



MATTHEW BARNEY
RIVER OF FUNDAMENT

By
OKWUI ENWEZOR

With contributions by
OKWUI ENWEZOR, HILTON ALS, DIEDRICH DIEDERICHSEN,
HOMI K. BHABHA, and DAVID WALSH

Edited by
LOUISE NERI

HAUS DER K U N S T

Skira RIZZOLI
NEW YORK

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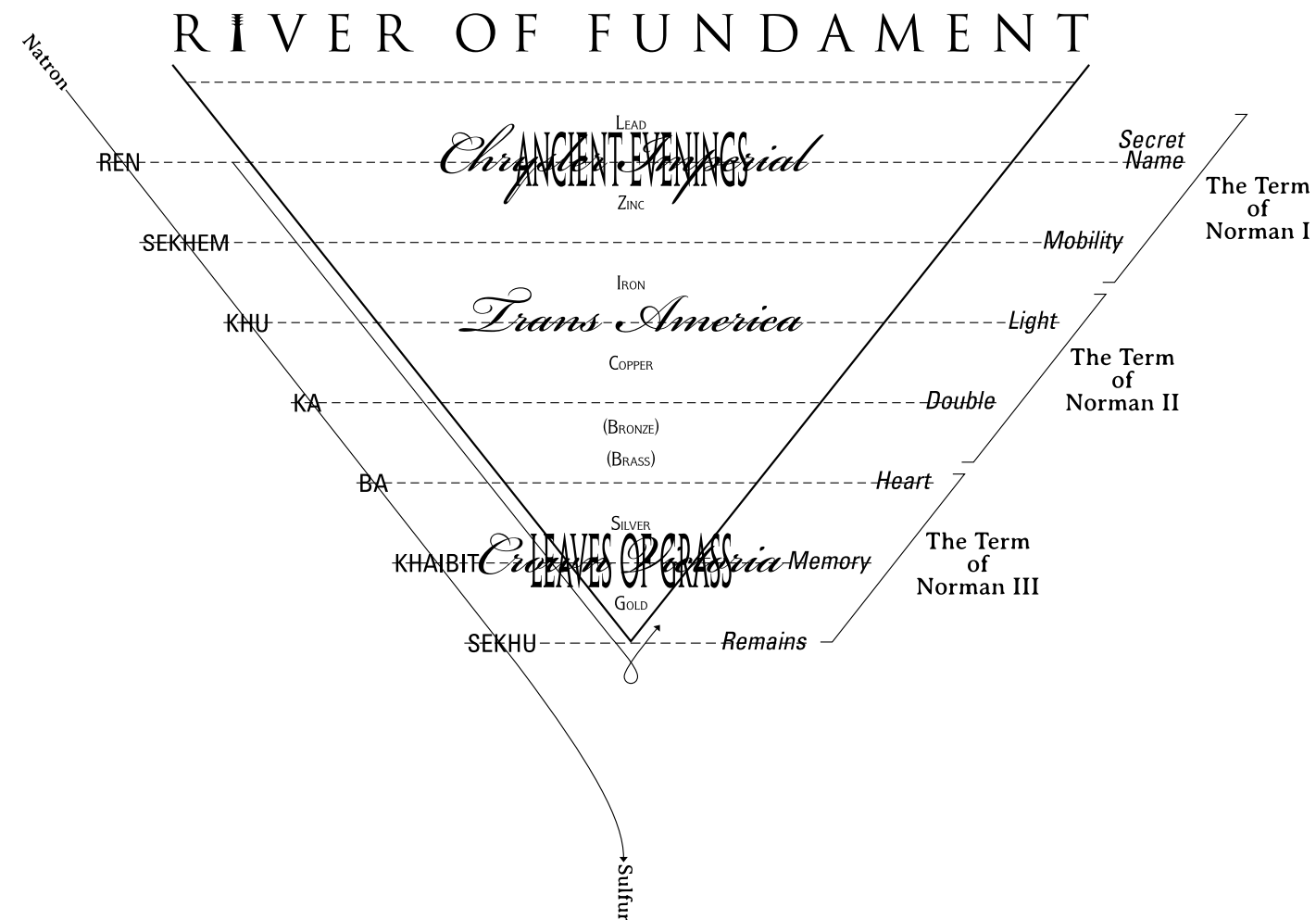
RIVER OF FUNDAMENT, a film-opera

Written and directed by
MATTHEW BARNEY

Music composed and directed by
JONATHAN BEPLER

Produced by
MATTHEW BARNEY and LAURENZ FOUNDATION

Director of photography
PETER STRIETMANN



SYNOPSIS

Set across the American landscape, *River of Fundament* is an epic story of regeneration and rebirth, inspired by Norman Mailer's 1983 novel *Ancient Evenings*.

Mailer's protagonist, the ancient Egyptian nobleman Menenhetet I, is replaced with the figure of the author himself, and his progress models that described in *Ancient Evenings*: like Menenhetet, Norman seeks reincarnation three times in the hope of achieving immortality; like Menenhetet, he impregnates his granddaughter Hathfertiti three times; and like Menenhetet, he embarks on a journey through the underworld on the path to reincarnation, which culminates in crossing the river of excrement that is the soul's final obstacle to rebirth. This narrative unfolds through two alternating story lines: Mailer's wake and a series of three live actions filmed in Los Angeles, Detroit, and New York, each of which recounts the myth of Osiris and Isis via the destruction and reincarnation of an American automobile.

The book is divided into chapters, each corresponding to one of the seven stages set out in ancient Egyptian lore that the soul undergoes in its journey towards new life. Each chapter weaves together storyboards, excerpts from the libretto and musical score, film and live-action stills, key drawings, and in-situ documentation of the sculpture cycle at Haus der Kunst. Separately conceived and formatted playbills for the three live actions *Ren*, *Khu*, and *Ba* are included.

I
OVERTURE 21–30

The *ka* spirit of Norman (the Apprentice) ascends from the underworld—he enters the house of Norman Mailer where preparations for Mailer’s wake are underway—he summons the spirit of the Pharaoh Usermare—Usermare sodomizes the *ka* of Norman—the female *ka* spirit of Norman (the Novice) performs a sacrificial rite.

II
THE WAKE OF NORMAN MAILER 31–46

Guests gather for the wake at Mailer’s house—reigning Pharaoh Ptah-nem-Hotep is among them—a eulogy and toast are given and music is performed as guests, family, and the invisible undead interact.

III
REN (Secret Name) 47–80

Los Angeles, May 17, 2008. Playbill texts by Neville Wakefield and Zach Baron. A ritual at a Chrysler dealership yard in Los Angeles—a musical procession accompanies a 1967 Chrysler Imperial (the spirit of Norman I/Osiris) to the showroom, the place of execution.

IV
SEKHEM (Mobility) 81–106

The wake feast begins—the secret name of Norman is revealed and the spirit of Norman I arrives from the underworld—Ptah-nem-Hotep shows Norman I his throne room and they exchange commonalities—with the help of the girl Hathfertiti, Norman I descends to the underworld to prepare for reincarnation.

V
KHU (Light) 107–138

Detroit, October 2, 2010. Playbill texts by Rebecca Ruth Hart, Angus Cook, and Shane Anderson. A ritual in the industrial district of Detroit by the River Rouge—the spirit of Norman II is embodied by a Pontiac Trans Am—the myth of Isis and Osiris is enacted by the *ka* spirits of Norman in the double roles of Isis and Osiris—Set binds and locks Osiris into the car, which plunges into the river—Isis and Nephthys recover the body from the river—Isis is impregnated before Osiris’s automotive corpse is cut into pieces by the enraged Set and fed into a massive furnace—the molten car body is formed into a massive iron pillar.

VI
KA (Double) 139–162

In the underworld, Norman II is born—he ascends to the wake—the woman Hathfertiti welcomes him—some guests leave, the mood turns darker and the undead sport—Nephthys and Set enact their domestic conflict—confrontation between Usermare and Hathfertiti, who reveals herself as his daughter—the Pontiac Trans Am surfaces in an industrial canal in New York—inside it Isis gives birth to Osiris’s son Horus.

VII
BA (Heart) 163–194

Brooklyn, New York, June 29, 2013. Playbill texts by Sean Campbell and Ross Simonini. A ritual at a dry dock at the Brooklyn Navy Yard—Horus and Set vie for the throne—a simultaneous battle ensues at the taxi garage—a crown is fashioned from the grille of the Ford Crown Victoria Police Interceptor in preparation for the coronation of a new king—Usermare holds court at Mailer’s house and Horus and Set are judged—Horus emerges victorious.

VIII
KHAIBIT (Memory) 195–216

The elderly Hathfertiti is coming to the end of her life, having assisted Norman II towards his next rebirth—she rejects Usermare’s admonishments again and dies in her sleep—Norman III emerges on the upper floor of the Mailer house—he attempts rebirth but without Hathfertiti he is trapped—the lineage of Norman ends—without their charge, the *ka* spirits leave the house and return to the underworld.

IX
SEKHU (Remains) 217–226

Sawtooth Mountain Range in Idaho—the cabin of Ernest Hemingway on Redfish Lake—sockeye salmon make their way to their spawning grounds on the River of No Return—the cycle of death and life continues.

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Director, Haus der Kunst
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Hemingway House, Sawtooth Mountain Region, Idaho



Ka: River of No Return, 2010



Redfish Lake, Sawtooth Mountain Range, Idaho



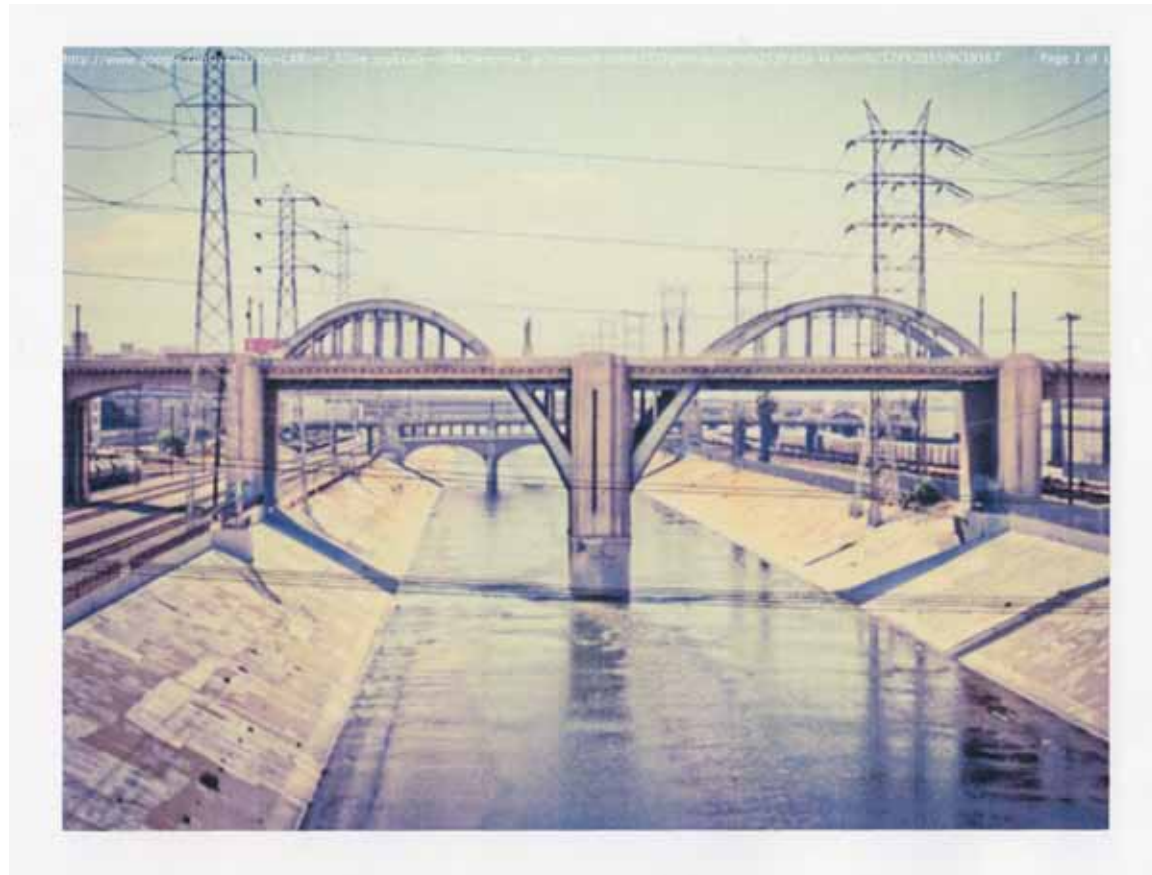
Snake River, Hell's Canyon, Oregon



Salmon River, Sawtooth National Forest, Idaho



Columbia River, The Oregon/Washington border



L.A. River, Los Angeles, California



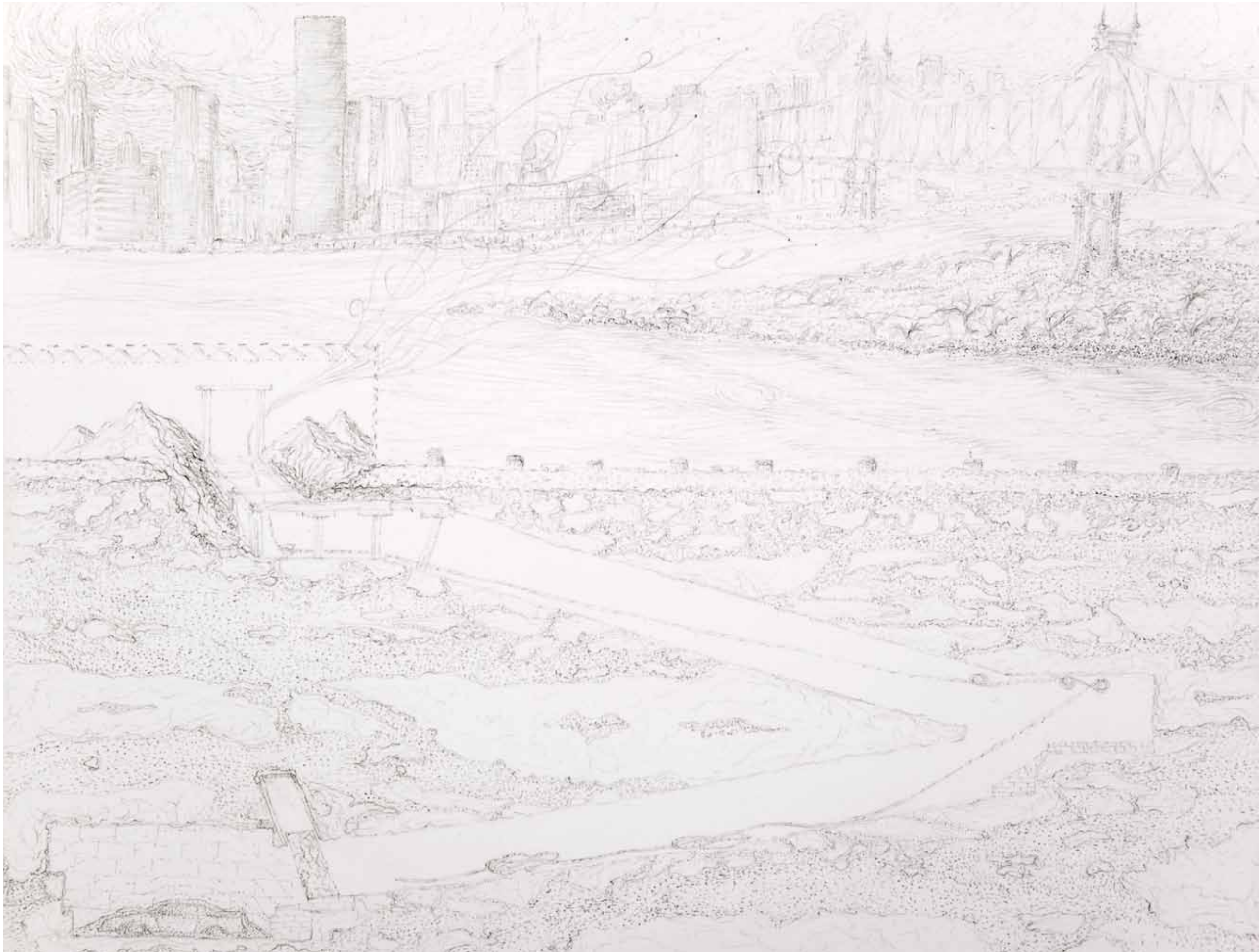
Newtown Creek, New York, New York



River Rouge and Detroit River, Detroit, Michigan



East River, New York, New York



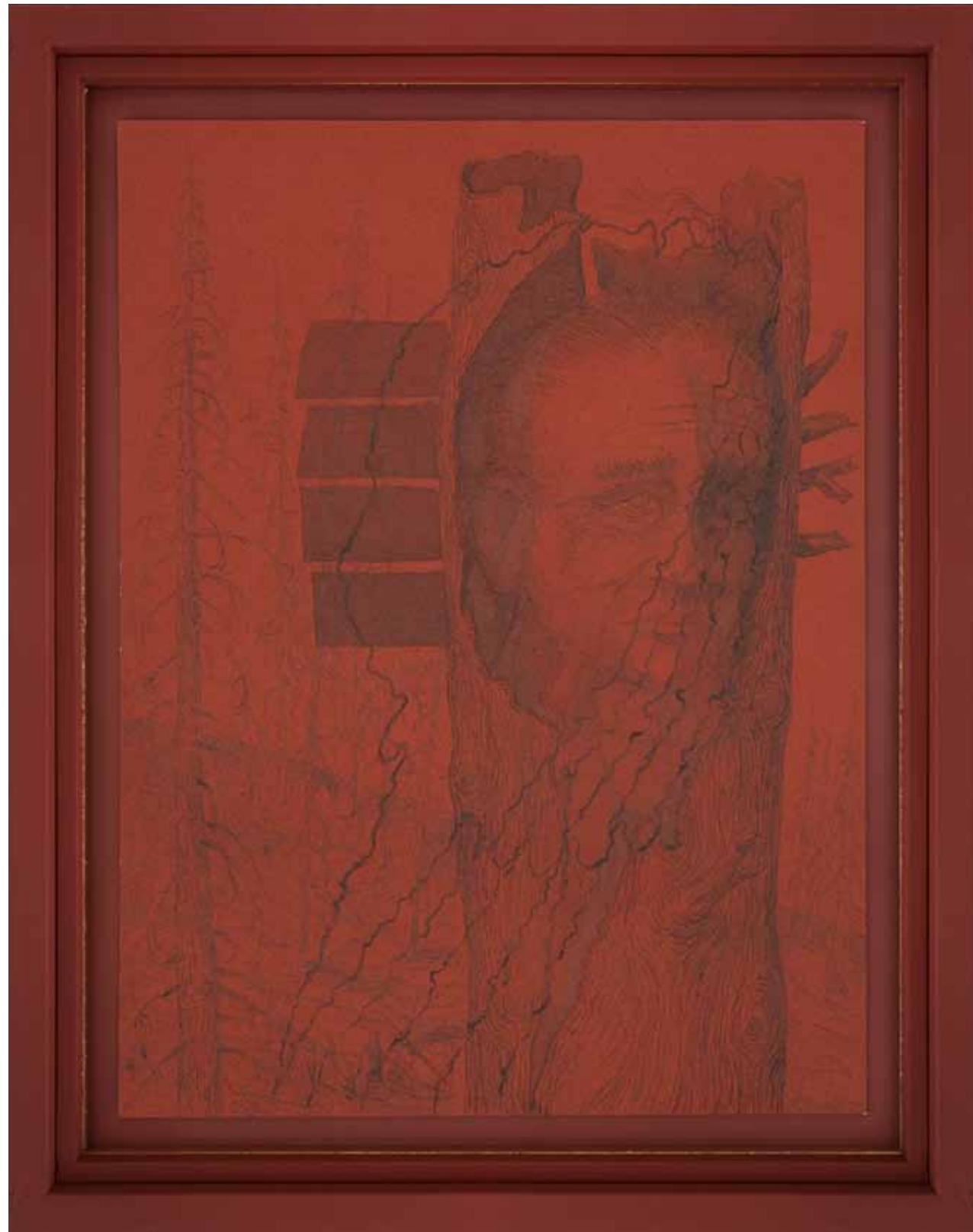
Ba: Queensborough, 2009



Mailer House, Brooklyn Heights, New York City



Mailer House on the East River, New York City, 2012



River Rouge: An American in Byblos, 2011

I OVERTURE

I believe in the practice and philosophy of what we have agreed to call magic, in what I must call the evocation of spirits, though I do not know what they are, in the power of creating magical illusions, in the visions of truth in the depths of the mind when the eyes are closed; and I believe . . . that the borders of our mind are ever shifting, and that many minds can flow into one another, as it were, and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy . . . and that our memories are part of one great memory, the memory of Nature herself.

W.B. Yeats, *Ideas of Good and Evil*
Epigraph to Norman Mailer's *Ancient Evenings*

5AD

Closeups show the swollen foreskin of the penis splitting the thin layer of gold into a mosaic of fissures. The feces in the colostomy bag starts to bubble.

5K

3.

to wall close

Overture continues and is joined by 2 unseen male vocalists.

VOICE 1 (O.S.)

When the soul has departed, a man sees corruption. He becomes a brother to decay and he sinks into a myriad of worms...he becomes nothing but worms.

VOICE 2 (O.S.)

Father, thou did not wither, Thou did not rot, Thou did not turn to worms. So will My member be everlasting. I shall not decay, I shall not rot, I shall not putrefy, I shall not see corruption. So will My sword remain drawn forever.

The APPRENTICE turns away from the USERMARE, and the Pharaoh inserts his penis into the APPRENTICE's rectum. Droplets of mercury begin to emerge from the anus of the APPRENTICE, and fall to the floor. A pool of mercury forms on the bathroom floor, which is organized into an abstract geometry by the grout lines in the tiles.

5M

5B, C POV A

6

6

INT. NORMAN MAILER APARTMENT - MASTER BEDROOM - DAWN

Next door, in the master bedroom, The NOVICE (Aimee Mullins) from Cremaster 3, is sitting on the end of the bed. She is also undead. The door is closed. The room is dim, and there are photographs of the Mailer family clustered on the bedside tables and wardrobes. A display of bullfighting instruments sits on top of an elegant wooden box, near the foot of the bed.

Overture is joined by unseen female vocalist.

FEMALE VOCALIST (O.S.)

She sought her brother without wearying
She wandered the country grief-stricken
She did not rest until she found him
She made a coolness with her wings,
and wind with her feathers
(MORE)

6 * 4/8 c
6 F, G A, B

Noise
POV
Side
tab.
3 bull
fight
instrument

V. 2 > U1 - 4.

FEMALE VOCALIST (O.S.) (cont'd)
In sadness, her thoughts drew tears
whose fall gave birth to rain

left -
right -
(w/d rope
left)

-left
hand
draw
- knife
BT

The NOVICE looks toward the door, at the light leaking onto the hardwood floor, and sees a rivulet of mercury crossing the threshold into the bedroom. She reaches for the festooned bullfighter's sword, and with a slow, graceful gesture, she makes a horizontal incision across each of her thighs. As blood pours down from the two wounds, the NOVICE reaches down and removes her two lower leg prosthetics and holds up her legs toward the door in a devotional gesture. The prosthetic legs are made of silicone rubber, and have a remarkable realness. Wider views show the NOVICE'S lower legs are now articulated with long, curved bullfighting swords. In close up view, blood drips down the length of the curved blades and pools on the hardwood floor beneath the bed, as the overture comes to an end.

6 D, E A, B

7 H, J A, B

7 7A A, B

INT. NORMAN MAILER APARTMENT - CHILDREN'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Next to the master bedroom, in the children's bedroom, nine young CHILDREN of varying age are playing and singing. There are three bunk beds, with three beds each. The room is chaotic. It is filled with the toys and a number of children's musical instruments. A nanny, HONEYBALL (Sidel Edressen), is sitting in a chair in the corner, reading.

7 B, C A, B

8 8 B, C

INT. NORMAN MAILER APARTMENT - PARLOR - DAWN

An overhead view of the dining room table sees mercury flowing into a miniature river across the tablecloth, and through the valleys between the stacks of dinner wear and crystal.

From this domestic landscape, the film's title graphics appear: "RIVER OF FUNDAMENT".

HOUSE 1

9 9 B, C

INT. NORMAN MAILER APARTMENT - PARLOR - DUSK

The wake has commenced, and guests have started arriving. As the guests arrive, they mill about the room speaking with one another in a quiet manner.

9 A

9 * 3/8 H1

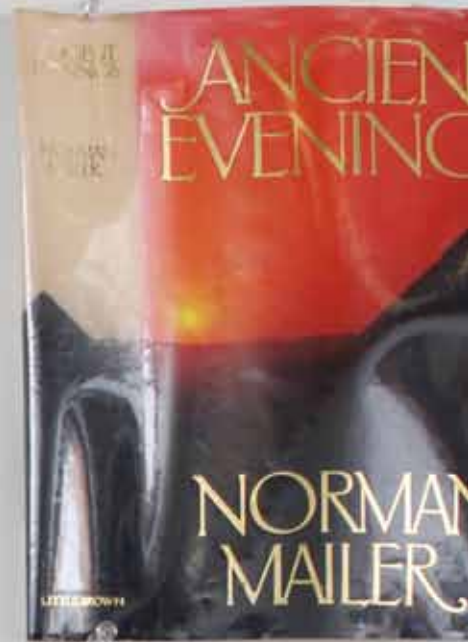
Wider
view

"greeters"

- glasses / blonde
- glasses / grey
- couple (young woman / purple shirt)
- long blonde hair
- Weiner

- Hatth 1
- Blonde bob / blk. dress
- PTAL - Entree (Room / T. Call)
- LW / ARTS >
- NB
- (long hair / musician)
- then
- Set enters.

INTRO/
TITLE









Guardian of the Veil: Adoration of Norman Mailer, 2007

II THE WAKE OF NORMAN MAILER

Crude thoughts and fierce forces are my state. I do not know who I am. Nor what I was. I cannot hear a sound. Pain is near that will be like no pain felt before. Is this the fear that holds the universe? Is pain the fundament? All the rivers veins of pain? The oceans my mind awash? I have a thirst like the heat of earth on fire. Mountains writhe. I see waves of flame. Washes, flashes, waves of flame.

Norman Mailer, *Ancient Evenings*

SND TUNING TRACK

understand it then. But now we can, and do.

Several MUSICIANS, scheduled to perform at the wake, begin to open their instrument cases, and remove their mouthpieces. They begin to warm up quietly, intermittently, as ELAINE STRITCH continues to read.

ELAINE STRITCH (cont'd)
I'd like to read a passage from Ancient Evenings. Though the protagonist in this story is called Men-nen-hetet, we all knew it was really Norman. The story is told by Men-nen-hetet's Ka. The Egyptians believed that your Ka, or your double, would appear to you, as you are dying, as a way of helping you as your memory fades away.

AA12-3 humming

[PRIEST ACTION]

ELAINE STRITCH (cont'd)
(looking around the room)
If Norman's Ka is among us, we send you our warmest welcome.

Hk6 - only says "hi" can use "we send warmest welcome fourth take."

Other guests laugh quietly, as the ELAINE STRITCH picks up a copy of Ancient Evenings.

ELAINE STRITCH (cont'd)
"Many lights appeared above my head, and they were like a ladder of lights with many rungs. I seized the first, and began to ascend from the river."

AA12-2 (glasses)

8A.

ELAINE STRITCH (CONT'D)
The ladder twisted and was not easy to climb, but, as it swayed, the fields of gold on the other bank receded from me, as did the waters, and I took the rungs of this ladder one by one, and each rung was as strong as the umbilical cord of each person I had known well, and I felt the embrace of their bodies. They came about me as I climbed and held my arms, and I could not move to the next rung until I lived with the honest thought of how I loved them or how I did not, and recalled all I loved most in each, and all I loved least.

white powder

pausing on BOOK

PT2

AA12 AABA

AA12 RA12A

As ELAINE STRITCH reads, the PRIEST has started setting up a miniature cupola on the table. He lights a match and ignites the cupola thru a small hole near its base. Next to the cupola, he empties a small pouch of white powder into a pile and begins to scrape the pile into a long line with his butter knife.

AA12 AABA

AA12 WIX

The WIDOW glares at the PRIEST. She is appalled with his lack of respect.

Two ASSISTANTS come to the table and begin to serve PTAH-NEM-HOTEP. One of them washes down his brow with perfumed oils, while another climbs under the table and begins to wash his feet. HATHFERTITI 1 can't resist, and peeks under the table to watch.

H1: LOOKS R-L @ ASSIST #1

ELAINE STRITCH (cont'd)
"There was every loss in my limbs as I passed again through the early love of my mother, but I had to grapple up the rungs of her fear of me when I was no longer a child but her lover, and I wept for the Pharaoh that He had not become a greater man but a smaller one, and tasted His expiring love for Himself in the fatigues of my breath, yes, and I went up on the spirits of the dead until I was high above the Pyramid."

[ASSISTANT #2 WASHES PTAH'S TEMPLE]

INT. AA

[PRIEST: CUTTING CINES]

TK.7 (sung)

The ENTERED APPRENTICE and NOVICE (the Ka's of Norman) have entered the room. As they are undead, they are seen only by the Pharaoh PTAH-NEM-HOTEP, the child, HATHFERTITI 1, the gods SET and NEPHTHYS, and the demi-god, LILA DOWNS. The APPRENTICE and NOVICE stand off to the side of the table, watching PTAH-NEM-HOTEP recline in pleasure, as his subjects continue to serve him.

Hk6 I wave w/ rt. looks R-L

WT 1007

SND TUNING TRACK

AA12 E, F, G, H, J, K, L, M, P

Around the room, the harp, guitar, and string quartet, continue to tune their strings and organize their sheet music. The trombonist and trumpet player warm up their mouthpieces, and the organist sets the stops on his organ.

ELAINE STRITCH (cont'd)
"Now, the great women in my life were near, and I climbed as if the arms of Osiris were for my use, and the head of Ra was like my own. (I saw again) a vision of great cities to come, and knew the strength of the Ka must be great. For even as the tender force of the flower breaks through the stone, so would the strength of the Ka be immense (if its true desire were opposed.)"

AA12 AA12A

sung tk.7

[PRIEST POWERS]

Horus / SET

The Widow's Song

Those are not the words

Text: Walt Whitman

J. Hepler

Those curves, angles *those are not - - -* *the substantial words* *human beings are the words*

The Widow

Soprano *mp* Were you think-ing that those were the words? Those up-right lines? Those curves ang-les dots? No, those are not the words the words - - The sub-stan-tial words are in the ground

Soprano *mp* Were you think-ing that those were the words? Those up-right lines? Those curves ang-les dots? No, not words words

Soprano *mp* Were you think-ing that those were the words? Those up-right lines? Those curves ang-les dots? No, not words words

Harp / Bells / Uke *mp*

Horns *mp* *recorder TP*

Violin I *p*

Violin II *p*

Viola *p*

Violoncello *p*

10 *air, soil, water* *(live in nature)*

The Widow

S. and sea they are in - the air they are in - you Hu-man bod-ies are the words. My-ri-ads of words. a-e-l-u-a-e-i air soil - - wat-er fire - - fire. Those are the words.

S. they are in - the air they are in - you air soil - - wat-er fire. Those are the words.

S. they are in - the air they are in - you air soil - - wat-er fire. Those are the words.

Harp / Bells / Uke *mp* *Me heads* *mp* *Uke*

Horns *mp* *Tb TP*

Vln. I

Vln. II

Via.

Vc.





ROOM 3
Sekhu, 2013







III REN

Ren, one's Secret Name, who left at once, even as a falling star might drop through the sky. That is as it must be, I concluded. For the Ren did not belong to the man, but came out of the Celestial Waters to enter an infant in the hour of his birth and might not stir again until it was time to go back. While the Secret Name must have some effect on one's character, it was certainly the most remote of our seven lights.

