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Kevin Beasley: Sport/Utility
May 2 - June 17, 2017
Opening Reception: Tuesday, May 2, 6-8pm

Casey Kaplan is pleased to announce Kevin Beasley: Sport/Utility. This is the artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery.

A du-rag, typically wrapped around the head to condition hair overnight and establish natural waves, is stretched, distorted and hung on the wall in conversation with a necktie. The utility of the du-rag as hair product, or wave cap, is contrasted by disparate affiliations of thuggery and respectability, ultimately criminalizing its use. In 2001, the du-rag was banned by the NFL, compelling alternate designs of the skull cap by brands such as Nike, Under Armour, and retired NFL player Marshawn Lynch's apparel line "Beast Mode". Lynch, a former running back known for his agility and brute force, utilized his position in the public eye to destabilize stigmas often fed by the media in an attempt to regain control over his own narrative.

Interested in disruptions of establishment, Kevin Beasley seeks to re-establish the meaning of a symbol or image. To realize this in previous works, Beasley has inserted the viewer into a sculpture by playing back the sound of one's own actions and movements slowed down, disrupted and displaced, or he has penetrated a prominent art institution with the loud and chilling a cappella voices of dead black rappers. For this exhibition, dual meanings and word plays are positioned within individual moments of manipulation, deconstruction and regeneration.

A gutted window air conditioner confined to the middle of a wall acts as narrator. Sound waves mimic the blowing air and replace the expected cold gust. Barely perceptible, intermittent clips spanning political rallies and historical documentaries are heard. Stripped of its facility to temper or soothe our surroundings, the projections of the AC unit subtly but persistently drive the constellation of sculptural bodies in Sport/Utility as it bridges inside to outside. Ambient hums weave in and around the exhibition space, bouncing between and connecting disparate objects. A tempo is set.

Two acoustic foam panels comprised of NBA jerseys emblazoned with the surnames of NBA superstars John "WALL" and Metta "WORLD PEACE" pad the walls. Coated in resin, the jerseys are torn and splayed. Tiled across the composition in an assemblage of bold colors, "wall" is repeated in a double entendre that conjures xenophobic political strategies. Players in motion are frozen and individuality reduced to a collective itemization, and yet a bodily presence lingers in each liquid collage as resin and sweat conflate.

Two heads meet, mirrored, embodying the brute force of a collision. Interlocked replica NFL 1930s Washington Redskins leather helmets are cast, producing a skin-like surface that emerges from under foam. The action is fossilized, visualizing what it means to bash two delicate minds together. The exhibition continues with a sculptural appropriation of a golf bag containing studio debris, "Billy Club" brand golf irons, and a black law enforcement baton. A pair of Kanye West-designed Adidas "Yeezy 750 BOOST" sneakers are perched on a child's booster seat.

A 2008 white GM Cadillac Escalade SUV is stripped of its engine, drained of its fluids and finally crushed. Prior to 1932, General Motors executed a policy forbidding black men and women from purchasing its Cadillac brand. A "black" market formed, in which white men were paid to buy Cadillacs on behalf of black Americans. GM subsequently changed this policy. Developing in prominence, subcultural connotations of the car have evolved. Siphoning air and sound from this immense object, histories fold upon themselves in a material transformation. Beasley's manipulations of language and objects of sport and utility strive to subvert diametric systems of institutional control and reclaim an altered narrative.

Kevin Beasley (b. 1985, Lynchburg, VA) lives and works in New York. Currently, the artist has a solo project on view at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles and a site-specific outdoor installation in Morningside Park in conjunction with The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York. Beasley's work has recently been included in exhibitions at The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago (2016); San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2016); Hammer Museum at Art + Practice, Los Angeles (2016); White Columns, New York (2016); The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2015); MoMA PS1, Long Island City (2015); Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (2015); The Glass House, New Canaan, CT (2015); The 2014 Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2014); The Seoul Museum of Art, Seoul (2014); The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2014); and The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2014). The artist has recently performed at venues including Lincoln Center of Performing Arts, New York (2016); Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto (2016); Casey Kaplan, New York (2015); The Dallas Museum of Art (2015); The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2015); The Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland (2014); The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2014); Queens Museum of Art, New York (2014); and The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2012). His work is held in the collections of The Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York; The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Perez Art Museum Miami; The Art Institute of Chicago; and San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Beginning in 2017 and culminating in 2020, Beasley's work will travel with the Joyner/Giuffrida Collection to The Ogden Museum of Southern Art, New Orleans; The Nasher Museum of Art, at Duke University, North Carolina; The Snite Museum of Art, at University of Notre Dame, Indiana; The Baltimore Museum of Art; and The Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. In December of 2017, Beasley is slated to open a solo exhibition at kim? Contemporary Art Center in Riga, Latvia.

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COUNTER CURRENT 17

PROJECT ROW HOUSES

cynthia woods mitchell center for the arts
UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

KEVIN BEASLEY
MOVEMENT V: BALLROOM

COUNTERCURRENT FESTIVAL
PRESENTED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PROJECT ROW HOUSES

The Historic Eldorado Ballroom
2310 Elgin St.
Houston, TX 77004

April 18 - 23, 2017
Opening Reception: Thursday, April 20 from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM
Performance: Saturday, April 22 at 8:00 PM - ticket reservation required

"Our engagement with darkness is what generates visibility." - Kevin Beasley

Enter a historic ballroom, one that's pitch black inside, lit only by exit signs and a series of lights activated by sound.

Artist Kevin Beasley is taking over the Eldorado Ballroom, the iconic Third Ward venue, and creating an original site-specific sculptural and sound installation. Sixteen sculptural works amplify the sounds produced by the movement of visitors, with the sound in turn producing light, creating a combination of a movement-based performance and listening sessions, an installation that exists—visually and aurally—only with the movement of bodies and a physical engagement between visitors and the space.

The Eldorado Ballroom featured a who's who of the great blues and jazz players—and was the place to cut loose—from the 1940s to the 1970s. Beasley explores the cultural, personal, and historical contexts of the materials and spaces with which he assembles his art, then radically transforms and reinterprets them. Movement V: Ballroom continues a series of experiments in materiality and sound, exploring the fading in and out of culture, and the erasure of predominately black cultural spaces. On April 22 at 8pm, Beasley will engage the installation with his own movements for a performance.

Since 2013, Kevin Beasley has created Movements I-V, performance installations that explore the implications of liveness and the body—including his own—within varying spaces. These works are invested in how the body, an agent of motion, affects the experience in multi-faceted ways, including visually, sonically, physically and culturally. His work has been exhibited at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

Movement V: Ballroom is part of Performing the Neighborhood, a five-year partnership between the Mitchell Center and Project Row Houses to commission and present major performance-based works by contemporary artists in the Third Ward neighborhood of Houston. These large-scale co-commissions will draw upon the neighborhood, as well as the rich, often complicated intersection between the university campus and its surrounding community.

NOTE: Movement V: Ballroom is based in darkness, with minimal lighting and visitors moving about. The installation might be disorientating for some.

Movement V: Ballroom is an unticketed installation open to the public during the following hours: April 18-23, 12PM - 8PM

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HAMMER

Hammer Projects: Kevin Beasley

JANUARY 21 - APRIL 23, 2017

New York–based artist Kevin Beasley transforms the museum's Vault Gallery into an elaborate environment inspired by Bernini's Baroque altarpiece in Saint Peter's Basilica and an infamous image of Black Panther Huey P. Newton.

The New York–based artist Kevin Beasley imbues his sculptures with both personal associations and references to current events, social movements, and economic realities. Using resin and foam to give shape and solidity to soft materials such as T-shirts, house dresses, and bandannas, he gives his works a pronounced presence while also calling attention to what is absent. The remnants of bodies in the form of used clothing, or materials like acoustic foam panels, which give shape to the elusiveness of sound, are activated in a practice rooted in assemblage. Inspired by the Vault Gallery's arched ceiling's allusion to sacred architecture, the installation is a contemporary interpretation of Bernini's seventeenth-century Baroque altarpiece in Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome. Beasley replaces Saint Peter's chair with a wicker "peacock" chair of the type that became iconic after Black Panther Party founder Huey P. Newton was photographed seated in one holding a shotgun in one hand and a spear in the other. In Beasley's remix, two historical references are united to create an environment that is bold and lively while simultaneously ghostly and mournful.

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HYPERALLERGIC

APRIL 17th, 2017

St. Peter's Basilica Meets the Black Panthers in a Contemporary Altarpiece

Kevin Beasley's installation feels sublime and sacred in its grandiose silence.

Hammer Projects: Kevin Beasley, installation view, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (all photos by Brian Forrest)

LOS ANGELES — The Vault Gallery at the UCLA's Hammer Museum is named after the classic arched architecture that informs the shape and structure of many houses of worship. The installation Hammer Projects: Kevin Beasley currently occupies the aforementioned hall, and the atmosphere is appropriately hushed. A thick black curtain encased in an exoskeleton made of knotted do-rags is suspended heavily from the high ceiling, tempering and softening the noise from the museum's open courtyard. The room is darkened. Eyes take a moment to adjust. Visitors whisper.

After padding softly around the curtain, the viewer is confronted by an altar that has been carefully arranged and spotlit in the apse. A single wicker peacock chair, raised slightly off the floor on a platform strewn with clothing, is centered on a diamond-patterned rug and flanked by a number of floating housedresses — shellacked phantoms with invisible bodies. Headless hoods face the audience. A pair of sweatpants halfheartedly hovers. A thin, molded figure clutching a black and red shield sits by each armrest. A flaming scarlet and gold sunburst hangs above and behind the throne, feathers dispersed across its shiny surface, a grate placed over its rectangular frame. More veils in florals and paisleys encircle the altarpiece.

The mournful surroundings suggest that these garments are widows' weeds. All the fabric ghosts seem to be covered in a liquid sheen. Beasley often utilizes a concoction of polyurethane foam and resin to give three-dimensionality to materials that have less structural integrity. Though not cast in luxurious metals, his figures are prepared to weather the storm.

Hammer Projects: Kevin Beasley, installation view

For this installation, Beasley lifted inspiration from two sources: the 17th-century Baroque altarpiece designed by sculptor Gian Lorenzo Bernini at the St. Peter's Basilica in Rome and a photographic portrait of the Black Panther Party co-founder Huey P. Newton sitting in a rattan peacock chair. The relic of Saint Peter's wooden chair is enclosed in an ornate bronze sculpture at the center of the altarpiece, supported by four saints whose robes swish and drape dramatically. The ceiling apse is outfitted in gilded stucco, and the opulent materials used reflect the spare-no-costs attitude of the Vatican: colorful marbles, stained glass, gilded bronze. Bernini's lavish décor symbolically reflects the power and endurance of the Church. The portrait of Newton, created centuries later, shows the man straight-backed on his throne, which sits upon a zebra skin, clutching both a spear and an automatic weapon. As art historian Jo-Ann Morgan notes, "the misé-en-scène also flirts with mythology of the nonwest — tinsel town meets National Geographic."

Hammer Projects: Kevin Beasley, installation view

The photograph has been reproduced and circulated widely since the late 1960s, and has become an image that reflects the authority and legitimacy of the Black Panther Party.

The composition of Newton's portrait is rooted in Western visual tradition but instantiates power through a fantastical staging that complicates what is expected through its deliberate presentation. Beasley inquires, "What does it mean to replace Bernini's chair of Saint Peter with the chair of Huey P. Newton?" With this installation, he challenged himself to reconsider the role of power through this exchange. His work often deals with the intersection of materiality and sound, and sound's ubiquity (both its presence and non-presence) helps shape the experience of moving through a space. At the Hammer, the space feels sublime and sacred in its grandiose silence.

Hammer Projects: Kevin Beasley *continues at Hammer Museum, UCLA (10899 Wilshire Blvd.), through April 23.*

Kim, H. *St.Peter's Basilica Meets the Black Panthers in a Contemporary Alterpiece.* Hyperallergic (online), April 17, 2017

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how the du-rag is being reclaimed by black artists and designers

Unpacking the aesthetic and cultural cues of the utilitarian headdress.

by Antwaun Sargent

Stretched across the ceiling of a chapel-like gallery in the Brooklyn Museum is the painter Kehinde Wiley's 2003 large-scale panel Go. It's a mural of young black men, floating through a blue sky scattered with large cumulus clouds, wearing our era's streetwear: baggy blue jeans and oversized T-shirts, bomber jackets, Timbs, and Air Force 1s to perfectly match the backwards fitted caps on their heads. One figure, body crawled inward, eyes wide and wandering, appears weary. His head, encircled by an ornate doily-like gold halo, is covered by a shimmering sign of black protection, style, and beauty: the du-rag.

Go, and later Wiley's Tomb of Pope Alexander VII Study I of a black figure wearing a white du-rag, are the first works of art I remember seeing where a figure sports a du-rag. The du-rag has its roots in the decorative headdresses of sub-Saharan Africa and subsequently, the rags American slaves used to tie their hair back in the the field and on Sunday morning to praise God. During the Harlem Renaissance, the du-rag (sometimes made of women's stockings) began to be worn by black American men inside their homes to protect their hairstyles. Into the latter part of the twentieth century, they were used by men of the diaspora to create waves in their fades and to protect their cornrows while they slept.

By the 1990s and early 2000s, it became a fashion accessory for young black men, worn outside in the world--despite the protests of many black parents, who wanted to protect their sons from easy stereotyping-- as a point of self imaging, black cool, and a gesture of their own representation. Rappers like Nelly and 50 Cent wore them in their videos and on red carpets and basketball players like Allen Iverson stylized them off the court. These men were owning their blackness in a whitewashed world.

The trend was short-lived. The culture has largely moved beyond waves, as a hairstyle, and the du-rag, as a signifier of black male personal style and marker of masculinity. But recently, it has re-emerged in both fashion and art as a powerful symbol of self care and individuality.

It was arguably Rihanna who brought the du-rag back to the fashion world of late, including it in her Fenty Puma spring/ summer 17 collection. The pop star-cum-designer refashioned the utilitarian headdress in soft shades of lilac, olive, and pink stretch lace, giving it a feminine bent.

Artists are also finding inspiration in the humble garment today. Kevin Beasley's Chair of the Ministers of Defense, an installation of altered jeans, T-shirts, housedresses, and du-rags, surrounding a 1970s vintage wicker "peacock" rattan chair, is currently on view at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles. The piece alludes to both Gian Lorenzo Bernini's seventeenth-century altarpiece for Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome and the iconic 1967 photograph of Black Panther Party founder Huey P. Newton wearing the party uniform while holding a shotgun and a spear in a peacock chair. The du-rags and other garments are covered in resin and adorned with guinea fowl feathers and Maasai and Zulu war shields, and hung by the artist in a way that suggests they are black figures guarding a throne.

"I was trying to consider in material choices how can the objects that I'm familiar with in my personal life, be elevated," explains Beasley. "The du-rag for me becomes one of the most interesting garments because it's been relegated to present a very particular stereotype and image of black men."

The du-rag outside of the black community has become, as Brian Josephs's recent GQ essay argues, "criminalized," loaded with stereotype as a symbol that suggests the black males who wear them are menacing "thugs." Josephs notes that both the NFL and NBA banned the "$2 dollar piece of headwear" in the early 2000s. Historically black colleges including Hampton University have banned the du-rag.

"They're a major asset to the black community hair self care image," explains Beasley, "I think in some way [Ministers] is about reclaiming the potential and even possibility in what they are and allowing them, as an object that has a lot of power, to exist very prominently." Beasley, who has used the du-rag as source material in other works like the sculptureUntitled (Dome) and the performance YOUR FACE IS/IS NOT ENOUGH, says,"They're elegant."

Kevin Beasley, Chair of the Ministers of Defense, 2016. Photo: Brian Forrest, Courtesy the artist and Hammer Museum

The portrait series Du-Rags, by New York photographer John Edmonds, features close-ups of the back of young black men's heads covered by these "objects of adornment—like a crown, hijab or burqa." "Du-Rags are very black," explains the artist, who recently completed an MFA in photography at the Yale University School of Art. When Edmonds was growing up in Southeast D.C. in the 1990s, he, his mother, and many of the men and women in his neighborhood wore du-rags. That early universality made him see the piece as a comment on black gender expression. "I don't really understand them as being gendered or prescribed to men, like many people do," he says. Untitled (Du-rag 3) is an image, printed on silk fabric, of a black male with a Cerulean blue du-rag tied neatly around his head. For Edmonds, it represents an opportunity to consider the individual as a universal black body without the limitations of gender.

Edmond's use of the du-rag to deconstruct gender and sexuality echoes its depiction in Barry Jenkins's black queer coming of age film Moonlight. Chiron's black du-rag is one symbol among many that subtly communicates how his queerness clashes with traditional notions of black hyper-masculinity. A sign of how intersectional identities often clash.

Reinventing the du-rag's ties to sexuality and gender performance are also themes that animate DU-RAAAG, a fashion photo project by Los Angeles artist and SON publisher Justen Le Roy. The black and white images, shot by Russell Hamilton, of black boys in the desert wearing du-rags and styled androgynously, "represent the du-rag as a cultural headdress that is synonymous with the black experience, mostly represented by the black male body," says Le Roy.

Le Roy's work reclaims images of the du-rag as depicted by mainstream fashion designers like Rick Owens, who sent white male models down his fall/winter 14 runway wearing black and brown du-rags. Kylie Jenner, evoking rapper Eminem who wore them throughout the early 2000s, donned a white one during New York fashion week last September, which, for Le Roy and others, represented cultural appropriation. "The du-rag is automatically criminalized for being of use to the black body yet we've seen platforms praise it as an aesthetic when presented on non-black bodies in fashion and music," he says. "These portraits put those who understand the history and use of the du-rag at the forefront."

The, non-commodified, ritualistic history of the du-rag is sublimely captured in the photographer Micaiah Carter's Orchestrated. The smoky portrait of a young black male, having a du-rag tied around his head by another, illustrates how the headdress represents community and coming of age. "Growing up in high school, no one really understood why I put a du-rag on my head at night," explains Carter. With Orchestrated, he says, "I wanted to put back in context what putting on the du-rag means," for the black community. This appears to be the goal of many of the black artists and creatives reclaiming its symbolism.

Sargent, Antwaun, "how the du-rag is being reclaimed by black artists and designers", iD-Vice (online), March 28, 2017

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inHARLEM

STUDIO MUSEUM HARLEM

inHarlem: Kevin Beasley

Morningside Park
Aug 25, 2016 - Jul 25, 2017

inHarlem: Kevin Beasley features Who's Afraid to Listen to Red, Black and Green?, and transforms a section of Morningside Park into a stage. Beasley installed a trio of large-scale sculptures he refers to as "acoustic mirrors," incorporating his signature found materials. Each sculpture features one of the colors of the African-American flag in the form of found red, black, or green T-shirts cast in resin. The acoustic mirrors enable a variety of planned performances and encourage impromptu use by members of the Harlem community. Who's Afraid to Listen to Red, Black and Green? reflects the artist's complementary interests in sculpture, sound and community-building, and will create a unique space for both contemplation and conversation.

inHarlem: Kevin Beasley, Simone Leigh, Kori Newkirk, Rudy Shepherd is organized by Amanda Hunt, Assistant Curator, in partnership with the NYC Parks along with the Marcus Garvey Park Alliance.

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The New York Times

What to See in New York Art Galleries This Week

By MARTHA SCHWENDENER, KAREN ROSENBERG and KEN JOHNSON

inHarlem: Kevin Beasley, Simone Leigh, Kori Newkirk and Rudy Shepherd

Marcus Garvey Park, Morningside Park, St. Nicholas Park and Jackie Robinson Park
Through July 25

Public art is a difficult genre because you're exhibiting work to a public in which everyone's a critic. Harlem — and particularly Marcus Garvey Park — has been achieving the delicate balance of exhibiting challenging, innovative art and serving a neighborhood in transition.

Spread across four Harlem parks, the "inHarlem" outdoor installation was organized by Amanda Hunt of the Studio Museum in Harlem, along with the New York City Department of Parks & Recreation and the Marcus Garvey Park Alliance. It includes Simone Leigh's beautiful re-creations of rotunda kitchen houses from rural Zimbabwe — except, Ms. Leigh recasts them as closed-up structures, painted black and left vacant by Africans who've migrated elsewhere.

Kevin Beasley's round, concave "acoustic mirrors" in Morningside Park, made with T-shirts cast in resin, borrow a form used by governments during wars to capture sound. Titled "Who's Afraid to Listen to Red, Black and Green?" (2016), they pay homage both to Barnett Newman's series of monochrome paintings, "Who's Afraid of Red, Yellow and Blue" (1966-70), and the voices and music of the African diaspora.

Kori Newkirk's reflective curtains, hung over the steps in St. Nicholas Park, resemble Christo and Jeanne-Claude's "The Gates" (2005) in Central Park. Meanwhile, in Jackie Robinson Park, Rudy Shepherd has created a giant "Black Rock Negative Energy Absorber" (2016) out of wood, metal and concrete — a quasi-abstract sculpture designed to exude positive energy and cast out bad mojo in a society in which black bodies are still under siege, and in a rapidly gentrifying Harlem.

- MARTHA SCHWENDENER

Schwendener, Martha, "What to see in New York Galleries This Week: inHarlem", New York Times, September 23, 2016, C19

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The New York Times

Righting Wrongs and Generating Attention for Art of the African Diaspora

By TED LOOS | OCT. 16, 2016

"Bronx Fitted" (2015), by Kevin Beasley. Credit Photo by Jean Vong, via Kevin Beasley and Casey Kaplan, New York

Sheena Wagstaff, chairwoman of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's modern and contemporary art department, was relatively new on the job in 2013 when Pamela J. Joyner, a prolific art collector and supporter of artists of African descent, invited her on a trip to Washington to visit the studio of the Color Field painter Sam Gilliam. They looked at Mr. Gilliam's in-progress pieces, a series of striking works with a thin stream of paint poured on board.

Ms. Wagstaff knew the Met owned a Gilliam work, "Leah's Renoir" (1979), somewhere in its collection, and the visit "prompted me to take a second look at it." Later, Ms. Joyner donated money to buy another Gilliam, "Whirlirama" (1970), and next year there are plans to exhibit both when the Met reinstalls its modern collection. "Pamela is such an informed champion of her artists," Ms. Wagstaff said.

That trip to Washington was one of the many ways that Ms. Joyner, 58, exerts her power as an art-world influence behind the scenes. She has relinquished a successful business career to become what she calls a full-time "mission-driven" collector of a very specific niche: Abstract art by African-Americans and members of the global African diaspora. Now she leverages her relationships with the Met in New York, the Tate in London, the Art Institute in Chicago and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art to help these artists gain traction in the wider world.

"It's no less ambitious than an effort to reframe art history," said Ms. Joyner, who sees herself as righting a wrong. "First, to include more broadly those who have been overlooked — and, for those with visibility, to steward and contextualize those careers."

When art collectors publish a book on their treasures, they often include a glamour shot of themselves surrounded by myriad works. But in "Four Generations: The Joyner/Giuffrida Collection of Abstract Art," edited by Courtney J. Martin and published last month by Gregory R. Miller, there is no picture of Ms. Joyner anywhere. Instead, there are academic essays by curators and writers, with only a short "question and answer" segment with Ms. Joyner and her husband, Alfred J. Giuffrida.

"That's very deliberate," Ms. Joyner said recently over coffee in Chelsea. "The focus is on the artists."

Ms. Joyner, who is based in San Francisco but keeps an apartment in New York, founded and ran a private equity marketing company called Avid Partners. She started the collection 20 years ago and now adds to it with Mr. Giuffrida, an investment executive whom she married in 2004. Her trove, more than 300 works, begins in the 1940s and goes up to "yesterday," Ms. Joyner said, encompassing four generations.

Her definition of "African descent" has broadened to include William Kentridge, the white South African artist whose work has been in Ms. Joyner's sights for some time. She just acquired her first Kentridge piece the other week in London.

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As an African-American woman in the corridors of establishment power — an education at Dartmouth and Harvard, and then an entrepreneurial career — she said she knew the feeling of being an outlier.

“I’ve operated in environments where some people would construe me to be unusual,” she said. “And I am stitched together in a way that I find myself doing things that aren’t necessarily expected. So I relate to that journey.”

The book’s most telling photograph is from 1950, when Abstract Expressionists gathered in New York to discuss their work. Some were famous — Willem de Kooning and Robert Motherwell — but the black painter Norman Lewis (1909-79), whose work Ms. Joyner collects, was also there.

“He’s literally at the table, but he gets written out of that history,” Ms. Joyner said. “His first monograph was only published last year.”

She explained some of the factors that kept black artists from gaining a foothold, especially in the 1960s and ’70s. “For a long time, the art world wanted black artists to do black subject matter,” she said. “Art was a political tool. People were viewed as not part of the struggle if they were doing abstraction.”

About 100 artists are in her collection, and Ms. Joyner referred to Lewis and the Washington Color School painter Alma Thomas (1891-1978) as the “Adam and Eve” of the group, stylistically begetting the later generations. (Thomas is the subject of an exhibition at the Studio Museum in Harlem through Oct. 30.)

Ms. Joyner’s largest holding, more than a dozen works, is of works by Mr. Gilliam, who is 82. She also owns pieces by successful midcareer artists like Kara Walker, Glenn Ligon and Mark Bradford, and is scouting out new talents. The under-40 artists she is tracking include the Conceptual sculptor Kevin Beasley; Hugo McCloud, who uses nontraditional materials in his paintings; and Samuel Levi Jones, best known for his mixed-media works on canvas.

The Los Angeles artist Charles Gaines, whose Abstract and Conceptual work is in her collection, said that “Four Generations” crystallized his longtime thinking about the context of his work as part of a continuum.

“Pamela’s book is the first legitimate academic effort to theorize some of this material,” Mr. Gaines, 72, said. “It’s a pioneering effort.”

About 60 works from the Joyner/Giuffrida collection will tour in a museum show, “Solidary and Solitary,” beginning next fall at the Ogden Museum in New Orleans. Ms. Joyner buys about 30 works a year and has never sold one, she said, although she has donated them to museums.

“Collecting is a job for Pamela,” said James Rondeau, director and president of the Art Institute of Chicago, in Ms. Joyner’s hometown, where she is a trustee.

Over the years, Ms. Joyner has watched prices rise for many artists she has championed. “One curator said that I’m my own worst enemy,” she said with a wry smile.

Lorna Simpson, an artist Ms. Joyner has collected and now befriended, noted that Ms. Joyner was no longer alone in her interest in the field. “The market was already starting to move around those pictures when she began,” Ms. Simpson said. “But she was ahead of it.”

Ms. Joyner is the daughter of two teachers, and she used to visit Georges Seurat’s “A Sunday on La Grande Jatte” at the Art Institute after attending ballet class. She noted that her mother moved from Mississippi to Chicago, where she attended her first integrated school.

“There was a keen sense in my household that you had to be prepared for whatever was going to happen,” Ms. Joyner said. “You needed these literacies, and cultural literacy was one of them.”

Ms. Simpson, who also has family roots in Chicago, said she noted a “black Chicago thing” about Ms. Joyner’s outlook, which she defined as a forthright sense of humor, “a way of seeing the world.”

Ms. Joyner does take breaks from collecting. “I have slumber parties with my girlfriends, and that has included Lorna,” she said.

So far, she said she was pleased by the reception to “Four Generations,” and had only one fear: that it might be misunderstood.

“The danger of these projects is if people think it’s a politically laden, identity-laden exercise,” she said, in explaining that race is not the only lens through which to view art. “Those elements are there, but they are not the drivers. Good art is the driver.”

