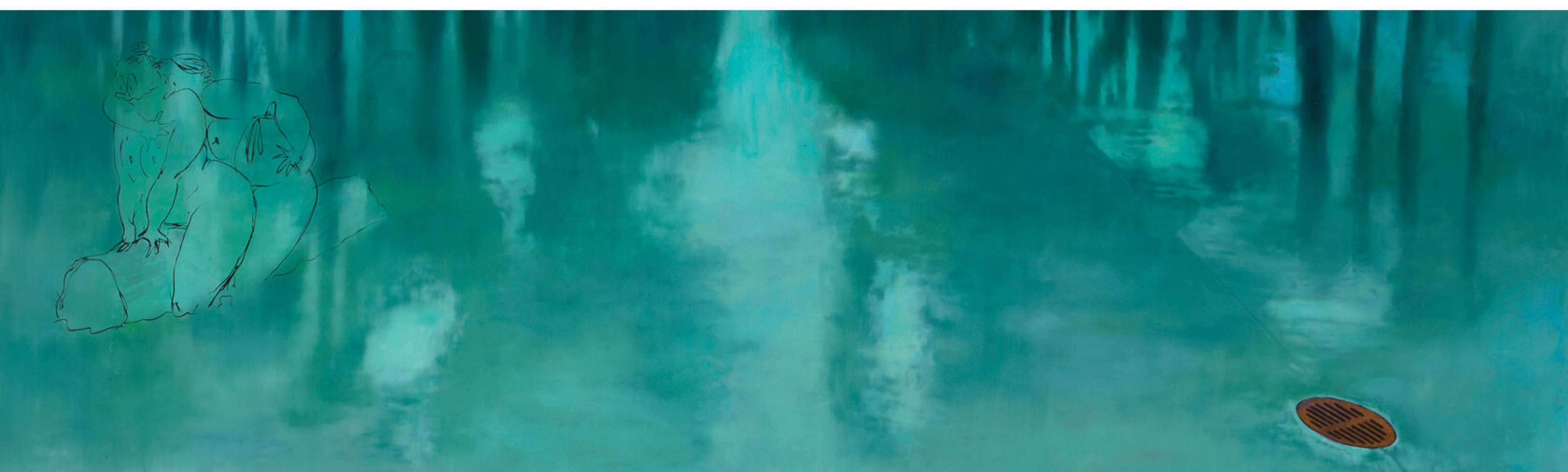




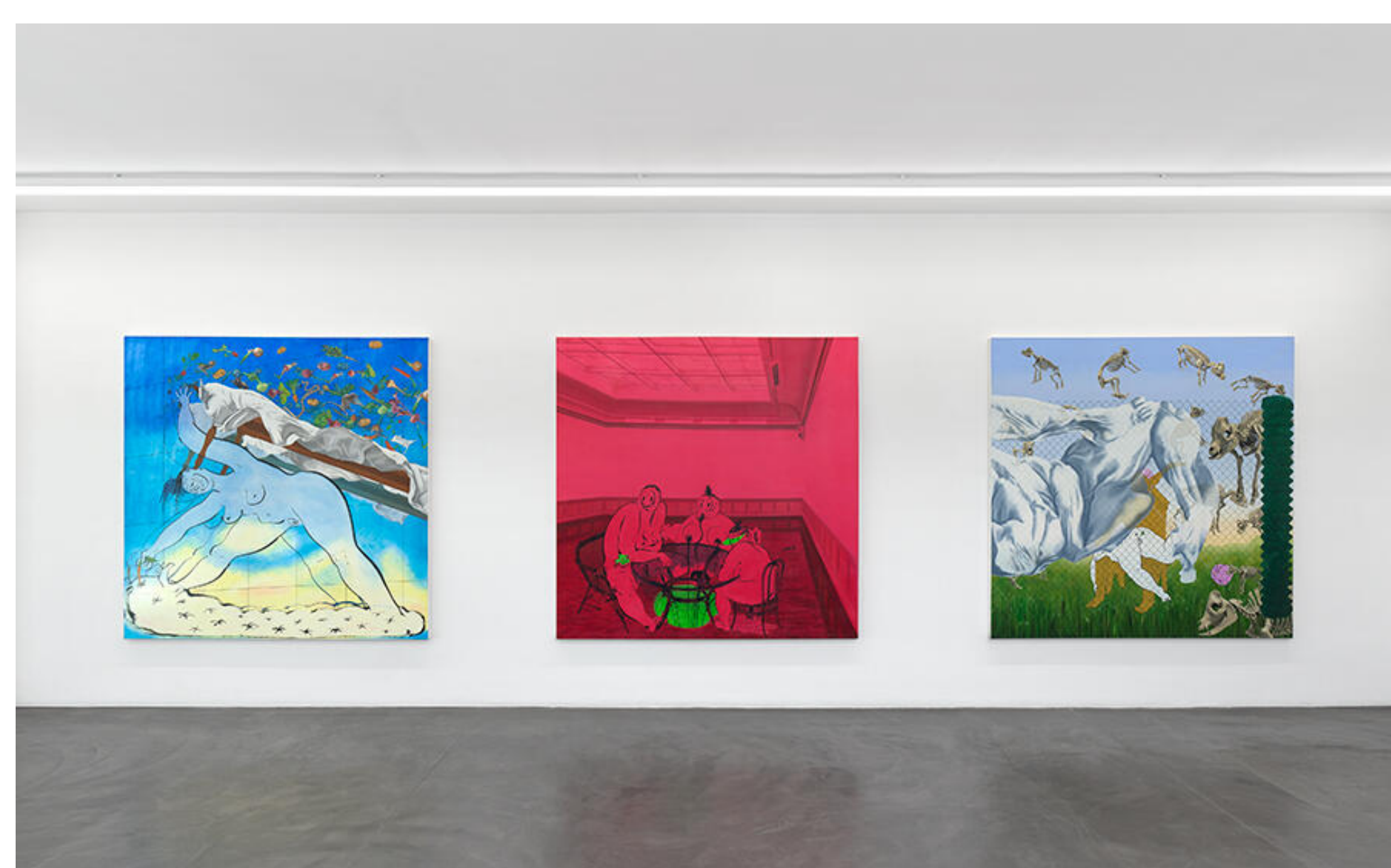
Ebecho Muslimova Plays a Game of Rumours

At Bernheim, Zurich, the artist's alter-ego, Fatebe, confidently splits herself between time zones, cities and hemispheres

