Exhibition Guide

Dara Friedman Perfect Stranger

Pérez Art Museum Miami

Dara Friedman: Perfect Stranger is organized by PAMM Curator René Morales and presented by Citi with generous support from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. Lead individual support received from Dennis Richard and Susan Bell Richard, Mark and Nedra Oren, and George Lindemann. Support from the J.W. Marriott Marquis Miami and Veuve Clicquot is also gratefully acknowledged.





National Endowment for the Arts





Introduction

Dara Friedman (b. 1968, Bad Kreuznach, Germany; lives in Miami) uses everyday sights and sounds as the raw material for film and video artworks that reverberate with emotional energy. Friedman engages tendencies in 20th-century experimental cinema that call for a radical reduction of the medium to its most essential material properties. The artist crafts each of her films with meticulous care, making precise choices with respect to camerawork, film stock, and editing strategy while taking into consideration every aspect of the presentation of her work in physical space, from the scale of the images to the specific qualities of the playback equipment. In place of linear storylines, her films typically portray straightforward gestures and situations that she has planned out in advance and that unfold according to predetermined rules and guidelines.

Yet for all of Friedman's strenuous logic and discipline, her approach remains unabashedly sensual and emotive. Bearing rich imagery and a strong emphasis on bodily experience, her films generate moments of high-pitched, cathartic intensity as well as serene, even euphoric interludes. In recent years, Friedman has increasingly explored the charged boundaries between the public and private spheres, working with musicians, dancers, actors, and other individuals selected through casting calls and auditions. These experimental collaborations dovetail with the artist's longstanding endeavor to use her work as a means of engendering empathy while pounding on the walls that separate viewer from subject, artist from audience, self from other.

Spanning more than 20 years of creative production, this immersive exhibition is Friedman's first mid-career survey and the largest presentation of her work to date.

About the Artist

Dara Friedman studied at the Städelschule in Frankfurt, as well as at the Slade School of Fine Art, University College, in London; University of Miami, School of Communication; and Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York. Solo exhibitions of her work have been presented at institutional venues including Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit; Center for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw; Museum Kunst der Westküste, Alkersum, Germany; Miami Art Museum; Contemporary Art Museum, Raleigh, North Carolina; Museum of Modern Art, New York; Public Art Fund, New York; The Kitchen, New York; Kunstmuseum Thun, Switzerland; and SITE Santa Fe. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at institutions including Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Kunstlerhaus Stuttgart; MoMA PS 1, Long Island City, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Serralves Museum, Porto, Portugal; Schirn Kunsthalle Frankfurt; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, among several others. Her work is included in numerous institutional collections, including those of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Pérez Art Museum Miami; Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich; Institute for Contemporary Art, Miami; and Hammer Museum, Los Angeles.

Bim Bam 1999

16 mm color film installation with two slot-loading projectors, metal armature, CD player, and speakers, 1 min., 1 sec; 1 min., 12 sec.
Collection of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, Museum Purchase

In two separate 16 mm film loops, one stacked atop the other, a pair of silhouetted female figures (both the artist) repeatedly step through a threshold, slamming the door in front of or behind them over and over with all their might. When the doors are open, they fill the frame with either yellow or blue light; when they are closed, the frame goes black. The footage was filmed with the camera turned on its side such that the figures appear at a 90-degree angle from the floor. The sound of doors slamming plays on an independent track and is left unsynchronized with the projections, either anticipating or lagging behind the action. The overall impression of the work is of a single, unitary jolt of experience that repeats endlessly. Bim Bam was inspired by a similarly circular rhyme that Friedman's grandmother used to recite to her at bedtime:

There once was a man his name was Bim Bam he had seven sons the seven sons said, "Father tell us a story!" then the man began.
There once was a man his name was Bim Bam...



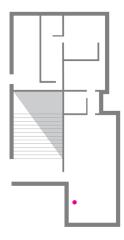


Total 1997

Super 8 mm color film optically reprinted to 16 mm film, with optical sound, 12 min. Courtesy de la Cruz Collection, Miami

The artist methodically destroys a domestic interior until all of its contents lie in a pile at the center of the room. The film and the sound play in reverse, so that the room appears to put itself back in order. With a simple technical adjustment, Friedman transforms an expression of rage into a cleansing, restorative act.





Whip Whipping the Wall 1998–2002

Digital color video, transferred from Super 8 mm film, with sound, 15 min.
Courtesy the artist and Galleria Massimo Minini, Brescia

The artist repeatedly lashes a wall with a bullwhip. Over time, the action begins to shred the wallpaper, revealing the raw plaster lying beneath. Eventually the plaster too begins to fall away, exposing bricks. The activity is deliberate and controlled, yet underscored by a tinge of danger.





Chrissy, Mette, Kristan 2000

Three 16 mm color films, with optical sound, and three slot-loading 16 mm film projectors, three custom loopers and mirrored plinths, 45 sec., 14 sec., 29 sec.
Lindemann Collection, Miami Beach



hold their arms outstretched, their hair and silk shirts flowing in slow motion in a strong wind produced by an off-camera fan. As each of the women tears off her garment, a quick succession of gunshots can be heard, suggesting the sound of buttons popping off their shirts. Friedman conjoins the women's bold act of self-exposure with a sound effect that correlates with defiance, strength, and power-traditionally masculine attributes herein grafted onto feminine subjects. For a brief instant, each figure is frozen in this pose, and then the footage goes into quick reverse, returning the women to their original, fully clothed state just before the action begins again. The three loops are unsynchronized; as a result, the lineup of figures never repeats itself.

Three women rip open their blouses and

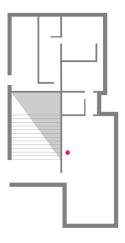


Revolution 1993–2003

Digital color video, transferred from 16 mm film, silent, 9 min., 20 sec. Rubell Family Collection, Miami

A young man walks along Washington Avenue in Miami Beach at dawn. The camera keeps him in frame using a steady trucking shot. Meanwhile, the image tilts clockwise and continues to rotate until the world appears to have turned fully upside down. As this 360-degree revolution progresses, the horizon line rights itself. The film comes full circle and begins again.





Government Cut Freestyle 1998

Digital color video, transferred from 16 mm film, silent, 9 min., 20 sec.
Collection Pérez Art Museum Miami, gift of Debra and Dennis Scholl

Young people take turns jumping off a pier in South Pointe Park in Miami Beach into Government Cut, the artificial waterway that connects Biscayne Bay to the Atlantic Ocean. The artist shot most of the footage so the divers' bodies remain tightly constricted within the frame, with the result that the camera bobs and sways gently as they plummet through the air, each time arching over the horizon line. Combined with the film's slow-motion pacing and the steady, undulating rhythm with which the scenes unfold, Friedman's camerawork elicits a hypnotic, swooning effect. As in a dream, the viewer experiences a quasi-kinesthetic sensation even as one's body remains more or less fixed in place.





Romance 2001

Digital color video, silent, 32 min. Collection Pérez Art Museum Miami, gift of Mimi Floback

Filmed through a grainy zoom lens, a succession of approximately 70 couples kiss tenderly, playfully, or with passionate abandon in slow motion in a tightly framed composition. In each scene, the focus is on the negative space between the lovers' profiles. Friedman captured the footage while taking long walks with her infant daughter in a public park in the Gianicolo neighborhood of Rome. The artist has likened the film to a nature documentary, as clinical in tone as a study of the mating habits of birds.



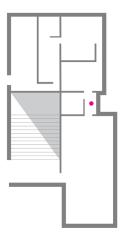


Sunset Island 2005

Two-channel digital color video, with sound, 21 min., 24 sec.
Collection of Dennis Richard and Susan Bell Richard

A man and a woman speak directly into the camera, each reciting a litany of questions from the same script. As the overlapping monologues progress, they oscillate from the emotionally heavy ("Do you love me more than I love you?") to the mundane ("Did you put gas in the car?"). Viewers shift their gaze continuously from one screen to the other, as in a tennis match. In this way, viewers become folded into the storyline, forming the ligature that binds the couple together.



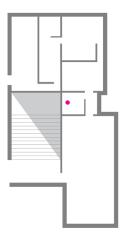


Tigertail 2007

16 mm color film, with sound, 13 min. Courtesy the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York and Rome

Friedman combines scenes shot in her subtropical backyard with footage taken in the New Forest in southern England, transforming these locations into the setting for a mysterious, pseudomythological reverie peopled with the artist's family members. A progression of striking glimpses unfolds, revealing wonders within the wooded landscape: a cluster of foxgloves, a peacock's tail, a galloping, caramel-colored foal, a cat, a goldfish, a labyrinth of coconuts through which the artist's young daughter runs, and a satyr-like, bare-chested man sitting on a brick wall while drinking from a bottle, enshrouded in thick smoke.



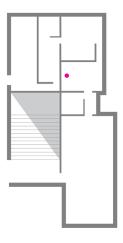


Musical 2007–08

HD color video, with sound, 48 min. The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Beth Swofford

A total of 55 participants, selected by Friedman through open-call auditions, perform in the crowded streets and subways, diners, and plazas of Midtown Manhattan while singing songs meaningful to them at full volume. The soundtrack that results features a spectrum of musical genres, from Broadway show tunes to classic rock, from a Kabuki ballad to a Michael Jackson tune, culminating in a rousing interpretation of "America, the Beautiful." The singers are, in general, barely registered by the throngs of people surrounding them. Even so, the camera's gaze establishes an emotional connection between the singers and the viewer, encasing them in a protective shell of empathy.





Dancer 2011

HD black-and-white video transferred from Super 16 mm film, with sound, 25 min. Collection Pérez Art Museum Miami, museum purchase with funds provided by the Helena Rubinstein Philanthropic Fund at The Miami Foundation

Sixty-six people of diverse ages and backgrounds—from classically trained ballerinas to pole dancers, tap dancers, clubbers, *capoeiristas*, calypso dancers, yogis, belly dancers, and tumblers—move through Miami, using the city's sidewalks as a stage. The sound consists of sweeping musical medleys punctuated by city traffic and the dancers' breathing. The camera moves alongside each person's body like a dance partner, while bringing the spectator into the action. The film functions as a tender portrait of the artist's home city, providing a vivid sense of street-level experience.





RITE 2014

HD color video, with sound, 4 min., 10 sec. Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich

Two women dance to a truncated score of Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring*.

The storyline of this classic modernist ballet centers on the sacrifice of a young woman who is killed by a group of elder men as part of a ritual commemorating the rebirth of the seasons. The dancers enact this role with vigorous intensity, subverting its implications of passivity and victimization.





PLAY (Parts 1 & 2) 2013

HD color video and black-and-white and color widescreen Super 8 mm film transferred to HD video, with sound, 29 min., 59 sec.; 15 min., 45 sec.

Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Purchase.

Eighteen couples—some actual romantic partners, others paired by the artist—act out scenes of intimacy. The scenes developed intuitively through the use of improvisational theater games designed by Friedman to provoke a connection between the duos in real time. Friedman held auditions to select the participants, who were, for the most part, CalArts theater students. The work was filmed at the Hammer Museum's Billy Wilder Theater, in a hippie shack in Topanga Canyon, and on the streets of Los Angeles.





Mother Drum 2015–16

Three-channel synchronized HD color video (HD color video and Super 16 mm film transferred to HD color video), with sound, 14 min., 31 sec.

Courtesy the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York and Rome

To create *Mother Drum*, Friedman placed an advertisement on the website powwows.com, inviting Native American Fancy Dancers and drummers to take part in her project. During the summer of 2015, she traveled to the Swinomish Reservation in Washington, the Coeur d'Alene Reservation in Idaho, and the Crow Agency Reservation in Montana to meet with and film those who replied.

Three large screens, projected edge-toedge and running along the floor, flicker with vivid color fields, syncopating sound and image. The family drum group White River Crossing sits in a circle around a drum in the open air of a moonless night; they begin to sing, immediately settling into an intense focus. A woman, Cynthia Jim, dances in a traditional jingle dress with her hands at her hips; her image leaps abruptly from one screen to another, disappearing and then reappearing in fiery, electric colors. A young girl playing with a failing flashlight runs in circles in pitch darkness, illuminating patches of dusty ground at her feet. A young boy, R. J. Teveter, sings and plays a hand drum and dances in the light of a car's headlamps. A pair of horses wades into the Little Bighorn River; it is either dawn or dusk. A woman bathes in the same water, immersed in a sapphire glow. A shot of the titular drum is superimposed with endoscopic footage of the pulsating interior of an esophageal passage, which was drawn directly from a medical context. Creating a visual and



aural parallel between the beat of the drum and the rhythms of the body, this composite image serves as a signifier for healing. In this sense, it resonates with the meanings behind the powwow: born in response to the historical repression of tribal ritual dances, this modern tradition functions as a strategy for decolonization, a form of cultural healing for the First Nations.