Norman Mailer, *Ancient Evenings*



Ren: Pentastar Suite, 2008



Guardian of the Veil: Norman Mailer, 2007



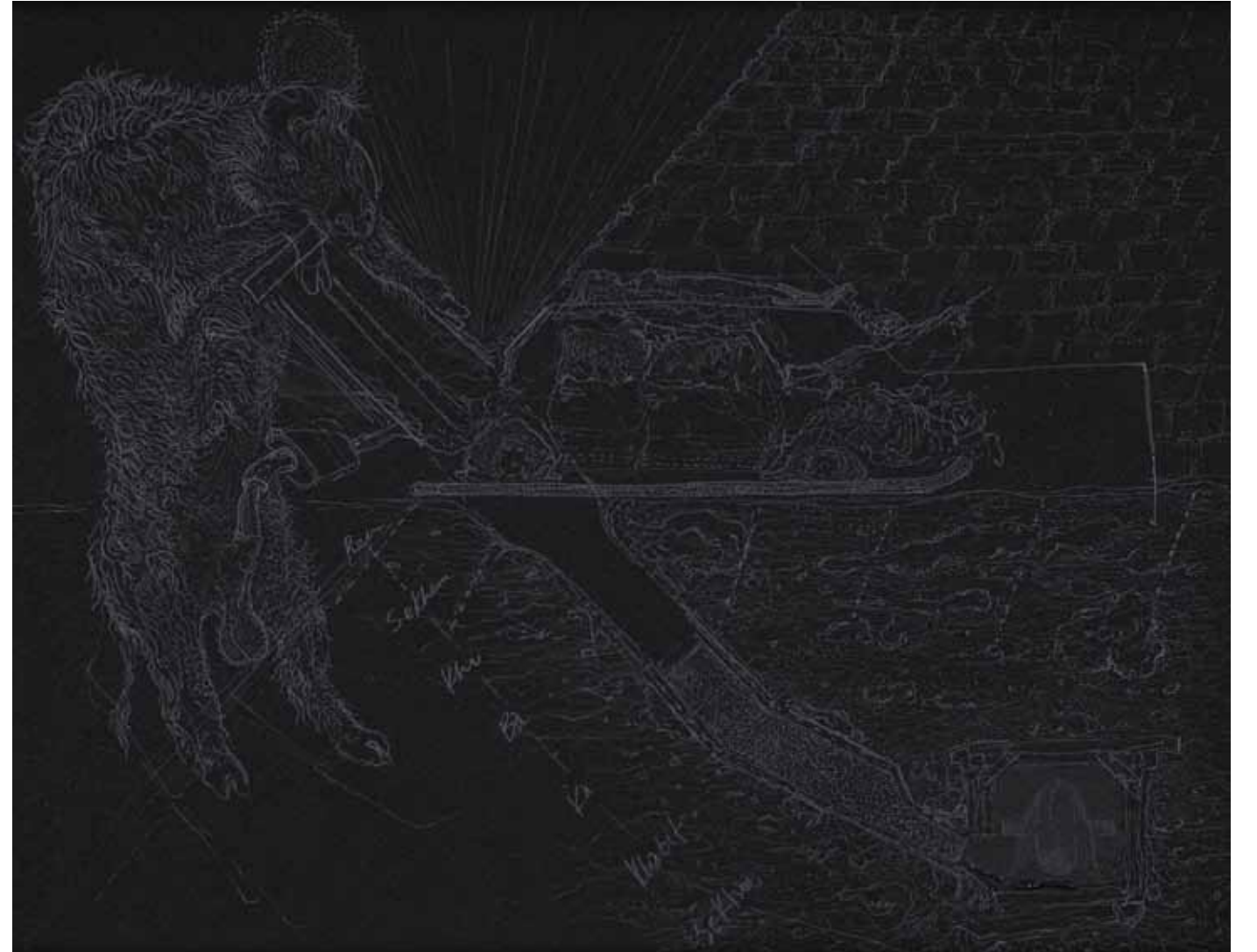
Ren: Pentastar Suite, 2008



Ren: Pentastar Suite, 2008



Ren: Pentastar Suite, 2008



Guardian of the Veil: Imperial Tomb, 2007



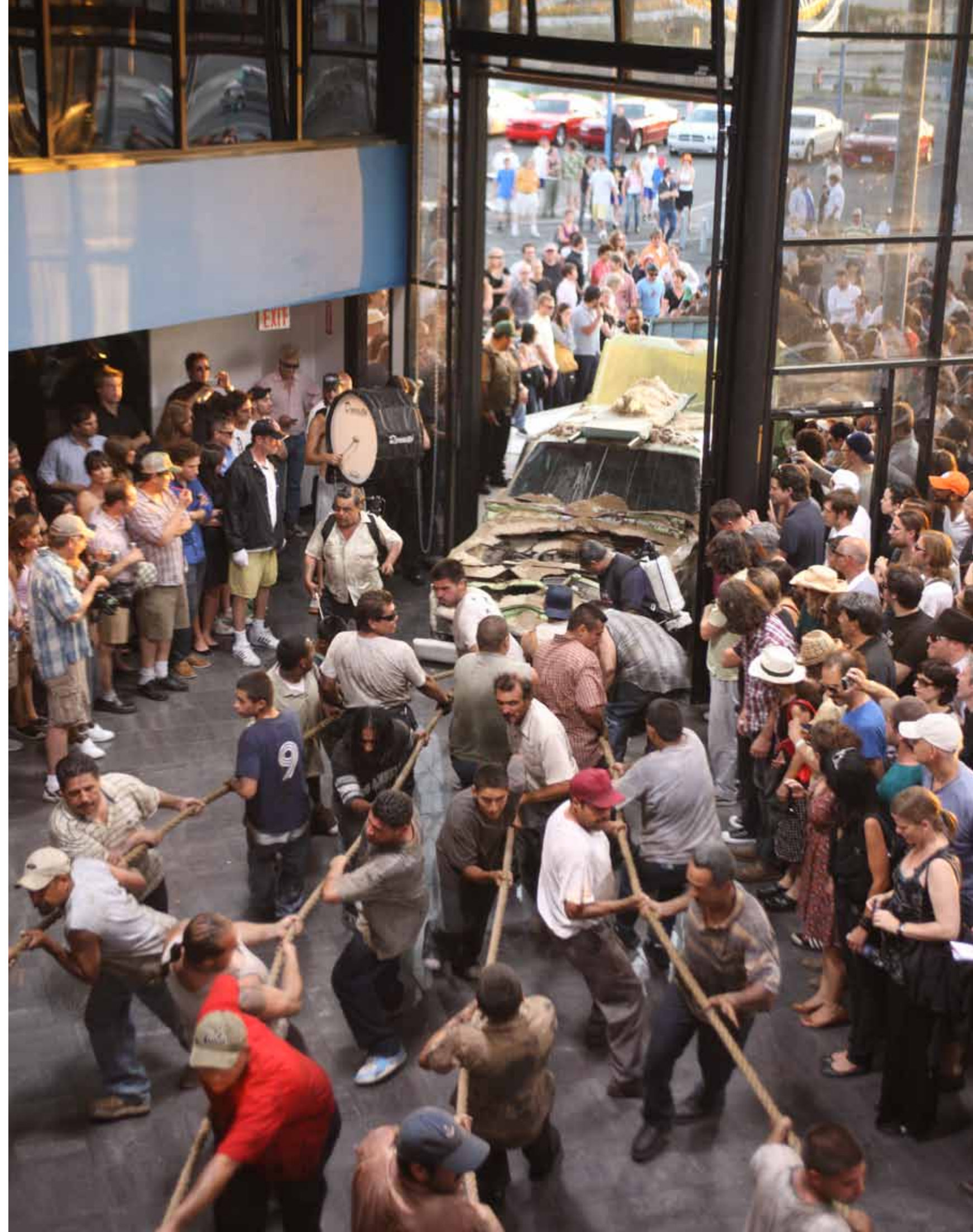
Ren: Headgasket, 2008



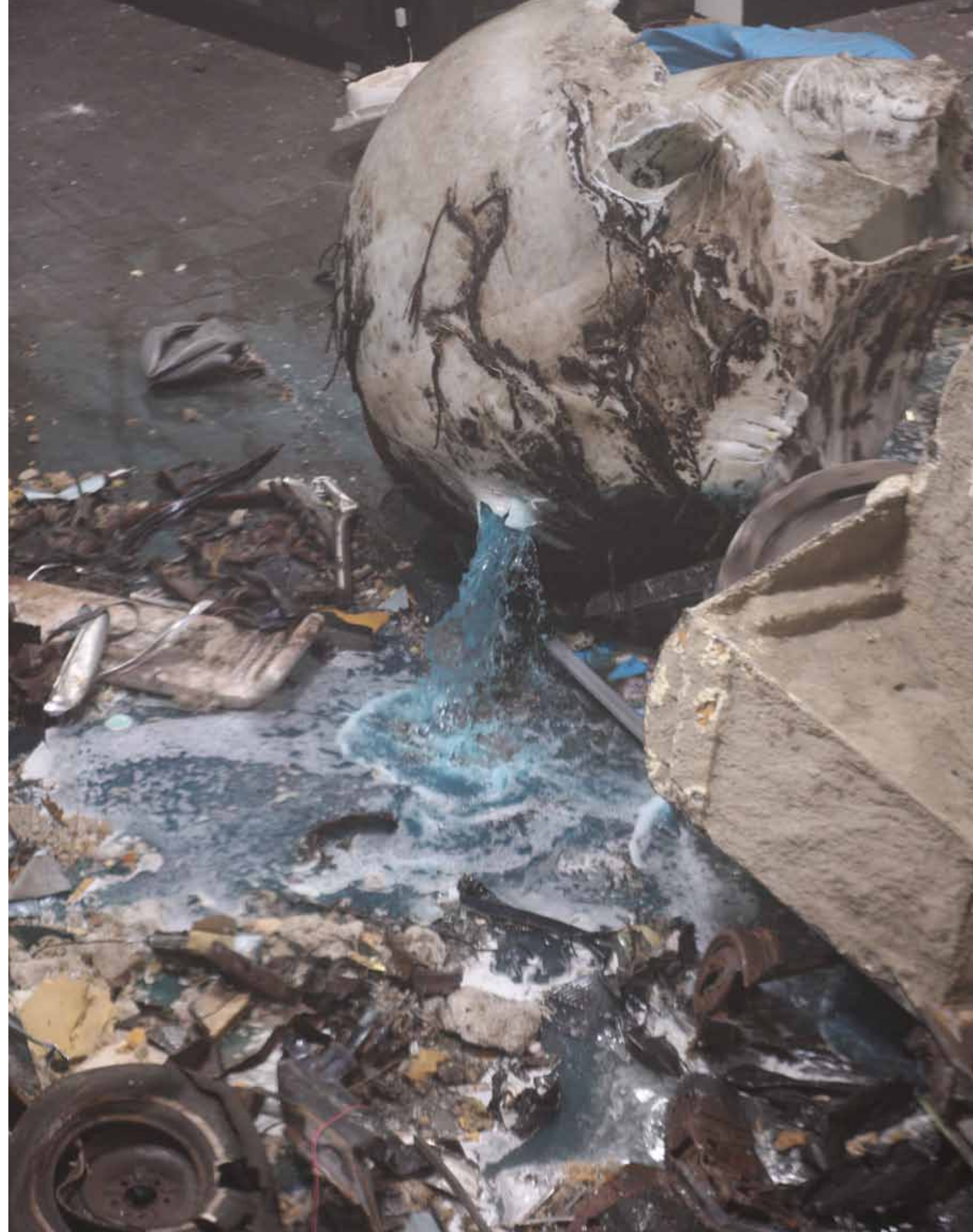
Ren: Khepera, 2008













ROOM 6
Secret Name, 2008–11

ROOM 7
Sacrificial Anode, 2011

ROOM 5
Imperial Mask, 2008–13

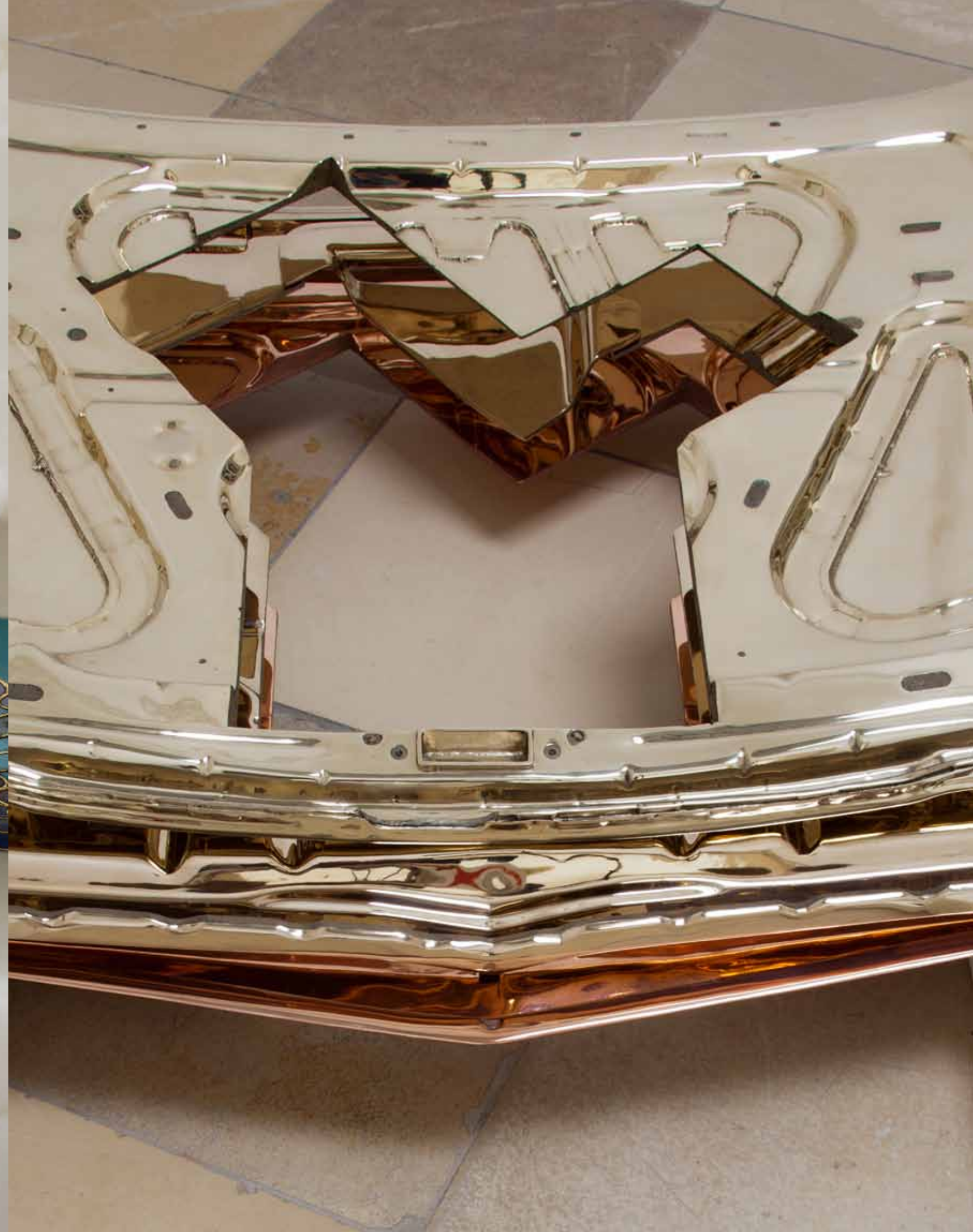














River of Fundament: The Term of Norman I, 2014

IV SEKHEM

His Name is gone, and we know that Sekhem will be next. We know the passing of this Sekhem and it is like the sunset on the Nile that comes with the priest's horn. The Sekhem is lost with the Ren and he is dead and his breath goes out on the last glory of the sunset.

Norman Mailer, *Ancient Evenings*

Throneroom Arioso

J. Bepler

Ptah: between the suburbs of Long Island and the wastelands of New Jersey... In the days of Usermare... Norman: The city is not unlike the crack between two great buttocks...

Ptah: Hmm - Hmm -

Viola: *usa vib*

11 Ptah: Everyone says that I am lacking in sufficient piety to be a good pharaoh... But a wise leader does not look to feel false respect... Each morning, the Overseer would take that little golden pot...

Ptah: Hmm - Hmm - Hmm -

Viola:

21 Ptah: take care of so many matters... *phil scrub* whatever I may have lacked in dedication, piety, bravery... And my stool would cultivate the earth...

Ptah: Hmm -

Viola:

30 and bring forth the most splendid herbs and vegetables, flowers... *Phil* devoted to the Life, Health and Strength of the city... if only my garden had thrived...

Ptah: Hmm -

Viola:

40 but you see, the overseer was a thief... *Phil squeal* and substituting his own in its place... I would entrust my excrement only to my namesake...

Ptah:

Viola:

2 50 *TP/TB snik enter* I had the pipeline laid out... would carry my leavings down to my garden...
Ptah: Hmm - Hmm -
Viola: *water hoses*

60 my herbs and vegetables have never been better... those onions and cabbages caused quite a spell...
Ptah: Hmm -
Viola: *Bubble*

70 have you ever seen such a sluiceway as this?... *Sid/Phil* Not even my great and revered ancestor... Norman: or as the sun when it rises...

Ptah:

Viola:

80 *Sid/more* Ptah: you ask me why he preys... Perhaps Norman... *quiet* I fear I am not fit to be a phar-oah
Ptah:
Viola: *mp TP*

90 *Phil/ridged out*
Viola:







ROOM 1
Canopic Chest, 2011

ROOM 9
Shaduf, 2013















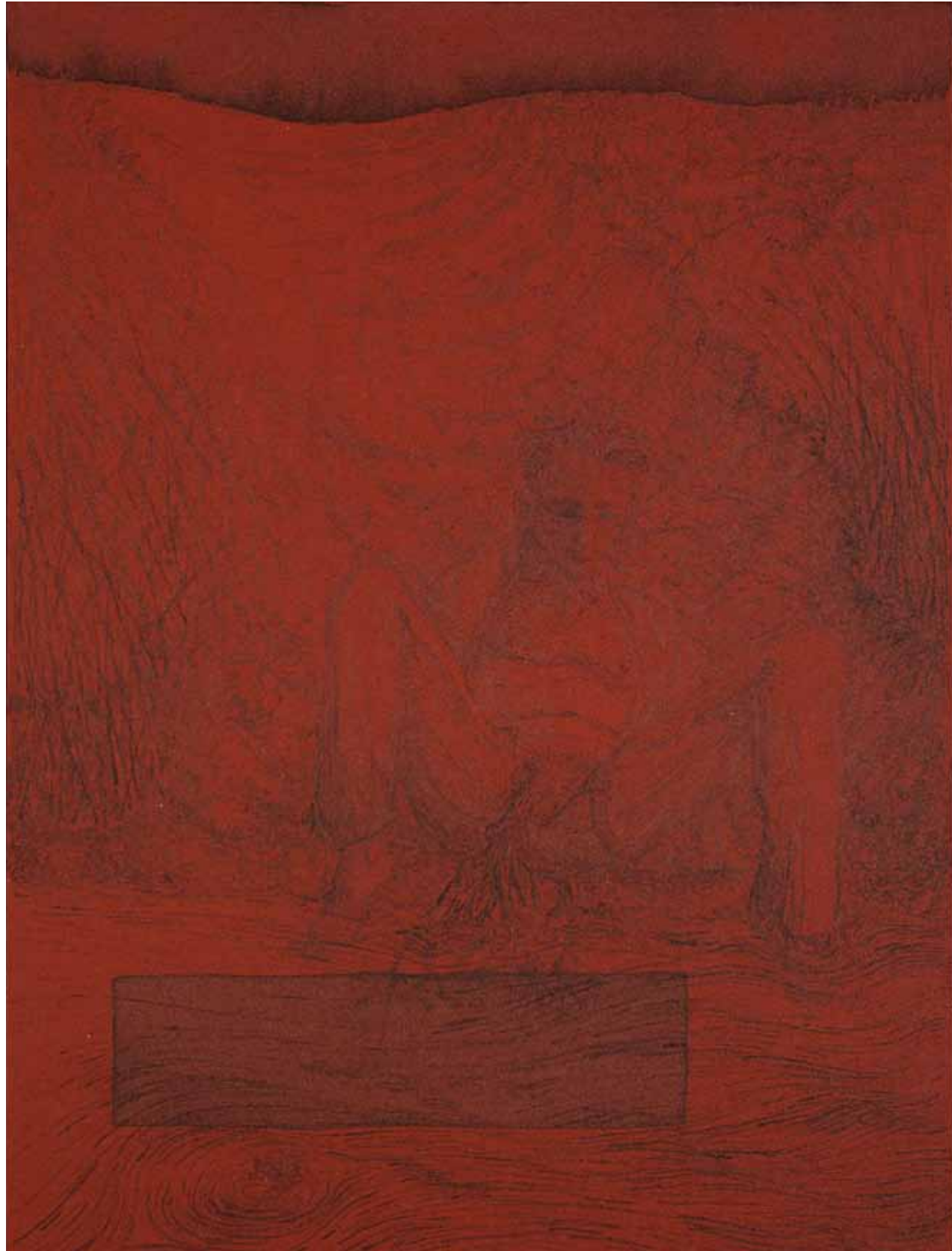
V
KHU

Yes, the Khu is a light in your mind while you live, but in death, it must return to heaven. For the Khu is also eternal. Out of the hovering of its wings, there comes to me a feeling, yes, of such tenderness as I have never known for any human, nor received in return—some sorrowful understanding of me was in the hovering of the Khu.

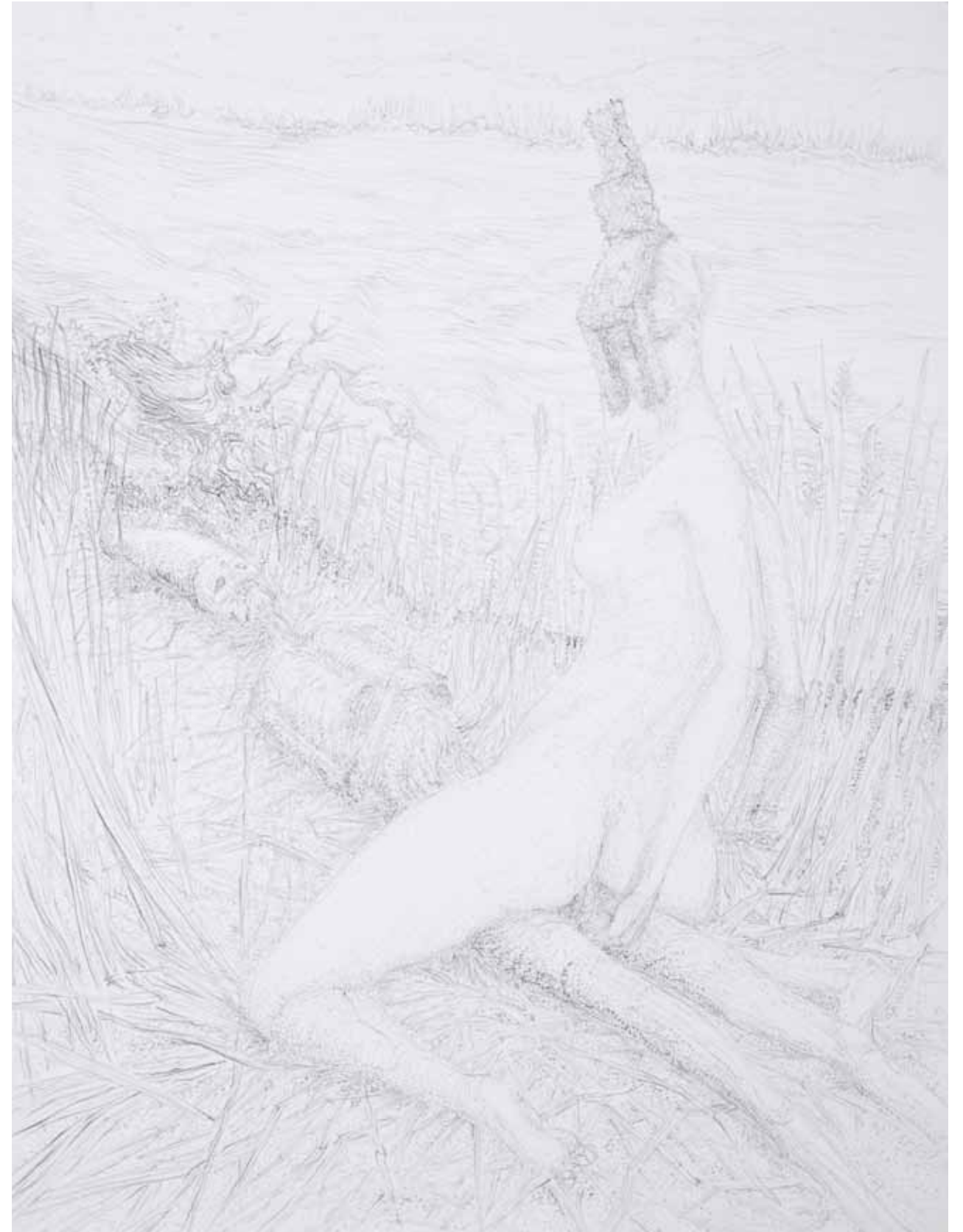
Norman Mailer, *Ancient Evenings*



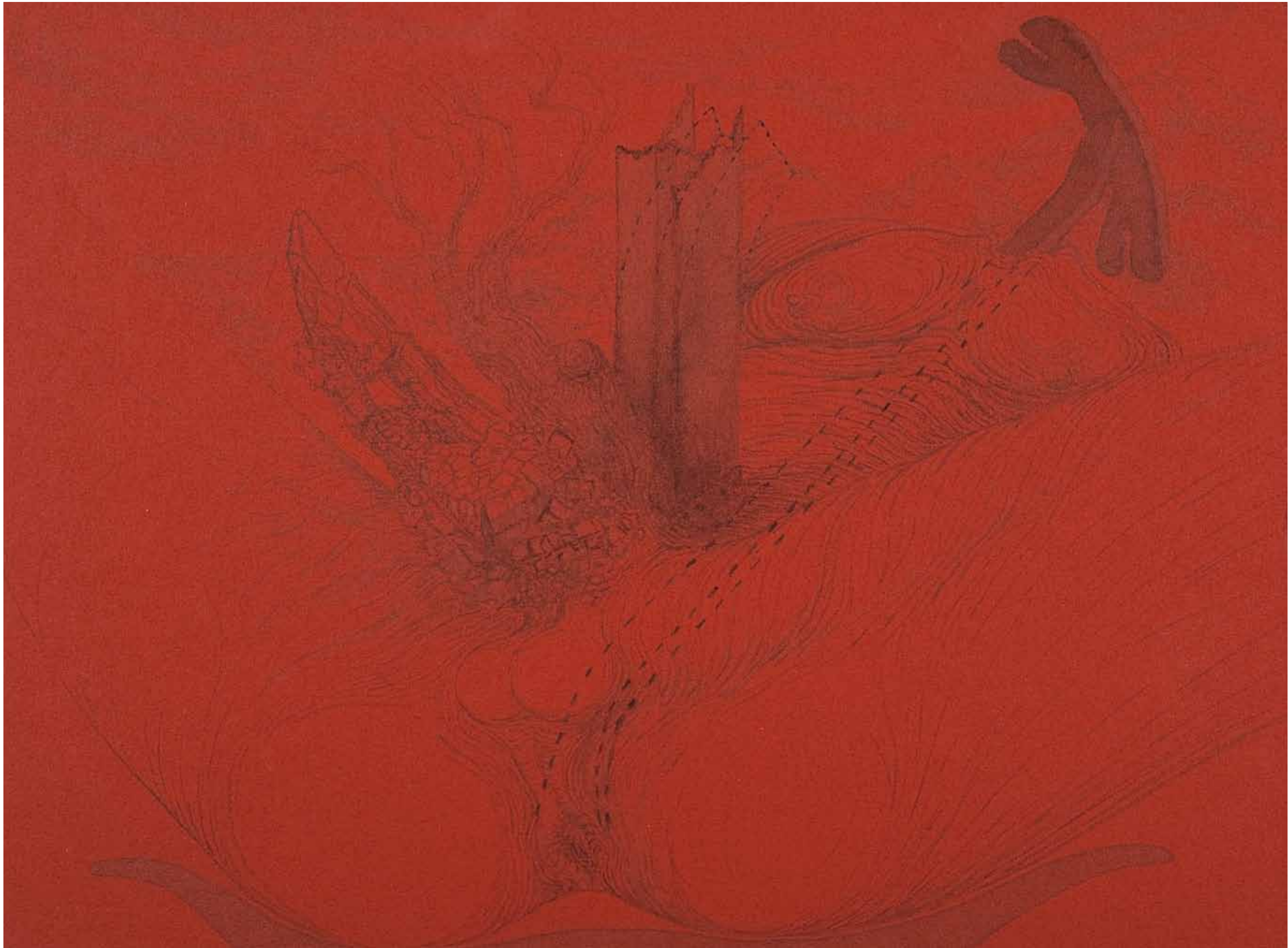
Khu: Boat of Ra, 2009



River Rouge: Tamarisk Root, 2011



Khu: Isis and Osiris, 2009



River Rouge: Path of Was, 2011



Khu: River Rouge, 2009















ROOM 7
Djed, 2011

ROOM 4
Coming Forth by Day, 2013













River of Fundament: The Term of Norman II, 2014

VI KA

Rivers of air came to me like a new life—and the forgotten first instant of death also came and was gone as quickly. Then was my Ka born, which is to say I was born again . . . (but) my double, like a mirror, has no memory. I could only think of him as a friend, my closest friend!

Norman Mailer, *Ancient Evenings*

33C.

DAVID AMRAM is in conversation with STEVE DALACHINSKI. They are talking about jazz. ***** (dialogue to come).**

29 INT. NORMAN MAILER APARTMENT - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT 29 **6/3 #3**

closeup view reveals the patch of black mold growing on the walls around windows and near the radiators, has become much larger.

HATHFERTITI 2 (Maggie Gyllenhaal) is still in bed. She is now an adult. She is established from an overhead view. Her nightgown is unbuttoned and she is gently rubbing ointment on a long scar that extends from her sternum down past her navel. A close up view of her nipple shows that she is lactating.

NORMAN 2 is sitting on the side of the bed, lost in thought. He has a look of content. A close up view of his lip shows a droplet of milk.

The NOVICE is sitting on the other side of the bed watching NORMAN 2.

HATHFERTITI 2
(to Norman 2)
Were you frightened sweetheart?

NORMAN 2 looks back to HATHFERTITI 2, but does not answer. He looks out the window and considers her question.

HATHFERTITI 2
Sometimes I'm scared too. But I know I have to be strong. I have to be here to take care of you, and that makes my fears go away.

THE NOVICE is now resting her head on HATHFERTITI 2'S chest, listening.

HATHFERTITI 2 hums quietly to NORMAN 2 and sings.

HATHFERTITI 2
The smallest sprouts show,
There is really no death.
Or, I guess the grass is itself a child
The babe of the vegetation.
And now it seems to me
The beautiful uncut hair of the graves.

30 INT. NORMAN MAILER APARTMENT - PARLOR - NIGHT 30 **27/8 H**

(4/8)
Pt. Knife:
Over
Left
Lungs
Out
His
Slide

(1/8)

(2/8)

34.
A29: Kids play on CHIMES IN KIDS
A29A
A1, B1, C1
A1, B1, C1
A1, B1, C1

PS

Father, Norman is not --

USERMARE (silencing her):
Filth!

Chastened, HATHFERTITI 2 averts her gaze.

USERMARE (reminiscing):
In my day, Ra was neither old nor decrepit but the source of all radiance. Horus may have been weak in the legs but He was the Lord of the sky and His feathers were our clouds. His eyes were the sun and the moon. Even Set had the power to shake the heavens with thunder.

Slowly, HATHFERTITI 2 turns to face him. (turn left)

C/U -- USERMARE'S ROTTING FLESH. We follow Hathfertiti's gaze as she looks at her father's decaying body.

HATHFERTITI 2
Your myths are wonderful, father. You know I've always enjoyed hearing them. Just as I enjoy hearing about Adam and Eve, or Apsu and Tiamat, Brahma, Wakan Tanka, Odin. (All those stories of how the world began.)

USERMARE
You enjoy, but do not believe.

Realizing he does not understand, HATHFERTITI 2 is silenced.

USERMARE sits in the chair. The LITTLE QUEEN (Ekat) standing behind the chair crosses over to the dining room table and climbs up on it. She then goes into a backbend over the dishes of moldy food.

USERMARE (continues)
Since my death, the Pharaohs have gone, and what have you brought in their stead? My land belongs to others. Now there are

A1C

A1D, A1E, A1C

A1F A, B

Wagon

Ekat
Cassy

Ekat

Text: Walt Whitman

Aria (Hathfertiti)

Music: J. Bepler

I'm for it

Hathfertiti *8^{va}* I swear I see now that ev-ry-thing has an et-et-nal soul, the

Choir

Violin I

Violin II

Viola

Violoncello

Hathfertiti *9* trees have root-ed in the ground the weeds of the sea have the an-i-mals

Choir *10* in the ground the sea have

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Hathfertiti *15* I swear I think there is noth-ing but im-mor-tal-ity... That the ex-quis-ite scheme is

Choir *16* think there is noth-ing... That the ex-quis-ite

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Hathfertiti *21* for it and the ne-bu-lous float is for it and the co-he-ring is for it and all prep-a-ration is

Choir for it for it for it

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Hathfertiti *27* for it and i-den-ti-ty... is for it and life and death are for it fuck yeah

Choir for it den-ti-ty... is for and life and death yeah

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.

Hathfertiti *35* I'm for it!

Choir I'm for it!

Vln. I

Vln. II

Vla.

Vc.







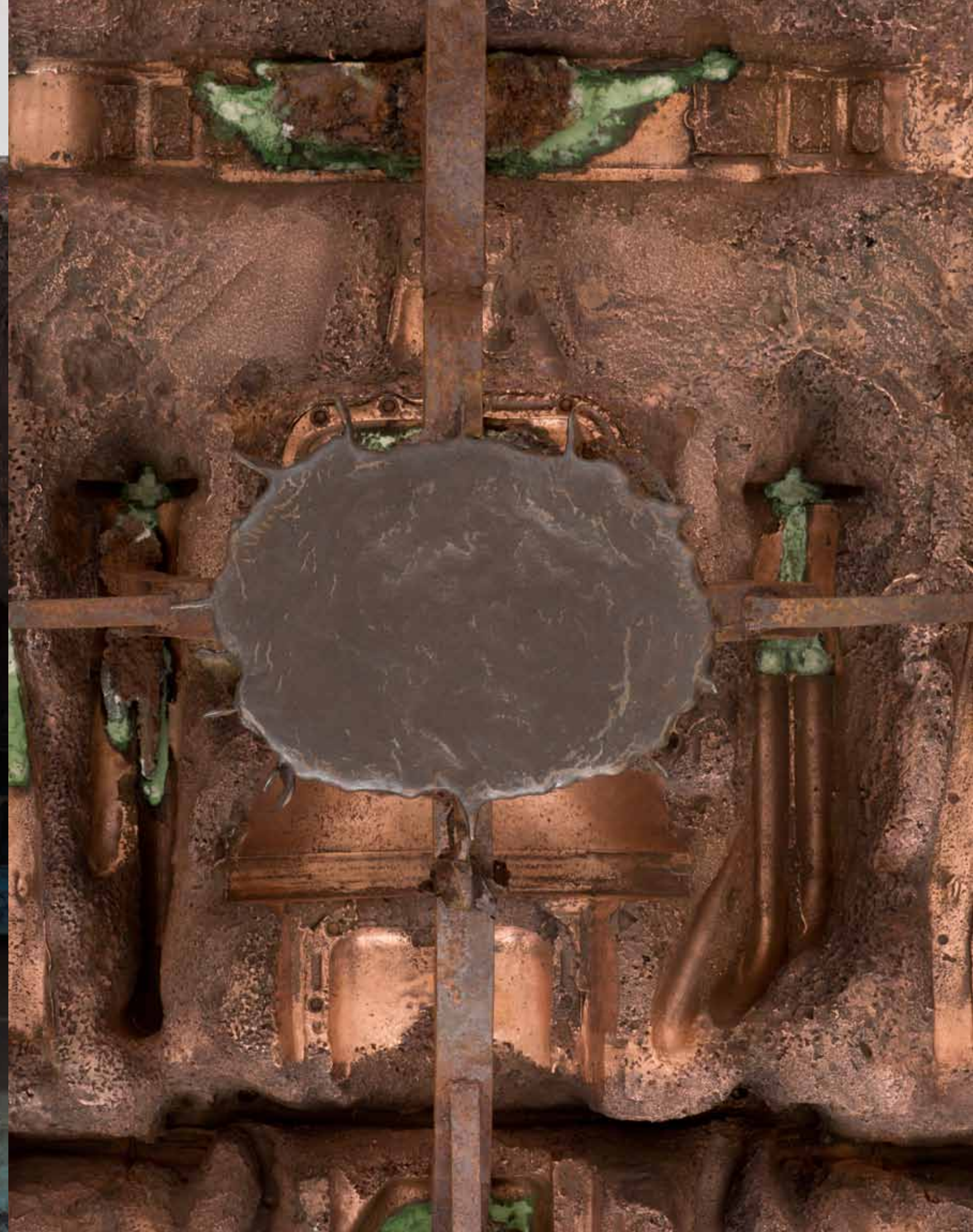


ROOM 8
Rouge Battery, 2013









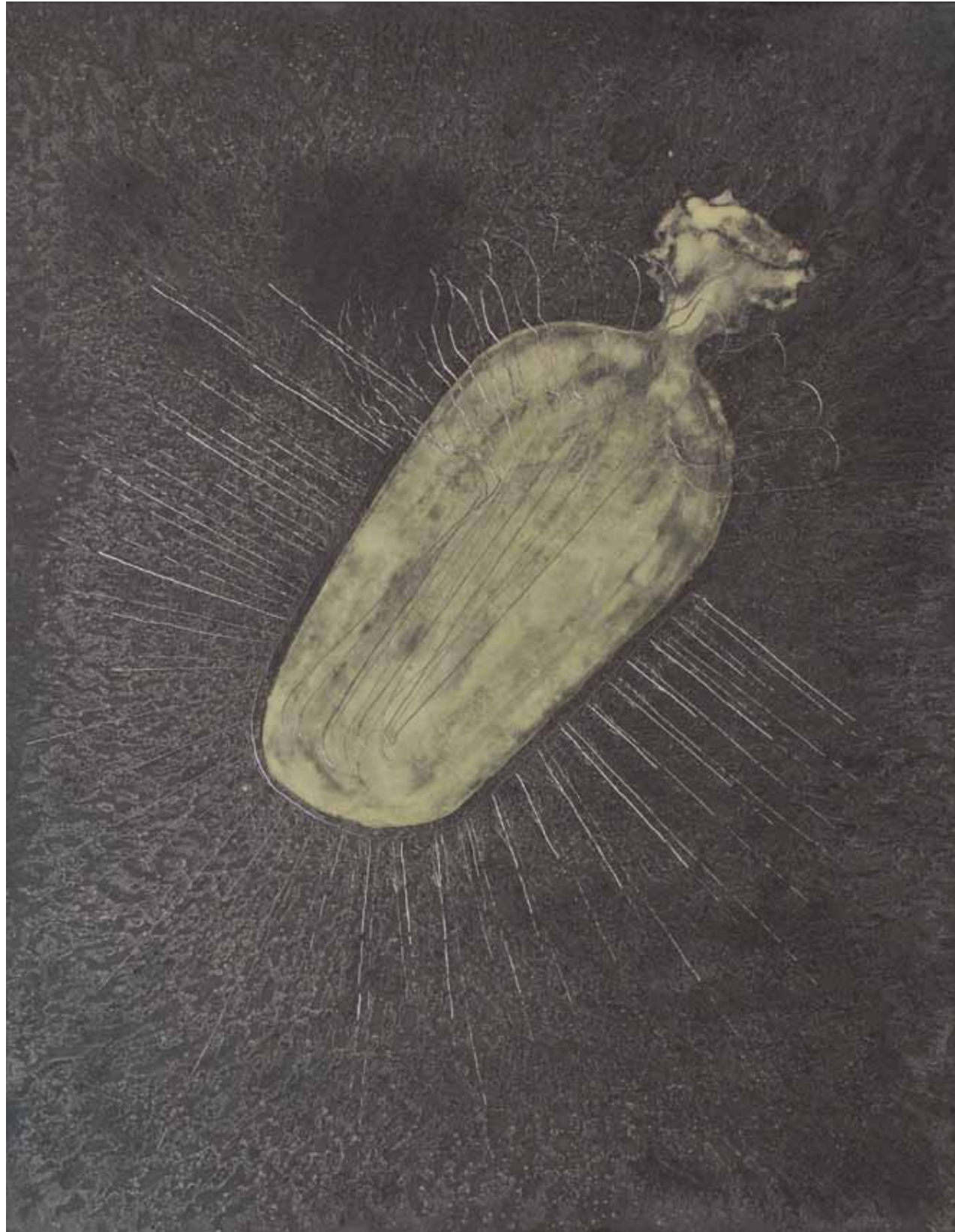
VII BA

Then I saw my Ba, saw that small bird whose face was my own face, and I had not seen it since it flew away as my Ka approached its tomb. It was here above me now, the soul of my heart even as the Ka was my double, and so the Ba could tell me that purity and goodness were worth less to Osiris than strength. Such was the thought of the Ba, the purest part of my heart.

Norman Mailer, *Ancient Evenings*



River of Fundament: Trans America, 2014



River of Fundament: Crown Sulfur, 2014













ROOM 10
Crown Victoria, 2013
Crown Zinc, 2013

ROOM 2
Trans America, 2013



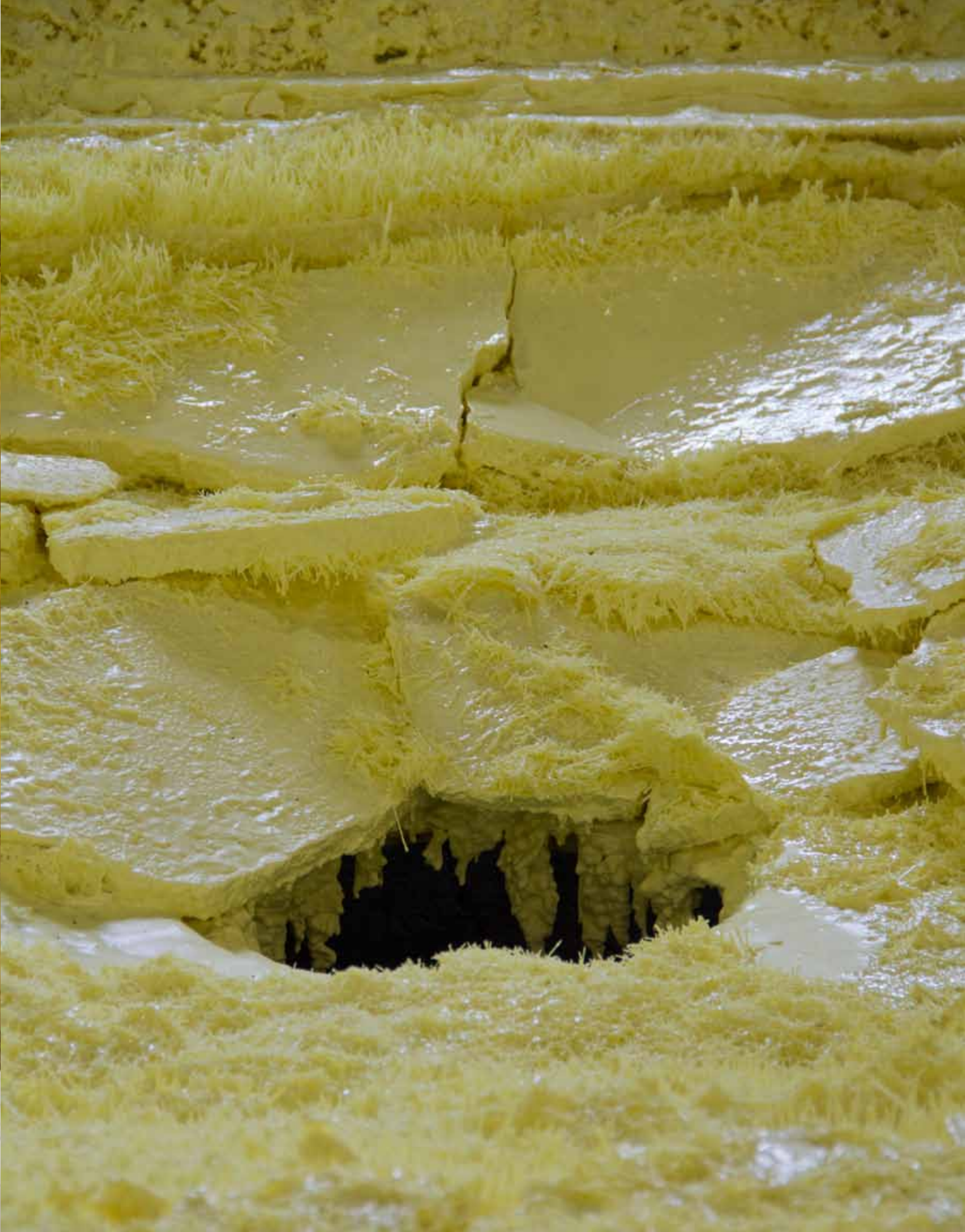


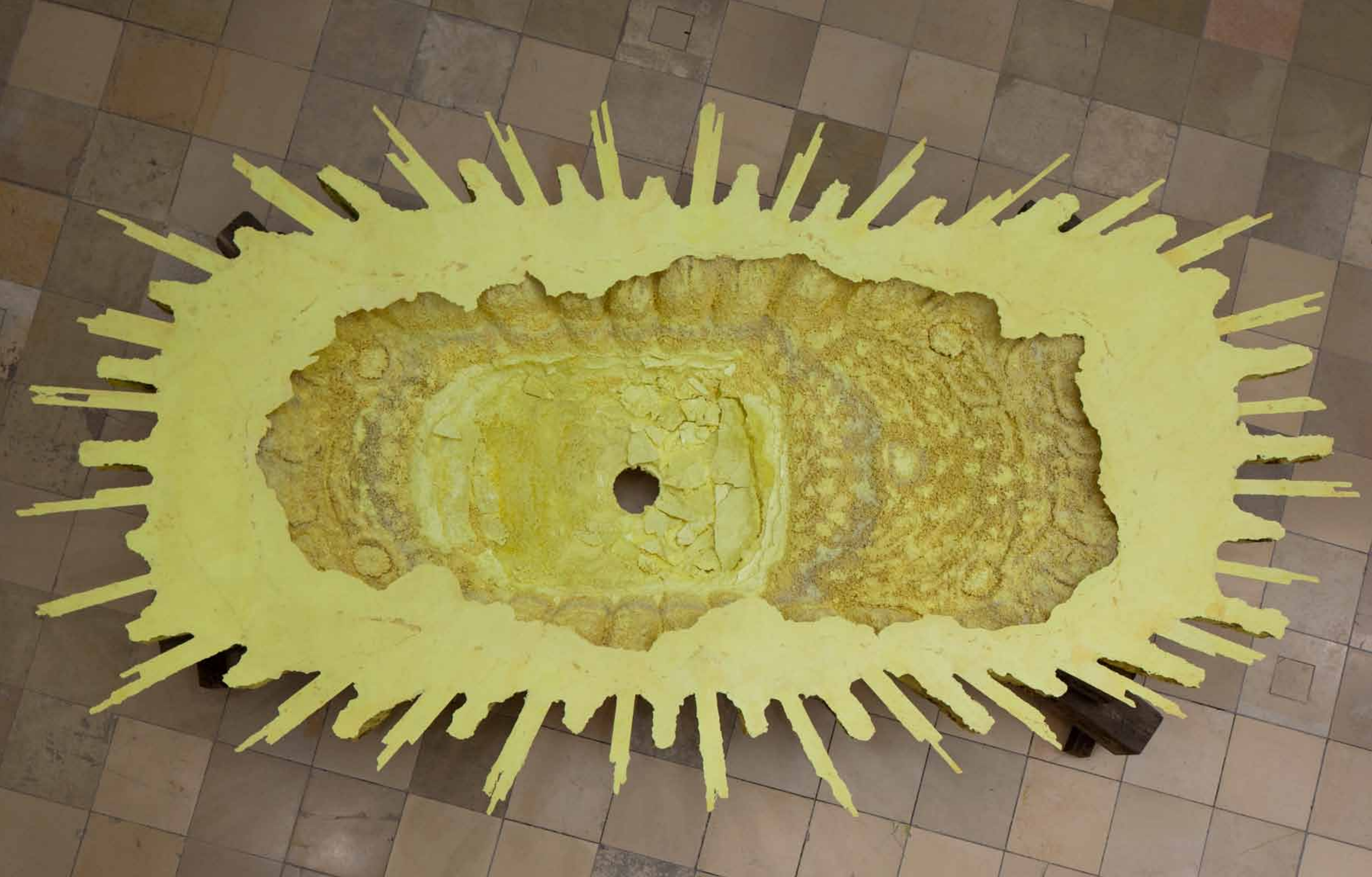














River of Fundament: The Term of Norman III, 2014

VIII KHAIBIT

So with his phallus still in my mouth, I knew the shame of (Norman). Now, the Ka of my great-grandfather weighed upon my Ka as Usermare must have weighed on him. I also knew this exhaustion. In none of his (three) lives had he found what he desired. That much I knew, and then I swallowed, and all the venom of his Khaibit came into me—from my great-grandfather's seed came the pure venom of his Khaibit. That would now be my knowledge of the past.

Norman Mailer, *Ancient Evenings*

60
A, B

The WIDOW and HATHFERTITI 3 walk into the parlor where HATHFERTITI 3 stops, now standing alone. The WIDOW continues past the sarcophagi and out into the terrace.

HATHFERTITI 3 is now alone in the parlor. USERMARE stands at the railing of the mezzanine looking down onto the parlor floor, watching HATHFERTITI 3. HATHFERTITI 3 sits with her back to USERMARE.

61 INT. NORMAN MAILER APARTMENT - MEZZANINE - LATE DUSK

61
A

* 1/8 H

USERMARE
Put this behind you, Hathfertiti.
Come away.

62 INT. NORMAN MAILER APARTMENT - PARLOR - LATE DUSK

62 * 3/8 H

62
A, B, C

HATHFERTITI 3
(still looking away;
simply)
You ~~have~~ ^{must} let me go.

HATHFERTITI 3 turns and makes several steps toward USERMARE now looking up to him.

HATHFERTITI 3
I am an acme of things
accomplished, and I an encloser of
things to be. Immense have been the
preparations for me, faithful and
friendly the arms that have helped
me. Before I was born out of my
mother, generations guided me. My
embryo ~~was~~ never ~~in~~ torpid --
nothing could overlay it. All
forces have been steadily employed
to complete and delight me. Now, I
stand on this spot with my soul.

(MORE)



60
61

SC. Alele & N3 is birthed

67 INT. NORMAN MAILER APARTMENT - MEZZANINE - LATE DUSK

67
A

* 1/8 H

USERMARE
(singing)
I suffer the onslaught of a
frightful wind. A pain is coming
that will be like no pain felt
before. I hear the scream of earth
exploding. In this terror, vast as
the abyss, I still know more than
fear... Here at the center of pain
is radiance.

67
A

67 INT. NORMAN MAILER APARTMENT - WRITER'S DEN - LATE DUSK

67 * 3/8 H

67
A, B

NOTE
A
EIK

In the writing den, NORMAN 3 (Chief Dave Bald Eagle) is sitting at the desk. He is covered with afterbirth from the womb of the elk. He is an elderly Native American man. Next to him at the desk a live IBIS is perched. A close up beneath NORMAN 3's feet, reveals that he has defecated through the can chair he is sitting in.

67
A

NORMAN 3 pulls a feather from the tail of the IBIS, and proceeds to dip the feather into the pile of stool on the floor. With his excrement, he brushes a simple Djed column onto the desktop with the edge of the feather.

pick up stool
draw pt

NORMAN 3 sings softly:

67
A

NORMAN 3
"Crude thoughts and fierce forces
are my state. I do not know who I
am. Nor what I was. I cannot hear a
sound. Pain is near that will be
like no pain felt before. Is this
the fear that holds the universe?
Is pain the fundament? All the
rivers veins of pain? The oceans my
mind awash? I have a thirst like
the heat of earth on fire.
Mountains writhe. I see waves of
flame. Washes, flashes, waves of
flame."

SHOT
A 67D
STILL LIFE
EIK 3/8 Apperize

68 EXT. NORMAN MAILER APARTMENT - TERRACE - LATE DUSK

68 * 3/8 H

The WIDOW is singing, as she looks out at the Brooklyn Bridge.

68
69

House 6 allsång + Finale

Col Soprano
 I ascended from the moon I ascended from the night I per-ceive the glass by glass-ness - the sun beams - ref - lect and de-branch to the steady and un-der-stand From the

Viola
 mp *non vib*

Chief Drum
 Free Time

Wahne
 I, I... I

Soprano
 Prof
 Much - er - of all lands.

Violoncello
Vc intro new vib

Ka of Ka
lead / verse
vocables
 You - - - - - will I - - - - - you - - - - - are - - - - - long

Violin I
 [Scribbled out]

Violin II
 [Scribbled out]

Viola
 [Scribbled out]

Violoncello
 [Scribbled out]

Megat
 I sleep long

Viola
 [Scribbled out]

Chief
 a ho aho - ho

Wahne
 oh... If you do not...

Shari
 Mother of all lands... did you see the year

Viola
 [Scribbled out]

Ka of Ka
Drum
vocables

Violin I
 [Scribbled out]

Violin II
 [Scribbled out]

Viola
 [Scribbled out]

Violoncello
 [Scribbled out]

Megat
 off spring great or small. There is that in me I do not know what it is - but I know it is in me. Wounded and sweet - calls and send - that are bad - he comes.

Viola
 [Scribbled out]

Chief
 - - - - - Tak - a - wam - ma - ki - pa - de - ki - ma - a - - - - - e - lan - ke - - - - - ma - ki - or - ki - le - ni - ti - - - - - sli - - - - - ki

Wahne
 like, I reckon you are fra... guess, grass

Shari
 did you wait for your - - - - - did you wait - - - - - for

Viola
 [Scribbled out]

Ka of Ka
 grass - - - - - (is web - - - - - all) You - - - - - may wait - - - - - you - - - - - year - - - - - of - - - - - did - - - - - for - - - - - of - - - - - spring

Violin I
 [Scribbled out]

Violin II
 [Scribbled out]

Viola
 [Scribbled out]

Violoncello
 [Scribbled out]

Megat
 [Scribbled out]

Viola
 [Scribbled out]

Chief
 [Scribbled out]

Wahne
 how can I say anything... anything

Shari
 did you wait for your - - - - - did you wait - - - - - for

Viola
 [Scribbled out]

Ka of Ka
 [Scribbled out]

Violin I
 [Scribbled out]

Violin II
 [Scribbled out]

Viola
 [Scribbled out]

Violoncello
 [Scribbled out]

detune







ROOM 2
Boat of Ra, 2014
Portcullis Block, 2014













River of Fundament: Leaves of Grass, 2014

IX SEKHU

I bequeath myself to the dirt to grow from the grass I love,
If you want me again look for me under your boot-soles.

You will hardly know who I am or what I mean,
But I shall be good health to you nevertheless,
And filter and fibre your blood.

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,
Missing me one place search another,
I stop somewhere waiting for you.

Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*











FOREWORD

OKWUI ENWEZOR
Director, Haus der Kunst

Matthew Barney is a unique figure among contemporary artists. With a practice that unites the plastic relationship of performance, film, and sculptural production with their narrative possibilities, over the last two decades, he has made some of the most riveting and complex art of our time. The resulting combination of artistic disciplines has manifested a rich body of work whose physical, material, visual, and aural orchestration into one aesthetic system is rooted in the concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the epic attempt to formulate and create a total work of art. The rigorous discipline that permeates Barney's work rests as much on the exhaustive conceptual parameters he establishes for each given body of work, as in the emphasis that he brings to its calibrated presentation. As ideas and concepts are transformed into physical and symbolic material, they have often led to sculptures that are either indices of existing objects, or they have been transposed through the actions and performances that generate them into wholly new and hybrid forms. These, in turn, are woven into a narrative and dialectical logic of tightly choreographed sequences of cast objects, images, and actions that reveal a profound interest in storytelling.

Barney's oeuvre is an act of patience. It evolves slowly through periods of gestation, from exploratory phases of quiet contemplation into bursts of intense studio activity. Each body of work takes a long time to reach the peak of its idea, which then leads to the clarity of resolution when assembled into an exhibition. Only then is the full spectrum of artistic intention firmly established and the complete ensemble of sculpture, film, drawing, and photography presented in one cohesive exhibition narrative.

Matthew Barney: River of Fundament represents one of Barney's most complex and challenging endeavors to date. Based on Norman Mailer's novel *Ancient Evenings*, a provocative tale of sex, life, death, and reincarnation set in ancient Egypt, Barney used the novel as the basis for a libretto about desire, virility, and immortality. These themes

are recurring leitmotifs throughout his work, particularly as they touch on his interest in the archaeology of American identity, culture, landscape, and its associated myths. In the epic opera-film these myths are explored through three classic American automobile protagonists: a 1967 Chrysler Crown Imperial, a 1979 Pontiac Firebird Trans Am, and a 2001 Ford Crown Victoria. Barney and his collaborator, the composer Jonathan Bepler, not only locate the film within the American landscape; they take us on a tour of American musical canons, at the same time placing the film in an experimental tradition.

To bring this epic opera-film and its related exhibition *River of Fundament* to two of Munich's iconic institutions—Haus der Kunst and the renowned Bayerische Staatsoper—as the only instance, in the foreseeable future, where the totality of the project will be seen, has been both a challenge and a thrill. The project would not have been possible without Matthew's support, commitment, generosity, and vision. From the outset, Matthew immersed himself in the difficult task of completing the film, sculptures, and drawings of the project, while also being available to work closely with me on the exhibition. Over the last two and a half years, through numerous visits and meetings with Matthew, I have gained important insight into the practice of this enormously gifted artist and the scope of his vision as a thinker. In so doing, I have acquired an even deeper respect and admiration for his work.

The process of bringing such a technically complex and challenging exhibition to fruition has been accompanied by so many committed supporters and collaborators of Barney, particularly his galleries: Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels; Regen Projects, Los Angeles; and Sadie Coles HQ, London. I want to thank Barbara Gladstone, Shaun Regen, and Sadie Coles for their significant support for the exhibition. Barbara Gladstone and members of her gallery staff have shepherded the exhibition from beginning to end, availing us of all their resources: knowledge, expertise, and organizational skills. I am especially grateful to Barbara for her enthusiasm and commitment in making sure that every avenue of possibility was explored to smooth the path towards a successful project. I thank Allyson Spellacy, gallery director and artist liaison, for her tireless energy and goodwill, always at the ready with solutions that propelled the project forward. I also thank Max Falkenstein, gallery director, and Rosalie Benitez, a director at the gallery when the exhibition was initiated, who encouraged me to pursue the project. Her involvement with the project continued in editorial work for the performance playbills, which are included in this book.

So many other people have played critical roles in the planning and execution of the project. Without the lenders, including institutions and private collections, assembling an exhibition of this scope would have

been near to impossible. In this regard, I thank Maja Oeri, Laurenz Foundation and Schaulager Basel, for lending *Djed* and *Canopic Chest*—two central sculptures in the exhibition—and members of the foundation's staff, Heidi Naeff, Yvo Hartmann, and Marcus Broecker for their collaboration.

The book is much more than a record of the exhibition. It is a special object that encompasses and narrates the sweep of the development of *River of Fundament*—both film and exhibition—to its presentation in Munich. I thank the various contributors to the book, especially the authors: Hilton Als, Homi Bhabha, Diedrich Diederichsen, and David Walsh for their inspired, interpretive insights into the work. The designer Jeff Ramsey, of Kloopfer-Ramsey-Kwon, Brooklyn, developed and orchestrated the book's beautiful and unique design. He was aided by Keith Riley from Matthew's studio. I am especially indebted to editor Louise Neri, who worked closely on the book with Matthew, from its initial concept to final realization. Her long professional and personal engagement with the artist made her the right person for the task, and she has brought her sensitive and critical expertise and skills to the shaping and editing of the entire book. I am enormously grateful to Skira Rizzoli, New York, the publisher of the book, especially Charles Miers, publisher, Margaret Chace, associate publisher, and editors Giulia Di Filippo and Isabel Venero for their enthusiasm, patience, and expert management of the entire production from start to finish.

A project of this scope requires the commitment and expertise of so many people. I wish to thank the entire team of Matthew Barney's studio: Matthew Ryle, Mike Bellon, Keith Riley, Katherine Bel, Jade Archuleta Gans, Kevin Lips, Kanoa Baysa, Tyler McPhee, Dave Smith, Stuart Wright, Marko Markovic, Nick Broujos, Andre Ponticello, and Kasey Conlon. Their tireless energy, deep knowledge of each work, intense focus, and great devotion to Barney's vision infused the entire production at Haus der Kunst with singular professionalism and great personal warmth. As I continuously observed them: they never quit. It was a pleasure to collaborate with them. Thanks to Chris Seguire for his technical support for the film presentation and image-editing for the book; and a special acknowledgment to Peter Strietmann for filming *Drawing Restraint 21* at Haus der Kunst, and to Ari Marcopoulos for photographing it.

Budco (New York) and Wimmer (Munich) were the two specialist heavy-load companies responsible for ensuring the safe installation of the heavy and fragile sculptures in Munich; Stephan Strobl of Metallbau S. StroblStrobl and members of his crew—Andre Schulz, Alexander Pfefferkorn, Marli Ulrich, Benedikt Dempke, Alessandro Bornas, Robert Scheuregger, Dieter Langer, Werner Raphael, and Tim

Backus—oversaw the construction of the temporary pavilion in which the heaviest sculpture in the exhibition is presented; static engineering experts Ingenieurbüro Ludwig Baumgartner supported our work with their knowledge of the load-bearing capabilities of the building; Alois Mahl for electrical work and Thomas Reitz provided security services. These companies and the respective members of their teams ensured a seamless delivery of all facets of this exhibition. I thank them all for their contributions.

There are so many ways whereby projects of this scope find their way to the public. This one would not have been possible without the crucial support and collaboration offered by two institutions: I am proud of the partnership between Haus der Kunst and Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich, in presenting the European premiere of Matthew and Jonathan's groundbreaking opera-film *River of Fundament* at the opera house. I am especially grateful to the Director of Bayerische Staatsoper, Nikolaus Bachler, who enthusiastically agreed to the cooperation at the inception of the exhibition. Members of his staff, especially Nico Sutter, Lea Heutelbeck, and Petra Ronzani, have been great colleagues throughout.

The exhibition has benefitted greatly from the partnership with MONA (Museum of Old and New Art), Hobart, Tasmania. Haus der Kunst has organized the exhibition in collaboration with members of the museum's curatorial staff Nicole Durling and Olivier Varenne, led by the museum's founder and director, David Walsh. I am thrilled that the exhibition will be traveling to MONA; its extensive collection of ancient Egyptian art and artifacts provides a fitting context for Matthew's Egyptian-inspired opus.

As always, the staff at Haus der Kunst has been exemplary. Every member of the staff has brought the same level of commitment, professionalism, and collegiality towards the execution of this project. I am indebted to their relentless hard work, and to the customary hospitality they extend to all the artists who exhibit at our institution. I thank Marco Graf von Matuschka, chief financial officer; my assistants Teresa Lengl and Iris Ludwig, and the Curatorial Office: Ulrich Wilmes, chief curator; Anna Schneider, adjunct assistant curator; Tim Roerig, curatorial intern; Isabella Kredler, assistant to chief curator; and Andrea Saul, public programs, for their work. I must single out Tina Köhler, head of exhibition production, who brought her customary tenacity, precision, knowledge, and leadership skills in managing, coordinating, and organizing the entire logistics and production. She and Anton Köttl, technical director and head of facilities, oversaw an efficient construction, technical, logistical, and facility management, assisted by Sofia Sprick, project assistant, and Glenn Rositter. Cassandre Schmid, registrar;

Johannes Baur and Susanne von der Groeben, conservators; art handlers and installers, Martin Hast, Osoek Kwon Song, Vincent Faciu, Florian Hubalek, Christian Leitner, Magnus Thoren, Adam Gander, Jose Zapata, Markus Brandenburg, Hansi Frank, Tanja Eiler, Elena Carvajal, Marzieh Kermani, and Laura Worj; and Marino Solokhov, audiovisual media, all contributed to the smooth installation of the exhibition. I also thank members of the museum's External Affairs department for the extensive outreach they have coordinated: Stephan Barthelmeß, head; Elena Heitsch, press; Anna Schueller, digital communication and social media, and Carina Essl, Friederike Ebeling, and Maxi Kolle, social media assistants; Martina Fischer, mediation and visitors relations; Tina Anjou, external affairs and marketing; and Jacqueline Falk, press assistant; Elizabeth Stoiber, and Sophie Wagner, external affairs interns; Chris Gonnawein (Funny Paper) design; Christian Gries (Kulturkonsorten) digital and online technical support; Maximilian Geuter, photographer; and our partners from Hochschule für Fernsehen und Film, München (Academy for Television and Film), Nora Ahrens and Stephan Vorbrugg (coordinators); Lion Bischof, Felicitas Sonvilla, Johanna Thalmann, Moritz Binder, and Jonas Priestersbach (film crew). Thanks to Markus Mueller for his insights, and Luz Gyalui for her work on correcting the transcripts of my interviews with Matthew Barney. Uchenna Soraya Enwezor was a constant presence and a source of support and encouragement.

I would like to acknowledge the commitment of members of our supervisory board to the vision of contemporary art that we have been presenting over the last several decades. I am especially grateful for the annual financial support of our shareholders: Freistaat Bayern, Joseph Schörghuber Stiftung, Gesellschaft der Freunde Haus der Kunst e.V.

Finally, I wish to express my deepest admiration and thanks to Matthew Barney and Jonathan Bepler for their achievement with the film *River of Fundament*. In their conception of this cinematic event as the confluence of styles and paradigms, they have, throughout two decades of collaboration, made an enduring contribution to the discipline and field of contemporary art. This film pushes and tests the boundaries of different artistic and sonic formats, while remaining deeply embedded in the way in which canonical references in Norman Mailer's novel inform the liberties that they have taken with its composition.

Having had the opportunity to organize this exhibition with Matthew, my abiding respect for the depth of his work, the rigor of his vision, and the singularity of his aesthetic principles has necessarily grown. I thank Matthew for his confidence in sharing his work with us.

Portals and Processions: Matthew Barney's *River of Fundament*

OKWUI ENWEZOR

THRESHOLDS

Over the last twenty-seven years Matthew Barney has produced some of the most accomplished, demanding, and distinctive bodies of work in contemporary art. A leading artist of his generation, he is a visionary figure whose complex and radical forms have generated an entirely new artistic vocabulary that is as unique as it is protean. At the root of his provocative art is an examination of physical and biological systems as a portal to the psychic, symbolic, mythological, occult, and archetypal dimensions of human experience and consciousness. These principles reveal themselves through performances, videos, drawings, films, photography, music, and sculpture, generating eruptions of sexual, scatological, abject, and allegorical forms within an aesthetic system of narrative discontinuity and expository totality. Through processes of epic ordeal, sublimation, and bodily transformation/metamorphosis that explore the boundaries of athleticism, masculinity, aberrant sexuality, and the artistic id and its ego, Barney's work has tested the extreme limits of the human body and subjectivity while probing the cultural myths and dynamics at work in the collective unconscious.

Through daring and strenuous performance and elaborate studio process, Barney has experimented with the plastic possibilities of unconventional sculptural materials—petroleum jelly, beeswax, sulfur, salt, and modern synthetics normally used for reconstructive surgery—to give shape and force to extraordinary alchemical manifestations of creative fervor. At the same time, he has brought a highly experimental use of narrative to traditional principles of sculptural and object production. Narrative, in turn, offers further legibility to the iconography, materials, actions, and performances that inspire and generate the sculptures

as they evolve through filmic and sonic structures into symbolic and allegorical forms. His work, as it undergoes transitions from filmic and performative *mise en scènes* into different structures of object and spatial relations unique to the language of sculpture, suggests a synthesis between the physical and indexical languages of technologically cast objects and filmically recorded actions. The tension that lies between the physical and indexical can either be a vehicle for the collapse of the febrile membrane that marks the border between the real and the imaginary, or it can further elucidate the narrative thrust of an entire ensemble of referential systems: physiological, technological, cultural, literary, mythic, geographic, or gendered. In many instances, actions and performances manifest films and videos; in turn, their recording occurs within an artistic production of a complex aesthetic system that serves as a catalyst for the sculptures that appear in different sequences and stages of performance and filming, and which occupy symbolic, imaginary, and physical realms within the overall narrative cycle.

Beginning with the *Drawing Restraint* series of performance-derived projects developed in 1987¹ while still an undergraduate at Yale University, Barney started drawing from the latent energies of the body as well as psychosomatic mental states. For him, this ongoing work represents a laboratory of aesthetic possibilities and remains a fertile terrain for experimenting with different dialectical concerns related to physical and mental challenges.² *Drawing Restraint*, in its different manifestations, presents an important insight into his ongoing explorations and examinations of form and the aesthetic systems that enclose and surmount them.³ The inherited forms and the vehicles that deliver them into visual, somatic, and phenomenological experiences are still retained in Barney's subsequent bodies of work, developing into a highly evolved and continuously refined artistic field that feeds all of his production. Today, the language of form, the granular grammar of material, and the privileging of long-form narrative cycles remain at the base of all his artistic and critical endeavors.

As a young artist, Barney had at his disposal, preternaturally, the tools of a personal iconographic philosophy and a vision of how his

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1. For the tracing of the evolution of Matthew Barney's early work, see Nancy Spector, "In Potentia: Matthew Barney and Joseph Beuys," in *All in the Present Must Be Transformed: Matthew Barney and Joseph Beuys* (Berlin: Deutsche Guggenheim, 2006).
 2. For an insightful discussion of this early body of work, in a conversation with Barney, see Hans Ulrich Obrist, *The Conversation Series 27* (Cologne: Walther König, 2013).
 3. For the exhibition in Haus der Kunst, Barney produced the site-specific performance *Drawing Restraint 21* (2014) in the central gallery of the museum, and a related sculpture, *Portcullis Block* (2014).

work could be differentiated from that of his contemporaries. *Drawing Restraint* provided him with a key to formulate an artistic structure that draws from dialectical experiments of thought and action, resistance and passivity, physicality and restraint. More important, it furnished him with protocols that enabled the manifestation of a profusion of forms: drawing, video, photography, and sculpture, all of which exist within the frame of aesthetic totality that defies conventional distinctions of primary and supplemental mediums.

Barney's ability to blur the line between forms, and thus open up possibilities in which aesthetic categories can be submitted to the conceptual parameters around which his artistic procedures are developed, has been shaped by his interest in and commitment to narrative as the propulsive force that drives each project. As Nancy Spector, his most complex and rigorous interpreter to date, has written: "The ongoing *Drawing Restraint* series . . . took as its point of departure the biochemical principle of hypertrophy or how muscles develop in response to increasing resistance. In a sequence of studio exercises, Barney applied this concept to the creation of form, attempting to draw while subjected to an array of disciplinary devices."⁴ These resistance exercises and the forms they generate—drawing, video, photography, and sculpture—whereby the act of making a mark transforms into an Oedipal struggle between form and content, id and ego, and thereby a test of artistic and personal will, created a unique artistic language that allowed Barney a level of conceptual and aesthetic latitude that twenty-five years later remains unexhausted, continuously generating new possibilities of performative extension. Deploying both unconventional materials and traditional tools (from athletic gear and prosthetics to graphite on paper, as well as casting sculptures in thermo-plastics, petroleum jelly, and metals), the *Drawing Restraint* series has been described by Klaus Kertess as "figures of friction, embodiments of the struggle of art-making processes."⁵ Spector went on to suggest that, "as Barney's career developed, the process that had begun in the studio as a rather straightforward transposition from the realms of athletic training and biology to that of aesthetic invention gradually evolved into an elaborate narrative structure."⁶

These ideas would be explored, and taken further in the subsequent series: the lavish, epic, and seminal *Cremaster* cycle (1994–2002). In this series, Barney mined a rich terrain of artistic, literary, biological,

4. Spector, "In Potentia," p. 17.

5. Klaus Kertess, "F(r)iction," in *Matthew Barney: Drawing Restraint 7*, ed. Cristina Bechtler (Ostfildern: Cantz Verlag, 1995), n.p.

6. Spector, "In Potentia," p. 17.

and technological references. He drew attention to the complex interplays of physicality and desire, eroticism and mythology, duration and the epic, which are interwoven to present a dramaturgical synthesis of aesthetic totality.⁷ His singular and unprecedented aesthetic disposition, established in the experience of the materials and their potentials, transitions, and transformations, has reoriented how we understand the ways in which physical and psychic experience shape the conventions of storytelling through objects, images, and sound. The *Cremaster* cycle marked the radical culmination of such an "elaborate narrative structure." The five-part work, which includes films shot in different locations (Isle of Man, Budapest, Utah salt flats, Boise, New York's Guggenheim Museum and Chrysler Building), is an extravagant, all-consuming feat of artistic vision in both scale and pitch, structure and narrative drive. It inhabits a grandeur hardly ever seen in the field of contemporary art, except perhaps in the work of such artists and writers as Joseph Beuys, Richard Serra, Bruce Nauman, Norman Mailer, and Ernest Hemingway, who have served Barney as important artistic references and standard-bearers.

THE RITUAL ARCHETYPE

There are books that are about journeys and books that are journeys. Such journeys often suggest symbolic, ritual, spiritual, or mythic realms. In encoded form the journeys appear like veined traceries (hieroglyphs) struck across a cartographic surface that signify layers of encrypted meaning. In many classical texts (both religious and secular), the abiding forms of representation—what Edgar Allan Poe calls "cryptographs"⁸—are often signified by a spiritual quest, individual desire, erotic confusion and carnal excess, corporeal and psychic transformation.⁹ It is only after undergoing the rite of passage that the hero/protagonist is deemed worthy of claiming the reward. In these classic texts we find figurations

7. The idea of aesthetic totality that curator Nancy Spector refers to as Barney's "self-enclosed aesthetic system" is very much related to the German concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* first associated with the work of composer Richard Wagner. The term refers to the synthesis of diverse elements to create a total artwork. Barney's art, in eschewing discrete bodies of work but aiming at presenting the comprehensiveness of a given cycle, certainly draws from this tradition. In fact, the notion of synthesis reveals the dialectical structures through which his art is often developed. For a more fully developed reading of Barney's ideas and process, see Nancy Spector, *Matthew Barney: The Cremaster Cycle* (New York: Guggenheim Museum, 2002).

8. Quoted in John T. Irwin, *American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1983), p. 43.

9. These states are common threads and are familiar in Barney's art. They are also standard elements in most creation-myth cycles.

of journeys, wanderings that follow paths, retrace steps, veer off trails, plunge down cliffs, detour into dead ends, crash into disasters, rise from abysses, split off in multiple directions. This is the root of all creation-myth cycles, part self-invention, part cultural regeneration.

Regardless of cultural situation or tradition, all books contain and carry traces of other books. In short, books that develop from the structure of journeys are like doubles and shadows of other books, sagas, stories, legends, and epics. There are two recognizable features to the narratives: there are those that unfold horizontally across the sheer immensity of space and loops of time, in the confounding folds of historical experience; Homer's *Odyssey*, Samuel Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, *The Mahabaratha*, *Epic of Gilgamesh*, Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*, and Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* are among such books, the horizontal literary epics whose narrative structures are as fantastical as their magical and imaginative powers. It is not unreasonable to situate Barney's artistic aspirations—particularly the five-part *Cremaster* cycle—within this context. *River of Fundament* extends the artist's relationship to, and engagement with, these traditions of storytelling. Perhaps the core genesis of his work is the grounding conceptual principle that he developed very early in his practice, through its narrative progression around themes of transformation and regeneration. Each chapter of the *Cremaster* cycle permits the introduction of a new obstacle to achieving a kind of mythic potency of the self.

Then there are literary journeys that are vertical, those that deploy the structure and architecture of descent and ascent to link the development and movement of the text, story, and imagery. Dante's *Inferno* is experienced in this way. It is traveled vertically through a dizzying descent and terrifying penetration that drills through the panting crust of the earth and into its core. Across many cultures, these epic journeys of personal and mythic quests have come to stand for a vast oceanic space of experience, with interludes and conceptual shifts, intricate strands and dangling threads constituting a culture's collective unconscious, archetypes, and a kind of compressed alabaster void of self-invention, that defy conventional logics of procedural linearity or aesthetic dichotomy of real and unreal, fantastical and representational; instead, all these features are interwoven. In the essay "Morality and Aesthetics in the Ritual Archetype," Wole Soyinka, deploying the dramatic exegesis, explains that

the setting of Ritual, of the drama of the gods, is the cosmic entirety, and our approach to this drama might usefully be made through the comparable example of the Epic which represents also, on a different level, another access to the Rites of Passage. The epic celebrates

the victory of the human spirit over forces inimical to self-extension. It concretises in the form of action the arduous birth of the individual or communal entity, creates a new being through utilizing and stressing the language of self-glorification.¹⁰

It is only through leaps of imagination, through the transcendence of social and cultural limitations, by summoning forth opposing ideals of the godly and the demonic, good and evil, natural and phenomenological, rational and irrational, symbolic and metaphoric, artificial and real, that we come to understand the textures of these journeys and requite ourselves to deciphering the texts and acts that describe them.

DOUBLES AND SHADOWS

Norman Mailer's *Ancient Evenings*, the Egyptian novel that he labored over for more than ten years, was published to divided opinion in 1983. To both critics and admirers, the novel is sometimes derided as pretentious, unreadable, even incomprehensible. A sprawling text of over 700 pages, it aspires to, and unfolds along, the classic narrative of book as journey, sharing many similar narrative features as some of its antecedents. It is a book that embodies the form of mythology from which it borrows: in fact, it represents an act of doubling of the ancient Egyptian *Book of the Dead* (*The Papyrus of Ani*),¹¹ which testifies to the legend of Osiris, the Egyptian god of the dead and the underworld as well as of the afterlife. Mailer's contemporary retelling of the Osiris legend is set in the ancient Egyptian period (1290–1100 BCE) and told in seven sections (books),¹² which represent the seven stages of the rite of passage of the soul's departure from the body through its journey to the afterlife, from the earthly realm of birth and death to the spiritual order of spirit and reincarnation.

In the *Book of the Dead*, the seven stages are known as the Seven Arits. Each *arit* represents a doorway, a portal through which the soul must pass, armed with a message (prayers, spells, words, names, magical incantations, litanies, anagrams) that is delivered to the gatekeeper and watchman before passage is granted to the next *arit*. It is only after this

10. Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 2.

11. The *Egyptian Book of the Dead*, as this body of text is known, is a collection of liturgical writing used in Egyptian funerary rituals. Fragments are found inscribed or painted on tomb walls, pyramids, coffins, and sarcophagi.

12. Norman Mailer, *Ancient Evenings* (New York: Little Brown, 1983). The book's seven chapters are "The Book of One Man Dead," "The Book of the Gods," "The Book of the Child," "The Book of the Charioteer," "The Book of Queens," "The Book of the Pharaoh," "The Book of Secrets."

prodigious journey, through feats of trial, cunning, endurance and perseverance, that the soul can be reincarnated and achieve eternal life. The passages that immediately follow the depictions, incantations, prayers, and exhortations in the Seven Arits are devoted to Osiris, just as the entire devotional texts of the *Papyrus of Ani* are dedicated to the god:

If [these] words be recited by the spirit when he shall come to the Seven Arits, and as he entereth the doors, he shall neither be turned back nor repulsed before Osiris, and he shall be made to have his being among the blessed spirits, and to have dominion among the ancestral followers of Osiris. If these things be done for any spirit he shall have his being in that place like a lord of eternity in one body with Osiris, and at no place shall any being contend against him.¹⁵

Here mythology is joined with ambition, aspiration with determination, the corporeal with the spiritual, death with rebirth, transformation with transcendence. These are the “fierce forces” that roam the vast plains of Mailer’s reimagining of literary eternity. In defiance of the novel’s detractors, Mailer upheld *Ancient Evenings* to be his best and greatest work. The novel begins with a typical mythological void: “The darkness was deep.” It is into this void, inside an underground, stony chamber, that the central protagonist, *ka* (spirit double) of the dead nobleman Menenhetet I, wakes. In anticipation of the unending, twisting, confusing paths of the journey through the Seven Arits, Mailer’s book begins with a highly self-conscious literariness, a line that is more a declaration than soaring poetry, but nevertheless one that immediately grabs hold of the reader: “Crude thoughts and fierce forces are my state.” The eminent critic Harold Bloom, in a trenchant review of the novel, refers to the opening line as an “artful sentence.”¹⁴ Indeed, it is. It alerts the reader that Mailer’s intentions are pitched toward historical, epochal heights, just as the debasing carnal violation and violence—from fist-fucking to promiscuous defecation—that follow will take the reader down into the lower depths, the sediment of unforgiving muck, a thick, viscous “black mayonnaise,”¹⁵ the channel of fundament that runs the length

13. *Papyrus of Ani; Egyptian Book of the Dead*, trans. E. A. Wallis Budge (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania African Studies Center). Retrieved from http://www.africa.upenn.edu/Books/Papyrus_Ani.html.

14. Harold Bloom, “Norman in Egypt,” in *Norman Mailer*, ed. Harold Bloom (Broomall, PA: Chelsea House Publishers, 2005), p. 33. See also the original review: *New York Review of Books*, April 28, 1983. Available at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1983/apr/28/norman-in-egypt>.

and breadth of the novel and through which the reader travels and propels the narrative. Bloom describes the novel’s trafficking in debasement and its link to Egyptian mythology:

What Mailer adds are his own emphases upon scatology, buggery, and the war between women and men, but the fundamental material on the wavering border between the human and the divine, and on the world of the dead, is already there in Egyptian mythology for him to develop. His book’s peculiar and disturbing sincerity is its strength. The reader is likely to be numbed by the repetition of charnel-house horrors, and even the most avid enthusiasts of buggery, whether heterosexual or homosexual, may flinch at confronting Mailer’s narrative exuberance in heaping up sodomistic rapes, but the religious seriousness of all these representations is rather humorlessly unquestioned and unquestionable.¹⁶

Trapped inside the stony chamber of Mailer’s opening lines, Menenhetet I intones:

I do not know who I am. Nor what I was. I cannot hear a sound. Pain is near that will be like no pain felt before.

Is this the fear that holds the universe? Is pain the fundament? All the rivers veins of pain? The oceans my mind awash? I have a thirst like the heat of earth on fire. Mountains writhe. I see waves of flame. Washes, flashes, waves of flame.

Thirst is in the rivers of the body. The rivers burn but do not move.

Although Mailer might have conceived his novel as a historical text, it did bear some contemporary resonances with the cultural state of decay in America in the early 1980s—of the emerging AIDS pandemic, economic anxiety, industrial decline, right-wing politics, and the imminent culture wars. A novel trafficking in exuberant enactments of anal sex during the 1980s is likely to receive a rather hostile audience, particularly since the

15. “Black mayonnaise” refers to the dense, resinous, and coagulated slick black oil residue that lies at the bottom of Newtown Creek along the Gowanus Canal. The canal is one of the most toxic and polluted waterways in the United States. The result of a massive 17 million gallon oil spill from the bulk oil depots on the banks of Newtown Creek, the depots owned by the Standard Oil Company generated one of the biggest environmental disasters, which thirty years later is still being cleaned up. For a report on Newtown Creek and black mayonnaise, see Julie Leibach, “Black Mayonnaise,” *Scienceline*, posted January 24, 2007. http://scienceline.org/2007/01/liebach_env_greenpointe/

16. Bloom, “Norman in Egypt,” p. 35.

political mood under Ronald Reagan had become unabashedly Victorian and conservative. The debate around sex and exchange of bodily fluids in the shadow of AIDS was such that the orificial¹⁷ and the fecal were read, in conservative religious quarters, as the ultimate desecralization of sex and the body. Theorists such as Leo Bersani, in his influential essay, “Is the Rectum a Grave?”¹⁸ would explore the more complex intersection of sex and death as the fearsome entombment of the body. While *Ancient Evenings* is literally composed as a double of the *Book of the Dead (Papyrus of Ani)*, it was written in the shadow of the changing cultural tide in which these debates were vivid. Bloom describes the tenor of these times, comparing Mailer’s novel to his earlier achievement in *The Executioner’s Song* and Thomas Pynchon’s *Gravity’s Rainbow*:

But there is also spiritual power in Mailer’s fantasy (it is not the historical novel that it masks itself as being) and there is a relevance to current reality in America that actually surpasses that of Mailer’s largest previous achievement, *The Executioner’s Song*. More than before, Mailer’s fantasies, now brutal and unpleasant, catch the precise accents of psychic realities within and between us. *Ancient Evenings* rivals *Gravity’s Rainbow* as an exercise in what has to be called a monumental sado-anarchism, and one aspect of Mailer’s phantasmagoria may be its need to challenge Pynchon precisely where he is strongest. Paranoia, in both these American amalgams of Prometheus and Narcissus, becomes a climate.¹⁹

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17. Debates around contemporary art in the 1980s and early 1990s were fraught with issues of bodily abjection. Robert Mapplethorpe’s photographs, especially his early graphic sadomasochistic depictions of rectal penetrations of men by other men’s fists prompted hysterical responses by politicians that resulted in government foundations such as the National Endowment of the Arts withdrawing funds from artists making and institutions showing such work. Art in which bodily fluids figured prominently was also the target of denunciation. Two notorious cases were Andres Serrano’s *Piss Christ* (1987), a large-format color photograph of a crucifix submerged in the golden-yellow liquid of the artist’s urine; and the extreme live performances of the performance artist Ron Athey, a performance artist whose actions involved the cutting and bleeding of a co-performer’s body in front of the public. It is curious that Matthew Barney’s iconography of masochism, and in particular works such as *Field Dressing (Orifil)*, 1989, never featured in these debates, even though his references to explicit rectal transformations were occurring around the same time.
18. Leo Bersani, “Is the Rectum a Grave?” in *October*, Vol 43: *AIDS: Cultural Analysis/Cultural Activism* (Winter 1987), pp. 197–222. Another reference worth considering is Jeffrey Masten, “Is the Fundament a Grave,” in *The Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporeality in Early Modern Europe*, eds. David Hillman and Carla Mazzio (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 129–46.
19. Bloom, “Norman in Egypt,” pp. 33–34

AMERICAN HIEROGLYPHICS

Barney’s new epic work *River of Fundament* is part of these “American amalgams of Prometheus and Narcissus.” Its climate touches the far reaches of artistic daring and narrative solipsism. In its lengthy and majestic meanderings, *River of Fundament* self-consciously accommodates a situation that becomes aesthetically elevated by Jonathan Bepler’s brilliant and complex musical score. It is a bracing visual and sonic event. Like Mailer’s novel, the film’s uncompromising and exuberant imagery, its length, the geographic scope of its three acts,²⁰ the different and dense layers (sculptures, drawings, recorded live performances staged in site-specific locations across America), through which the entire phantasmagoria is experienced, are likely to exhaust and divide opinions. The project, initially conceived by Barney and Bepler as a live opera, began in 2007. Its final form comprises a nearly six-hour-long symphonic-opera film authored by the artist and Bepler,²¹ monumental sculptures, scores of drawings, photographs, and storyboards. In its aesthetic totality, *River of Fundament* derives its form and narrative thrust directly from Mailer’s *Ancient Evenings* and the earlier *Cremaster* cycle. Transitions between the novel and *Cremaster* can be perceived throughout the genesis and transformations of its forms, images, and sounds, as well as the return of the Entered Apprentice (reprised by Barney) and Entered Novitiate (reprised by Aimee Mullins), last seen in *Cremaster 3* (2002). Another direct and vital connection between *Cremaster 3* and *River of Fundament* is the centrality of the Chrysler Crown Imperial in the iconography of the two films.

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20. Throughout *River of Fundament*—film and sculptures—there is a striking recurrence of triadic structure, a classic religious iconographic structure representing body, soul, and spirit. Scenes occur across three American cities; three classic American automobiles are destroyed and reincarnated; there are three Normans (I, II, and III), each played by men of different generations, who transit from one stage to the next through three animals—cow, buffalo, and elk; and three Queen Hathfertilis. There are three phalli of Osiris in *Coming Forth by Day*; three cast hoods in *Imperial Mask*; three sarcophagi in *Sekhu*. To the extent that the employment of triadic form structures the compositional and narrative procession of *River of Fundament*, the work certainly reflects Barney’s fundamental use of religio-philosophical dialectical reasoning to shape the iconographic codes of the entire work. Through layers of repetition, these codes become increasingly like a transparent sheath laid upon the body of form and myth. In fact, Christian Scheidemann, in a sensitive and perceptive essay on Barney’s use of material, described a triadic “cyclical dynamism” in Barney’s sculptural production “as it moves between states of ‘Situation’ (chaos), ‘Condition’ (discipline), and ‘Production’ (creation).” Christian Scheidemann, “Notes from the Laboratory,” in *Barney/Beuys: All in the Present Must Be Transformed*, ed. Nancy Spector (Berlin: Deutsche Guggenheim, 2006), p. 131.
21. *River of Fundament* is the sixth collaboration between Barney and Bepler. The two worked previously on all five films of the *Cremaster* cycle, for which Bepler was responsible for the music and score. The collaborations between artist and composer underscore an important aspect of Barney’s interest in examining American structures of representation, as well as cultural archetypes.

Drawn as a portrait of the American author, this new epic cycle takes up the elaborate funerary systems of ancient Egyptian mythology and the pharaonic court to examine the story of man and his destiny from birth to death, and the reincarnation of the soul in the afterlife. The figure through whom this transformation is realized is Mailer himself, represented three times as Norman I, II, and III and incarnated at his wake by three different actors—the author's son, John Buffalo Mailer; the free jazz percussionist Milton Graves; and the ninety-two-year-old Chief Dave Beautiful Bald Eagle; and, in the film, through the procession of his spirit doubles (*ka*) from life to afterlife. Where Mailer's narrative focuses on the orgiastic and hypersexual transformations of the human body, Barney, in a series of live and filmed performances, enacts the recurring cycles of reincarnation through the bodies of three classic American automobiles—the 1967 Chrysler Crown Imperial,²² which is reincarnated as a 1979 Pontiac Firebird Trans Am, and, finally, into the 2001 Ford Crown Victoria Police Interceptor—creating a contemporary allegory of death and rebirth within the American industrial landscape. In the performances and the film, each of the three automobiles (which represent the so-called Big Three U.S. automotive behemoths based in Detroit) wears on its front bonnet an ornate mask crafted of the entire front end of the Chrysler Imperial, thus symbolizing the iconic states of American industrial modernity.

Through the procession of the cars and their mythological moorings across the American industrial landscape, Barney and Bepler use the performances to create a new American hieroglyphics. In the second live performance *Khu*, set in Detroit, the undercarriage and engine block of the Crown Imperial were modified ritually, in a mold taken from the car's undercarriage, to resemble the *djed* column, a reference to the spine of the god Osiris in ancient Egyptian mythology. The modified car body and *djed* column were then cast from a mold formed directly in the earth using a medieval casting method. The casting of the twenty-five-ton iron sculpture occurred during the final sequence of the performance, in which the cut-up parts of the Imperial were fed into five custom-built furnaces and then poured to create *Djed Car Body* and its massive overspill. Passages from the book and retellings drawn from its iconographic tables and the wastelands of the American industrial landscape form the basis and point of departure for the resulting film, *River of Fundament*. Initially conceived as an opera in seven acts, the epic

22. The 1967 Chrysler Crown Imperial was last encountered in Barney's *Cremaster 3* as a victorious personage in the Demolition Derby competition in the Chrysler Building in New York.

operatic and symphonic film, constructed of three acts that last nearly six hours, brings to conclusion the mammoth artistic and musical odyssey that is unlike anything Barney and Bepler have ever attempted. Over the seven years of its development and evolution, *River of Fundament* has given rise to a range of visual, sculptural, and sonic pieces that are only now being brought into one field of representation.

In the film, Barney and Bepler bring their own radical interpretations to Mailer's text, using it as the basis for the libretto written by Barney and scored by Bepler. As much as the film represents the project's context, the accompanying score, which drives the narrative, establishes the film's melancholic mood. It is like a tour through American musical styles, from free jazz to *ranchera* singing, *mariachi* music, rhythm and blues, funk, classical arias, Native American powwow recital, marching bands, and a capella improvisations. The result is a work of astonishing magnificence, a film of resplendent *horror vacui* and implacable sonic effects. Its relentless and uncompromising narrative arc is structured into seven acts of filmed and live performances. The three live performances are *Ren*, which takes place in and around a Chrysler car dealership in downtown Los Angeles in 2008; *Khu*, set in several locations in Detroit in 2010; and *Ba*, performed in 2013 in the dry docks of the decommissioned Brooklyn Navy Yard in New York. All three performances push and stretch the limits of imaginative credibility. Like Mailer's ravenous text filled with abject sex, shit, decay, violence and violation, Barney and Bepler's film operates on crescendos of highly textured visual hyperrealism and richly dense sonic and musical fields. What emerges is a force field of the entropic and dystopic, fluid states and inert orders of organic matter mixed with jangling, screeching, whispering, hissing, crunching, gurgling, bubbling, spluttering, and rushing torrents and walls of sound that make the viewer either recoil with horror or sit up in attentive alertness. It makes for a singularly absorbing experience.

In many ways, *River of Fundament* is less an interpretation of *Ancient Evenings* than it is the novel's *ka*, the artistic double of the literary text. Moreover, Barney—who long admired Mailer and had actively worked with him, as well as using *The Executioner's Song* for *Cremaster 2*²³ (1999)—may well represent Mailer's own *ka*—especially reading *Ancient Evenings* and considering Barney's epic reinterpretation of Mailer's magnum opus as a parallel American odyssey. In connecting the shared conceptual and cultural spaces of Mailer and Barney, their respective works evoke what John T. Irwin refers to

23. Norman Mailer played the character of Harry Houdini in Barney's film.

in the writings of several nineteenth-century American writers (e.g., Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Poe, Hawthorne, and Melville) as “hieroglyphic doubling.”²⁴ It seems that Barney’s responses to both *Ancient Evenings* and ancient Egyptian mythology are of a piece with the esoteric tropes he has employed in other aspects of his work: the relentless testing of limits (both physical and aesthetic); the extravagant deployment of ancient symbolism; medieval heraldry and the use of arcane occult rituals and Masonic symbols; and the myths of the American automobile. Prominently featured in *River of Fundament*, are classic cars: the Chrysler Crown Imperial, the Pontiac Firebird Trans Am, and the Ford Crown Victoria Police Interceptor. Each makes an appearance and is transformed or reincarnated into the other through the concept of hieroglyphic doubling at the base of the American canon.

Thus, “crude thoughts and fierce forces” are also fundamental to Matthew Barney’s art. He fashions himself and his work in the American epic tradition, and through his work he creates a distinctive, individual character of the artist-self that is wholly original and rare among contemporary artists of his generation. His works involve journeys that plumb the depths and limits of physical order, they test and challenge accepted conventions of structural and temporal unity of a work, and they risk the traumas of psychic evisceration. In bringing the physical and psychic constellations to inform the narrative drives and processes of his work, Barney aspires to what Wole Soyinka describes as “the ritual archetype,” often “represented in drama by the passage-rites of hero-gods, a projection of man’s conflict with forces which challenge his efforts to harmonize with his environment, physical, social, and psychic.”²⁵

ANCIENT PERIODIC TABLE

Barney and Bepler started work on *River of Fundament* in 2007. As the project grew more complex, and as the research and preparation for its various components took shape, the two began thinking of it as more than just a long-form durational work. Barney had reached the conclusion of a cycle in the *Cremaster* project that seemed to call for aesthetic abnegation, for a formal reorientation in his practice. That did not necessarily mean abandoning the established precepts he had developed and honed over more than two decades. Nevertheless, if he were to extricate himself from the powerful hold that *Cremaster* had over the

24. On the concept of hieroglyphic doubling, see John T. Irwin, *American Hieroglyphics: The Symbol of the Egyptian Hieroglyphics in the American Renaissance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1983), pp. 43–64.

25. Wole Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 1.

collective understanding of his practice, not only would his new work have to serve as a natural transition from his earlier achievements; it must also mark a clear departure, setting a precedent for all future work. *River of Fundament* is the vehicle for this reorientation. Despite lavish flourishes in some of the sculptures, its formal sobriety and antitheatricity are both surprising and deeply rewarding. Presented in its entirety for the first time at Haus der Kunst, it marks an important shift in Barney’s aesthetic language.

The idea for the exhibition *River of Fundament* came about partly because of how I perceived this shift. It was a visceral as well as an intellectual response to the new sculptures that contributed to my interest. I saw the project’s four earliest sculptures—*Djed*, *Canopic Chest*, *Secret Name*, and *Sacrificial Anode*—at an exhibition at Barbara Gladstone Gallery, New York in fall 2011. The experience was unlike anything I had ever known of Barney’s work. Not only had he changed some of his primary materials, but the use of elemental metals and traditional metal casting, while still retaining the casting techniques and sculptural language of earlier work, was a radical departure from the essential plastic qualities, surfaces, and materiality of the *Cremaster* and *Drawing Restraint* sculptures. As in his previous work, the methods by which Barney creates these sculptures are firmly rooted in biochemical and alchemical processes.

It was as if this move to metal casting—bronze, copper, iron, lead, brass, and zinc—infused the sculptures with a new kind of sublime power. The brooding and enigmatic works, the almost primitive and obdurate forms, the crude shapes they sprouted made them appear like prehistoric vessels formed from an ancient periodic table, as if they had been exhumed from the sediment of an ancient dried-up riverbed. Their massive archaic presence and carefully modeled surfaces, as well as the painstakingly worked patinas, shifted my perspective of Barney’s work entirely. In contrast to his earlier works, which had the appearance of technologically advanced objects, here were sculptural forms possessing a completely new narrative disposition that hinted at ancient history and myth. They fascinated me, not so much for their scale, forceful presence, power, and skilled engineering, but for their sensitivity, delicacy, and abstract qualities.

Later sculptures combined these features, such as the three-part *Sekhu* (2013). This work is composed of massive rectangular blocks of cast sulfur and quarried salt that rest on corroded and polished cast bronze sleds. A third sled lies empty except for a piece of drive shaft, cast in brass and burnished, laid horizontally on bars along the middle. Subtle references drawn from Minimalist sculpture are visible throughout. However, where Minimalist sculpture refused subjective content

and denied narrative, Barney's sculpture, through the process of defamiliarization, introduces narrative, and makes references to sexuality, figuration, and latent energy.

Djed's several components emanate the same latent energy. The landscape-like flatness of the massive overflow, despite weighing over twelve tons, appears both light and fragile. Its abstractness is counteracted by the solid cast iron block of the *Djed Car Body's* figurative distinctiveness. It retains the visible iconographic description, along with the elongated phallus-like extension of the drive shaft at the center of the sculpture, of the undercarriage of the Chrysler Crown Imperial from which it was cast. Looking closely at the sculpture and seeing the places where Barney altered and refigured it to resemble the shape of the column often viewed as the symbol of Osiris's divine power, *Djed* appears more like an atrophied figuration of exhausted potency. By contrast, the monumental cast-copper sculpture *Rouge Battery*, a negative form of the *Djed Car Body*, retains a formal elegance despite its size and scale. As the reflective surfaces of its polished copper rim gleam with a dull brilliance, its corroded and oxidized innards produce an alluring painterliness that shifts focus from the apparent overall density of its mass.

The enormous flat spread of *Trans America's* acid yellow sulfur surface has similar attributes. The concave raft-shaped work was produced during the final stages of the third live performance, *Ba*, in the dry dock of the Brooklyn Navy Yard in New York. Cast from the inverted mold of the Pontiac Firebird Trans Am, the surfaces of *Trans America* are highly expressive and delicately regulated, changing from flat to ribbed to granular to hairy molecular tendrils that sweep across different portions of the depression, as if trembling from an unseen wind. The jagged, rough surfaces of *Canopic Chest*, surmounted by four bellow-like voids on its front end, at first appear like clusters of blackened crushed rocks. Though cast in an art foundry, its form derives from the front end and engine of the Chrysler Imperial that was wrecked and atomized before an audience during *Ren* in 2008. *Canopic Chest* looks like a fossilized beast on its base of four cast-bronze wooden beams, only on close examination does the intricacy of the molding, from which the surfaces obtained their careful clustered fragments, become apparent. Each of these sculptures suggests a paradigm shift in Barney's attitude towards materials and I feel that I have witnessed the emergence of a whole new artistic sensibility, fueled by Barney's irrepressible appetite for artistic risk.

STONY CHAMBERS: EXHIBITING *RIVER OF FUNDAMENT*

Drama, choreography, arias, musical performances, orchestral recitals, percussion solos, mortal combats, sex, sodomy, disembowelment, and industrial sculpture casting represent parts of the crucible that is *River of Fundament*. Like Barney's previous works, each of these aspects of artistic and performative process is organized into a singularly elaborated and fused exhibition platform to give a sense of narrative synthesis that nevertheless remains open. In its final form at Haus der Kunst and the Bavarian State Opera, *River of Fundament* is a film and a corresponding related series of fourteen large- and medium-scale sculptures, drawings, storyboards, and vitrines containing graphic and sculptural elements. The project marks transitions in theme, structure, and iconography, as well as a radical shift in the employment of material, resulting in a wholly new elaboration of sculptural materiality. In addition, the sculptures that resulted from the project mark a major departure from Barney's earlier signature use and treatment of materials. This shift introduces his first major works produced from traditional sculptural and industrial metals (such as iron, bronze, lead, copper, brass, and zinc), in addition to the organic elements of sulfur and salt. The exhibition thus unites the aesthetic and formal principles that have fed Barney's artistic process and investigations for more than two decades, and it reveals a new vision of plastic possibilities in his ongoing investigation of narrative sculpture.

Though the sculptures were not originally conceived for Haus der Kunst when he produced them, it was as if Barney had in mind the architectural specificities of the museum's vertical rooms. The sequential pacing of the galleries, together with the size and scale of the sculptures, proved to be an uncannily perfect match for his own narrative approach to placing the sculptures in each room: the sequence of thirteen galleries in which the works are installed could be likened to the chambers in which the body of the departed is laid to rest in Egyptian funerary ritual. The classical architectural procession of the galleries at Haus der Kunst is accessed through the museum's monumental, columned Middle Hall. The entrance is through a portal leading into a soaring 600-square-meter gallery and suffused with simulated daylight system. Around this central hall, to the south and north, are a suite of ten galleries that form a processional enfilade moving from west to east and circling back from east to west.

The first gallery contains *Canopic Chest* (2010), one of the earliest sculptures in the series. Barney's first-ever bronze sculpture, *Canopic Chest* is the only sculpture produced independently of the rest, and it does not appear in the performances or the film. It was cast industrially in a foundry from a mold taken from the space beneath the front

engine of the 1967 Chrysler Crown Imperial that was ritually destroyed in front of a live audience during the *Ren* performance in Los Angeles. In the process of making the sculptures, Barney had examined certain ancient Egyptian cast metal objects in museums. He was particularly fascinated by those bronze objects that retained their metal casting gates. The attached gates led him to question why they had not been removed upon completion of the casting process. He speculated that perhaps the objects were not the final chosen casts, but rather second casts; that their survival may have been owed to the fact that the intact casting gates increased their structural resilience. Of greater importance to Barney, in his study of not only these Egyptian objects, but also medieval and early Viking casting methods and rituals, were the various options that this newly acquired knowledge of historical process offered for advanced modern casting. He started developing ways to assimilate these principles into his own casting processes.²⁶ As he explains: “Methods of using casting gates and runners have been around for a long time. They are used to bring metal into the lower part of the mold before it begins to cool, and to remove air bubbles from the casting.”²⁷ Having studied the process carefully, Barney was fascinated with how the process of “investing” molten metal into the gates and runners could be used to generate new and unpredictable sculptural features. The result: paper-thin, blooming wafers and starburst-like disks that look like festering outgrowths around the solid mass of cast bronze. The wafers and disks give the impression of delicate liquid drawings frozen and suspended in air. This effect was created as a consequence of leaking metal being trapped as it drained from the gates and runners. The resulting combination of mass and fragment, seen in such sculptures as *Coming Forth by Day*, *Shaduf*, and especially *Canopic*

26. One important aspect, for example, is the way Barney emulated a Viking casting ritual for the casting of *Djed*. The Vikings believed that adding the bones of dead warriors to the furnace while forging swords helped strengthen the weapons; during *Khu* in Detroit, the wrecked body of the Chrysler Imperial was recovered from the Detroit River and ritually cut into eight parts that were then fed into the five giant custom-built furnaces from which the molten iron was poured to create *Djed*. Barney was especially interested in foregrounding this ritual reenactment of feeding the dismembered body of Osiris into the furnaces to add a new charge and impart a great allegorical potency to the object. Scholars who have studied archaeological remnants of Iron Age Viking furnaces have speculated that the bones placed ritually in the forge may have led to carbonization and, hence, to the production of a primitive type of steel. For more on Viking metallurgy, see Terje Gansum, “Role the Bones: From Iron to Steel,” *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 37, no. 1 (2004): 41–57; and Joakim Goldhahn and Terje Oestigaard, “Smith and Death: Cremations in Furnaces in Bronze and Iron Age Scandinavia,” *OAS no. 10, Facets of Archeology: Essays in Honour of Lotte Hedeager on Her 60th Birthday* (2008), pp. 215–41.

27. The statement was from an e-mail exchange between the author and artist.

Chest, reveal the extent of Barney’s intellectually incisive and formally rigorous approach to sculpture, as well as a markedly new interest in embracing process and, with that, relinquishing a certain degree of control in his sculptural language.

In the context of the museum installation, *Canopic Chest* serves as a kind of overture, the beginning of the journey of the dead towards reincarnation. In ancient Egypt, canopic jars were used as receptacles for the viscera of the departed. Several processes were used to drain the organs from the body, exiting them through the deceased’s anus and then placing them in the jars. This introductory sequence not only refers to ancient Egyptian funerary rites, but it also follows, retraces and retells parts of Mailer’s *Ancient Evenings*—itself a retracing and retelling of the ancient Egyptian *Book of the Dead*—and pharaonic funerary politics of transformation, transcendence, and reincarnation. Mailer used a horizontal narrative and temporal form, over a span of 190 years of pharaonic intrigues and politics, to develop the story, which is fundamentally about the body. As a sculptural form, *Canopic Chest* allegorizes this relationship between mythic structure and narrative, and in so doing it embodies and carries forward (despite its latency) the way in which Barney visualizes several organs in the film. In the book and the film, the narrative moves across lipid canals of bodily waste, mapping openings (spasming orifices, ejaculating genitals, and diseased organs) across the journey as it goes. At the same time, it moves vertically, evoking the journeys of descent and ascent, exits and entries, penetration and disembowelment.

The center gallery of Haus der Kunst contains two monumental sculptures that are related thematically: *Boat of Ra* (2014), which replicates the wooden roof of the Mailer house, inverted to look like a vessel; and *Trans America* (2014), the monumental cast sulfur sculpture that Barney likens to a “solar disk.” *Boat of Ra* was seen in the final act of the film *River of Fundament* as a tugboat carried a section of the re-created Mailer house downstream, its sailcloth roof flapping in the wind. In the sculpture the beams of the roof, intricately sandblasted as if worn away by the elements, form an upside-down pyramid, holding a cargo that includes Mailer’s writing desk cast in bronze and the straitjacket of the artist James Lee Byars, cast in bronze and plated in gold.

The Munich exhibition also includes a site-specific performance with a consequent drawing (the twenty-first in the *Drawing Restraint* series) and a sculpture titled *Portcullis Block* (2014). In the days before the exhibition opening, *Drawing Restraint 21* was enacted across the surface of the center gallery: under Barney’s direction, a team of sixteen local female athletes pulled a block of graphite weighing 5,000 pounds on a pair of wooden sleds, creating a drawing around the perimeter

walls of the center gallery containing *Boat of Ra* and *Trans America*. The resulting linear trace, with its graphic indentations, zigzagging lines, breaks, and faint smudges, reads like a choreographic score.

Throughout *River of Fundament* the figure of the Chrysler Imperial, last seen in *Cremaster 3*, recurs repeatedly, as do the figures of the Entered Apprentice and the Entered Novitiate. The majestic car assumes and embodies the narrative and carries it forward, weaving together the genealogies of material and myth into sculptural form. At the end of the enfilade at Haus der Kunst is the monumental cast-iron sculpture *Djed* (2010), installed in an almost godly state in an antechamber pavilion. Its primary iconography and form are the undercarriage of the Chrysler Imperial, modified to evoke the pillar-like hieroglyph of Osiris. From the performances (*Ren*, *Khu*, and *Ba*) the film, drawings, and related sculptures have been developed.

FUGUE FOR URBAN AMERICA: DETROIT, VALLEY OF THE DEAD

Both Mailer's book and Barney and Bepler's epic film represent an allegory of American decline told in two eras and postindustrial periods—the 1980s and the 2000s—amid the blue vapors and gangrened stench of death and decay roiling the collective American body. Detroit, the current embodiment of urban deterioration and economic desperation in America, is an apt setting for the reimagining of the physical, psychic, spiritual, and cultural collapse²⁸ of a once-mighty industrial complex, now the scene of ecological violence wrought by industrial modernity. The convergence of car manufacturing and industrial progress was monumentalized in a cycle of fourteen vast murals in the courtyard of the Detroit Institute of Art, created by the staunch Mexican communist and artist Diego Rivera in a commission paid for by Edsel Ford, Henry Ford's son and the chairman of Ford Motor Company whose massive Rouge car plant Barney makes reference to with *Rouge Battery* (2013/14). Rivera's murals celebrated the might of industrial capitalism and the utopia of a worker-led modernity. The pictorial narrative represented the conflicts between industry and society, and it imagined an entirely different outcome of harmony between capital and labor. None of the conflicts, or the aspirations they engendered in the American

28. Recently, Detroit, which is currently undergoing financial restructuring in bankruptcy court (the largest bankruptcy ever of an American city), was contemplating selling the historic collection of the Detroit Institute of Art, a museum whose exquisite holdings of European and American art derived directly from the affluence that once surrounded the city during its heyday until the urban riots of the late 1960s led to white flight and the exodus of the middle class to the sterile suburbs.

industrial belt of the early twentieth century, remain today; they have disappeared, along with the outsourced jobs that have been shipped to China and other Asian countries.

Today the city of the American "Big Three" tethers on the abyss of dissolution, a bleak vision of industrial and urban ruin. Its abandoned factories and bankrupt emptiness epitomize the city of the dead. In *River of Fundament*, references to the city's preindustrial, industrial, and postindustrial states are drawn through allusions to the vast caverns of salt deposits running beneath the city, and the navigation of the polluted Rouge and Detroit rivers that once were waterways of industrial progress. Choked by chemical and smelting pollutants, the river is a metaphor for the journey of the departed American industrial soul on its way to the afterlife and its imagined regeneration in service industries in the digital age. Strings, horns, bugles, and voices—like the lament for the recovered corpse of Osiris by the inconsolable Nephthys, while his consort and sister Isis stands by in shock—lend soaring dirge-like recitals to this funerary procession of the once-great city that gave life to Fordist theories of production. Barney's specific take on Mailer's sprawling book on death spills the guts of the city and empties it into a murky, slow-moving river of feces that is the "fundament," a thick syphilitic substance that coalesces into *Matthew Barney: River of Fundament*.

THE SCAFFOLD OR ANXIETY OF INFLUENCE

I have suggested in this essay that more than any other body of work in Matthew Barney's artistic career, *River of Fundament* might be best understood within the context of the American epic tradition. I have proposed a genealogy of important references and artistic precedents for Barney, including Joseph Beuys, Norman Mailer, Ernest Hemingway, Richard Serra, and Bruce Nauman. Their work and individual commitment to craft, typified by the melding of the self with the artistic figure and the development of an entire complex of relations to the corporeal and the mythic, fit Barney's retinue of allegorical codes. The presence and accomplishments of these antecedents engender a response in Barney that might be deemed Oedipal. This extended relationship is perhaps more consistent when viewed through related aesthetic prisms developed in the practice of the European Beuys, whose elliptical and highly symbolic work (and even the artist himself) at some level incubates a certain dimension of femininity, than when viewed through the supercharged masculinity of some of his American counterparts.²⁹ In *Sekhu* and *Trans America*, for example, Barney's use of liquid sulfur for casting recalls Beuys's sculpture *Unschlitt/Tallow* (1977), cast from twenty tons of a mixture of 50% stearin, 43% paraffin, and 7% sheep's

tallow.⁵⁰ In fact, Barney's deployment of the concept of sculptural tableaux, as well as his extensive use of custom-made vitrines as modules to collect and encapsulate sculpted objects and performance-related materials, reveals his indebtedness to Beuys.⁵¹ And yet, despite this formal debt, his interest in the fusion of techno-medieval symbolism departs significantly from Beuys's shamanistic bricolage of the organic and natural sciences.⁵² Another difference between the two artists relates to the tension between Barney's Americanness and Beuys's essential Europeaness. These differences, which pertain both to geography and culture, are suggested, for instance, in Barney's symbolic reference to the elk in Native American mythology in the last cycle of Norman III and Beuys's deployment of the stag in the sculpture *Lightning with Stag in Its Glare* (*Blitzschlag mit Lichtschein auf Hirsch*), 1958–85, which recalls ancient Norse myths. This tension is intensified in *River of Fundament*, with its focus on American modernity and civilization. If Mailer's *Ancient Evenings* was characterized as his Egyptian novel, it could be argued that Barney's *River of Fundament*, at least in terms of its symbols and iconography, is his most American work. Here, Serra provides a scaffold of the quintessential embodiment of artistic will against which new forms of resistance can be derived, prompting a new burst of energy for Barney's current thinking about sculptural form and material.

