

## Kayne Griffin Corcoran

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### Dara Friedman Explores the "Theatre of Your Mind" in Massive PAMM Exhibit



Friedman's *Rite* (2014), a four-minute video with sound. © Dara Friedman, courtesy of the artist and Gavin Brown's enterprise, New York

You might call being an artist Dara Friedman's fated vocation. At the age of 20, she happened into the company of Austrian experimental filmmaker Peter Kubelka and honed her vision and craft while working under him. On a visit to Salzburg International Summer Academy of Fine Arts — which she calls the cheap side door to getting into a European art school — avant-garde artist Hermann Nitsch suggested she call his friend Kubelka and gave her his home number.

Friedman didn't know anything about him. After a phone call, he agreed to let her attend one of his classes in Vienna in which they'd be watching films for two months. She never even applied to art school, just turned up, and he gave her a roll of film. She shot *Dara 1*, a simple art video in which she filmed herself waking up. When Kubelka saw it, he said, "You can stay."

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Though *Ishmael* didn't make it into "Perfect Stranger," Morales and Friedman are considering screening it alongside a BBC documentary about the Miami Circle in January. "I want to do programming around that — pull back the curtain on the sort of archaeological significance of what's right downtown."

She has collaborated with indigenous communities for multiple works exploring their cultures. "It's kind of mind-blowing in terms of an activist element. Native cultures are everywhere. We're blind to them; we don't see them. It's like racism and inequality: That switch hasn't been turned on, but once you turn on the switch, you see it everywhere. *Ishmael* was helpful in doing that. You see where we come from and what we're doing with it. It's like mental infrastructure that's getting built," she explains.

At the time Morales approached her about the show, Friedman was working on *Mother Drum*, a film projected across three screens featuring indigenous performers. "I was really interested in ritual," she says. "There's all this talk about how important ritual is, and I wanted to know why and to feel it and experience it myself. I didn't want secondhand knowledge." She goes out into the field, explores experiences, finds their importance — in this case, of prayer and ritual — filters it through her perspective, and offers it to audiences. The performers might be strangers to you, but within Friedman's work, they become the perfect strangers.

— Liz Tracy