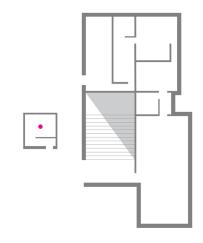


Dichter 2017

Four-channel HD color video transferred from 16 mm film, with sound, 32 min., 13 sec.; 24 min., 10 sec.; 22 min., 51 sec.; 24 min., 46 sec. Courtesy the artist and Supportico Lopez, Berlin

Fifteen performers, selected through open-call auditions held in Berlin, recite poems that had a formative influence on them as teenagers. The artist adapted the techniques and concepts of drama theorist Jerzy Grotowski, in which the voice is conceived as a physical material and an integral aspect of visceral experience. Friedman asked the performers to lower their voices as the camera approached. and to speak loudly only when the lens was farthest away from them. Each of the 16 unsynchronized loops bears its own duration and comes on at a different interval. The result is an irregular and constantly shifting checkerboard pattern on the walls of the exhibition space. At certain moments, the words and phrases of the actors can be heard distinctly, creating suspended moments of clarity apart from the din. At others, the space is filled with an intense cacophony. As the moments of intimacy vie with these overwhelming tides of emotion, the work poignantly evokes the universal experience of unfulfilled craving to connect with the other. In German, the word dichter means "poet," "poets," or "denser."





Talk Show 1997

Digital color video, with sound, 28 min., 10 sec. Courtesy the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York and Rome

Five women dressed as newscasters take turns speaking into the camera. They relay insights into art, life, and filmmaking, ranging from the keen to the ponderous. The script consists of a compilation of notes Friedman took while studying with the seminal Structural filmmaker Peter Kubelka at the Städelschule in Frankfurt in the early 1990s.



*This film can be accessed in the Videos section of the PAMM app or by scanning the QR code below.



Ishmael and the Well of Ancient Mysteries 2014

HD color video, with sound, 12 min., 17 sec. Collection of the artist

Ishmael "Golden Eagle" Bermúdez tells his story of how, after over 13 years of digging beginning in the 1960s, he discovered the sacred spring of the ancient Tequesta on his property in Miami's crowded, upscale Brickell neighborhood.



*Special screening and discussion Check out pamm.org/calendar for details.

Exhibition Checklist

Revolution, 1993–2003
Digital color video, transferred from 16 mm film, silent, 9 min., 20 sec.
With Anthony Saulnier
Rubell Family Collection, Miami

Talk Show, 1997
Digital color video, with sound, 28 min., 10 sec.
With Chrissy Colton, Natalie Morales,
Lorie Mertes, Julia Day, and Judy McIlvaine
Courtesy the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise,
New York and Rome

Total, 1997

Super 8 mm color film optically reprinted to 16 mm film, with optical sound, 12 min. Courtesy de la Cruz Collection, Miami

Government Cut Freestyle, 1998
Digital color video, transferred from 16 mm film, silent, 9 min., 20 sec.
Collection Pérez Art Museum Miami, gift of Debra and Dennis Scholl

Bim Bam. 1999

16 mm color film installation with two slot-loading projectors, metal armature, CD player, and speakers, 1 min., 1 sec; 1 min., 12 sec.
Collection of the Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, Museum Purchase

Chrissy, Mette, Kristan, 2000

Three 16 mm color films, with optical sound, and three slot-loading 16 mm film projectors, three custom loopers and mirrored plinths, 45 sec., 14 sec., 29 sec.

