

Installation: *Matthew Barney: REPRESSIA (decline)*
Dates: July 23, 2023–January 7, 2024
Location: Resnick Pavilion



(Image captions on page 2)

The Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) presents *Matthew Barney: REPRESSIA (decline)*. Acquired by LACMA in 2019, *REPRESSIA (decline)* (1991) establishes Matthew Barney's influential visual language and probes the themes of masculinity and theatricality in sports that have reemerged in the artist's latest project, *SECONDARY* (2023), which debuted in New York this past May. *REPRESSIA (decline)* is the first work by Barney to enter LACMA's collection.

Barney's expansive career began in the early 1990s with significant gallery exhibitions that established his interest in centering the body and performance in his installations and media productions. Predating the pageantry found in Barney's *Cremaster* series—which invoked everything from Busby Berkeley musicals to Richard Serra's *Catching Lead*—the artist's early work centered spaces, objects, and recordings of performances exploring, to paraphrase the artist, “the athlete (a)s an alchemist/the athlete (a)s an artist.”

REPRESSIA (decline) comprises a room-sized installation with sculptural components that resemble exercise equipment and materials used in wrestling, from a pink, fleshy wrestling mat and tube socks to petroleum jelly and a speculum. Fashioning many of these out of transmutable elements such as cast petroleum wax and tapioca, Barney—who was an athlete before studying art at Yale—transforms athletic tools of the trade and medical apparatuses into highly charged relics. These sculptural elements dialogue with two video performances within the installation:

Radial Drill (1991) and *Blind Perineum* (1991). In each of the pieces, Barney is seen performing a series of strenuous physical acts.

Curated by Rita Gonzalez, Terri and Michael Smooke Curator and Department Head, Contemporary Art, at LACMA, *Matthew Barney: REPRESSIA (decline)* is an opportunity for visitors to explore the early vision of an artist who has had a major impact on how other artists engage with film, as well as the intersection between cinematic output with more conventional modes of drawing, painting, and sculpture.

The presentation continues LACMA's strong history of advancing new models for exploring how film and popular culture interrelate with traditional areas of art from all periods and cultures. Over the past 30 years, the museum has acquired time-based media objects in nearly every curatorial department, including major video installations such as Nam June Paik's *Video Flag Z* (1986), Bill Viola's *Slowly Turning Narrative* (1992), and Mariko Mori's *Miko no Inori* (1996), as well as works by Tacita Dean, Stan Douglas, Pierre Huyghe, Christian Marclay, Steve McQueen, Bruce Nauman, and Diana Thater.

About Matthew Barney

Matthew Barney is an artist known for his broad-ranging practice encompassing film, performance, sculpture, photography, and drawing. He is celebrated for his feature-length cinematic work, including *Cremaster Cycle* (1994–2002); *River of Fundament* (2014); and *Redoubt* (2019). As a sculptor, Barney works with materials stretching from petroleum jelly to bronze, creating objects and installations that are intrinsically linked to his cinematic world. Barney has exhibited major projects in solo exhibitions organized by the Guggenheim Museum, New York (2002); the 21st Century Museum for Contemporary Art, Kanazawa, Japan (2005); Schaulager, Basel, Switzerland (2010 and 2021); the Morgan Library and Museum, New York (2013); Haus der Kunst, Munich, Germany (2014); and Yale University Art Gallery (2019). Barney was honored with the Aperto Prize at the Venice Biennale (1993); the Hugo Boss Prize (1996); the Kaiser Ring Award in Goslar, Germany (2007); and the Golden Gate Persistence of Vision Award at the 54th San Francisco International Film Festival (2011). Born in San Francisco, California, and raised in Boise, Idaho, Barney now lives and works in New York City.

Credit

This exhibition was organized by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

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About LACMA

Located on the Pacific Rim, LACMA is the largest art museum in the western United States, with a collection of more than 149,000 objects that illuminate 6,000 years of artistic expression across the globe. Committed to showcasing a multitude of art histories, LACMA exhibits and interprets works of art from new and unexpected points of view that are informed by the region's rich cultural heritage and diverse population. LACMA's spirit of experimentation is reflected in its work with artists, technologists, and thought leaders as well as in its regional, national, and global partnerships to share collections and programs, create pioneering initiatives, and engage new audiences.

Location: 5905 Wilshire Boulevard, Los Angeles, CA, 90036. Lacma.org

Image captions: (Left and right) Matthew Barney, *REPRESSIA (decline)*, 1991, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, gift of Jeffrey Deitch and Manfred Simchowitz, © Matthew Barney, photo by Larry Lamé, courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery

Press Contact: press@lacma.org

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