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Dara Friedman's "Perfect Stranger" is PAMM's Largest Showcase of a Miami Artist



A still from Dara Friedman's *Dancer*.

In 2014, the German-born, Miami-based artist Dara Friedman's film about a local man, Ishmael Bermudez, earned a showing at Art Basel Miami Beach. The film followed Bermudez, a character who lives on a valuable plot of land in the Brickell area, where he believes archaeological remnants of an ancient native culture lurk within a freshwater spring. This strange but valuable tale, illustrating much about this city and the cultures therein, was titled *Ishmael and the Well of Ancient Mysteries*. It was one of two of Friedman's films screened during the film sector of Art Basel Miami Beach 2014.

For many local artists, seeing a truly Miami story displayed formally at an event that descends upon the city rather than blooming from within was a revelation. Pérez Art Museum Miami knows the value of Friedman's work and will present her first career survey, "Perfect Stranger," November 3 through Art Basel into March 2018. It's significant that the museum would place a local's work on display at such an important and busy time in the largest show of a Miami artist at PAMM. A student of experimental filmmaker Peter Kubelka and talented artist, Friedman is deserving of this time and space for her work.

"Dara's work is totally unique," curator Rene Morales says. "She takes up the rigorously experimental tradition of structural filmmaking and updates it with new ideas and effects that feel utterly fresh and that are always extremely emotionally affecting. The imagery in her films is dazzlingly rich, and her work has an almost visceral effect on viewers." He says her work resists categorization, calling it "a hybrid practice that merges aspects of experimental cinema with an

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almost sculptural approach to film installation. Her experiments with large numbers of participants in her more recent work can be described almost as a new kind of social practice."

That description is reflected in the 17 emotionally impactful film and video works in "Perfect Stranger." While one gallery will be open, mixing light and sounds from various works, the other will be closed with soundproofed rooms and seating for each film, offering two different experiences of the work. On display will be 1998's hypnotic film *Government Cut Freestyle*, which shows young people jumping off the South Pointe Park pier into *Government Cut*; 2001's *Romance*, featuring 70 kissing couples that Friedman filmed in Rome while on walks with her daughter; and 2011's *Dancer*, coproduced by PAMM. The last shows a variety of people dancing in different styles on Miami sidewalks.



A still from Friedman's *Rite*.

"Dara is one of Miami's most widely acclaimed artists; her work has been exhibited at prestigious venues throughout the world," Morales says. "At the same time, she has served for over two decades as a veritable pillar in this community, playing a pivotal role in the development of the Miami art scene by serving as an important nexus point for many collectors, artists, gallerists, writers, and curators, here and elsewhere, while providing crucial support for many of her fellow local artists." Her PAMM show during Art Basel will definitely draw more eyes to Miami artists and the stellar work being done here.

—Liz Tracy