

GBE
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DARA FRIEDMAN
MOTHER DRUM
MARCH 4 – APRIL 22, 2017

Gavin Brown's enterprise premieres a new work by Dara Friedman, *Mother Drum*, filmed throughout the summer of 2015 on the Swinomish Reservation in Washington, Coeur d'Alene Reservation in Idaho, and Crow Agency Reservation in Montana.

The genesis of this project was a 2014 archaeological dig in downtown Miami, where Friedman is based, which uncovered the remnants of the ancient, aboriginal city of Tequesta. The contemporary city, dense with high-rise developments, had for the most part ignored the history of its native inhabitants. But this sacred ground lies directly beneath the condos that populate its skyline, surrounding this site, encasing it in steel and glass.

The following summer, Friedman placed an advertisement on PowWows.com, asking Native American Fancy Dancers and drummers to take part in her project, and traveled to pow wows in the West to meet with those who replied. The film, *Mother Drum*, is a result of those meetings.

The people in the film participated explicitly for Friedman's camera, separate from the larger events taking place at the pow wows. The power of the drum is the central, healing character throughout Friedman's work. In the artist's words, "the dusty and undeniable metaphysics of the drum embody the Earth's heartbeat; the beats vibrate a person's bones until they are both with and beyond themselves."

Born in 1968 in Bad Kreuznach, Germany, Dara Friedman now lives and works in Miami. Her work has been featured in solo exhibitions at Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York; MOCAD, Detroit; The Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Centre for Contemporary Art Ujazdowski Castle, Warsaw, Poland; The Kitchen, New York; Kunstmuseum, Thun, Switzerland; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. Friedman will be the subject of an extensive retrospective at the Perez Museum in Miami, opening in October 2017.

It's such a sacred responsibility being a mother. Encasing self with the ability to connect to spirit defines many of our relationships. Relationship to self being of utmost importance. Knowing one's own relationship to the Universe, to mother earth, to our relatives: the rooted ones, fliers/winged, swimmers/finned and four-legged/walkers beings. Also our connections to all elements: water, earth, fire, wind, are all within our natural encasing of connective abilities.

Motherhood is a choreographic dance that takes all that we care about and puts it to the forefront ready to be instructed by its carrier. As I dance encapsulated, meditatively focused on any given imbalance (body, mind, heart, spirit), I become that which is imbalanced and work it with shifting, rhythmically shaking, turning with directive intention, and find the strands of focus only to redirect and re-balance with intuitive movement, working with rhythm and sound.

The enticing rhythms that form in this dance of balance aid by re-forming a high frequency of decolonizing energy toward a healthy, functioning and fluid energy of body, mind and spirit.

A unique rhythm can be facilitated with the help of the drum. The drum resonates a vibration of unseen strands that link our past present and future to who we are now and what we truly symbolize, as well as the relationships we nurture. When linked- in with this sacred rhythm that can be so diverse from person to person, there is a dance of negotiation and navigation. An encounter of choreography that is negotiated according to the connection and focus we are engaged in. Navigation is a process of agency that somehow finds the strands of focus and encapsulates its carrier, ready for instruction.



By being blessed with motherhood, sisterhood, aunthood, daughterhood, grandmotherhood, great grandmotherhood we carry a special connection to the universe. Being in cycle with our grandmother moon we are able to link with all life. Gifted with creation within the very make-up of who we are. The same creation is manifested in all things we focus on. Once focused, and combining that focus with song, drum, dance, ceremony we are able to take an energy that is otherwise chaos and reform it to the needs of community. The conductor of an orchestra of energy.

Today's social pressures on women and especially the colonizing impacts upon Indigenous women has caused a slowing of these energy directives by Indigenous women. However, there is another cycle sweeping the Nations where ceremony, song and drum are found. The directives are being evidenced through a healing of our Nations. The ones at the forefront of this healing are women. They are choreographing their own dances with critical engagement toward holistic wellness of their communities, families and themselves.

Being a lady singer, I have had the experience of what the power of the drum can facilitate. The drum, a transformative animate member of creation, awaits the life-giving instructions of all those that engage in its power. It appears to be a single inanimate object, but instead is animate and carries with it vibrations of life waiting to heal those who need it. Waiting for the mothers to dance their medicinal movements, congregate healing formulas from the universe so as to heal.

Sincerely,

*Shuel-let-qua Q:olosoet (Cynthia Jim)
Saddle Lake Cree Nation
Alberta, Canada
February 15, 2017*

Cynthia Jim, who dances in *Mother Drum*, resides on the Saddle Lake reserve and is of Salishan descent from the Kwekwenaqe (Whonnock) and Stlatlimx Nations of British Columbia. Her early exposure to cultural rituals and ceremony within the Longhouses of the Fraser Valley and the plains of pow-wow trails and ceremony, have contributed richly to how she interprets her surroundings.

