



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Wednesday, July 15, 2015

**THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, LOS ANGELES, PRESENTS
*MATTHEW BARNEY: RIVER OF FUNDAMENT***

**BARNEY'S FIRST MAJOR MUSEUM EXHIBITION IN L.A. FEATURES FILM AND LARGE-
SCALE SCULPTURE**

September 13, 2015–January 18, 2016

The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA



LOS ANGELES—The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, presents *Matthew Barney: RIVER OF FUNDAMENT*, Barney's first major solo museum exhibition in Los Angeles. *River of Fundament* (2014) is one of Barney's most challenging and ambitious projects to date, and his largest filmic undertaking since the renowned, five-part *CREMASTER* film cycle (1994–2002). The eponymous exhibition comprises the epic-length, operatic film *River of Fundament*, which screens in a cinema made specifically for The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA, and approximately 85 works inspired by or made in conjunction with the film, including large-scale sculptures weighing up to 25 tons, drawings, and vitrines.

Nearly seven years in the making, the film *River of Fundament* tells a story of regeneration and rebirth inspired by *Ancient Evenings* (1983), Norman Mailer's sprawling, provocative novel set in ancient Egypt.

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Conceived as a nontraditional opera written in collaboration with composer Jonathan Bepler, the film combines documentary footage of live performances mounted by Barney and Bepler in Los Angeles, Detroit, and New York, with scripted scenes filmed in a recreation of Mailer's Brooklyn home and in a subterranean river of feces. Over three feature-length acts, the imagined character of Norman Mailer appears as a protagonist in different incarnations, including one portrayed by Mailer's son, John Buffalo. In a parallel narrative, three American automobiles are transmogrified. The film features a notable and diverse cast, including actors Maggie Gyllenhaal, Paul Giamatti, Elaine Stritch, Ellen Burstyn, Aimee Mullins, and Joan La Barbara.

The film is divided into three acts, each featuring a live performance (*REN*, *KHU*, and *BA*) that advances the narrative of a commercial and industrial society via the American automobile manufacturing industry. *REN* (Los Angeles, 2008) subjects the 1967 Chrysler Crown Imperial from Barney's *CREMASTER 3* (2002) to mechanized destruction in an automobile showroom. *KHU* (Detroit, 2010) documents a performative casting of the massive sculpture *DJED* (2009-11), during which 25 tons of molten iron is poured into an open, molded pit at a derelict steel mill. *BA* (New York, 2013) takes place at locations along New York City's East River, culminating in a battle at a dry dock in the Brooklyn Navy Yard, a large basin used for the construction and repair of ships. From the dried up L.A. River, to the Detroit River, and finally to New York City's East River—host to a funereal barge ferrying the Mailer apartment set—man-made and natural arteries transport the protagonists on their journeys from death to rebirth.

Matthew Barney: RIVER OF FUNDAMENT continues the program Barney has developed over the last seven years, in which a complex storytelling system, intertwining personal, historical, and modern mythologies, generates narrative sculpture. With this project, Barney moves away from his signature materials of thermal plastic and petroleum jelly towards iron, bronze, lead, copper, brass, and zinc, metals that evoke both ancient sculpture and automobile manufacture. For instance, *Canopic Chest* (2009-11) refers to the jars that ancient Egyptians used during mummification to store their viscera for the afterlife; and *Sacrificial Anode* (2011) takes its name from a type of highly active metal used to protect other metals from corrosion. The forms of these sculptures are based on the ancient Egyptian was scepter, a royal staff and symbol of power cast in precious metals.

The exhibition includes a new group of sculptures made specifically for the MOCA presentation and on view for the first time. Barney made the sculptures in his *Water Castings* series (2015) using a process he has developed over the past year. Molten bronze, poured into an open pit filled with a silt of water and clay, reacts immediately with the explosive expansion of the water. The bronze displaces the water and fills the random recesses in the clay to create a form that would be impossible to cast or model by hand. The exhibition also includes a suite of new drawings, storyboards, and vitrines that intricately map the character and thematic development of *River of Fundament*. In his drawings, Barney continues to explore unorthodox, highly symbolic substances and materials such as gold, silver, lapis lazuli, and sulfur.

The film *River of Fundament* premiered at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in February 2014, and had its European premiere at the Bavarian State Opera, Munich, in conjunction with the opening of Barney's eponymous exhibition at Haus der Kunst. *River of Fundament* screened at Royce Hall on April 25, 2015, presented by the Center for the Art of Performance at UCLA, for its Los Angeles premiere in advance of the presentation at MOCA.

