

Hope Blossoms

Performers and artists unite to benefit Miami shelter in hip art happening

By Jan Engoren



Performance artists The Fantastic Nobodies will bring their living frame tableaux to Miami on October 16 to benefit the Lotus House Women's Shelter. Photo: Courtesy of (CTS) Creative Thriftshop, New York

"This is soup and this is art. Art. Soup. Soup. Art. No, this is soup and this is art." —Lily Tomlin as Trudy

Art happens. And on October 16, art is happening in a big way at the Margulies Warehouse in the Wynwood Arts District of Miami. Constance Collins Margulies and the Martin Z. Margulies Family Foundation, along with the Sundari Foundation, are throwing a huge art happening at the Margulies' 45,000-sq. ft. warehouse.

To celebrate the Fifth Annual Benefit of the Lotus House Women's Shelter, this year, instead of a sedate sit-down dinner or a traditional art viewing, Margulies, aided by a \$10,000 donation from Art Miami, decided to throw a once-in-a-lifetime, not-to-be-missed art happening.

What is an art happening, you ask? It comes out of the performance artist movement, started in the 1950s by Alan Kaprow, an American painter and creator of more than 200 art happenings who believed in 'art as experience.'

The extravaganza will support the Lotus House Shelter, which provides sanctuary and support for homeless women and children in the impoverished Overtown area of

Miami. The shelter provides transitional housing and social services to approximately 130 women and children annually.

The goal of this ambitious undertaking is to raise awareness of issues facing the homeless population in Miami and join together as a community using the arts as a means to uplift and nourish the spirit.

“This is an amazing, artistic adventure, the likes of which Miami has never seen,” says Margulies. “It’s been a year in the planning and it is so exciting to see it coming to fruition. I see it as an antidote to viewing art solely as a commodity. This is art for the experience of art and as a means to bring together and support the community in which we live.”

Painters, sculptors, photographers, videographers, dancers, conceptual and performance artists will be performing throughout the evening. Audience members and the residents of the Lotus House are encouraged to participate and become part of the happening. All the performers and performances are designed to complement each other. It is an interactive evening designed to inspire hope and healing, especially for the women and children of the shelter.

The theme of the night is Hope Blossoms, and its goal is to use art as a means to effect societal change and help end homelessness. Art can inspire, nurture and transform. Harnessing its energy is powerful.

More than 30 performance artists will come to Miami to harness that energy and create live works of sensory art that explore what hope looks, feels, tastes and sounds like.

Happenings are created ‘of-the-moment,’ whereby performers and audience form a dynamic relationship, the line between them is erased as is the line separating life from art. The audience finds a way to participate in the aesthetic arrangement and movement and it is up to each individual to find and create their ideal moment.



Nick Korniloff and Constance Collins Margulies with the big check Art Miami contributed to Lotus House and the Hope Blossom project

“All the artists are donating their time and talent,” says Margulies. “I believe that the creative process of art can serve as a metaphor for hope. We want to engage the audience in the creative process and unleash their imagination.”

Nick Korniloff, a past director and new owner of Art Miami, says that this is the second year that Art Miami has been involved with the Sundari Foundation and Lotus House. In September, Art Miami donated \$10,000 to Lotus House and the Hope Blossoms project. He hopes to make it an ongoing tradition.

Says Korniloff, who is busy preparing for the 20th anniversary of Art Miami in December, “Prices in the art market have adjusted. Collectors appreciate the ambiance of Miami and we believe that a strong community benefits everyone. Supporting Hope Blossoms and the Lotus House is a way for us to be involved in the community. I believe art is a strong motivator for doing good.”

Additionally, in their newly designed venue, Art Miami will donate proceeds from their VIP opening night reception on December 1 to Lotus House and the Sundari Foundation.



The Fantastic Nobodies will perform at the Lotus House benefit. Photo: Courtesy of (CTS) Creative Thriftshop, New York

Margulies dedicated the past year to working with an art consultant in New York to interview and select the artists who are coming to participate and engage with the audience and residents of Lotus House.

One of these groups of performers is The Fantastic Nobodies, a group of six wild and crazy guys who divide their time between New York and Berlin, and who are, according to their own description, “humorous, gregarious, grotesque, and burlesque.”

Their slogan is, “For the right price, we will come to terrorize your mansion and mishandle your art collection.”

It is this irreverent sense of humor and their ‘utterly insane’ antics that they will bring to their “Living Frame” performance at the warehouse. In July, they custom-built a 30 foot stage and a 7’ x 10’ hand-crafted gold frame which will encase their tableau vivant performance of Pandora’s Box.

Aptly enough, the story of Pandora and her box, resonates with the theme of the night: hope. When Pandora's curiosity leads her to open the box, despite being warned otherwise, disease, evil, and illness, all fly out, leaving hope inside. Without hope to mitigate humanity's burdens, humankind would be filled with despair.

And so it was until Pandora revisits her box and releases hope into the world where it takes root and blossoms.

It is this symbolic tale that is recreated live and on stage. Inside their gilt frame, as hope emerges, the Fantastic Nobodies create a set filled with flowers in bloom. As they share the flowers with the audience, they release a white dove into the crowd, creating energy for a more hopeful vision and future.

Other locally-based performers include Roberto Lange, Ruben Millares, Gloria Leigh O'Connell and the Miami Poetry Collective, which will work with participants to explore the meaning of hope through word art.

It wouldn't be a true Happening, if it weren't documented. In that spirit, the Wet Heat Project, founded in Miami by Grela Orihuela and Bill Bilowit, will chronicle the events as they happen and will produce a cinema verité documentary which can be seen on their website, www.wetheat.tv.

To ensure that somebody is documenting the documenters, New York fashion and celebrity photographer, Jason Schmidt will fly in to capture the essence of the art as it is created. Schmidt has made a name for himself by photographing artists in their natural habitat, a voyeur capturing a glimpse into the creative process as it unfolds.



Art lovers mill about the Art Miami pavilion last December. This year's opening night reception will benefit Lotus House.

So, which is the 'real moment?' The actual performance, each individual's experience, what's captured on film, or what Schmidt will shoot with his camera?

Lynn del Sol, director of the Creative Thriftshop, which represents the Fantastic Nobodies, prefers photographs for capturing a moment.

“Each set change dictates what will happen,” says del Sol. “The staging sets a tone for what the audience does and for their reactions. Everything is constantly in flux and of the moment. The camera has the ability to ‘push-pause’ on the action and purely capture a moment in time that might otherwise be lost.”

In any case, no matter how they’re captured, it seems there will be many memorable moments, in real-time, on film, in pictures and in many people’s memories, many of which will be played over and over again.

Hope Blossoms will take place October 16, 8-11 p.m., at the Margulies Warehouse, 591 NW 27th St., Miami in the Wynwood Art District. Advance tickets are available starting at \$100 and can be purchased online at: Lotushouseshelter.org. Tickets at the door are \$150 and subject to availability. Call 305-365-2478 for additional information or visit Lotushouseshelter.org. Street parking and valet parking available.

Have a comment about what you’ve read? E-mail letters@miamiartzine.com