29. It might be interesting to speculate on the entanglement of the feminine and masculine in Beuys's work and how it reflects similar concerns in Barney's art. Despite the tendency to interpret Barney's early work along the lines of his athletic engagement and the expression of raw physicality it invites, such interpretation might actually be a sort of misprision, for it presupposes some form of undiluted masculinity in operation throughout his practice. In the work of Beuys, an interesting duality between the feminine and the masculine, which also courses through Barney's practice, emerges in clearer view. Barney's use of unstable materials, or so-called intelligent synthetics that are responsive to changes in temperature, such as the self-lubricating plastics he often uses, might suggest a conscious openness to resist definite states and final forms, especially in contrast to the assured solidity and finality in Serra's work. However, Barney has no more abjured Serra than he has embraced Beuys, without qualifications, in his response to their divergent artistic principles. Both Beuys's "fat corners" and Serra's early work with thrown liquid lead, which produced unpredictable results, have been immensely influential. Each has bequeathed an interesting resonance, in terms of the sculptural materials, to the materials employed and effects achieved in Barney's own innovative use of materials.

30. For a fascinating description of this work by Beuys and the process of its realization for the 1977 Skulptur Projekt, Münster, see Christian Scheidemann, "Notes from the Laboratory," in *Barney/Beuys: All in the Present Must Be Transformed*, ed. Nancy Spector (Berlin: Deutsche Guggenheim, 2006), pp. 125–39.

31. In 2006 the Deutsche Guggenheim, Berlin presented *Barney/Beuys: All in the Present Must Be Transformed*, an exhibition that explored the relationship between the two artists. Curated by Nancy Spector, the show marked the first time Beuys's explicit influence on Barney was used to generate a dialogue between their respective practices.

32. Nat Trotman, "Ritual Space/Sculptural Time," in *Barney/Beuys: All in the Present Must Be Transformed*, ed. Nancy Spector (Berlin: Deutsche Guggenheim, 2006), p. 141.

Might it be possible, then, to suggest that Barney's new work, the entire mental and aesthetic geology surrounding the development and making of *River of Fundament*, represents a direct response to the anxiety of influence exerted by Hemingway, Mailer, and Serra? Is *River of Fundament*, and its mythological narrative, the ritual quest for renewal, transformation, and transcendence that is embedded in the carapace of its narrative of death and reincarnation, not an allegory of American masculine fragility and decline? Hemingway, for instance, modeled his entire persona on the quintessential, indestructible masculine ideal; Mailer was much too demonstrative in his pugilistic depictions of fearless virility; and it would seem that Serra's addiction to ever-increasing tonnage, to the bare brutalism of massive forms, lays bare its own type of primitive insecurity.

Of all these American figures, Nauman might actually provide the closest artistic model for Barney, both for his highly distinctive practice and his work's exemplary formal weirdness. He represents the clearest demonstration of the kind of intermedial openness reflected in Barney's own corpus. Nauman's pioneering work in performance, video, drawing, and sculpture, set within specific narrative contexts, resonates with Barney's practice in more ways than have been acknowledged. While Barney has apparently acknowledged Nauman's importance, he has responded much more directly to the archetypal American masculine figures in Hemingway, Mailer, and Serra.

Still, the formal elegance and opacity of Beuys and the psychological trials of Nauman remain palpably evident in Barney's practice. Although Mailer's *Ancient Evenings* is the catalyst for the development of *River of Fundament*, all these references, especially the three American masculine figures, hover over the work as a series of imaginative scaffolds. For instance, Barney perceives Hemingway as the pharaoh to whose position the nobleman Mailer aspires. Indeed, in his turn towards primary metals such as iron and bronze in sculptures of massive weight and scale, Barney may finally be contending with Serra in the same way that Mailer contended with Hemingway. Entering and exiting *River of Fundament* and its psychic states is also to exit and enter different domains of the American cultural complex. In this new body of work within the cultural landscape that spurned the three protagonist automobiles, Barney takes a bold stab at establishing critical anchors within the topological surface on which a new American hieroglyphic appears.

Adaptation

HILTON ALS

And let this sentence flow as wondrous and slow as a river, a single sentence about adaptation, specifically Matthew Barney's *River of Fundament*, his "adaptation" of Norman Mailer's 1983 novel *Ancient Evenings*, an opera nearly ten years in the making, a cinematic feat that includes a related body of artworks, and what Barney's project shares with Mailer's strange long book is a fascination with the alchemy of art, and how bodies are myths, and death a kind of transcendence; *Ancient Evenings* is about transfiguration—bodies become something other than themselves, or think of themselves as such while sometimes swimming through rivers of shit and grief, or ingesting the spirit or parts of another body sometimes too—just as this sentence is, or will be—and while one can write whatever one wants—Mailer seemed to think so—it's very, very difficult to make bodies shift shape on the page because it's difficult for readers to imagine what an author sees in his head when he imagines bodies becoming something other than themselves; and that's one of the stories of *Ancient Evenings*, how Mailer saw his book and how, for the most part, other people didn't see it the same way but rather as a failure, another example of the author's exhausted masculinity; in any case, bodies shifting shape is less difficult to represent in a film because that's the business of film, to show us how something happens, how the story becomes one thing and then another, and maybe that's one reason Mailer approached Barney to direct this project so many years ago: Barney's work is about the body evolving into itself or becoming an idea of itself, or annihilating itself; but Mailer was so sure of the certainty of his vision on page after page that "Ancient Evenings" was published before he knew—sort of—what he had wrought; at no point would he give up on *Ancient Evenings*, even as it got some of the worst reviews of his career, and I can see why: he could not settle on a metaphor, he was trying to make a world out of too many ideas, all centered around *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, a fantastic text with many versions, some stretching back for thousands of years before Mailer wrote his version of the story; in any case in *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*

there are lines like this from “Hymn to Osiris”: “Homage to thee, Osiris, Lord of Eternity, King of the Gods, whose names are manifold, whose forms are hold, thou being of hidden form in temples, whose *ka* is holy,” and it’s the word “manifold” that means the most to me, certainly in the context of thinking about Mailer and Barney; but while words are not manifold, making them into language can be, and part of the problem with *Ancient Evenings* is this: Mailer thought he could make words be something other than themselves, bend them entirely to his will; that is, he wanted to make words plastic objects, as plastic as film; but a book is one thing and an opera and film another, and in *Ancient Evenings*, he tells a seven-hundred-plus-page story that is daunting from the outset, since to really understand it one has to get into Egyptian mythology, an assumption that doesn’t stop there; Mailer assumes that his forays into Egyptian mythology, numerology, and other hermetic subjects might be interesting to other people; I did, because I read in an interview with Mailer—it appeared some time ago—that as he was finishing his book, AIDS became a primary metaphor for him, a subject I first read about in *The New York Times*, two years before *Ancient Evenings* was published, a time when so many young gay men didn’t know that they had bodies that were not impervious to being destroyed; and of course one can read *Ancient Evenings* as a quest for life after death, and of bodies being decimated by time and hate; I read it that way at first too, as a profound meditation on AIDS, but it is also a meditation on Mailer’s belief in his own intelligence, the great surge of his own massive egocentricity, which he needed in order to become Norman Mailer so that he could create his book’s narrator, Ka, or the surviving double of a dead young nobleman who had been named Menenhetet II, or Meni; Ka says: “Crude thoughts and fierce forces are my state,” and it’s a fierce force indeed that drives this book; for instance, Ka takes us on a tour of a necropolis where he encounters the *ka* of his great-grandfather Menenhetet I; when the book begins, Menenhetet I has just died in his fourth life; he was sixty years old, and he was a seer, and he consumed bat dung; he also understands the world in ways no one else can or does; but he does not want to die, so he becomes Meni by fucking himself into existence or re-existence, that is, his energy or power impregnates a woman who may or may not be his mother, given that he has been reincarnated; Menenhetet I selects his granddaughter Hathfertiti for the honor of being impregnated, and there is—wait—there is a river of thought that follows those various central plots, and that river sweeps me past the exigencies of the Menenhetets for just a second, to Ramses II, a gorgeous male god who rules over the Hittites, and Meni is condemned to worship Ramses and thus compete with him and Ramses fucks Meni because he can, and because fucking is power, and—wait—the river carries me to certain

images in Barney’s film that bear a close resemblance to these scenes; with the artist himself as the *ka* of Norman Mailer-Osiris swimming through rivers of shit and then being fucked by Ramses or, in the movie, Norman III, and the shit and the fucking are about breaking through the container of the physical self, and about power and endurance; shit is also evidence of the body expelling toxins, and there’s shit in the male need to dominate, like one god dominating another; over time Meni’s senses become confused; he hears odors, smells colors and then his consciousness gets fainter as his *sekhu*, or remains, held down by weights, renders up its moisture in natron, a salt mixture found in the dry lake beds of Egypt; and after nearly two and half months—time is what we hold on to to follow the beyond-dense chronology of Mailer’s tale—“I became hard as the wood of a hull,” Meni says, “then hard as the rock of the earth, and felt the last of me depart to join my *ka*, my *ba*, and my fearsome *khaibit*”; but before considering that Ka and Ba are Meni’s parents, one must know that those are words that describe the ancient Egyptian idea of the soul; *ka* is the life force of all living things, and *ba* is the personality; Meni, dying once again so he can live once again, changes into something else, “like one of those spiraled chambers of the sea that is thrown up on the beach, yet contain the roar of waters when you hold them to your ear”; thus entombed, Meni’s *sekhu*, or vital energy, becomes dumb, mute; his being is in some way complete; but *Ancient Evenings* isn’t over by then, not by a long shot; in any case, recalling more of the plot is only interesting insofar as Barney had to deal with it or found it interesting enough to deal with; and watching the hours of footage that he was able to cull out of the experience of the book is to find oneself in a world of pure distillation; Godard said the best movies are often made out of not-good books because in that case you can feel free to change the word into a better image—and the same can hold true for an opera as well, as stage opera images can come from bad stories—for instance, one of Godard’s masterpieces, the very modern *Vivre Sa Vie* of 1962 was inspired by a not-great story written by Guy de Maupassant in the nineteenth century; and, in contemporary theater, the Nature Theater of Oklahoma’s epic *Life and Times* has a script that uses the most mind-numbing banalities to get to certain truths about behavior, dreams, and the everyday; and Barney has extracted the strongest of Mailer’s metaphors and made cinema out of them, which is to say he has delivered the viewer from Mailer’s torrent of words—all those verbal associations and compacted narratives, all those stories that grow out of stories—to make *River of Fundament* a kind of pure opera about myth and masculinity feeding on itself, and time as it feeds on us; Barney’s opera is an opera that eats its way *into* film: the images he has created are and aren’t contained in the film; there’s something more

visceral going on in there, he wants us to smell the shit, but film distances us and protects us from the terrible stench of life: that which we sing about, all us living who will be dead but don't want to be, like the Egyptian ancients; film as opera: the great German artist Hans-Jürgen Syberberg was, I think, the last person to achieve this on an epic scale in his 1977 masterpiece, *Hitler: A Film from Germany*, in which he used all that he could—puppets, projections, voice-over narration, “live” actors dressed like historical figures, and so on—to describe Germany as a film with Hitler as its star; in her compelling 1980 essay about this epic 442-minute work, Susan Sontag refers to the movie as a “mosaic,” and so is *River of Fundament* a mosaic where bodies play music and music plays off bodies, and the camera not only “captures” the drama of the proceedings but participates in it as well; also, Barney has opened up *Ancient Evenings* in ways Mailer did not anticipate by constructing in the film an additional narrative to the story of Meni and the rest, that includes Mailer or, rather, his death; the mourners in Barney's film include Mailer's wife, played by the vocalist Joan La Barbara, who portrays Norris Church Mailer, who is now also dead, and their son John Buffalo Mailer also takes part; Barney built a set of Mailer's house in Brooklyn, but not as a shrine: shrines are not meant to be destroyed, and he had to destroy aspects of the house in order to get past Mailer and his story and to find his own story as a director, even as he memorialized the past by reimagining it, giving it a script and a song or songs; but Mailer has always been there, from Barney's 1999 film, *Cremaster 2*, which took elements of its Idaho locale and story from the real, brutal, flat world that the convicted-and-then-executed Gary Gilmore occupied, a world Mailer described in his late masterpiece *The Executioner's Song* of 1979, a book epic in its reach and cinematic in its structure, the closest Mailer ever came to making a great film himself; the subject of Mailer and film is interesting insofar as he used film as a tool to further mythologize himself, to big up Norman Mailer as human myth, a point that Barney emphasized in *Cremaster 2* and the exhibition “Subliming Vessel” in 2013 that included notations, photographs, newspaper clippings, and postcards as well as traditional drawings; from Diane Arbus's famous portrait of Mailer as the pugilist at rest to references to *The Executioner's Song* and the mythology of the American West; one can't parse Barney's work; if he's going to talk about gods swimming through shit then he wants to understand shit, and if he's going to talk about Mailer, he wants to understand Mailer; the asshole—that orifice through which aspects of the self are expelled—the myth of machismo sports, and Mailer are very much parts of the same thinking; men have assholes that can become pussies, given the right dude or finger, and in *River of Fundament* the anus is a gateway to receiving another male's power; and the asshole is also a portal

through which a god can expel himself to remake himself, like Meni, over and over again; there's so much water in *River of Fundament* and it flows like an idea, sometimes carrying a barge, and among the many transformations—adaptations—from Mailer's bad novel to Barney's great film are the ways in which Barney “contemporizes” the action of Mailer's story of ancient shit; in *River of Fundament*, the god is a car, specifically a 1967 Chrysler Crown Imperial (this is America after all), but in Barney's America of Detroit in demise, car production has ground to a halt, and so what can the Chrysler logo—a five-pointed star—mean in relation to the five drawings Barney executed of a pentagon that employs said logo; and *ren*, as Mailer taught us via his extrapolation of *The Egyptian Book of the Dead*, is one of the seven stages that the soul passes through after death; and, in a way, the grief-choked moment that Barney makes up in Mailer's home following his death that is presided over by Paul Giamatti as Ptah-Nem-Hotep is his attempt not to lose Mailer or myth or America in the shape of a god; and then there is Native America—another myth of the West—in the form of Native Americans chanting as the camera revolves around them gently, sizing up what they have to show us, saying to us slowly, boy did America rip these people off; the camera revolves around the Native American chanters and drummers slowly because Barney, like Mailer, believes that there is meaning in pacing—as Mailer said to George Plimpton, if he cut *Ancient Evenings* more than he did, he would lose the book; “The length is necessary, slowness is important to give a sense of the pace. If you speed the book up you gain a quick readability, but you lose the pace of ancient Egypt”; and if Barney sped his film up he would lose the pace of a now-ancient America, one where Native Americans are as anachronistic as 1967 Chryslers, a world of myths where masculinity has become as much of a myth as femaleness; in any case, these definitions aren't so clear anymore and Mailer might have been writing about Barney when he wrote, in his 1976 essay “Henry Miller: Genius and Lust, Narcissism,” that part of the crisis of the last century was that “nothing like a coherent view of personality” was able to prevail; he continued, “We live in every concept of human motivation and they are all at odds. Our minds are obliged to entertain everything from the structured hydraulics of the Freudians who look at psychic disturbance as varieties of stopped-up plumbing,” to myths themselves, right?; but in describing Miller's importance, whose work can be viewed as a collage of bodies, bodies immersed in politics, sexual and otherwise, historical and otherwise, Mailer was not only describing his own, but Barney's, too: “His preference is . . . to create his . . . world through the visions of dreams and the tides of whatever myths he finds appropriate to his use.”

River of Many Returns

DIEDRICH DIEDERICHSEN

A considerable portion of *River of Fundament* is based on film and sound recordings made at large-scale performances before live audiences in Los Angeles, Detroit, and New York. As with many of Matthew Barney's cinematic works, the pre-cinematic is a key element: stage sets, found backdrops from the industrial and urban landscape, costumes, and special preparations of bodies and body parts devised and discovered, developed, designed, and set up in such a way that the cinematic eyes and their physical supports have large distances to cover or immense psychological hurdles to overcome, surrounded or engulfed by scenographic, sculptural, and architectonic volumes that they are sometimes forced to traverse but that are nonetheless specially designed with them in mind. They "play" something like a score that exists in the form of set architecture and actors' movements. Much of that can and must be planned and constructed before those eyes have a chance to approach it and to set out upon what then looks, in the movie theater, like an adventurous expedition or bizarre ritual.

The pre-cinematic also includes a pre-musical, pre-sonic element. All along the very same sets and structures, which are not traversed by cameras and actors alone, microphones are placed; a sensitivity to the often moving "sonic action" is technically constructed, thus producing a second landscape. Ornamentally positioned people are microphone bearers; visually nondescript elements constitute sonic crossings, boundaries or passages. The sonic landscape is laid out differently from the visible one, and it has different openings and blind spots. Above all, however, it must develop its own unique equivalents of escape routes and cul-de-sacs—and the traversal of stations of the soul, of chemistry, alchemy, speculation, art, and politics seems to be a central theme of this six-hour cinematic opera.

The camera scours all zones, realms, hiding places, stretches of river, mines, open territories, urban wastelands, cities, and sewers. The actors follow it and end up in these cavities, buildings, basements, shafts, chambers, bathrooms, sewers, depths, and heights. The camera in turn

doesn't stop at the surface of their bodies: it keeps watch at their orifices, which in turn lead to cavities, or crawls ahead into "anti-places." Thus, at one point an actor (John Buffalo Mailer as the character Norman III) invades the body of a dead cow after delivering its dead calf. But how can sound, how can music possibly have anything to set beside this feat of penetration, this determination to access places that haven't been seen this way ever before? It may have been an option to decorate and illustrate the film's path toward blasphemy and from thence to an alternate sacredness, but this is not the option that Jonathan Bepler has chosen. If nothing else, that may have been impossible here, since in this film decoration and ornament so often appear in their deeply significant codedness rather than as a form of visual relief: twisting lines turn into a real slithering snake.

One might attempt to explain the events, complications, and performances and attribute a meaning to their order by pointing to Norman Mailer's novel *Ancient Evenings* that inspired them, or to the seven stages through which the soul passes after death according to certain Egyptian beliefs, which for Barney and Bepler determine the order of the seven acts. I would like to propose a third structure, which can be seen at work in this colossal project and is not restricted to orders and sequences but pervades it at every level.

Maggots and liquid mercury may have mythological and alchemical meanings in ancient Egypt and medieval Europe, but what the spectators actually see primarily are views of an increasingly inanimate material realm. Earth, dirt, and cesspools in a state of decay, destruction, and mortification. A type of formlessness that can at most be experienced sexually; stench, pools and puddles, stagnant water, abject cavities, smeared substances, mold. The horizontal, "*l'informe*," "base materialism." Also part of the palette are industrially mined and processed mineral resources; industrial wastelands; and formerly inhabited settlements that floods have left coated with the formless: crusts of sludge.

Above this sphere sits that of utilitarian organization and capitalist exploitation: the syncing up of the machinery of mining, highways, Fordist production, assembly lines and disciplined workers, architecture, formation in the broadest sense: design, form-giving, metal violins and cellos. This is the world of instrumental reason. Formlessness is superseded by connective, standardized, communicating forms whose purpose is production and circulation, the elimination and dissimulation of the blood-and-mud streams, of slime and ooze. This is also the site of communication, conversation, instructions and the act of complying with them, listening and speaking.

Then comes the point at which this order takes on a life of its own, becoming art and decor, form and communication without the aim of

circulation. One could speak of art in the classical bourgeois sense. But this art for its own sake does not remain intact for long; the decor does not stay decorative: the non-instrumental organization becomes a ritual practice; it summons the gods, reverses the verdict of death and decay, fertilizes, delivers, empties the cavities of the earth and bodies and invokes other, higher worlds. It would like to attain, explore, and plan life after death, and even hopes to gain certainties. Metaphysics. At this juncture, this sacred realm meets up again with the first one: pure materiality, formlessness, and amorphousness now return as moments of alchemy and acts of magic.

In this tripartite world, however, Christian and secular European ideas of transcending the sensuous toward an abstract or sacred and immaterial world are left unrealized. Even the third realm is full of life: even death and the afterlife are set in extremely material environments, full of density, darkness, stench, excrement, blood, and revulsion. The fact is we are dealing here with a world order whose agenda is rebirth, not transfiguration, and rebirth is only available under the same conditions as birth: *inter faeces et urinam*. The realm of the dead is separated from that of the living by a river of shit, a metaphysical sewer, a cosmic cesspool.

The music, too, unfolds in varying degrees of density. One of the Egyptian protagonists (Osiris) who begins a second life here is a car, a metal person who suffers differently from the various flesh-and-blood ones. The material composition of the musical instruments is a plane on which the music can be alchemically related to the events narrated and presented. In my view, however, the composition actually begins before the act of composing: above all, it is responsible for the transition from noise to sound, for the difference between something that merely carries information about a material cause and thus adds to the visual data on material realities, and something that elevates this information to a symbolic plane that communicates more than it points to the underlying fact—but without suppressing that fact, as opposed to what highly codified music normally does.

For their part, the sounds in this film seem to exist on three different levels or journey through three different realms. On the first level, they convey something about their causes; on the second, they symbolize musical entities and contribute to emotional communication; on the third, they are designed to *bring something about* or at least play the role of a musical effect (trance, ecstasy, incantation).

The first musical signals are barely distinguishable from noises caused by the action. The first organ tones are accompanied by the noise of the instrument's keys being pressed. Hence we know that this organ does not lie in the heaven of extradiegetic meaning but must be located

somewhere near the cesspool through which someone (the *ka* of Osiris/Norman played by Matthew Barney) is wading. Later, the same phenomenon is repeated, this gradual emergence of the musical, of sound, from noise, from the everyday clatter that dishes, heels, fabrics rubbed together, and distant human voices are constantly making.

Time and again in the course of the film we encounter human bodies, products of engineering, and architectural material as potential striking noisy surfaces, potential cavities, potential percussion instruments. Mouths, assholes, cow bellies, car chassis, factories, and, again and again, water—the classical allegory of the musical. Liquids subject to gravity provide the metaphors for musical sequences; incidental or necessary noises which are supplied by the formless material. Noises are the *informe* of music; particular noises are music's object, its stench, its disintegration, and disappearance into horizontality. Throughout the film, informal clinking and clattering gradually coalesce into percussive patterns, which are then overlaid by chords and other sense-making musical formats, until they ultimately take command again in increasingly ritualized sequences.

In a replica of Norman Mailer's residence, a wake takes place in honor of the deceased, sometimes resembling a ritual and then again a dinner party. The guests request attention and give little speeches or else immerse themselves in conversations. The latter are constantly coming loose from the conventional unpitched speech patterns of communicative conversation and slipping into song; scattered notes are sung, then spoken again. Joan La Barbara, the most accomplished vocalist in contemporary music, plays Mailer's widow. Every one of her words is potentially sung, remains spoken, breaks into song. Children are present. Aimless playing of toy instruments turns imperceptibly into a subtly structured song form. The tuning of instruments turns into expressive music at the boundary between form and deliberate formlessness.

Then there are the rituals. The deaths and resurrections of cars and their spirits, which here are connected with the ancient Egyptians. These scenes in particular are populated by self-contained and preconceived ensembles. Groups of instrumentalists, set off as collective units by march formation and costumes, are associated with the bundling of sounds into *unisoni*, joint climaxes, and large-scale choreographed movements across terrain.

But the transitions to the sacred that wait at the end of organization, at the end of the form and order of ritual, are not a pinnacle. The worldview of reincarnation operates with circles and with what the Hegelian and other European philosophies of history would call "bad infinity." Here, men become not executors but their own fathers; linearity has it tough. What stands at the end of the process of transfiguration is not pure

ether and abstraction but rather new density, concreteness, the fertility of putrefaction. In the music the counterpart to these transitions is the percussion. On one hand, it constitutes the height of collective organization and efficacy, the quasi-military fusion of the symbolic plane and that of the action; on the other, it stands for the turning of sound into noise, of formed and quasi-linguistic symbols into dense, unsymbolizable reality.

Especially worthy of mention in this context is the musician Milford Graves, who not only plays one of the film's main characters (Norman II) but also repeatedly models, in micro- and macrocosm, the turning of percussive performance into sound creation and back into the representation of physicality. The fact that he is a percussionist and percussion researcher in "real life" links him to other actors/performers in the film who "in real life" are also connected to their roles in ways that actors generally are not: whether they practice the same profession as Norman Mailer, like Salman Rushdie; or are related to him, like his son; or they were his friends and acquaintances, like many of the New York artistic and cultural celebrities who attend the wake. Their areas of artistic expertise range from opera to free jazz, from conceptual art (Lawrence Weiner) to New Wave (Deborah Harry): hence as a cast they map out the film's artistic languages. But what all of these languages and their exponents have in common is that they involve a close connection between music and narrative.

The music responds to the redescribing of a world of bodies (in the sense of flesh as well as volumes) and of an all-encompassing physicality that no death or decay can permanently interrupt. In doing so, it succeeds in setting beside it a sonic universe that obeys its own independent laws of density, duration, impermanence, endurance, and transition, yet still refers to the cinematic action. Music responds here to the density of spoken sentences, voices, and rituals with a forest of pluckings and pickings, a jungle of sonic colors caused by diverse string instruments, but it responds to the execution of ritual often only with a single repeated chord. For all their referentiality and synchrony, however, both of these forms—and a few more as well—appear, not as illustrations or commentary, but as "utterances" of the objects and subjects, portions of the dialogue of the entities in the river.

On the Changing Space of Things: Memory and Cartography in the Making of Narrative Sculpture

HOMI K. BHABHA

ON THE RIVER

The East River, stained by the hanging shadow of Manhattan, is a river of fundament. This is the river of mythmaking for “it avails not, neither time or place—distance avails not,”¹ and from its banks rise the flame and foundry of the sculptor’s studio. It is also the river of transmutation where the artist’s subliming vessel creates an alchemy of materials, metaphors, and magic. It was on this river that I first saw the ghost of a Brooklyn brownstone aloft a barge, when suddenly the water turned dark with “semen, sweat and pools of putrefaction,”² and the foundations of the house were flooded with traces of Osiris’s bodily wastes. And it was on the banks of this same river that I first witnessed the abrupt transfiguration of Norman Mailer’s wake into a pharaonic world doomed by the pursuit of power and immortality, yielding slowly to the paranoia of impotency and impropriety. Quite out of the blue, on the shore of Long Island City, I encountered the dismembered body of Osiris—god of the Egyptian netherworld and guardian of the Nile’s silt—come to life again in the storyboards of an American gothic (or gnostic) narrative cycle of birth, death, and the undead. In the studio beside the water, as the storyboards developed into a total work without a teleology—a *bricolage* of cinema, opera, drawing, sculpture, performance, dance, and music—*River of Fundament* slowly revealed itself to be a work immersed in the sorcery of living multiple lives:³ the reincarnation of

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1. Whitman, Walt, “Crossing Brooklyn Ferry,” *Leaves of Grass*, <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/20006>.
 2. Geraldine Pinch, *Egyptian Mythology: A Guide to the Gods, Goddesses, and Traditions of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 179.
 3. Matthew Barney, conversation with Homi Bhabha, 2012–13.

three Normans; the tale of three cities—Los Angeles, Detroit, Brooklyn; the ritual dismemberment of three cars—Trans Am, Chrysler Imperial, and Crown Victoria; and the rebirth of three Hathfertitis. In the words of Matthew Barney, this world of narrative and mystery, from the rebirth of the Pharaohs to the ritualized recasting of the American car as Osiris's hieroglyph, is “fundamentally American but wrapped in a thin layer of gold from another culture.”⁴

ENFOLDED STATES

In Barney's studio, I came to understand his metaphor for a bonding between cultures as a process of annealing or tempering—as if by fire—rather than the self-conscious appropriation of the mythos of one culture to establish its articulacy or superiority over another. After all, Barney's Egyptian inspiration, Norman Mailer's *Ancient Evenings*, is a novel of avowedly hybrid horizons, engaged in adapting the Egyptian myth of reincarnation and restitution (embodied in Isis and Osiris) to address an American literary and artistic culture wounded by a sense of its historical and spiritual “belatedness.”⁵ Such an argument was made by Harold Bloom in a contemporary review of *Ancient Evenings*, and played a significant role in Barney's interpretation of the book. Bloom writes:

Mailer too wishes us to learn how to live, in an America where he sees our bodies and spirits becoming increasingly artificial, even “plastic” as he has often remarked. If our current realities, corporeal and psychic, manifest only lost connections, then Mailer's swarming, sex-and-death-ridden ancient Egyptian evenings are intended at once to mirror our desperation, and to contrast our evasions with the Egyptian rehearsal of the part of death.⁶

Mailer raises large questions about the life span of civilizations and how everyday experiences are interpreted and understood in the shadow of the insurmountable forces of cultural transition. When history fails us, do the universal resonances of symbols and myths—particularly those from cultures and periods distant from our own—have the capacity to reignite the fires of love, sex, worship, or power? In gazing upon the monumental heights of early civilizations—Egyptian Pharaohs, Hellenic gods—are we not incited to rebel against the mere measures of the freedom of will and action allowed us as secular modern individuals? In

4. Hans Ulrich Obrist, *The Conversation Series 27* (Cologne: Walther König, 2013), p. 139.

5. Harold Bloom, “Norman in Egypt,” *New York Review of Books*, April 8, 1983, pp. 3–5.

6. Ibid.

facing up to the *horror vacui* of death—“Rage, rage against the dying of the light”⁷—does art finally find its *raison d'être* in a ceaseless reverberation of the limits or thresholds between the human and the non-human?

Some of Mailer's philosophical reflections echo throughout *River of Fundament*. Magic, sorcery, alchemy, and allegory reflect the formal mode—and mood—of both artists. Barney is particularly interested in turning time—be it the temporality of history or the durational experience of a performance—into a sculptural object. For instance, *Ancient Evenings* and *River of Fundament* share a narrative structure immersed in the transmutations of the Osiris myth. Nothing stops Mailer from spinning the myth across times and places so long as his verbal magic can sustain the constant shape-changing. Substituting an automobile for the protagonist Osiris, Barney is faced with a sculptural problem presented by the material itself. The ritual dismemberment of Osiris's body, repeated across the narrative, is no less important for Barney's performance than it is for Mailer's novel. And yet, as Barney writes, “something that cannot be repeated cannot be reversed . . . Somehow that's been important to me. The car can only be cut into pieces and melted once.”⁸

Barney invents a mode of visual and aural narrative that explores the vulnerability of relationships coexisting on the borders between humanity, animality, and the construction of ritual objects. Mailer's *Ancient Evenings* demonstrates the powers of mythopoeic narratives to signify the imminence of transformation—the very moment at which different states of being “fold themselves into each other.” With a little help from Hans Bellmer and Harry Houdini, Barney makes visible the erotic intercession of man and god in a torqued coupling, resurrecting a new life from the womb of death. In the artist's words:

Given the nature of Mailer's text, what seems to be at the core of his story is that the gods are obliged to transform constantly and they are obliged to move between an animal state and to fuck one another and to kill one another and just to keep changing that way, *folding themselves into each other*.⁹

The mutability of mythic narrative—its enfolded states of being—has a particular salience for Barney's view of the body of the artist, his disposition in relation to the sculptural object, and his performance across

7. Dylan Thomas, “Do Not Go Gentle Into That Good Night,” *The Poems of Dylan Thomas*, <http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15377>.

8. Obrist and Barney, *The Conversation Series*, p. 140.

9. Obrist and Barney, *The Conversation Series*, p. 59.

genres. There is something Houdini-like in the way in which Barney weaves in and out of his narratives: now an actor; now an athlete; now a dancer; now a performance artist; now a mythological figure. To see these transformations as the assumption of “roles” is to miss Barney’s crucial insight into the way in which the artist is both internal to the meaning and making of the work, and as shaper or builder hovers outside and around the work. Barney suggests that many artists are conscious of “being simultaneously present and absent, and how that feeling eventually manifests itself in an object.”¹⁰

When the artist’s presence or disposition is instantaneously “present and absent,” the object’s comportment resists a “frontal”¹¹ representation; its elusive or oblique existence—its resistance to narrative linearity or figurative transparency—creates a subject for the work that is more conceptually complex and contingent. “Not being comfortable with being present in a frontal way,” Barney says, “what I am quite good at is being part of a system or creating a synergetic system, where there are no individuals.”¹² What is true of the artist is true of the work. *River of Fundament* is part of a large interlocking signifying system that gets its synergy from the intersection of diverse locations and disparate cultural mediums built around the repetitive event of Mailer’s wake. The event itself consists of layers of myth and memory—Egyptian ghosts, the undead souls of Mailer and Hemingway, the living witness of Norman’s friends and admirers. “I think these narratives are large,” Barney comments, “and the related works are large, but the stories are made from fragments.” The fragmentation of the myth of Osiris plays out across the American landscape, creating an intricate cartographic system—a ritual movement from place to place—and making space for surreal transitions and transmutations of myth into contemporary cultural history, novelistic fiction into cinematic scenarios, and sculpture into narrative. Indeed, they fold themselves into each other.

Barney’s work is transgressive because it refuses to take the frontal perspective. There is no unifying “subject” that sums up the extravagant and erotic explorations of *River of Fundament*, giving it a sanitized, holistic presence. The boundaries of gender, pleasure, desire, death and life itself are pushed to extremes from which it becomes impossible to reinstate either the vertical virtuosity of the human body, or the frontal, face-to-face perception of the discrete work of art. The hybrid scale of *River of Fundament*—at once human and non-human, at once person

10. Matthew Barney, *Prayer Sheet with the Wound and the Nail* (Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2010), p. 23.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

12. *Ibid.*

and object, at once sculpture and cinema, at once the survival of life and the cycle of death—finds its measure in these lines that first appeared as a coffin-text, and were later absorbed in *The Book of the Dead*.

I live, I die: I am Osiris
I have entered you, and have reappeared through you
I have waxed fat in you
I have grown in you
I have fallen upon my side
The gods are living from me.¹³

SUBLIMING VESSEL

If it is the gift of the gods to conjure a constant transformation from one state of being to another, great artists aspire to nothing less ambitious in their recasting of materials and meaning. Quite literally so, in the case of Barney’s sculpture *Secret Name*, which is made of corroding metals, lead, zinc, and copper, placed in proximity to each other. The electro-magnetic reaction corrodes the inferior metal (the anode) while the superior metal (the cathode) is protected by the molecules attracted to it. Barney disrupts the bi-polarity by introducing, in the interstices, an inferior third metal that corrodes while protecting the other two, thus taking on the function of a “sacrificial anode.” Another metaphor for art’s transformative potential—the “subliming vessel”—emerged when I asked Barney to explain the relationship between his storyboards for *River of Fundament* and Mailer’s *Ancient Evenings*. What were these collages of texts, notes, figures, pictures, and newspaper scraps? Were they the outcome of a process of translating shared tropes, themes, and timelines for the purpose of turning the novel into sculpture and film? Barney responded:

Do you know what a subliming vessel is? Like the process of sublimation where you take the solid state of something and you skip the liquid state and you get to the gas. And models like that in science are really meaningful to me, and especially the idea of skipping a state. It is a process of distillation but it’s not necessarily linear . . . The idea of sublimation is really on my mind because it can straddle the material understanding of sublimation and the psychological notion . . . I was interested in that as a way of visualizing the sculpture-making process . . . And I think it is a fascinating model for object making; this way of working, where things that have nothing to do with each

13. Eberhard Otto, *Ancient Egyptian Art: The Cults of Osiris and Amon* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1968), p. 25.

other are placed together as if a form of alchemy could happen and a material transformation could take place between the two states of material.¹⁴

When Mailer's arcane Egypt and Barney's American vernacular are placed side by side in the subliming vessel, what alchemical reaction ensues? Making "Egyptian" sculptures out of cast bronze, brass and iron were "a bit against my nature,"¹⁵ Barney says. These hard materials were certainly a departure from the wetter, malleable materials—Vaseline, plastics, petroleum jelly—that were truer to his athletic self-image, and integral to his earlier work on bodily restraint. It would be careless to talk of Barney's *use* of materials; it is truer to say that he has an ongoing "dialogue with material,"¹⁶ as he himself once described it. Material is not merely that thing which is "built to scale"; nor is it merely that thing in which a concept can be rendered or an affect expressed or an idea beheld. Material, in Barney's view, provides the artist with "a way of visualizing the sculpture-making practice."¹⁷ In speaking of the "material and object-based presence"¹⁸ of Joseph Beuys's work, Barney speaks of his own system:

I would identify my system: as a vessel that external stimulation and information, other environments, pass through. At the same time I would say . . . my language seeks new environments and asks them to function like vessels that my language can pass through and transform.¹⁹

MATERIAL MEMORY AND NARRATIVE SCULPTURE

What kind of "thing" is material? This question leads us to Barney's most direct disclosure of the desire that drives his art: "The intention has always been to make a narrative sculpture."²⁰ The figures of speech that Barney uses to describe the properties of materials, or material processes of transformation and transmutation, are embedded in narratives of ritual and memory. Ritual memory is the immanent force of recall and

14. Matthew Barney, conversation with Homi Bhabha, 2012–13.

15. Isabelle Dervaux, "From Residual Marks to Drawing as Meditation: An Interview with Matthew Barney," in *Subliming Vessel: The Drawings of Matthew Barney* (New York: Skira Rizzoli, 2013), p. 56.