BY KRZYSZTOF KOŚCIUCZUK IN EXHIBITION REVIEWS | 19 JUN 24

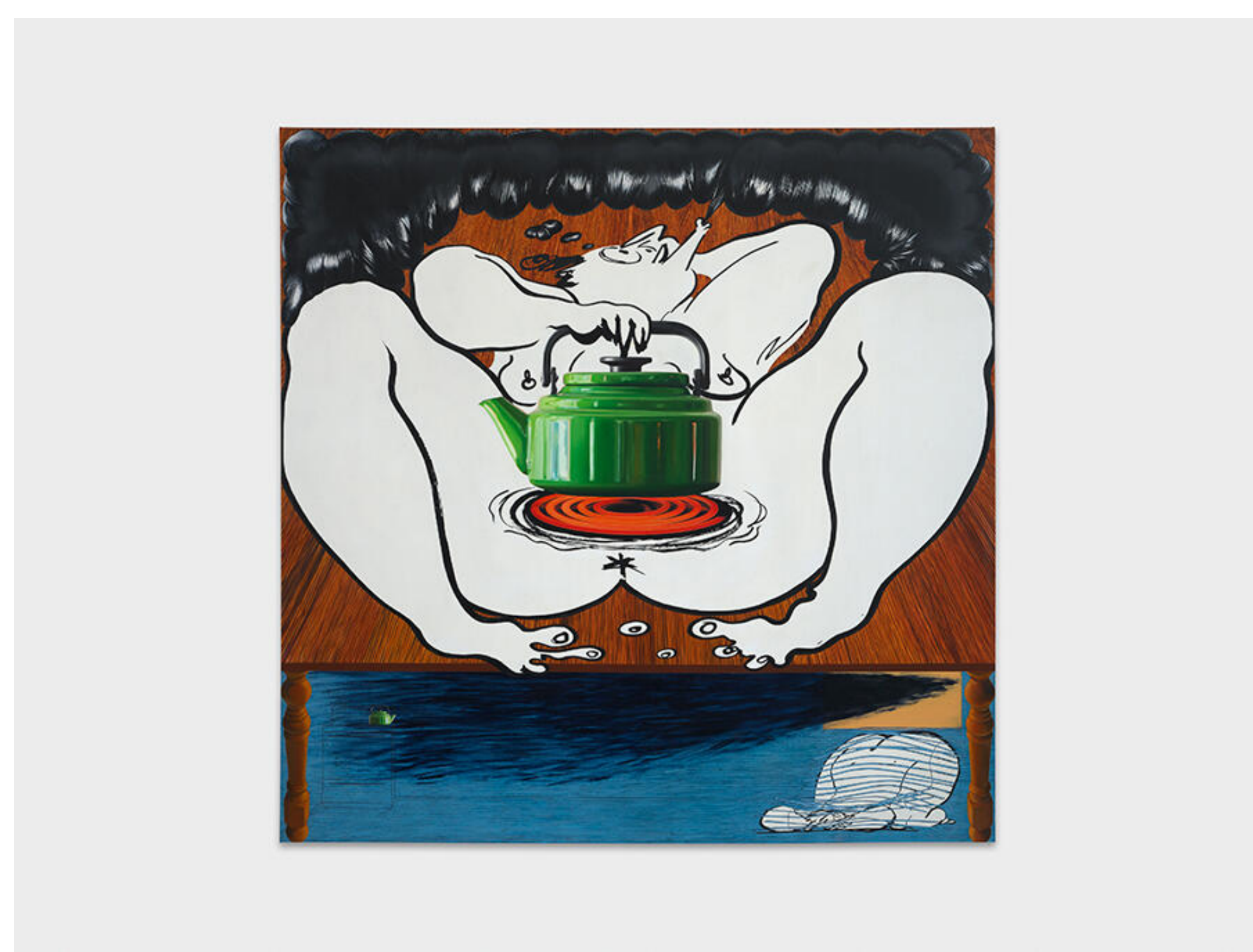


Since her first appearance in 2011, Fatebe – the protagonist of the copious works of Ebecho Muslimova, an artist born in the Republic of Dagestan, educated in the US and now based in Mexico – has grown from a delicate, black and white ink figure displayed in A4 format to a character who fills two-metre-square, mixed-media canvases and stretches across whole walls of museums and galleries in larger-than-life murals.



Ebecho Muslimova, 'Whispers', 2024, exhibition view. Courtesy: the artist and Bernheim London and Zurich; photograph: Annik Wetter

Cheerful, abject and crass, Fatebe is a counter-patriarchal version of Betty Boop, the oversexualized 'baby vamp' brought to life as an animated cartoon during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Sharing the bold, celebratory shapes of Niki de Saint Phalle's feminine figures, Fatebe engages in acts and scenes of sexual transgression that, if they have any precedent, are more likely to be found in the dark recesses of the internet than within the art-historical canon. Invariably nude, Fatebe (a portmanteau of 'fat' and 'Ebe', Muslimova's nickname) is a protean character who is both a subject and an object, capable of impossible feats as well as withstanding the most perverse forms of torture. Seemingly never uncomfortable, she constantly has a grin pinned to her face.



