

Galerie Nathalie Obadia
3, rue du Cloître Saint-Merri 75004 Paris
tel:+33.(0)1.42.74.67.68 fax:+33.(0).1.42.74.68.66
info@galerie-obadia.com / www.galerie-obadia.com

BARRY X BALL

MATTHEW BARNEY / BARRY X BALL
DUAL – DUAL PORTRAIT

MARCH 17TH – MAY 16TH, 2012



Matthew Barney / Barry X Ball Dual-Dual Portrait, 2000-2009
*Italian Portoro Marble, Portuguese Gold Marble, stainless steel,
various other metals stone. stone / shaft assemblies: each 139.7 x
13.3 x 20.3 cm, stone figures: each 55.9 x 13.3 x 20.3 cm.*

On the occasion of its first collaboration with Barry X Ball, Galerie Nathalie Obadia is delighted to present *Matthew Barney / Barry X Ball Dual-Dual Portrait*, a new installation by this American artist, in its Parisian gallery space.

After the critical success of his exhibition at Ca'Rezzonico in Venice last summer, the artist will be showing a composition of great technical virtuosity: a Janus-like double portrait of himself and fellow artist Matthew Barney.

In the spirit of his most emblematic pieces, Barry X Ball thus continues his work on a contemporary reinterpretation of historical sculpture, taking as his models art-world personalities, in an effort to offer a total sensory experience, getting the viewer to oscillate between the tension of the sublime and the possibility of the grotesque.

Matthew Barney / Barry X Ball Dual-Dual Portrait is the sixth and last piece in a series of installations dedicated to the famous American artist, initiated in June 2000, when Matthew Barney was invited by Barry X Ball to pose for him. Although all of Ball's heads have been carved from stone, his portrait project has gone through many formal and conceptual changes, since its inception: the completed works vary greatly in form, scale, and materials. The Matthew Barney installations are the largest, most-complex portrait sculptures Barry X Ball has realized.

« *I have chosen to work primarily stone because it's a déclassé material* », explains Barry X Ball, « *because of its proven permanence, because of its glorious history as a sculpture material, because it resists my every effort to control it, because its timeless nature contrasts with the of-the-moment high-tech means I utilize to shape it, because it is a challenge to make something of it more beautiful than it is in its natural state.* »

While remaining true to his formal approach, with *Matthew Barney / Barry X Ball Dual-Dual Portrait*, Barry X Ball pushes back the limits of his practice by creating a striking sculpted piece in two tones. There is an extreme tension between the intimacy of the conversation and the repulsion and terror inspired by the javelin tearing the flesh of the truncated busts: between the bulk of the marble and the precise refinement of the delicately chiselled flesh of the two men, inspired by Italian Mannerist ceremonial armour.

The artist, who composes titles for his works in the form of prose poems, shaping his sentences as he models his sculptural portraits, offers the viewer a description - sometimes clinical, sometimes poetic - of his installation :

This work is the most recent example of the exotic-stone portraits that have occupied me for the last 15 years. It was realized through a complex technical process incorporating photography, life-casting, Forton-plaster and clay hand-modeling, 3-dimensional digitization (laser-scanning), digital modeling, computer-controlled stone milling, and hundreds of hours of hand stone carving / polishing. The resultant sculpture pays reverent homage to its historical antecedents. I hope it is also completely new.

The installation incorporates paired exotic marble figures, stainless steel impalement shafts, delicate web-like rigging, and specific lighting. With the figures' violently-penetrated labial / vulval appendages hovering above a floor-shadow rosette, a subtle bi-sexual interplay is established. The interpenetrating radiating cable funnels of the twin martyrs ("Saints Barry and Matthew [Ball and Barney] in Ecstasy") are modeled on both Gothic pendentive vaulting and the Brooklyn Bridge suspension system. While projecting a singular, excruciating intensity, a surreal stillness, verging on the sinister, suffuses the hyper-detailed doubled double figures. Their effusive bas-relief shrink-wrapped scarification, composed of fanciful decorative elements, animal forms, religious symbols (Islamic, Jewish, and Christian), escutcheons, and dome-like rivets, reflects a world of influences and lends a bi-millennial retrospective sweep to the work, intended as a conceptual / technical tour de force. The work's complexity is echoed in its expansive, clinically-poetic title.

