the gallery Magenta Plains, she is showing five new large-scale paintings across two floors, as well as works on paper.

Location: Magenta Plains, 94 Allen Street

Price: Free

Time: Opening reception, 6 p.m.–8 p.m.; Wednesday–Sunday, 11 a.m.–6 p.m.

—Cristina Cruz

Time Out New York

October 31, 2019



Ebecho Muslimova, “TRAPS!”

Art, Contemporary art  [Magenta Plains](#), Midtown West  Until Wednesday December 18 2019



Photograph: Courtesy Magenta Plains

Time Out says

Since 2011, the work of Ebecho Muslimova has centered on the artist’s irrepressible alter ego, Fatebe, whose naked, corpulent figure acrobatically bounces across the artist’s drawings and paintings. Rendered in sweeping cartoon outline, Fatebe is usually alone, confronting nonsensical situations with unconquerable good cheer as she overcomes outlandish depredations that often involve defecation, urination and other acts of abjection; indeed, her vagina and sphincter—which are sometimes elastically stretched with unlikely objects such as pianos or ceiling fans—are often prominently depicted. Born in the former Soviet Union, Muslimova adroitly mines a particularly dark vein of absurdism that feels uniquely Russian. That remains true of her current show, in which Fatebe contends with a plague of frogs among other disasters.

POSTED: THURSDAY OCTOBER 31 2019

Art Spiel

December 4, 2019

ART SPIEL

TRAPS! Ebecho Muslimova at Magenta Plains

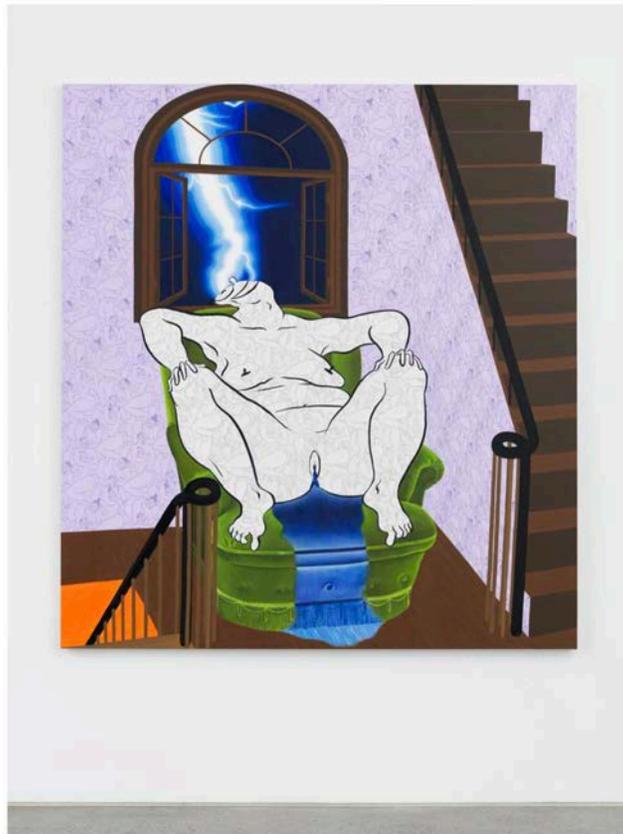
Exhibition review by Torey Akers



Ebecho Muslimova, Fatebe Deep Frog Organza, 2019, oil and acrylic on canvas, 60" x 66", courtesy of Magenta Plains

Human civilization has always maintained an uneasy relationship with female monstrosity—just watch the cavalcade of sirens, witches, harpies and hags that stalk the perimeters of every major mythology on earth, luring hapless men to their deaths. This hyper-visible, oft-storied, but deeply erasive marginalization has long plagued the non-normative woman; however, there's a certain freedom in the fringes. Take Baubo, the Orphic goddess of chaos and mirth, whose paunchy, wizened appearance belied a frisky bawdiness that ancient Greeks adored. Ebecho Muslimova's 'Fatebe' character, whom she has been drawing since 2011 and features vivaciously in her latest solo exhibition, *TRAPS!*, at Magenta Plains, New York, builds on Baubo's cultural legacy with appropriately grotesque panache, taking a wide-eyed, manic approach to the tandem joys and pitfalls of embodiment.

The show occupies two floors and consists of large, patterned oil paintings flanked by smaller black-and-white ink pieces, which adopt a somewhat unassuming posture in white frames behind glass. The overarching theme of *TRAPS!* immediately pops upon entry into the gallery; in each image, Fatebe encounters environmental obstacles, like nets or natural disasters, that she navigates with flagrant, surrealist plasticity, often to the detrimental of her body, but never her spirit. Muslimova has approached this suite of work through a planar lens, tilting towards the virtual, and Fatebe's iconic stylization interacts with her surroundings as a digital layer rather than a stand-alone character.



Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe Lightning in the Mezzanine*, 2019, oil and acrylic on canvas, 66" x 60", courtesy of Magenta Plains

In "Fatebe Lightning In the Mezzanine" (2019), the naked figure, crouched in a realistically-rendered chair, leans backwards out an open window, gulping down a hot bolt of lightning into her gaping maw while she leaks rainwater from her genitals. Her skin bears the same design of the wallpaper behind her, a tessellated tangle of tiny Fatebes, cluing the viewer into her semiotic invasion of the space.

When Muslimova introduces color, Fatebe transforms into an iconographic Roger Rabbit, unburdened by the mundane bureaucracy of logic, physics, or pain. Her greyscale infiltration feels filmic at first, invoking a range of references from *The Last Person In Pleasantville* to Betty Boop, but a comparative glance at Muslimova's drawings place Fatebe's ancestry staunchly in Al Hirschfeld's camp. The artist's hand, both careful and expressive, conjures an old-school slapstick ethos off-positioned in Bakhtinian balance with glamour, a rupturous, Carnivalian burst of irreverence that simultaneously defaces and upholds the status quo. It's little wonder that Fatebe's body rarely casts a shadow; she is one. Every inky stammer amplifies her charisma, her irrepressible, guiltless individuality.



Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe Beat Trap*, 2019, Sumi ink on paper, 9" x 12", courtesy of Magenta Plains

Muslimova invented Fatebe as an inside joke, which tracks — her buoyant elasticity seems flush not with self-deprecation, but an earnest, frenetic wish fulfillment. Even when Fatebe loses, she's grinning, emboldened by the kind of agency only hypnagogic chaos affords. It's Fatebe's distance from painting's erotic nude tradition that provides so much space for mischief, transmogrifying her naked form into that of both a lovable trickster goddess and wide-eyed cipher for less ribald interpretations of femininity. Still, some of that madcap heart gets lost in translation with Muslimova's paintings, since their tight, untextured surfaces and self-consciously altermodern portrayals of only grant Fatebe the patina of fluidity, eschewing the kind of expository gesture that sets her drawings apart. This difference is best articulated in the lower level of the gallery, where an engulfing oil and acrylic depiction of Fatebe stuck in a net sits across from a sketch of Fatebe, for lack of better phrasing, queefing spaghetti and meatballs into a chair while seated at a dinner table. The curation is great, as "Fatebe Net"'s tangled position and unbothered pose give the impression that she fell through the top floor, but there's something a little staid and separate about Muslimova's handling; it's an exercise in patterning, an expert deployment of trend. There's simply no match for her tender, small scale virtuosity.



Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe Surprise*, 2019, Sumi ink on paper, 12" x 9", courtesy of Magenta Plains

Artforum

January 2018

ARTFORUM

Ebecho Muslimova

MAGENTA PLAINS

94 Allen St

January 7–February 11

It's one thing for a woman to be nasty; it's quite another thing for her to be unapologetically fat. A little over a year ago, before the #MeToo movement showed the power of collective voices by calling out sexual abusers, Donald Trump deflected criticism, during the presidential debates, about his misogynist attitudes by throwing Rosie O'Donnell's body up as a rhetorical shield. Add Rosie to a list of full-figured feminists who are brash, excessive, and unafraid of men's opinions of their bodies. Also enter Fatebe, the flexible, bug-eyed, ultravoluptuous avatar of the Russian-born artist Ebecho Muslimova. This exhibition is Muslimova's first to include both drawings and paintings of a ribald character that, through an assortment of poses both banal and coquettish, frequently flashes her vagina or anus.

In the ink-and-gouache drawing *Fatebe 2017 Show* (all works 2017), Muslimova makes artistic doubt a poignant subject: Fatebe tumbles headfirst down a flight of stairs into a basement gallery—namely, the exact space where this show is installed. One breast flops around as another gets dipped into a fecal-looking liquid covering the floor. In *Fatebe Asparagus Pee*, Muslimova depicts Fatebe as a fertility goddess that is as modern as she is abject. She clutches stalks of the vegetable—once grouped into the same family as the lily, a classical fertility symbol—in her arms, while dozens more are shoved down her throat. She also straddles a pyramid of toilet paper.

Several other paintings return to the theme of self-examination. In the colorful *Fatebe Rack*, a take on Narcissus, she seems to be examining her vagina in the surface of a kiddie pool while trapped in a laundry rack. *Fatebe Self Possession* satirizes Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*: Fatebe films into her wide-open vagina, where three miniature Fatebes navigate a winding spiral staircase that exposes some carpeting (get the joke?) right out of Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining*.



Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe Self Possession*, 2017, acrylic and gouache on canvas, 42 x 60".

— Wendy Vogel

Forbes

January 7, 2018

Forbes

Arts & Entertainment / #GettingBuzz

JAN 7, 2018 @ 08:20 PM 810

The Little Black Book of Billionaire Secrets

A Dick Joke Made By A Woman: On Fatebe, The Character Created By Artist Ebecho Muslimova



Brienne Walsh, CONTRIBUTOR
FULL BIO

Opinions expressed by Forbes Contributors are their own.



Courtesy of Ebecho Muslimova and Magenta Plains, New York
Ebecho Muslimova Fatebe Asparagus Pee, 2017 Acrylic on canvas

[+]

Fatebe, the character who stars in an exhibition of drawings and paintings by Ebecho Muslimova that opens tonight at Magenta Plains, is a slob. She is a

feminist icon. She is ridiculous. She is a dick joke writ with vaginas. She is joyful, she is gluttonous, and she is body proud.



Courtesy of Ebecho Muslimova and Magenta Plains, New York

Ebecho Muslimova Fatebe Rack, 2017 Acrylic on canvas 54h x 42w in

She emerged while Muslimova was an undergraduate at Cooper Union, as “an excuse to entertain my friends. This is what art students do. They get together, they get drunk, and they draw pictures of each other.”

Fatebe takes her name from Muslimova’s abbreviated first name. She is Fat-Ebe. She is uncouth. She is a comment on vanity. She is a low-brow concern. The fact that she is fat is none of your business. “I tell people, she’s already an entity, she just happens to be a bigger weight than other people,” Muslimova said. “It’s not a big deal. It’s just a part of her attribute. It’s ok to big. It’s not a giant statement.”

What started out as a joke became all that Muslimova could create. A sculptress by training, she stopped making objects, and started just drawing Fatebe. Fatebe with a vagina like a hot air balloon; Fatebe

making a circular hole in a wooden floor with her big dumb head.

“Whether I was thinking of it consciously or not, I wanted to own the dick joke,” Muslimova says. “All of these boys around me had the privilege of making boner jokes, and making boner funny art. I didn’t see that being done by women – the back of the bathroom doodle type of freedom.”

Consumed by Fatebe, Muslimova was unsure if she could ever have a career in the art world. She preemptively gave one up. When she graduated, she took a job making prints used on mass-market pajamas – a job she still does today. “I draw flowers by day, and vaginas at night,” she laughed.



Courtesy of Ebecho Muslimova and Magenta Plains, New York

Ebecho Muslimova

[+]

Little did she know, but her career was just starting. Her Fatebe images are skillful, and funny. They emerged at a time when women finally seemed to be breaking through the prison of a certain type of representation. “Vaginas are so serious,” Muslimova told me. “They’re either something so furious, this origin of the world thing, or they’re sexy. But what if it’s just like – the same way men twiddle the thing that protrudes out of them. What if you owned that? Fatebe is not ashamed.”