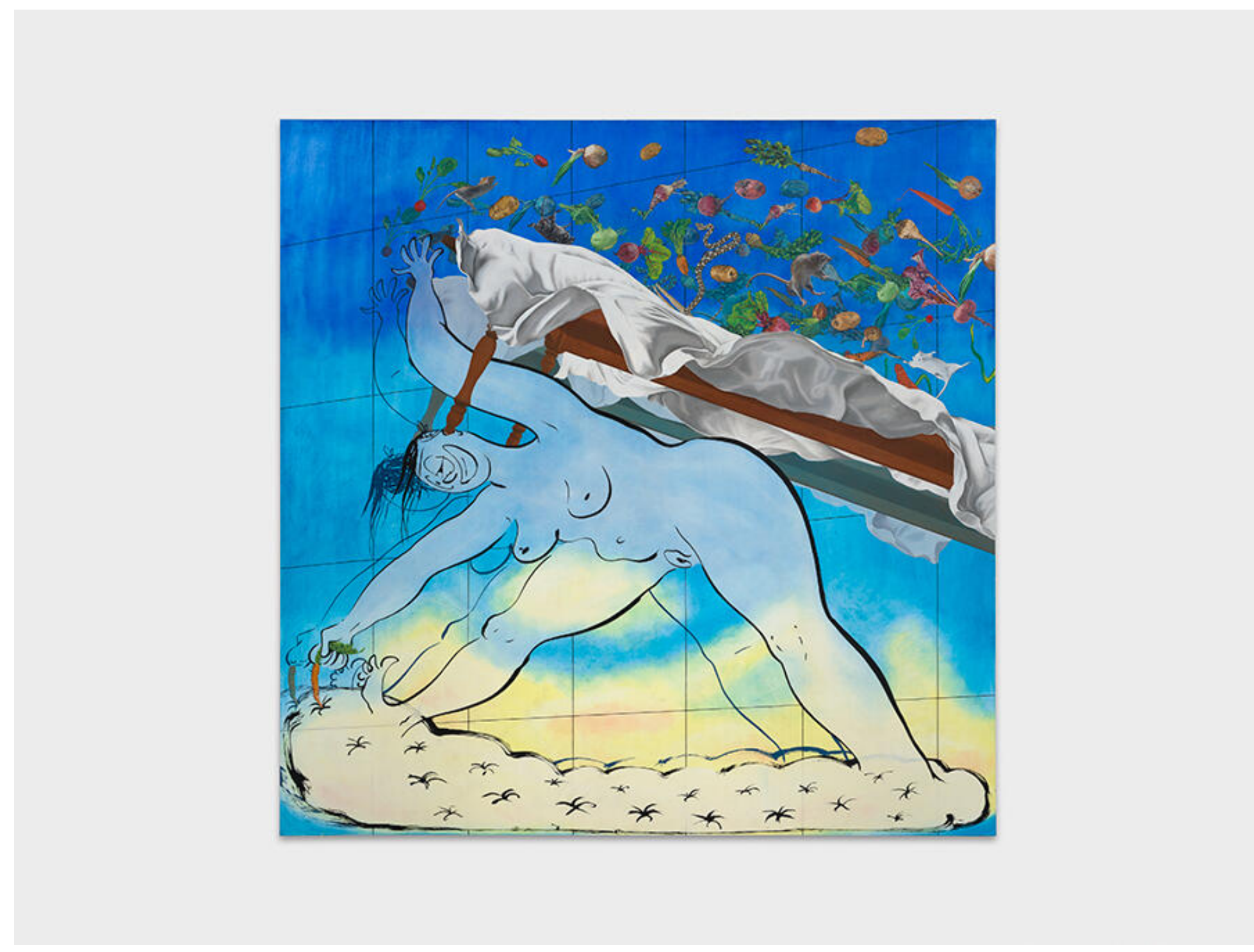
Ebecho Muslimova, 'Fatebe Kettle Vision', 2024, acrylic, high definition UV ink and oil paint on canvas 1.83 x 1.83 m. Courtesy: the artist and Bernheim London and Zurich; photograph: Annik Wetter

In Muslimova's most recent set of works – currently on view in 'Whispers' at Bernheim in Zurich – Fatebe seems to, at times, dissolve into the setting, be that landscape or architecture, in scenes that frequently address consumption: both of food and of commodities. In *Fatebe Kettle Vision* (all works 2024), she appears outlined by the typical thick contour, her vulva replaced with a hotplate burner, her hand wielding an alluring, hyper-realistic, Japanese enamel kettle. With a plume of black smoke billowing from her mouth, she's cast here as a stove. In *Fatebe Farm Mother*, on the other hand, she is hardly noticeable, a pale figure in the background of a fenced field with a swarm of animal skeletons hovering above like bees.



Ebecho Muslimova, 'Whispers', 2024, exhibition view. Courtesy: the artist and Bernheim London and Zurich; photograph: Annik Wetter

But the artist's protagonist is not fading away. To the contrary, 'Whispers' is a disjointed conversation. Riffing off the children's game in which a message is passed in hushed tones between participants, often becoming distorted along the way, the artist prepared two sets of work: the other is on view in a concurrent exhibition at Mendes Wood DM in São Paulo and titled 'Rumors' (which is how the game is known in Brazil). In some cases, the works were conceived as elements in a single composition – as in *Fatebe Harvest Day*, on show in Zurich, and *Fatebe Farm to Table*, in São Paulo. The protagonist in the former painting is busy picking carrots from a field that is perhaps also part of her body. She carries a table on her back, her jerky movements sending scores of vegetables and rats into the air. In this painting's sister image, Fatebe – wearing red, high-heeled shoes that suggest an urban, consumerist incarnation – is impaled by the same table. In other works, the connection is less obvious but, in any case, the counterpart works remain out of sight to gallery visitors in both cities.