With Chrissy Colton, Mette Tommerup, and Kristan

Lindemann Collection, Miami Beach

Romance, 2001
Digital color video, silent, 32 min.
Collection Pérez Art Museum Miami, gift of Mimi Floback

Whip Whipping the Wall, 1998–2002 Digital color video, transferred from Super 8 mm film, with sound, 15 min. Courtesy the artist and Galleria Massimo Minini, Brescia Sunset Island, 2005
Two-channel digital color video, with sound, 21 min., 24 sec.
With Fabrizio Brienza and Ivelin Giro
Collection of Dennis Richard and
Susan Bell Richard

Tigertail, 2007

16 mm color film, with sound, 13 min. With Cherry Handforth, Mark Handforth, and Violet Handforth Courtesy the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York and Rome

Musical, 2007-08

HD color video, with sound, 48 min. With Linnette Harrigan, Jenn Jade Ledesna, Alia Maria Smith, Charlene Lite, Yo Smith Kwon, Ula Einstein, Ashley Fisher, Steven Shear, Anna Barvshnikov, Lara Allen, Natasha Bunzl, Francie Scanlon, Saskia Blaha, Jessica Barr, Yuliya Lanina, Robert Rios, Meleni Smith, Malave Brothaz, Cassandra Kassell, Ben Jurney, Hannah Lindroth, Charlene Chan, Zoey Zucker, Golly Gee, Lauren White, Cassie Newman, Brian Thomas Wilson, Andrew Osarchuk, Grace McLean, Karen Siegel, Sean Paul Gallegos, Andrea Monteiro, Ashley Jones, Jessica Tate, Nick Cordero, Mark Stringham, Jordan Stovall, Emily DeMarinis, Boguslava Dimitrova, Mark Stringham, Ricardo Suarez, Russell Brown, Sonya Cooke, Francis Anaman, Mellissa Offoha, Zachary Gilman, Velvet Piini, Leslie McDonel, and Julie Troost Production: Dara Friedman, Jesse Hamerman, Ian Epps, Richard Needham, Rochelle Steiner, Susan Freedman, Alex Zachary, Passerby, and Daniel Newman

Commissioned by The Public Art Fund, New York The Museum of Modern Art, New York. Gift of Beth Swofford

Dancer, 2011

HD black-and-white video transferred from Super 16 mm film, with sound, 25 min.
With Eric Boyd, Chelsea Reyes, Sandra
Cenecharl, Afua Hall, Jean-Aurel Maurice, Loren
Livick, Munier Zavala, Jeremy Martin, Kristofer
Powell, Dwayne Green, Yali Romagosa,
Rivkins Christopher, Jillian Mayer, Luis Neira,
Nevien Mohamed, Josuée Germain, Lisa Miranda,
Michelin Janvier, Vanessa Nicholson, Isis Masoud,
Michelle Soto, Michael Joseph, Barbara Alfonzo,
Angelina Battle, Equilo Porto, Wayne Krassner,
Portia Lange, Nilas Granados, Belaxis Buil,
Patrick Fleming, Oscar Caballero,

Exhibition Checklist (continued)

Shannon Taylor, Celia Fonta, Sandra Portal, Ilana Reynolds, José Dominguez, Lucia Aratanha, Priscilla Marrero, Eugeniu Pereu, Kimberly Roberts, Allisen Learnard, Ivonne Batanero, Andy Hermann, Amber Caddington, Samara Rolle, Wesley Wray, Trina Soumare, Sheena Martin, Bill Spring, Katherine Alvarado, Aliro Zapata, Krystle Aguilera, Lina Ferrera, Angeles Cardenas, Jessie Gold, Elizabeth Hart, Lydia Bittner-Baird, Heather Malonev, Nikki Rollason, Annilie Hartley, Carlota Pradera, Jennifer Fain, Effy Polizogopoulos Production: Dara Friedman, Richard Needham, Howard Garrao, Barron Sherer, Mark Handforth, and Sasha Altaf

Produced by: Dara Friedman, Gavin Brown's enterprise, Miami Art Museum

Additional support provided by: Peter Boswell, Donataller, Brian DeGraw, Skint, Donald Ashwander, Eye, Nick Relph, Oliver Payne, and Gavin Brown

Collection Pérez Art Museum Miami, museum purchase with funds provided by the Helena Rubinstein Philanthropic Fund at The Miami Foundation