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Matthew Barney (b. 1967, San Francisco; lives and works in New York) has been included in group exhibitions such as Documenta IX, Kassel; the 1993 and 1995 Whitney Biennials; and the 1993 and 2003 Venice Biennales. *Matthew Barney: The CREMASTER Cycle* (2002–03), an exhibition of work from his epic film cycle, was organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, and traveled to Museum Ludwig, Cologne, and the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris. *Matthew Barney: DRAWING RESTRAINT*, a full-scale survey of the artist's ongoing performance-based project, was organized by the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan, and traveled to Leeum Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; Serpentine Gallery, London; and Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna. *Matthew Barney: Prayer Sheet with the Wound and the Nail* was mounted at Laurenz Foundation, Schaulager, Basel, in 2010. In 2013, a selection of the artist's drawings (*Subliming Vessel: The Drawings of Matthew Barney*) was presented at New York's Morgan Library & Museum and at the Bibliothèque nationale de France.

Matthew Barney: RIVER OF FUNDAMENT, an exhibition catalogue published by Rizzoli for the Los Angeles presentation, includes contributions by Philippe Vergne, Hilton Als, Homi K. Bhabha, Diedrich Diederichsen, Okwui Enwezor, and David Walsh, as well as installation views from the exhibition in Haus der Kunst. ISBN 978-0847842582.

Matthew Barney: RIVER OF FUNDAMENT is organized by Haus der Kunst, Munich in collaboration with the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA), Tasmania and curated by Okwui Enwezor. The Los Angeles presentation is coordinated by MOCA Assistant Curator Lanka Tattersall.

The exhibition was realized by MOCA in collaboration with Laurenz Foundation, Schaulager, Basel.



Lead support is provided by Steven & Alexandra Cohen Foundation and Gladstone Gallery.

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Additional support is provided by Cindy and Howard Rachofsky and C. Richard and Pamela Kramlich.

In-kind media support is provided by KCETLink, KCRW 89.9 FM, and *Los Angeles* magazine.

Image credit: Matthew Barney and Jonathan Bepler, *River of Fundament*, 2014, production still, courtesy of Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels, © Matthew Barney, photo by Hugo Glendinning

RELATED PROGRAMS

MEMBERS OPENING

Saturday, September 12, 7-9pm

The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA

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The Board of Trustees and Philippe Vergne, Director invite you to the Members' Opening of *Matthew Barney: RIVER OF FUNDAMENT*. Please present your membership card for admission. Parking is available in surrounding lots. DJ, food trucks, and beverages provided by Jarritos and Silverlake Wine.

FREE for MOCA members; no reservations necessary

INFO 213/621-1794 or membership1@moca.org

ART TALK: MATTHEW BARNEY, WILLIAM FORSYTHE, AND MAGGIE NELSON

Sunday, September 13, 3pm

Location to be determined

FREE with museum admission; priority entry for MOCA members subject to availability

ART TALK: MATTHEW BARNEY AND HOMI K. BHABHA

Sunday, October 11, 3pm

Location to be determined

FREE with museum admission; priority entry for MOCA members subject to availability

Please check moca.org for updates on related programs.

THE MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART, LOS ANGELES (MOCA)

About MOCA: Founded in 1979, MOCA's vision is to be the defining museum of contemporary art. In a relatively short period of time, MOCA has achieved astonishing growth with three Los Angeles locations of architectural renown; a world-class permanent collection of more than 6,800 objects, international in scope and among the finest in the world; hallmark education programs that are widely emulated; award-winning publications that present original scholarship; groundbreaking monographic, touring, and thematic exhibitions of international repute that survey the art of our time; and cutting-edge engagement with modes of new media production. MOCA is a not-for-profit institution that relies on a variety of funding sources for its activities.

Hours: MOCA Grand Avenue (located at 250 South Grand Avenue in downtown Los Angeles) is open Monday and Friday from 11am to 5pm; Thursday from 11am to 8pm; Saturday and Sunday from 11am to 6pm; and closed on Tuesday and Wednesday. The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA (located at 152 North Central Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90012) has the same hours as MOCA Grand Avenue during exhibitions. Please call ahead or go to moca.org for the Geffen Contemporary at MOCA exhibition schedule. MOCA Pacific Design Center (located at 8687 Melrose Avenue, West Hollywood, CA 90069) is open Tuesday through Friday from 11am to 5pm; Saturday and Sunday from 11am to 6pm; and closed on Monday. The MOCA Store at MOCA Grand Avenue (located at 250 South Grand Avenue) is open Monday through Wednesday and Friday from 10:30am to 5:30pm; Thursday from 10:30am to 8:30pm; and Saturday and Sunday from 10:30am to 6:30pm.

Museum Admission: General admission is free for all MOCA members. General admission is also free for everyone at MOCA Grand Avenue and The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA on Thursdays from 5pm to 8pm, courtesy of Wells Fargo. General admission is always free at MOCA Pacific Design Center. General admission at MOCA Grand Avenue and the Geffen Contemporary at MOCA is \$12 for adults; \$7 for students with I.D. and seniors (65+); and free for children under 12.

More Information: For 24-hour information on current exhibitions, education programs, and special events, call 213/626-6222 or access MOCA online at moca.org.



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