Loos, Ted, “ART & DESIGN: Righting Wrongs and Generating Attention for Art of the African Diaspora”, New York Times, October 16, 2016

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cura.

Kevin Beasley. Energy Accumulates

by Rose Bouthillier

(I)

I made my first visit to Kevin Beasley's studio in the spring of 2013. It was really flush inside, full with things being undone and made together. He cradled one in his hands, something like a rubber bladder coated in aqua gunk with dozens of straws poking out: a head, a stone, a seed. I saw foam, feathers, epoxy, underlay; materials clustered, burst, stretched, connected, and frayed. Clothing is ubiquitous in his work, fibers that accrue secretions, folds, and stains: another layer. An acute sensitivity to things – their structures and molecules, how they fit in your hands, and lodge in your brain – was palpable.

Beasley's concern for objects correlates with his interest in sound. He is drawn to both for their somatic immediacy (((*thud*))), their ability to act as conduits for embodied feeling, individual and collective. Some early, important work took shape on his family's farm in Virginia, a place thick with personal history. Through a series of private performances and soundings, he explored land and shelter, embedding objects with microphones to catch frequencies and generations. These sounds continue to reverberate in Beasley's more recent work, emitted by speakers in new sculptural forms. He likens this relay to the children's game of telephone, phrases whispered and caught in distorted fragments: "there are traces and remnants of its sonic deliverance, the way it came out. Even though something is lost, there's a totally different kind of articulation, through all of these little bodies." Loosen. Scrape. Reconstitute.

Informed by these early experiments, Beasley has developed a series of responsive in situ sound works. Recordings gathered on location are processed, altered, and mixed with other samples and effects in complex, multi-channel scores. Performing live, Beasley attunes each composition to the architecture and environment that it emanated from. Immersive and enveloping, the sound transforms: senses are heightened, space seems to expand and contract, and moments are condensed. The effect could be likened to bas-relief: information, inverted and superimposed, creates another dimension.

(II)

When we started speaking about potential sites for a new sound piece in Cleveland, Beasley and I kept circling around the Cozad-Bates house, an empty, derelict mansion that sits across the street and down the block from the Museum of Contemporary Art. Built in 1853 by a prominent abolitionist family, it stands still, loaded and anachronistic in the midst of a rapidly changing neighborhood. Beasley was wary of the site as a relic, weighed down by historical narratives: "its greatest potential is as an active generator of thoughts, ideas and experiences. So how do we consider the history of a site and contextualize it in a way that

Untitled (Just watch), 2015 (opposite page) Strange Fruit (Pair 2), 2015 (detail) Courtesy: the artist (p. 114) Courtesy: the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York. Photo: Jean Vong (p. 115) Performance view, Movement I: DEF/ACHE/CRYSTALLINE/SLEEVE, May 16, 2014, Whitney Biennial 2014 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (March 7 – May 25, 2014) Courtesy: the artist and The Whitney Museum of American Art, New York Photo: Paula Court (p. 113)

Untitled (stack) 2015 (opposite page) Black rocker, 2015 (pp. 118–119) Courtesy: the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York Photo: Jean Vong
Kevin Beasley's studio (detail), 2016 (pp. 122–123) Courtesy: the artist

also becomes a part of its history, or rather, where we are aware of the shape and form of that history we are creating?"

On site visits he spent hours in the house with recording equipment, listening, shifting weight, picking up low lows – rumblings, echoes. He roamed the surrounding streets, observing daily rhythms and rituals, overhearing conversations, attending to the background. The resulting composition, *And in My Dream I Was Rolling on the Floor* (2014), developed in four parts corresponding to sunrise, high noon, sunset, and night. These intervals provided entirely different tones and temperatures to soak in, emphasizing the durational aspects of the work. As dawn broke on the day of the performance, people filtered into the house, wandering sleepy eyed through the open, rough rooms. One section of the piece consisted entirely of birdsong, filling the space and growing louder with the light, making the brick walls seem diaphanous. From room to room the eight-channel composition was split and woven; as you wandered the tone of it shifted, you felt it differently. A match lighting. Air being sucked out of a room. Dropping. Seeping. The clattering rhythm of train tracks. Haunting, stretched out chords of a church organ. Footsteps. A child describing his dream.

Moments in the composition felt very clear; others much more complicated, dense, and layered with samples and synths into waves of sound, a morphing script of atmosphere. There was aloneness and oneness; sound felt so deeply in my body that I felt like a conductor, shaken. Afterwards, re-wired, different things felt possible. That is it, the most essential thing, the work moving outwards and through things and shifting what it touches. "Sound has the ability to be located and to come from somewhere very specific, but then descend into this abstraction and you can't describe why you're into it. Certain chord changes in music just make people cry. It's powerful in a way that we realize we need in order to survive."

(III)

A little over a year later, I took the overnight bus to New York for *An Evening with Kevin Beasley* (2015) at the Guggenheim. Entering the familiar lobby to take a seat on the floor, I noticed deep, fizzy sounds filling the air, hovering in the chatter of the assembling crowd. Above, Beasley's performance had already begun; he was activating his sculptures *Strange Fruit (Pair 1)* and *(Pair 2)* (2015), setting the subliminal tone, prepping eardrums. These call-and-response pieces were made to gather and transmit sound and touch to one another; contact and voice microphones protrude from roughed up Air Jordans, coated in slick globs of epoxy and expandable foam, dangling in clusters of speakers, rope, and wire. They look alien, made for some vital transfusion or scavenged energy system. ("I have ideas for a few works that in some way would serve as useable objects in a state of emergency…").

They spoke to one another across the void, in a building of organic forms (the ramp a nautilus-shell, the galleries divided like the membranes of citrus fruit). Beasley descended, caught in glimpses, and eventually took his place in the center of the crowd, surrounded by an array of turntables, modifiers, and computers. The sounds he mixed with were recorded by the sculptures over the course of the exhibition, incidental and intentional, a remembrance of their own display. Like us, they sleep at night.

For Beasley, the decision to *hang* these pieces was loaded: "sculpture is sculpture because of its relationship to the body. And hanging a body in American culture has a history, it's very violent, it's very deep." Bright, neon chords secure these tangled masses to the ceiling with a noose knot, one of the strongest you can tie. This tether is not an apparatus, but fully integrated with the work; instead of pulling down they reach up, secure. Beasley likens their palette (crimson and purple) to grapes or plums, evoking Abel Meeropol's poem *Strange Fruit*: "Blood on the leaves and blood at the root."

These are complicated objects: violent yet generative, fragile yet rough, branded yet singular. Most importantly, they are *live*. Inviting contact, speech, noise, they draw on the insides (guts/gutting/guttural). The sounds are hard to hear, hard to distinguish by listening, better felt in the body. "I've been thinking a lot about absorption… what happens when you're just not being heard, or that type of utterance doesn't reach the other side of the room. Or, it reaches the other side of the room but it doesn't carry. It's too fragile to even bear the weight of something. Because that is a condition that I think is happening… What it means for a body to absorb something, what it means to be in a room that you are being absorbed in, how do you then feel in that condition?"

(IV)

In the fall of 2015 I returned to New York for Beasley's *Untitled Stanzas: Staff/Un/Site* (2015), on the High Line Rail Yards, the northernmost and least developed part of the park. On arrival I was immediately struck by the openness, so much *air*, a bubble of relative stillness surrounded by motion: buildings going up, traffic under foot, cruise ships in the Hudson. There's no interior here, no walls for sound to bounce off of, no containers for vision. Focusing on the sounds Beasley pushed out through the speakers lining the path was difficult; it was hard to distinguish composition from background, the unintended, blending and mimicry. This openness invites in murmurs, conversations, and movements – "That porosity was necessary for exchange. Like thinking about the pours of your body being necessary to release heat, release sweat."
Beasley performed the work on three consecutive nights, in different breezes, under different clouds. Microphones interspersed with the speakers recorded sounds to be incorporated the next evening, a subtle accretion. Over the course

of the performances, I experienced disorienting drifts between micro and macro. Losing myself in a rhythmic, fuzzy trance watching a bee caress a blossom, imagining waves crashing into their cells; snapping back to large chaotic sounds, everything suddenly and unbelievably vast. In one particular moment of alignment a helicopter flew overhead and Beasley responded in real time, creating "this deep immersive, recorded, generated, and live and real helicopted sonic space that literally was just bleeding into the air." This volume, this cutting, seems to drag forward, pressurizing the instant as it passes, and then fades.

On the High Line, melancholy mingled with the transience, underscored by the inevitable change that hung in the air. There is something markedly inorganic about this cultivated wilderness, a hyper-commoditized space, packaged with a philosophy of idleness and beauty. But the bodies still breath. The sun always sets.

(V)

These performances feel like chapters, responding to each other as they do to their own moments, spaces, and conditions. They induce a sense of privacy within the collective in the same way Beasley finds remove for himself, casting attention elsewhere, even from the center of a crowd. But he is never far; there is a clear sense of things moving through him (mind, heart, hands). The fluidity of these episodes makes them hard to hold on to; I continue to have intense flashbacks, triggered by sounds that put me in two (or more) places at once; little scratches and breaks in temporal order. I'm struck by a profound awareness of continuum. Even while constructing an in-the-moment experience, the work introduces the past, stretches backwards, and it extends the other way too, on and on. And you recognize your body, your frequency, in the midst of it. Consonance and dissonance, and "Maybe you're in a dream. The dream, depending on the moment you're experiencing it in, it has a very clear and precise narrative, it's really articulated, it's very real, and it feels like a real space, something that you're familiar with in some way, but maybe, then it isn't."

Bouthillier, Rose, "Kevin Beasley. Energy Accumulates", Cura, No. 22, Summer, Pg 118 - 125, 2016

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The Renaissance Society

at The University of Chicago

Apr 24-Jun 26, 2016
BETWEEN THE TICKS OF THE WATCH
Kevin Beasley, Peter Downsbrough, Goutam Ghosh, Falke Pisano, Martha Wilson

What we understand to be true is continually honed by the dialectic between skepticism and certainty. Doubt can be an essential epistemological method for identifying new avenues of inquiry, opening space for the germination of novel forms and concepts. At the same time, doubt also eats away at the foundation of understanding itself, calling into question the very possibility of knowledge.

Between the Ticks of the Watch presents a platform for considering doubt as both a state of mind and pragmatic tool. Rather than defining the concept, the exhibition traces how uncertainty manifests itself. In different ways, the artworks presented and accompanying program of talks and screenings offer glimpses of how the condition of doubt permeates questions of scientific verification, identity, construction of language, and broader philosophical concerns.

Kevin Beasley presents a new installation featuring objects comprised of gas masks and megaphones: these hybrids are poised both to defend against and to facilitate expressions of power. Here, they lay on the floor, ready to be activated in situations of conflict.

Peter Downsbrough's works are marked by an investigation into the spatial possibilities of language and the linguistic possibilities of space. His spare installations use lines to structure and divide and treat words as objects which are frequently split, mirrored, or otherwise manipulated.

The collaged drawings of Goutam Ghosh appear to have been paused mid-execution; often structured by an underlying grid, the remaining empty space lingers uncertainly between inception and completion.

The value in mathematics (language), a recent video by Falke Pisano, centers on a conversation between the artist and two ethnomathematicians as they discuss how qualitative interpretations can undermine what are otherwise considered to be objective truths.

With a biting playfulness, Martha Wilson combines photography and text to stage acts of self-questioning, using her own shifting appearance to explore the fluidity of identity and its representations.

This exhibition is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and Harper Court Arts Council.

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ARTFORUM

Chicago

“Between the Ticks of the Watch”

THE RENAISSANCE SOCIETY
5811 South Ellis Avenue, Cobb Hall, 4th floor
April 24–June 26

View of “Between the Ticks of the Watch,” 2016.

Curated by Solveig Øvstebø, “Between the Ticks of the Watch” explores fault lines within conventional thought through the work of Kevin Beasley, Peter Downsbrough, Goutam Ghosh, Falke Pisano, and Martha Wilson. In Posturing, 1973/2008, one among a suite of self-portrait photographs on display here, Wilson traces her transformation from a woman to a man to man in drag. Text beneath the image reads: “Theoretically, the uninitiated audience sees only half of this process, from ‘male’ into ‘female.’” Downsbrough’s architectural intervention And as There, 2016, includes one thin pole hanging from the ceiling. By its base on the floor, “AND” is printed in vinyl letters in all caps, and the adjacent windows are inscribed with “AS” and “THERE,” printed backward. As though intended for an outside audience, “THERE” imposes the relativity of one’s linguistic position. Ghosh’s abstract paintings hang unstretched and furling on the wall and are composed alternately of delicate geometric lines that delineate the picture plane and earth-toned, curvilinear marks that read like incomplete notes from unrecognizable computations. In Beasley’s sculptural installation Your Face Is/Is Not Enough, 2016, gas masks embellished with feathers, cheetah prints, umbrellas, and baseball hats rest on microphone stands beside similarly adorned megaphones. Activated by performers during the opening, the objects seem to await further inhabitation; they invite resistance through the co-optation of police-issue riot gear. Finally, Pisano’s film The Value in Mathematics (Language), 2015, investigates the relationship between philosophy, religion, democracy, and geometry. The restrained intersections of these works puncture underlying assumptions about how accessible space, place, and logic might be.

— *Caroline Picard*

Picard, Caroline, “Critic’s Picks: Between the Ticks of the Watch”, Artforum (online), May 26, 2016

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artnet news

PEOPLE

10 Black Artists to Celebrate in 2016

By Rain Embuscado
February 13, 2016

Kevin Beasley, Untitled Stanzas: Staff/Un/Site (2015), Photo: Courtesy of the artist.

5. Kevin Beasley

Arguably best-remembered for his big-league debut at the Whitney Museum's 2014 Biennial, American artist Kevin Beasley has recently taken his industrial-inspired sound works out of the white box and onto the stage. Last fall, Beasley hosted "Untitled Stanzas: Staff/Un/Site," a hybrid performance-piece sound installation that saw him layering audio recordings over a two-day period on New York's Chelsea High Line.