PLAY (Parts 1 & 2), 2013

enterprise

HD color video and black-and-white and color widescreen Super 8 mm film transferred to HD video, with sound, 29 min., 59 sec.; 15 min., 45 sec. With Amanda Washko, Dakota Lupo, Fernando Belo, Nana Levitan, Jacob Loeb, Chelsev Holland, Juan Riedinger, Agam Darshi, Sara Hertweck, Read MacGuirtose, Constance Strickland, Megan Rippey, Gabriela Garcia Medina, Paget Kagy, Julian Silver, Smaranda Luna, Gabriel Luna, Joseph Thomas, Cameron Oro, Ashish Dha, Kymberly Harris, Hadley Gallen, Aiala Bandele, Paula Rebelo. Michael Aurelio, Kestrel Burley, Nick Fontaine, Dierdre Lyons, Stephen Butchko, Ciera Adams, Kelsey Milano, Sandy Simona Production: Dara Friedman, Richard Needham, January Parkos Arnall, Angat Gaada, Albert Ortega, and Jeffrey Baum Additional support provided by: Ali Subotnick, Corina Durland, Anne Ellegood, Laurel Durland, Charlie White, Mark Handforth, and Jamie Kenyon Produced by: Dara Friedman, Gavin Brown's

PLAY (Parts 1 & 2) was created during a residency at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. The Hammer Museum's Artist in Residency Program was initiated with funding from the Nimoy Foundation and is supported through a generous grant from the James Irvine Foundation Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Purchase.

Ishmael and the Well of Ancient Mysteries, 2014 HD color video, with sound, 12 min., 17 sec. With Ishmael "Golden Eagle" Bermúdez Collection of the artist

RITE, 2014

HD color video, with sound, 4 min., 10 sec. With Ana Mendez and Constance Strickland Production: Dara Friedman, Richard Needham, Barron Sherer

Produced by: Dara Friedman, Gavin Brown's enterprise, and Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst

Migros Museum für Gegenwartskunst, Zurich

Mother Drum, 2015-16

Three-channel synchronized HD color video (HD color video and Super 16 mm film transferred to HD color video), with sound, 14 min., 31 sec. With Cynthia Jim. Jordyn Nomee. Dahviitihi White. RJ Teveter Jr., Wade Broken Nose, Maxine Broken Nose, Maxx Broken Nose, Maurice Broken Nose, Marques Broken Nose, Ohitika Gibbon, and Delino Cook

Production: Dara Friedman, Mark Handforth, and Richard Needham

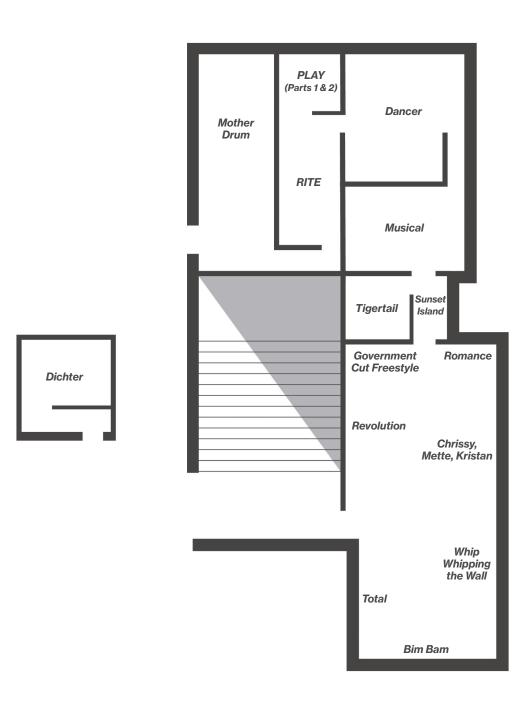
Courtesy the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York and Rome

Dichter, 2017

Four-channel HD color video transferred from 16 mm film, with sound, 32 min., 13 sec.; 24 min., 10 sec.; 22 min., 51 sec.; 24 min., 46 sec. With Helena Abay, Esther Hafner, Steff Jungen, Daniela Marcozzi, Maria Raisch, Norbert Rost, Roman Schomburg, Katja Tannert, Anna Villinger, Katharina von Harsdorf, Martina Ysker, Anni Sutany, Michael Lämmermann, and Laura Sophia Becker Production: Timothy Davies, Dara Friedman,

Christian Fritzenwanker, Michele Giorgetta, Andra Mineo, Richard Needham, Udo Radek Additional support provided by: Supportico Lopez, Zeynep Yuecel, Kirsty Bell, Francesca Boenzi, Gigiotto del Vecchio, Cristina Moreno Garcia, Stefania Palumbo

Courtesy the artist and Supportico Lopez, Berlin



Dara Friedman: Perfect Stranger November 3, 2017–March 4, 2018

Pérez Art Museum Miami

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