Courtesy Magenta Plains

*Ebecho Muslimova Fatebe Self Possession, 2017 Acrylic and gouache on canvas
60h x 42w in*

In the exhibition at Magenta Plains, Muslimova is showing Fatebe paintings for the first time — previously, the character only existed in drawings. The work draws a wealth of connections. They resemble racist cartoons from the 1930s, the drawings of Roger Hargreaves, Japanese woodblock prints, and even the paintings of Tahitian women by Paul Gauguin. They are vulgar, but they are also beautiful, and arresting.

“A big concern of mine is that they are read really fast. You might not get the statement I’m making, but you get a statement really fast.”



Courtesy of Ebecho Muslimova and Magenta Plains, New York

*Ebecho Muslimova
Untitled (Jar), 2017 Acrylic and gouache on canvas 12h x 10w in*

The titles, Muslimova, are deadpan; but they are also nonsensical, derived from word associations. *Untitled (Jar)*, 2017, which shows Fatebe impaled on a stack of coins, is a “painting I made about getting fucked by money,” Muslimova told me. *Fatebe Asparagus Pee*, 2017 shows Fatebe with her mouth and ears full of asparagus, straddling a pyramid of toilet paper. “I felt very humiliated making this whole show this whole time,” Muslimova told me of the work. “I wanted one painting where I was literally pissing myself. I wanted to do it in a way so that it works as a kind of scratch and sniff in understanding.”

Muslimova is only at the beginning of her career, but she has a natural instinct towards staying true to herself that most people only gain from decades of failing. Fatebe, she believes, is not the kind of character that makes an artist into an art star; but she doesn't care because Fatebe comes out of her cleanly, without struggle. Fatebe is a compulsion, and she is a beacon.

“Whatever I need to be say can be said through her,” Muslimova says. “If I can't figure out a way to say it through Fatebe, then the statement isn't thought out well enough.”



Courtesy of Ebecho Muslimova and Magenta Plains, New York
Ebecho Muslimova Fatebe 2017 Show, 2017 Ink and gouache on paper 10.50h x 17.75w in

It might not be your first choice to go see an exhibition that features a character with sagging breasts that she dips into the brown murk of a flooded basement; but go. I get why Muslimova is fascinated by her character. Once you get a glimpse, you can't tear your eyes away.

Ebecho Muslimova is open at Magenta Plains through February 11, 2018 concurrently with an exhibition of paintings by Zach Bruder.



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Elephant

January 12, 2018

ELEPHANT

12 Jan 2018

New Year, New York Gallery Hop

New year, new you, New York. Get out into the chilly streets, there are a host of brand new shows in town. Words by Noah Dillon



Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe Rack*, 2017
Magenta Plains

On CNN, the Ball Drop at Times Square—New York City's long-running New Year's Eve ball—looked not too dissimilar to mind-altering performance art, inspiring a fleeting few memes online. Then the new year arrived in the midst of an Arctic blast that brought temperatures in New York down below 10F, the coldest of any such celebration in fifty-five years, and the first shows of the year opened on nights as cold as 3F. It's certainly not the most tempting time of year to brave it out to see some art. Indeed, many top managers, advisers and other art-world luminaries are almost certainly sunning themselves in St. Barths or the like at this very moment. If you can't afford such sunny luxuries, pull yourself together! There are some really great shows opening this month in the chilly city.

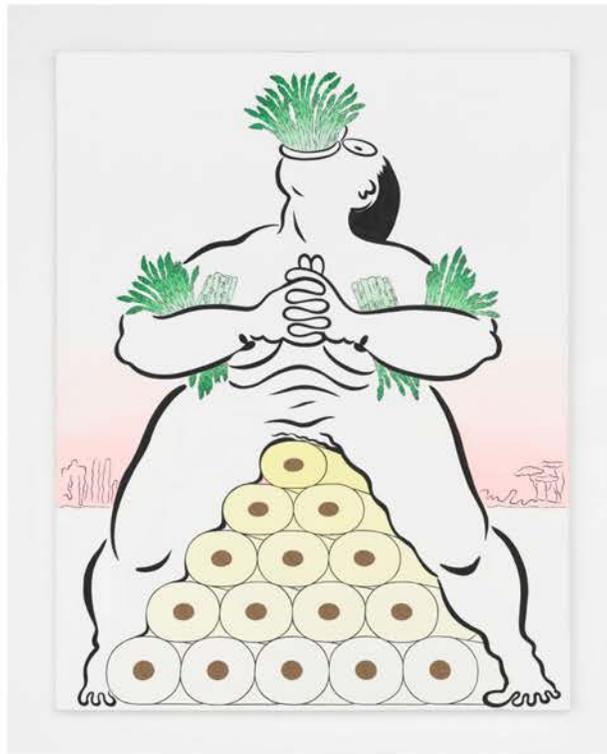
Cheim & Read's exhibition of work by Barry McGee opened last Thursday, in spite of blizzard conditions that deposited eight or more inches of snow throughout the day. However, a performance by Alicia Hall Moran and Jason Moran, at **Gavin Brown's Enterprise**, was pushed back until January 15. Alicia Hall Moran, a mezzo-soprano and artist of multiple mediums (including theatre, dance and visual arts), will also be performing at **MASS MoCA** on 27 January. That production employs experimental uses of the music from *Carmen*, telling the story of East Germany's Katarina Witt and American Debi Thomas, figure skaters who both competed and skated with selections from the opera during the 1988 Winter Olympics. The show will be on ice, in case you've been especially enjoying the cold.

Spieltrieb is now showing at **Jack Hanley Gallery**, with works by Polly Apfelbaum, Beverly Fishman, Ryan Mrozowski and Kathleen Ryan. The exhibition's title refers to German philosopher Friedrich Schiller, and his "spieltrieb"—the "play impulse". The sculptures and paintings on view are playful. I always delight in Apfelbaum's bright mutant works and the way in which they confound expectations of divisions between contemporary and modernist imagery, or between two- and three-dimensional art. Downstairs in the same building, at **Nicelle Beauchene Gallery**, is a new show of single-colour canvases by Jim Lee, which opens the same night.

It's amazing that people devoutly drink iced coffee when the outside is frozen. I guess there's no accounting for taste. On your way between shows I would stop in at Irving Farm Coffee on Orchard to get a real coffee, a hot one, and trudge through the snow and slush a few more blocks over to **Klaus Von Nichtssagend**, which currently shows Demetrius Oliver, themed around moving air and featuring paintings, photographs and sculptures rooted in fans.