16. Obrist and Barney, *The Conversation Series*, p. 81.

17. Matthew Barney, conversation with Homi Bhabha, 2012–13.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

19. *Ibid.*

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 128–29ff.

revision that is inscribed in each encounter with material. Like all arts of memory, material-memory is located in a particular event or experience; when aroused in the present, however, it draws on its transformative powers. Narrative sculpture appeals to material-memory and the sculptural practices of the past, in order to visualize objects and projects that initiate dialogues with new materials, and establish new sites and systems of art-making. These innovations, in their turn create *lieux de mémoire* in an evolving language of sculptural form and matter. Barney has described his work as "one long sentence" in which material "could become anything or take any form, so in that sense its prosthetic nature hasn't ever changed."²¹ To understand the ritual of material-memory we must explore the prosthetic nature of material, and the personae that haunt its narrative.

The value of material-memory lies not in its accuracy of representation—memories can be distorted projections—but in its powers of recall and repetition. Memory brings back events or objects of the past, in a state of openness and uncertainty that allows for their re-signification. Like dreams, memories bring together anachronous and asymmetrical things, "as if a form of alchemy could happen and a material transformation could take place." In Barney's work, as in the realms of art and myth, the transformative wonders of alchemy and memory lie in processes by which time tempers (or anneals) the object. It is not traditional, timeworn repetition that ritualizes objects and practices; ritual is only secondarily a customary habit. The power of iteration lies in revealing what is anachronistic and asymmetrical in each repetition, while annealing the object with diverse angles of vision, and the multiple layers of meaning that give it ritual resonance. As you can see, what I am calling the ritual repetition of material-memory is in sync with Barney's subliming vessel.

Whether the material is Vaseline or prosthetic plastic (in the earlier work), cast iron or copper (in *River of Fundament*), Barney's sculptures follow a particular narrative trajectory in casting the protagonists or personae who become the agents of his films, drawings or sculptures. "Each project is an organism, a body of some sort,"²² Barney says; and it is the transformation of bodily materials and forms, from the soft matter of the imprint of the human body to the dead, hard materials of prosthetics and non-human bodies—from the human subject to the sculptural object—that provides the germ of his narratives. The montage-like articulation of the human and non-human, placed side by side in an

21. *Ibid.*, p. 82.

22. Dervaux, "From Residual Marks to Drawing as Meditation," p. 56.

equal alliance, sets the stage for Barney's mythopoeic allegories and his psychosexual dramas.

It is the memory of the body, encrypted or impressed in material, that is scaled up to meet more complex narrative challenges. Barney insists on the priority of the bodily scale for sculptural narrative even if it is later attenuated, extended or turned into metaphor. "This idea of rendering a body didn't go away—describing a body, a narrative that would take place on top of it, inside of, and around a body—that *continued*, but it was less literal . . . and it became more narrative, referring to the landscape, and at times to known mythologies and stories . . . a body of a larger scale that includes the architectural and geological."²³ How does the prosthetic process work through material-memory? What is the ritual that turns the human subject into the sculptural object?

Anatomical details, biological facts, and bodily affects serve as the basis for what Barney describes as a model for a larger aesthetic system. Vaseline carries with it the material-memory of athletics, youth, the lubrication of intimate body parts and the protection of soft-tissue; in a later incarnation, it becomes the film through which Barney visualizes the layered prosthetic plastic frames that mount his drawings in settings that he describes as deep orifices. Frame and drawing must touch each other like "an abstraction of an internal labia and an external labia." The use of petroleum jelly brings back the "site-specific" memory of the footballer's body in the locker room.

From the age of ten to nineteen, Barney remembers himself covered in plastic much of the time—shoulder and thigh pads, athletic tape, foam pieces, vinyl tape, Vaseline. The football gear becomes a prosthetic extension to the embalmed athletic body within. There is a visualization of sculpture-making in this prosthetic process: the athlete's protective cladding acts like a mother-mold in the metal casting process, and takes on the shape of the body. Human identity (the body) and instrumental materiality (the prosthetic) are placed side by side; the human subject and the prosthetic "object" fold themselves into each other; and the persona and its prosthetic become proximate representations of each other. They stand in a double relation to each other by standing in for each other. We are now in the realm of the subliming vessel. What are the alchemical transformations that result from Barney's dialogue with the "prosthetic nature of material," a preoccupation constant throughout his career?

23. Ibid.

PROSTHESIS AND MYTH

Answering this question takes us directly to the milieu of *River of Fundament*. Here, Barney's long-standing ideas about the prosthetic transformation of materials are profoundly connected with the mythic narratives and symbolic languages of Egyptian ritual. The presiding god of *River of Fundament* is Osiris. The inspiration for Barney's adaptation is the ritual of regeneration enacted in the name of Osiris who was dismembered by his brother Set, and after a protracted kingdom-wide quest for the various parts of his interred body, was found partially restored by his wife and sister Isis. Osiris's missing phallus, according to most versions of the myth, was never found. Osiris is the god of fertility whose regeneration is symbolized in a plant-like rural resurrection—a chthonic fertility²⁴ of corn and barley; he is also the god of the underworld whose cult represents the quintessence of the ancient Egyptian view of a human being's life "as a microcosm of the entire natural world."²⁵ In his composite identity as Ptah-Sokar-Osiris, he is also, in part, the deity of sculpture.²⁶

Barney's concept of the image of the human body, re-presented or reconfigured in the prosthetic mold, is open to a version of Egyptian eschatology. The prosthetic object resembles the *ka*, or the person's double, and provides nourishment after the person's death.²⁷ The prosthetic, as a double, also recalls the hieroglyph by which the god is named publicly or in secret. "According to Egyptian belief," Eberhard Otto writes in *Egyptian Art: The Cults of Osiris and Amon*, "the name too is among the powers of the personality, which like the body or the *ka* can take the place of the person itself."²⁸ It is the irony of the prosthetic, whether it be athletic cladding or the *ka*, that what protects your body, or preserves your spirit, also signifies lifelessness and death. The prosthetic self can be read as belonging to the afterlife of the human body from which it is cast, and open to the ritual process of death and rebirth. In brief, the sculptural form of Barney's aesthetic thinking, modeled on the nature of the prosthetic, is remarkably open to the ontological beliefs and mythological rituals of *Ancient Evenings*:

One of the first moves I made in adapting Mailer's *Ancient Evenings* was to bring it into the American landscape, and to replace Mailer's protagonist with a Chrysler Imperial. In the action in Detroit, the

24. Otto, *Ancient Egyptian Art*, p. 24ff.

25. Karol Myśliwiec, *Eros on the Nile* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2004).

26. Pinch, *Egyptian Mythology*, p. 50.

27. Ibid., p. 229.

28. Otto, *Ancient Egyptian Art*, p. 54.

Imperial was recovered from the Detroit river and cut into pieces and melted in this furnace . . . It does feel very model-like in a way, but the mold was made by taking the undercarriage of a 1967 Chrysler Imperial and cutting away parts of it, then burying it in sand and stone to form an abstraction of the Egyptian hieroglyph for the deity Osiris.²⁹

The hybrid entity body-cum-prosthesis signifies the mythological personae given to the three automobiles, the Trans Am, the Chrysler Imperial, and the Ford Interceptor, in *River of Fundament*. They represent the spirit of Osiris as it is regenerated and manifested in the three Normans. Like the deity, they straddle life and death, transform themselves from one material into another, and live on the cusp of dismemberment/resurrection, degeneration/regeneration, or dismantling/recycling. *Djed*, a sculptural recasting of the dismembered undercarriage of the Chrysler Imperial to assume the form of Osiris's hieroglyph, perfectly illustrates the coming together of material-memory (the melting and remolding of the car's body) and mythic ritual (the dismemberment of Osiris). Could this be what Barney means when he says that his intention has always been to make "narrative sculpture"? If my speculation seems plausible, let me go a little further with the story and take you from *Djed*, via an iconic moment in the film, to the sculptural triptych *Eye of Osiris* (which Barney has subsequently retitled *Coming Forth by Day*, but to which I refer by its former name for the sake of my narrative).

There is an arresting moment in *River of Fundament*, set on the Detroit River, when a severed part of the body of Osiris (the engine block) is discovered, and hauled out of the water. Isis's quest is partly fulfilled, until she discovers, as the myth tells us, that Osiris's dismembered phallus cannot be found. Distraught, Isis takes on the sculptor's role, and fashions a prosthetic phallus (some say in wax, others say in gold), which she attaches to the engine block—the fragmented body of Osiris (the body-cum-prosthesis). Filling the engine cylinders with snakes, Isis pulls down her trousers, straddles the engine block, and fornicates with Osiris. Myth has it that this is the moment at which Horus was conceived. Egyptian mythic narratives are typically written as iterative pairs, according to Geraldine Pinch, who writes, "Pairs often consist of an event that happened during the First Time (when the universe was created) and an event that is placed during the era when deities ruled the earth. . . . One event seems to take place in linear time and the other in cyclical time."³⁰

29. Obrist and Barney, *The Conversation Series*, p. 127.

30. For this account, see Pinch, *Egyptian Myth: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 93; and Pinch, *Egyptian Mythology*, pp. 131–32.

Let us now turn from the film to the *Eye of Osiris* to continue the story of sculptural narrative. It was Set, the murderer of Osiris, who also killed Horus. He dismembered Osiris's body into fourteen pieces and tore Horus's eye into six. Paired with the re-membering of Osiris's body, Horus's eye was reassembled, and the six parts of the eye represented the standard grain measure in the hieroglyphic script. The deity of grain, Osiris, now enters the narrative again, for once Horus is healed, he revives his murdered father and makes his body whole again. *Eye of Osiris* is threaded through with this transformational narrative. The subliming vessel gives us a phallus that is part bodily member and part vegetation. The tumescent phallus sprouts sprigs and branches—the signs of life returning—and it is accompanied on either side by large vegetal forms that attest to the renewed vigor of the god of the underworld. In the wake with which the film opens, the opulence of fruit, flowers and vegetables (including edible cactus leaves shaped like cartouches) are a tribute to Osiris and a testament to the rebirth of Norman; but the luscious, wide-faced lotuses in large gold goblets that adorn the festive table represent the eye of Horus, the host, who offers gifts of wine, food, and perfumes to the celebrants. In Barney's alchemy of film and sculpture there emerges a mode of narrative that demands a new kind of attentiveness: film develops the stillness of sculpture shaping the eye to revolve around a shot, as if the flat screen has developed a new layer of depth; while sculpture reveals a capacity to unravel itself in time, as if its very materials are the signposts of a secret, cinematic story.

HOST AND GUEST

Around the table laden with victuals for the wake, Norman Mailer is vividly present because he is palpably absent. In all these myths of death and regeneration, despite the rituals that ensure that he will be born again or the dismembered Osiris will be restored to wholeness, there is an empty place for the stranger who comes belatedly to the feast. Nature abhors a vacuum, but death cannot but leave an absence. In Barney's exploration of the mythological, mystical "other world" there is a strong cartographic desire to explore the world of others—everything from the sacred to the septic flushes through *River of Fundament*. After the wake, the ritual boar rots with mold that spreads like poison ivy over its ravaged bones; bodies writhe and flail, rising to the heights of agony and longing, and subsiding in shit and blood; Mailer wrestles Hemingway with naked ambition; Whitman conducts the traffic on Brooklyn Bridge; Isis's vulva opens like a blossom to give birth to a bird, the baby falcon Horus; Osiris dies and rises again in three great American cities.

In the riot of such enfolded states, I recall some questions I asked Matthew in the studio. "What explains your attachment to place? As your

cartographies catch up with your mythologies, how do you occupy so many foreign territories?" I end with Matthew's reflections not because I want him to have the final word, but because what he has to say poses a new set of questions—about host and guest—for our next conversation:

The notion of the guest occupying a foreign territory the way that place informs the guest and my relation to place . . . is very strong in the work I think. As strong as my relation is to narrative and mythology . . . it's often the place more so than the narrative. The landscape or the way that the landscape holds mythology is probably more useful than a story. And that's what attracted me to Mailer in the first place . . . the way that the landscape holds mythology.³¹

In writing this essay I have incurred a debt to many friends and supporters. I am grateful to Barbara Gladstone for bringing Matthew Barney and me together, and to Matthew for open access to his ideas and intuitions in a series of conversations. Allyson Spellacy and Alexandra Hays have been extraordinarily efficient and generous in supporting this project. Louise Neri's suggestions and editorial emendations were crucial to the writing of this piece. My student Steven Tardif and my assistant, Kevin Herwig, showed a rare expertise in shuttling materials from Cambridge to Mumbai and back. Thanks to you all.

31. Matthew Barney, conversation with Homi Bhabha, 2012–13.

The Unbearable Unlikelihood of Barney

DAVID WALSH

We see the sinking of the *Titanic* as an unmitigated disaster. We also marvel at the irony of an unsinkable ship at the bottom of the ocean. This is the stuff of legend.

There are other perspectives, of course. Perhaps the failure of one ocean liner engenders an analysis of process. Maybe we do better now, maybe the things we launch stay afloat. But those very legends—movies, books, songs, *stories*—perhaps they enrich us.

When liquids freeze, the resulting solids typically occupy less volume. Water is a significant exception. If it wasn't, icebergs wouldn't float, and the *Titanic* wouldn't have sunk. In fact, it wouldn't have sunk for a much more fundamental reason—it would never have been built. Deep oceans, cold and dark, would freeze from the bottom up. There wouldn't be any liquid water; there wouldn't be any life on earth.

A critic's role is to ponder the sunken ship, and wonder if it sank the right way, a good way.

A eulogist has a much more honorable role. A eulogist sees the ship resting there on the bottom, and sees past that to celebrate the unfrozen ocean.

I choose to eulogize Matthew Barney for those reasons, and this: Barney's work is an iceberg, massing below the surface, waiting to cut me open, waiting to show me the sea of opportunity.

While I was considering how to contribute to this book, I learned that Lou Reed had died and I spontaneously wrote an obituary for our museum blog, *MONA Blog*. Even though I knew little about Lou Reed, the blog was worthwhile. It captured my ambivalence about his death: I hate that he died but, after all, he had to die, because he lived, so the only unknown is whether he lived meaningfully. A better writer than I, Ford Madox Ford, wrote of Joseph Conrad, a better writer than almost anybody, "That such a man could have died, that such a man could have lived." So now here's my contribution: an obituary of Matthew Barney,

even though he isn't dead. Based on a sample space of one, obituaries benefit from lack of proximity, and lack of certainty. I certainly have both. And anyway, Barney might well be dead by the time you read this, given the time between composition and publication, and you could be reading it long after that. A very healthy forty-five-year-old has a bit less than one chance in a thousand of dying in the next three months.

I only met Barney once, just six months ago in June, and I am saddened that the opportunity will not come again. That was in Long Island City, at his studio, and there I became acquainted with his last body of work and was astonished at the level of resolution and integrity displayed. He showed us brief excerpts from *River of Fundament*, a film now complete. At five hours fifteen minutes it better have a lot to say, and it does.

I had encountered Barney's work only six years before, my aesthetic migration from antiquities to contemporary art having begun in my early forties. I'd attended the 2007 Venice Biennale and having left Venice en route to the Basel art fair, we found our connecting flight cancelled in Munich. So Olivier, one of MONA's curators, decided that we would drive to Basel via Bregenz where he knew there was a stunning museum. At the time, the Kunsthhaus Bregenz had four works of art on display—one per floor—in an exhibition called "Mythos," and one of the works, *Cetacea*, was by Barney. It led me here.

A brief aside about history: since students of history seek essentially to explain how the present came to be, and everybody else is seeking to justify the status quo, there is a tendency to come to accept whatever prevails. Yes, millions died pointlessly in World War II, but it was sufficiently long ago that most people alive today were not alive then, and most people assume that this mostly good world is the result of that world. In the spirit of "better the devil we know . . ." "the majority would keep history as is, and not eliminate massive injustices if they had the choice, because any changes would presumably ripple through to a vastly different present where the currently living would never have lived. Of course, the predominant effect of snuffing out all those lives was to end those bloodlines: the people most affected were affected by not being born. And the unborn don't author histories.

I had severe asthma as a child, and it adversely affected my activity levels and my schooling. The converse is that I read a great deal, having nothing else to do. So I am now the product of luck, genes, some choice, a slightly underprivileged upbringing, and asthma. But I'm also the product of that cancelled flight—that which availed me of Bregenz and Barney—and here I am, at the keyboard, pondering the value of reality. And in that same reality Barney was born, and exhibited at Bregenz, and died. And now, close to the point of his demise, it seems

a disaster for him, and for those who loved him, and for those who love his work. But this new world, the Barney-less world, will soon become the status quo, and that will be the world we want, and in that world there will be acceptance and, more than acceptance, a doctrine that asserts the inevitability of what came to pass. Within that doctrine we will be able to trace the orbit of high-minded contemporary art, and it will be shown that this orbit has been boosted by Barney, and further expanded, maybe, by his passing.

And here is another thing. As we consider a world without Matthew Barney, we should contemplate a world where he never existed. For me, that is a world far worse than the one into which he was born and died. Maybe, right now, the best of all possible worlds is the one in which once the Barney switch has been thrown it has not yet short-circuited. But the second best world is this one, the one where he was born and lived until very recently, and made all the works we see, and the works that I saw in his studio last June. Once one is born, dying is, of course, inevitable. Being born, on the other hand, is very unlikely. It requires a confluence of events that range from the evolution of life on Earth through the oxygenation of the atmosphere to the invention of sex. It also requires that hundreds of millions of an individual's ancestors live long enough to produce their progeny, and also requires of them to be horny enough, or slow enough, that those offspring are produced. And it requires the intervention of comets like the one that caused the Chicxulub crater, or dinosaurs might have prevailed. Also, and far more importantly, it requires the avoidance of an infinite series of ghostly impediments that I cannot nominate, since they didn't happen, but could have. In this view—call it "The Unbearable Unlikelihood of Barney"—Barney was special in many ways beyond his capacity to contrive and create. Many things contributed to the body of work we enjoy from him, although over his dead body.

At the risk of belaboring the point, I note that unlikely as Barney's existence was, the confluence of minuscule probabilities is further diminished by the fact that each of us is as unlikely as he; and that nature and fortune contrived to place us here, overlapping his brief beacon and ranging slightly beyond it, so that we can not only enjoy his work, but also appreciate it, interpret it, and rationalize it to establish his place in our canon.

Barney's controversial legal will, which stipulates that his body be hacked to pieces, superficially reeks of self-aggrandizement. It seems that he identifies himself with Horus. But his body of work belies this obvious connection. Emboldened by his inability to respond, I contend that Barney is Isis, the giver of life, the committed servant of process and, at least as far as Norman Mailer is concerned in his 1980s novel

Ancient Evenings, a mistress of the destroyer (Barney uses the ancient Egyptian Osiris myth sieved through Mailer). Like Isis, Barney allows nothing to interfere. The destination is known and the journey will be undertaken. Aggravations like death will not be permitted to stand in the way. Perhaps the dismembered Barney chunks share some of a tape-worm's regenerative power. Each may become a metonym for the vastness of his conception: little bastard Barneys preserved in Lucite, waiting for the day when some Spielbergian Isis extracts information that permits reassembling the matrix of Barney. Would not each degraded and imperfectly reassembled Barney clone ideally show the circularity that is inherent in the myths and in Barney's work? Osiris-Set-Isis-Osiris. Barney-Mailer-Osiris-Barney. Osiris-Dionysius-Jesus-Barney-Osiris.

I identify with Set. His actions were appalling, of course, but he had every right to consider them permanent. While grieving, many imagine a different world where the confluence of events didn't lead to the loss of a loved one. Isis has the power to undermine certainty, albeit briefly, and thus cause and effect are given short shrift. Far from creating the order implicit in the myth, this in turn undermines how we seek explanations, because now they don't explain. A later myth, one coupled to the Osiris myth, has Jesus temporarily returning to life, but oddly—as in Barney's recapitulated car—the reversal of the damage done by death is incomplete. He still bears the stigma(ta) of his ordeal. Here, replete with symbolic meaning but no other sort of meaning, we are given evidence of the impossible, and we are given to understand that redefining “impossible” as “really quite achievable” is a good thing. Does Jesus's mother's impossible virginity add a layer of conceptual purpose to Isis's fornication with her ephemerally undead husband? Two thousand years later, the refinement of the myth introduces the idea that no man is required for conception, an idea that would have allowed Osiris to stay honorably dead. After a further two thousand years, Barney and Mailer reinvigorated the myth cycle, with the ephemeral returnee becoming permanent. Industrial revivification requires no faith; the evidence is eternally interpretable. The next refinement might well be eliminating the resurrection by eliminating death. In my view this has the potential to be as problematic as any of the precursor myths. And it might not be a myth at all.

During my visit to Barney's studio a few months ago, I began to understand the precision of his creation. Most artists with whose work I'm familiar, including even a few I consider great, meddle with their media and an outcome emerges. Serendipity programs their response to that meddling and meaning is retrospectively introduced. I have no wish to dismiss, nor diminish, this process. Most of the worthwhile things in the world were created iteratively, without flashes of insight, from

penicillin to the *Principia*. However, emboldened again by his incapacity to contest my speculation, I note that Barney seemed to flesh out his concepts fully before their execution. Fortunate happenstances were welcome, and slag and wax and celluloid were allowed, to some extent, to do as they chose, but the greater purpose was adhered to.

I did not see Barney's phenomenal performance in Detroit, a part of his overall recapitulation of the Osiris myth. I won't re-recapitulate the Set-murders-Osiris-Isis-gives-birth-to-Horus-myth here, since other more academic and informed writers are sure to embrace the structures that buttress Barney's work; though I note his declared ambivalence to Mailer's dense and difficult tome, a novel wherein the supernatural is as natural as sex with one's sister. A literary masterwork would have created an expectation of servitude from the art, whereas *Ancient Evenings*, which it seems reasonable to assert that only the author, and possibly Barney, ever finished, allows room for tale-telling while providing a contemporary framework. And what better place than Detroit to seek to leaven the impact of death—here Barney writes his own epitaph—and to lever from that into the nature of rebirth and its potential consequences? Osiris's rebirth, ephemeral with respect to Osiris but considerable with respect to Horus and order in Egypt, contains the germ of the presentation that I gave earlier: death results from being born, birth is the event of significance. Detroit has been transmogrified in this way, but it's only in observing old Detroit that the oddity of the new can be encapsulated. Thus it was for me that day in Long Island City with Barney's consumed Chrysler and its renewal as Osiris, in broken but perfected form.

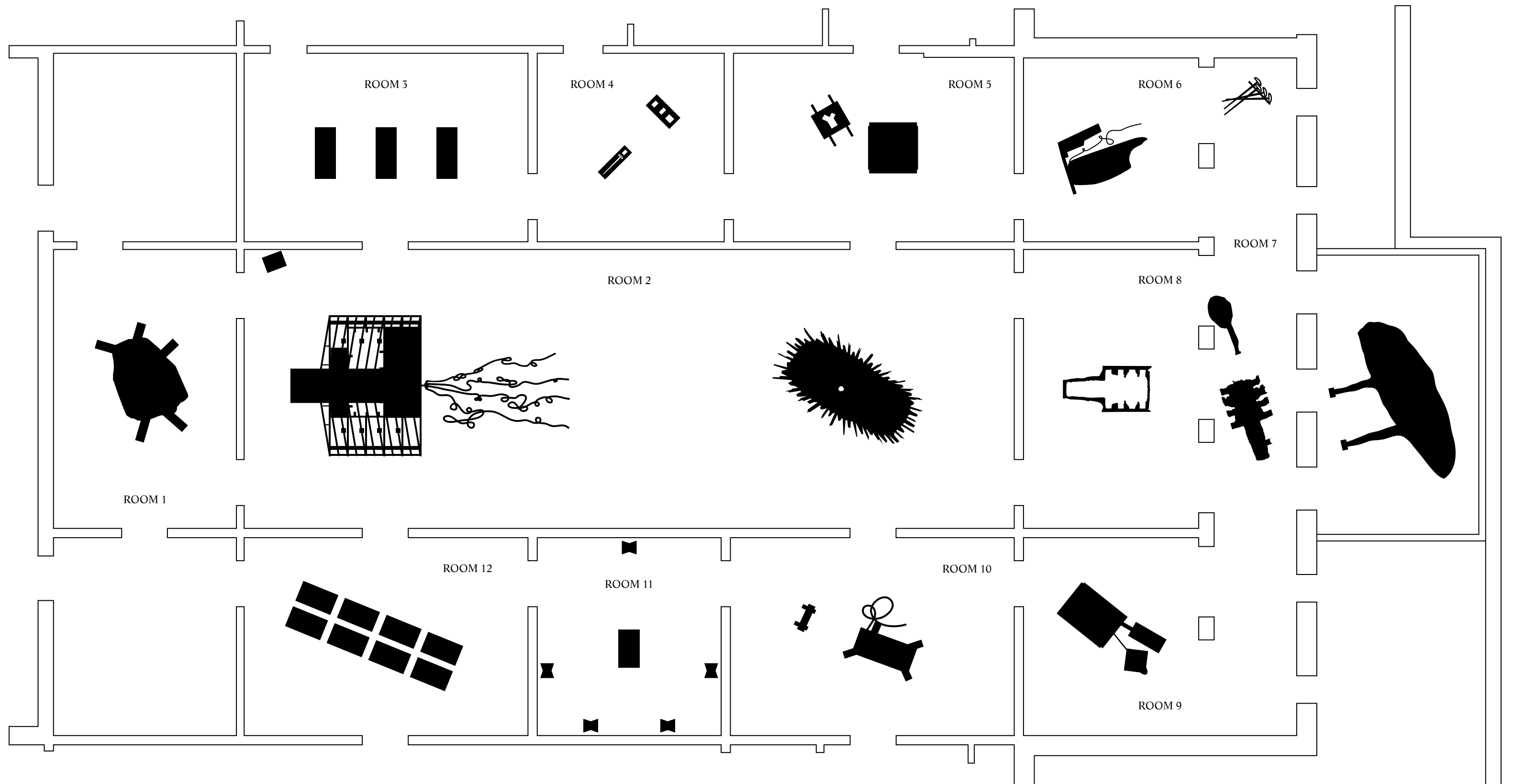
I am an art collector, and I want that ascended car. Occasionally, infrequently, an object is whole; its medium, its message, its matrix, and its conceptual process are subsumed into a creation of great constitution. In the presence of Barney's Chrysler, I felt sanctified by its tamed form, and I felt the restrained malevolence of its inner animal. Here Set and Osiris are one, the killer and the killed, a compound of the brutish and the stoic, allied and alloyed into a gleaming thing that is no thing, and thus can represent, each in their turn, both folly and fulfillment.

As I said, I want that car. But impediments exist, not least the explosion in value that the death of the artist often effects. And here is the embodiment of that folly, that the axiology of Barney's oeuvre is enhanced by his absence. We might as well value the gold in the ground, un-mined, more highly than the golden ring that aids a declaration of love. I want that car to be the ring *and* the declaration. I love this particular work, and the body of work to which it belongs

My exuberant endorsement of Barney's work might lead an unbiased observer to conclude that the “I” in this essay is Matthew himself. Perhaps in a flurry of near-dead activity he (I) wrote this self-congratulatory

piece and then realized that its impact would be undermined if published under his own name. Or maybe, while visiting his studio, I pilfered a speculative document, a pending work, and after his demise reconfigured it to be my own. There is a precedent for this, at least in art. In Woody Allen's unattended masterpiece *You Will Meet a Tall Dark Stranger*, a failing novelist is party to his friend's excellent manuscript. His friend dies and he publishes the manuscript as his own; except the friend isn't dead, only comatose and, at the movie's conclusion, likely to recover. If this is Matthew's little experiment, I will sure look stupid if, like Woody Allen's character, or like Osiris, he turns up not to be dead. But I have little to worry about. Death, except in myths, is forever. And a good thing, too.

SITE MAP OF THE EXHIBITION



LIST OF WORKS

River of Fundament

A film-opera by Matthew Barney and Jonathan Bepler
Running time: 5 hours, 11 minutes
European premiere at Bayerische Staatsoper Munich,
March 16, 2014 in association with Haus der Kunst, Munich

ROOM 1

Canopic Chest, 2011

Cast bronze
73 ½ x 165 x 243 inches
(186.7 x 419.1 x 617.2 cm)
Laurenz Foundation, Basel

Canopic Chest was cast with the remains of the front end of the 1967 Chrysler Crown Imperial that was wrecked during the *Ren* performance in Los Angeles in 2008. Its appearance is influenced by early Egyptian bronze castings that withstood the test of time, because their casting gates had not been removed and thus supported the objects. Produced at an early stage in the *River of Fundament* project, *Canopic Chest* revealed that bronze could be utilized for Barney's visual language, which opened the way for further exploration of this classical material in subsequent sculptures.

In ancient Egyptian funerary practices, a canopic chest was the container in which four canopic jars containing the internal organs of the deceased were placed. The Egyptians believed that the body parts of their dead had to be preserved together if the dead were to embark on the journey into the afterlife. The canopic chest served to ensure the wholeness of the spirit.

ROOM 2

Boat of Ra, 2014

132 x 600 x 288 inches
(335.3 x 1524 x 731.5 cm)
Wood, cast bronze, gold plated bronze, resin-bonded sand, steel
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

Boat of Ra is conceived both as an inverted version of Norman Mailer's attic and a shipwreck. The sculpture evokes the night boat (*mesektet*) of the sun god Ra, who was believed

to descend into the underworld at night, where he merged with the god of the dead, Osiris, before being reborn with the morning sun. The passage of Ra thus represents the cycle of death and rebirth.

As an inversion of Norman Mailer's attic, the ship carries a sand mold of Mailer's study, where his writing desk was situated. This desk at which Mailer labored for ten years to write *Ancient Evenings* has been cast in bronze. The golden straitjacket that lies on the desk refers to that of the artist James Lee Byars, whose character Barney resurrected to play the part of Osiris in *Khu*.

Drawing Restraint 21, 2014

Haus der Kunst, March 13, 2014, with the assistance of the Munich Cowboys Ladies football team.

Since the late 1980s, Barney has been making drawings in situ during live performances, resulting in the ongoing *Drawing Restraint* series. The project arose from a fascination with the fact that the human body needs resistance in order to develop muscular strength, and this logic was extended to the process of drawing. For *Drawing Restraint 21*, Barney directed a team of sixteen female athletes to execute a drawing on the main gallery's walls using a 5,000-pound graphite block that they dragged on sleds. This procedure left a broken graphic trace around the walls.

Portcullis Block, 2014

Graphite, wooden sleds
57 ¼ x 39 x 50 ½ inches
(145.4 x 99.1 x 128.3 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

In medieval times, portcullises were used to fortify castle entrances. Built into the entrance walls, they could be quickly lowered with chains or ropes to hold back or entrap enemies. The graphite block also recalls the stone blocks that were used to seal Egyptian burial chambers.

Trans America, 2013

Cast sulfur, epoxy, wood timbers
36 x 120 x 170 inches
(91.4 x 304.8 x 431.8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

Trans America was cast from an impression of the 1979 Pontiac Firebird Trans Am car that featured prominently in *River of Fundament*. Poured as part of the *Ba* performance in New York in 2013, *Trans America* personifies the second incarnation of Norman Mailer. It consists of resin-bonded sulfur that evokes the hybrid materials of Barney's earlier sculptures. The substance was poured into the mold of the Trans Am and then drained via a hole in the base of the mold, leaving behind a negative cast of the automobile body. A sulfur crystal that formed in this process has been left inside the sculpture.

ROOM 3

Sekhu, 2013

Salt, sulfur, copper, bronze and brass
40 x 42 x 105 inches
(101.6 x 106.7 x 266.7 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

Sekhu comprises the casket vessels for each incarnation of Norman Mailer, placed on bronze sleds that resemble those used in ancient Egyptian funerary processions. The third sled carries no casket. In the novel *Ancient Evenings*, the protagonist gets stuck after his second death, and Norman III fails to reincarnate as well. On the first sled, a sulfur sarcophagus is topped by a copper cast of a car armrest and drive shaft; on the second, a salt sarcophagus is topped by a bronze armrest and drive shaft. The third sled holds a cast brass drive shaft. *Sekhu* refers to funerary processions as well as to the ancient Egyptian reincarnation cycle, within which *sekhu* symbolizes the body's remains.

DRAWINGS are fundamental to Barney's process. His interest in the medium extends to the physical process of its making, as in his ongoing series *Drawing Restraint*. The extensive body of drawings that accompanies *River of Fundament*, while constituting an independent element of the project, intricately maps the project's character and further explores its conceptual arc. The drawings are divided into four series: The red drawings (*River Rouge*); the black drawings (*Guardian of the Veil*); the white drawings (*Soul States*); and the works executed directly on bronze, brass, and copper (*Yellow Metals*).

The drawings mirror the themes and iconography of *River of Fundament* and explore the depths of each act rather than present its narrative. Barney evokes his enigmatic, delicate imagery with the addition of nontraditional materials such as petroleum jelly and metal leaf, in addition to lapis

dust and HDPE, a plastic derived from crude oil. As is often the case with Barney's drawings, the frames are integral parts of the works, functioning as either portals to or as extensions of the drawings.

Ba: Undercarriage, 2009

Graphite and silver leaf on paper in polyethylene frame
16 ½ x 13 x 1 ¼ inches
(41.9 x 33 x 3.2 cm)
Private collection, New York

Guardian of the Veil: Duad, 2008

Graphite on paper and polycaprolactone in polyethylene frame
12 ¾ x 10 ¾ x 1 inches
(32.4 x 27.3 x 2.5 cm)
Private collection

Guardian of the Veil: Norman Mailer, 2007

Graphite on paper in polyethylene frame
12 ¾ x 10 ¾ inches
(32.4 x 27.3 cm)
Private collection, Los Angeles

Khu: Birth of Anubis, 2011

Ink on paper in polyethylene frame
14 ¼ x 11 ¾ x 1 ¼ inches
(36.2 x 29.8 x 3.2 cm)
Collection of Flea, Los Angeles

Khaibit: Baghdad Battery, 2010

Ink, graphite, and copper leaf on paper in polyethylene frame
13 x 16 ½ x 1 ¼ inches
(33 x 41.9 x 3.2 cm)
Roman Family Collection

Khu: Isis and Osiris, 2009

Graphite on paper in polyethylene frame
14 ¼ x 11 ¾ x 1 ⅜ inches
(36.2 x 29.8 x 3.5 cm)
Private collection

Khu: Five Points Make a Man, 2009

Graphite on paper in polyethylene frame
9 ½ x 11 ⅞ x 1 ⅜ inches
(24.1 x 30.2 x 3.5 cm)
Courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London

Khu: Osiris J.L.B., 2009

Graphite on paper in polyethylene frame
14 ¼ x 11 ⅞ inches
(36.2 x 29.5 cm)
Private collection

Khu: River Rouge, 2009
Graphite and lapis lazuli on paper in polyethylene frame
16 ³/₈ x 12 ⁷/₈ x 1 ³/₈ inches
(41.6 x 32.7 x 3.5 cm)
Private collection

Khu: The Seed of Set Is Dense as the Milk of Silver, 2009
Graphite and silver leaf on paper in polyethylene frame
14 ¹/₄ x 11 ³/₄ x 1 ¹/₄ inches
(36.2 x 29.8 x 3.2 cm)
Collection Mark Fletcher and Tobias Meyer

Ren: Khepera, 2008
Graphite on paper in polyethylene frame
12 x 9 ¹/₂ x 1 ¹/₄ inches
(30.5 x 24.1 x 3.2 cm)
Collection Mark Fletcher and Tobias Meyer

Ren: Lapis Ren, 2008
Ink, graphite, petroleum jelly, and lapis lazuli on paper in polyethylene frame
11 ⁷/₈ x 9 ¹/₂ x 1 ¹/₄ inches
(30.2 x 24.1 x 3.2 cm)
AS Ingunn Werners collection, Iceland

Sekhem: Horus, 2008
Graphite on paper in polyethylene frame
14 ¹/₄ x 11 ³/₄ x 1 ¹/₄ inches
(36.2 x 29.8 x 3.2 cm)
Private collection, Paris

Sekhem: Isis, 2008
Graphite on paper in polyethylene frame
14 ¹/₄ x 11 ³/₄ x 1 ¹/₄ inches
(36.2 x 29.8 x 3.2 cm)
Private collection

River of Fundament: Leaves of Grass, 2014
Engraved brass
14 ³/₄ x 12 ¹/₄ inches
(37.5 x 31.1 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

ROOM 4

Coming Forth by Day, 2013
Cast bronze in bronze vitrine
48 x 36 x 96 inches
(121.9 x 91.4 x 243.8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

Presented in a unique vitrine, the three bronze phalluses—which first appeared in wood, crystal, and metal during the *Khu* performance in Detroit 2010—show signs of seeping transformation in the vitrine’s base. The sculpture refers to

the Egyptian myth in which Isis gathers the scattered physical remains of Osiris in an effort to restore his spirit’s integrity. She, however, fails to find Osiris’s phallus and decides to re-create it instead—thereby restoring his potency and fertility.

