

For Immediate Release: February 13, 2007

## Marcel Dzama: *Even the Ghost of the Past*

March 6 - April 19, 2008

Opening Reception: Thursday, March 6, 2008, 6 - 8 pm



Opening on March 6, David Zwirner is pleased to present a new exhibition by Marcel Dzama. For the last decade, Canadian-born Dzama has shown extensively throughout North America and Europe. Transforming 519 West 19th Street into an odeum of imagination, Dzama's ambitious fifth solo exhibition at the gallery will include single drawings, composite drawings, costumes, dioramas, and film.

Marcel Dzama is best known for his figurative compositions of pen and watercolor on manila-colored paper. Bearing a characteristic palette of muted browns, grays, greens, and reds, Dzama's drawings are populated by an expansive cast of human, animal, and hybrid characters. In this exhibition distinct personalities take center stage, most notably the masked and armed "terrorist." In the sixteen-part drawing *Inflated Threat*, 2007, this character is obsessively repeated amongst cowboys, archers, and femmes fatales, suggesting the exaggerated climate of fear and shoot-'em-up mentality at the forefront of American politics. Despite the works' formal and psychological

complexity, the artist commonly places his fantastic personae against a blank background; avoiding a definite narrative context in the drawings, Dzama consequently invites various interpretations.

In recent years, Dzama has expanded his practice to include work in multiple media, including painting, sculpture, and film. Mirroring the progression in his artistic practice, the exhibition's first room of drawings will give way to a second room of new work in three dimensions. Concurrently inspired by the religious shrines he found in Mexico and the work of Joseph Cornell, Dzama has created a series of five dioramas. Recessed into the wall, the works recall a child's puppet theatre or the traditional didactic displays found in natural history museums. Countering the mode of presentation's innocuous associations, the works ultimately reveal violent quirks, whimsical fetishes, macabre humor, and sardonic political criticism. For the colossal *On the banks of the red river*, 2007-2008, the artist has employed nearly 300 ceramic sculptures. Recreating the apocalyptic cover image of his 2005 exhibition catalogue, *The Course of Human History Personified*, this work is replete with greedy aristocratic hunters, gigantic disembodied heads, flying banshees, and a motley mix of creatures caught in the throes of death.

For this exhibition, the artist has also created a sculptural work that pays homage to Marcel Duchamp's *Étant donnés*, 1946-66. Like Duchamp, Dzama has created an intricate tableau only visible to viewers through a small peephole. The artist imagines what could have provoked Duchamp's famous scene of a nude splayed in the woods. Evoking David and Goliath, Dzama's fanciful interpretation proposes a wily fox is to blame, knocking-out both the nude and her lover with a slingshot. Dzama, thus effectively, and comically, demystifies one of art history's most enigmatic works.

In the final room, the artist will present his silent film *The Lotus Eaters*, 2005. Recalling a bygone cinematic era, the black-and-white short will be accompanied, on select days, by a live pianist. The title suggests the mythical race, whose favored food induced a dreamy and contented forgetfulness, found in Homer's *Odyssey*. While the film's narrative structure mimics that of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, as a tortured artist travels the underworld of his creations in search of his deceased wife. Using a combination of 8mm and 16mm film, Dzama also incorporates footage shot by a Fisher-Price PixelVision camcorder - the artist's childhood camera. Embodying the unique combination of home-spun aesthetic and referential complexity that characterizes Dzama's production, the film makes vivid not only the characters who occupy the artist's imagination, but also the essential nature of the creative process.

A fully illustrated catalogue will be published in conjunction with the exhibition.

Schedule of live piano performances: March 6, 6-8 pm; March 8, 1-6 pm; March 15, 1-6 pm; March 22, 1-6 pm; March 26, 10 am-6 pm; March 27, 10 am-6 pm; March 28, 10 am-6 pm; March 29, 10 am-6 pm; April 5, 1-6 pm; April 12, 1-6 pm; April 19, 1-6 pm

Press preview with the artist, March 6 at 5 pm. For information contact [julia@davidzwirner.com](mailto:julia@davidzwirner.com)