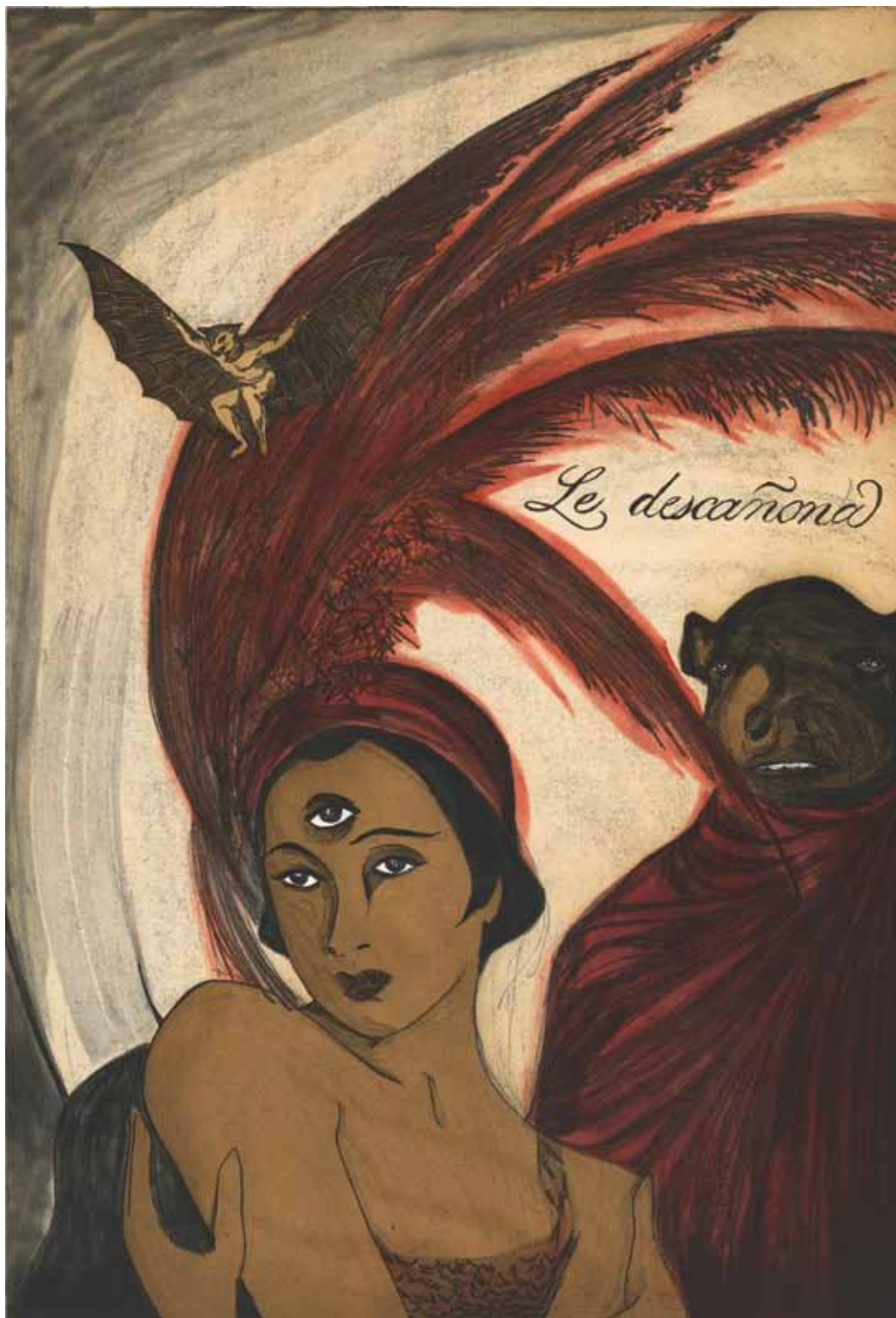


Overview

MARCEL DZAMA



The Beauty that is Born from the Seed of the Beast, 2015. Color soft ground etching with spit bite aquatint and aquatint. 31½-x-21½-inch image on 39½-x-28½-inch sheet, ed. 25. All images printed by Emily York. See crownpoint.com for more information.



Here's a Fine Revolution, 2015. Color spit bite aquatint with aquatint and soft ground etching. 21½-x-30¼-inch image on 29½-x-37¼-inch sheet, ed. 25.

MARCEL DZAMA

“Dzama-mania is in full swing,” wrote a reporter from the *Toronto Star* in 2010. Marcel Dzama, he explained, is “a broad-based crowd-pleaser with artistic integrity whose drawings have built up a following that has the very rare feature of crossing over from the art world into the culture at large.” *Drawings*, he said. Not paintings, not sculpture (though Dzama does do sculpture), not photography. Rarely is a fine-art reputation built on drawings.

Drawing, it’s true, is at the root of Dzama’s art. But he does do other things, and if “Dzama-mania” extends beyond the art world, it is most likely driven by the artist’s forays into film and dance. In 2013, his short film *Une Danse des Bouffons* was premiered by the Toronto International Film Festival, which commissioned it. And upcoming in February 2016, the New York City Ballet will present a new work based on a Hans Christian Anderson story with music by Bryce Dessner, choreography by Justin Peck, sets and costumes by Marcel Dzama. Two of the three large etchings Dzama has just completed at Crown Point invoke ballet scenes. The third resembles an old movie poster, with a beautiful woman and a beast. And, as a piece de resistance, there is a complicated yet delicate portfolio of twelve small etchings titled *The Fallen Fables*.

