

Matthew Barney

American, born 1967

*CREMASTER 2: The Drones' Exposition*

1999

Mixed-media sculptural installation including 35mm film, twelve prints, and five drawings

Dimensions variable

Collection of the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Accessions Committee Fund purchase, 2000.141

Glen Helfand on *CREMASTER 2: The Drones' Exposition*

Bleachers are hard, backless seats that make us aware of our bodies as we witness the physical limits of others'. We might as easily be watching high school wrestlers, but here the spectacle is Matthew Barney Americana, a filmed stream of bodies in motion. The fourth installment in the artist's five-part *CREMASTER* cycle conjures a bee-covered heavy metal man, a wasp-waisted woman, a statuesque Norman Mailer, and Barney himself as killer Gary Gilmore writhing in a custom car with internal organ-like chambers. (Or did I dream that?)

It's easy to forget that Barney, a mythic multimedia art star, is a sculptor. His achievements place as much emphasis on social as object sculpture. He choreographs within the film frame, but also choreographs our rapt attention and squirmy discomfort as audience members who become inspired and sometimes bored. We are certain to fidget on those bleachers, a name fittingly derived from exposure to the sun.

Here, in this heraldic fantasy theater, we are exposed together to endangered, projected 35mm light. Barney makes us treasure the form with a preservationist's largesse, and makes it a team effort. *CREMASTER 2*, the film and its related sculptures, prints, and drawings, is jointly owned by SFMOMA and the Walker Art Center. Was it too expensive or too large a vision to tidily store in a single site? Some imaginations are just that vast and alluring.