

## ARTFORUM

### Dora Garcia

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James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939) is not so much a book to be read as it is to be experienced. This is a key thought to hold on to when viewing Spanish artist Dora Garcia's *The Joycean Society*, 2013, one of three large-scale video projections with accompanying sculptural elements gathered by curator Chantal Pontbriand for the exhibition "Of Crimes and Dreams." Shot in a documentary style, the film hovers around members of a reading group in Zurich as they decode a single page in Joyce's masterpiece. As the complex, ciphered text is unpacked word by word, spontaneous tangents emerge across literary cues and personal anecdotes. It's a durational performance of sorts (keeping in mind that it takes the group eleven years to work through the entire book), and the longer one watches the more it becomes clear that, for Garcia, the essential value of language, no matter how irrational or obscure, is the parallel social dynamic that it reveals.

Similarly, for her video *Désordre*, 2013, Garcia invited residents at a French psychiatric hospital to read *Finnegans Wake* as well as Félix Guattari's *Soixante-cinq rêves de Franz Kafka* (Sixty-Five Dreams of Franz Kafka) (2007), this time prompting a free-association discussion on daydreaming, anxiety, and betrayal. There is a candid synergy to this group of marginalized "others," and the results are pointedly lucid: "I think it's important to dream because it's proof of life," says one patient. It all comes together in a pair of large chalkboards from Garcia's ongoing series "Mad Marginal Charts," 2009–. Here, Garcia has devised a kind of spiraling linguistic calculus based on research on Joyce, Freud, Lacan, and Antonin Artaud to anti-psychiatry and deinstitutionalization. Impenetrable at a glance, this mapping of abstract symbols and equations demands complete absorption, in time opening a coded gateway that at once confounds and creates meaning beyond the conscious limits of language and society.



Dora Garcia, "Mad Marginal Charts (detail)," 2009–, mixed media. Installation view.

— Bryne McLaughlin

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