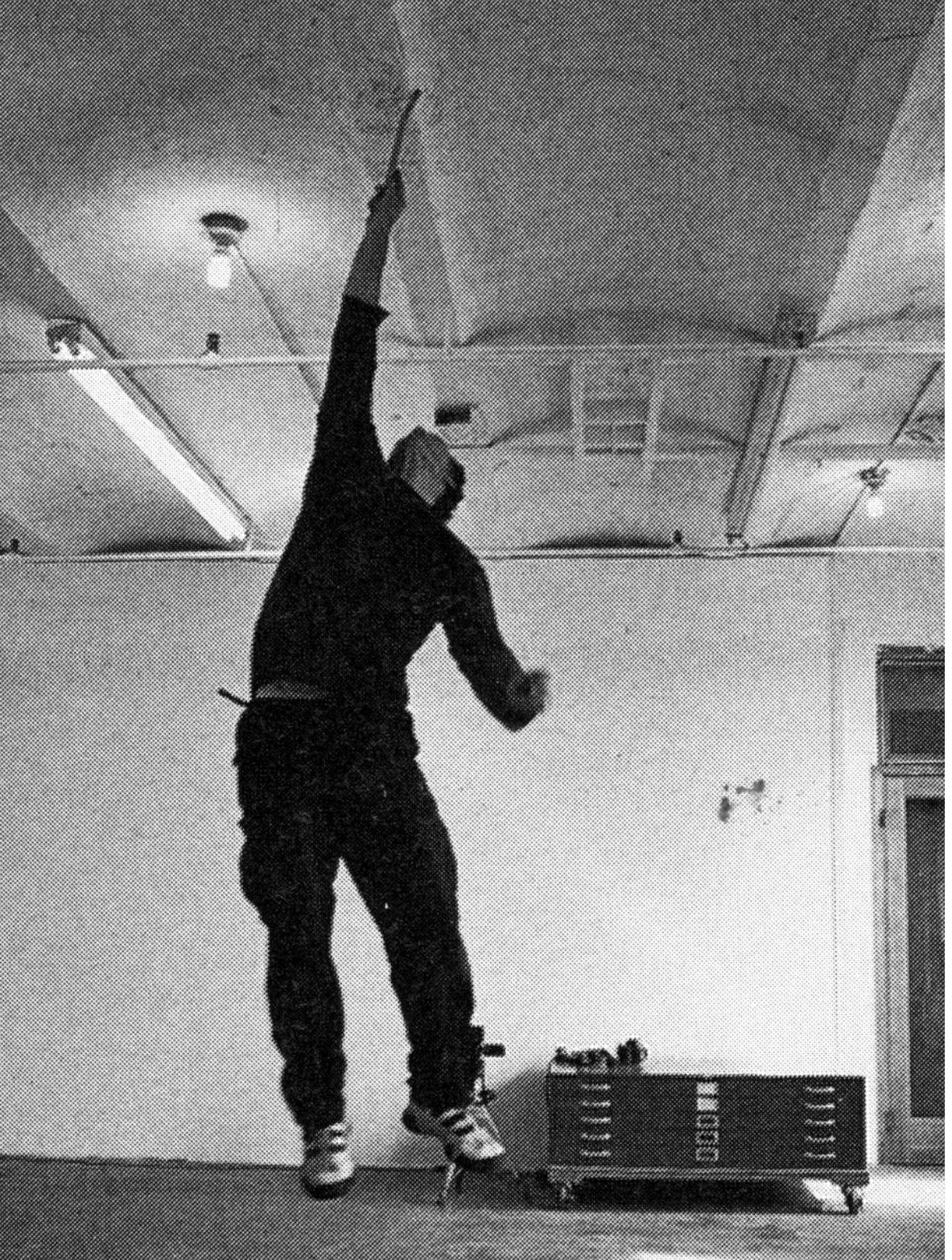


Carmen **WINANT**

# *The Artist Is the Athlete*

## INVESTIGATING PRACTICE IN MATTHEW BARNEY'S *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6*

## *Introduction*

PICTURE THIS: IN A SMALL WHITE ROOM BELOW THE YALE University gymnasium, an undergraduate named Matthew Barney set up several video cameras on tripods. Wearing a loose gray tee shirt, sneakers, and worn-in jeans, the twenty year old is momentarily suspended on a ramp that leans steeply against the wall. Gripping an elongated drawing tool in his right hand, he forcibly strains against the self-imposed harness system that pulls him back, reaching toward the far wall with the weight of his body. In some attempts, he will successfully make his mark; in others, he'll fall just short. This scene, equally desperate, fleeting, and captivating, constitutes *DRAWING RESTRAINT 2*, one of the six studio experiments made by the artist between 1987 and 1989. This essay will investigate the resonance of athletic experience in those early studio projects, which established the young Barney as an international art-world sensation, and will contend that recognizing the specific and paradoxical ritual of practice—rather than the broader strokes of performance—inform a deeper understanding of these works.

"Practice" can be a generic term carrying different meanings depending on the context and field of endeavor; most germane here are art practice and athletic practice. For a visual artist, the term "practice" may encompass both an activity undertaken to develop one's

mastery and the process of actually creating and completing a piece intended for an audience or market. In this sense, an artist's product or performance may not be fully distinguishable from his or her practice itself.[1]

In contrast, within the realm of athletics the distinction between practice and performance is more clearly delineated in accordance with the formal definitions. Practice is the repetition of action in order to improve a skill, presumably for the purposes of a singular end goal; the etymology of the word refers to being *fit* for action. A performance, in contrast, is the action itself. In particular, performance is often defined as an action that is executed before an audience. Understanding the difference between practice and performance becomes essential in interpreting references to athletic experience—whether such references are expressed through art, scholarly prose, or sports journalism. The difference is also germane to this essay, which will interrogate the ways the early work of Matthew Barney is informed by this distinction.

