

# Daria Martin

Tonight the World

Creative Learning: Teachers' Resource

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## Introduction

Daria Martin, artist and winner of the 2018 Jarman Award, revisits dreams and memories from her personal family history to create a complex portrait of migration, loss and resilience. Martin stages a series of intimate encounters with an extensive archive of dream diaries. Combining digital gaming technology and anamorphic optics, the artist creates an immersive film environment in which visitors can explore the subconscious and vivid memories of her grandmother who fled from the Holocaust to London in 1938. These forensically recorded accounts made over a 35-year period, initially for the purposes of psychoanalysis, frequently return to the curious and traumatic history of her childhood home, a modernist villa in the city of Brno, then Czechoslovakia. The installation is simultaneously a portrait of the artist's ancestor, a self-portrait and an exploration of intolerance, migration loss, and resilience.

## About Daria Martin

Daria Martin was born in 1973 in San Francisco. After studying humanities at Yale University, she received her M.F.A from the University of California, Los Angeles, in 2000. Martin has lived and worked in London since 2002 when she participated in the artist in residence programme at the Delfina Studios Trust. Her work has been exhibited extensively across the world. Daria Martin is a Professor of Art and Director of Research at the Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford as well as a Supernumerary Fellow in Fine Art of St John's College.

As an artist, her 16mm films aim to create a continuity between disparate media (such as painting and performance), between people and objects, and between internal and social worlds. Human gesture and seductive imagery meet physically mannered artifice to pry loose viewers' learned habits of perception.

Subjects such as robots, an archive of dream diaries and close-up card magic, are explored within isolated spaces such as the wings of a theatre, a military academy, or a scaled up modernist sculpture. These protective yet fragmented settings, full of seams of shadows, stand in for the capacities of the film medium itself, a permeable container that consumes and recycles the world at large.

Some areas of research that inspire her work include cinematic theories of embodied spectatorship, postmodern dance's task-based movements, scientific and artistic investigations of synaesthesia, genres of performance in which props play a significant role, and feminist gender theory.

## Before you visit

Children under 12 should be accompanied by adults. It is most appropriate for pupils studying at Key Stage 4 or higher. A pre-visit is recommended for teachers intending to bring students to the exhibition.

## Your visit

*Tonight the World*  
The Curve Level G  
Sat–Wed 11am–8pm  
Thu and Fri 11am–9pm  
Bank Holidays 12pm–8pm

Large bags and luggage cannot be permitted into the gallery.

Free: Booking not required. Curatorial introductions may be available to school groups, please email [creative.learning@barbican.org.uk](mailto:creative.learning@barbican.org.uk) with your planned visit date to check availability.

## Key questions

Susi Stiassni, Martin's paternal grandmother, fled her childhood home in Czechoslovakia during the Holocaust. Though she never returned, she frequently visited the villa in Brno in her dreams. How can dreams be used as a way to learn about histories and address past traumas and the lasting impact they have?

What role can an artist or documentarian play in retelling histories? How have people documented war in the past? What role can individuals or communities play in addressing traumatic histories and personal stories in accessible ways?

In *Tonight the World*, film, objects, diaries, photographs and a virtual game are used to tell the story of Susi Stiassni's past traumas. What impact does each of these different mediums have on the audience and what effect do they have in relation to each other?

## Curriculum links

### History

The exhibition encourages the viewer to question the impact of using film and game-art to document historical events and personal stories.

#### Ask

- What is the impact of using personal histories and memories within digital games?
- What other types of art forms have artists and writers used to document history? Can you think of any other stories that tell of the trauma of war?

### Politics

*Tonight the World* raises questions on socio-political issues surrounding WWII, The Holocaust, migration and identity.

#### Ask

- Can *Tonight the World* be understood as a political statement? Is it possible to comprehend and interpret this work as political information? Use *Tonight the World* as a starting point to research World War II and its impact. Can artistic works contribute to political dialogue?

### Film

The final part of the exhibition displays a series of films projected onto an expansive curved screen.

#### Ask

- What impact does this have when viewing the films? How does this affect this retelling of the subconscious?

Another film component takes viewers through a virtual rendering of the home – the site of the dreams in *Tonight the World* – and a historical landmark in its own right.

#### Ask

- What choices has the artist made when creating this digital rendering of the house? How do the two film elements respond or relate to each other?

The cast in *Tonight the World* includes four actresses of different generations. Through the five films they resemble one another and play Susi and other characters from her dreams.

#### Ask

- Why do you think the artist has made this decision? How does it add to the absurd nature of dreams?
- What role do senses play in the films? How have objects been used to emit sounds of dreams, for example, a collection of medals, a child's tricycle, a branch of berries?

### Art

Through her work Martin combines references to architecture, fashion, dance, performance art, sculpture, painting and music.

#### Ask

- How does the exhibition immerse the viewer in the artists' explorations of these?
- Martin has created an artistic reparation of her history by restaging her dreams in *Villa Stiassni* itself, recrafting her personal story through a filmic 'dream interpretation'. What other ways can art be used to recraft personal stories?

## English Literature

Words, writing and language play a strong role in *Tonight the World*.

### Ask

- How can literature be used as a starting or end point to learn about personal and traumatic events? Have a go at creating your own dream diary. How can this then be used as a starting point to create a piece of writing? If you can't remember a dream, ask a family member or a friend to tell you about a dream they had and write a poem or a short story in response.

Look at other diaries or stories that document the impact WWII had on children, for example *The Diary of Anne Frank* or *The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas*.

## Psychology

Susí's diaries reveal a complex psychological legacy in relation both to the threat of Nazi invasion and to her own mother, including personal reflections and also detailed accounts of her dreams.

### Ask

- How can psychoanalysis and dream interpretation be used to think about loss or past traumas?

## Additional Resources

[www.dariamartin.com](http://www.dariamartin.com)

## Barbican Guildhall Creative Learning

This Teachers Resource was prepared by Barbican Guildhall Creative Learning, which supports people of all ages and backgrounds to access and participate in world-class visual arts, music, theatre, dance, film and spoken word. We regularly work with schools and colleges to create unforgettable learning experiences that help to embed arts and creativity across the national curriculum.

For more information please contact: [creative.learning@barbican.org.uk](mailto:creative.learning@barbican.org.uk)