


art21.org/marceldzama


Marcel Dzama

ABOUT

Born

1974 (Winnipeg, Canada)

Education

University of Manitoba, BFA

Lives and Works

Brooklyn, NY

About the Artist

Fantastical and absurd, Marcel Dzama's drawings, performances, and films feature a cast of humans, animals, and hybrid creatures. Dzama draws upon a mix of influences—from childhood monsters, like the Wolfman and Dracula, to the work of artists like Marcel Duchamp, Francisco Goya, William Blake, and Francis Picabia—to create unique worlds that are at once surreal and familiar, sweet and violent, and chaotic and elegant.

Media and Materials

drawing
film
performance

Key Words and Ideas

collaboration
commentary
history
humor
fantasy
friendship
icons

play
political
storytelling
surrealism
theatre
worldbuilding

Related Artists

Meriem Bennani
Nathalie Djurberg &
Hans Berg
Nick Cave
Michael Ray Charles
Trenton Doyle
Hancock
Pierre Huyghe
Tala Madani

Barry McGee
Raymond Pettibon
Mary Reid Kelley
Jacolby Satterwhite
William Scott
Kiki Smith
Nancy Spero
Chris Ware
Jamie Warren

TEACHING CONNECTIONS

“Making films is an excuse to just get a group of people and have this family for a little while.” —Marcel Dzama

How to Use This Guide

Art21 encourages active engagement when teaching with our films. The questions and activities below are recommendations for incorporating Art21 films featuring Marcel Dzama into your classroom. Each class will likely require different adaptations for best results.

NOTE: Please view all films before sharing them with your students.

Before Viewing

Establish key ideas, in anticipation of viewing the film(s):

- ① What does 'fantasy' mean to you? Name some traditional characters or elements found in the genre of fantasy.
- ② When have you worked on a project with collaborators before? What makes a partnership fun?
- ③ How do artists use humor in their work?

While Viewing

Support active viewing, and pause the film to clarify particular ideas:

- ① List the fantasy elements (characters, costumes, decor, mood, etc.) in the film.
- ② While watching "Making Movies with Amy Sedaris & Friends" or "Drawing with Raymond Pettibon," consider: Why does Dzama enjoy these collaborations?
- ③ How does Dzama use humor in his work? Similarly, how does he use a shock or scare factor?

After Viewing

Follow-up on key ideas and synthesize information learned from the film(s):

- ① How does Dzama use classic fantasy elements to tell modern stories? How does he make them more current?
- ② What aspects of Dzama's collaborations are appealing to you? Are there factors that you might seek to replicate in your next working relationship?
- ③ Dzama playfully evokes multiple emotions in his drawings, performances and films. Why might he incorporate humor, suspense, etc.? What do these emotions add to the experience of viewing his work?

Related Activities

Engaging in creative activities after watching Art21 films can reinforce learning and stimulate ideas. Art21 encourages educators to adapt these activities to their classrooms.

- ✓ After watching "Organizing Chaos," invite students to create an artwork commemorating a teen or student activist, such as Emma Gonzalez. Students can use a historical or current figure as inspiration.
- ✓ Dzama mentions the influence of Marcel Duchamp, Francisco Goya, William Blake, and Francis Picabia, and references these artists throughout his work. Ask students to choose one of these artists and research their work. Once everyone has investigated an artist, rewatch the film. Ask students to list the references they now notice while they watch. Create a word web or venn diagram after viewing the film, noting similarities and differences between Dzama's artistic influences.
- ✓ Create a written story or illustration that imagines a world where humans and animals work together towards common goals. What would this look like or sound like? Invite students to share their process and final work with classmates.