



ART

welcome to miami

Emerging American artist TSCHABALALA SELF is on a steep upwards trajectory with a host of international solo shows already under her belt and a booth dedicated to her latest project at Art Basel Miami Beach...

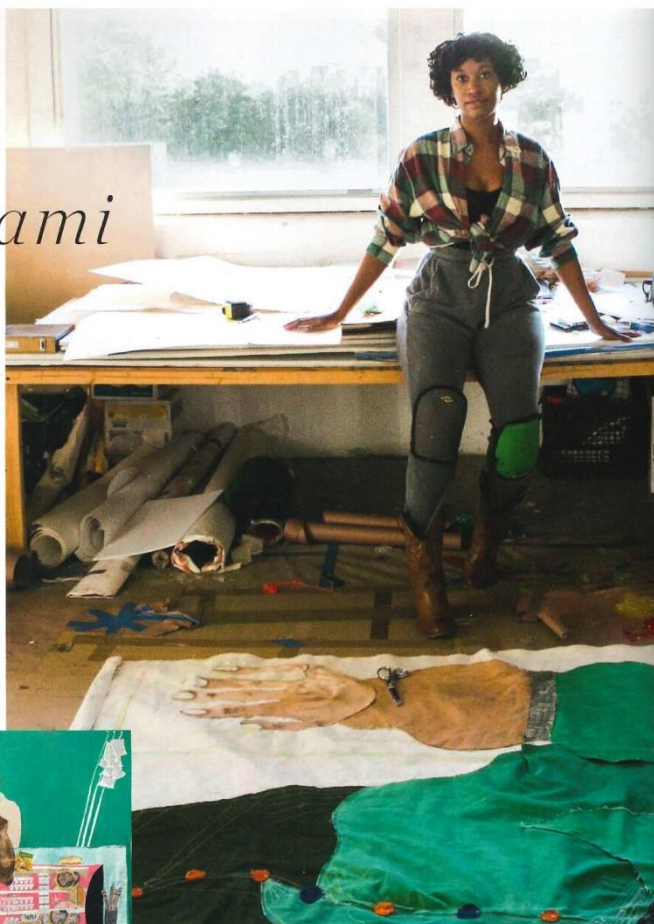
Words by Georgia Simmonds

"Growing up, when I was looking for images that looked like me out in the world, a lot of them were images from pop culture," says 28-year-old artist Tschabalala Self. "Often that's the only arena in the culture at large where black people are exalted."

Best known for examining attitudes towards race and gender with her bold celebrations of the black female figure, Self's artworks are masterful collages of intricately sewn textile scraps and paint. "Sometimes, I just like to start from the scraps and not have any one idea in mind," she explains, "I start sewing pieces together and at that point the work is very abstract, and it slowly becomes more defined. I like working that way because it really feels as though the figure is being born out of this messiness."

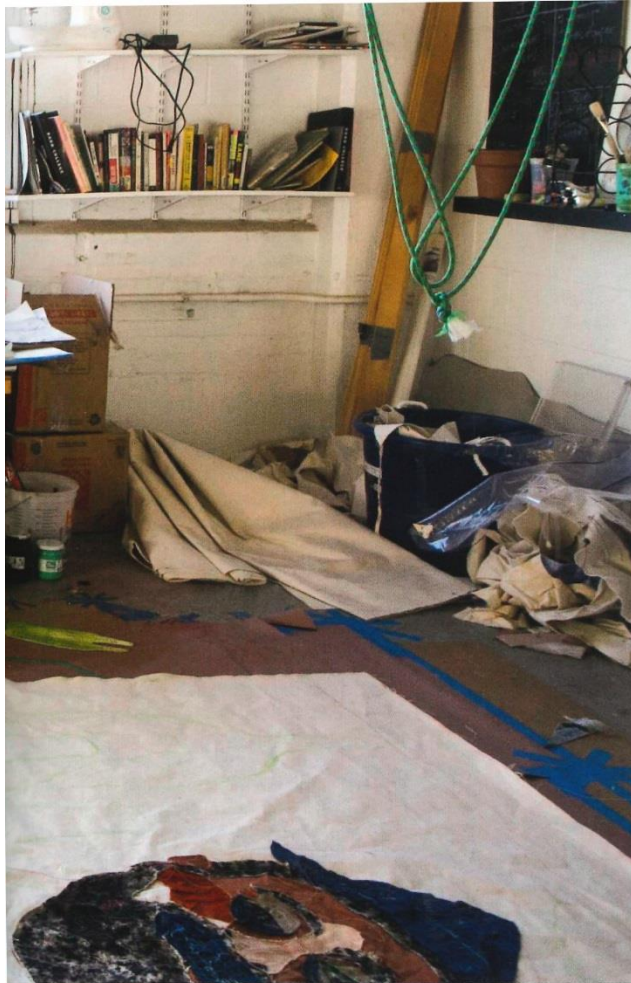
Self currently lives between Harlem – the neighborhood where she was raised – and New Haven, the city where she earned her MFA from Yale in 2015 and honed her striking visual language. Her process of assembling and embellishing colorful fragments of material is meant to echo how an actual person is formed: "In terms of personality, a person is built up of many different elements," explains Self, who feels her interest in depicting people has something to do with her position in the family. As the youngest of five, she spent her childhood absorbed in watching her siblings "being an observer in my household". There's another significant family tie too – Self incorporates textile swatches collected by her late mother into her pieces. "For me, it adds a certain responsibility. I want each work that has a piece of my mother's fabric to be strong and relevant and important."