Afterwards, if you're hungry, go down the street to Canal, hang a right, and up the block is Dimes, a hip, cosy restaurant with a weird menu that's really good. Its eclecticism is pretty sure to fit both budgets and diets of, I'm pretty sure, any variety. I like the black rice and the cauliflower.

If you're in this area, don't miss the exciting Ebecho Muslimova at **Magenta Plains**, with drawings of her exuberant everywoman, Fatebe, all smile, libido and cartoon supermorphia.



Ebecho Muslimova, Fatebe Asparagus Pee, 2017
Magenta Plains

Also recently opened on 28th Street is **Joshua Liner Gallery** tenth-anniversary group show, with works by twenty-one artists from its diverse roster. Anniversary shows of this sort can be really wonderful—for instance Anton Kern's Implosion 20 in 2016 and Jack Hanley's thirtieth, in January of last year. Such shows are often lovingly and generously curated, and the atmosphere is familial.

Artspace

January 12, 2018

Artspace

ARTIST TO WATCH

9 Artists to Watch in January 2018

By Artspace Editors

JAN. 12, 2018

. . .

EBECHO MUSLIMOVA**Magenta Plains, New York****January 7 – February 11**

Photo via Instagram

If there's one thing the editorial team at Artspace can agree on, it's that Ebecho Muslimova blows our minds. The Russian-born, New York-based artist is known for her alter ego "Fatebe," a character who is quite innovative in the ways in which she explores the orifices of her body. In one mostly black-and-white painting (picture the cartoon-like line drawings of [Raymond Pettibon](#), [Koak](#), or old Felix the Cat cartoons), a naked Fatebe looks through a movie camera through her own gaping vagina to peer down a spiral staircase where other Fatebe's stand peering back up at her. In every cartoon, Fatebe is autonomous, Fatebe is active, Fatebe is happy, and in the words of Piper Marshall writing for *Artforum*, "Fatebe is a sinister feminist." A recent graduate of Cooper Union, Muslimova has had solo exhibitions at Room East and White Flag Projects in New York.

artnet

January 16, 2018

artnet news

Market Art World Exhibitions Opinion Partner Content

On View**This Artist's Surreal Paintings Imagine the Adventures of an Outrageous and Unstoppable Alter Ego—See Them Here**

Show of the Day: "2017" at Magenta Plains, New York.

Sarah Cascone, January 16, 2018

Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe Asparagus Pee* (2017). Courtesy of Magenta Plains.**EBECHO MUSLIMOVA**

"2017"

Magenta Plains, New York

What the Gallery Says: "Ebecho Muslimova's strikingly graphic paintings and drawings spotlight an alter ego named 'Fatebe,' a grinning, portly figure minimally rendered in sweeping black lines. Wide-eyed and naked, Fatebe finds herself in various impossible situations—a contortionist of voluminous proportions. Whether squatting like a genie inside a jar of coins and gagged by a stack of quarters, or poised as Narcissus over a pool of still water while folded into the angles of a laundry drying rack, Fatebe can do and show things that her author can't."

Why It's Worth a Look: The 33-year-old Russia-born artist has impeccable line work, and is showing paintings, in addition to her usual drawings, for the first time. Each piece reads like an anxiety-ridden nightmare, Muslimova's Fatebe alter ego constantly finding herself in impossible, compromising, or otherwise absurd situations. The work recalls old time-y cartoons, and a Surrealist take on slapstick humor. Through it all, Fatebe remains smiling, and unapologetic emblem of voluptuous womanhood.

What It Looks Like:



Installation view of Ebecho Muslimova's current exhibition at Magenta Plains. Courtesy of Magenta Plains.



Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe 2017 Show (2017)*. Courtesy of Magenta Plains.



Ebecho Muslimova, *Untitled (Jar)*, 2017. Courtesy of Magenta Plains.



Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe Self Possession* (2017). Courtesy of Magenta Plains.



Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe Rack* (2017). Courtesy of Magenta Plains.



Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe Arms Display* (2017). Courtesy of Magenta Plains.



Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe Wheelbarrow Unicycle* (2017). Courtesy of Magenta Plains.



Installation view of Ebecho Muslimova's current exhibition at Magenta Plains.
Courtesy of Magenta Plains.



Installation view of Ebecho Muslimova's current exhibition at Magenta Plains.
Courtesy of Magenta Plains.

"Ebecho Muslimova" is on view through February 11, 2018.

Magenta Plains is located at 94 Allen Street, New York.

Hyperallergic

January 28, 2018

HYPERALLERGIC

ART • WEEKEND

An Artist's Irrepressible Alter Ego

In the world of Ebecho Muslimova's recurring character, Fatebe, there are no men: they are irrelevant.

John Yau | 6 days ago



Ebecho Muslimova, "Untitled (Jar)" (2017), acrylic and gouache on canvas, 12 x 10 inches

When Ebecho Muslimova began drawing Fatebe, her alter ego, around 2011, she initially existed only as confidently drawn black ink lines on small sheets of white paper. In a drawing included in her first solo show at Room East (2015), Fatebe is hunkered down, a mad smile on her face, digging a hole and happily flinging mud balls over her shoulder. In another she is scrunched up and flat on her back, crumpled like a collapsed ceramic in exasperated surprise.

Fatebe is a female Buster Keaton enduring humiliation upon humiliation. She has straight black hair and is always seen in her birthday suit, her vagina often exposed. She is zaftig, muscular, and irrepressible — a contortionist performance artist whose only audience is the viewer. The situations she finds herself in are weird, funny and oddly sinister: they have to do with every part of the body and everything the body produces. Shit, piss, and flatulence are all part of the situations that Muslimova depicts with a fluid line.



Ebecho Muslimova, "Fatebe 2017 Show" (2017), ink and gouache on paper, 10.50 x 17.75 inches

Her latest exhibition, *Ebecho Muslimova: 2017*, at Magenta Plains (January 7 – February 11, 2018), includes something new: in addition to the ink drawings, there are four paintings, three of which are large. It is a bold move that may put off some of her fans, but shouldn't.