Barry X Ball, february 2012.

paired, mirrored, flayed, javelin-impaled, cable-delineated-pendentive-funnel-suspended, squid-like, priapic / labio-vulval, Janusian meta-portrait lozenges, in turn pairing Matthew Barney, with eyes alternately open and closed, and the artist, in two guises: screaming and 'defaced'-in-the-style-of-a-melting-Chinese-Scholars'-Rock (with said disfigurement contained in a symmetrically-bordered peel escutcheon),
with the composite figures richly embossed, in a manner reminiscent of late-Renaissance Milanese parade armor, with a cornucopia of silhouetted motifs: Abrahamic ecclesiastical symbols, animals, decorative flourishes, and protuberant, warty, half-spheres,
one in subtly-figured, richly-colored Portuguese Gold Marble; the other in Italian Portoro Marble, variegated black, electrically-laced with orange and white veins,
with differing surface treatments keyed to the corresponding swag-draped corporeal flay strata: a glistening sheen for the splayed entrails, miniature horizontal flutes for the mid-level viscera, and gnarled, ridged, sfumato-esque soft-focus ornamental relief for the epidermis,
with eyes, oral features, and the mutilated face gleaming, respectively, with a moist, lachrymal / salivary / mucosal polish,
with mannered, attenuated, crown-like cranium-top shatter-burst exit-wounds

2000 – 2009

Italian Portoro Marble, Portuguese Gold Marble, stainless steel, various other metals
stone / shaft assemblies: each 55 x 5-1/4 x 8 inches

(each 139.7 x 13.3 x 20.3 centimeters)

stone figures: each 22 x 5-1/4 x 8 inches

(each 55.9 x 13.3 x 20.3 centimeters)

BARRY X BALL

Born 1955, Pasadena, California.
Lives and works in New York.

UPCOMING

2012 Matthew Barney / BXB Dual-Dual Portrait at Galerie Nathalie Obadia
Solo show of work by the artist in the collection of Thomas Olbricht.
Monograph published by Radius Books, Santa Fe, NM.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS (Selection, since 2004)

2011 Portraits and Masterpieces, Ca' Rezzonico (In conjunction with the 54th International Art Exhibition— Venice Biennale)
2009 Salon 94 Freemans, New York.
2008 De Pury & Luxembourg, Zurich.
2007 SITE Santa Fe, Santa Fe, New Mexico.
Galleria Michela Rizzo, Venice.
2004 PS1 / MoMA Contemporary Art Center, New York.
Eglise des Jacobins. Printemps de Septembre, Toulouse, France.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS (Selection, since 2004)

2011 The FLAG Art Foundation, Art2, New York.
Martos Gallery. The 2011 Bridgehampton Biennial, New York
Curated by Bob Nickas.
2010 Here and Now, The Civic Archaeological Museum of Bologna, Bologna
Lebenslust und Totentanz, Krems, Kunsthalle Krems, Austria.
Omaggio a Giuseppe Panza di Biumo, Museo Cantonale d'Arte, Lugano, Switzerland
Barry X Ball, Huma Bhabha, Jon Kessler, Salon 94 Freemans, New York
Passion Fruits Picked from the Olbricht Collection, Berlin. Me Collectors Room Berlin
Ultramegalore: Fashion Icon Testimony. Modemuseum Hasselt, Belgium
2009 Every Revolution is a Roll of the Dice. Paula Cooper Gallery, New York
2008 Beijing Today Art Museum, Traveling to Shanghai Duolun Museum of
Modern Art, Shanghai; Jinse Gallery, Chongqing
An Exhibition of Gallery Artists. Galleria Michela Rizzo, Venice
Carlo Mollino, Casa Del Sole, With New Work By Barry X Ball. Salon 94, New York
2007 Every Revolution is a Roll of the Dice, Marfa. Ballroom Marfa, Texas
To be continued.... Magasin 3 Stockholm Konsthall, Stockholm
The Maramotti Collection, Reggio Emilia, Italy.
2006 The Gold Standard. PS1 / MoMA Contemporary Art Center, New York
The Matthew Barney Show. Bar of Contemporary Art, San Francisco
2004 Minimal to the Max: The Brownstone Collection. Norton Museum of Art, Palm Beach