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"1 interview and 1 creative wisdom with Matthew Barney here," *The Creative Independent*,
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Matthew Barney

Artist

Matthew Barney is a visual artist who lives and works in New York. He previously spoke to the Creative Independent about how where you grow up finds its way into your work.

How do you avoid burnout?

In a way, I avoid burnout by procrastinating. I work with a group of people on both my films and my sculptural work. With any project, there's a way in which the group effort gains critical mass and forms its own momentum, and once

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that happens it's difficult to stop it. Over the years I've learned to hold back on pivotal decisions as long as possible as a way to focus the energy of the project into a more intense and more sustainable period.

Of course, this is relative. My projects take a long time. *Cremaster* was nearly 10 years in production. *River of Fundament* took seven years. That's a long time to be inside something, but both projects were episodic. Each episode was broken into multiple production blocks, with some down time in-between. This allows everyone in the group to recharge their batteries, and also gives me a chance to consider the problems that inevitably come up in any production, and to do something about it in the next block. This is physical downtime for me, but mentally I tend to continue circling around the project on a daily basis, learning more about it. It's during this period where I would hold off on making key decisions as long as possible, while trying not to sabotage the preparation time for the next production block.

I remember meeting with a homicide detective in Detroit with a group of performers during the *River of Fundament* rehearsals. He was training the performers proper crime scene procedure. He spoke to us about the two different schools of thought in crime scene investigation.

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One, where the scene is approached like a grid where the investigators spread out in a single line, arm's width apart, and walk from one end of the scene to the other, and the second, where the scene is visualized more like a circle and the investigators follow a spiral from the outer perimeter to the center of the crime scene. This circular method resonated for me, and felt something like the approach I take with my work, where in any project there are some concrete forms and concepts at the center, but there are also some questions which are harder to answer and some problems that have no specific form. It takes the duration of the production, circling around the problem, to get to the bottom of it. This keeps things interesting.