The small, largely black painting, "Untitled (Jar)" (2017), shows Fatebe stuck inside a white, outlined jar, her flattened white body resembling an overhead view of a frog. With her two big elliptical cartoon eyes upside-down and staring directly at the viewer, perplexed, she is squashed against the glass by the contents of the jar, a trove of gray and copper-colored coins, from quarters to pennies. A column of gray coins descends unimpeded from above the overflowing rim of the jar into Fatebe's open, upturned mouth and out of her stretched-open vagina.



Ebecho Muslimova, "Fatebe Wheelbarrow Unicycle" (2017), ink on paper, 9 x 12 inches

This is what Muslimova does best: she presents a situation where the viewer is hard put to figure out how Fatebe ended up in such circumstances. For all the shame and mortification her alter ego is subjected to, Muslimova never reveals the source (or points a finger), making what could easily be a didactic view into something bizarrely enigmatic.

This is one thing that sets Muslimova apart from other artists working graphically, often in black-and-white. I am thinking of Raymond Pettibon and

Steve Gianakos. The shame and embarrassment that Gianakos's figures suffer through don't invite the viewer's empathy. Pettibon and Gianakos make work that is confrontational and, frankly, male. In Fatebe's world, there are no men: they are irrelevant.

The other difference has to do with the source. Pettibon is often inspired by current events, while Gianakos has long mixed pornography with images of happy children taken from illustrated books. Fatebe is Muslimova's invention, which is every cartoonist's dream — to make a memorable character. She

appears to be asocial, and the only being with whom she interacts is her reflection or manifestations of herself. Carroll Dunham could learn a thing or two about nuance from Muslimova.



Ebecho Muslimova, "Fatebe Asparagus Pee" (2017), acrylic on canvas, 54 x 42 inches

In one of the large acrylic paintings, "Fatebe Asparagus Pee" (2017), Fatebe is squatting with legs apart upon a pyramidal stack of toilet paper. The roll at the top is a sickly yellow, which becomes lighter as it spreads downward through the tiered toilet paper, though the bottom row remains pure white, apparently spared by Fatebe's pee. Meanwhile, she is clasping her hands together and holding a bunch of asparagus stalks in the crook of each elbow. Another two bunches are tucked between her forearms and her breasts. Finally, Fatebe flings back her head, her open mouth crammed with more than a dozen asparagus stalks, as if her mouth were a vase. Muslimova's riff on the trope of woman as vessel is a perverse celebration of olfactory delight.

In "Fatebe Self Possession" (2017), Fatebe's limbs are bent around the edges of the canvas like a rectangular donut, so that she is looking down into her wide-open vagina, which contains an overhead view of a stairwell receding down to a patterned carpet in red, orange, and black. Fatebe is filming the receding set of stairs with an old-fashioned movie camera. Three Fatebes peer up from different places on the staircase. The carpet at the bottom, framed by the staircase, is the only color in this otherwise black-and-white work. Fatebe's self-obsession — of which there is a trace in all of the work — is given the full treatment in this painting. And yet, contrary to what you might expect, the narcissism comes across as peculiar, even benign: she is making a film of her other. While Fatebe might not embrace multitudes, she does contain mirror-



Ebecho Muslimova, "Fatebe Rack" (2017), acrylic on canvas, 54 x 42 inches

In "Fatebe Rack" (2017), Muslimova uses color graphically, filling the ground with a solid green. Fatebe is folded over so that her hands are touching her feet, entwined in the bars of an unfoldable laundry rack, which, for some inexplicable reason, is rising out a child's black rubber wading pool (or oversized washtub). She is staring into the water, which goes from pale pink to pale blue, reflecting the unseen sky above. This mirroring is echoed by Fatebe's dark blue reflection in the water, which is staring up at the figure perched above, and gives the painting a spatial dimension that Muslimova has not previously brought into her work.

As one might expect, Muslimova paints tightly and graphically, and her paintings share something with those of John Wesley. Fatebe seems to exist in what Jacques Lacan called the "mirror stage," which is supposed to happen during early childhood, when the infant becomes fascinated with mirrors. While this theory has long since been discredited, what Muslimova does is create a character that is innocent, curious, and fascinated by her reflection. No matter what fate befalls her, she remains remarkably imperturbable. This is what I think Muslimova's fans adore about Fatebe — no matter what happens to her, Fatebe accommodates herself to the situation and she never gets knocked down.

Ebecho Muslimova: 2017 continues at Magenta Plains (94 Allen Street, Lower East Side, Manhattan) through February 11.

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February 2018

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EDITORS' PICKS



“Ebecho Muslimova”

at Magenta Plains

through February 11

In this show of new drawings and paintings, Russian-born artist Ebecho Muslimova's recurring character Fatebe finds herself, once again, awkwardly positioned. But whether she's straddling a pile of toilet paper rolls, entangled in a folding drying rack, or speeding down a hill in a wheelbarrow, she is never less than superbly self-assured.

Image: Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe Rack*, 2017, acrylic on canvas, 54 x 42 inches. Courtesy of the artist and Magenta Plains, New York.

The New York Times

July 23, 2015

The New York Times

ART & DESIGN | ART REVIEW

Ebecho Muslimova Draws a Clumsy, Manic Alter Ego

By KEN JOHNSON JULY 23, 2015

Many people have distorted impressions of their own bodies and consequent feelings of inferiority. It's hard to maintain a positive self-image when unrealistic ideals are thrust before our eyes everywhere we look.

So when an artist like the gifted drawer Ebecho Muslimova creates funny, wordless cartoons of a lovably goofy, corpulent alter ego called Fatebe, we know what she's wrestling with. In [this show's](#) eight pieces, selected from more than 100 Fatebe drawings she has made, Ms. Muslimova envisions this avatar as a kind of indomitable, clumsily manic performance artist.

Sinuously outlined with fine brushes in black ink on snowy white pages, Fatebe appears naked, with unkempt hair and expressions of popeyed surprise, in all sorts of awkward and confounding situations. In "Fatebe Floor Piece," she has somehow managed to cut a splintery circle in a gallery's wooden floor, using her head like a jigsaw.

"Fatebe Dirt Hole" could be a homage to Mike Kelley: It shows Fatebe furiously digging mud, flinging clods into the air. The soil can be read as feces, which suggests a vision of the artist delving into her own primal unconscious. In an untitled piece, she re-enacts the myth of Narcissus: At the edge of a black river, she is bent over and using her hands to scoop out a masklike reflection of her own face.