Earlier this year, the artist joined a group exhibition at the historic White Columns Gallery in New York. The eponymous "10th Anniversary White Columns Annual" includes veterans Rainer Ganahl, Nancy Shaver and 22 others and runs through February 20. According to the Casey Kaplan Gallery, who represents Beasley, the artist is also looking forward to another major group exhibition at the Modern Art Oxford in London opening April 15th, alongside Yoko Ono, David Maljkovic, and Njideka Akunyili Crosby among others.

Embuscado, Rain, “10 Black Artists to Celebrate in 2016”, Artnet News (online), February 13, 2016

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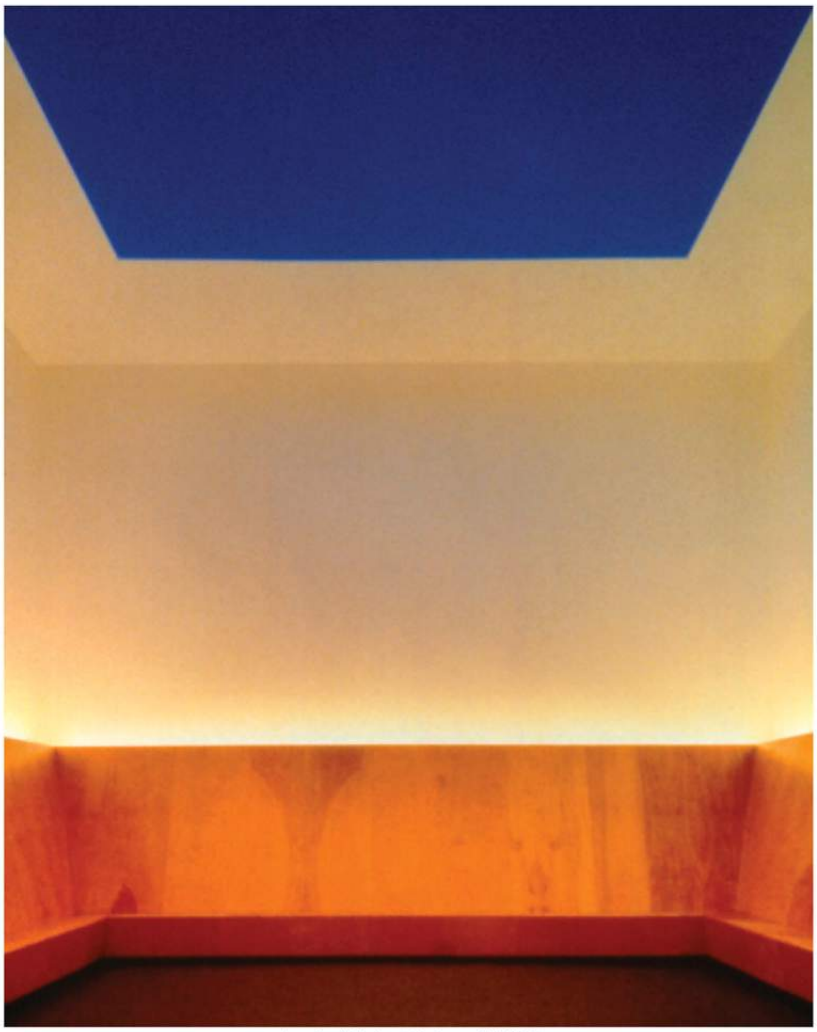


James Turrell. *Meeting*. 1986. Courtesy MoMA PS1

THE ART OF CURATION

WITHOUT ALANNA HEISS, DOZENS OF NEW YORK ARTISTS WORKING THROUGH IDEAS OF PRETENSION AND PERCEPTION WOULD NOT HAVE FOUND THEIR ULTIMATE ARENA. HERE'S HOW THE MOMA PS1 FOUNDER CHANGED WHAT A MUSEUM PEDESTAL LOOKS LIKE

PHOTOGRAPHY MICHAEL AVEDON

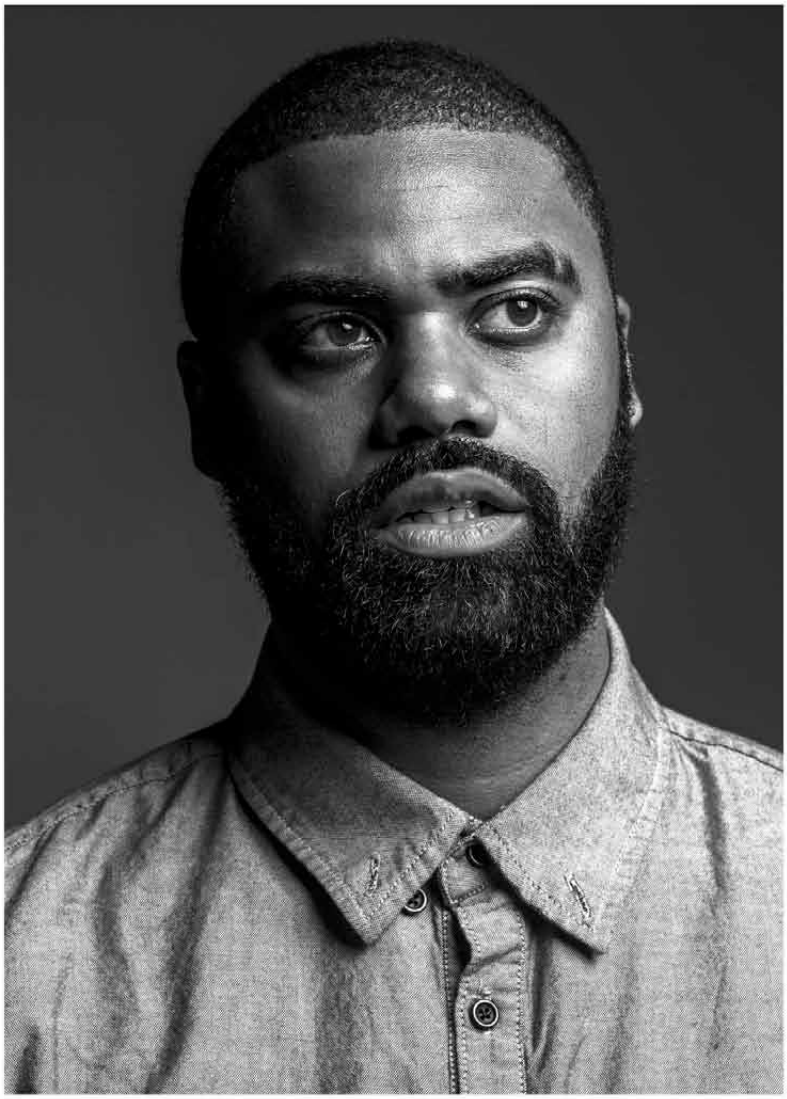
HEISS AND BIESENBACH CAN SPOT A BURGEONING ART STAR FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE. HERE, FOUR OF THEIR PICKS FROM THE NEXT GENERATION OF VISUAL ARTISTS DESCRIBE WHAT THE FUTURE LOOKS LIKE

Kevin Beasley. *Untitled (...just watch).* 2015. Nautica rain jacket, resin.

KEVIN BEASLEY

"It is within repose – an O.G. classic fold, as he walks, becomes a chamber – a reflection of sentiment, reverberating empty at 17."

KEVIN BEASLEY WEARS SHIRT HIS OWN



Battaglia, Andy, "The Art of Curation", V Magazine, Issue V99, Spring, 2016, Pg. 54-59

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OBSERVER

8 Things to Do in New York's Art World Before September 25

By Paul Laster | September 21, 2015

Kevin Beasley, *BEATEN-FACE/TOMS/ARMS, TIES, & LEG/FLOOR/BODY/BASS*, 2014. Photo by Nicole Gurney. (Photo: Courtesy the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York)

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 22

Performance: "Kevin Beasley: Untitled Stanzas: Staff/Un/Site" at The High Line

Sculptor and sound artist Kevin Beasley performs a new sound piece that he composed using entirely sounds recorded around the High Line—from chirping crickets to construction noise and traffic—over the course of the past few months. Come back on Wednesday and Thursday nights and you'll hear the experimental artist's previous night's performances layered on top of that evening's piece.

The High Line, West 30 Street & 12th Avenue, New York, 6 p.m.

Laster, Paul, "8 Things to Do in New York's Art World Before September 25", Observer (online), September 21, 2015

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Kevin Beasley
Untitled Stanzas: Staff/Un/Site

Tuesday, September 22, 2015
Wednesday, September 23, 2015
Thursday, September 24, 2015

Performance at 6:00 PM

High Line at the Rail Yards
On the High Line at West 30th Street and 12th Avenue

Free Admission |
Open To All Ages |
No RSVP Required

Image: Kevin Beasley, BEATEN-FACE/TOMS/ARMS, TIES, & LEG/FLOOR/BODY/BASS, 2014
Photo by Nicole Gurney. Courtesy the artist and Casey Kaplan, New Yorrk

Kevin Beasley creates densely layered sculptures and sound-based performances that form immersive tactile experiences. With microphones embedded in cast plaster objects dragged across the gallery floor, or arranged in fleets to capture the sound of the artist's movement, Beasley emphasizes the physical nature of sound, both in the mechanical waves by which sound travels, and in the insistence of one's presence in the creation and experience of noise. The artist focuses on the personal memories we each bring to our experiences in both his performances and his sculptures, embedding them with objects and sounds imbued with personal experience. Beasley's 2012 sound performance at MoMA featured the artist in the museum's central atrium processing the voices of deceased rappers into cacophonous wails that shook the walls of the museum itself.

For the High Line, the artist will install and play a new sound composition at the 12th Avenue Overlook, on the High Line at West 30th Street and 12th Avenue. Over the few months leading up to the performance, Beasley traversed the High Line, recording sounds from around the park – from crickets chirping in the thicket at West 21st Street, to the evolving sound of various construction sites, to the meandering traffic on the West Side Highway. Beasley took greatest interest in the convergence of sounds at the rail yards, due to the wide open soundscape enabled by the lack of skyscrapers. In an attempt to engage one of the few remaining open-air pockets in Manhattan, the artist will amplify, accentuate, and process these recordings. Furthermore, each performance will be recorded and layered on top of the next, creating a changing, open-ended composition. Beasley says he imagines the work's title as a score, each performance as a stanza, and the site as the medium or notes that fill the score.

Kevin Beasley (b. 1985, United States) lives and works in New York. Beasley's performances have been featured at Casey Kaplan, New York (2015); Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland (2014); The Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2014); Queens Museum of Art, New York (2014); and The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2012). Notable group exhibitions include Cut to Swipe, The Museum of Modern Art, New York (2014); Rockaway!, MoMA PS1, Rockaway Beach, New York (2014); and Material Histories, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York (2014). Beasley's work has been featured in major biennials and group exhibitions including the Whitney Biennial (2014) and the 2013 Queens International, Queens Museum, New York (2013).

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August 26, 2015

GUGGENHEIM

Artist Kevin Beasley on Installing His Work at the Guggenheim

BY KATHERINE BRINSON

In 2014, the Guggenheim's Young Collectors Council—an acquisitions committee that focuses on collecting the work of emerging artists—commissioned American artist Kevin Beasley to create a new artwork for the museum's permanent collection. The resulting sculpture, Strange Fruit (Pair 1) (2015), along with a companion piece, Strange Fruit (Pair 2) (2015), is currently on view in Storylines: Contemporary Art at the Guggenheim, an exhibition that explores diverse approaches to narrative in contemporary practice. Following is my conversation with Beasley about the process of creating these works for the Guggenheim's rotunda.

Katherine Brinson: The sculptures on view in Storylines grew out of a body of work initiated in 2014 with projects for the Studio Museum in Harlem and the Whitney Biennial, in which you created objects that register their sonic surroundings. How did the intense architectural specificity of the Frank Lloyd Wright rotunda shape your thinking for the commission?

Kevin Beasley: So the rotunda really presents a problem for controlling audio, especially when one is importing recorded sound taken from other spaces or trying to articulate a series of gestures that one composed in a different context. I knew from the beginning that these approaches would be working against the space if I really wanted to engage with the architecture, its use, and iconic aesthetic. There really is nothing like the Wright rotunda in the world and I wanted to acknowledge the nuance of that. I also have a deep interest in context and how one can consider the problems and circumstances that arise within a particular space, so the progression of the elevation, the widening and tightening of the bays and walkways, really presented an organic foundation for experience. The space is a reservoir for everything fluid, so I really had to allow the materiality and spatial exchanges of whatever I was going to make to also carry this fluidity.

Brinson: The works themselves are inherently fluid; they're these charismatic sculptural forms, but at the same time they function as instruments to be played, and are also archives of a sort that build a portrait of the museum. Have you been surprised by the way they index the space?

Beasley: When making the works I was deeply curious about how they can function not just within the space, but with people as the active ingredient. I think the form and materials provoke a curiosity in people that will always have various results and

nuanced responses. This wasn't as much of a surprise as being able to bear witness to something unfolding. I couldn't predict what would happen with the sculptures and how people would engage with them, but I do always look forward to what I can't anticipate. I think, in this way, the indexing of the space is an ongoing process, and what has happened thus far has been a testament to the architecture, the crowds of people, and the current installation.

Brinson: It's funny—it's as if the museum collected the work, but really it's the work that's collecting the museum! This show explores the notion that familiar objects and materials can be potent narrative vessels through embedded cultural and personal resonances. Could you discuss the valences of the found objects used in Strange Fruit?