The art world is convinced Self's work is exactly that. Her canvases have caught the industry's full attention, and solo shows in New York, LA, Berlin, Naples, Rome and London, and a coveted spot on 2017's *Forbes 30 Under 30* list have put her on the map. In her dedicated Thierry Goldberg booth at Art Basel, she is moving away from focusing only on the body to explore ideas of community.



TRUE COLORS

From top: Tschabalala Self in her studio working on *Counter*, 2017; *Chopped Cheese*, 2017; *Bodega Run Diptych - Panel I*, 2017, all part of her Bodega project



“It’s *important* for people from all backgrounds to be *able* to leave a *record* of their existence”

At the fair she will show an immersive installation recreating a small grocery-store environment that examines the significance of New York City bodegas – hives of activity in areas such as Harlem, where she grew up: “I was trying to find a space that could function as an icon for my community.”

Much as those pop-culture images had a big impact on Self growing up, she is mindful of the sense of belonging that artists and their work can ignite. “It’s important for people from all backgrounds to be able to leave a record of their existence so [future generations] can feel like there is a place for them in the world,” says Self. “And it becomes more urgent for people who are likely to face marginalization. There will be fewer examples of their narrative.”

Art Basel Miami Beach runs from December 6 to 8, 2018

private views

Two other female artists making their mark at ART BASEL MIAMI BEACH

PIA CAMIL

“It’s like my second studio,” says 38-year-old artist Pia Camil of Mexico City, the place she was born and raised. “It’s a city I know very well but it’s so massive and monstrous that I also enjoy the feeling of exploring it and not being part of it.” Responding to urban spaces and the politics of consumerism are themes that recur in Camil’s work. She returned to Mexico’s capital in 2009, having left to study in Rhode Island and London where she honed her creative practice, which combines vibrant, monumental or wearable textiles, ceramics, painting and audience participation. The ‘habitable paintings’ (poncho-like garments made from fabric remnants) Camil gave out to visitors at Frieze in 2015 caused a frenzy. As an artist, Camil thrives working with others. In her studio – a cabaret theater from the 1940s in

Mexico City – she hosts open events every three months, inviting friends and artists to stage experimental collaborations. Colombian gallery

Instituto de Visión Bogotá will showcase Pia Camil’s textiles at Art Basel along with a video (right) she produced in partnership with writer

Gabriela Jauregui, featuring an androgynous person doing domestic chores in a surreal environment.



EBECHO MUSLIMOVA

To date, the Dagestan-born, New York-based artist Ebecho Muslimova has created hundreds of drawings of her cartoon-like, alter ego, Fatebe (below), whom she depicts – always nude – in various uncomfortable, anxiety-charged situations such as trapped in too-small spaces or in danger of falling from a great height. Scenarios that recall, in expressive inky strokes, the absurdity and agony of dreams. “She’s a distinct character who is not me, but she’s of me,” clarifies Muslimova, whose work will take over Switzerland’s Galerie Maria Bernheim booth at Art Basel. “[Fatebe] is a tool for my feelings. She’s like a surrogate



of my emotional process... My nerves or anxieties, she’s a shield for me.” The work is about honoring difficult feelings and reframing humiliation and, for now, Fatebe is the full focus of the 34-year-old rising star’s practice: “I have been working with her for a long time and I haven’t ceased to find power in it,” says Muslimova. “I guess I’m trying to find the ultimate version, or emblem, or motif of a feeling via her.”