

Hili Perlson, "Matthew Barney draws on a sporting horror story with video installation 'Secondary'," *Wallpaper**, July 7, 2024

Wallpaper*

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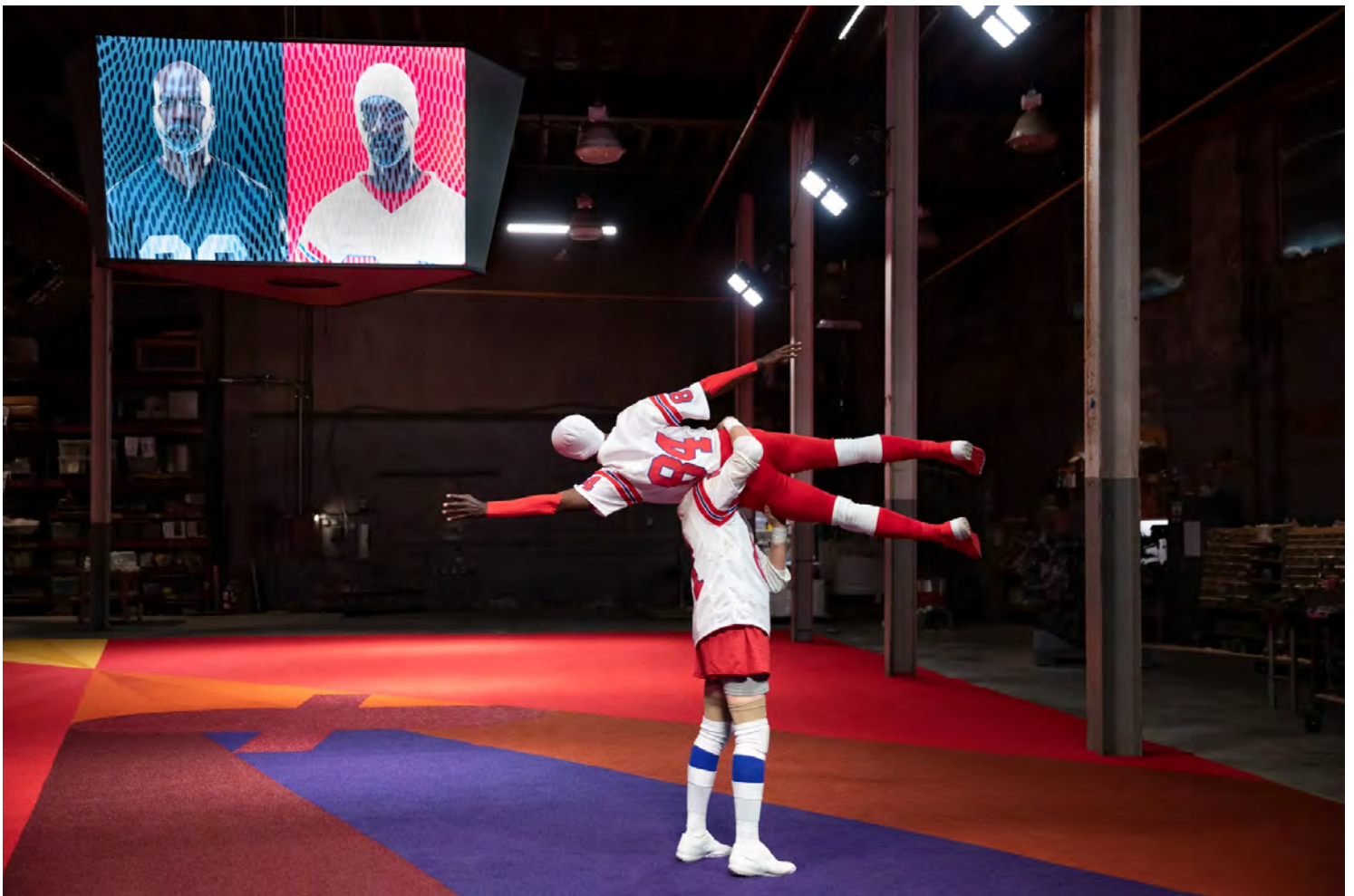
NEWS

