

Posted on Wed, Oct. 20, 2010

An artsy party to help Miami shelter

BY JORDAN LEVIN

jlevin@MiamiHerald.com



Handout

Miami performance duo The TM Sisters will perform at Heart Happening, a benefit for Lotus House.

A benefit for an Overtown shelter for homeless women and children harnesses the growing cachet of art in Miami for a good cause.

Instead of the sit-down, dress-up charity dinner, Heart Happening 2010 will throw a performance art party Friday at the Margulies Art Warehouse in Wynwood. More than 30 artists in all kinds of genres -- dance, performance, music, graffiti, installation, multimedia -- will perform throughout the 45,000-square-foot warehouse.

Tickets are \$100; proceeds will go to the Lotus House Women's Shelter, which provides housing, job training, counseling for homeless women and their children for a year at a time, working to help them move from homelessness to work and stability.

"It's serious fun," says Marty Margulies, the real estate developer and prominent art collector hosting the event with his wife, Constance Collins Margulies, who founded Lotus House in 2006.

"This event has a huge amount of young people, and that's what every community needs. If you get young people interested in the arts you have a community, instead of the same people whose names you always see in the social columns."

Initially they held traditional fundraisers for Lotus House. But last year they were inspired by the growing prominence of the new genre and held their first performance party, which drew more than 800.

"It was extremely well-received -- it just had a great festive feeling," he says.

Many of the artists, who come from Miami and across the world, will create unique works on the spot. British conceptual artist Ben Fain will transform the Lotus House Thrift Store truck into a parade float/meditation center, and he will lead group meditations on the power of community. The Miami Poetry Collective will improvise poems. Primary Flight, which has created murals in Wynwood, will paint graffiti murals at the warehouse. The TM Sisters, another prominent Miami art duo, are creating an interactive video game.

Gema Alva, a Spanish-born multimedia artist and mother of two young children, is creating an elaborate installation with the women at Lotus House. Alva and the women will talk as they loop thread onto a spool, metaphorically transforming the thread with their stories and emotions. At the party, Alva will weave that thread onto a pin-covered, circular board, assisted by the Lotus House women and audience members.

“The artwork is an excuse to be in touch with [Lotus House women] and spend some time with them,” says Alva. She has worked at community outreach programs at prominent New York museums, including the Museum of Modern Art. She is inspired by the notion of artists, and art lovers and collectors, focusing more on art that expresses their values than on the art's monetary value.

“The same thing that happens with collectors can happen with artists, because sometimes when you are working with powerful people you forget why you are making art,” Alva says. “This is like a family working together, where you work for a good cause. It's inspiring.”

© 2010 Miami Herald Media Company. All Rights Reserved.
<http://www.miamiherald.com>