Beasley: This is definitely a can-opening question, so I'll try to keep it concise. The shoes are really the foundation of the work and actually the point of contact and synthesis for me. Although there are many other components that are facilitating the sounds and the forms one is experiencing, the shoes deal with context and some social questions I'm dealing with on a daily basis: the question of communication and how shoes on a power line operate as language through some kind of localized coded gesture. It's not just the presence of the sneakers, but how they are arranged, altered, and their form—their elevation. For me there is a lot of complication in how Jordan-brand shoes not only impact young black youth, but also how they point to an ill aspect of our economy and society—one that everyone in this country is accountable for. As much as our conscious actions perpetuate a continued violence, a widening of the gap between classes, and an infinite racism, our ignorance is doing just as much damage. So I find it necessary to speak through these materials and issues in a way that invites some kind of generative action in a different direction. You know, harmonizing is a lot harder than it sounds! So when two people harmonize together, it takes a collective commitment and execution of something while also taking the risk of having others hear you search for the harmony. It's about dealing with vulnerability head on. I personally define a critical facet of sculpture as its relationship to the body, and because of this I never liked seeing sculpture hanging from the ceiling—it always pertains to an act of violence, given the history of lynching in America. So I felt the need to deal with it directly and experience what generative quality it may possess—if one is so compelled to engage—or if any at all.

Brinson: All your sculptures have a distinct corporeality, which I think radiates from both the familiarity of their materials and the way they've clearly been shaped by your physical process, but the submerged imagery of violence you describe makes these works especially disarming—they're seductive and troubling at the same time. It's interesting that you raise the image of two people harmonizing, as you've periodically interacted with the sculptures while they've been on view, inviting collaborators to activate them in a kind of duet across the ramps. Could you describe what was going on during those unannounced sessions?

Beasley: So, those sessions have been really casual. The sculptures have contact microphones embedded in them, so we've been touching them a lot and making these mantra-like sounds. Normally I don't prepare the artists I invite for interacting with the works because it's important to have a lot of play. So we're stepping into it blind. There's a lot of discovery and there are several misses that ultimately guide an experience one cannot stage or compose. There's a lot of improvising, but not for the sake of performance—rather, for discovery, which is very exciting for me. It puts something back into the act of engaging, where as a performer you can have a public moment that attempts to demystify the process of making, and, ultimately, the institutional parameters. In this way, people would come up to us while we were playing the sculptures, either waiting for their turn to engage or to ask a question about the artist, or "what is it?" These interruptions are really a part of the experience within a museum that is all about levels of engagement and ultimately having some kind of conversation. There's already a lot of curiosity, so when we are playing the works, people gravitate to them. It's very disarming in this way because the visitors are caught off guard and we as artists are also bearing witness to people's reactions.

Brinson: Yes, it was fascinating to see those very direct responses from our visitors unfold. And the performance you staged on the evening of June 26 drew on both live and recorded sounds . . .

Beasley: For the live event on the rotunda floor, part of the performance took place without most people knowing it. I was upstairs with the sculptures, engaging with them, but they were connected to the PA system on the rotunda floor, so people heard it but just didn't have a visual. In some way, I think it worked on people's subconscious to tune their ears to the space, because it has very specific acoustic characteristics. The descent down the ramp was also something I wanted to do because it's the only architecture of its kind and probably the only place I could reveal a performance in this way. It felt necessary to really engage with the architecture in as many ways as I could; from the recordings I took of the museum and previous interactions with the sculptures, to the way these were played back and manipulated live with bodies fully immersed.

Brinson: Although the rotunda is cavernous, the audience was rapt throughout, and it was somehow a very intimate experience, in part because you were performing on the floor and we were seated at the same level. Was that deliberate?

Beasley: It was definitely deliberate to create some intimacy because it requests one's full attention. It's like being the only one hearing someone speak—the intimacy allows for eye contact and maybe the ideas sink in a little deeper.

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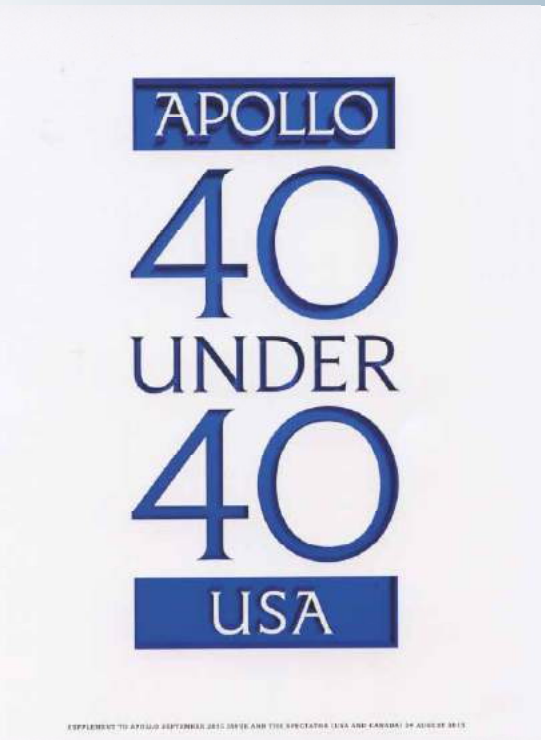

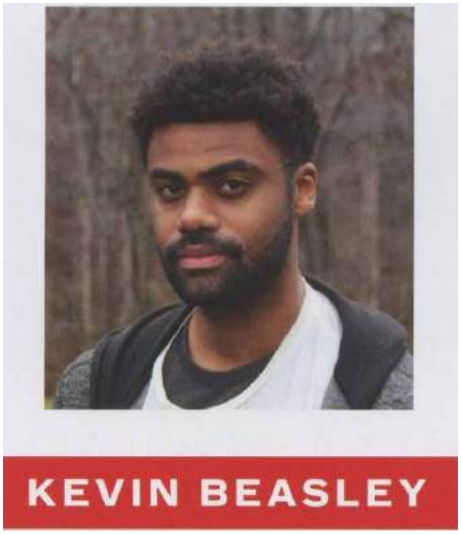

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NEW YORK

‘Sound is just as physical, tactile and experiential as any other material,’ Virginia-born Kevin Beasley told an interviewer in 2012. When confronted with his work, its hard to disagree: Beasley incorporates music, unexpected sonic trickery and incidental noise into his ‘sound sculptures’- such as a Steinway piano with embedded microphones, which produces eerie percussive noises when played. His floor-based sculptures make use of found objects, pressed into resin and polyurethane foam as it hardens - a focus on process that has also been key to his performances at museums, including the Dallas Museum of Art and the Guggenheim in New York.

“The Artists: Apollo 40 Under 40, USA”Apollo, September 2015, pg. 15

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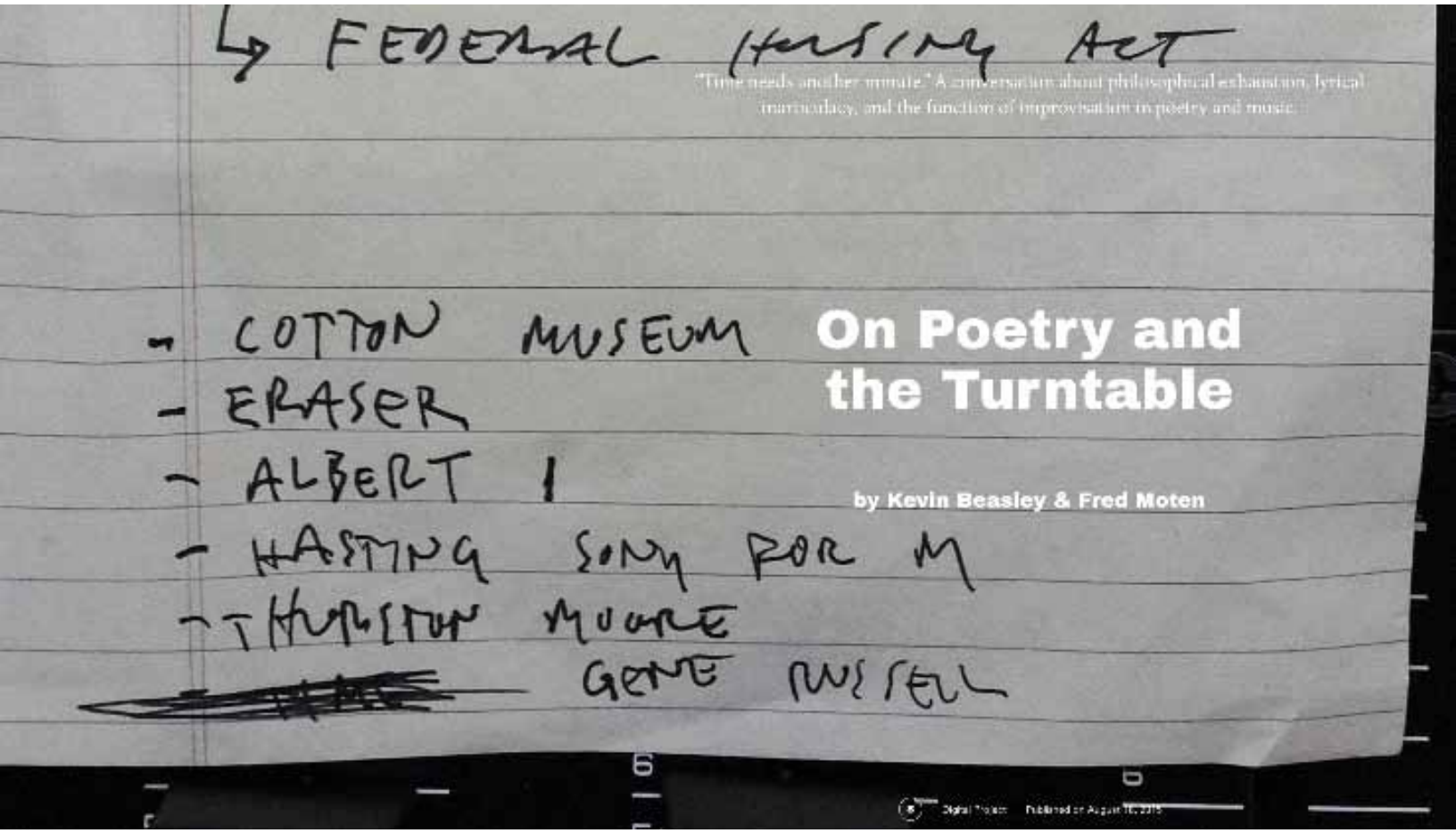

FRED MOTEN Tonight we're going to talk about value and improvisation in music, but we're also going to sound it out. We'll think about it while we hear and feel it. We're hoping that you will join us; perhaps we'll figure out some new ways to think about value, and also to think about that which is invaluable—which seems like a good thing to talk about in a museum.

KEVIN BEASLEY One of the first emails I sent to you, Fred, linked to a video of a producer and DJ from Detroit, Theo Parrish, talking about the value of vinyl. He talks about the physicality of the record, how it works as a medium, what kind of information is embedded in the grooves, and how people react and respond to vinyl. He considers his decision to collect and DJ vinyl as a way of embracing artistry over convenience.1 This video made me think about what it means, now, to produce sound in such a physical format. I wanted to create a collection of sounds and music that contains a certain kind of value.

One track is from a compilation representing a style of music and dance called footwork, which originated in Chicago in the 1990s. You can compare it to B-boys and B-girls battling, except footwork has also occasioned the creation of a distinct genre of music. Teenagers produce beats inspired by a group of dancers; those dancers are in constant motion, their arms and legs are moving maniacally. Footwork has evolved into a separate subculture and, for a lot of young kids, an alternative to being out on the street. The kids meet at abandoned storefronts or at someone's house: The dancers keep telling the DJ to play the music faster, faster, and the intensity ramps up. Producers started taking samples of tracks and speeding them up, then bringing them back to these battles. The value of that experience inheres in the music.

I'm also including some jazz made in Detroit in the mid-'70s. In the early 1960s, the city of Detroit began an urban-renewal campaign, primarily to make way for I-375 and I-75, the Chrysler Freeway. One of the neighborhoods destroyed in the process was Black Bottom, a center of culture and commerce for black residents. A lot of jazz venues were lost, as well as dentist offices, grocery stores, pharmacies, and other businesses that served the black community. Many of them were concentrated on Hastings Street. One track on this collection is from a record called Hastings Street Jazz Experience, made by Detroit Jazz Composers Ltd. in 1976. I'm using a lot of jazz from that area, that time.

What I like about that James Brown track, "Papa's Got a Brand New Bag Part Two," is that even though it's an instrumental, there's no way for Brown not to be on the track. He is one of the instruments. Even without singing, Brown is trying to communicate the soul embedded in the funk of the instrumental groove by giving it everything he has—beyond his singing voice. In Eddie Murphy Delirious, released in 1983, Murphy talks about James Brown. He says: "When James Brown said, 'Hey!' he wrote that down. That was a lyric!" Brown's utterances and breathing have a certain mass, a certain weight, and they become definitive, iconic. I can only describe those vocalizations as invaluable.

The following track is by a DJ and producer called Actress. He mines a lot of nuances vocally, emulating the atmosphere of a location, the texture of a space, and the subtle sounds and condition of a body moving through particular environments, especially in the album Ghettoville. On one track, "Street Corp.," which I didn't play, he talks about the correlation between the corporation and the street. He talks about giving money to homeless people in order to keep the street going. It's difficult for me to expound on what's happening sonically in the mix, and on the context, but this makes me think about the relationship between minimalism and dispossession. Minimalist works come under fire for being "lacking" in some way—empty, or cold. And then when artists come from a place of dispossession, I also see the question "What makes this valuable?" being lobbed at their work. Although they exist on different planes, minimalism being a highly valued aesthetic form, the value of both these kinds of work is ultimately determined by perception. They're both affected by the same kind of forces.

