“A Danceable Feast.” Border Crossings (March/April/May 2016): 14-15 [ill.]
David Zwirner

For Dzama, dance is a field of creation and his movement is always in the direction of homage.

An essential element of struggle is the center of The Most Incredible Things. A chapter of a 1970s fairy tale by Hans Christian Andersen, the story is about a girl who eats cheese and becomes a dancing clock. The Dzarama makes a wondrous clock and the Dzaramer sets it to break not only it but also the people who admire it.

Every hour, dancers representing different aspects of human history emerge from the clock in a marvelous display of ingenuity: among them a talking bird, a little king, the blue sisters, the seven deadly sins, and the Nine Muses. Adam and Eve also make an appearance in costumers that are a distant arrangement of green leaves. In any other known to man, this Eve would set the stage on fire.

One of the most incredible things about the ballet is the sheer variety and number of costumes Dzama designed for it. He worked with Peck and Dzarama in October 2014 and by the time they met again in late November he had already done the drawings and costumes for the 64 dancers in the ballet. But there is much more to his design than we see on stage. The New York City Ballet hosts an art series in which they ask a contemporary artist to install an exhibition in the promenade of the David H Koch Theater. This year, Dzama was the participating artist, which gave him an opportunity not only to develop a new piece, but to show the design process for the sets and costumes.

The process was elaborate. He envisioned the promenade as a large chessboard in which red and blue chess pieces would dance to the end of things. He improved the Elia Kazan scene of the ballet by adding sets and costumes, and he set up display cases in which he can see the mechanics of invention through preliminary drawings, small figurines, and a can of stage paint mixed. The models are different interpretations of Alberto Giacometti's 1935 surrealist sculpture called The Alpaca at 9 A.M. "I love that piece," Dzama says. "Every time I go to MOMA I stare at it. And now it is mine." (Seeing how Dzama made his designs is part of the gift of this ballet. Everyone who attended the art series performance was given a charming 24-page takeaway called The Book of Ballets: La Choco la Fiera Incapable with a foreword by Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber).