

The Art Newspaper

Akers, Tory: Matthew Barney's *Cremaster Cycle* returns to the big screen in New York
10 May 2023



THE ART NEWSPAPER

Matthew Barney's *Cremaster Cycle* returns to the big screen in New York

The screening of this ambitious contribution to cinema, showing in its entirety in New York for the first time in eight years, coincides with the debut of Barney's newest project



Matthew Barney, *CREMASTER 4*, 1994, production still
© Matthew Barney. Photo: Michael James O'Brien. Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery

This month, New York-based entertainment company Metrograph will be showcasing the work of Matthew Barney at its Lower East Side cinema. The American conceptual, video, performance artist's *Cremaster Cycle* series (1994-2002)—a five-part aesthetic storytelling system that was constructed over the course of a decade—will screen [↗](#) in its entirety across several weeks beginning 17 May.

Cremaster 1 (1995) and *Cremaster 4* (1994) will screen as a double bill on 17 May at 7pm, and *Cremaster 5* (1997) will screen on 23 May at 7pm. *Cremaster 2* (1999) will screen the week of 30 May, and the three-hour *Cremaster 3* (2002) will show the week of 5 June. Matthew Barney and writer Maggie Nelson, literary critic and author of *The Argonauts*, will have a conversation at Metrograph on 4 June following a screening of Barney's re-mastered early works.

The Cremaster Cycle put Barney on the cultural map in the 1990s, challenging and arresting viewers with its sumptuous visuals and ambitious, often macabre subject matter, ranging from sexual development to Celtic mythology to the act of creation itself. Named after the muscle that controls testicular temperature response, *The Cremaster Cycle's* ambitious, interdisciplinary approach feels as bold and fresh today as it did upon at the time of the first film's release nearly 30 years ago. The work has not been screened in New York since 2015, and its return coincides with the concurrent run of *Secondary* [↗](#), a new moving image work from Barney that will be on public view in his Long Island City studio from 12 May to 25 June.

The Cremaster Cycle, in keeping with Nelson's literary oeuvre, functions as its own kaleidoscopic, surrealist autofiction, marrying aspects of Barney's life and body (he plays the protagonist in most of the films) with dizzying feats of transformation and dramaturgical expression.

Barney, who was born in San Francisco and raised in Boise, Idaho, is known for his wide-ranging practice, encompassing performance, photography, sculpture and film. His work has been the subject of exhibitions all over the world at venues including the 21st Century Museum for Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, Japan, and the Guggenheim Museum in New York—where parts of *The Cremaster Cycle* were filmed.



Matthew Barney, *CREMASTER I*, 1995, production still

© Matthew Barney.

Photo: Michael James O'Brien. Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery