

Marcel Dzama
Empress of Night

June 28–August 8, 2025
606 N Western Avenue, Los Angeles



Marcel Dzama, *The sleep of reason produces monsters*, 2025
© Marcel Dzama. Courtesy the artist and David Zwirner

David Zwirner is pleased to announce *Empress of Night*, an exhibition of new and recent work by Marcel Dzama, on view at the gallery's 606 N Western Avenue location in Los Angeles.

Dzama's recent works are fantastical visions of a lush and at-times flooded world where anthropomorphized animals and dancing figures are set against dense junglescapes and expansive skies. References to Francisco Goya and surrealist poet Federico García Lorca (1898–1936)—one of Spain's most important and celebrated writers—are evident throughout these compositions, suggesting parallels between the war-torn and uncertain eras in which those artists lived and the political, social, and ecological upheavals of our own. Some works make direct reference to the rise of authoritarianism

in the world today, while others use allegory as a critical means of commenting on growing threats to democracy and human rights. Dzama made these works late at night—as is his nocturnal working style—and many are set against dark skies that contain celestial visions of stars and moons. Evoking a sense of joy and wonder, these nightscapes suggest hope and possibility even during times of unrest.

Among the new works are several large-format drawings, some of which are filled to the brim with animal life, which serve as a reminder of the toll being taken on the planet and its effects on all life-forms. These include *The sleep of reason produces monsters* (2025), which makes direct reference to Goya's famous 1799 print of the same title, and *Blue water blues* (2024), an absorbing, nearly monochromatic triptych that shows an underwater scene rife with marine life. *I never came from your rib you came from my vagina* (2025), another large-format triptych, presents a jubilant display of womanhood, which reads like a celebratory rejoinder to some of the more noxious strains of hypermasculinity that are increasingly prevalent in society today.

A centerpiece of the exhibition is Dzama's 2023 film *To live on the Moon (For Lorca)*, which was originally commissioned by Performa for that year's iteration of the recurring performance festival in New York. The film opens with a theatrical recreation of the 1936 assassination of Lorca by the Nationalist forces of Francisco Franco during the Spanish Civil War. In 1929, Lorca authored *Trip to the Moon*, a screenplay composed of seventy-three narrative vignettes filled with love, violence, and mysticism. Though it was never produced as a film, Lorca's screenplay is viewed as a surrealist masterpiece. Dzama's film, an homage to Lorca, mixes dreamy figures and imagery—including depictions of the moon that recall Georges Méliès's seminal early film *A Trip to the Moon* (1902)—with themes of life, death, violence, and resurrection.

Dzama's presentation in Los Angeles—his fifteenth solo exhibition with David Zwirner since joining the gallery in 1998—marks a notable return for the artist. His first solo exhibition ever was held at Richard Heller Gallery, Santa Monica, in 1997, and his last solo show in the city was more than twenty years ago. The exhibition also coincides with *Marcel Dzama: Dancing with the Moon*, a major survey of the artist's work at the Pera Museum, Istanbul, on view through August 17, 2025. Dzama will also debut a new zine that will be released concurrently with the exhibition.

Since rising to prominence in the late 1990s, Marcel Dzama (b. 1974) has developed an immediately recognizable visual language that investigates human action and motivation, as well as the blurred relationship between the real and the subconscious. Drawing equally from folk vernacular as from art-historical and contemporary influences, Dzama's work visualizes a universe of childhood fantasies and otherworldly fairy tales.

Dzama was born in Winnipeg, Canada, where he received his BFA in 1997 from the University of Manitoba. Since 1998, his work has been represented by David Zwirner.

Dzama has exhibited widely throughout the United States and abroad. His recent solo exhibitions include *Marcel Dzama: Ghosts of Canoe Lake*, which was on view at McMichael Canadian Art Collection, Kleinburg, Ontario, in 2023 and traveled to Contemporary Calgary, Alberta, and the Plug In Institute of Contemporary Art, Winnipeg. In 2022, a solo presentation of the artist's work, *Marcel Dzama: Viviendo*

en el limbo y soñando con el paraíso was on view at the Museo de Arte de Zapopan (MAZ), Mexico. *Marcel Dzama: An End to the End Times* was on view in 2021 at the Savannah College of Art and Design Museum of Art, Georgia. Also in 2021, the Sara Hildén Art Museum in Tampere, Finland, presented an exhibition of the artist's work entitled *Marcel Dzama: Tonight We Dance*.

In 2021, MTA Arts & Design unveiled a commissioned mosaic by the artist, *No Less Than Everything Comes Together*, that is permanently on view at the Bedford Avenue Station in Brooklyn, New York.

In 2016, the artist created the costume and stage design for New York City Ballet's *The Most Incredible Thing*, a performance based on Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale. Coinciding with the performance, Dzama also created an installation in the Promenade of the David H. Koch Theater as part of the New York City Ballet Art Series, titled *The tension around which history is built*.

Works by the artist are held in museum collections worldwide, including the Art Institute of Chicago; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Dallas Museum of Art; Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC; National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Tate, United Kingdom; and Vancouver Art Gallery. Dzama lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

For all press inquiries, contact:

Elizabeth Gartner
egartner@davidzwirner.com

Julia Lukacher
jlukacher@davidzwirner.com