



Sculptor Martha Friedman is bringing 'Pore' to Miami's Locust Projects.

ENTERTAINMENT

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A sculptor and a dancer collaborate on 'Pore' at Locust Projects

BY REBEKAH LANAE LENGEL
Artburstmiami.com

Brooklyn-based sculptor Martha Friedman's fascination with the body started at an early age. Raised in Detroit by a molecular geneticist father and a mother who returned to school to become a doctor when Friedman was a child, she recalls spending her formative years in her father's lab.

"I spent a lot of time looking through microscopes, and I think looking back, I picked up on this kind of abstract sense of the body; I started to understand that there was this very strange abstract relationship to information and the body and what the body looks like on this very, very different scale," Friedman says.

This body focus has informed much of her work, and she has become known for her abstract rubber sculptures featuring bodily elements. She comes to Miami this month for the installation *Martha Friedman: Pore* at Locust Projects. *Pore* explores the ancient theory of the four humors of the body through sculpture and performance. It features four massive rubber sculptures that also double as costumes for dancer/choreographer Silas Riener, Friedman's collaborator on the project.

"I'm expressing [the humors] a bit more materially," Friedman explains. "I'm pouring about 900 pounds of liquid rubber on the floor, and each [of the four solidified forms] is a color story of the humors. The phlegm one is sort of a light blue, black bile is black, blood is this rusty red, and yellow bile is sort of yellow-green color. They are these inside-out images of the body leaking, or the fluid of the body coming out of the membranes. And then I'm dropping into these structures, these costume elements that connect them."

Locust Projects' executive director Chana Budgazad Sheldon, who had been following Friedman's career, was looking for an opportunity to work with her. She was excited about the idea of *Pore*, incorporating movement and sculpture in an unpredictable way.

"We are always looking for the most ambitious ideas that really take artists outside of their normal studio practice, and kind of use the opportunity to push what they do in a way that we kind of don't know what way it will end up," Sheldon says.

It was also the collaborative opportunity that Friedman and Riener were seeking. Friedman was teaching at Princeton University in 2013 when she met Riener, a former Merce Cunningham Dance Company member, who was working on a piece for students and was in need of an installation backdrop. Friedman was recommended to provide one, and the two noted a synergy in their aesthetics.

"Martha and I started having conversations, and working with each other around the strange intersection of sculpture and performance, specifically dance, and specifically my body," Riener says.

"In a lot of Martha's work," he continues, "there's this absent body, this disfigured body represented by the material, so we started talking about what it would mean to have a body present, not representing anything necessarily, but being a body next to this material."

Of Riener, Friedman says, "it's interesting to work on this with such a virtuosic body. He has so much control over his body, like technically it's amazing, and I'd like to think that I have that kind of technical control over the materials that I use."

The material and the choreographic elements of *Pore* informed one another. And in an interesting turn, the physical space of Locust Projects informs the physical material of the rubber as well, adding a sense of permanence to a piece that has an ephemeral quality. As Budgazad Sheldon explains, "Martha's actually pouring the rubber onto our floor and lifting it up, so an imprint of our site is actually going to be visible in the piece itself, so it's really architecturally responsive."

Moving in coordination with up to 900 pounds of rubber has affected the architecture of Riener's movement as well.

"We were rehearsing all day, and I couldn't figure out why I felt so crazy, but then I realized there was an actual weight weighing down on me and depressing me," he recalls. "There has been a lot to figure out about the weight of this material; there are some things I can't do. The material has really guided what we can do, by extending the body into this material platform and then having the body be forced to react or bounce away from all of this rubber weight. It's been fun!"

Of the rubbery movements they were exploring, Riener says, "Martha was pulling molds of different parts of my body, looking at the way a body moves, because a sculpture typically doesn't move, and we started exploring the idea of a performance inside of a sculptural show."

In the end, Riener says, "She and I, through her encyclopedic knowledge of art history and my dance knowledge, we are able to do something that I don't think either of us could have done on our own. And that's really exciting."

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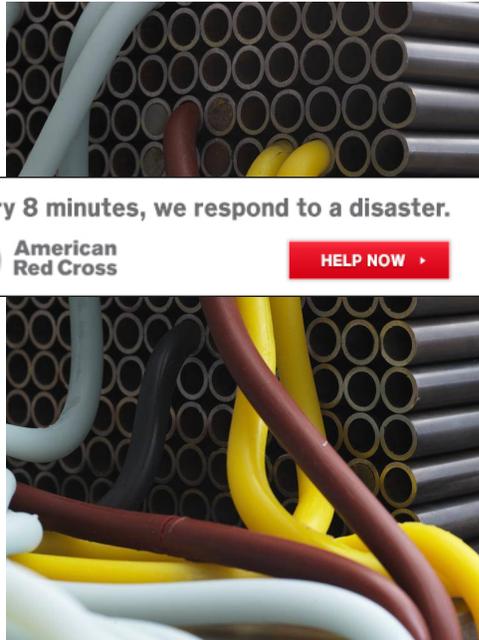
IF YOU GO

What: 'Martha Friedman: Pore.'

Where: Locust Projects, 3852 N. Miami Ave., Miami.

When: Saturday through Jan. 31.

Information: 305-576-8570 or www.locustprojects.org.



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< 1 of 3 >

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