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Not the dinosaur but the multi-media artist's film cycle

Ong Sor Fern
FILM CORRESPONDENT

WHEN Mr Zhang Wenjie, the National Museum Cinematheque's assistant programming manager, put together the movies for its Alternative Visions series, he was expecting a modest turnout.

After all, the six films by controversial American multimedia artist Matthew Barney are not likely to appeal to the summer blockbuster crowd.

But tickets to the event, which runs from June 13 to 16, are selling fast. All five films in the acclaimed Cremaster cycle are already 80 per cent sold out and *Drawing Restraint No. 9* has only about 30 per cent tickets available.

The artist's films are elaborate visual set pieces which incorporate images from myth and pop culture.

Mr Zhang says: "I didn't expect it to do so well, especially since so far there's been very little publicity on the event, apart from our e-mailers and word of mouth."

The enthusiastic audience response proves that the Cinematheque can fill a gap, despite the crowded film scene here, with multiplexes offering not just mainstream movies but also arthouse fare and monthly film festivals.

Since the National Museum re-opened in December, the Cinematheque's 247-seat hall has hosted monthly screenings. It is part of the museum's move towards incorporating other ways of showcasing history.

Mr Zhang is ramping up the venue's programming with a combination of alternative fare and classic works that will set the Cinematheque apart from indie film venues like Screening Room and Pitch Black.

"There's a lot to be done, especially for older films that fall outside of the mainstream," he says.

His model is the Cinematheque Francaise, which inspired the French New Wave of directors with its comprehensive screenings.

"The aim of the programmes is to celebrate the magic and mystique of film," he adds.

Hence, a new outdoor series, *Under The Banyan Tree*, will kick off next month with an Audrey Hepburn doublebill of *Breakfast At Tiffany's* (1961) and *Roman Holiday* (1953).

To be held on the last Friday and Saturday of every month, the series will also include doublebills of Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963) and *Psycho* (1960), and Japanese animation



BIG DRAW: Tickets to *Drawing Restraint No. 9* are also selling fast.

master Hayao Miyazaki's *My Neighbour Totoro* (1988) and *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989).

Besides such populist fare, there will be a World Cinema series which starts in September.

This ticketed monthly series aims to introduce people to classics like King Hu's martial arts landmark *A Touch Of Zen* (1971) and Andy Warhol's experimental *The Chelsea Girls* (1966).

The Cinematheque will also offer additional ad hoc fare.

It is co-organising a showcase of Vietnam films with the Singapore International Film Festival next year.

Another highlight next year will be a retrospective of Italian film-maker Michelangelo Antonioni, showcasing all his works, including 18 features and various short films.

► **Alternative Visions:** Matthew Barney is on at the National Museum's Cinematheque from June 13 to 16. Tickets at \$10 are available at the museum and the box office. For more information, visit www.nationalmuseum.sg or call 6332-3659.