Was, 2013
Cast sterling silver, sulfur in bronze vitrine
42 x 72 x 30 inches
(106.7 x 182.9 x 76.2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

Was resembles the ancient Egyptian *was* scepter, which represents control over the forces of chaos. In hieroglyphics, it stands for “power.” The attribute was used in rituals in all three of the live performances of *River of Fundament*, and recurs in three other sculptures: *Canopic Chest*, *Secret Name*, and *Sacrificial Anode*.

Ba: Queensborough, 2009
Graphite on paper in polyethylene frame
11 ³/₄ x 14 ¹/₄ x 1 ¹/₄ inches
(29.8 x 36.2 x 3.2 cm)
Collection of Sebastian Beck Almrud

Ka: Galena Summit, 2009
Ink and graphite on paper in polyethylene frame
16 ¹/₂ x 13 x 1 ¹/₄ inches
(41.9 x 33 x 3.2 cm)
Collection of the artist

Ka: Hemingway House, 2009
Ink, graphite, and silver leaf on paper in polyethylene frame
9 ¹/₂ x 11 ⁷/₈ x 1 ¹/₂ inches
(24.1 x 30.2 x 3.8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

Ka: River of No Return, 2010
Graphite, gold leaf, and silver leaf on paper in polyethylene frame
13 x 16 ³/₈ x 1 ³/₈ inches
(33 x 41.6 x 3.5 cm)
Collection of Edwin Cohen

Khu: Boat of Ra, 2009
Ink, graphite, and gold leaf on paper in polyethylene frame
13 x 16 ³/₈ x 1 ³/₈ inches
(33 x 41.6 x 3.5 cm)
Private collection

Khu: Detroit Sewage Treatment, 2011
Ink, graphite, and gold leaf on paper in polyethylene frame
11 ¹/₂ x 14 ¹/₄ x 1 ¹/₄ inches
(29.2 x 36.2 x 3.2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

Khu: Sunken Trunk, 2009
Ink and graphite on paper in polyethylene frame
14 ¹/₄ x 11 ³/₄ x 1 ¹/₄ inches
(36.2 x 29.8 x 3.2 cm)
Titze Collection

River Rouge: Osiris I, 2011
Ink on paper in painted steel frame
14 ⁵/₁₆ x 11 ⁵/₁₆ x 1 ¹/₂ inches
(36.4 x 28.7 x 3.8 cm)
Private collection

River Rouge: Tamarisk Root, 2011
Ink on paper in painted steel frame
14 ³/₈ x 11 ¹/₄ x 1 ¹/₈ inches
(36.5 x 28.6 x 2.9 cm)
Collection of Flea, Los Angeles

Sekhem: Osiris, 2009
Graphite and silver leaf on paper in polyethylene frame
16 ¹/₂ x 13 x 1 ¹/₄ inches
(41.9 x 33 x 3.2 cm)
Collection of Pamela and Richard Kramlich

ROOM 5

Imperial Mask, 2008–13
Cast polycaprolactone, copper, bronze, brass, Chrysler Imperial front end assembly, gold, lapis lazuli, turquoise, carnelian, agate, polyethylene and lead
48 x 96 x 96 inches
(121.9 x 243.8 x 243.8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

Imperial Mask comprises metal casts of the car hoods of all three automobile protagonists in *River of Fundament* as well as a sarcophagus that holds the front end of the Chrysler Crown Imperial and the original car hood. The hood of the 1967 Chrysler Crown Imperial has been executed in copper; that of the 1979 Pontiac Firebird Trans Am in bronze; and that of the 2001 Ford Crown Victoria in brass. The different materials of the stacked car hoods symbolize the progression of the soul passing through various stages of death and rebirth as it seeks to achieve divinity. In this way, *Imperial Mask* alludes to the protagonist of *Ancient Evenings*, who reincarnates several times, but ultimately fails to become a god.

For the surface of the sarcophagus, Barney uses polycaprolactone, while on the inside he uses a variety of precious materials including gold, lapis lazuli, and turquoise, appropriating Egyptian iconography in an oversized amulet with an image of a winged scarab, carefully inlaid into the hood of the Chrysler Crown Imperial.

Yellow Metals is the most recent series of drawings and has been executed with different elemental metals and alloys.

Evoking complex processes of mixture and purification, the drawings are inscribed within a hierarchy of metals.

River of Fundament: New York Harbor, 2014
Engraved brass and patina
14 ³/₄ x 12 ¹/₄ inches
(37.5 x 31.1 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

River of Fundament: Redfish Lake, 2014
Engraved brass and iron powder in brass frame
12 ¹/₄ x 14 ³/₄ inches
(31.1 x 37.5 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

River of Fundament: The Term of Norman III, 2014
Engraved brass in brass frame
16 ¹/₂ x 20 x 1 ¹/₂ inches
(41.9 x 50.8 x 3.8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

River of Fundament: The Term of Norman II, 2014
Engraved bronze in bronze frame
16 ¹/₂ x 20 x 1 ¹/₂ inches
(41.9 x 50.8 x 3.8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

River of Fundament: The Term of Norman I, 2014
Engraved copper in copper frame
16 ¹/₂ x 20 x 1 ¹/₂ inches
(41.9 x 50.8 x 3.8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

River of Fundament: Trans America, 2014
Engraved brass and patina
12 ¹/₄ x 14 ³/₄ inches
(31.1 x 37.5 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

ROOM 6

Secret Name, 2008–11
Cast polycaprolactone, lead, copper, and zinc
21 ³/₄ x 179 x 128 ¹/₂ inches
(55.2 x 454.7 x 326.4 cm)
Courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles, CA

According to ancient Egyptian mythology, the gods endowed every human being with a secret name (or *ren*) that revealed the true identity of one’s eternal spirit. The departure of the secret name from the body of the dead was believed to be the

first stage in the process of reincarnation. Barney and Bepler interpreted this stage in the *Ren* performance in Los Angeles.

Secret Name exemplifies the notion of the so-called sacrificial anode. When two metals are statically charged, a third metal can be introduced to protect the first two against corrosion. This third metal, the sacrificial anode, is more reactive to the corrosive environment than the other two metals and will partially corrode or dissolve. In *Secret Name*, the zinc rod that protrudes from the sculpture acts as a sacrificial anode. It was inserted into the sculpture during *Ren*, underscoring the processional character of this work.

Ren: Ankh, 2008

Graphite and petroleum jelly on paper in polyethylene frame
11 7/8 x 9 1/2 x 1 1/4 inches
(30.2 x 24.1 x 3.2 cm)
Private collection, Paris

Ren: Headgasket, 2008

Graphite, gold leaf, and silver leaf on paper in polyethylene frame
11 7/8 x 9 1/2 x 1 1/4 inches
(30.2 x 24.1 x 3.2 cm)
Collection of Don and Britt Chadwick

Ren: Pentastar Suite, 2008

Graphite and lapis lazuli on paper in five polyethylene frames
14 1/4 x 11 3/4 x 1 1/4 inches each
(5 x 36.2 x 29.8 x 3.2 cm)
Collection of Joe and Marie Donnelly

ROOM 7

Sacrificial Anode, 2011

Cast zinc, polyethylene
7 1/2 x 98 1/2 x 61 3/4 inches
(19.1 x 250.2 x 156.8 cm)
Courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles, CA

The title of *Sacrificial Anode* refers to its function in the sculpture *Secret Name*. Because the sacrificial anode in *Secret Name* is slowly corroding, Barney produced a stack of replacement pieces that developed into a separate artwork. The anodes resemble the ancient Egyptian *was* scepter, which symbolizes control over the force of chaos; the sacrificial anode in *Secret Name* serves to stabilize two metals in competition.

Djed, 2011

Cast iron and graphite blocks
20 1/4 x 406 x 399 inches
(50.2 x 1031.2 x 1013.5 cm)
Laurenz Foundation, Basel

Norman Mailer's novel *Ancient Evenings* narrates the soul's stages through death and rebirth. In *River of Fundament* Matthew Barney departs from Mailer's novel and replaces

the human protagonist with three automobiles that personify his three incarnations. *Djed* was cast before an audience in Detroit during the *Khu* performance in 2010. The cut-up body of the demolished 1967 Chrysler Crown Imperial from the *Ren* performance in 2008 was fed into five custom-built furnaces, at twenty-five tons the largest nonindustrial iron pour ever completed. *Djed* comprises three cast components: the oversized reservoir of the furnace, the floorboard and an overflow. The floorboard's shape is derived from the Chrysler Crown Imperial, modified to evoke the ancient Egyptian *djed* symbol. In hieroglyphics, the *djed* symbol is associated with Osiris, the god of the dead. It is commonly understood to represent his spine. *Djed* thus references Osiris in both form and content.

ROOM 8

Rouge Battery, 2013

Cast copper and iron
28 x 90 x 179 inches
(71.1 x 228.6 x 454.7 cm)
Courtesy Regen Projects, Los Angeles, CA

Rouge Battery represents the inversion or negative of the *Djed* floorboard. The sculpture refers both to the theory that the ancient Egyptians knew how to produce static electricity, and the once heavily polluted Rouge River that runs through Detroit, the former heart of America's automobile industry. *Rouge Battery* is cast in copper and contains an iron element. When an electrolyte is added to these two metals, an electric charge is produced. In the case of this sculpture, urine has been used as an electrolyte. As a result, the parts where the copper and the iron element connect have oxidized.

RIVER ROUGE in Detroit was the site of *Khu* in 2010, and it is also the place where Henry Ford built Rouge Plant, an automobile factory that was the first-ever vertically integrated assembly line. This location establishes a reference to the myth of Isis and Osiris. Here, the coffin holding the body of Osiris is carried along by the river Nile before it grows into a tree on the shores of the ancient city of Byblos. The steel frames are painted with iron oxide pigments in the same manner as the Ford Rouge plant. The *River Rouge* drawings thus evoke both the narrative and the site of *Khu*.

River Rouge: Brimstone, 2011

Ink, iron, and sulfur on paper in painted steel frame
11 3/8 x 14 3/8 x 1 5/8 inches
(28.9 x 36.5 x 4.1 cm)
Collection of Elizabeth Redleaf

River Rouge: Coming Forth of the Seed of Horus, 2011

Ink and semen on paper in painted steel frame
11 1/4 x 14 3/8 x 1 1/8 inches
(28.6 x 36.5 x 2.9 cm)
Collection of Mark Fletcher and Tobias Meyer

River Rouge: An American in Byblos, 2011

Ink on paper in painted steel frame
14 3/8 x 11 3/8 x 1 5/8 inches
(36.5 x 28.9 x 4.1 cm)
Collection of Pamela and Richard Kramlich

River Rouge: Crown Victoria, 2011

Ink on paper in painted steel frame
11 3/8 x 14 3/8 x 1 1/2 inches
(28.9 x 36.5 x 3.8 cm)
Collection of Julia Reyes and Robert Taubman

River Rouge: New Disease, 2011

Ink and graphite on paper in painted steel frame
14 3/8 x 11 3/8 x 1 1/2 inches
(36.5 x 28.9 x 3.8 cm)
Private collection

River Rouge: Djed, 2011

Ink on paper in painted steel frame
14 3/8 x 11 3/8 x 1 1/2 inches
(36.5 x 28.9 x 3.8 cm)
Collection of Barbara Gladstone

River Rouge: Path of Was, 2011

Ink on paper in painted steel frame
11 3/8 x 14 3/8 x 1 5/8 inches
(28.9 x 36.5 x 4.1 cm)
Courtesy of Lehmann-Art Ltd.

River Rouge: Set and Set, 2011

Ink and graphite on paper in painted steel frame
14 5/16 x 11 5/16 x 1 1/2 inches
(36.4 x 28.7 x 3.8 cm)
Dian Woodner Collection, New York

River Rouge: Sulfur Dioxide, 2011

Ink, iron, and sulfur on paper in painted steel frame
14 3/8 x 11 3/8 x 1 5/8 inches
(36.5 x 28.9 x 4.1 cm)
Private collection, New York

River Rouge: Raising of Djed, 2011

Sulfur on paper in painted steel frame
14 3/8 x 11 1/4 x 1 1/8 inches
(36.5 x 28.6 x 2.9 cm)
Roman Family Collection

River Rouge: Sulfuric Acid, 2011

Ink and sulfur on paper in painted steel frame
14 3/8 x 11 3/8 x 1 5/8 inches
(36.5 x 28.9 x 4.1 cm)
Roman Family Collection

River Rouge: Zug Island, 2011

Ink on paper in painted steel frame
11 3/8 x 14 3/8 x 1 1/2 inches
(28.9 x 36.5 x 3.8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

ROOM 9

Shaduf, 2013

Cast brass
144 x 120 x 180 inches
(365.8 x 304.8 x 457.2 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

A "shaduf" is an irrigation tool that originated in ancient Egypt. Elaborated into a throne room, *Shaduf* appears as a functioning environment in Barney and Bepler's film-opera. The sculpture was inspired by a passage from the novel *Ancient Evenings* in which a pharaoh seeks to extend his influence by fertilizing crops with his own feces, as a way of entering the bodies of his peoples, to become one with them.

Shaduf was produced in a process called burnout casting. A model of flammable materials was dipped into ceramic, after which the model was burned out, leaving only the ceramic form behind. The brass was then cast into the ceramic mold to produce the final sculpture.

Guardian of the Veil drawings date back to the beginnings of the *River of Fundament* project. They represent many of the characters from the film-opera, and explore their mythological dimensions. The "guardian of the veil" refers to the ancient Egyptian god Anubis. Anubis, who is typically represented as a dog or a human with the face of a dog, was believed to rule the underworld until he was replaced by Osiris. Norman Mailer, who is represented in one of the drawings, died shortly before Barney started working on this series. It was partly through Barney's drawing process that the protagonist of *Ancient Evenings* was replaced by Mailer himself within the narrative of *River of Fundament*.

Guardian of the Veil: Black Khu, 2008

Ink and graphite on paper in polyethylene frame
12 3/4 x 10 3/4 x 1 inches
(32.4 x 27.3 x 2.6 cm)
Collection of Olivier Diaz

Guardian of the Veil: Dung, 2007

Graphite on paper in polyethylene frame
10 3/4 x 12 3/4 inches
(27.3 x 32.4 cm)
Collection of Björk Gudmundsdottir

Guardian of the Veil: Imperial Tomb, 2007
Graphite and petroleum jelly on paper in acrylic frame
10 x 12 x 1 ¼ inches
(25.4 x 30.5 x 3.2 cm)
Private collection

Guardian of the Veil: Khaibit, 2007
Ink and graphite on paper in polyethylene frame
10 ¾ x 12 ¾ x 1 ⅝ inches
(27.3 x 32.4 x 4.1 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

Guardian of the Veil: Nile, 2008
Graphite and petroleum jelly on paper in acrylic frame
12 ¾ x 10 ¾ inches
(32.4 x 27.3 cm)
Private collection

Guardian of the Veil: The Bonds That Gag My Mouth Have Been Loosed by My City-God, 2007
Ink on paper in polyethylene frame
10 ¾ x 12 ¾ inches
(27.3 x 32.4 cm)
Private collection

Guardian of the Veil: Thoth, 2007
Graphite on paper in polyethylene frame
12 ¾ x 10 ¾ inches
(32.4 x 27.3 cm)
Collection of Shaun Caley Regen, Los Angeles

*Sekhu: Here, at the Center of Pain Is Radianc*e, 2010
Graphite, petroleum jelly, and silver leaf on paper in polyethylene frame
12 ⅞ x 10 ⅞ x 1 ¼ inches
(30.8 x 25.7 x 3.2 cm)
AS Ingunn Werners Collection Iceland

River of Fundament: Crown Sulfur, 2014
Engraved zinc in zinc frame
16 ½ x 20 x 1 ½ inches
(41.9 x 50.8 x 3.8 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

ROOM 10

Crown Victoria, 2013
Cast zinc
60 x 80 x 200 inches
(152.4 x 203.2 x 508 cm)
Courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London

Crown Victoria was cast from the undercarriage of the third automobile protagonist, the 2001 Ford Crown Victoria Police Interceptor. The car appeared as a functioning vehicle

in the *Khu* performance and was transformed during the *Ba* performance in New York. In this last performance, the floorboard of the Ford Crown Victoria was used as a heating element to warm up the sulfur before it was poured into the mold of *Trans America*. Having been part of the casting process of another sculpture, *Crown Victoria* underlines the complex interconnections between the sculptures in *River of Fundament*. The zinc used to make *Crown Victoria* refers both to its function as a heating element and the use of zinc coatings within the automotive industry as rust-retardants.

Crown Zinc, 2013
Cast zinc and gold plating
16 ½ x 57 x 28 inches
41.9 x 144.8 x 71.1 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

Crown Zinc is modeled after the grille of the third automobile protagonist, the 2001 Ford Crown Victoria. In the film, the grille is removed, to be gold-plated and become the crown for which Set and Horus vie in the final *Ba* performance.

ROOM 11

Osiris: Five Points Make a Man, 2005
Four silk top hats, cast iron, cast copper, salt crystal, silk blindfold, and five gold plated magnets
40 x 35 ½ x 47 ¼ inches
(101.6 x 90.2 x 120 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

The title *Osiris: Five Points Make a Man* refers to the late artist James Lee Byars, a Detroit native who died in Cairo, Egypt, whom Barney resurrected to play the part of Osiris in his project. *Five Points Make a Man* is the title of a performance piece in which Byars meditated on the themes of death and resurrection. Toward the end of his life he became increasingly fascinated with the idea that given an arrangement of five points of any kind, the mind of the viewer would construct the human figure. The top hats in the vitrine belong to Byars's signature costume. Stacked on top of each other, the four hats resemble the ancient Egyptian *djed* pillar.

LIBRETTI Barney has taken copies of Norman Mailer's novel *Ancient Evenings* and Ernest Hemingway's novels *The Sun Also Rises* (1926) and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* (1940) and made unique sculptures inside wall-mounted vitrines. Each vitrine contains a book, resting upon a bed of carved salt and opened to a spread that bears a drawing pertaining to one of the seven stages of the soul as it passes from death to rebirth. The salt blocks are references to the salt mines that extend beneath the Detroit River, which contain a vast and complex transport system that was once compared to the network of tunnels and secret chambers beneath the Great Pyramids. In comingling his draftsmanship with

passages that comprise the opera's libretto, for Barney each book represents a different aspect of his new interpretation of Mailer's novel.

Ancient Evenings: Ka Libretto, 2009
Ink, graphite, and lapis lazuli on paperback copy of *Ancient Evenings* by Norman Mailer, paperback copies of *The Sun Also Rises* and *For Whom the Bell Tolls* by Ernest Hemingway, on carved salt base, in nylon and acrylic vitrine
19 x 13 ¾ x 17 ¼ inches
(48.3 x 34.9 x 43.8 cm)
Courtesy of Lehmann-Art Ltd.

Ancient Evenings: Khaibit Libretto, 2009
Ink and graphite on paperback copy of *Ancient Evenings* by Norman Mailer, on carved salt base, in nylon and acrylic vitrine
15 ½ x 13 ¾ x 14 ¾ inches
(39.4 x 34.9 x 37.5 cm)
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

Ancient Evenings: Khu Libretto, 2009
Graphite and gold leaf on paperback copy of *Ancient Evenings* by Norman Mailer, on carved salt base, in nylon and acrylic vitrine
15 ½ x 13 ¾ x 14 ¾ inches
(39.4 x 34.9 x 37.5 cm)
Private collection, Switzerland

Ancient Evenings: Ren Libretto, 2009
Graphite and gold leaf on paperback copy of *Ancient Evenings* by Norman Mailer, on carved salt base, in nylon and acrylic vitrine
15 ½ x 13 ¾ x 14 ¾ inches
(39.4 x 34.9 x 37.5 cm)
Private collection, Switzerland

Ancient Evenings: Sekhem Libretto, 2009
Graphite on paperback copy of *Ancient Evenings* by Norman Mailer, on carved salt base, in nylon and acrylic vitrine
15 ½ x 13 ¾ x 14 ¾ inches
(39.4 x 34.9 x 37.5 cm)
Private collection, Italy

ROOM 12

STORYBOARD VITRINES According to his established practice, Barney used storyboards to lay out the narrative structure of *River of Fundament*. The materials from the storyboards were originally pinned directly on the wall of his studio. Presented in eight freestanding cabinets, the storyboards assemble the central motifs of the three acts of the film-opera in a nonlinear fashion (Act I: cabinets 1, 2; Act II: cabinets 3, 4; Act III: cabinets 5, 6, 7, 8). Comprised of photographs, clipart, drawings, collage, and small sculpture, the cabinets exemplify Barney's forensic strategy of isolating and

recombining materials to create a personal myth. The skeleton of the pig (which was prepared for the wake feast and gradually decays during the course of events), functions as the keeper of time in the film-opera.

River of No Return, 2014
Digital C-print in wood frame
49 x 37 ⅓ inches
124.5 x 94.9 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery, New York and Brussels

River of No Return depicts a dead ibis, lying on the ground surrounded by sagebrush and foliage from the American high desert. The ibis has multiple bullet wounds. In its beak is a small golden sphere, which was used in a scene of the film-opera in which the *ka* of Norman Mailer (played by Matthew Barney) wears the costume of the late artist James Lee Byars.

FILM CREDITS

A Film by
Matthew Barney
and
Jonathan Bepler

Written and Directed by
Matthew Barney

Music Composed and Directed by
Jonathan Bepler

Produced by
Matthew Barney
and
Laurenz Foundation

Director of Photography
Peter Strietmann

Production Design
Matthew D. Ryle

Editor
Katharine McQuerrey

Producer
Mike Bellon

Norman III
Chief Dave Beautiful Bald Eagle

Norman II
Milford Graves

Norman I
John Buffalo Mailer

Hathfertiti
Ellen Burstyn

Hathfertiti
Maggie Gyllenhaal

Hathfertiti
Madyn G. Coakley

Ptah-nem-hotep
Paul Giamatti

The Widow of Norman
Joan La Barbara

Usermare
Stephen Payne

The Ka of Norman / Isis
Aimee Mullins

**The Ka of Norman /
Osiris: James Lee Byars**
Matthew Barney

Nephthys
Jennie Knaggs

Set
Herbert Perry
and
Eugene Perry

Horus
Brennan Hall

Lieutenant Worden
Shara Worden

Eulogist
Elaine Stritch

Ranchera Singer
Lila Downs

Priest / REN Dealership Manager
Jerry Giles

Head Chef / Day Labor Boss
Luis Alvarez y Alvarez

Singing Wake Guests
Sidsel Endressen
Phil Minton
and
Deborah Harry

Slam Poet
George Stonefish

R&B Singer
Terrell Howard

Factory Singer
Belita Woods

The Ka of the Ka of Norman
Michaela Dennis

Honeyball
Milica Nikcevic

Garage Manager
Bobbi Starr

Manager's Lover
Taylor Starr

Fighting Mechanics
Magno Gama
Pablo Silva

**Additional Dialogue
Written and Adapted by**
David Grimm

Assistant Director
Sarah Gyllenstierna

Co-Producer
Blake Ashman-Kipervaser

Live Performance Dramaturgy
Tony Gerber

Production Design Team
Kanoa Baysa
Jade Archuleta-Gans
Michael Branning
Mike Koller

Special Makeup Effects
Keith Edmier
Josh Turi

Special Makeup Effects: REN
Gabe Bartalos

Lighting Design by
Chris Winget

Sound Design
Dave Paterson

Visual Effects Supervisor
Mauricio Baiocchi

Post Production Supervisor
Christopher Seguine

CAST

Wake Guests
David Amram
Iran Barkley
Suzanne Bertish
Dick Cavett
Steve Dalachinski
Clarissa Dalrymple
Marti Domination
Jeffrey Eugenides
Tommy Gallagher
Gail Gerber
Larry Holmes
Fran Lebowitz
Cinqué Lee
Detective Bill Majeski
Jonas Mekas
Adrianna Nicole
De'Quan Purdy
Salman Rushdie
Luc Sante
Lawrence Schiller
Richard Stratton
James Toback
Mr. Twinkle
Alice Weiner
Lawrence Weiner

The Wake Ensemble:
Sopranos
Kjersti Kveli
Gelsey Bell
Megan Schubert

Harp
Zeena Parkins

Ukulele
Mick Barr

Trumpet
Axel Dörner

Trombone
Art Baron

Organ
Dr. Lonnie Smith

Percussion
Jeffrey Berman

Strings: Flux Quartet
Tom Chiu
Conrad Harris
Max Mandel
Felix Fan

Grill Cook
Paulo Henri D. Paguntalan

Assistants to Ptah-Nem-Hotep
Kat Delph
Rachel Wolski

Teenage Beatboxer
Ryan Robinson

Little Queen
Bobbi Starr

Queens and Eunuchs
Peter Badalamenti
Eleanor Bauer
Ekaterina Sknarina
Danny Wylde

Mystic River Singers
Kenny Merrick, Jr.
Lauren Merrick
Chad Benedict
Craig Merrick
Tyson Merrick
Chris Newell
Wayahsti Richardson

The Council of Hemingways
Kevin McGuire
Richard Faulk
Greg Pursino
Mike Wilson

Kidsroom Ensemble
Artie Carpenter
Ocean Elizabeth Currier
Luca Lodewick
Theo Lodewick
Sam Nivola
Sydney Swihart
Morgan Swihart
Alexa Swinton

RoF Step Team
Linda Dixon
Tasha Evans
Sadara Hunt
Shamania Laurence
Jasmine Ramos
Veronica Rivera
Sabrie Rodriguez
Danielle Rosario
Marilyn R. Solis

Bartender
David Grimm

Prep Cook
Franciso Paez

Fry Cook
Hector Tecaxco

Khepera
Mouse

Hunter
Ed Mulick

Additional Wake Guests
Val Aiyeola
Salvatore Bumbico
David Byrd
Kari Sioux Gordon
Princess Harris
Suzanne Lipinsky
Dolores McDougal
Tina Moore
C.G. Reeves
Gabrielle Ryan
Carol Sims
David Stern
Kristen Sultana
T. Boomer Tibbs
Harry Timothee
Bill Weeden

CREW

Director of Photography
Peter Strietmann

Cinematography
John Chater
Wolfgang Held
Claudia Raschke-Robinson

Additional Cinematography
Ryan Samul
Ahmet Sesigurgil
Christopher Seguine

Technical Director
Christopher Seguine

First Assistant Camera
Laura Nespola
Caitlin Strom
Rebecca Arndt

Additional First Assistant Camera
Jesse Redding Fleming
Corey Gegner
Linda Kallerus
Rob Koch
George Tur

Second Assistant Camera
Oliver Lanzenberg
Kyle Parsons

Gaffer
Chris Winget

Key Grip
Chris Hayes

Best Boy Grip
Aaron Brown

Generator Operators
Joe Chiofalo
Brendan Perrault

Techno Crane Technicians

Craig Striano
Sebastian Almeida

Techno Crane / Stedicam Operator

Peter Strietmann

Production Supervisor

Jennifer Kern

Production Office Coordinators

Dave Shelley
Jordan Rathus

Second Assistant Director

Melinda Ziyadat

Script Supervisor

Zorinah Juan

Production Design

Matthew D. Ryle

Production Design Team

Kanoa Baysa
Jade Archuleta-Gans
Michael Branning
Mike Koller

KHU Foundry Design and Operation

Casey Westbrook

Art Department

Nicholas Broujos
Kasey Conlon
Adam Cowell
Tyler McPhee
Josh Reiman
David Smith
Heimir Sverisson
Chris Wawrinofsky
Stuart Wright

Graphic Design

Keith Riley

Key Hair and Makeup

Thorsten Weiss

Wig Maker

J. Jared Janas

Wig Stylist

Elias Aguirre

Makeup Assistants

Jen Myles
Imane Fiocchi
Mykel Renner
Sandra Schneider
Elsa Canedo
Mordechai Alvow
Christine Herbeck

Special FX Makeup Assistants

Greg Pikulski
Brian Spears

Costume Design by

Anna Maria Diaz-Balart

Wardrobe Supervisor

Yasmin Reshamwala

Wardrobe Assistants

Nelly Zagury
Kate Loftus O'Brien
Helen Anstis
Samantha Bates
Michelle Walquist
Kate Weigel
Ellery Bakker

Little Queens Costumes

Three As Four

Ka of Norman's Costume

Narciso Rodriguez

Ka of Norman's Costume

Linda Labelle

Propmaster / Lead Man

Gregg Bellon

Propmaster

Lauren Nikrooz

Casting

Susan Shopmaker

Step Team Choreography

Edward L. Nelson

Step Team Coach

Tamika Myers

Step Team Management

Markus H. Knight, G.E.R., INC.

Assistant to Producer

Katherine Bel

Key Production Assistant

Darryl Prevost

Production Assistants

Daniel Lugo
Stephan Prevost
Kyle Parsons
Owen O'Leary
Aurora Aspen
Kate Lawrenson
Parker Jessup
Tingting Wei
Marko Markovic
Gabriel Resmini
Jordan Boxer
Eli Holstein

Burke Batelle
Jon Konkol

Body Doubles

Jefferson Bare
Richie Calhoun
Blanche Cauvin
Mike Landry
Danny Orio
De'Quan Purdy
Ekatarina Sknarina

Stunt Double

Samuel Elias

Still Photography

David Regen
Ari Marcopoulos
Keith Riley

Metal Fabrication

Walla Walla Foundry

Gold Plating

Epner Technologies

Taxidermy

Frank Zitz

Alligator provided by

Dawn Animal Agency

Alligator Handler

Urbantarzan

Ibis Wrangler

Glenn Grisco

Techno Crane Provided by

Monster Remotes

Helicopter, NY

Al Cerullo, Hoverviews

Helicopter, Idaho

Aaron Packer, Reeder Flying Service

Wescam Technician

Steven Winslow

Camera Rentals

Chater Camera
CPT Rentals
Abel Cine Tech

Grip Rentals

Eastern Effects, Inc.

Wescam Rental

Pictorvision

Set Medics

Pinnacle Ventures Group, LLC

Catering by

Jonathan Forgash and Brian Havens
Starstruck Catering

Additional Catering by

Something's Cooking

Onscreen Food Preparation

Francisco Paez and Matthew Bernick

Barge and Tug provided by

Thornton Towing and Transport
Weeks Marine

Crane Barge provided by

Custom Marine

Legal

Stout, Thomas & Johnson

Accountant

Edward Greenberg, CPA

Production Insurance Agents

Ellen Ross
Jerilyn Gamble

Sound Mixer

Stuart C. Deutsch, C.A.S.

ProTools Playback Operator

Antonio Arroyo

Additional ProTools Playback Operator

John D'Aquino
Matt Rucker

Boom Operator

Kelly Neese

Sound Utility/Second Boom Operator

Jonathan Jackson

Music Production Supervisor

Rachel Maio

Music Administration

Andrew Kramp

Repititeur and Score Preparation

Will Gardner

Music Assistant

Margaret Fitzpatrick

Music Recorded by

Michael Cheever

Recording Assistants

Jeffrey Neuberger
Gracie Terzian

Bent Circuit Instruments by

The Mad Noodler

With Thanks to

Ross Simonini, Hilton Als, Allyson Spellacy,
Gladstone Gallery, Ari Marcopoulos,
Jack Lane, Nicholas Williams, Arden Gill,
John Gill, Julina Tatlock, Beth Vangelder,
Michael Mailer, Maggie Mailer, Peter
Kurland, Dylan Farnum, Courtney
Kivowitz, Fred Hayes, Lou Lunte, Caroline
Clawson, Idaho Department of Fish and
Game, Nature Conservancy, Doug Yeager,
Peter Robles, Vocaallab, Romain Bischoff,
Annemieke Keurentjes, Holland Festival,
Shayna Dunkelmann, Dan Levine,
Jason Brandenberg

**REN
Los Angeles, California**

CAST

Ranchera Singer

Lila Downs

Ren Sales Manager

Jerry Giles

Day Labor Boss

Luis Alvarez y Alvarez

Khepera

Mouse

The Ka of Norman

Aimee Mullins

Ren Sales Executive Singers

Carolyn Barnes
Ernesto Briones
Lateefah Devoe
Allan Louis
Sean Smith
Richard Tanner
Richard Yearwood

Day Laborers

Jose G. Arevalos
Jose Manuel Arevalos
Kevin Alvarengan
Christian Alvarado
Bryan Armendariz
Amador Barrios
Billy Bernal
Jose Rolando Bravo
Joshua Brown
Eric Cartegena
Joshua Carvajal
Luis Cervantes
Jose Cervantes I
Jose Cervantes II
Lorenzo Chavira
Giuseppe DiMaggio
Christopher Escobar
Ernesto Escobar
Jose A. Fonseca
Rolando Fonseca

Artemio Garcia
Pepito Garcia
Angel Olivares Garcia
Joel Gonzalez
Ernesto Gutierrez
Emilio Hernandez
Freddy Jose Hernandez
Jose Anthony Hernandez Jossue Luna
Henry Maciel
Edward Maldonado
Daniel Mora Jr.
Daniel Mora Sr.
Michael Olivares
Luis Perez
Mario Placencia
Isabel Ramirez
Oscar Ramos
Rogelio Ramos
Justino Abel Rivas
Marcos Rosas
Jaime Sanchez Jr.
Miguel Fonseca Ureno
Eric Velasquez

Ren Service Department Team

Jade Archuleta-Gans
Kanoa Baysa
Michael Branning
Julee Hightower Ryle
Matthew D. Ryle
Dwayne Wilson

Ren Key Booth Attendant

Kath Strietmann

Ren Drum Corps

Daniel Wahl (Captain)
Corey Blee
Sarayah Bourenane
Phillip Camacho
Roque A. Castaneda
Caleb Gasteiger
Brian Horan
Matt King
Phillip W. Kruse
Melissa McGoldrick
Eddy Mendoza
Jose A. Mendoza
Jason Merett
Jason Morton
Amador Padilla
Tyler Randall
Matthew Regua
Jessie Schultz
Matt Tepas
Ramis Urribarri
Greg Valenzuela
Jonathan Zuniga

Ren Bugle Corps

Sean Billings (Captain)
Clara Adame
Ezekiel Ah Sue
John Christianson
Michael John Daigeau

Elliot Deutsch
Jonathan E. Goldman
Richard C. Harris
Jeff Helens
James Hovorka
James Hsu
Vance Hu
Uma Kedharnath
Kurt Kilgus
Steven Lagosh
Travis Martin
Ben McIntosh
John Nunley
Brian Owen
Christopher Powell
Jason Thor
Natalie Salvatierre
Andrew Lewis Stewart
Steven Wade
Steve White
Steven Zuniga

Flag Girl
Alex Gariano

Mariachi Divas de Cindy Shea
Catherine Baeza
Lorraine Fusago
Suzanne M. Garcia
Norma Herrera
Ariana Mejia
Diana McConnell
Maya Martinez
Martha Ramirez
Diana Reyes
Melinda Salcido

REN

CREW

Co-Directors

Matthew Barney
Jonathan Bepler

Director of Photography

Peter Strietmann

Production Design

Matthew D. Ryle

Producer

Mike Bellon

Associate Producer

Starr Sutherland

Production Coordination

Luis Alvarez y Alvarez
Nicole Ganas

Production Design Team

Jade Archuleta-Gans
Kanoa Baysa
Mike Branning

Julee Hightower Ryle
Dwayne Wilson
Special Makeup and Effects
Gabe Bartalos, Atlantic West Effects

Wardrobe
Lise Marker

Production Support
Regen Projects

Second Camera Operator
Stephen Buckingham

First Camera Assistant
Terry Chu

Second Camera Assistant
Petr Stepanek

Additional Camera Operators
Brian Pratt For Pacific Coast Productions
Doug Froebe
John Chater
Christopher Seguine

Additional Camera Assistants
Jesse Redding Fleming
Seanna Carroll

Technical Director
Christopher Seguine

Robotic Camera Design and Fabrication
Inertia Labs

Robotic Camera Operators
Reason Bradley and Alexander Rose for
Inertia Labs

Techno Crane Operator
Carlos Gonzalez

Gaffers
Jon Guerra
Hollywood Heard

Best Boy Electric
Brian Lukas

Lighting
John Shoemaker
Larry Richardson
Langston York
John Zivelonghi

Key Grip
Perry Kadiris

Best Boy Grip
Bodie Hyman

Electrician
Will Valentine

Grips
Douglas Blagg
Marshall Valentine
Walter Royle
Alex Klavukov
Pat Christman
Jacob W. Smith
Fred Davis
Rodolfo Covurrabius
Mike Carter
Brad McElroy

Live Visual Effects
REEL EFX, Inc.

