

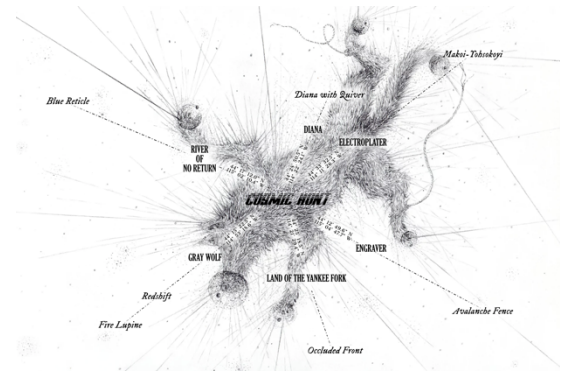
Matthew Barney

*Cosmic Hunt*

Live from 12 September 2020

This September Matthew Barney presents the online project *Cosmic Hunt*, featuring seven new drawings extending from the artist's acclaimed body of work *Redoubt*. The works and virtual site, mark the latest stage of an ongoing project that centres on the narratives developed within Barney's 2018 feature-length film of the same title. The film, cast sculptures and electroplated engravings of *Redoubt* will also be the subject of an extensive presentation at the Hayward Gallery, London, in 2021.

Bridging material and virtual worlds, Barney's digital foray takes the form of an annotated map – a constellation in the form of a wolf. The map's labels and indices create a portal to different chapters within the *Redoubt* narrative, including the new drawings made specifically for the *Cosmic Hunt* project. These finely detailed images in graphite and gouache on coloured paper render landscapes and characters from the film, as well as video clips and landscape coordinates, offering a view into the broader narrative arc of the film.



The collective title of the project derives from a family of cognate tales known as the 'cosmic hunt myths.' This widespread narrative – disseminated across many cultures with small variations – describes the pursuit of a large animal, whom through its wounding or death is transformed into a constellation in the night sky. In the same way, *Redoubt* maps cosmic questions onto the story of the wolf hunt that occupies a central position in the film.

*Redoubt* was filmed in the rugged Sawtooth Mountains of central Idaho near where the artist grew up – a region where wolves were reintroduced in 1995, and have since been relisted for legal hunting. *Redoubt* transposes the ancient myth of Diana and Actaeon into this north American wilderness. The story of the hunter Actaeon – who spied on the goddess Diana and was punished for his transgression – is refracted into wordless choreography. Themes of metamorphosis, humanity's primal relationship with animals and the environment, and the alchemical nature of artistic creation play out within landscapes of epic remoteness and beauty. As in previous works, Barney merges ancient legend with the politics of modern America – whether the tension between the individual and state, the right to bear arms, or the ideologies of far-right survivalist sects.

The film has given rise to a variety of sculptural and drawn works, both those that originated within the action of the film, and those postdating it. *Redoubt* has continued to expand and evolve in the style of a mythic cycle, of which the latest manifestation is the group of seven drawings at the heart of the *Cosmic Hunt* project. In these drawings, characters and settings from the film have been isolated on a small-scale and rendered in intimate detail. The different hues of the paper, matched in the works' polymer frames – magenta, ochre, blue and orange – evoke the changing skies, forest fires and spectrums of the Idaho wilderness. Certain works draw directly from the Greco-Roman myth underlying *Redoubt*. *Diana with Quiver* alludes to the vengeful goddess, punisher of Actaeon, through the image of an androgynous character – a medieval knight or saintly crusader – who appears to be metamorphosing into a network of cracks or scales. Within this mesh of delicate lines extending over the image, chainmail seemingly transmutes into military camouflage. *Avalanche Fence* depicts the nets and buttresses of an avalanche barrier on a mountainside on a ground of vivid magenta. The image is interrupted and overlaid by a chevron of pink gouache – a lacuna that suggests both an avalanche (a deluge obliterating what lies beneath) and an angular symbol.

The Idaho landscape is evoked elsewhere in *Makoi-Yohsokoyi* ('wolf trail' in the native Blackfoot language of the American Northwest, and the origin myth of the Milky Way), where the evocation of mountain terrain again folds together with an emblematic shape – here against a ground of cool nocturnal blue. Semblances of maps and constellations thread through several of the works, reflecting in miniature the macrocosmic scheme – the map – within which Barney has presented the entire group. The faint woodland scene in *Blue Reticle* is overlaid by two perpendicular axes that might equally be compass points or the sights of a hunter's gun; while the wolf in *Redshift* appears to be trapped within, or impaled by, the lines of the constellation that it represents.

The superstructure of Barney's project is the virtual map, which acts as a gateway to the *Cosmic Hunt* drawings and a means of navigating the broader thematic sweep of *Redoubt*. Scattered coordinates and character names chart specific loci and video clips revealing the film's settings and characters. Like the film itself, the map expresses an interplay between cosmic vastness and the small-scale or incidental – furthering Barney's longstanding preoccupation with landscape as both setting and subject.

Matthew Barney (b. 1967) is one of America's most significant contemporary artists. Over the past two decades he has evolved a practice that encompasses filmmaking, performance, drawing, painting, and sculpture. *Redoubt* was first presented at the Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven, in 2019 (accompanied by an extensive new publication), and subsequently travelling to UCCA Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing in 2019 – marking the artist's first solo exhibition in China. In 2021, *Redoubt* will be the subject of a solo exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, London. Major presentations in recent years include *River of Fundament*, Haus der Kunst, Munich (2014), touring to the Museum of Old and New Art, Hobart, Tasmania (2014) and The Geffen Contemporary at MOCA Los Angeles (2015); *Subliming Vessel: The Drawings of Matthew Barney*, The Morgan Library & Museum, New York (2013), and the Bibliothèque nationale de France (2013-2014). In 2002, Barney's acclaimed series *The Cremaster Cycle* (1994-2002), was presented as a solo exhibition organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York: travelling to Museum Ludwig, Cologne (2002); Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2002); and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2003). Over the course of his career he has received numerous awards, including the Aperto prize at the 1993 Venice Biennale and the 1996 Hugo Boss Award. The artist lives and works in New York.

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