

Dia Art Foundation
Readings in Contemporary Poetry
Marcella Durand and Tonya Foster

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Dia:Chelsea
535 West 22nd Street, 5th Floor
New York City

Introduction by Vincent Katz

Marcella Durand's books include *AREA* (Belladonna, 2008), *Traffic & Weather* (Futurepoem, 2008), *Deep eco pré* (a collaboration with Tina Darragh, Little Red Leaves, 2009), and most recently, *Le Jardin de M.* (*The Garden of M.* [éditions joca seria, 2016]), with French translations by Olivier Brossard, and *Rays of the Shadow* (Tent Editions, 2017). Durand is working on a long piece for two voices titled *Mirror Lines* and is completing her translation of Michèle Métail's book-length poem *Les horizons du sol* (*The Horizons of the Soil*, 1999). She lives in New York City with her husband and son.

Marcella Durand's poetry has long used the long line, the prose affect, to create poetry as stimulating in its provocative treatment of subject as in the unexpected slight shifts of syntax and tone that guide her reader and listener to a different point of view. But she has also harbored the short line, line breaks breaking like waves in the oceans and shorelines that populate her verse.

She has even experimented with divided-up lines, words taking their own space as breath and visual acuity prescribe. Here's a section from an early poem:

(low music) my bed
a park
filled
with
country & arrivals
(new music) heard on the edge
trip
yes, we like edges
passing overhead
sketch of boundaries
on the trip
(from "Machine into Water 7")

A recent body of work, *Rays of the Shadow*, is a series of poems of only a few lines each. The syllabic restriction Durand imposes on her writing here is belied by the grace and range

of her language and thinking. A question posed in the first poem could serve as the kind of questioning this poet regularly forces her readers to consider: “Can a similar length be imported into / a language that is curt and parasitical?” These poems delve into architecture, geometry, ocean, buildings, petroleum, water, light, air, and, as ever, waves, or as Durand puts it, “gathered water.” She will be reading from *Rays of the Shadow* tonight, as well as from a new body of work. Please join me in welcoming Marcella Durand.

Tonya Foster is the author of the poetry collection *A Swarm of Bees in High Court* (Belladonna, 2015) and the bilingual chapbook *La Grammaire des Os* (*The Grammar of Bones* [éditions joca seria, 2016]). Foster was a coeditor of *Third Mind: Creative Writing through Visual Art* (Teachers and Writers Collaborative, 2002). She is an Assistant Professor of writing, literature, and creative writing at California College of the Arts in Oakland and is a poetry editor at *Fence* magazine.

Tonya Foster is a poet of place, but equally, a poet of sound, whose twisting of meanings is always purposeful. Her playfulness is a chisel used, in her skilled hands, to cut and fashion pictures of our shared history in these United States. Beyond too, perhaps, but for now, I feel a real concern on Foster’s part to describe, to depict, although not always literally, tragedies as well as daily lives that are the result of this country’s trajectory.

There is also an unmistakable visual element in Foster’s poems on the page — their layouts, repetitions, but also transformations, via parenthetical letters, of nouns and pronouns. “As always,” she writes, “there is / this hill we climb— (y)our thicket / of (st)roll and (st)utter.” In three line stanzas, Foster conjures worlds:

Click the remote;
Cough into the dark tree
Of (y)our hands S/w/allow

Then there are refrains — long-limbed couplets or incantation. Enjoying, glorying in, pleasure, while the mind engages in inquiries — into language, neighborhood wiles. She may be reading from *Swarm* or she may read from new work tonight, but whatever she reads, she will take us to very specific interiors and outsides. Please welcome Tonya Foster.