One of the last tracks was by a DJ named Big Strick, from Detroit. You hear stories about these black men and what they experienced growing up; you hear them unpack it from a personal, familial perspective. actually of these guys having a conversation about being called a nigger, a particular experience that is close to home for all of them. I don't have those same kinds of stories. I didn't grow up where they grew up, or during the same decades. I have dealt with overt racism before, but my childhood circumstances were different from these guys in Detroit. But when I hear these stories pressed onto vinyl, embedded within a track, I can recognize a correlation: Oh, that's something my uncle or aunt would say. Listening to this music in a club is really strange: The record places so much weight on how you move and how you think. What is the value of these stories being channeled from the vinyl into your body? Listening to the track while sitting in this intimate room with you all opens it up to more focused listening and potentially imagining ourselves in the positions of the people whosevoices we hear on the track.

BILL CORBETT There's a lot here, to these seventy-year-old ears, that connects to the world I've inhabited. Charles Olson once said that writing poetry, for him, was like dancing sitting down. In the context of this museum, it is inevitable that we think of Robert Rauschenberg's Canyon. In the early '50s, when Rauschenberg was living downtown, he impulsively picked things up from the street. A friend who lived in the Carnegie Apartments called him and said, "There's a stuffed eagle here!" Rauschenberg knew right away that he wanted the eagle, so he brought it home. Now, in Canyon, the eagle is adjacent to a pillow and words taken from political posters of the time; these provide a context. We can connect this to John Cage. You said something about James Brown's "Hey!" There's a vast language that we never write down: "hm," "unh." These words aren't in the dictionary, so they're often thought to be disposable. Like Rauschenberg, you're working with all of the things that are thought to be dispos

able. A poet like Clark Coolidge, who has some of the greatest ears of my generation (and who is also a jazz musician), writes poems that are built out of the particular qualities of words, of syntax.2 Ashbery does much the same in his poem "Europe."3

COMMENTER 1 Fred, when you were reading your poem, you said something about "meaning as accent," which to me really relates to Kevin's set. How does this "accent" stand in relation to meaning? Meaning as accent to what?

MOTEN I was thinking about James Brown's screams and grunts. Not only are these not dictionary words, but from a conventional linguistics point of view these sounds have no meaning—which is to say they have no value. But rather than say, in response, "No, they do have value!" I'd say, "You're right: They're invaluable." These sounds do not accumulate. But they do have features, which turn out to infect or inflect the words that do have meaning, that do have value. In other words, these sounds are unmistakably, irreducibly uttered, right? When we utter the word, we infuse it with precisely the breath, soul, or anima of that invaluable thing Brown is constantly distilling for us in his vocal performances—we do that when we give our words in, and as, sound. Imbuing the word with sound can grant it a rhythmic feel. The accent: maybe not "accent to" but "accent on," you know? You build something, in a way, that is analogous to what Bill said about Clark Coolidge's use of language. When my kids build structures in Minecraft, their freedom has to do with a lack of concern with adhering to some preconceived sense of the value of what they're doing.

COMMENTER 1 One of the phrases in Fred's poem that stood out to me described words as "not … concertized"; they "resist concertization." And yet this is precisely a concertized situation! We are sitting quietly, watching you perform.

MOTEN You should have all been drinking!

CLAIRE BISHOP We felt obliged to sit down and be quiet as you were performing, but the impulse to move was huge. This must have been a very conscious decision on your part. And yet it seems very ironic in a series organized by a choreographer. What do you think is gained and what is lost in this concertized situation?

BEASLEY When you listen, you often feel the impulse to move; that's what the music incites. But what happens when you can't move? What do you think about? Consider the Big Strick track: The dance rhythm is a form of resistance to the Detroit auto factories and repetitive working-class jobs that drove the city's economy and politics. Juan Atkins, Derrick May, and Kevin Saunderson began making techno music as a way to find the human spirit within the machine, as a kind of escape from the gridlock of industry. I'm curious about the space between the rhythm track and the vocal samples—the space we reside in as listeners who can't dance to the rhythm or ignore it to simply contemplate the meaning of the words. To sit down and listen, to resist the impulse to move, can open up a new possibility for listening and understanding more of where the artist is coming from. Maybe you've heard some of these tracks, maybe not. Maybe you've heard the Gene Russell version of Coltrane's "My Favorite Things," which was released by Black Jazz, the label Russell started in the early '70s. Russell said the label "represented a new and fresh alternative to traditional jazz, embodying the spirit of the black urban awakening of the civil rights period." That kind of deliberation is fundamental to jazz, but I feel like it's rare to sit down and absorb this aspect of the music, such that it informs the way you move to the music.

ADRIENNE EDWARDS I was thinking about exhaustion in relation to your work—stemming from repetition, a sense of duration—and about footwork, the demand to play the music faster and faster, the question of how long a dancer can last. James Brown's utterance—"Hey!"—exists within a black vernacular, which also has to do with exhaustion.

BEASLEY I'm constantly trying to exhaust something, or get to the point of trying to exhaust something—and that is exhausting. To be able to consider and to be sensitive to all of these things is very athletic. Many of the musicians whose work I was playing push themselves to a point of no return. Think of Sly getting high until he's totally gone, in another world, where he can create this funky madness. The first line of "Time" is "Time needs another minute." That's an exhausting thought.

RALPH LEMON To me this has to do with a certain kind of cultural or psychic inebriation. When I was researching blues in the South I discovered how important it was to be literally drunk as well as figuratively drunk on those specific sonic forms. When you played Sly, Kevin, I immediately remembered being sixteen or seventeen, and how important it was to be really high when listening to his music. We were in my friend's basement, we were all smoking pot, and it was perfect. I felt like the music was also on pot—it's Sly music, so of course it is. But I felt like we were somehow, culturally, in on the same joke. I wasn't thinking about race; it was really just a matter of sharing the inebriation. Of course it was black music, and my friends and I were black, and we were in a basement, and we were smoking pot, so I feel like we were communicating on a different level. That communication is very much a part of all the music you were playing. Fred, what do you think?

MOTEN One of Deleuze's last essays is called "The Exhausted," or that's how it's translated—the French title is "L'épuisé." It's about Beckett's television plays. Deleuze makes this distinction between being exhausted and merely being tired. To be tired is to still operate within a system determined by the opposition between the possible and the impossible, but to be exhausted is to no longer be able to imagine the possible, or to operate within its protocols or even its negation.4 I think about this in relation to a culturally specific question of value. Listen to Jesse Jackson's mantra: "I am somebody." What I think he's trying to articulate and assert is a certain possibility, one that emerges out of the experience of being devalued. His refrain suggests another: "I must be respected, I must be protected." This implies that we have been conceived as not valuable and so have been not protected, not respected.

It's similar to the musician who is saying, "Our thing is not a concertized thing." They didn't respect our music; they didn't value our music: They saw so little value in our music that they would drink over it.

But then I think of the great Mingus album Charles Mingus Presents Charles Mingus, in which he basicallysimulates a club environment. Mingus hated the sound of drinks tinkling when he played. He wanted a pristine sonic space that wouldn't be interrupted by the kind of behavior that devalued the music. But he also wanted the feeling of the club! So on the album he actually announces the songs as if he's at a club. That social situation, marked by disrespect, turns out to be a condition of the music that Mingus wants to play.

Maybe exhaustion has to do with a system structured by the distinction between people who have value and people who don't; a system in which not to have value is tantamount to having been assigned a price. I have no value; they bought me. This particular system of devaluation, which operates by way of the ascription of value, ought to be exhausted. We're exhausted by it. And that means we don't simply turn around and say, "I am valued; I have value." The music is always trying to figure out some other way of responding to this situation; the music doesn't establish itself in relation to a preconceived idea of what constitutes value. And Mingus's music does this in concert, or in a kind of subconcert, the underground concert of the club, a social space that blurs the distinction between performer and audience, where the music is neither exalted by the prevailing valuations that correspond to being concertized in the normative way nor ashamed of its radicalization of the concert.

The music is always exploring what it is to be invaluable, to exceed the given structure of value. Obviously there's a social insurgency that accompanies that exhaustion, that desire to exhaust the system and make something else.

BRENT EDWARDS Kevin, who was the musician in the interview you played, who was talking about playing in clubs and recording for Impulse?

BEASLEY That was Albert Ayler.

EDWARDS I thought it was Ayler. Playing that interview gave us a sense of the self-reflexivity—what George Lewis calls "extramusicality"—that's intrinsic to, or that underlies, the music: an awareness of the complex dialectic between concertizing and clubbing. Mingus says: I don't like the glasses clinking; I don't like the commercialization of music. And yet what he's saying is: I've recorded enough; I've let myself be circulated so much that I can withdraw myself from circulation; I made these records so that I could earn enough money to not play in clubs. That awareness is part of the fabric of the music. I felt like you were staging a relationship between Ayler's remarkable articulacy and what wasn't said, between how Ayler positions himself and the musical fabric—the role of what the poet Nathaniel Mackey calls the "telling inarticulacy" of James Brown's grunts and of Sly's falsetto, which go beyond language but nevertheless say something.

BEASLEY There's an Ayler box set, Holy Ghost, which has a series of interviews with a Japanese producer. I'm interested in why a lot of black jazz musicians, especially those who played free jazz, were more prominent in Europe and Japan than in the US. In one of the interviews, Ayler, who lived in Paris for a long time, says, "I haven't played in New York! And I'm not gonna play in New York!" This has to do with the venues where he was able to play, the available contexts for his music. Ayler also talks about his performances being "pure energy," whereas Coltrane waxes really smooth. Maybe Ayler was just isolated, or maybe he couldn't locate venues that would let him express himself as openly and freely as possible. In this selection of music there are many variants of that
situation, which Ayler articulates in a really poignant way.

COMMENTER 2 That could have been called, and may at another time have been called, a poem. Eliot began to write "The Waste Land" when the telephone was being invented and there were suddenly disembodied voices traveling great distances. Not for nothing is Ayler's record called Holy Ghost: Ayler is a ghost but he is present, calling forth such an extraordinary variety of sounds. To me, the music is like poetry or collage.

MOTEN I have a question for everybody. In the past few days I've been feeling utterly convinced that the university is dead or dying. I love the university, insofar as it has exposed me to things I wouldn't otherwise have encountered, but now I feel like the

university is collapsing under the weight of its own accumulation. Do people feel similarly about the museum? Or is MoMA going to last forever?

KATHY HALBREICH No way.

LEMON Why not, Kathy?

HALBREICH Nothing lasts forever. This institution will die like other institutions do.

LEMON What does it mean that MoMA will "die"?

HALBREICH I came back once from Rome and I said to Glenn [Lowry, MoMA's director], "What are we making now that will last as long as those things from a more ancient time?" But in fact, I don't actually think there's great value in something lasting forever.

MOTEN What I'm trying to ask is: Can an institution like MoMA bear the weight of its own value?

HALBREICH Sometimes it's crushed by that weight.

COMMENTER 3 Fred went to the same school as Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Emerson had the same concerns in the 1830s. Rather than rely on great books, he thought we should mine our own experiences, write our own sentences. I think we all feel like collapsing under the weight of what we've accumulated as we get older: This is not about institutions; this is about who we are as people.

MOTEN It's hard for me to believe that Emerson could have ever felt as sure that he was right as I feel that I am right. I don't say this out of despair; I just mean to preface a practical question, which Emerson also asked: If you had a particular experience at a university, which feels unlikely to be possible in the future, how do you smuggle that experience into the world so that it continues to develop? I'm not so much despairing as asking a question about making plans.

COMMENTER 3 Look at what you just did! Additionally, you're publishing essays and writing poetry.

MOTEN Maybe there's another way to ask this question: The museum is designed to hold what we consider to be invaluable, but it operates by assigning a value to these things. Can this contradiction be sustained? Then again, this contradiction has to do with the emergence of conceptual art. On the one hand, how does a museum become a place for performance? On the other, doesn't performance begin to produce a way of thinking about art that exceeds what museums can do? But, you know, we're here, even if we're just visitors.

COMMENTER 4 Kevin, what you were playing, my background contextualized what you were playing, and what I resonated to, and then there was stuff I had no idea about but I was resonating to it because you were. And then the same thing with Fred, but it seems like you're talking about value as if it's something like, well, you talked about exhaustion, and that makes me think of duration. Can I be of the same duration? Isn't there value that, no matter how much of something there is, it isn't any less valuable?

COMMENTER 5 Does value only exist within a context?

MOTEN I'm interested in making a claim for what is
invaluable, which is different from criticizing the way in which someone is, within a certain context, determined not to have value. Part of what black studies means for me is dealing with a paradox: You're talking about people who are also commodities. The very way in which you are conceived of as having no value is precisely that you have been assigned a value. Literally a price. That paradox is something I feel like I want and need to work through.

I mean, we were listening to Black Flag before this started. That song "No Values." So [Ron Reyes] is screaming, "Got no values, nothing to say." I guess maybe I was trying to think about value by way of that punk thing. I keep getting hoodwinked into being on Facebook—it's not my fault, I have "friends," you know?—and there's a certain way of thinking and talking about things, and a certain way of talking about, for example, Trayvon Martin and Jordan Davis according to a general formulation that the lives of young black males are devalued. And that's the first axiom of a certain kind of analysis. I think that analysis is faulty. I think the problem is the valuation of black life. I think the problem is that we operate within a system of valuation, that we put prices on things. I don't mean to say that the price of black lives isn't low, but if and when that price were raised—for me, the valuation would still be the problem.

