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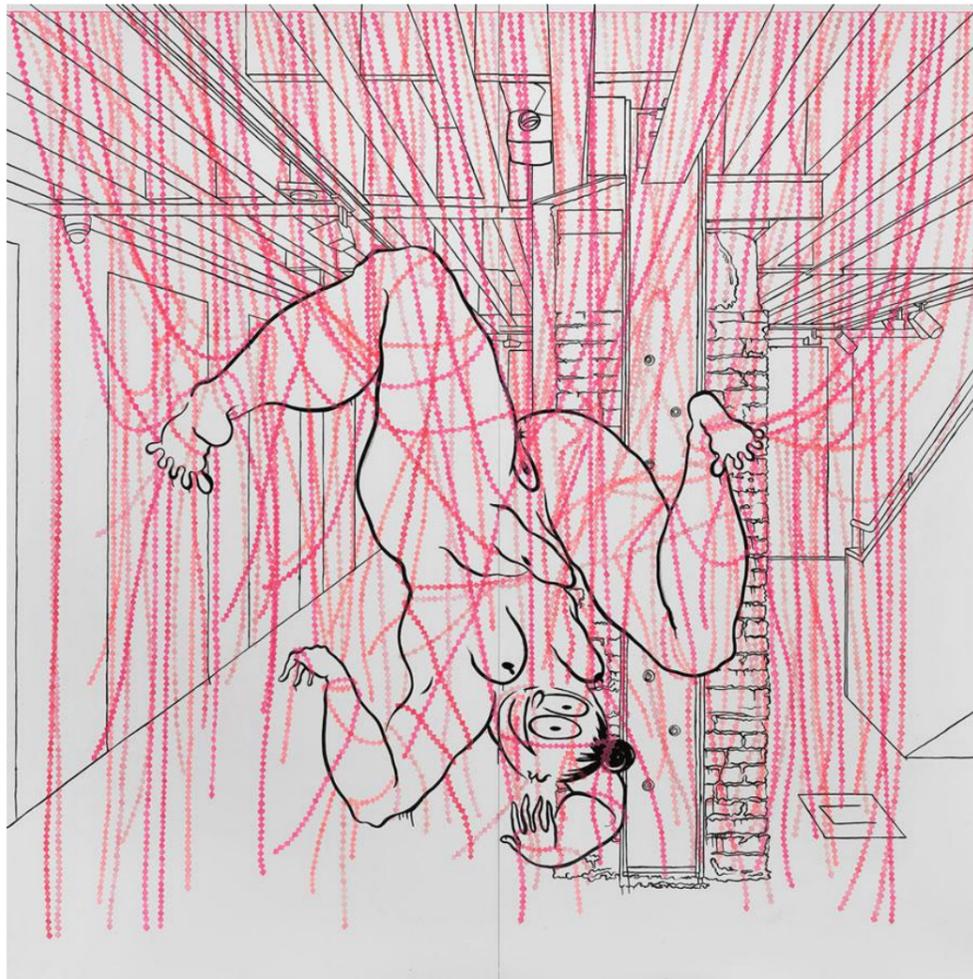
## Ebecho Muslimova's Alter-Ego Devours the Patriarchy

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

A 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.

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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 x 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*

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