



MAGICAL POWERS

CHARLEY FRIEDMAN

Nina Johnson

6315 Northwest 2nd Avenue, 33150 Miami, FL, US

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CHARLEY'S HOUSE OF FUN

BY NANCY JONES

Silver linings and fun sex are two surprise elements you're likely to encounter this New Year at **Gallery Diet** in Wynwood.

Director Nina Johnson opens her unashamedly beat-up gray door with a welcome smile. Seems like everyone's a potential friend here. Even those glum looking refugees (from downtown New York ?) moping around in the back will probably lighten up after a dose of prankster artist **Charley Friedman's *Magical Powers***.

Friedman makes his home in that beehive of art-making –Brooklyn– where most sculptors who know-what's-good-for-them live these days. His second solo show here at Diet is small. But small, smart and cagey. Cagey, in fact, is how that 99-year old dynamo sculptor Louise Bourgeois once described herself. And Friedman has a little of that naughty Bourgeois in him, minus the tortured childhood angst.

 His materials are by turn crude, everyday, found, or skillfully crafted, while his outlook is altogether wry. *Magic Rays* and *Magic Powers* form the locus of the exhibition. On one wall a small graphite work on paper, *Magic Rays* shows a gleeful male nude spreading rays of sperm-like joy around. He's no sex symbol, just a regular guy who wants to believe he's still a power in the world by dint of his male-ness. Walk over to the center of the room and *Rays* morph into *Powers*, a sculpture fabricated from Pop-colored felt pieces sewn together. There is also what looks like a female hand involved. Either she's showing who's really the boss and creator here, or she's blocking the intrusive rays from that guy over on the wall who's clearly deluded and infatuated with himself.

You could call it a win/win situation, or not.

There's another sculpture by Friedman, and two handsome C-prints of a tortoise and a cow. One's a little slow and the other gives milk.

You can read into it, or not.

No ambiguity about *I Like Moist Things*. Letters are carved out of natural sponges that drip intermittently into a tacky looking children's wading pool.

You might like it, or not. I did.

Everything Is Going To Be Okay is the final Friedman work I look back to see before going out the door. Maybe 2010 won't be so bad after all.

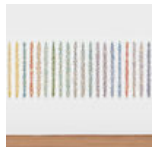


Images: *Magic powers* (2009), Felt, 90 x 29 x 23 inches; *I like moist things* (2009), Vinyl, water, natural sponges, 79 x 79 x 105 inches; *Untitled* (2009), graphite on paper, 21 x 27 inches. Courtesy Gallery Diet.

Posted by Nancy Jones on 1/24/10

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