My wife and I were sitting in bed and talking about Lucy Lippard and the dematerialization of the art object—we have that kind of relationship. It struck me that conceptualism took that which we conceive of as invaluable, namely the making of art, and detached it from the objects in which the invaluable congeals as value. You can link this to the kind of minimalism that Michael Fried tried to scandalize by designating as "literalism": Fried talks about the experience of seeing or of being in the presence of one of Tony Smith's cube sculptures as if he were being "mugged" by it; he talks about Smith's cubes as if they were Trayvon Martin and he were George Zimmerman—Fried didn't have a gun, but he had a typewriter, and he wrote "Art and Objecthood" to kill that shit, basically. But he couldn't kill it! Fried's beef with the cube was precisely that it was anthropomorphic, that it stood in relation to him as if it were another body, but precisely in such a way that it could never be mistaken for another body, another self. He didn't want to be confronted with what Denise Ferreira da Silva would call this no-body; when he looks at a work of art he wants to see himself, through or in some "other," but the insistent, literal presence of this nonsubjective, countersubjective, subsubjective thing ruptures the discreteness that allows us to talk about selves and others, and the operations of valuation and accumulation that brutally attend them, in the first place. It was as if in that cube Fried caught a glimpse of the end of man, not so much as Derrida or Foucault more or less ambivalently imagines, but rather as Sylvia Wynter urgently demands.5 My point is that this interplay between conceptualism and minimalism has to do with the emergence of performance art in which animated flesh—in its activity, in the improvisational instant—marks the work, the labor of artists. Think of Adrian Piper's proposed performance A Slave to Art, which would have entailed selling herself to the museum director and collector Pontus Hultén.6 For a minute, people were interested in making artworks that were basically exhausted by this system of buying and selling, and which allow us to imagine ourselves outside of that system.

Art makes it possible to ask this question. You could say the question is impractical, childish, or naive, but I still want to ask it: How might we organize ourselves outside of the system of buying and selling?

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IN FOCUS

Kevin Beasley

Sculpture, field recordings and the ghosts of dead rappers

—

by Andy Battaglia

Seated at a piano, Kevin Beasley is, first and foremost, sculpture: shoulders hunched and heaving, body contorted and controlled. In performance, surrounded by sound, he's a picture of muscular stillness, even when he moves. His sound is sculpture, too: less music and more form. In a gallery, it serves an extra-musical use, filling space as much as the objects on the floor or the walls. This was clearly in evidence at Beasley's first New York solo show this spring at Casey Kaplan (newly relocated from Chelsea to the Flower District in Manhattan). Beasley filled the gallery with music-making equipment and works made with resin cast in the shapes of satellite dishes and clothing bins. It was a motley mix, suggestive of remnants of a lived-in scene with a story to tell.

Beasley's work is too performative and raw to be classed as part of the often-clinical sphere of sound art but, equally, he is too immersed in sound to rank as a sculptor in a merely physical realm. This makes the work all the more promising. Beasley's biggest public breakthrough came in 2012 at The Museum of Modern Art in New York, where he played with sounds from deceased 1990s-era rappers, like a sort of incantatory DJ conjuring the dead. Presented as an addendum to 'Some Sweet Day', a dance programme in MoMA's imposing atrium, the performance piece *I Want My Spot Back* – titled in reference to a line from a track by The Notorious B.I.G. – consisted of Beasley kneeling on the floor with turntables and working his way through a cappella tracks processed into a miasma of ghostly abstraction. The sound was distended and slow, mournful in its introspection but shot through with a sense of menace, suggesting sound recordings as haunted communiqués from the other side.

I Want My Spot Back originated in the sculpture department at Yale University School of Art, which Beasley attended as a graduate student after college in Detroit. He originally enrolled for automotive design at Detroit but, troubled by listening to lectures on planned obsolescence in a setting as blighted and broken as the Motor City, he switched to art. At Yale, a lifetime of playing and communing with music found its way into his art, in part by way of appreciation for the simultaneously high- and low-tech creation stories of homespun sounds such as Detroit techno. After *I Want My Spot Back*, Beasley made … *for this moment, this moment is yours* … (2013), a sound piece comprising a reel-to-reel tape machine and more than 2,000 hours of recordings collected from family and friends. Following that, he continued his performance work with *And in My Dream I Was Rolling on the Floor* (2014), a work comprising four pieces (each composed for specific times of day), which was sited in the empty Cozad-Bates House, across the street from the Museum of Contemporary Art in Cleveland. Designated as a landmark but otherwise abandoned and ignored, this pre-Civil War property – once the home of a prominent abolitionist – served as a hiding place for escaped slaves as part of the Underground Railroad (a network of secret routes and safe houses for slaves attempting to escape to free states). The sounds Beasley presented here were primarily field recordings from the area surrounding the site, including happenstance organ sounds from a nearby church.

At the heart of Beasley's solo show at Casey Kaplan was an upright Steinway piano (manufactured in the late 1800s near where the artist lives and works in New York) and a large soundboard with an array of speakers attached (*Movement IV*, 2015). The piano was internally fitted with minutely sensitive contact microphones, each attached to a pair of keys and fed into the soundboard through 44 separate channels. The sound was big, murky and resonant, with layer upon layer of reverb. Around the space were satellite-dish forms whose cast-resin shells included

1

1
Untitled (stack), 2015, polyurethane foam, resin, soil, house dresses, T-shirts, studio debris, soil, 121 × 68 × 50 cm

2
Movement IV, 2015, Steinway piano, mixing console, effects processors, DI-boxes, speakers, cables, 226 × 106 × 40 cm

3
BEATEN-FACE/TOMS/ ARMS, TIES, & LEG/FLOOR/ BODY/BASS, 2014, documentation of performance at New Forms Festival, Vancouver

All images courtesy the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York

2

discarded clothes: house dresses of a kind that Beasley's grandmother wore, T-shirts and the artist's own old Air Jordan jacket. While serving as reminders of home, the dishes also worked as acoustic mirrors, reflecting the sound of the space back in on itself. Most of the time, the Steinway sat expectantly, humming with suggestive static while waiting for gallery-goers to sit down and tickle its keys. At other times, it was played in performance by Beasley himself, with sound taking its place as a form of sculpture that, although invisible, was still voluminous enough to fill the room.

Andy Battaglia is a writer based in New York, USA. His work has appeared in The Wall Street Journal, The Paris Review *and* The National, *among others.*

Kevin Beasley is an artist based in New York, USA. His first solo exhibition at Casey Kaplan, New York, was held earlier this year. His work will also be included in the exhibition series 'Night (1947–2015)' at The Glass House, New Canaan, which runs until 30 November, and in 'Storylines: Contemporary Art from the Guggenheim', at the Guggenheim Museum, New York, from 5 June to 9 September.

Beasley's work is too performative and raw to class as sound art but, equally, he is too immersed in sound to rank as a sculptor in a merely physical realm.

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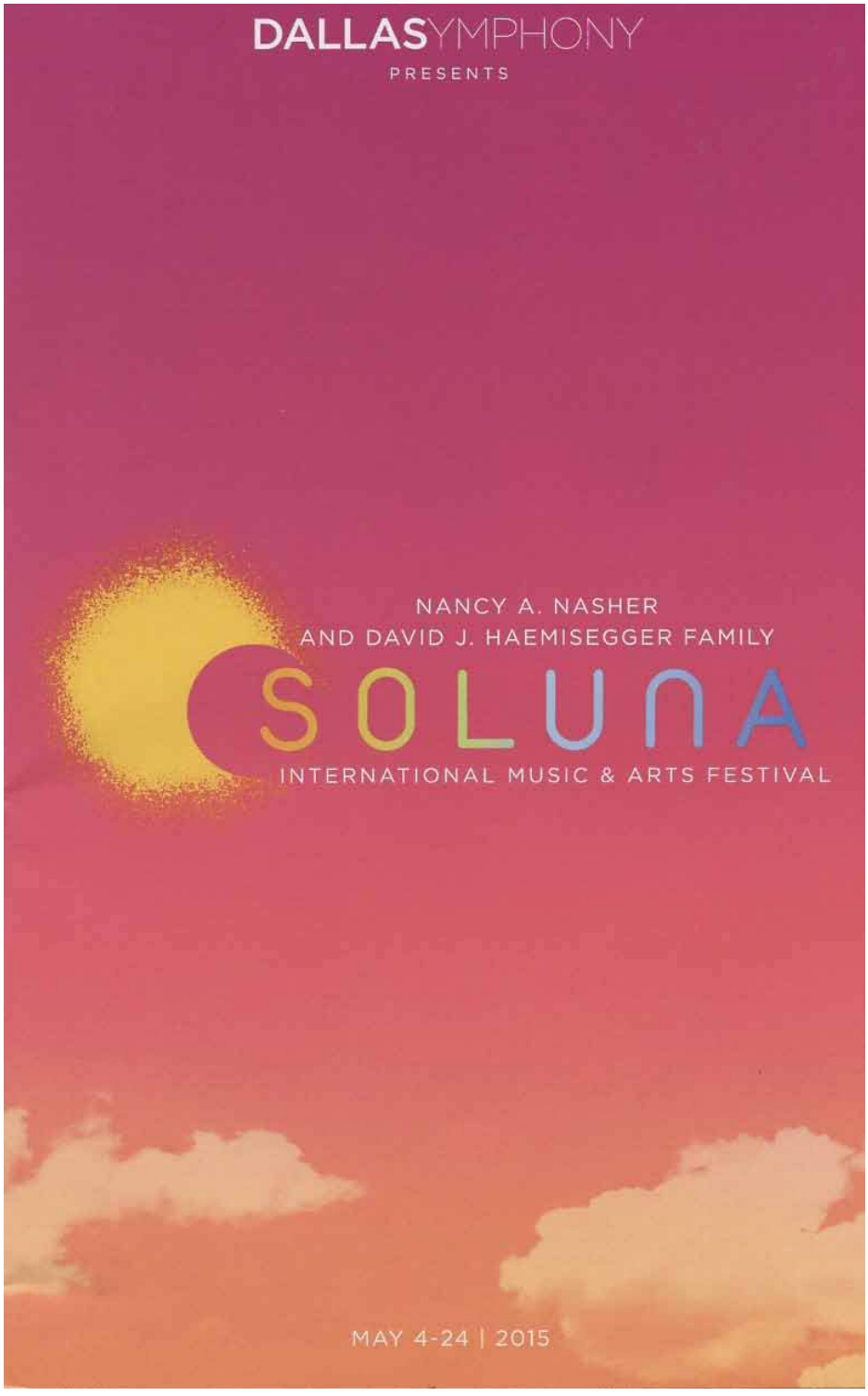

DMA LATE NIGHTS
KEVIN BEASLEY: BLACK ROCKER
KEVIN BEASLEY

ATRIUM, DALLAS MUSEUM OF ART
May 15, 2015, 6pm-12am
His newly commissioned performance installation emphasizes the physicality of sound and explores the journey to American-ness through a culture dependent upon notions of blackness.

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Forbes

Soluna Bridges The Gap Between Classical Music And Contemporary Culture

It's around 7 p.m. on a Friday and the Dallas Museum of Art is about to experience the busiest May ever of its Late Nights, where it's open until midnight every third Friday of each month. It wasn't due to a blockbuster exhibition by a blue-chip artist like James Turrell, or because of a historical draw akin to the hit the Treasures of Tutankhamen, nor was it because of the wonder of a fashion exhibition that celebrated a late designer, like Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty did for the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. The attraction that night was an interactive performance-based installation by the 30-year-old New York-based artist Kevin Beasley.

Beasley executed the installation, titled "Black Rocker," in between a Dale Chihuly sculpture of giant Murano glass flowers that hang on the museum's café window and an enormous painting by Robert Rauschenberg that hung behind him. Beasley acted like a ringmaster, controlling sounds on a black rocker, while participants sat on pads equipped with microphones that were wrapped in colorful fabric. They could do whatever they wanted — pound on them like drums or drop them. Beasley also had the ability to control the sounds through a series of mute switches on the control panel. "I'm noticeably putting myself in a position of power, but also I'm relinquishing that power," said the artist.

Kevin Beasley's Black Rocker

The performance was part of the inaugural Soluna, a three-week long festival in Dallas, Texas that seeks to introduce different audiences to new art forms — classical music enthusiasts have the opportunity to take in contemporary art while watching like through the Pipilotti Rist, or young indie music fans can hear the Dallas Symphony Orchestra while watching the homegrown singer St. Vincent perform.

For the last four decades, the Dallas Arts District was a billion-dollar work in progress, with starchitect-designed cultural institutions popping up every few years like the I.M. Pei-designed Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center, which was completed in 1989, and the Renzo Piano-designed Nasher Sculpture Center, which opened in 2003, along with a number of others. The Arts District was finally completed in 2012, but the city discovered that there were a number of hurdles ahead, like how to attract visitors from Dallas's underprivileged communities, and how to get classical music and dance enthusiasts into the art museums, and vice versa. Each building kept attracting the same audience — until the three-week Soluna International Arts & Music Festival. ""I thought we have this incredible arts district here," said Anna-Sophia van Zweden, one of the co-founders of Soluna. "It would be such a waste not to collaborate with the other institutions."

"And a huge investment — the city has spent a billion-and-a-half dollars on this Arts District, and until this festival, there really hasn't been a recurring sandbox for all of us to play together in," added Jonathan Martin, president and CEO of the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. "We're all here geographically, but we had all been politely doing our own thing."

"I've watched almost a 30 percent decline in the percentage of Americans consuming what symphonies produce since 1982," said Martin, who also noted that the average age of a Dallas Symphony Orchestra audience member is 58. "What are we going to do about that?"

Binlot, Ann, "Soluna Bridges the Gap Between Classical Music and Contemporary Culture", Forbes (online), June 9, 2015.

