

ART SPIEL

Reflections on the work of contemporary artists

DECEMBER 4, 2019 BY TOREY AKERS

TRAPS! Ebecho Muslimova at Magenta Plains

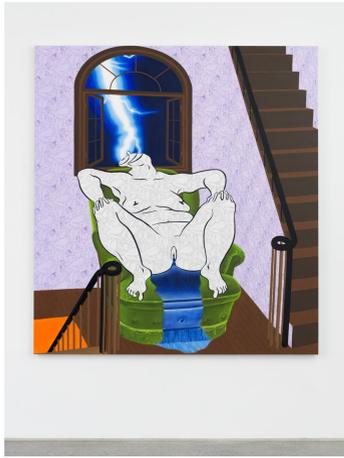
Exhibition review by **Torey Akers**



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 looks 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, Carnivalesque 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

TRAPS! is on view at Magenta Plains until December 14th, 2019



Torey Akers is a Brooklyn-based artist and writer who is interested in a hybridized, ekphrastic approach to both practices. She writes criticism for a variety of outlets and makes paintings about longing, love, and digitized experience. She holds an MFA from Cranbrook Academy of Art.



EXHIBITION REVIEW

#TOREYAKERS #ARTSPIEL #MAGENTAPLAINS #DRAWING #FEMINISTART

PREVIOUS

← **Lily Prince: Honing Plein Air**

NEXT

Elisa Gutiérrez Eriksen on The process of calculating one's position at NARS Foundation →

Search ...



Articles

About

SUBSCRIBE



FEATURED ARTICLES

Armita Raafat: *Traces and Silences* at High Noon
October 9, 2023

A Stage Within a Stage- Ye Qin Zhu at Dimin
October 8, 2023

The Immigrant Artist Biennial - In Dialogue
October 4, 2023

Whisperings from the Wormhole with @talluts
October 2, 2023

Mini Graminski: *Between Shadow and Light* at Window on Hudson
September 29, 2023

Manet and Degas as Realists
September 28, 2023

Peter Eudenbach: *From Cricket Songs to Solar Panels*
September 25, 2023

PE Pinkman: *Two Solo Shows* at Watchung Arts Center
September 20, 2023

Norte Maar's *CounterPointe10* - Alejandra Seeber and Sarah Yasmine Marazzi-Sassoon
September 18, 2023

Tempestry Project: Emily McNeil and Asy Connelly with Amy Brady
September 15, 2023