

## Visual Arts: A matter of perspective

Dora Garcia takes ideas from other artists and uses them to explore perception

BY JOHN POHL, SPECIAL TO THE GAZETTE    AUGUST 15, 2014



Dora Garcia's video *The Joycean Society* is about a group of people in Zurich who meet regularly to decipher *Finnegans Wake*, mixing their interpretations of the difficult text with anecdotes from their own lives. (Credit: Maxime Boisvert/Darling Foundry)

Photograph by: Maxime Boisvert, Maxime Boisvert

MONTREAL — The power of art to change society is at the core of a challenging exhibition of videos — and wallpaper — by Spanish artist Dora Garcia at the Darling Foundry.

Challenging because one requires an investment of time to even start making sense of what Dora Garcia: *Of Crimes and Dreams* is all about.

As Darling Foundry director Caroline Andrieux noted in an interview, Garcia takes ideas from other artists and changes the perspective.

*Hôtel Wolfers* restages Samuel Beckett's *Film* (1965), a short movie without dialogue that features Buster Keaton as a man who is trying to deny his own existence by hiding his face, covering mirrors and destroying photos of himself, as if perception was needed to prove existence. But it's a futile exercise — the camera perceives his actions as he makes his way through an abandoned building.

Garcia's version of *Film* also explores a derelict building, but with a narrator providing dialogue. There is no Keaton character, but he exists through the narrator's scene-by-scene description of Beckett's *Film*.

The other two films — *Désordre* and *The Joycean Society* — bring the lone individual into social settings where books are discussed and become a catalyst for group action.

*Désordre* takes place in a psychiatric hospital in France. Patients discuss *Finnegans Wake* by James Joyce and Félix Guattari's *Soixante-cinq rêves de Franz Kafka*, and react on both intellectual and emotional levels.

*The Joycean Society* is about a group of people in Zurich who meet regularly to decipher *Finnegans Wake* almost word by word, again mixing their interpretations of the difficult text with anecdotes from their own lives.



Dora Garcia's films *The Joycean Society*, left, and *Désordre* bring the lone individual into social settings where books are discussed and become a catalyst for group action. The Spanish artist's work is on display at the Darling Foundry. (Credit: Maxime Boisvert/Darling Foundry)

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These insights come from non-specialists reading and discussing the books together, which curator Chantal Pontbriand connects in the exhibition text to Garcia's "central idea that marginality (the realm of the outsider) is an artistic position."

In other words, art is not the sole domain of artists.

There is also the Jacques Lacan Wallpaper — drawings by Garcia that reflect the French philosopher's idea that the unconscious is as structured as language, and that "Freudian slips" are windows into the unconscious.

"Joyce sought to come as close as possible to the way in which the unconscious thinks," Pontbriand said. "And, as with dreams, the unconscious thinks in such a way that can seem irrational, even incoherent."

The Mad Marginal Charts are blackboards of pictograms that bridge the ideas of Lacan and Joyce, Andrieux said.

Joyce is known for language that even intellectuals find difficult to understand, but the films show that even people unfamiliar with him can gain insights into his work, she said.

The group readings, in which everyone has the opportunity to speak and respond, are essentially political, Pontbriand writes.

"The micro-communities created around common interests, around shared passions, open a path toward other existences, toward other ways of thinking and seeing, too often ignored or even prevented by the powers in place."

Garcia's work is reflected in the Darling Foundry's approach to art and society through its programming — hampered this summer when municipal officials refused, for the first time in eight years, to close the street in front of the Darling for its summer activities. The Darling is situated on the last block of Ottawa St., ending at Queen St. in a T intersection.

"We are here as a cultural and social meeting point to discuss critical ideas about our quality of life," Andrieux said. "How art can bring people together and be a subject for discussion."