There is no shortage of scholarship emphasizing Barney's personal history as a star athlete. However, much of this critical reception has defaulted to a sensationalized reading of his history, neglecting the specificity and centrality of practice. For example, in analyzing the influence of athleticism in his work, in 2007 in *ArtUS*,[2] Mike Rogers described Barney as "a football-playing jock", echoing David Bonetti's 1991 review of Barney's San Francisco Museum of Modern Art exhibition for the *San Francisco Examiner*, which was titled: "This Kid's Just a Jock."[3] Even if such references is tongue in cheek, in *titling* their essays and reviews so flippantly these critics reduced readers' expectations of the work, and flattened the subtle meaning Barney's connection to athletics might hold.

In Barney's interview with Calvin Tompkins for the latter's 2003 *New Yorker* profile ("His Body, Himself"), Barney hinted at the centrality of practice or rehearsal to his artistic process. Explaining the apparatus used in *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6*, he said: "It was a very natural segue out of the only thing I knew, which was the training ritual of athletics."[4] Such comments reinforce the idea that the repetition and physicality of practice—rather than the bravado of the big game—was Barney's true site of exploration. For the most part, however, Tompkins's article paid little or no attention to the distinction between athletic practice and performance.

It is easy to see where and how this disjunct may have occurred. The cultural discourse and visual representation of sports tend to be reduced to that which we see: performance, competition, and physical prowess. The individual athlete competing before crowds of spectators readily assumes the trappings of hero status. The spectator's presence legitimates the athlete's value. As Classics scholar Daniel A. Dombrowski writes, "Athletics is in some way larger than life because it is so public."[5]

Jeff Koons famously critiqued the cultural branding of the athlete-as-savior in his 1985 appropriation of the Nike poster of NBA star Moses Malone as the biblical Moses, parting a red sea of basketballs *(fig. 1)*. Nike's more recent 2010 ad campaign pictures current NBA star LeBron James *(fig. 2)*; floating within a dense field of recessive black space, his muscular arms spread wide and head thrown back in exaltation, the pose insinuated both victory and crucifixion. These two advertisements for the same brand, the former a direct appropriation and the latter a straight commercial product, are separated by twenty-five years. However, both market a lone athletic superstar as a savior, pictured in a moment of exaggerated glory. Though both appear in full uniform, Malone and James are decontextualized from any hint of the court or their teammates.

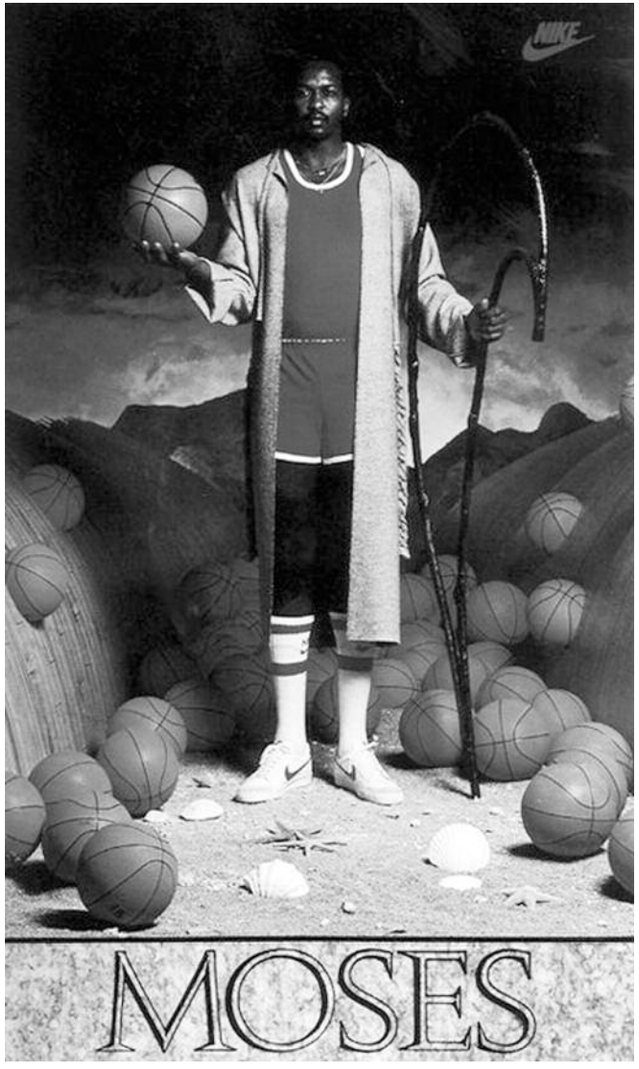



FIGURE 1—*Jeff Koons,* Moses, *1985*

FIGURE 2—*Nike ad featuring NBA star player LeBron James, 2007*

The theatricality inherent to Malone's direct pose and stage-set environment allow for an easy parody, while the contemporary LeBron James advertisement is much more reductive and far slicker, refusing didacticism and camp and thereby achieving a more subtle effect. Both ads are clever in their selective use of text; the 1985 ad reads only "Moses," while the 2007 ad reads "We are all witnesses," affirming that personal success is the greatest reward even for the team player, and that performance, above all, needs to be *seen* in order to be qualified.

## *The Relationship of Practice to Performance*

*It was football that he lived for.*

—MATTHEW BARNEY'S MOTHER, MARSHA GIBNEY[6]

ONE FACT IS FOUNDATIONAL TO UNDERSTANDING ATHLETIC experience: athletes generally spend only rare moments in competition; close to 99 percent of their time is devoted to practice.[7] How and when does this practice take shape? What trace does it leave, and can it exist for its own sake? Abandon the spectator's view of performance—a few moments of fleeting theater. Bearing Matthew Barney in mind, focus the lens instead on the unseen: the torrent of invisible self-regulation that constitutes practice.

The great anti-performance, athletic practice denies not only an audience but also the binary terms of winning and losing. It is comprised of thousands of private hours, repeating often-grueling tests to build strength, skill, and endurance. Unlike the Big Game, during which the athlete confronts an opponent and at which failure and success are measured by performance, practice requires that the athlete confront his or her own inadequacies in the attempt to patch, to strengthen, to move toward (but quite never reach) realized potential. Physically and psychologically, athletic life is a contemporary Sisyphean myth: less involved with the Big Game than with its infinite rehearsal.[8]

Referring to "training" alone can still miss the specific psychic experience of practice for the athlete. In high-level athletics, a divide exists between the rituals and expectations of practice and those of training. Professional athletes employ two guides: a coach whose job includes inspiring their athlete through a grueling workout, and a "trainer" whose sole role is to build trainees' muscular strength and agility through a serious of repetitive weightlifting, resistance training, and isometric exercises. While falling under the umbrella of "practice," training must be regarded as its own distinct regimen. While the roles of "trainer" and "coach" are often conflated in public perception (see: every popular football movie ever made), these figures play distinct parts in an athlete's preparation for competition. The coach oversees practice, encouraging the players' drive to win. The trainer presents physical challenges that can be extreme, but the psychological dimensions are minimal—only a willingness to push, pull, lift, and strain is required. Trainers prefer a mindless body willing to resist its own better instincts.

Training is designed to produce controlled physical strain through a process that is appropriately called progressive overload, micro-tearing, or micro-trauma. Following the creation of thousands of small tears in muscle fiber, new muscle cells form inside these tiny crevices, creating larger, denser, more capable and explosive areas. Weightlifters, for example, often refer to their practice as "sculpting"—a deliberate maneuvering of the body's ability to re-form itself between the rips and rivers.[9]

## *Pain and Pleasure in Athletic Practice*

THE INVESTIGATION OF A RITUAL INVOLVING SELF-INDUCED bodily pain demands a consideration of its relationship to pleasure, desire, and masochism itself. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*,

Sigmund Freud situated the death drive in direct opposition to Eros (also known as the pleasure drive), the need for survival and sex. Freud identified masochistic behavior as the manifestation of the death drive; it is the act of turning on one's own ego, not only to deny the self pleasure, but—mostly important to my argument—to insist on the repetition of that trauma. Masochism by definition can, and must, be enacted over and over. It is this repetitive compulsion that is "more primitive, more elementary, more instinctual than the pleasure principle which it over-rides," writes Freud.[10] Masochism thus cannot exist as an accident, even a favorable one; it is a premeditated act, as deliberate as it is compulsory.

Gilles Deleuze also considers the phenomenon of repetition in direct relationship to pleasure within the death drive. In *Coldness and Cruelty* he describes the masochist as an "obsessive" at heart and considers ritualized repetition—and its relationship to anticipation—essential to the masochist. "The masochist," Deleuze writes, "is not a strange being who finds pleasure in pain… for him, pain, punishment, or humiliation are necessary prerequisites to obtaining gratification.… Formally speaking, masochism is a state of waiting…in its pure form."[11] Pleasure and repetition exchange roles as they become harnessed to one another; pleasure is not sought through repetition, it *is* repetition. "Beneath masochism," Deleuze furthers, "repetition runs wild and becomes independent of all previous pleasure."[12] Thus the ineffable fury of anticipation, filled with longing, desire, and hurt engenders its own meaningful practice.[13]

Practice, then, is by nature paradoxical, full of both aspiration and inadequacy.[14] It involves strengthening by way of repeatedly encountering weakness in oneself. In the case of daily physical practice, it is also strengthening by way of regular self-inflicted bodily pain and actual self-harm, unseen at the molecular level. Yet practice is rich with desire, pleasure, and potential. All of this leaves a deep mark on the body and psyche. Practice is by no means the performance, but here it may be understood as the biggest game of all.

## *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6: A View through the Lens of Practice*

THIS TEXT CONSIDERS ATHLETIC PRACTICE THROUGH NUMBER OF interrelated dimensions: the function of practice as anti-performance; kinesthetic language; aspiration and inadequacy; repeated, self-inflicted, and anti-climactic pain; and the paradoxical experience of practice. This section will apply these concepts to a fresh reading of *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1*—one that suggests Barney is working out, and drawing on, key aspects of his bodily and psychological experience of practice, and that this matters for our understanding of the work.

In creating *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6*, Barney borrowed extensively not only from the idea of practice but also directly from its kinesthetic language and technology (in this case, for football). As previously mentioned, football practice rarely consists of rehearsals of the game itself. Rather, it most often involves repetitive sprints (aptly called "suicides") and the use of restraining devices or blocking sleds against which to hurl one's body. Unlike the conflation of practice and performance within art, there can be no question of the difference between the two in athletics, as there is often little resemblance. The stock image of football players at practice *(fig. 3)* bears an uncanny resemblance to Barney's studio experiments—notably in the instances of constraint and gravity, as well as the literal apparatuses.

For any athlete—but concretely for a football player—to draw from practice is to draw from an engagement with restraint. As stills from *DRAWING RESTRAINT 5* and *1* illustrate *(figs. 4 and 5)*, the studio actions literally mime the kinesthetic and technological rituals of prac-

FIGURE 3 (TOP)—*Football practice*

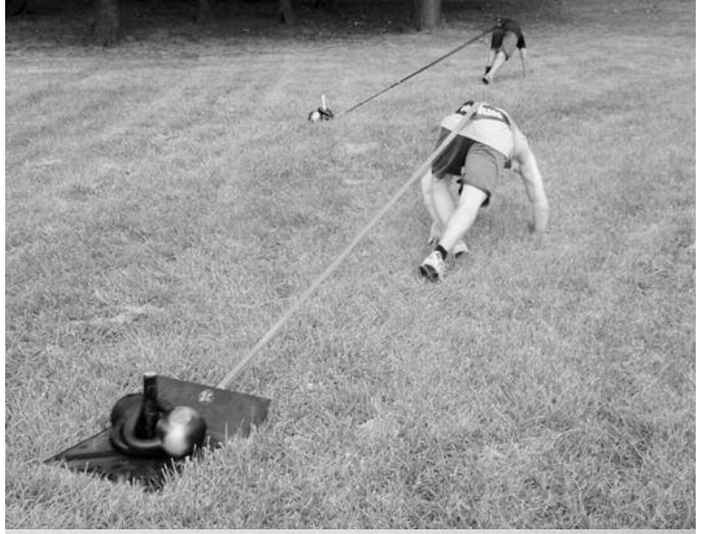
FIGURES 4 AND 5—*Matthew Barney,* DRAWING RESTRAINT 5, *1988, and* DRAWING RESTRAINT 1, *1987*

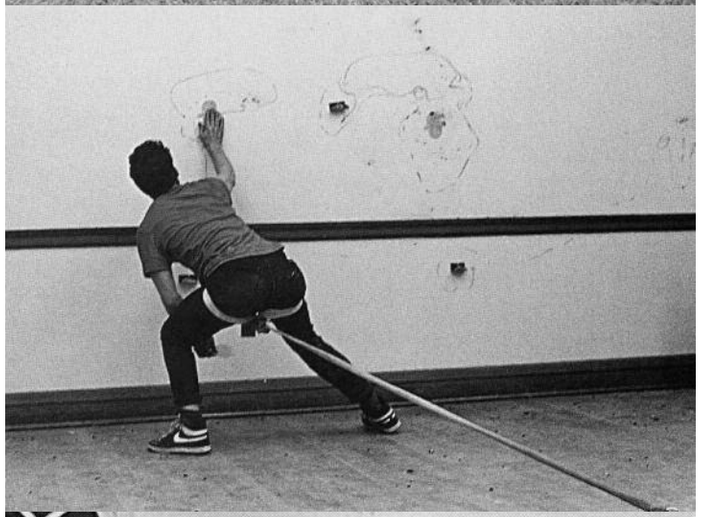
tice on the field of play. In this sense—bearing the football training images in mind—Barney has retraced his own muscle memory, literally drawing practice itself.

Barney tapped into the value of kinesthetic practice to create form and content heavily in his early work, often referring to it in his notes as "hypertrophy" or "bodily intelligence" In 1990, Barney wrote the following journal entry in urgent, scrawling script:

> *Hypertrophy: excessive growth or development of an organ or tissue with the body; the alchemy of the body. The athlete in training tears down isolated groups of muscle fibers. Which in turn become in engorged with blood and lactic acid. The muscle groups begin on a next-day cycle of increased mass and strength.*[15]

Talking to Adam Phillips about *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6*, Barney explained that his ambition during his undergraduate years at Yale was to be a plastic surgeon (he was initially a pre-med student). He considered this parallel to his desire to make art: "It was about wanting to create something."[16] In a similar vein, Barney told Arthur C. Danto in 2006, "I realized that through [athletic] expectations I had an ability to use my body as a tool toward a creative end…my body could belong to a sculpture-making language."[17] Part of what Barney brought from his experience of athletic practice was an early interest in and knowledge about re-shaping the body in a new form.





The constant state of being *almost there*—but falling just short—is fundamental to athletic experience and was formative for Barney's art practice. While Barney cites the "potential for failure" as a driving force in *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6*,[18] it is easy to envision the reverse: that failure enables the constitution of potential. Failure can be a very powerful and disquieting force, about which Barney himself says: "It's as though failure will make the audience feel something they can't bear to feel…provok[ing] something in other people that becomes unbearable."[19] In a reversal of societal and personal expectation, which marks failure as an "unbearable" terminus, Barney has allowed failure to become a point of departure.

There are two kinds of failure present in *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6*: first, it enacts the millions of moments when Barney, like all athletes in practice, strives and falls short of reaching a goal, hitting the target, or *making a mark*.[20] Barney does not re-enact this ceaseless struggle, he literally embodies it.[21] Mike Rogers, one of the most sensitive critics of Barney's work, wrote in 2007 that this "simple act of futility," this endless struggle for its own sake, was among the most compelling aspects of *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6*.[22]

But of course for Matthew Barney the football player, there was a terminus. As critics repeatedly mention, Barney ultimately did not make the cut to play college ball. Calvin Tompkins wrote for the *New Yorker* in 2003 that Barney "had a great arm, but he wasn't quite big enough for the Pac-10 teams he wanted to play for."[23] Lucia Bozzola echoed this in the *New York Times* in 2010, writing that "[While] Barney distinguished himself as the quarterback for his high school's championship-winning football team…he was too short to play college ball."[24] Barney is presumably processing not only the micro moments of failure that comprise practice, but also—by returning to the sport as subject—his ultimate failure to remain a practicing athlete.



As Barney told Adam Phillips in 2010 when asked about leaving the sport behind upon entering college, "There was a melancholy of having to let go."[25] In *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6* he has found a way to relocate this nostalgia from the gymnasium to the studio. This understanding colors *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6* with nostalgia and loss not normally attributed to the work, and ultimately suggesting Barney's longing for the consistently punishing and satisfying ritual of practice.

I have argued that repeatedly inflicting pain on oneself is its own form of practice, steeped in the pleasures and terrors of masochism. The athlete is thus necessarily both the "victim and the executioner" of their own body (to quote Foucault),[26] ultimately self-inflicting the compulsive, internalized, fitful phenomenon of practice. The inherent paradox of practice—wherein the body is systematically weakened in order to become stronger, through the process of muscle being built up through the very exercises that break down its tissue—has received a great deal of critical attention in studies of *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6*. Curator Francesco Bonami referred to this phenomenon as "fanatical ritual."[27] Adam Phillips captured this phenomenon most precisely when he stated to Barney that "constraint," rather than freedom, "is the object of desire" in the *DRAWING RESTRAINT* series.[28] In struggling again and again to reach the back wall with his drawing utensil, Barney depicts the unwavering, nearly violent urge to betray one's own body with the wants of discipline, or at least to reconcile its simultaneous capacity for both pain and pleasure.

Harkening back to his days as an athlete, Barney has referred to a state of detachment from his own body. In 2006 he explained to Arthur Danto, "I came to understand that the competitive athlete has the ability to be simultaneously inside and outside of their body. They have the ability to perceive [their surroundings]…as they move through them."[29]

This simultaneous facility for occupying the body as well as detaching from it may derive in part from Barney's work as a fashion model for J. Crew, Nike, and other retailers *(see, for example, fig. 6)*. It is impossible to ignore the potential influence of his professional modeling career, which was concurrent with the creation of *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6*.[30] While the artist posits that his modeling and his art practice are at odds with one another ("That is as close as I have gotten to being involved with someone else's narrative," he stated to Adam Phillips in 2010[31]), in both activities Barney harnesses his body's potential as a generative tool—it becomes not simply a container, but the product itself. Although this essay does not consider the question deeply, modeling arguably affected Barney's sense of his own sexual desirability, perceived masculinity, and physical body. Barney himself conceded: "I learned a lot from it, which I was able to use later.…It reinforced something."[32] Indeed, the artist's body was youthful, healthy, and handsome. Despite the degree to which the artist strips his work of explicit eroticism, *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6* succeeds in part because of this specific body's desirability. It is likewise worth considering, even briefly, whether a female athlete creating a work about physicality would be received as broodingly, without becoming overtly framed in terms of erotic tropes.

## *The Artist's Strategies: Anti-Performance to Suspension and the Still*

BARNEY'S *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6* SERIES, WHILE OFTEN referred to as "performative" work, is more accurately described as video. (He would most likely say sculpture, though the term "actions" is also used.) This is a critical distinction, as it reflects upon the recurring practice/performance dialectic: Performance, by definition, takes place before an audience. With the exception of *DRAWING*



FIGURE 6—*Nike ad featuring Matthew Barney, 1988*

FIGURE 7—*Matthew Barney,* DRAWING RESTRAINT 6, *2006*

*RESTRAINT 5*, Barney never "enacted" the training ritual for a present viewer; he left only marks, urgent and childlike, as evidence of the action *(fig. 7)*.[33] In fact, to date all of his pieces have been created in private, and shown only as videos and films, or more often—since the videos are very difficult to access—as still images. By exhibiting only the videos (and related stills) of his process, Barney enables his audience to view an invisible thing (practice) without turning it into its opposite (performance), and thereby without compromising its impact. Viewers are thus able to bear witness without any of the melodramatic trappings of spectacle. (Recall the LeBron James Nike ad discussed above, and the centrality of witnesses to performance and heroism.)

In being denied the actual experience first-hand, the viewer may feel removed or frustrated—feeling echoed in the work itself. Barney is dealing in the limits of endurance, both his and ours. As Michael Kimmelman wrote in 2007, "In a sense, he's asking his audience to take a leap, too. It's the perfect sports metaphor."[34] Scholar and curator Robert Storr went so far as to describe Barney's camerawork in all of his videos and films as "repetitive and agonizingly slow."[35] By design, the process of witnessing lacks the excitement and drama of a performance or game; it is forever the anticipation, the refusal, anticlimax.[36]

Barney's strategies for bringing the experience of practice into *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1-6* go beyond the absence of audience and the lack of narrative drama in the videos. For example, there is the conspicuous lack of sound (an element that Barney likewise limits, although not altogether, in his later *CREMASTER Cycle* films[37]). This silence provides a certain suspense, underscoring the solitary and detached, if somehow enthralling, action at the heart of the performance. As a result, Barney's studio experiments create an insurmountable distance between spectator and action, an effect that Francesco Bonami compares to watching a man walk on the moon from a home

television set. The analogy is ripe for comparison: for a work concerning the properties of gravity and suspension, Barney was his only witness in a trial that would later be widely seen *(figs. 8 and 9)*.[38]

Moreover, much like the moon landing, *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6* is most often viewed and considered as a set of still photographs. Whether purposeful or not, by reducing the viewing experience not only to a video playback of a performance but to a still image frozen from that play-back, Barney wholly and successfully strips any remaining performative aspect from the work, creating a memory of a memory. In this strategy of removal, Barney reminds us that the action has already passed.

Deleuze would argue that this strategy of still documentation serves to heighten the masochistic element of *DRAWING RESTRAINT*. In *Coldness and Cruelty*, Deleuze characterized the frozen moment as a contract between viewer and artist that is enacted at the threshold of distance and proximity, alienation and connection, waiting and satisfaction. In photographs of *DRAWING RESTRAINT 6*, Barney's static body itself acts both to describe a body literally suspended in space and to undermine the possibility of a conclusion or arrival.

## DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6 *in Context*

BARNEY COMPLETED *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6* IN 1989, WHEN he was just transitioning away from a life dominated by the intense ritual of athletic practice. I argue that this is central to a reading of his early works. Since that time, Barney has periodically expanded upon his *DRAWING RESTRAINT* series,[39] with projects that are increasingly narrative-based and reflect exponentially higher production value and budgets.[40]

While the series has continued to engage bodily resistance to force, what is most telling are the ways that the subsequent work has



FIGURE 8—*Neil Armstrong walks on the moon, 1969*

FIGURE 9—*Matthew Barney,* DRAWING RESTRAINT 6, *1989*

departed from the initial series. A comparison with 2005's *DRAWING RESTRAINT 10*, *11*, and *12*, which most resemble the initial series, throws into sharp relief the pervasiveness of practice in the early work of the twenty-year-old athlete-turned-artist.[41]

Marking a drastic shift from the earlier private rituals held within his underground studio walls, Barney performed *DRAWING RESTRAINT 10–12* in front of live audiences. These works are no longer about athletic practice and failure; they are, in some way, art performances. The clearest parallels exist between *DRAWING RESTRAINT 6* (1989) and *DRAWING RESTRAINT 10* (2005); indeed, the latter is credited as a literal restaging of the former. *DRAWING RESTRAINT 6*, however, was crude: Barney filmed himself in his small, cluttered studio in the basement of a gym, jumping tirelessly on a mini-trampoline that looks as if it could easily snap under his weight *(fig. 10)*. Nineteen years later, we see Barney in the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, Japan, leaping off a trampoline the size of a room. The striking "glass gallery"[42] *(fig. 11)* in which the action happens seems to promote the exact opposite of invisibility; it is a fishbowl, the artist an entertainer on display.

While a first glance might call a viewer's attention to that which was missing from the earlier work, I am concerned with what is absent in the latter. Simply put, *DRAWING RESTRAINT 10* (like the other later works in the series) lacks the unelaborate rawness that gave the performances of *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6* their arresting quality. The later works cannot contend with the messy, crude negotiation of inadequacy and failure, too distant a memory at this point in the artist's career.

Has Barney become too impressed with his own progress, and the resources that it can attract? Have the pressures of success and the expectations and demands of the art market taken their toll? Is the re-staging a watered-down, overly stylized version of its original? Can the artist ever successfully re-create the boundless determination (or desperation) of the flagship works? It does not seem likely. Like any success story, the compelling part of the narrative—the protagonist's early struggles to come to terms with potential and failure—have passed. The notion that Barney's success has undermined his paradoxical stake in practice perhaps resonates with Francesco Bonami's deprecating description of Barney's public persona as "a tired rock star, oppressed by his public."[43]

A key feature of the early underground experiments, then, is their eager clumsiness. At the time of their creation, the artist was drawing on the kinesthetic and emotionally charged vocabulary of his still-recent experience in athletic practice. The raw vulnerability of failure feeds their effectiveness; it is not the condition of the work, it is the work. By the time Barney was producing later iterations in the *DRAWING RESTRAINT* series, the fear of failure is nowhere to be seen; our artist had finally won his Big Game.

## *The Collapse of Practices, or, The Artist Is the Athlete*

LET US CONSIDER THE WAYS IN WHICH *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6* successfully collapses athletic and artistic practice. As mentioned in the introduction to this essay, practice is an essential aspect not only of athletics but also of art; as noted, art practice is a term that is not dichotomized from exhibition in the way that athletic practice is from sporting events. Barely out of high school when he created the *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6* series, Barney was at a moment in his youth when his libidinal energy had shifted from athletics to art, as his high school dreams of becoming a professional athlete had very recently failed to come to fruition. Significantly, the muscle memory and kinesthetic language Barney brought to his nascent art practice were still rooted in his football practice.

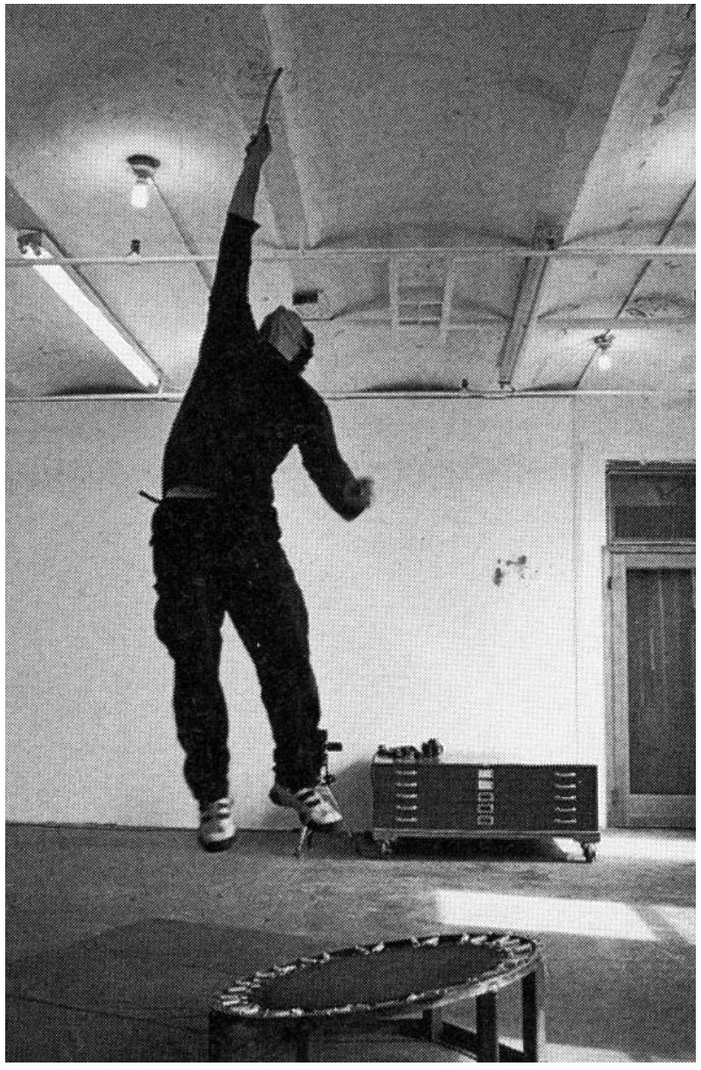


FIGURE 10—*Matthew Barney,* DRAWING RESTRAINT 6, *1989*

FIGURE 11—*Matthew Barney,* DRAWING RESTRAINT 10, *2005*

In viewing *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6* through the lens of practice, Barney's work may be understood not only as the distillation of thousands of hours of ritualized physical practice, but also as a brilliantly executed trick. By using his body as the instrument, he collapses artistic and athletic practice, and to great effect. He has affirmed this idea by describing his body as "belong[ing] to a sculpture-making language."[43] The explosion of his physicality against the restraints on the gallery walls concentrates artistic and athletic matter and energy; the explosion becomes an implosion.[44] Without an understanding of the conceptual centrality of practice to Barney's art, this polysemous reading of the work is nearly impossible.

Moving beyond the ritual of physiological training, practice becomes a rich and instructive theme for artistic exploration, encompassing a paradoxical vocabulary of futility/rehearsal, restraint, solitude, desire, repetition, failure, and profoundly masochistic behavior. Only by engaging with *all* of these aspects of practice was Barney able to create a project with the blunt depth of *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6*. Matthew Barney the young "jock" was not describing practice, he was enacting and becoming it. The result is a unique and deeply arresting psychological metaphor about male anxiety, aspiration, and human physical drives.

In a journal entry from 1990, Barney writes simply in all capital letters: THE ARTIST IS THE ATHLETE. It is not simply that understanding practice can expand our reading of *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6*. The converse is also true: in these works Barney has expanded our understanding of the meaning of practice.



## *Notes*

1 It should also be noted that the meaning of the term "art practice" is rather elastic. For example, Simon Penny describes it as the process by which artists engage with their tools to create the artistic product. (See Simon Penny, "The Virtualization of Art Practice: Body Knowledge and the Engineering Worldview," *Art Journal* 56 no. 3, http://www.jstor.org/stable/777834). The blog "Art Practice as Research" defines visual arts practice as "a form of inquiry… a form of human understanding whose cognitive processes are distributed throughout the various media, languages, and contexts used to make meaning from images and objects; see "Art Practice As Research," accessed February 19, 2011, modified 2011, http://art practiceasresearch.com /topic/content-2/content. Even in the teaching context, which naturally emphasizes the development of skills, the term 'practice' tends to envelope both skill-building exercises and creative production or performance of finished work; see, for example, "UC Berkeley Department of Practice," accessed March 3, 2011, http://art.berkeley.edu/programs/undergraduate/facts.php.

2 Mike Rogers, "Matthew Barney's Drawing Restraint," *ArtUS*, no. 45 (2007), 160.

3 David Bonetti, "This Kid's Just a Jock," *San Francisco Examiner*, December 20, 1991.

4 Adam Phillips and Matthew Barney, "A Conversation," in *Matthew Barney: Prayer Sheet with the Wound and the Nail*. (Schaulager: Basel, 2010), 24.

5 Daniel A. Dombrowski, "Weiss and the Pursuit of Bodily Excellence," in *Contemporary Athletics and Ancient Greek Ideals* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 37.

6 Calvin Tompkins, "His Body, Himself: Matthew Barney's Strange and Passionate Exploration of Gender," *The New Yorker* (January 27, 2003), 52.

7 Practice thus differs substantially from performance in the athletic realm; the labor of practice occurs totally unseen, beyond the space of spectacle. In the case of high school football, a season comprises approximately ten games, each of which includes forty-eight minutes of play (not including time-outs to strategize); even in the highly improbable event that a player were in the game every minute of every game, it would amount to a maximum of about eight hours of play-time per year. A varsity athlete would likely have spent about two hours per day in practice—both in-season and off-season. At roughly ten hours a week, this would come to about 500 hours in a year.

8 In his later *CREMASTER 5*, Barney would depict the pre-performance theater stage as the site of the action.

9 When asked if he considered his body to be a "living sculpture" during the filming of 1977's *Pumping Iron*, Arnold Schwarzenegger replied: "Yes, definitely. Good

bodybuilders have the same mind when it comes to sculpting that a sculptor has."

