

Matthew Barney

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“I like to think the music can take you farther into the visual than the visual alone can. There’s a place where we can see and hear at the same time, without being aware of doing either: a state of awareness without concentration, which can only happen with this kind of accumulation of elements.”

Matthew Barney

Matthew Barney’s long- running *DRAWING RESTRAINT* series, which began in 1987, culminating in the 1989 work *Field Dressing*, merges two distinct themes: the body of the athlete as an energetic sculpture and the fetish character of workout equipment. In his first solo exhibitions in 1991, he presented installations featuring sculptures and videos that showed how he arrived at his drawings through interaction with various constructions and objects in conjunction with physical exertion and the struggle to overcome various hurdles. In the exhibition, seven photos from the series *ENVELOPA: Drawing Restraint 7 (Guillotine)*, 1993, were scattered throughout the venue as links, while the major cinematic work *Drawing Restraint 9*, 2006, was screened in the Base.

Barney began working on his monumental *CREMASTER* cycle in 1994 – a five- part film project complemented by photographs, drawings and sculptures (some of which featured in his film sets or were derived from them). At the heart of the exhibition, featuring works from the period 1992 to 2006, was the spatial sound sculpture of the *CREMASTER* cycle, with showcases accompanying each film.

What initially took the form of performances by the artist without an audience eventually took shape as a poetic and at the same time disturbing work in the film *DRAWING RESTRAINT 9*. The act of overcoming adversity in order to draw was transposed into the medium of film and extended into the creation of a sculpture. *DRAWING RESTRAINT 9* references the Japanese whaling vessel *Nisshin Maru*. The soundtrack was created by Icelandic musician Björk, who also plays a leading role in the film: it begins with a procession in a Japanese port, where a tanker carrying hot vaseline, oxen, horses and wild boar is accompanied to the ship and surrounded by hundreds of curious onlookers. The vaseline is pumped into a massive open mould on deck, where it cools over the course of several weeks en route to the Antarctic. Using the tools and techniques deployed in the whaling industry, the vaseline is eventually transformed into a sculpture that changes shape several times. The climax of the film involves the removal of the sculpture on arrival in the southern polar sea, against a backdrop of icebergs. Parallel to this creation of an artwork, a love story develops below deck – played by Barney and Björk in accordance with the strict choreographical rules of the Japanese tea ceremony. In the course of the ceremony and the voyage, the tea room itself becomes a „cup“ filled with the warm liquid in which both of these western passengers are subjected to a mysterious physical transformation.

Matthew Barney (born 1967 in San Francisco, US) lives and works in New York.