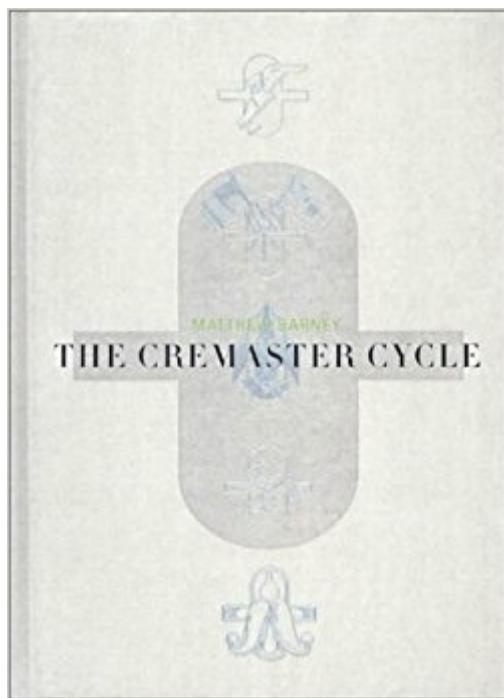


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Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle



Synopsis

Filled with hundreds of Matthew Barney's fantastical images, this comprehensive volume, which accompanies a major exhibition at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, surveys the popular artist's *CREMASTER* cycle; an epic five-part film project that uses the biological model of sexual difference as its conceptual departure point. Three essays by Barney experts articulate the series' diverse themes and explore the artist's innovative aesthetic vocabulary; interviews with key collaborators; composer, costume designer, make-up artist, technicians, and actors; reveal his working process. In addition to stills from the five films; including the final episode, *CREMASTER 3*, which will premiere at the exhibition; the book features related sculptures, photographs, drawings, and storyboards. For anyone intrigued by this Wagner of contemporary art, this is an atlas to his enticingly hypnotic worlds.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"The most important American artist of his generation." -- Michael Kimmelman, The New York Times Magazine

Very useful book for writing an academic paper on The Cremaster Cycle that includes a lot of attention to Barney's autobiographical reasons for why the Cycle was created where and how he intended, as well as some lovely full-colour posed photo stills that I have yet to find in online image databases. Great supplement to viewing the entirety of the films, but no substitution to seeing the work itself (as any good film-based work should be). I highly recommend this particular piece of

documentation to anyone looking for further insight on Barney's creative process (or a "Sparks Notes" for the content of the individual films) as well as anyone writing on this intense, expansive, and complex work.

This book, describing Matthew Barney's masterpiece "The Cremaster Cycle" is more than the standard book of photos from an exhibition. It is a work of art itself, encapsulating the entire Cycle in 500 pages. It could serve as the textbook for an entire semester art course on the creative process, the meaning of contemporary art, even questioning man's struggle to create. This book is in 5 main parts. First is Nancy Spector's brilliant 80 page essay on Matthew Barney's work. This is no mere blueprint of the meaning of the Cremaster Cycle; instead it is an ambitious work in its own right, exploring as much ground as Barney himself. The level of detail and penetrating questions Spector brings up is mind-blowing. I can think of no other essay on art that has moved me like this one. After seeing the entire Cremaster Cycle and reading Spector's discussion on it, I can only conclude that even contemporary art geniuses like Richard Prince, Koons, even Warhol are doing paint-by-numbers in comparison. If you are looking for a simple Rosetta Stone for the Cycle, in which you are told "X is a symbol for Y and this is what the whole thing means" you will be disappointed. That is the power of Barney's work - it is universal, yet personal, accessible, yet confounding at the same time. Barney's work is not defined by a tight narrative with one fixed solution. Nor does it have the feeling of random scribblings devoid of meaning, attempting to provoke like many contemporary artists. There is nothing wasted here - every detail matters. At every juncture, Spector goes one step further; she takes a scrap of detail and lingers, letting its implications emanate outward like the rings in a pond from a tiny pebble hitting the surface. The very struggle of creation is what is at stake here. While most contemporary art is no more than shrill complaints about current events like war, racism, or homophobia, Barney soars above them all and deals with universal, timeless issues. The second part of this book is an "encyclopedia" of sorts, which dovetails nicely with Spector's work. Like her essay, it delves deeper into specific elements of the Cycle, without being an "on the nose" explanation. The third part of the book is the visual meat of the book. Organized in the five parts of the cycle, it is a collection of photos, drawings, sculptures, images and articles that relate to the Cycle. None of the exhibits are labeled with text, which allows the viewer/reader to experience them in order, without text which might block the direction the mind can travel. It is a veritable scrapbook, with everything from scenes from the films, to Polaroids that inspired some of the art. It is nicely tabbed by section, and the quality of the paper and images is outstanding. The fourth part of the book is the text that is an index of part three, explaining exactly

what each visual element is. This is very useful and informative and the decision to keep this separate from section three is a good one. The final part of the book is a series of articles from interviews with Matthew Barney's various collaborators. For anyone that has seen these films and wondered "what is it like working on one of these strange films?" this is the most rewarding section. An artist dresses you up like a 1950s Hollywood starlet in silky lingerie, puts you under a table, has you make designs with grapes that come out of your strange shoe - what is that like? The answer is here. The only thing I would have liked to have understood better is the business side of it all; an interview with Barbara Gladstone who helped finance the project would have been very interesting to me. This book is a prized possession, a piece of art itself. Like no other exhibition art book, this book is like owning a piece of the *Cremaster Cycle*. Other than owning one of the limited edition Laserdisc copies of the *Cycle*, this is the best way to "collect" Barney's work. This book has greatly deepened my understanding of all art, not just that of Matthew Barney. Nancy Spector is a art genius herself for recognizing and promoting the deep talent of Matthew Barney. Reading her essay may even make you ask yourself serious questions about your own life.

If you have been lucky enough to see the 5 *Creamaster* films I'm sure that you were left as awestruck as I was. This book is the perfect source to try and make some sort of meaning out of all the minutia. As twisted /demented as Barney's work appears, you can see his genius unfolding before your very eyes.

Excellent quality. A truly beautiful book. The images inside are not a complete catalog of the work but that's okay with me.

I'm so pleased with Matthew Barney's *Cremaster Cycle* book. I was lucky enough to see this show in New York, it was truly a life changing experience.

Whether you like Barney or not, this book made for the Guggenheim solo exhibition in 2002 have lot of meat. 500 pages covering his *Cremaster* series (1,2,3), with numerous photograph stills of his films, reference photos, and his works. Approximately, 340 works are shown. The book quality is very good (did not quite match the creativity of Damien Hirst's *I want to spend the rest...book*), but nevertheless, this book will serve as Barney's important documentation.

Practically an encyclopedia on Barney's *Cremaster Cycle*. This is a huge book. Fascinating.

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