

'Hope Blossoms': About 30 artists will assemble to sing, dance, paint, drum -- and help women and children in need

BY DANIEL CHANG

dchang@MiamiHerald.com



The Fantastic Nobodies, a New York artists' collective, will create an out-of-the-box narrative of Pandora's Box at Friday's charity event.

Art doesn't just happen, but in the right environment, creativity can blossom in many forms -- painting, sculpture, photography, video, light, words, food, sound, dance and other performance.

For 30 artists assembling at the Margulies Collection at the Warehouse on Friday for a 1950s-style art "happening," their collective creativity will yield a different kind of harvest: Hope for the residents of Lotus House, a shelter for homeless women and infants in Overtown.

Now in its fifth year, the annual fundraiser and art auction at the Margulies Collection has become an anticipated event in itself.

But this year, the hosts -- Martin Z. Margulies, a Miami developer and art collector, and wife Constance Collins Margulies, president of Sundari Foundation, which operates Lotus House -- took a cue from the American artist Allan Kaprow and produced a multidisciplinary event with no narrative.

Dancers will dance; an artists' collective will perform; painters will teach the audience

to paint; poets will recite works; sculptors will create installations. . . . You get the picture.

“This is probably one of the only times that we've ever heard of 30 or so performing artists in one venue in one night, all at the same time. They'll all be spread out throughout the warehouse,” Margulies says of the fundraising event, dubbed *Hope Blossoms -- An Art Happening*.

Artist Shinique Smith plans to create a sculpture from donated clothing during the event, then sell the work by auction that night. Musicians Ruben Millares and Richie Marquez will offer to lead a drumming circle. And nobody knows what to expect from The Fantastic Nobodies, a New York artists' collective that proposes to work with the audience to unfold an “out-of-the-box” narrative of *Pandora's Box*.

As if to show that the happening is not all about esoteric concepts of “art,” Margulies says he is looking forward to artist Lee Walton's collaboration with Miami-based dancers.

It works like this: Upon entering the happening, audience members will receive a deck of pictures of the dancers, who will be spread throughout the warehouse wearing headphones.

When someone taps the dancer on the shoulder, that dancer will dance, but the audience won't hear the music.

“It's sort of like a kid's game,” Margulies says. “But that's the fun of it.”

In addition, a silent auction will be held featuring artwork donated by Miami artists and showcased throughout the warehouse.

Christopher “Kit” Stetser, a Miami photographer, donated a portfolio of 48 color and black-and-white pictures titled *Miami Establishments*.

Stetser discovered the subjects of his photos -- churches, businesses, parks -- on his daily commute by bicycle from his home in Allapattah to Miami Beach.

His route is Seventeenth Avenue. “It has just about everything: barber shops, Central American cafes. . . . Chihuahua World is a new establishment,” he says. “These are interesting places.”

Margulies hopes people find the happening interesting enough to shell out the \$100 ticket price, which is lower than last year's admission, he says, “due to the economy” and because “we are doing something very unusual.”

He's expecting about 500 to 600 people, and hopes the auction will help raise more. About 10 Miami restaurants also will donate catering to the event.

“Ticket sales, as good as they will be, we don't think it will raise the money because of the times that we're in,” Margulies says.

But he's optimistic the happening will help Lotus House cultivate a new group of supporters.

“We'll get great exposure for the shelter,” he says, “younger people who can afford \$100, and we think it's a real great opportunity to reach out to more people.”

Constance Margulies founded Lotus House in 2006 to provide housing and support for homeless mothers.

By offering job training and educational programs such as art and yoga, and a facility set amid a lush garden, Lotus House has become more sanctuary than institution, says Martin Margulies.

“Constance gives these people a caring, holistic approach,” he says.

This fall, Lotus House opened a thrift store in Miami, and Margulies says the shelter's reputation is growing, having received grants from TV star Oprah Winfrey and a New York-based foundation.

“It's starting to spread now,” he says.

IF YOU GO

What: "Hope Blossoms -- An Art Happening" benefit for Lotus House Women's Shelter

When: 8-11 p.m. Friday

Where: The Margulies Collection at the Warehouse, 591 NW 27th St., Miami

Cost: \$100

Info: 305-365-2478 or www.lotushouseshelter.org