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SCENE

Matthew Barney Comes to the Biennial

The acclaimed avant-garde filmmaker will screen his latest movie in Denver on July 18.

BY SPENCER CAMPBELL

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—A film still from "River Of Fundament"; Courtesy of Chris Winget



If interpreting the paintings of Clyfford Still is like deciphering geometry, Matthew Barney's films may be more like trying to understand quantum mechanics. "Matthew Barney makes Clyfford Still seem easy," says Dean Sobel, director of Denver's Clyfford Still Museum, which, together with the Denver Art Museum, will screen Barney's *River of Fundament* at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House on July 18 during this year's Biennial of the Americas. Barney's five avant-garde Cremaster movies (1994 to 2002) led the *New York Times* to crown him "the most important American artist of his generation" in 1999. *River of Fundament*, his follow-up, is five hours and 17 minutes long (not counting two intermissions) and includes a Norman Mailer character climbing into the body of a disemboweled cow.

There isn't much of a narrative. There is, however, a visually complex layering of images and media that tends to evoke a strong emotional response in audiences. Since debuting at the Brooklyn Academy of Music in February 2014, the film has been screened only twice domestically, in Detroit and Los Angeles. Its novelty makes it a perfect fit for Denver's Biennial of the Americas (July 14 through August 30). Although there will be newer attractions at the 2015 festival, such as installations from Mexican artists Erick Meyenberg and Marcela Armas, *River of Fundament* is a rare breed of evocative art Denver doesn't get to see every year (or even every two years).

MATTHEW BARNEY, RIVER OF FUNDAMENT, CLYFFORD STILL MUSEUM, NORMAN MAILER, ELLIE CAULKINS OPERA HOUSE

