



# Art in America

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EXHIBITIONS THE LOOKOUT

## Matthew Barney

at Gladstone Gallery,  
through Oct. 22

515 West 24th Street

I mistakenly expected this partial re-staging of Matthew Barney's 1991 New York solo debut to have a scrappy and searching look. Instead, the sculptures, installations, and drawings that Barney produced at the age of twenty-four feel fully resolved. The psycho-sexual tensions, counter-masculinities, mythological struggles, and material alchemies that animate much of his subsequent work, including his five "Cremaster" films, are here. Pieces of weight-training equipment cast in petroleum wax, petroleum jelly, or self-lubricating plastic form the core of complex installations that represent fragments of an allegorical world populated by Harry Houdini and Jim Otto, an Oakland Raiders football player of the 1960s.

Barney translated a Beuysian fascination with physical forces—heat and cold, strength and decay—into works that serve both as emblems of an all-American culture of athleticism and as props for ambiguous gender-role performances, some of which are captured on video. These short scenes—including one showing a mostly nude Barney scaling the gallery walls—have a playful quality, though it's possible to see how they point toward Barney's later cinematic work, which has grown increasingly overwrought. The films employ vast networks of cultural symbols and references to raise questions that can feel merely personal and, ultimately, rather small. In 1991, by contrast, Barney was letting his sculptures carry the symbolic weight, trusting viewers to enter, and perhaps build on, his imaginative world while remaining grounded fully in his virtuosic handling of materials. —*William S. Smith*

Pictured: Matthew Barney: *RADIAL DRILL*, 1991, color and black-and-white video, 5 minutes. Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels.



## More from the Lookout



**Giorgio de Chirico and Giulio Paolini**  
at The Center for Italian Modern Art,  
through Jun. 24  
421 Broome Street



**“Douglas Crimp —Before Pictures New York City 1967–1977”**  
at Galerie Buchholz,  
through Oct. 22  
17 East 82nd Street



**Jessica Mein**  
at Simon Preston,  
through Oct. 30  
301 Broome Street



**“Something Possible Everywhere”**  
at 205 Hudson Street  
Gallery,  
through Nov. 30  
205 Hudson Street



**Matthew Chambers**  
at Feuer/Mesler,  
through Oct. 23  
319 Grand Street, 2nd  
Floor



**Talia Chetrit**  
at Kaufmann Repetto,  
through Oct. 31  
535 West 22nd Street



**Zoe Leonard**  
at Hauser & Wirth,  
through Oct. 22  
32 East 69th Street



**Richard Hawkins**  
at Greene Naftali,  
through Oct. 22  
508 West 26th Street,  
Ground floor



**Walter Robinson**  
at Jeffrey Deitch,  
through Oct. 22  
18 Wooster Street



**Caitlin Keogh**  
at Bortolami,  
through Oct. 29  
520 West 20th Street



**McDermott & McGough**  
at James Fuentes,  
through Oct. 23  
55 Delancey Street



**Arlene Shechet**  
at Frick Collection,  
through Apr. 2  
1 East 70th Street

