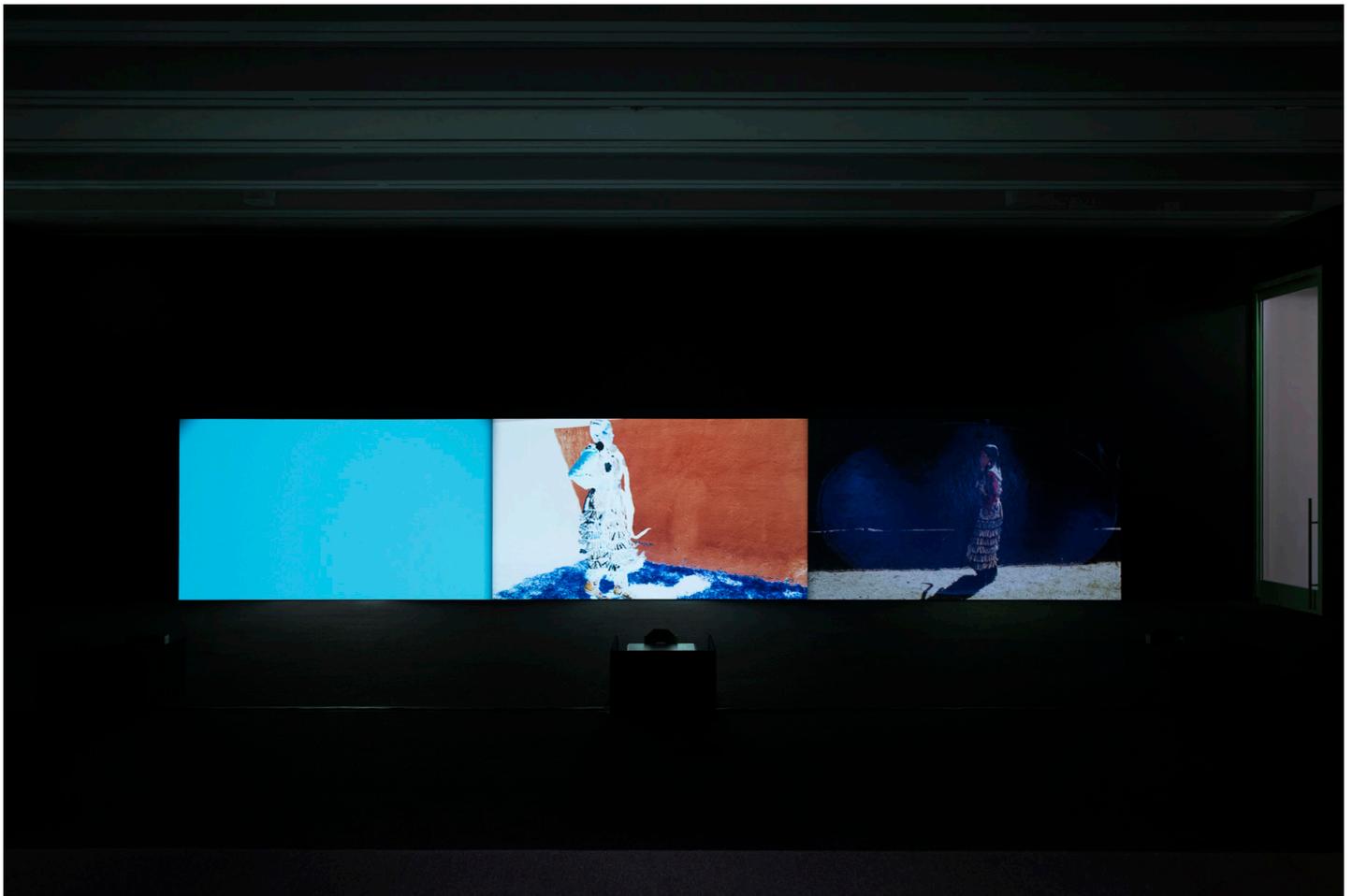


Educator Notes

Dara Friedman: Mother Drum

December 15, 2017–May 13, 2018



About the Artist

Dara Friedman was born in Bad Kreuznach, Germany, in 1968, and lives and works in Miami. She studied at Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main, the Slade School of Fine Art, University College, London, and University of Miami. Recent exhibitions of her work have taken place at: Pérez Art Museum Miami (2017–18); Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit and Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (both 2014); Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, DC, and Aargauer Kunsthaus, Aarau, Switzerland (both 2013).

About the Exhibition

Friedman's three-channel video installation *Mother Drum* (2016)—projected in a continuous loop onto a single, long wall in Gallery 5—interweaves footage of individual dancers, groups of drummers, and other scenes filmed at the Swinomish Reservation in Washington, the Coeur d'Alene Reservation in Idaho, and the Crow Agency Reservation in Montana. Friedman initiated this work by placing an advertisement on PowWows.com, inviting Native American dancers and drummers to participate in her project and traveling to meet those who responded with interest. The participants collaborated with the artist, creating performances for the camera separate from ceremonial events. Interspersed throughout the film are large blocks of monochromatic color, circle motifs, double mirroring, and other image editing techniques created in postproduction. These disruptive visuals are paired with steadfast sounds of drums, singing, and the chiming of dresses and regalia moving during dance. The resulting work captures the resonant power of communal acts, and raises important questions relevant to contemporary life.

One of the performers, Shuel-let-qua Q:olosoet, also known as Cynthia Jim, is from Edmonton, Alberta, and is of Salishan descent from the Kwekwenaque (Whonnock) and Stl'atl'imx Nations. She provided insight into her experience of this project, explaining that 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.” *Mother Drum* examines the visibility of indigenous histories, pairing traditional dances with editing techniques that multiply and complicate these images. We are invited to listen for connections across time, place, and cultures presented in this work. What kinds of relationships are nurtured by *Mother Drum*?

Questions for Discussion

- 1 Why does the artist ask the performers to perform directly for the camera?
- 1 What do the fields of colors—red, yellow, blue, and green—invite you to think about?
- 1 What can we learn from experiencing traditional rituals performed today?

Suggested Activities

Rhythm and Beats

After students have spent time studying *Mother Drum*, take the class on a silent walk around and outside your classroom. Ask students to listen for sounds that have a rhythm. Possible observations could include the ticking of a clock, the bouncing of a ball, or footsteps on a hard surface. If you have a camera or recording device, have students take turns recording these observations. Students can ask people they encounter to re-create the actions for their recordings.

When back in the classroom, gather large pieces of paper, paintbrushes, and black ink or paint. Invite students to re-create the rhythm they observed (using memory or a recording) through moving their paintbrush on the paper. Ask them to pay attention to the weight of the brushstroke and its placement on the page. Once the ink or paint has dried, give students brightly colored watercolor to create fields of color that interact with the black lines and forms. Once this has dried, hang your students' drawings around the classroom. Can you find patterns?

Following page: Installation view: Dara Friedman, *Mother Drum*, 2017.
Photo: Tony Prikryl

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