Matthew Barney draws on a sporting horror history with video installation 'Secondary'

Matthew Barney revisits a haunting memory of violence and spectacle in his first institutional show in Paris in over a decade

BY HILI PERLSON

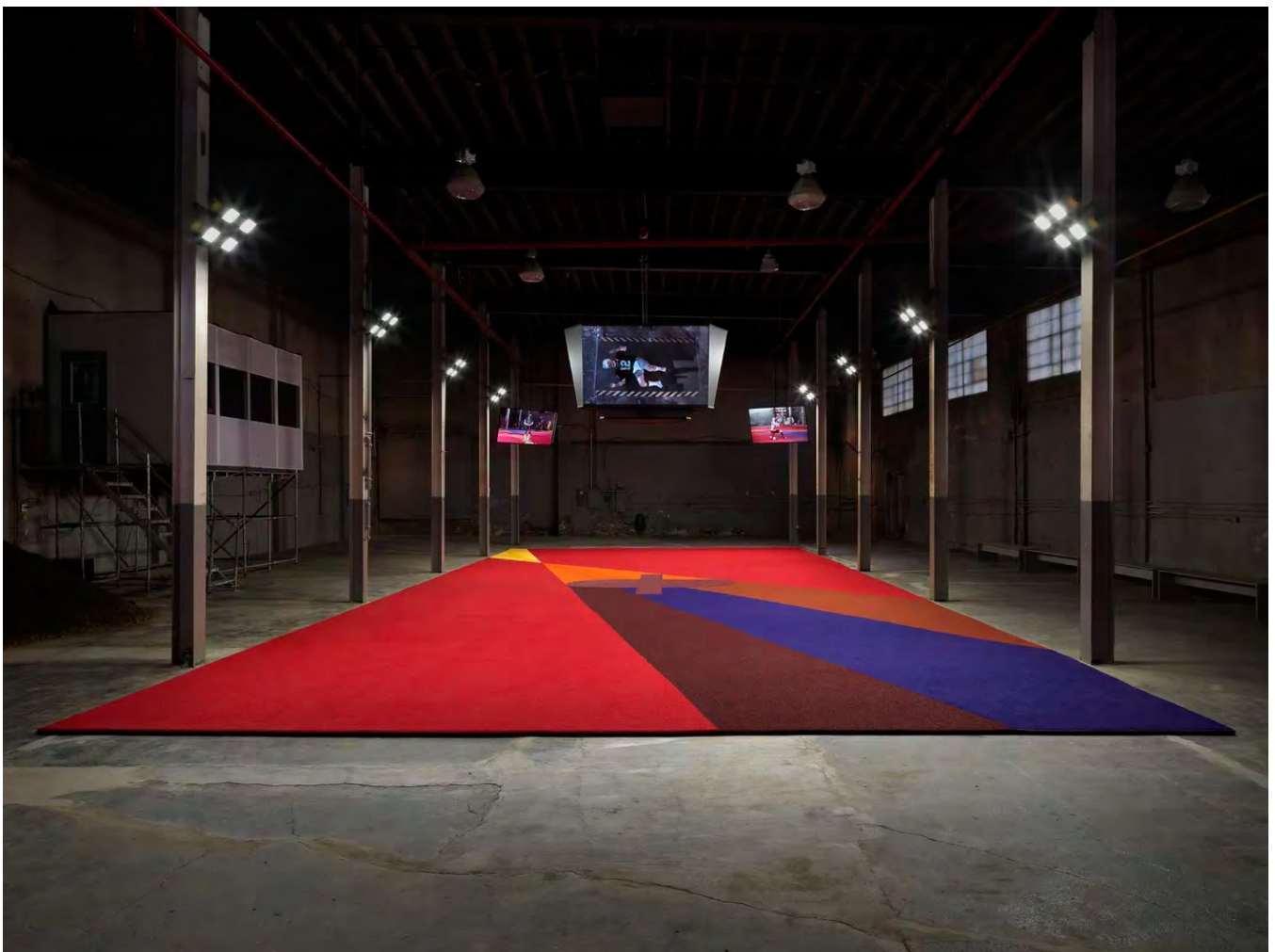
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(Image credit: Julieta Cervantes)