10 Sigmund Freud, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Middlesex: 1987), 294.

11 Gilles Deluze, *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty* (Zone Books: New York, 1991 reprint), 71.

12 Deleuze, *Coldness and Cruelty*, 120.

13 Foucault writes: "Torture rests on a whole quantitative art of pain. But there is more to it: this production of pain is regulated." See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Vintage Books: New York, 1995), 33–34.

14 Adam Phillips told Barney "Maybe constraint is the point [at which] we could be involved in something paradoxical? See Phillips and Barney, "A Conversation," 19.

15 "Drawing Restraint by Matthew Barney," accessed November 20, 2011, http://www.drawingrestraint.net/#.

16 Barney and Phillips, "A Conversation," 26.

17 Danto, *Blood and Iron*, in 2006, 63.

18 Barney and Phillips, "A Conversation," 26.

19 Ibid.

20 Adam Phillips tells Barney: "potential has a quasi magical quality, an unpredictable consequence…disillusioning because your fantasy about what is possible is so at odds with what happens." Ibid.

21 In regard to the previously mentioned *Paradox of Praxis* piece, Franciss Alys said: "Sometimes making something leads to nothing." Francis Alÿs, "Walks/Paseos," (Mexico City: Museo de Arte Moderno, 1997), 15.

22 Rogers, "Matthew Barney's Drawing Restraint."

23 Tompkins, "His Body, Himself," 52.

24 "Matthew Barney," accessed February 10, 2011, last modified 2010, http://movies.nytimes.com/person/237238/Matthew-Barney/biography.

25 Barney and Phillips, "A Conversation," 23.

26 Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment*, 73.

27 Francisco Bonami, "The Artist As a Young Athlete", *Flash Art* no. 162 1992 (Reprint 2008), 172–73.

28 Barney and Phillips, "A Conversation," 20.

29 Notably, Yuko Hasegawa has asked, "How does one… become to the subject of restraint? The world is not an object of restraint that exists elsewhere, instead the self and other exist as one and there is always the freedom of exchange . . . free to travel between restraint and release" See Yuko Hasegawa and Luc Steels, *Matthew Barney: Drawing Restraint Vol II*, (Takashi Asai: Tokyo, 2005), 7-26.

30 "His looks come straight out of a Riefenstahl [film]" writes Michael Kimmelman for the *New York Times* in 2007, describing Barney's Aryan handsomeness. See Michael Kimmelman, "The Gold Standard," *New York Times*, March 11, 2007.

31 Barney and Phillips, "A Conversation," 41.

32 Informative or not, Barney cannot escape the superficial implications of this early career; for instance, Matthew Collings described Barney's *CREMASTER Cycle* as "sensationalist" and "both giddy and boring, like advertising." See Tompkins, "His Body, Himself," 59.

33 This is not entirely the case. *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1* has been performed on rare occasions.

34 Michael Kimmelman, "The Gold Standard."

35 Tompkins, "His Body, Himself," 56.

36 Again the issue of gender becomes salient in considering this seminal series. *DRAWING RESTRAINT 1–6* takes a specific body—strong, young and male—as its medium in its never ending search for triumph. The series simultaneously enacts and evokes questions about the expectations placed on the male sexual body: What is strength? What is fortitude, and who is assigned that potential? How is masculinity marked? What will be expected in performance? What does it take to go outside one's own body? What provides expectation and enables pleasure?

37 The *CREMASTER Cycle*, which will be touched upon briefly later in this paper, is a series of five non-narrative, lush, and often disturbing films made by Barney throughout the 1990s. Most simply described as being about the process of sexual differentiation (the Cremaster cycle is literally that process in the womb during gestation), they are still widely considered to be Barney's magnum opus.

38 The detached, ethereal moon comparison recalls the unlikely, if suddenly appropriate image of astronaut Alan Shepard putting a gold ball on the moon's surface in 1961 to the applause of the NASA base on earth.

39 The most recent addition, *DRAWING RESTRAINT 18*, was made in 2010.

40 Barney's most recent performance to date, "Khu," took place in Detroit, Michigan, in the fall of 2010; it reportedly cost three million dollars to produce.

41 *DRAWING RESTRAINT 10* was a reenactment of 1989's *DRAWING RESTRAINT 6*, which remained undocumented until 2004. The performance, in which Barney jumps on a room-size trampoline at a 30-degree angle in a class box for 90 minutes, is performed live. *DRAWING RESTRAINT 11*, performed during his survey exhibition in the 21st Century Museum of Contemporary Art in Kanazawa, Japan, Barney ascends a forty-foot high gallery wall three times. He makes a drawing with an elongated drawing tool as he goes. Finally, *DRAWING RESTRAINT 12* was performed in the Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art in Seoul, Korea. The piece also took the form of a steep climb, though in a more narrow area; Barney used the force "gravity" to

help complete the drawing.

42 Neville Wakefield "Matthew Barney: Prayer Sheet with the Wound and the Nail" in *Matthew Barney: Prayer Sheet with the Wound and the Nail*. (Schaulager: Basel, 2010), 40.

43 Bonami, *Young Athlete*, 72.

44 Arthur C. Danto and Matthew Barney, "A Dialogue on Blood and Iron," *Modern Painters*, 2006, 62.

45 Glen Helfand writes to this end: "[Barney's] sculptural and video work meshes the gallery with the locker room, pulling the vocabularies of football fields…into the effete realm of contemporary art." See Glen Helfand, "Fully Pumped for Fame: Artist/Jock Matthew Barney Works Out At SFMOMA," *SF Weekly*, January 22, 1992, 19.