Dzama is Canadian. He was born in Winnipeg in 1974 and

grew up there, but has been living in New York since 2004. He is represented by the David Zwirner Gallery, and is the subject, in 2013, of two big coffee-table books, one published in the United States by Abrams, the other by Hatje Cantz Verlag in Germany. Dzama’s images have been spreading around the world since the *Toronto Star* talked about his “cantankerous bears and gunslinging girls” five years ago.

Reading about Dzama’s drawings, I kept seeing the words “fantasy,” “myth” and “allegory,” so I paid attention when I picked up the *New York Times Book Review* and found all three words in the first sentence of a piece (not about Dzama) by Neil Gaiman. Gaiman says “fantasy shades into myth in one direction, allegory in another.” The sentence sent me to the dictionary. *Fantasy* is “a creation of the imagination.” *Myth* is “lacking factual basis or historical validity;” and *allegory* is “the expression by means of symbolic fictional figures of truths about human experience.” And so it is with Dzama’s art: his imagination offers—on the one hand—nothing factual or historically valid, but—on the other hand—he can reveal symbolic truths. Such revelations (charming yet disturbing) occur because Dzama’s characters, enlivened by his beautiful drawing, are so present on the page.

THE FALLEN FABLES

1. The Fallen Fables
2. Hopelessly Hidden, and Does Not Exist
3. She is So Charming, Disarming and Not to Be Trusted
4. A Mother of the Seven Sons
5. The Opening Act to the Manifesto
6. The Old Virtues Are Up for Grabs



1



2



3



7



8



9

A portfolio of twelve soft ground etchings with spit bite aquatint printed on gampi paper chine collé
13 x 10 inches, edition 25

7. A Joyous Impluse
8. The I Like America and America Likes Me Jig
9. New Things May Form from Our Fragments
10. A Truth May Bend a Little
11. The Unclipped Fingernails of the Dead
12. He Must Work in a Fallen World



4



5



6



10



11



12



Our Daughter's Dance with Wisdom, 2015. Color spit bite aquatint with aquatint and soft ground etching. 21½-x-33½-inch image on 29½-x-40½-inch sheet, ed. 25.

“The monster is in the service of the white knight,” Marcel murmured as he worked in the Crown Point etching studio. “He paints acid onto the plate to bite the shadows into it.” Marcel is soft-spoken, shy—some would say—yet comfortable with himself and his work. He allowed me to make a short video, and offered commentary from time to time. The monster, in this body of work, is occupying two forms: a bear and a bull. Neither of them is “cantankerous,” as the newspaperman characterized the bear. Rather, they both seem bemused, perhaps puzzled, maybe simply resigned to the world around them. The bear appears in two of the portfolio prints, Number 2 and Number 3. He may be an earlier incarnation of the bull. The title of the print in which the bear appears alone is *Hopelessly Hidden, and Does Not Exist*.

The bull is in *The Beauty that is Born from the Seed of the Beast*, the large vertical etching illustrated on the cover of this newsletter, and also in one of the small etchings, the final one in the portfolio, Number 12. Its individual title is *He Must Work in a Fallen World*.

In part of my video, Marcel and I (as a voice behind the camera) are looking at the portfolio etchings—at that point they had fairy-tale roots. There were not yet twelve of them, and many were not in their final state. Marcel’s working title for the group at that time was *Ugly Stories and Beautiful Monsters*. Later, he changed

it to *The Fallen Fables* and added image Number 1: Duchamp’s *Étant donnés* embellished with Marcel’s addition of what he called the Cheshire Cat staring coolly out of the picture. In *Alice in Wonderland* the Cheshire Cat appears and disappears at will, sometimes initiating philosophical conversations. Here, it appears again in Number 7, looking sideways at a puppet show.

Number 4, *A Mother of the Seven Sons*, was—when I made the video—Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs. Number 6, *The Old Virtues are Up for Grabs*, was Red Riding Hood—the wolf is there, and (Marcel said) it creates a connection to Joseph Beuys. Number 10, Pinocchio (the liar), is Pinocchio in both versions.

Number 11 originally had to do with the Three Little Pigs—one pig is visible. “Beheadings are in the news,” Marcel remarked sadly as we looked at this image. The inscription means “Take Care.” That is the only cursive inscription Marcel could translate. He doesn’t know what the others mean; he simply copied them from Goya’s *Disasters of War*. (Now that you know this, you can see another story line.)

As Marcel and I talk on the video about the little prints, the word “scary” is repeated by both of us. “A scary one...a very scary one...another scary one.” I think the last one, showing hands raised to acclaim the bull, is perhaps the scariest of all.

—Kathan Brown, October, 2015

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MARCEL DZAMA: Three Etchings and a Portfolio

On view in the gallery are four films. Three are by the artist:
The Infidels, *Death Disco Dance*, and
Une Danse des Bouffons (A Jester's Dance). The fourth is
a film of Marcel Dzama in the Crown Point studio.



Marcel Dzama in the Crown Point studio, 2015.

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Marcel Dzama: Puppets, Pawns, and Prophets

This richly illustrated catalogue presents Marcel Dzama's 2013 exhibition at David Zwirner in London. It included videos inspired by the game of chess and puppets and masks based on Dzama's characters, along with drawings, collages, dioramas, paintings, and sculptural works. 184 pages, 154 color reproductions, hardcover. Published by David Zwirner/Hatje Kantz, 2013. \$50