On 12 August 1978, when artist Matthew Barney was 11 years old, he – and a million other spectators across the US – watched the live broadcast of a football game that would remain seared in the collective American memory. Jack Tatum, a defensive back for the Oakland Raiders, delivered an open-field hit on Darryl Stingley, a wide receiver for the New England Patriots. The impact left Stingley paralysed. Slow-motion replays of the collision were broadcast over and over again, imprinting on the viewers' minds with a spectacle of violence and tragedy; the currency of shattered dreams and broken bodies.

Matthew Barney presents 'Secondary'



Matthew Barney, *Secondary*, 2023. Five-channel 4K color video installation with immersive sound Running time: 60 minutes

(Image credit: © Matthew Barney Installation. Photo: Dario Lasagni Courtesy of the artist, Gladstone Gallery, Sadie Coles HQ, Regen Projects, and Galerie Max Hetzler)

Barney, himself a youth league quarterback at the time, is presenting a new body of work in which he unpacks different aspects of that fateful game and its haunting memory. A five-channel video installation titled *Secondary* (2023), shot in Barney's studio, is the centerpiece of an exhibition at the Fondation Cartier in Paris, his first institutional solo show in the French capital in over ten years. The work is also on view at Sadie Coles in London and Regen Projects in LA, as the artist weaves the idea of simultaneity into the work through the broadcast of spectacle around the world.



Matthew Barney, *Secondary*, 2023

(Image credit: © Matthew Barney Production. Still: Julieta Cervantes. Courtesy of the artist, Gladstone Gallery, Sadie Coles HQ, Regen Projects, and Galerie Max Hetzler)

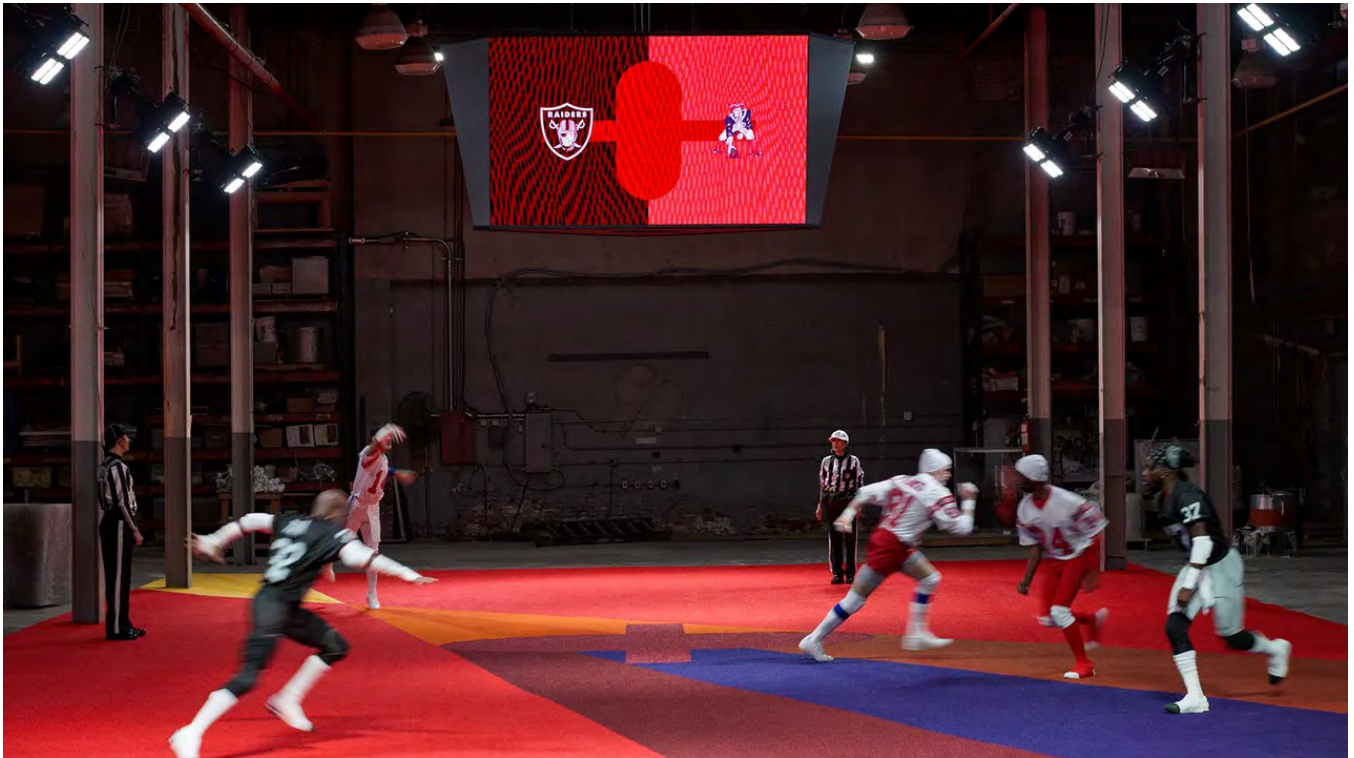
The video shows an abstracted fragmentation of the game, and the drills and rituals surrounding the sport. Dancers and performers, all in their fifties – including Barney himself – embody both teams’ players. Created in collaboration with movement director David Thomson and using a vocabulary that borrows from breakdance, Krump and contact improvisation, the choreography speaks to the fragility of the (ageing) body, and the tensions between performance, success, failure, and entertainment.