Ebecho Muslimova, 'Fatebe Harvest Day', 2024, acrylic, high definition UV ink and oil paint on canvas 1.83 x 1.83 m. Courtesy: the artist and Bernheim London and Zurich; photograph: Annik Wetter

In a 2022 interview with *The Talks*, Muslimova explained that she started drawing during a particularly 'frustrating' period in school, using humour because it 'seemed like the fastest way to communicate something very quickly and efficiently.' 'Whispers', shows just how far Muslimova – and, by extension, Fatebe – has come since then. First leaving the comforts of the A4 page, she has now transcended the confines of the exhibition space, confidently splitting herself between time zones, cities and hemispheres, the grin still on her face.

Ebecho Muslimova's 'Whispers' is on view at Bernheim, Zurich, until 26 July; 'Rumors' is on view at Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, until 10 August

Main image: Ebecho Muslimova, *Fatebe String Play*, 2024, acrylic, high definition UV ink and oil paint on canvas 1.83 x 1.83 m. Courtesy: the artist and Bernheim London and Zurich; photograph: Annik Wetter



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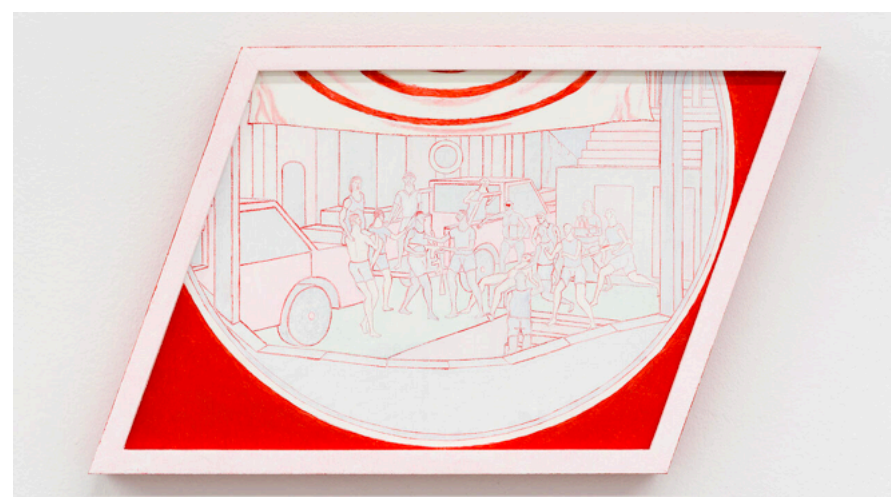
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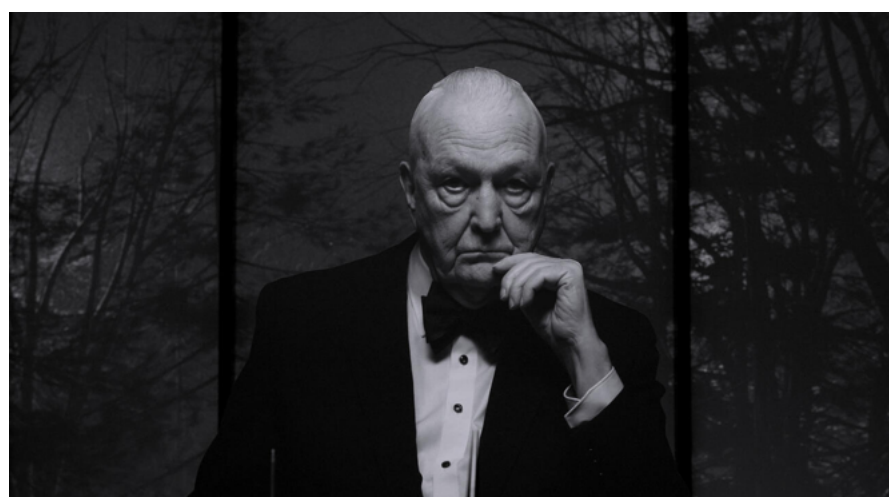
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