Still Photography
Chris Winget
Cathy Opie
Kelly Thomas
Ivanno Grasso

Art Department
Eric Bonwit
James Frede
Dane Johnson
Jack Wilmarth
Mike Taub
Javier Rodriguez
Jeff Hassay
Jenny Nichols
Joel Kyack
Jennifer Loh
Tanya Brodsky
Brad Hudson
Fatima Manalili
Joseph Imhauser
Justin Waugh
Pete Ortel

Graphic Design
Keith Riley

Hair and Makeup
Geoffrey Rodriguez For GRBP, Inc.

Makeup provided by
M.A.C.

M.A.C. Makeup Assistants
Tiffany Johnson
Genoa Norris

Wig Stylist
Natasha Ladek

Wig Assistants
Carlos Ortiz
Griselda Quezada

Wardrobe Assistants
Chelsea Rector
Kath Strietmann
Ann Gale

Prop Coordination
Luis Alvarez y Alvarez

Casting
Francene Selkirk for Shooting From
the Hip Casting

Animal Talent
Birds & Animals Unlimited

Animal Trainers
Gary Mui
John McCormick
Scott Schweipzwer
Tasha Zamsky

Shredder Operator
Ed Vallone

General Contractors
Rick Balthazar
Victor Jasniy

Locations Facility Managers
Bob Boyd
Dave Hernandez

Interns, New York
Jessica Coffrin
Theo Mercier
Kevin Stahl

Interns, Los Angeles
Drew Baldwin
Natasha Case
Nikki Caster
James Cone
Richard Corral
Mirren Gordon-Crozier
Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer
Jesse Aron Green
Max Kuo
Jennifer Lahotski
Manny Lopez
Kira Lum
Samantha Lee Mahoney
Richie Manuel
Alexandra Outerbridge
Josh Patterson
Colin Sieburgh
Chrystal Tezuka
Jackson Trugman
Amy Wong

Equipment Rentals
Abel Cine Tech
US Audio & Lighting

Costume Rental
Palace Costume Rentals

Camera Rental
Chater Camera, Inc.

Catering
City Kitchen

**Music Recordist and
Assistant to Composer**
Daniel Tiede

Lead Audio
Roswell Jones

Location Audio
Russel White
Percy Urgena
John Klein

Band Squad Ushers
Nikki Caster
Sarah Lehrer-Graiwer
Mike Taub
Dax Henderson
Drew Baldwin
Collin Sieburgh
Kira Lum

Atlantic West Effects Crew

Design/Sculpture
Gabe Bartalos

Life Casting
Jeff Small

Mold Makers
Jim O'Jala
Chris Dooly

Office Manager
Robert Coddington

With Thanks to
Stiers RV Center, The City of Santa Fe
Springs, CA, Bill Tayek of Downey Sign &
Lighting, Remo Drums, Lisa Love,
Neville Wakefield, Stacy Bengtson,
Zach Baron, Mindy Deblaise, Gary Locke,
Willa Bepler, Microtech Geffel

**KHU
Detroit, Michigan**

CAST

Isis
Aimee Mullins

Nephtys
Jennie Knaggs

Set
Eugene Perry
Herbert Perry

Factory Singer
Belita Woods

Osiris: James Lee Byars
Matthew Barney

Lieutenant Worden
Shara Worden

Officers
Krista Evans-Wiseman
Don Becks

Guard
Thomas Taylor

The KHU Sopranos
Seycon Nadia Chea
Natalie Cochran
Leah Deraney
Yana Lavovna
Jill Opal Oliver
Margaret Cassetto
Tamara Whitty
Shara Worden

Assembly Line Workers
Mike Branning
Mildred Cross
Kat Delph
Eric Hubel
Ralph Jones
Shawn Newell
Garrett Papow
Harry Schnur
Dennis Spors
Mike Tyson
Ralph Valdez
Rachel Wolski

**Crime Scene
Investigators**
Ryan Myers
Bethany Waldon

CSI Camera Operator
Bryan Papierski

Tow Boat Operators
Jason Elliot
Travis Ferguson
Jake Meinke
Mike Schwartz

Barge Workers
Josh Bemelen
Giles Rosbury
Bill Strietmann
Chris Vollmer
Randy Voss

Torch Cutters
Felipe Asevedo
Jacobo Lopez
James Lee Byars
Jamie Easter
Nate Young
Gus Kunesh

Kate Kunesh
Nick Cocciolone

Vulture
Benson

Dog
Cowboy Bob Beane

**Breathworkers, Longstrings,
and Skip Percussion**

Jon Brumit
Clem Fortuna
Eric Hubel
Daniel Jenatsch
Djeto Juncaj
Brett Lee
Charlie McCutcheon
Thollem McDonas
Marko Novachoff
Frank Pahl
Joel Peterson
Kurt Prisbe
Jay Rowe
Doug Shimmin
Chris Turner

Metalin Players of Detroit

Erin Little (principal)
Adam Aslnayyan
Patrick Behnke
Teresa Ciriha
Samantha Cooper
Karen Danke
Ian Emerson
Henrik Karapetyan
James Kujawski
Chris Morelli
Diana Nucera
Michael Rais
Melissa Roberts
Candice Smith
Scott Stefanko
Ben Temkow
Bethany Widmer

Khu Percussion Ensemble

Ian Ding (principal)
Joe Gramley
Jacob Nissly
Nicholas Papador
Jonathan Ovalle

Khu Saxophone Ensemble

Erik Ronmark (principal)
Tracy Chesher
William J Conn, Jr.
John Cummins
Noa Even
Jim Fusik
Jim Holden
Tim Holmes
David Hughes
Joshua James
Sheldon Johnson

Justin Jozwiak
Keith Kaminsky
Elissa Kana
Eric Schweizer

Khu Trombone Choir

Bugs Beddow
Dave Busch
Matt Davidson
Ken Grabowski
John Kachnowski
Bruce Sole
Laura Sullivan
Susana Woloson

KHU

CREW

Co-Directors

Matthew Barney
Jonathan Bepler

Director of Photography

Peter Strietmann

Production Design

Matthew D. Ryle

Producer

Mike Bellon

Associate Producer

Christos Moisides

Camera Operators

John Chater
Anthony Garth
Ivan George
Kevin Hewitt
Mark Karavites, S.O.C.
Peter Klein
Barry Meier
Christos Moisides
Bryan Papierski
Jesse Redding Fleming
Christopher Seguine

Helicopter Camera Operators

Anthony Garth
Lon Stratton

RC Helicopter Operator

Wendell Adkins

RC Helicopter Camera Operator

Leisa Adkins

Techno Crane Operators

Peter Strietmann
Mark Woods

Technical Director

Christopher Seguine

First Camera Assistants

Dave Brush
Shawn Cragin
Michael Dzialowski
Brad Fanfalone
Jesse Redding Fleming
Alex Klein
Cliff Trudeau
John Waterman
Albert Strietmann

Second Assistant Camera

Trevor Rios
John Singhoffer

Camera PAs

Nick Curdy
Meghan Donnelly
Jeff Solano
Kath Strietmann

Gaffers

Sean Kelly
Eric Rubner

Grips

Erik Hill
Joel Hale
Arron Mohr

Best Boy Grip

John Lawson

Stage Hand

Max Rubner

Stunt Coordination

Jim Gill, REEL FX, Inc.

Stunt Crew

Eric Baxter
Bryan Foley
Tristan Verstaeten

Stage Managers

Dave Shelley
Brett Finley

Stage Management Team

Lauren Ayles
Bob Bonnell
Joel Hale
John Lawsom

Production Design Team

Kanoa Baysa
Jade Archuleta-Gans
Mike Branning
Josh Bemelen

Foundry Design and Operation

Casey Westbrook

Foundry Design Team

Caleb Plattner
Jason Cole
Aaron Mccaffrey

**Iron Furnaces Safety Directors/
Coordinators**

James Wade
Chido Johnson
John Rizzo

Iron Furnace Operators

Brad Allen
Todd Chapman
Jason Cole
Christopher Fachini
David Flaughner
Tobias Flores
Robert Gorowicz
Kate Hobby
Jason Kimes
Elizabeth Kronfield
Ryan Lamfers
Aarron Mccaffery
Caleb Plattner
Vaughn Randall
Josh Reiman
Jono Retallick
John Rizzo
Kevin Shunn
Julie Ward
Casey Westbrook
Matt Wicker

Iron Furnace Charge Crew

Jose Chavez
Karren Donnellan
Layton Ehmke
Natalie Estep
Phillip Evans
Christopher Fachini
David Flaughner
Tobias Flores
Kyle Forgia
Robert Gorowicz
Sean Hages
Zak Helenske
Jason Kimes
Brittany Kinard
Francesca Lalanne-Jeune
Kieran Martin
Kevin Mccoy
Aaron McNally
Shane Morgan
Jennifer Mosier
Stacey Rathert
Jono Retallick
Mary Catherine Richardson
Danielle Robinson
William Tiege
Pete Turner
Christopher Wells
Rachel Wolski

Art Department

Kevin Beasley
John C. Corbin
Natalie Estep
Christopher Fachini
David Flaughner
Robert Gorowicz
Steve Hughes
Kevin Mccoy
Nathan Morgan
Linus O'leary
Finn Rosbury
Giles Rosbury
Clinton Snider
Matthew sochocki
Joseph Sopkowicz
Dylan Spaysky
Graem Whyte

Wardrobe

Jennifer Price

Wardrobe Assistants

Kristi Burgett
Ann Gale
Isaac Richard
Staphany Sowards
Kath Strietmann

Chainmaille Fabrication

Ericia Bartels
Christine Bossler
Alan Ardizzone

Hair and Makeup

Cheri Bertocin
Andrea Deshanu
Crystal Palmer
Renata Stojcevski

Production Coordination

Sarah Demeuse
Jordan Rathus
Mitch Cope

Graphic Design

Keith Riley

Location Scouting

Scott Hocking

Crime Scene Consultation

Lt. John Morell
Lt. Sherri Meisel

Tug Boat - Carolyn Hoey

Captain David Jones
Robert Fredrickson
Jon-Paul Kubala
Tim Carpenter

General Contractor

Dennis Spors

Heavy Equipment Operator

Dennis Szulborski

Tower Master Rigger / Stunt Coordinator

Nick Cocciolone

Tower Assistant Rigger

Drew Derkaz

Construction

James Hood

Crane Operators

Mark Palmer
Mark Woods

Magnet Crane Operator

Julio Perez

Dump Truck Driver

Hazen Knox

Scrap Handlers

Robert Gleich
Julio Perez
Shawn Thorsrud

Still Photographer

Hugo Glendenning

Props

Garett Pappow

Interns

Chris Apczynski
Ryan Jennings Clark
Aaron Dawson
Michelle Diem
Douglas Ellis
Tom Friel
Christina Hagan
Kimberly Hooper
Hana Kostis
Curtis Mcguire
Joey Miri
Ryan L. Myers
Garrett Papow
Angela Pham
Dan Roberts
Derek Schultz
Erin Sweeney
Bethany Waldon

Vulture Handlers

Dennis Grisco
Glen Grisco

Bus Driver

Rick Showalter, Satisfaction

Flatbed Driver

Tiny

Catering

Continental Dining and Refreshment

Camera Rentals
Fletcher Camera
Stratton Camera
Chater Camera

Lighting and Grip Rentals
Detroit Power and Light

Location Services
Matthew Tait, Terf Inc.

Casting by
Gail & Rice Inc.

Additional Fabrication
Hughes and Lynn

Tugboats Provided by
Gaelic Tugboat

Barges Provided by
Faust Corporation

Helicopter Provided by
McMahon Helicopters

RC Helicopter
Perfect Perspectives Aerial

Sound Supervisor
Jeffrey M. Jones, C.A.S.

Sound Crew
Jamie Scarpuzza, C.A.S.
Michael Amman
Ron Ayers
Pat Beanie
Greg Burns
Jeff Chaffin
Mike Fariss
Joe Furby
Ray Goodman
Mark Gougeon
Danny Ray Huffman
Burr Huntington
Erik Hurdle
Al Hurschman
Jamie Hurshman
Al Jacquez
John Jacquez
Kiowa Jones
Travis Laguire Quinn
Nick Mott
Justin Saylor
Tim Kennedy

Additional Sound Recording
Matthew Israel

Music Recorded by
Ray Goodman
Daniel Jenatsch

Music Production Supervisor
Andrew Kramp

Music Contractors
Joel Peterson
Dominic Arellano

**Assistant Conductor and
Score Preparation**
Daniel Sutton

Music Instrument Development
Daniel Jenatsch

Music Interns
Devon Caranicas
Sjoerd Dijk
Dan Gizzie
Teal Louise
Kate Price
Bob Turek

With Thanks to
Deputy Steve Campau, Community Ems,
Sheriff Tim Donnellon,
Sgt. Edward "Rocky" Golden,
Deputy Diane Howe, Lt. Dennis Maurey,
Stephen McLallen, St. Clair County Marine
Division, Deputy Scott Theel,
Brian Williams and Tow Boat U.S.,
Deputy Phil Witherspoon, New Music
Detroit, Joel Petersen, Faruq Z. Bey,
Schertler SA

Additional Thanks to
Hilton Als, Archdiocese of Detroit,
Sarah Arnett, Dave Bartush, Dan Deane,
Nicholson Terminal, Detroit Institute of
Arts, Detroit Wastewater Treatment Plant,
Toby Barlow, Graham Beal, Michael Werner
and The Estate of James Lee Byars,
Xenia Castillo-Hunter, Phillip Cooley,
Detroit Police Department, Carone Dutz,
George Ellenwood, Rosemarie Giffin,
The Glove, Erica Hill, Paul Lamarre, Jr.,
Ed Levy, Eugenio Lopez,
John Buffalo Mailer, Norman Mailer Estate,
Norris Church Mailer, David Regen,
Mark Rosenthal, Rosario Saxe-Coburg,
Lawrence Schiller, Jeffrey Spillman,
Sgt. Janae Stinson, Us Coast Guard Sector
Detroit, Joycelyn Goins,
Gordon Veneklasen, Neville Wakefield,
Jim Webber, Angus Cook, Shane Anderson

Special Thanks to
Barbara Gladstone, Rosalie Benitez,
Gladstone Gallery and Becky Hart
for their organizational support, Isadora,
Nati, Willa, Jolie, Jimmy

BA
New York, New York

CAST

Horus
Brennan Hall

Set
Herbert Perry

Garage Manager
Bobbi Starr

Manager's Lover
Taylor Starr

Fighting Mechanics
Pablo Silva
Magno Gama

Autoworkers
Jefferson Bare
Wilfredo Roldan
Craig Machado
Stephen Mack
Stuart Wright
Jade Archuleta-Gans

Platers
Karren Karagulian
Bill Johnson

Horus's Trainer
Byron Michael Howard

Set's Trainer
Tico Flores-Kyle

Horus's Manager
Maurice Johnson

Set's Manager
Arnold A. Sidney, Jr.

Horus's Bodyguards
Andre Maurice Irving
Roy James Wilson

Set's Bodyguards
Steven Carl Fallis
Ramon Aleman

Painter
Kanoa Baysa

Entourage Musicians

Chaparekes
Danielle De Picciotto
Rebecca Gaffney

Fiddles
Josh Henderson
Adriel Williams

Baglamas
Mick Barr
Alex Hacke

Banjos
Eric Hubel
Greg McMullen

Musical Crowd Leaders

Megan Schubert
Algis Kizys
Geoff Gersh
Sarah Small
Randy Gibson
Peter Scisioli
Gelsey Bell
Daisy Press

DSNY Horns
Guidonian Hand
William Lang
Sebastian Vera
Mark Broschinsky
James Rogers

DSNY Workers
Ladun Thompson
Trent Miller
Jonathan Dewberry
Douglas Stirling
Matthew Streeter
Reginald Wilson
Kevin Lips
Adam Cowell
Femi Olagoke
Majda Puaca
Dean Morris

Falcon
Rain

Basenji
Bingo

BA

CREW

Produced by
Matthew Barney and Laurenz Foundation

Director of Photography
Peter Strietmann

Production Design
Matthew D. Ryle

Technical Director
Christopher Seguine

Cinematography
John Chater
Ryan Samul
Claudia Raschke-Robinson

First Assistant Camera
Laura Nespolo
Caitlin Strom
Rebecca Arndt
Corey Gegner

Second Assistant Camera
Randy Schwartz
Oliver Lanzenberg
James Schlittenhart

Steadicam Operator
Aaron Brown

Crane Camera Operator
Scott Buckler

Gaffer
Chris Winget

Key Grips
Marc Cato
Joe Chiofalo

Grip
Jimmy Candelejo

Crane Grip
Alex Klymko

Swing
Brendan Perrault

Electric
Aaron Brown

Generator Operator
Cory Harmon

Second Assistant Director
Anne Marie Dentici

Second Second Assistant Director
Brennan Brooks

Production Supervisor
Jennifer Kern

Production Office Coordinators
Dave Shelley
Jordan Rathus

Key Hair and Makeup
Christine Herbeck

Hair/Makeup Assistants
Marissa Masella
Akane Awaji
Maggie Lawrenson

Wardrobe
Nelly Zagury

Wardrobe Assistants
Andy Slemenda

Ruby Gerber
Nicole Mourino
Michael Solis

Production Design Team
Kanoa Baysa
Jade Archuleta-Gans
Mike Branning

Art Department
Chris Wawrinofsky
Stuart Wright
David Smith
Adam Cowell
Kevin Lips
Tyler McPhee
Nick Broujos
Tom Kearns

Assistant to Producer
Katherine Bel

Extras Casting
Rachel Julia Engler

Production Assistants
Kevin Jeanbaptiste
Owen O'Leary
Jason Beaucourt
Octavia Pride
Joe Bender
Candice Thomas
Kristina Wagner
Shane Larue
Sasha Fayne
Theodore King
Oliver Agger

Camera PA
Kyle Parsons
Henry Zaballos

Craft Service PA
Marko Markovic

Still Photography
Hugo Glendinning
Stephen Mallon
Keith Riley

Albert Strietmann
Chris Winget

Art Department Interns
Alexandre Degardin
Alessia Arregui
Sena Wataya

Set Medics
Peter Borriello
Lareina Lawrence
Pierre Ramos
Chris Taylor
Matt Tizol

Bird Handler Jennifer Peña	Richard Wissak, Eric Hubel, Megan Schubert, Pat Laghezza, Pitchfork Media, Inc.	ADR Voiceovers Randolph Albright Mike Bellon	(text: “A Song of the Rolling Earth,” Walt Whitman)	The Wake Ensemble; Kidsroom Ensemble Bass Baritone: Eugene Perry Song by Jonathan Bepler and Jennie Knaggs (text: David Grimm, Matthew Barney, Jonathan Bepler)	<i>Corrosion: “Death snips proud men”</i> Vocal: Phil Minton, Trumpet: Axel Dörner Wall Percussion: Milford Graves, Beatboxer: Ryan Robinson The Wake Ensemble, Steam: Jonathan Bepler (text: Death Snips Proud Men, Carl Sandburg)
Dog Handler John-Michael Ekeblad	POST PRODUCTION	Sound Edited and Mixed HARBOR Sound	<i>Line in Nature</i> Harp: Zeena Parkins Organ: Dr. Lonnie Smith The Wake Ensemble (text: Uriel, Ralph Emerson)	<i>The Seed of Set / Honeyball Incantation</i> Vocals: Deborah Harry, Mezzo Soprano: Milica Nikcevic Kid’s Drums: Jonathan Bepler (text: <i>Ancient Evenings</i> , Norman Mailer)	<i>River of Fundament</i> Slam Poet: George Stonefish; R&B Singer: Terrell Howard; Soprano: Shara Worden; Vocals: De’Quan Purdy, Marti Domination, Adrianna Nicole, Wake Sopranos; Beatboxer: Ryan Robinson; Bent circuit toys: Kidsroom Ensemble and Jonathan Bepler; Hammond Organ: Dr. Lonnie Smith; Harp: Zeena Parkins (text: Matthew Barney)
Bird provided by Dawn Animal Agency	Additional Editing Luis Alvarez y Alvarez Christopher Seguine	Foley Recorded at Props and Pits	<i>REN Chrysler Gala: Approaches, Prologue, and Procession</i> REN Drum and Bugle Corps	<i>Norman’s Fall: River of Feces</i> Recorders: Artie Carpenter, Chimes: Kidsroom Ensemble Strings: Flux Quartet, Suonas: Jonathan Bepler Whistles: David Amram (excerpt from “Epitaph for Norman”)	
Dog provided by Daytime Projects	Associate Editor Naomi Spiro	Visual Effects	<i>Crudos Pensamientos y Fuerzas Feroces</i> Ranchera Singer: Lila Downs, Band: Mariachi Divas (text: <i>Ancient Evenings</i> , Norman Mailer, translated by Juan Kruz Diaz de Garaio Esnaola)	Act II	
Powerscopic Crane Scott Buckler, Riggin Design	First Assistant Editor Charlie Greene	Shady Lane Visual FX: Lead Composer Natalie Nolan	<i>The Secret Name: “Cold fires wash”</i> Pump Organ: Dr. Lonnie Smith Soprano: Shara Worden Harp: Zeena Parkins Ukulele: Mick Barr Vocals: Lila Downs The Wake Ensemble (text: <i>Ancient Evenings</i> , Norman Mailer)	<i>KHU Overture and Aria: “Bring me this...”</i> Soprano: Belita Woods Metalin Players of Detroit (text: The Book of Going Forth by Day)	
Grip and Electric Equipment provided by Eastern Effects	Assistant Editor Margaret Fitzpatrick	Composers Jedediah Smith Olga Tsibulina	<i>REN: “La sed está en los ríos del cuerpo”</i> Vocal arrangement: Lila Downs Mariachi Divas, REN Drum and Bugle Corps (text: <i>Ancient Evenings</i> , Norman Mailer)	<i>KHU: “Quietly get up...”</i> Bass-Baritone: Eugene Perry Drips and Wet Organ: Jonathan Bepler (text: The Death of James Lee Byars, James Lee Byars)	
Drydock provided by GMD Shipyard	Additional Assistant Editors Max Demetrio Randy Yang	Swordfish Visual FX: Executive Creative Director Matt Silverman	<i>The Tongue of the Pig</i> Tenor Saxophone: James Carter; Organ: Dr. Lonnie Smith; Vocals: Phil Minton, Sidsel Endresen, Paulo Henri D. Paguntalan, Wake Sopranos; Drums: Jeffrey Berman; The Wake Ensemble (text: Western Lands, William S. Burroughs)	<i>KHU: River Rouge</i> Soprano: Belita Woods Metalin Players of Detroit, KHU Trombone Choir (text: The Book of Going Forth by Day)	
Interior Taxi Garage provided by SR Auto Service	4k Conform & Digital Cinema Mastering Sublime Films, San Francisco, CA	Senior Producer Kathryn Bodle	<i>Throne Room Arioso</i> Tenor: Paul Giamatti; Vocals: Phil Minton, Sidsel Endresen; Viola: Max Mandel Wet Horns: Axel Dörner, Art Baron (text: <i>Ancient Evenings</i> , Norman Mailer; David Grimm)	<i>KHU: Crime Scene Response / Recovery of Osiris</i> Vocal arrangements of “Osiris come...” and “Isis is faint...”: Jennie Knaggs; The KHU Sopranos with Vocal Solos by Shara Worden, Tamara Whitty, Yana Lavovna, Leah Deraney; KHU Saxophone and Percussion Ensemble; Metalin Players of Detroit (text: The Book of Going Forth by Day)	
Exterior Taxi Garage provided by 55 Stan Operating Corp.	Colorists Christopher Seguine Peter Strietmann	Creative Technologist Brandon Smith	<i>REN: “La sed está en los ríos del cuerpo”</i> Vocal arrangement: Lila Downs Mariachi Divas, REN Drum and Bugle Corps (text: <i>Ancient Evenings</i> , Norman Mailer translated by Juan Kruz Diaz de Garaio Esnaola)	<i>KHU: Four Cylinder Spell / Seed of Set</i> Vocals and Percussion: Milford Graves; Isis Soliloquy: Aimee Mullins; “Seed of Set” Vocal: Jennie Knaggs; Radios and Gurgle Vocals: KHU Sopranos KHU Saxophone and KHU Percussion Ensemble; Metalin Players of Detroit. (text: <i>Ancient Evenings</i> , Norman Mailer)	
Holding provided by Ager Fish Corp.	Supervising Sound Editor and Re-Recording Mixer Dave Paterson	CG Artists Scott Frankel Peter Rubin Jin Yong Kim	<i>Ballad of the Bullfighter</i> Hathfertiti: Madyn Coakley Vocals: Jennie Knaggs, Milica Nikcevic, Shara Worden; Child Ukulele: Sam Nivola; Accordion: Zeena Parkins Djouras and Baglamas: Jonathan Bepler;	<i>KHU: Cutting Song: “14 pieces”</i> Bass-Baritones: Eugene Perry, Herbert Perry; Soprano: Jennie Knaggs; The KHU Sopranos; Metalin Players of Detroit; KHU Sax Ensemble; Breathworkers	
Cameras provided by Cpt Rentals Chater Camera	Music Editors Will Gardner Daniel Jenatsch Adrian Baumeister	Thanks to Nick Rashby, AHA Systems David Gessel	<i>Eulogy for Norman: “Many lights appeared”</i> Eulogist: Elaine Stritch, The Wake Ensemble (text: <i>Ancient Evenings</i> , Norman Mailer)	<i>KHU: Epilogue: “Pain took abode...”</i> Soprano: Belita Woods Djed Cymbals: Jonathan Bepler (text: <i>Ancient Evenings</i> , Norman Mailer)	
Audio Rentals Gotham Sound and Professional Sound Services	Music Mixed by Jonathan Bepler Conrad Hensel Michael Cheever	MUSIC	<i>The Widow’s Song: “Those are not the words”</i> Widow: Joan La Barbara Wake Sopranos, The Wake Ensemble	Act III	
Sound Mixer Gabriel Cyr	Music Mixed by Jonathan Bepler Conrad Hensel Michael Cheever				
Boom Operator Kristian Borysevich					
Additional Boom Operators Kevin Kniowski Andre Logan Brion Snyder	Music Mixed at Sparkle Studios, Berlin				
Sound Utility Daniel D’errico	FX Editors Mary Ellen Porto Robert Hein Damian Volpe Dialogue Editors Tony Martinez Alexa Zimmerman Roberto Fernandez				
Assistant Conductor Will Gardner	Foley Artists Rachel Chancey Ryan Collison				
Assistant to Music Director Brenda Goldstein	Assistant Sound Editor Alexa Zimmerman				
With Thanks to Ross Simonini, Sean Campbell, Ed Jordan, George Velez, Tom Maiorano, Tariq and Sami Rana, Allyson Spellacy, Barbara Gladstone, Ari Marcopoulos, Brandon Stosuy, Luis Alvarez y Alvarez, Marc Agger, Andrea Nitsche-Krupp,	ADR Engineer Ian Gaffney-Rosenfeld				

Bass: Stephen Payne
Body Instrument: Danny Wylde,
The Wake Ensemble
(text: Ideas of Good and Evil, W. B. Yeats;
Ancient Evenings, Norman Mailer)

Hathfertiti's Aria: "I'm for it"
Soprano: Maggie Gyllenhaal
Strings: Flux Quartet; The Wake Sopranos
(text: To Think of Time, Walt Whitman)

BA: Brooklyn Navy Drydock
Entourage Musicians,
New York Crowd,
Crowd vocal leaders

BA: The Battle of Horus and Set
Drum Performance by Milford Graves
Car Horns and Body instruments:
Jonathan Bepler

The Hearing of Horus and Set
Countertenor: Brennan Hall, Bass-Baritone:
Herbert Perry
Strings: Flux Quartet
(text: *Ancient Evenings*, Norman Mailer;
David Grimm)

The Judgement of Horus and Set
Kenny Merrick JR., Mystic River Singers,
Solo Jurist: Lauren Merrick
Countertenor: Brennan Hall,
The Council of Hemingways
Strings: Flux Quartet,
Vocals: Bobbi Starr
(text: The Book of Going Forth by Day;
Ancient Evenings, Norman Mailer)

Throneroom SouSaxophone
Bass Saxophone: James Carter

BA: Coronation and Aria
Countertenor: Brennan Hall
Sanitation Horns and Trombones:
Guidonian Hand
Horn: Bobbi Starr
(text: *Ancient Evenings*, Norman Mailer)

Norman of the Sharp Silver Sword
ROF Step Team
Frame Drums and Bells: Milford Graves
Step dance: Brennan Hall
(text: Hymn to Ogun)

Step Gauntlet
Countertenor: Brennan Hall
Bass-Baritone: Herbert Perry,
Tenor: Kevin McGuire
The Council of Hemingways,
Mystic River Singers

*"I Am an Acme of Things Accomplished" /
"I Bequeath Myself"*
Vocals: Ellen Burstyn
Strings: Flux Quartet

Chimes: Sydney Swihart
(text: Song of Myself, Walt Whitman)

"Siksil Wiblikcan na Silwowiokca"
(*Crude Thoughts and Fierce Forces*)
Vocal Arrangement:
Chief Dave Beautiful Bald Eagle
(text: *Ancient Evenings*, Norman Mailer
translated to Lakota by
Chief Dave Beautiful Bald Eagle)

Widow's Lament: "Life I reckon you are..."
Vocal composed and performed by:
Joan La Barbara
(text: Song of Myself, Walt Whitman)

"I Ascend From the Moon"
Soprano: Megan Schubert
Violin: Tom Chiu
(text: Song of Myself, Walt Whitman)

Mother of All Lands
Soprano: Shara Worden,
Cello Solo: Felix Fan
(text: adaptation of Song of Myself,
Walt Whitman)

Ka of Ka Song: "Tenderly will I use you..."
Hand Drum and Vocal: Michaela Dennis
(text: A Child said, What is the Grass?,
Walt Whitman)

I Bequeath Myself to the Dirt
Vocals: Shara Worden
Strings: Flux Quartet
Song by Jonathan Bepler and Shara Worden
(text: Song of Myself, Walt Whitman)

"I suffer the onslaught..."
Bass: Stephen Payne
(text: *Ancient Evenings*, Norman Mailer)

Epilogue
Metalin Players of Detroit
The KHU Sopranos,
Soprano Solo: Shara Worden

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Special Thanks to
The Mailer Family, Maja Oeri and
Hans U. Bodenmann, Barbara Gladstone,
Allyson Spellacy, Stacy Tunis,
Gladstone Gallery, Shaun Caley Regen,
Regen Projects, Sadie Coles,
Pauline Daly, Heidi Naef,

Charlotte Gutzwiller, Schaulager,
Alex Poots, Paul Clay, Manchester
International Festival, Becky Hart,
Okwui Enwezor, Louise Neri,
The Estate of James Lee Byars and
Michael Werner Gallery,
NY State Governor's Office for Motion
Picture and Television Development,
Gudrun Tryggvadottir,
Elisa Snaebjörnsdottir, Ari Marcopoulos,
Brandon Stosuy, Jane Lea, Roni Horn,
Elizabeth Peyton, Neville Wakefield,
Rosalie Benitez, Bob and Sherrie Barney,
Tracy Barney, Zone 6, Isadora Barney,
Willia, Jolie, Jimmy, and Nelson

This production participated in the New
York State Governor's Office for Motion
Picture and Television Development's Post
Production Credit Program

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CONTRIBUTORS

HILTON ALS

is a staff writer for *The New Yorker*. His most recent book *White Girls* has been nominated for a National Book Critics Circle Award.

HOMI K. BHABHA

is the Anne F. Rothenberg Professor of the Humanities in the Department of English, the Director of the Humanities Center, and the Senior Advisor on the Humanities to the President and Provost at Harvard University. He is the author of numerous works exploring postcolonial theory, cultural change and power, and cosmopolitanism, among other themes.

DIEDRICH DIEDERICHSEN

is Professor of Theory, Practice, and Communication of Contemporary Art at the Institute for Art History and Cultural Studies at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna. Diederichsen works on, and writes continuously about, pop music, contemporary art, modern composition, cinema, theater, design, and politics.

OKWUI ENWEZOR

is Director of Haus der Kunst. He is also editor and founding publisher of *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art*, and director of the Visual Arts Section, 56th Venice Biennale, 2015.

DAVID WALSH

is the founder of the Museum of Old and New Art (MONA), a private museum in Hobart, Tasmania, which opened to the public in 2011. In 2014, MONA will present selected works from *River of Fundament* in the context of ancient Egyptian objects from the museum's permanent collection.

ARTIST'S ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I salute my collaborators Jonathan Bepler and Peter Strietmann for their vision and their courage to make *River of Fundament*. It has been a joy to continue to grow and learn together.

The studio has been engaged in *River of Fundament* for seven years. They have carried the physical and emotional weight of this project as it has morphed from the production of live performances, to filmmaking, and back to our native language of sculpture production. I salute them all for their fearlessness, stamina, and focus. They are: Matthew Ryle, Mike Bellon, Kanoa Baysa, Jade Archuleta Gans, Keith Riley, Katherine Bel, Mike Koller, Michael Branning, Kevin Lips, Tyler McPhee, Dave Smith, Stuart Wright, Tom Kearns, Josh Reiman, Adam Cowell, Josh Bemelen, Ann Gale, Marko Markovic, Nick Broujos, Chris Wawrinofsky, Andre Ponticello, and Kasey Conlon.

I am grateful to Maja Oeri, Hans Bodenmann, and Laurenz Foundation for their belief in *River of Fundament* and for joining me in producing the film.

For their unconditional support of more than twenty years, I wish to thank Barbara Gladstone and her gallery. Most significantly I thank Rosalie Benitez and Allyson Spellacy for their dedication to this project. I would also like to recognize Shaun Caley Regen and Sadie Coles for their years of support and collaboration.

This book would not have been possible without the concentrated work of Louise Neri, Margaret Chace, Giulia Di Filippo, and Jeff Ramsey. I salute them along with all the contributors.

Finally, I wish to thank Okwui Enwezor and the Haus der Kunst staff for the leap of faith they made in committing to a project of this scale while still in midstream, and ultimately giving *River of Fundament* an ideal home.

And most of all, for her patience and love, I thank Doa Faun Barney.

—Matthew Barney

Published in conjunction with the exhibition *Matthew Barney: River of Fundament*, held at Haus der Kunst, Munich, March 16–August 17, 2014; and at Museum of Old and New Art (MONA), Tasmania, Australia, November 22, 2014–April 27, 2015.

The exhibition *Matthew Barney: River of Fundament* was curated by Okwui Enwezor and organized by Haus der Kunst in collaboration with Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) in Tasmania, Australia.

The European premiere of the film was presented in cooperation with Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich. *River of Fundament* is produced by Matthew Barney and Laurenz Foundation, Schaulager Basel.

Haus der Kunst thanks its shareholders for their annual support of the program: Freistaat Bayern, Josef Schörghuber Stiftung, Gesellschaft der Freunde Haus der Kunst e.V.

Additional support has been provided by Laurenz Foundation, Schaulager Basel; Gladstone Gallery, New York; Regen Projects, Los Angeles; and Sadie Coles HQ, London.

First published in the United States of America in 2014 by

Skira Rizzoli Publications, Inc.
300 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10010
www.rizzoliusa.com

in association with

Haus der Kunst
Prinzregentenstrasse 1
80538 Munich
Germany
www.hausderkunst.de

Editor:
LOUISE NERI
Associate Publisher:
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Coordinating Editor:
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Playbills Editor:
ROSALIE BENITEZ
Production Manager:
KAIJA MARKOE
Image Preparation:
LOREN OLSON,
CHRISTOPHER SEGUINE
Design:
KLOEPFER-RAMSEY-KWON, New York
Design Assistance:
KEITH RILEY, Matthew Barney Studio
Translation of Diedrich Diederichsen's
River of Many Returns:
JAMES GUSSEN

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2014 2015 2016 2017 / 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Library of Congress Control Number:
2014934294

ISBN: 978-0-8478-4258-2

Printed in Italy





