

ARTNEWS



Dara Friedman, *Musical*, 2007-8, film still, HD Video, 48 minutes.

DARA FRIEDMAN

Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit

May 16-July 27

REVIEWS: NATIONAL

By Roger Green

The exhibition "Dara Friedman: Projecting" brought to MOCAD a trilogy of film and video pieces by the Miami-based artist: *Musical* (2007-8), *Dancer* (2011) and *PLAY* (2013). Populating these works are amateur and professional performers recruited through open auditions. In each film, Friedman engages with the inner lives of her actors, often employing theatrical and cinematic devices to accentuate their projected emotions.

Musical documents 60 individual performers singing a cappella in public places around Manhattan. Predictably, the New Yorkers scurrying past them mostly ignore the singers' efforts – their lack of interest at odds with the performers' expressiveness.

Parading through *Dancer* are dozens of dancers, performing outdoors in Miami, solo or in pairs. The piece is often dazzling, especially when fluidly moving figures are silhouetted against sun-bleached walls. Grainy imagery and visible film equipment underscore the impromptu spirit of the dancing.

PLAY consists of a series of vignettes starring 17 different couples. The interactions between each pair, based on improvisational-theater exercises, range from lyrical to sadomasochistic, as when a woman repeatedly slaps a man before kissing him. The point of this last work, Friedman has noted, is to try to make sense of the human condition. Many Detroiters can probably relate.