Matthew Barney, *Secondary*, 2023

(Image credit: © Matthew Barney Production still: Julieta Cervantes. Courtesy of the artist, Gladstone Gallery, Sadie Coles HQ, Regen Projects, and Galerie Max Hetzler)

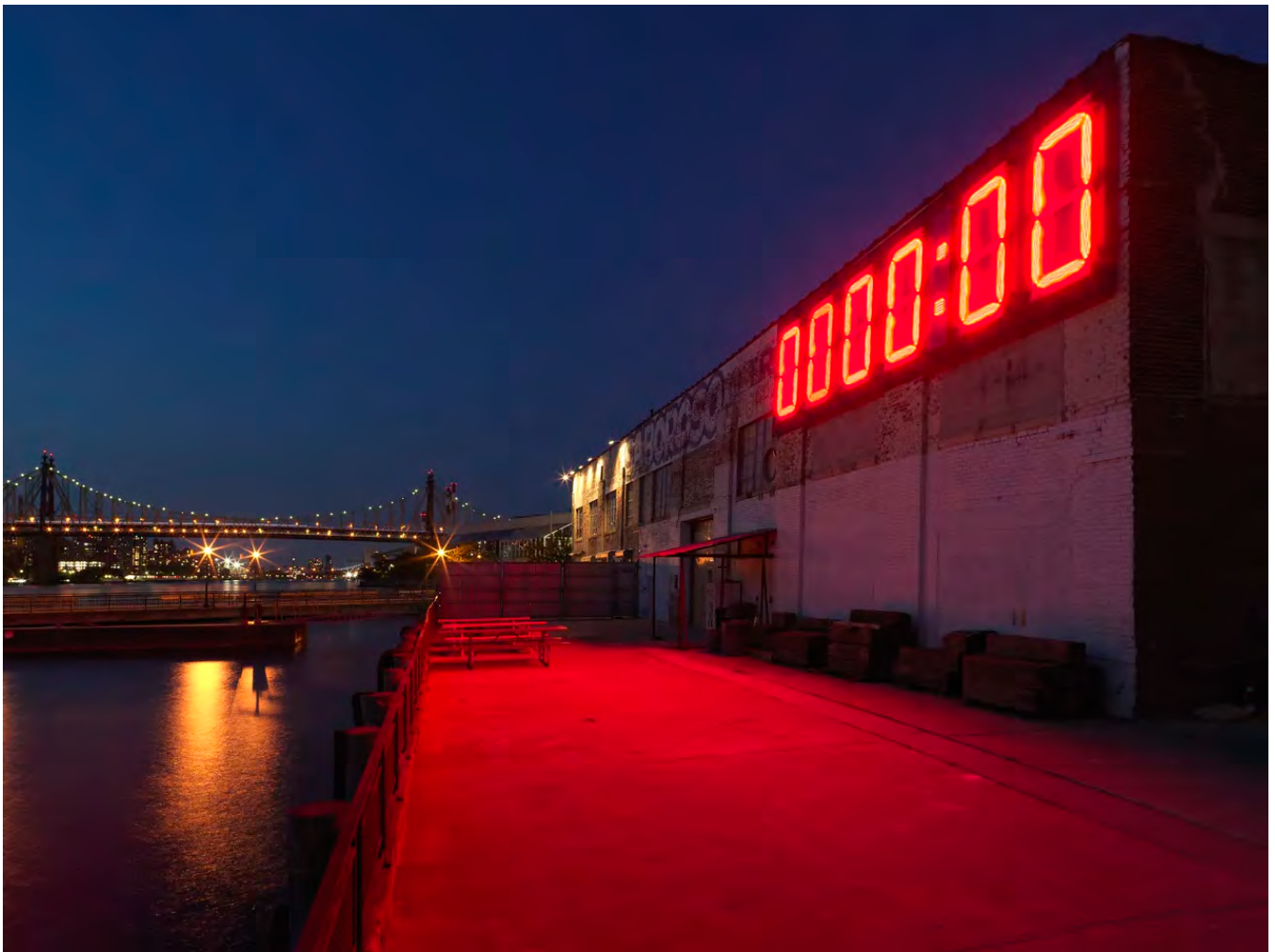
‘The extreme physical and psychological conditions of the game – which have been abstracted into my art practice since my earliest work – provide a context for this subject that is both retrospective and a new, direct engagement,’ Barney writes in a magazine that accompanies the exhibition. In the space adjacent to the installation, a terracotta sculpture in the form of a power rack, complete with weights and suspension belts, is situated in a way that invites the verdant garden around the glass-and-steel architecture of the Jean Nouvel building to become an additional element of the work.



Matthew Barney, *Secondary*, 2023

(Image credit: © Matthew Barney. Production still: Julieta Cervantes. Courtesy of the artist, Gladstone Gallery, Sadie Coles HQ, Regen Projects, and Galerie Max Hetzler)

In sharp contrast to the intensity of the video installation next door, the sculpture evokes a found object, a piece of once-functioning training equipment that has been rusting away amid the greenery. 'I feel that *Secondary* is one of the most personal works Barney has ever done,' says curator Juliette Lecorne. She's referring to the entire body of work, which also includes additional sculptures and environments, some of which are on view at Max Hetzler gallery, on the other side of the Seine.

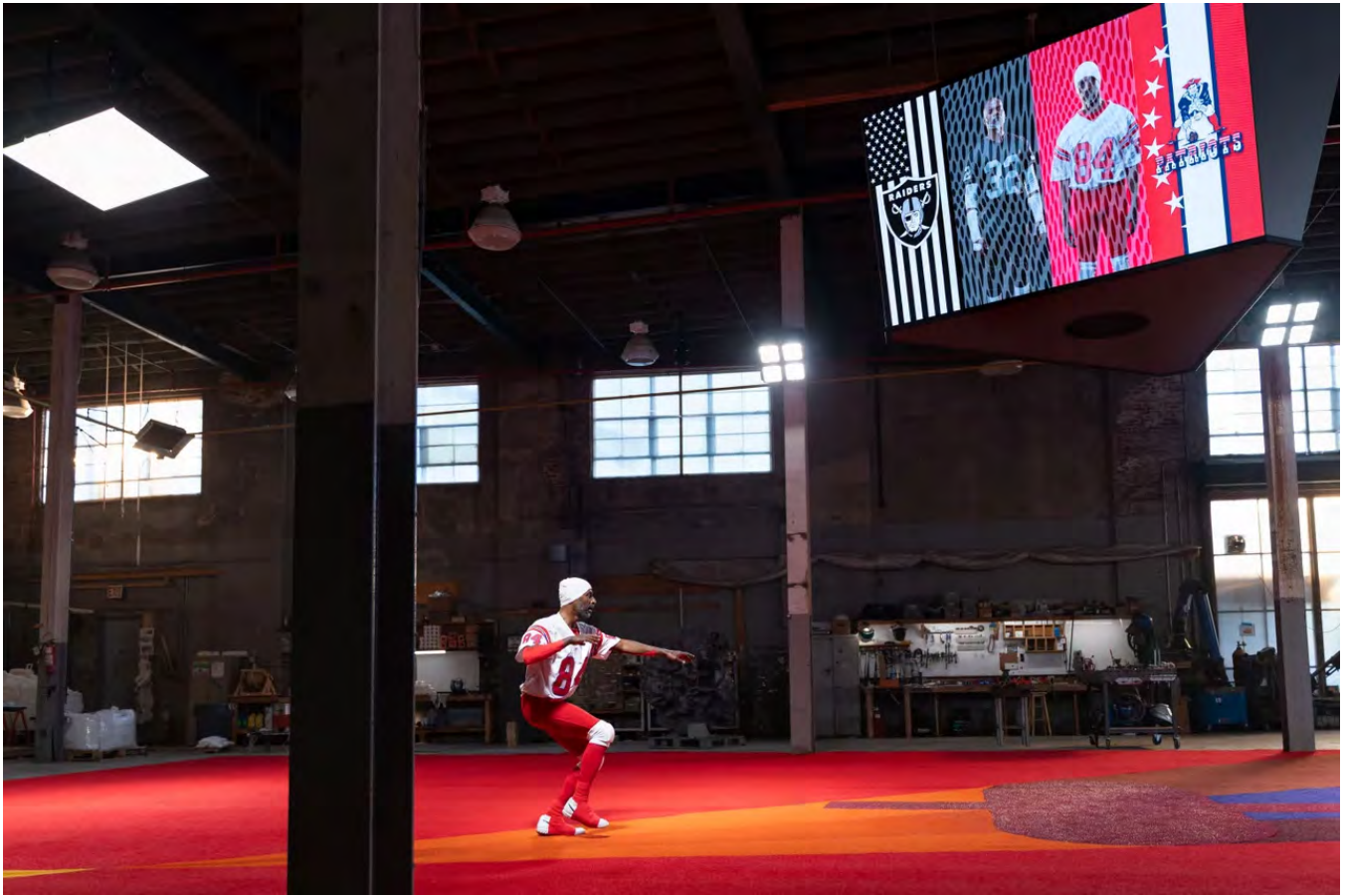


Matthew Barney, *Secondary*, 2023

(Image credit: © Matthew Barney Installation. Photo: Dario Lasagni Courtesy of the artist, Gladstone Gallery, Sadie Coles HQ, Regen Projects, and Galerie Max Hetzler)

Meanwhile, in the exhibition space on the basement level at Fondation Cartier, Barney has created a new work which builds on his ongoing video series *Drawing Restraint*. Begun in the late 1980s, the series is a physical experimentation around the topography of the artist's own studio. Drawing on his experience as an athlete, Barney would limit his movement, suspend himself from furniture, metal bars, and ropes – and draw.

In the new video, the performer embodying the professional football player Jack Tatum, who was known for his aggressive style and technique even before the impact, pounds unfired clay sculptures into the gallery's walls, and drags them across the room, but his range of motion is restricted by a red velvet rope.



Matthew Barney, *Secondary*, 2023

(Image credit: © Matthew Barney. Production still: Julieta Cervantes. Courtesy of the artist, Gladstone Gallery, Sadie Coles HQ, Regen Projects, and Galerie Max Hetzler)

The video was filmed in situ, and visible traces of the performance function like a stage set for the videos showing several works from the series *Drawing Restraint*. As Paris readies to host the 2024 Summer Olympics, it seems like Barney couldn't have chosen a better occasion for an exhibition offering a critical comment on the role of athletes as entertainers.

Matthew Barney's Secondary is on view until 8 September 2024, at the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, Paris. ✱