

*Ebecho Muslimova & Maria Lassnig*

March 13–April 26, 2025

## Level One

Magenta Plains is pleased to present *Ebecho Muslimova & Maria Lassnig*, an exhibition that brings together the work of two artists who confront the psychological and physical experience of the body in profoundly individual yet resonant ways. New paintings and sumi ink drawings by Muslimova are paired with historic works by Lassnig dated from 1970-1992.

While stylistically distinct, the practices of Lassnig and Muslimova converge on the theme of bodily perception as a site of self-exploration. This exhibition juxtaposes Lassnig's intense, gestural paintings and expressive watercolors with Muslimova's line-based, cartoon-like works. Both artists share a commitment to vulnerability; Lassnig confronts embarrassment, as seen in her deeply personal works that chronicle her fears and emotions on canvas. Muslimova, in a similar vein, exposes the awkward and often absurd nature of the body and its impulses. The two thus navigate the delicate balance between self-protection and self-exposure, presenting the female body as a vessel of truth, humor, and unfiltered emotional honesty.

"Fatebe," Muslimova's recurrent protagonist, embodies a catalog of human experience with a raw, almost grotesque sense of acceptance. Fatebe's surrealistic, exaggerated gestures and poses capture a vast spectrum of emotions, from resilience to absurdity, mirroring Lassnig's *Körperbewusstseinsmalerei* or "body-awareness painting" approach, in which Lassnig painted her bodily sensations and subjective feelings rather than physical appearances. Just as Lassnig's works translate internal sensations — like pressure, tension, and discomfort — into compositions that defy traditional figuration, Muslimova's Fatebe navigates the tensions of personal identity, often pushing against the limits of social norms and expectations of femininity.

Muslimova's new works explore Fatebe's relationship to the concept of "l'homme différent," a term coined by historian Lucian Boia which describes a popular trope in science fiction in which humans encounter human-adjacent entities, such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* or Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*. In these tales, the non-human entity is used as a mirror of an anxiety in the human condition, most often aligned with a concern about technological or sociocultural advancement. Fatebe functions similarly; her body is stretched, manipulated, hybridized, and otherwise altered to the threshold of unrecognizability, while maintaining a tenuous relationship to the human form. For example, in *Fatebe lo Stalled* (2024), Fatebe herself appears in a reprisal of the myth of Io, lover of Zeus, who was turned into a heifer by the Greek god to avoid detection by his wife Hera. In the image, Fatebe wears a mask which situates her mid-transformation, and is a hybridized version of herself, fused with the bathtub, while surrounded by distinct Fatebes creating an audience for this Greek tragedy. To her right is another hybrid Fatebe, this time with an ancient Greek "rhyton," a drinking vessel designed to only be set down once it is emptied—as is the bathtub with which Fatebe/Io is morphed. The system is cyclical, uncanny, and it is clear that we have encountered this transformation at a midway point. Fatebe then embodies the anxiety spawned amidst technological upheaval, akin to Boia's "l'homme different."

Each work on view by Lassnig represents a different dimension of her practice: small-scale gestural drawing, figurative self-portrait, and pseudo-abstraction. *Zornige Schreckschraube (Angry Shrew/Screw)* (1992) offers an apt comparison to Muslimova's work—the wordplay of the title illuminates the painted object as a biomechanical representation of feminine anger. The screw head is overtly clear, but it is connected to a coiled, pinkish, fleshy form which evokes an intestine as much as a cobra. Lassnig utilizes this creature as a metaphor for the way in which feminine anger is diminished, and aspects of the feminine are othered as non-human. The stories of Fatebe/Io and the Angry Screw/Shrew are, if not directly related, certainly thematically aligned.

This exhibition invites viewers to witness the evolution of female self-representation across generations, encouraging a conversation about the ways women artists have used their bodies as both subject and medium. Through this, Muslimova and Lassnig not only depict the body but turn it into a map of lived experience, inviting us to see through their eyes and feel through their skin.

**Ebecho Muslimova** (b. 1986, Makhachkala, Dagestan, RU) received her BFA at Cooper Union in New York, NY in 2010. Muslimova has presented solo exhibitions at Mendes Wood DM, São Paulo, BR; Bernheim Gallery, Zürich, CH; Magenta Plains, New York, NY; The Drawing Center, New York, NY; David Zwirner Gallery, London, UK; 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.

Muslimova's work is in public collections including The Centre Pompidou, Paris, FR; Dallas Museum of Art, Dallas, TX; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Hirshhorn Museum, Washington, D.C.; ICA Miami, Miami, FL; MAMCO Geneva, Geneva, CH; RISD Museum, Providence, RI; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY and Zuzeum, Riga, LV. Muslimova lives and works in Mexico City, MX.

From a young age, **Maria Lassnig** (b. 1919, Carinthia, AT – d. 2014, Vienna, AT) began to explore the human figure through drawing. She studied painting at the Vienna Fine Arts Academy but found the art scene at that time to be too limiting. She moved to Paris in 1960 and then to New York in 1968, continually exploring how to represent the body as it feels to inhabit rather than how it appears from the outside – a concept which Lassnig named *Körperbewusstseinsmalerei* (“body awareness painting”). On returning to her native Austria in 1980, she became the country's first female professor of painting. She also taught animation during her time at the Vienna University of Applied Arts.

Her life's work won her many accolades including the Grand Austrian State Prize in 1988 and the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement in 2013 at the 55th Venice Biennale. She has been the subject of one person exhibitions at the Albertina Museum, Vienna; Deichtorhallen Hamburg; Kunsthaus Zurich; MoMA PS1, Long Island City, New York; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Serpentine Gallery, London; Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam; and Vienna Secession among others. Lassnig represented Austria in the 1980 Venice Biennale alongside Valie Export, and she participated in Documenta in Kassel, Germany in 1982 and 1997. Lassnig's work is held in collections around the world including Aïshti Foundation, Beirut, LB; Pompidou Centre, Paris, FR; Cleveland Museum of Art, OH; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Hessel Museum of Art, Bard College, Annandale-on-Hudson, NY; Kunstmuseum Basel, CH; Kunstmuseum Bonn, DE; Morgan Library & Museum, New York, NY; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, CA; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam, NL; Zabłudowicz Collection, London, UK.