Ms. Muslimova was born in Russia in 1984, graduated from Cooper Union and lives in New York. This is her first solo exhibition. It's a modest but auspicious debut.

Room East

41 Orchard Street, near Hester Street, Lower East Side

Through Aug. 15

A version of this review appears in print on July 24, 2015, on Page C20 of the New York edition with the headline: Ebecho Muslimova. Order Reprints | Today's Paper | Subscribe

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SEPTEMBRE

Entre sexe, provocation et humour, l'artiste Ebecho Muslimova fait mouche

ART

Cette représentante de la jeune scène new-yorkaise connaît un vif succès avec ses dessins en noir et blanc de Fatebe, une sorte de double d'elle-même en version extra large et totalement décomplexée, qu'elle met en scène dans les positions les plus suggestives et provocatrices.

Par **Nicolas Trembley**Partager cet article [f](#) [t](#) [✉](#)

Peinture murale d'Ebecho Muslimova pour la 32e Biennale des arts graphiques de Ljubljana.

Ebecho Muslimova, jeune artiste née en 1984, originaire du Daghestan russe et formée à la Cooper Union de New York, a créé un alter ego que tout le monde adorerait posséder. Ce double avec lequel elle joue, c'est Fatebe (pour "Fat" et "Ebe", diminutif du prénom de l'artiste) une grosse femme nue qui apparaît dans des dessins faits à l'encre noir sur des pages blanches, comme dans une sorte de journal. Totalement désinhibée, Fatebe n'hésite pas à présenter son sexe et ses fesses aux spectateurs. On la retrouve dans les positions les plus acrobatiques, cheveux au vent, accrochée à une barre de gymnastique, compressée dans une boîte en carton, etc. Ces dessins ont été rassemblés dans *Fatebe Volume 1*, un livre publié chez Onestar Press à Paris. Fatebe est une caricature hilarante et décomplexée d'Ebecho Muslimova. L'artiste s'en sert pour créer des situations qu'elle même ne saurait se permettre de vivre. Nous avons rencontré Ebecho et Fatebe lors de leur exposition à la Galerie Maria Bernheim, à Zurich. L'artiste, elle, n'est pas du tout grosse... comme on peut le vérifier sur son compte Instagram (@ebecho).

Numéro : Quel est votre parcours ?

Ebecho Muslimova : Je suis née en Russie, au Daghestan, et j'ai grandi à New York, où j'ai fait mes études à la Cooper Union, avec une spécialisation en sculpture et dessin.

L'environnement dans lequel vous avez grandi vous a-t-il influencée ?

Il m'a influencée dans une large mesure, c'est certain. C'est notre lot à tous, il me semble. J'ai commencé à dessiner très jeune. À la maison, j'ai toujours été soutenue et applaudie. Dans ma famille, tout le monde est doué pour ces choses-là. Lorsque nous avons émigré aux États-Unis, pour faire face à la barrière de la langue et aux problèmes un peu dingues que je rencontrais, je me suis appuyée sur cette capacité à dessiner et je l'ai développée – cela m'a aidée à surmonter la confusion que je ressentais.

Comment avez-vous su que vous vouliez devenir artiste ? Et que signifie le fait d'être artiste pour vous aujourd'hui ?

J'étais une enfant hyperactive. Je courais partout, sans pouvoir m'arrêter – à tel point que mes parents ne parvenaient même pas à m'asseoir assez longtemps sur la cuvette des toilettes pour permettre le passage des selles. Je restais parfois constipée pendant plusieurs semaines – jusqu'à ce qu'ils finissent par comprendre que le seul moyen de me faire tenir en place sur le trône, c'était de me donner du papier et un crayon pour dessiner. Je crois qu'en tant qu'artiste, c'est encore ce que j'essaie de faire aujourd'hui : arriver à chier correctement.

Quelles sont vos références en matière d'art, ou dans d'autres domaines ?

J'aime énormément le travail de Mike Kelley, ou celui de R.D. Laing, les dessins de Raymond Pettibon... Et tout dernièrement, je suis tombée amoureuse des écrits de Dennis Cooper.

“J'ai commencé à dessiner le personnage de Fatebe à la fin de mon premier cycle universitaire, un peu comme une caricature de moi-même en version complètement désinhibée.”

On vous connaît pour un ensemble d'œuvres qui représentent Fatebe, une figure féminine nue et potelée, dans différentes situations. Pourriez-vous nous dire comment le personnage est apparu dans votre travail, et ce qu'il représente ?

Je n'aime pas qu'on la qualifie de "potelée" – c'est un terme à réserver aux enfants. Fatebe est grosse, et ce n'est pas un problème ! J'ai commencé à la dessiner à la fin de mon premier cycle universitaire, un peu comme une caricature de moi-même, en version complètement désinhibée. Une sorte de double "*Übermensch*" [surhumain], à un moment où je me sentais totalement découragée, fragilisée par la pression que je ressentais par rapport à ce que je m'imaginai devoir produire. Ce personnage est d'abord né pour moi et mes amis. Je voulais vraiment créer quelque chose de libre, et de drôle dans sa sincérité. C'était pour nous faire marrer, mes amis et moi, mais pas forcément en rivalisant d'astuce ou d'esprit. Je voulais simplement que nous soyons séduits par cette entité nommée Fatebe, comme on peut tomber amoureux de quelqu'un d'exceptionnel.

Considérez-vous Fatebe comme un alter ego ? S'inspire-t-elle de votre vie ou est-elle une pure fiction ? Vous inspire-t-elle en retour ?

J'aime bien envisager ces dessins comme des autoportraits, mais les autoportraits de quelqu'un d'autre. À l'origine, le terme "alter ego" indiquait que ce second moi était un "*ami véritable et fidèle*", et c'est comme ça

que je vois Fatebe. Elle vient de l'intérieur de moi-même, mais, surtout, je crois que je réussis bien à l'en faire

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Cherchez-vous à aborder des problématiques politiques ou féministes ?

Peut-être y a-t-il en effet une dimension politique à regarder longuement et intensément l'image que vous renvoie le miroir et, à partir de là, votre travail. Il me semble en tout cas que cet effort qui consiste à faire le point sur soi avec honnêteté s'étend à d'autres concepts. Pour moi, les thématiques féministes seraient difficiles à formuler avec précision, mais je me dis : "*Comment le simple fait de produire cette œuvre pourrait-il ne pas constituer en soi une position féministe ?*"



Fatebe Pianist (2017), d'Ebecho Muslimova, dessin à l'encre sur papier, 47,31 x 39,69 cm.

