

January 2007

Rational means as provocation of the absurd

The Goslar Kaiser Ring 2007 to be awarded to Matthew Barney

GOSLAR. The American artist Matthew Barney is to receive the City of Goslar's Kaiser Ring award for 2007. This was announced by the mayor, Henning Binnewies, on Friday evening at the traditional New Year's reception in the Kaiserpfalz, Goslar's historic imperial palace. Matthew Barney was born on March 25, 1967 in San Francisco; he lives and works in New York. The Kaiser Ring will be presented to him in a special session of the City Council on October 6th.

With Matthew Barney the jury is acknowledging "one of the great symbolists of the last fifty years, who as a utopian has created artistic works dealing with the theme of the boundaries of the sexes." In doing so the award winner, who numbers among the most important artists of the present day, unites sculptural environments, installations and drawings with videos and performances in his works. The focus lies in particular on the exploration of the restraints between corporeality and sexuality using the fusion of the physical mercilessness of serious athletics and its erotic implications. The jury: "His works are operatic in their scale and cinematic in their form. Art, especially the five films "Cremaster", prove him to be a very cultivated and consciously contemporary artist who provokes, in a disciplined manner, the absurd with rational means. An unforgettable labyrinthine private cosmos has come into being in which possible human creative processes, with motives and symbols from mythology, history, geology and architecture, are melted into a mysterious parallel universe."

"all in the present must be transformed" is the title of an exhibit in the German Guggenheim in Berlin, which can be seen until January 12, 2007

Works of Matthew Barney and Joseph Beuys are contrasted with each other to point out the aesthetic and conceptive factors which the two artists, in spite of differences in time and place, have in common. At the centre of the exhibit are the metaphoric handling of material, the transformative targeting, as well as the relationship between action and documentation in Beuys' and Barney' practice.

Among the works of Matthew Barneys, whose works have been exhibited at the Kassel documenta frequently, are videos, installations, sculptures, photographs, drawings, multimedia objects and films. He works with themes like biology, sexuality, history, mythology, sport and medicine, among others, which in part relate to legendary or mythological figures. In his monumental Cremaster Cycle (1994-2002), a five-part non-chronological ordered art film, the conflict of a prenatal development of a reproduction system is the main theme. Between 1988 and 2005 he developed the 12-part series Drawing Restraint in which the principle of tension and counter tension within the framework of action art is delineated. A part of the series is the art film Drawing Restraint 9, which was also shown in German cinemas in 2006. The film

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music was composed by his wife, the Icelandic singer Björk, who also played one of the major roles in the two films (the other was played by the artist himself).

The Goslar Kaiser Ring is one of the most highly-renowned awards for modern art in the world. Previous to Matthew Barney, the prize was awarded to, among others, Henry Moore, Max Ernst, Alexander Calder, Joseph Beuys, Günther Uecker, Georg Baselitz, Christo, Gerhard Richter, Cindy Sherman, Sigmar Polke, Christian Boltanski, Jenny Holzer, Robert Longo and, last year, Jörg Immendorff.

Short Biography

Matthew Barney

Born 1967 in San Francisco, CA. Lives and works in New York

Films, Videos, Installations, Sculptures, Photography, Drawings, Multimedia

Mythical story lines and motives which relate to legendary figures

1992 documenta 9, Kassel

1993 Biennial Exhibition, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York

1994 Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris: "Hors Limites"

1995 Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Kunsthalle Bern; The Watari

Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokio; Museum für Gegenwartskunst - Basell

1996 San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, San Francisco; Portikus, Frankfurt;

Guggenheim Art Gallery; Biennale, Sydney, Australien; De Appel Foundation, Amsterdam

1999 Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Serieuze Zaken, Amsterdam

2000 Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris: "Matthew Barney, Cremaster 2"; Seoul Metropolitan Museum: "Media Art 2000"; Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York;

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2001 The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles: "Public Offerings"; Galleri K, Oslo

2002 documenta 11, Kassel; Museum Ludwig, Köln: "The Cremaster Cycle - Skulpturen und Filme 1994-2002"; Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York: "Penetration";

Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris; Friedrich Petzel Gallery, New York

2003 Sammlung Goetz, München; Regen Projects, Los Angeles

Awards, among others:

1993: Europa 2000 Prize, Aperto '93, XLV Venice Biennale

1996: Hugo Boss Prize of the Guggenheim-Museum, New York

1999: James D. Phelan Art Award in Video, Bay Area Video Coalition, San Francisco Foundation

2001: Glen Dimplex Award, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin

Enclosure: Portrait photo of Matthew Barney

Photo by Chris Winget, Courtesy Gladstone Gallery, New York "The images cannot be cropped, altered, montaged, overlaid with text or otherwise manipulated."

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