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A Battle Between Body, Blood and Bile Through Dance and Sculpture

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Silas Riener performing with Martha Friedman's 'Pore' at Locust Projects in Miami (all photos by the author for Hyperallergic)

MIAMI — The idea that a balance of four humors — blood, phlegm, black bile, and yellow bile — determines the health of our bodies was once prevalent in Western medicine, and is reinterpreted in a visceral collaboration between sculptor Martha Friedman and dancer Silas Riener. Staged at Locust Projects in Miami, *Pore* has Riener activating four installations made from around 1,000 pounds of rubber, each referencing the qualities of the four humors.

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Silas Riener performing with the "phlegm" stage of Martha Friedman's 'Pore' at Locust Projects (click to enlarge)

The performances are only happening through this weekend in conjunction with Art Basel Miami Beach (times are listed online), although the sculptures are up until January. They're joined by other work by Friedman in metal, but it's really the rubber forms that have the most tactile power, particularly when inhabited by Riener. Each acts as a sort of oversized costume. As the audience follows Riener around the gallery, he writhes his body into their unforgiving forms, such as a sash of pus-colored tubes for yellow bile, or a leotard wrapped in murky blue and gray tentacles for phlegm. Each is attached to a huge weight of rubber suspended from a

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metal clamp on the ceiling that was initially poured by Friedman right on the Locust Projects floor, imprinting the texture of the place onto the piece.

Back in 2013 I saw Riener, a former Merce Cunningham dancer who now often performs in collaboration with Rashaun Mitchell, in *Veal* from Harrison Atelier at the Invisible Dog in Brooklyn.

There, dancers contorted and were suspended upside down while wearing thick black aprons, referencing a slaughterhouse. His angular motion and control of his body in slow, precise balancing movement works similarly well with Friedman's unforgiving art. On the night I attended a steady rain kept the crowd thin, and there was near absolute silence except for the bursts of Paul Hindemith's music for George Balanchine's *The Four Temperaments* — another dance piece inspired by the humors — and the grotesque ripple of the rubber.

As Riener pulsed with confidence in the blood sculpture, which draped his head in a hood like a boxer while wearing shorts embedded with shapes similar to heart valves, or futilely pulled against the tar-like grip of the black bile that wrapped one of his legs, the rubber moved in corporeal waves, the material against his bare skin drawing sweat. Performing a rigid bourrée in pointe shoes for yellow bile, or attempting a slow, shaky, arabesque while on a block of flubbery rubber for phlegm, there was this quiet battle between his body and Friedman's representations of the invisible energies beneath the skin, a consideration of the limits of our control over the interior forces of our own bodies.



Silas Riener performing with the "black bile" stage of Martha Friedman's 'Pore' at Locust Projects

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Silas Riener performing with the "blood" stage of Martha Friedman's 'Pore' at Locust Projects



Detail of the "blood" stage of Martha Friedman's 'Pore' at Locust Projects

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Silas Riener performing with the “yellow bile” stage of Martha Friedman’s ‘Pore’ at Locust Projects



Silas Riener performing with the “phlegm” stage of Martha Friedman’s ‘Pore’ at Locust Projects

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Installation view of Martha Friedman's 'Pore' at Locust Projects



The "black bile" stage of Martha Friedman's 'Pore' at Locust Projects