Quel est votre rythme de travail ?

Ma pratique et ma production fluctuent en fonction du niveau qu'atteint mon besoin de communiquer. Je me sens plus en forme quand je produis avec régularité, même si, parfois, j'ai besoin de laisser Fatebe infuser en moi quelque temps. Je ne saurais vous dire combien de dessins je fais par mois. Elle me vient par jaillissements sporadiques.

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Composez-vous par séries, ou les dessins sont-ils indépendants les uns des autres ?

Les deux, d'une certaine manière. Chaque dessin exprime une idée autonome, que je n'éprouve pas le besoin de réitérer ou d'élargir une fois qu'elle a été transcrite sur la page à travers le personnage. Mais j'imagine qu'on pourrait considérer l'ensemble du projet comme une série.

Pourquoi avoir choisi de dessiner en noir sur du papier blanc ? Il semble d'ailleurs que cela soit en train d'évoluer, puisque vous avez récemment utilisé de la couleur, et de plus grands formats, comme cette peinture murale présentée à la 32e Biennale des arts graphiques de Ljubljana, en Slovénie... Comment voyez vous l'évolution de votre travail ?

Dessiner est pour moi la façon la plus naturelle de penser, et ce sont les limites imposées par le noir et blanc qui reflètent le mieux ma manière de raisonner. J'ai probablement développé une forme de pensée binaire, résultat de traumatismes passés, ce qui m'a aussi conduite à rechercher le moyen le plus direct pour expliquer cet autre moi. La décision d'utiliser du papier blanc de petit format revêtait un caractère strictement pratique : puisque ces dessins étaient d'abord conçus comme une gratification personnelle et immédiate, il me semblait idiot de dépenser de l'argent en fournitures artistiques de grandes dimensions. Même si je reste concernée par les défis d'un art minimal en noir et blanc, je commence à trouver intéressant de laisser la couleur faire quelques apparitions. Par son échelle, la représentation murale de Ljubljana constituait sans aucun doute un grand changement ludique, mais, là encore, la décision était pragmatique. Le sujet, ce grand dispositif inspiré des machines de Rube Goldberg, ici employé à des fins onanistes, nécessitait beaucoup de place. Il était impossible de m'en tenir à mon format habituel.

Vos œuvres ont-elles vocation à favoriser une prise de conscience du public ?

L'importance jubilatoire des détails dans l'espace qui sépare les choses.

Quel sera votre prochain projet ?

Je suis très impatiente de monter l'exposition prévue cet hiver à la galerie Magenta Plains, à New York.

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EXHIBITIONS

"The Crack-Up" and Ebecho Muslimova at Room East, New York

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Ebecho Muslimova



My Darling,
Though you are far away from me, nothing will change.
I will love you truly and you will always be a special part of Fatebe.
I long to feel the comfort and softness of your loving arms. I want to hug you and kiss Fatebe and hold you tight but I must wait...
Until we meet again, I long for Fatebe.
Yours,

at Room East, New York





Ebecho Muslimova installation views at Room East, New York, 2015
Courtesy: Room East, New York.

Artforum

July 2015

ARTFORUM

EBECHO MUSLIMOVA

by Piper Marshall

ROOM EAST

41 Orchard Street

June 28, 2015 – August 15, 2015

A particular smell clings to New York City's Chinatown in the summer. The aroma makes its way to Orchard Street. It inflects the eight drawings hanging at Room East. These direct cartoons depict FATEBE. FATEBE is artist Ebecho Muslimova's alter ego. We may not know Muslimova, but FATEBE is a black line on white ground. And Fatebe is doing things (think Garbage Pail Kids). FATEBE is playing with herself; she is playing with her fat body. She stares at her face in a stream of shit. She twists her form into a mess on the potter's wheel. She folds her flab over a wire. She flatulates out into the open. She digs up dirt with her hands. She drapes her flesh over handrails. She offers us a view of her symmetrical vagina.

But seriously, what compels us to gape at FATEBE? Why does our gaze linger so readily, so openly? These drawings thrust in front of us what we will to push aside. FATEBE taps into the drive that lures us downtown. She makes us inhale the foul stench of the moistest nights. She throws at us that which we are required to withstand: our bodies, our selves. FATEBE is a sinister feminist. She wildly grins.



Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe Air Pump*, 2015,
ink on paper 12 x 9".

The Creators Project

July 2015

Creators

VICE

Meet Fatebe, Our Body-Positive Art Obsession | Monday Insta Illustrator



Being naked is awesome, and rarely do we see that simple idea expressed as joyfully and with such variety as in [Ebecho Muslimova's Fatebe](#) drawings, which were plastered all over One Star Press' booth at the [New York Art Book Fair](#) this weekend. The Russian artist and Cooper Union alum's energetic alter ego lets it all hang out while executing acrobatics that range from the impossible to the downright impressive. Sometimes her drawings tackle the everyday struggles of womanhood, such as uncomfortable shoes and objectification, but Muslimova really shines when abandoning reality altogether and illustrating kooky contortions of female anatomy. I'll never be able to unsee the image of Fatebe straddling a ceiling fan, or her internal plumbing reimagined as chemical dumping pipes.

Aesthetica

September 21, 2016

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Juxtaposing Exhibitions



Disappearing buildings, a pink ceiling and a laminated sexual enhancement pill wrapper keep each other company in a punny but divided show organised with Aaron Gemmill. The artist framed *O/U* as a dialogue on exchanges: over-under hints at the "political and strategic connotations" of "two prepositions that exist in a dialectic." The first level of juxtaposition comes from the gallery setup: *O/U* exists at both P! on Broome Street and ROOM EAST on Orchard, a few minutes' walk away if the crosswalk signals are in your favour. Though the rationale for this specific division of works is not always clear— some pieces are grouped thematically while other series are split between the spaces — the works echo each other in amusing and sometimes surprising ways.

From the street, P! feels inviting. A warm glow of pink emanates from the space. Achieving this effect was a joint effort. Matthew Schrader painted the walls (*Pink Walls*, 2016) whilst Julie Ault and Martin Beck painted the ceiling (*Pink Ceiling*, 2005-2015). As is clear from the dates, Ault and Beck were there first, and their piece was not made with this show in mind. In contrast, the undated black and white ceiling piece at ROOM EAST, *Possession of Authority* by Lars Breuer, is undated and could have been made for the show. Schrader and Breuer's paintings are then interesting due to their amplification of existing gestures. After noticing the ceiling, one naturally looks at the floor. Aaron Gemmill's *Camera drawing 2016* (2016) is a series of nested quadrangles routed in the floor so that they appear to be telescoping, just as a camera lens turns to extend and focus on a subject. The subject to focus on here is the gallery, and that sentiment is echoed by Patrick Ireland, whose *Borromini's Underpass* (1980) honors the Italian architect with a clean, geometric diagram for a sculpture scaled to the gallery, made of series of ropes sloping from walls to floor to form the shape of a boat's hull. Through these four pieces, the space of the gallery is fully denoted as a container.

The walls, floor, and ceiling are also surfaces, which Jessica Dickinson calls to attention with *remainder: Are: Here (Final)* (2016), a graphite rubbing on paper. Though the drawing is hung vertically, the rubbing seems to have been made from a horizontal surface such as a tiled floor. This reorientation is successful in literally navigating the sort of over / under relationship Gemmill was likely after; a parallel piece hung at ROOM EAST ties the two spaces together.

More nuanced works in the show at P! include Zoe Leonard's *January 23, Frame 8* (2011) and Matthew Schrader's *Untitled*, (2014). The former is an atmospheric Gelatin silver print capturing the diffused light of a winter day. A quarter-sized pinpoint of light is surrounded by a stippled gradient of heat. It is only recognisable as a landscape because of the fine blades of grass poking up from the bottom of the frame. The latter work more actively captures sunlight. Made of magnetic viewing film and neodymium magnets, the diamond-shaped panel is of a deep emerald color that slowly reacts to magnetic radiation. As it fluctuates, this is the most dynamic piece of the show.

Several other works in both spaces speak to more bodily and comic interpretations of the theme. At P!, Kate Levant's *Untitled [enhancement]* (2016) highlights the ups and downs of sexual prowess via a shiny laminated enhancement pill wrapper whose only visible text reads, "Performance." At ROOM EAST, Levant's *Untitled* (2014) inkjet print depicts a snake swallowing an entire egg from a nest. The snake's jaws must have detached in order to swallow, and one can imagine the lump visibly travelling through its slippery body. Also lumpy are the bodies in Ebecho Muslimova's ink drawings on paper. *Fatebe Brick Holder* (2015) shows a woman who supports a tower of bricks by sticking them between her legs, supported by rolls of fat.

In *Fatebe Slides* (2016), the same woman (presumably) stuffs her plump body into two human-sized sandals, one for her legs and one for her arms. Her hands and feet are each stuffed into four additional, appropriately sized slides, but her gleeful smile suggests she is enjoying this corporeal challenge. Barbara Bloom captured other amusing contortions with *Berlin Street Corner* (1989) back at P!: one woman of average height bends slightly to address a much smaller, older, and hunched over woman with a poof of grey hair. Their differences in the print are exaggerated by the split colors of the custom matte.

Muslimova's brick stacks relate directly to Miles Huston's *A Fallow Field* (2016), a tower of eleven produce boxes reaching from floor to ceiling, touching both so that the stack could be imagined to extend above and below the ceiling and floor at ROOM EAST. This gesture has, of course, been tried before (see, for example, Constantina Zavitsanos's tower of debt documents), but the Eight Mile Creek Farm boxes here sport a sticker of a friendly farmer carrying items herself; the visual doubling and familiarity with such boxes hint nicely at tactility.

Also bodily and quite interesting is Steven Holl's *Tesseract of Time* (2016), an archival print on cotton rag that reads as a drawing. The top half is a sort of Trisha Brown dance diagram and the bottom could have been the basis for Susan Marshall's *Chromatic* piece at The Kitchen. This piece could also very likely have been the starting point for the show, as it literally depicts how bodies could interact with architecture: under, in, on, and over. The tesseracts drawn on the bottom half are slightly larger than a human. They are meant to start out on the ground as black and white sculptures but later be raised to "catch [the] gold of [the] rising sun" (linking the piece to Leonard's photograph). Holl also intended to have dancers wear asymmetrical costumes in primary colors with green while they responded to "music patterns in a chromatic field." This is where Marshall could have come in—her piece wove Josef Albers' color theory into a frenzied lecture-come-dance-come-musical performance.

Relating more directly to architecture are Marc Handelman's oil paintings on inkjet prints, another series that is split between the two spaces. *Untitled* (2016) at P! seems most successful of the three on display, but all works attempt to make architecture disappear into the sky by extending the pattern of the sky with paint over the top of the building. In the piece at P!, the building's outline is still somewhat visible as one can see where the paint ends, and this level of difference is most interesting. The prints seem to be of architectural building mockups rather than photographs of existing buildings, and could conceivably be a sort of sociopolitical protest of gentrification in line with Gemmill's stated interests.

Several of the remaining works in the show respond to over-under with formal concerns. In Karel Martens' *Untitled* (circa 2008) letterpress on paper, a pink doughnut form interacts with a yellow rectangle. The rectangle's outer edge is tangential to the doughnut's outer edge while the rectangle's inner edge is tangential to the doughnut hole. The effect is that the rectangle seems to emerge out of, or unravel from, the loop. Because the shapes' shared area is of a mixed color, it is unclear which shape is on top.

Last to be unraveled are the two rolls of toilet paper facing the street at ROOM EAST. This installation by Aki Sasamoto presents the most quotidian explanation of the show with an accordingly accurate title (*Under/Over*, 2015). Though both toilet paper holders are hung on the same wall at the same height, one roll faces the wall while the other hangs toward the viewer. Most would agree that one roll should be switched. More difficult to decide: which one, and why does this flip feel most pressing of all?

O—U at P! and Room East ran from 15 JULY–20 AUGUST, New York.

Mira Dayal

Credits:

1. Installation views of O / U at P! and Room East. Courtesy of Sebastian Bach.

Posted on 21 September 2016