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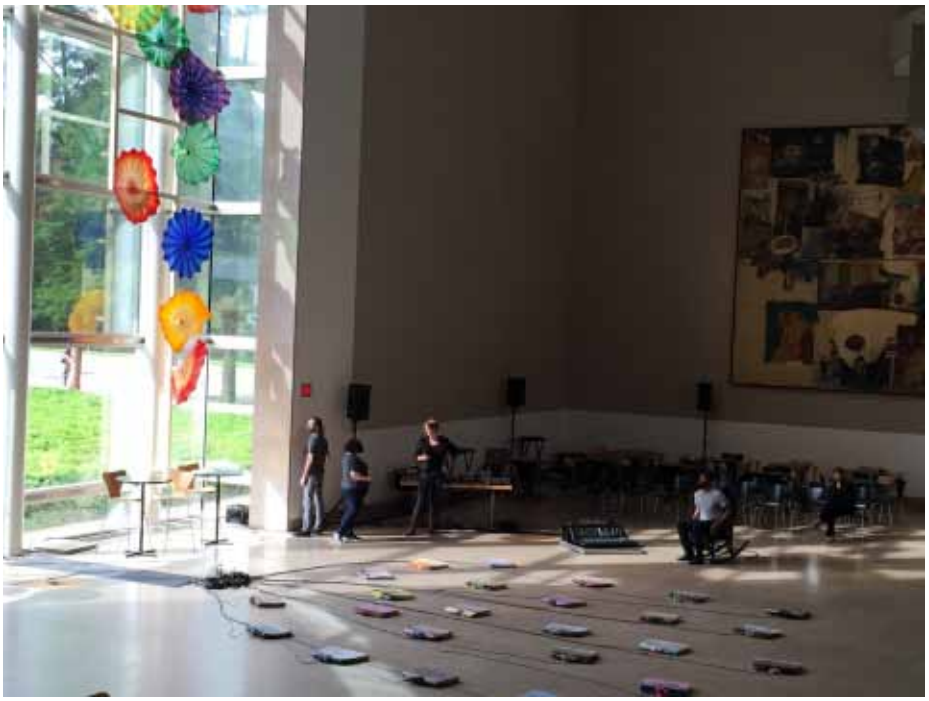
TJ

An Artistic Mold of Contemplation

New York-based artist Kevin Beasley will have site-specific, one night exhibition and performance at the Dallas Museum of Art's Late Night that pushes the boundaries on invitation and engagement in art.
by Linda Smith
published Friday, May 15, 2015



Kevin Beasley preparing for his performance installation Black Rocker at Dallas Museum of Art
Photo: Kimberly Daniell

Dallas — Kevin Beasley's original tools in any work are his hands. He fully embraces the physicality of the sculpting process, but takes it further by incorporating sound as well. At previous exhibitions, he has blasted early '90s rap that has shaken whole museums, immersing everyone in his work, or worked with sound to record patrons. All his work is site-specific, and the same is true for Black Rocker, his one-day performance and exhibition for the Dallas Museum of Art in the Friday Late Nights, 6 p.m.-midnight, as part of the Dallas Symphony's Soluna Festival.

With Black Rocker, Beasley has created comfortable seat cushions out of polyurethane foam, outfitted them with African-themed fabrics from a Harlem store, and connected the seats, which will lie directly on the floor. At the front and facing the seats will be the titular object, a black rocking chair meant to stir up images of contemplation. As far as the sound portion, there will be microphones on the floor, picking up the sound from patrons sitting on the

cushions. Adjustments, clapping, and other changes will be picked up and amplified, making a recording of the intrusive and perhaps even discomforting experience.

Photo: Kimberly Daniell
Kevin Beasley preparing for his performance installation Black Rocker at Dallas Museum of Art

Beasley used resin and polyurethane foam extensively in this piece, but in other works has incorporated shoes and objects that have a daily impact on us.

"Thinking about how those materials can be morphed, how they can be shaped, how we can also use them and think about them in terms of recontextualizing our understanding of other things like clothes or residue marks that are made on a daily basis," Beasley said at his artist talk Thursday night at the Dallas Museum of Art. "They're really messy, and I like that a lot, I like dealing with messy things."

His use of sound transforms his physical installations by adding a layer of unexpectedness and static spontaneity to his exhibitions. Since his days working on his Master's at Yale, he has DJed, and he regularly uses turntables and speakers extensively for this, both in the studio and in exhibitions.

"Turntables are pivotal for me in terms of really translating our thinking on the close relationship to sound as a physical thing and then its atmospheric quality," Beasley said.

The site-specificity of each exhibition is seriously considered by Beasley. For his performance in the atrium of the DMA at the Late Night, he took into account the "different set of questions and concerns in that context."

"At the Late Night, everyone is kind of chilling out, sitting, so I was thinking, 'How do I approach this question of participation and engagement?' which is an ongoing question for me, where I'm thinking a lot about, 'Where's the line?'" Beasley asked. "Mainly, if you're present in a room and something is taking place that you're witnessing, at what moment are you no longer a spectator, and does it require a physical gesture? What kind of physical gesture? And within that, can you be a participant with something by also usurping and disseminating your experience of a later date?"

These thoughts led him to what DMA Hoffman Family Senior Curator of Contemporary Art Gavin Delahunty and Beasley called Beasley's most ambitious project yet, and the pivotal role engagement will play in it.

"What if there was a work that prompted this sort of engagement, where your actions have implications and can actually change the way the person next to you in experiencing the space and the work?" Beasley said.

And in a museum, where it is often taboo to touch artwork, why allow visitors to actually sit on the floor cushions and contribute in that way?

"To have some kind of exchange," Beasley said. "I think when anyone walks into a room, your presence has implications and there's consequences to them. How subtle it is is really the difference, but I think there's a possibility for you, or someone who is present, to have more control over what that is, and then maybe that could make one aware of their own actions."

Delahunty posited that "we listen to obtain information, and we listen to understand, we listen for enjoyment, and we listen to learn." For Beasley, the learning aspect is key to the experience.

“When I’m listening, I have this deep interest in observing and understanding,” Beasley said. “It goes back to the way that I’m approaching my art practice. To listen to something is to really understand the context that I’m in, or to glean as much from what I am experiencing.”

Beasley hopes that audiences are just as present as possible, not necessarily passive nor active in the exhibit, so that they may gain the full experience.

“There is something I’m accumulating here, but maybe now is not the time to unpack everything,” Beasley said. “There are a lot of reactions and responses, and I think ideally what I would want in terms of listening is to just be aware of the context, and that the listening that you’re doing is much more than your ears. It’s about the position of your body, and recognizing the space that you’re in, and that in that moment, there is an experience of one particular kind.”

Delahunty remarked that “we’ve been attacking the original, decomposing the original, and it’s about the triumph of the copy,” as we send out information into the world. Beasley agreed with that, but saw those bits of info as holding significant cultural and historical reference, while also presenting it in a completely different way.

“You have this experience of memory, like a trigger where you recognize what that is and then you have this experience of listening to that anew,” Beasley said.

Beasley’s exhibition has made a statement in the art world, and Delahunty called it “very contemporaneous” of him.

“There are artists like you who are making art that punctures this notion of value and of control, and it’s about an emancipation of the institution, breaking it down and probing it in an interesting way,” Delahunty said. “You’ve thrown down a very particular gauntlet in the institution.”

Smith, Linda, “An Artistic Mold of Contemplation”, Theater Jones (online), May 15, 2015.

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DALLAS Observer

Artist Kevin Beasley Talks 'Black Rocker,' His One-Night-Only Sound Installation Debuting at the DMA

By Jonathan Patrick, May 15 2015 at 9:48 AM

Renowned multi-medium artist Kevin Beasley's CV reads like a solid career's worth of exhibitions and achievements, complete with an exemplary eduction as its foundation. Except, Beasley's only been at this thing for roughly nine years. His future is exceedingly bright, and gaping. This evening Beasley will debut a new, site-specific work entitled Black Rocker. This interactive sound performance piece, commissioned by the Dallas Museum of Art, and part of Dallas' inaugural arts and music festival SOLUNA, centers on the physicality of sound and its nuanced acoustical relationship with(in) space and time, underpinned, too, by an examination and celebration of "Blackness" in America. The Black Rocker installation will be activated between 6 pm and midnight in the DMA's atrium. In anticipation of this evening's debut, we sat down with Beasley to gain some insight on this exciting new commission.

What can audiences expect with Black Rocker?
I kind of framed the evening under this title Black Rocker, which comes from a premise to think about music, to think about sound, to think about "Blackness," in an abstract way. But also for me, which is kind of comical, whenever I'm making a work, or I'm addressing something that's sound-based, I'm always thinking about what's necessary--what's urgent. And what was urgent for me, at the time, was having this moment of reflection, to stop and think about the context I'm in. Like really basic existence. I'm curious what's generative about that, and how that's activated. So, for Black Rocker, the [DMA] space from 6 [p.m.] to midnight will be in this sort of contemplative state.

How would you say these concepts and aims tie in with the theme of Blackness that you mentioned?
When I think about Blackness, I think of aesthetics and I also think about stereotypes. The stereotypes are in some way something we all understand and gravitate towards. I'm not interested in stereotypes because they leave out things that are very essential to an experience of a human being. So, it's taking Blackness as a premise and understanding what it is to be just a person in the world. Blackness is very amorphous. It can be something that we haven't experienced before. In how it evolves and how these different thoughts and notions of what is Blackness can be redefined. What's essential is that the experience being created is one that connects to people.

Is Black Rocker somewhat occasioned by the current racial issues facing America--the idea of a police-state, the rampant prejudices we're witnessing, etc?
It's kind of present. It's always there. I'm really conscious of the way we speak around these things. I'm also hesitant to make declarative statements because there's always a lot of complexity to how one instance turns into the other. For this work, it's a space for me to think about a lot of these things--to raise more questions, to
further develop a language around it that maybe just about having an experience of something and saying "OK, maybe I have a better perspective of what can be called or defined as Blackness, because here's a black artist making this kind of work." Maybe that can set a precedent in some way. Like how Neil deGrasse Tyson talked about role models. He said that if he had looked for a role model of what he wanted to be he wouldn't have become an astrophysicist, because he didn't see any black astrophysicists. But by him becoming an astrophysicist and taking this path of a really intelligent black male, then he ends up becoming the example he wanted to find. So then being an astrophysicist also becomes part of Blackness.

What I'm trying to do is process: how do I approach this conversation?

What do you see as the aim, function, or purpose of your sound-art specifically, whether that be abstract or concrete?
I always feel like it's another way of me considering context. A lot of my work is about a curiosity of why I as an individual do things that I do, why do people react and respond the way that they do, and how those actions affect my surrounding. Sound is just another way that I know of to process the world. Part of it is that within the constant re-contextualizing of objects you gain some type of perspective about what something is, what its implications are. That recognition alone can generate an experience, the creation of a conversation. That's important to the work. That's why I share it.

For audiences who are unfamiliar with your work, how would you describe your sound-art or your art in general?
I think it's a very nuanced inquiry of our bodies and the way we use them, and the way we interact with the world. My curiosity with sound is another form that complicates what those answers could be. It raises more questions than it gives answers.

What do you see as the future directions that sound-art needs to explore and also retreat from?
From my perspective, what I have found to be the most generative is the contextualizing of these "moments," these performances, and the music itself. By which I mean the way they reach the public. There's something about being booked as a musician vs working with a venue or institution, and I think the approach in that can help facilitate the reception of whatever these sounds are. Changing the context [of the performance] changes everything.

For musicians, it's usually a standard stage, theater-style performance. And I think when musicians are performing in an art context, or a context that has yet to be labeled, that you find that the way the music is approached, the relationship to the audience, and the reception of that has some flexibility in terms of changing. Which I think really informs the music and how one performs and how their bodies are implicated. For example, Albert Ayler used to talk about why he would not perform at spots like The Village Vanguard--and that's a big, classic jazz spot. He said that there was something about that space that was not conducive to listening, but, instead, conducive to a social experience. Things like the clinking of glasses and the pouring of drinks were distractions to him.

Patrick, Jonathan, "Artist Kevin Beasley Talks 'Black Rocker,' His One-Night-Only Sound Installation Debuting at the DMA", Dallas Observer (online), May 15, 2015.

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David Joselit | Against Representation

In conversation with David Andrew Tasmam
Images courtesy Kevin Beasley

Kevin Beasley, …ain't it?, 2014, Hooded sweatshirt, resin, 21 x 37 x 2.5" / 53.3 x 94 x 6.4cm, photo: Jean Vong, Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York

During February and March of 2015, David Andrew Tasman met with David Joselit to discuss his recent essays, "Material Witness" and "The Art Effect," as well as the tragic death of Eric Garner, the limits of institutional critique, and art's capacities beyond representation.

David Andrew Tasman: In your recent essay in Artforum, "Material Witness," you articulate the outrage many of us have felt in light of ongoing U.S discrimination and police brutality, contextualizing recent events to reflect on visual politics. Is your recommendation to be "skeptical of the ideological promises of representation," in regards to the video of Eric Garner's murder, an indictment of image or format?

David Joselit: To assess the efficacy of an image requires a definition of what we mean by success. I've been dismayed by the claims for image effects that seem exorbitant while also missing what an image can actually do. In the case of the video showing Garner being assaulted, the fact that his choking was recorded but didn't lead to the outcome expected — namely, an indictment of the police officer involved — is an instance of the difference between what an image seems to show and what it can actually do. Art can occupy that space. What I define as a "format" in After Art is a strategy for activating the space between what an image shows and what an image does. Thinking about the real-world effects of images, including art images, results in two questions. Are images doing what you want them to do in a particular context? And, if they aren't, does their format become increasingly

relevant? The artwork almost always contains vestiges of what might be called the roots — or infrastructural extensions — of its entanglements in the world. These might include the means of production of the image, the human effort that brought it into being, its mode of circulation, the historical events that condition it, etc. The artwork's format solidifies and makes visible that connective tissue, reinforcing the idea that the work of art encompasses both an image and its extensions. The term format does not merely distinguish between digital vs. analog, as medium might do, but points to how an image is situated within a set of relations that condition how efficacious it may be. Formats attract attention and exercise power. The difference between format and medium lies largely in the heterogeneity of the components — aesthetics, data, history, the scene of an action — which is anathema to traditional concepts of medium. When Bruno Latour talks about assemblages, he is talking about linkages — not the abstract infinity of a network. It's difficult to quantify the limits of extension, for instance, one must think about what is folded into images as well as what extends out from them.

Kevin Beasley, Untitled (stack), 2015, Polyurethane foam, resin, soil, house dresses, t-shirts, studio debris, soil, 48 x 27 x 20" / 121.92 x 68.58 x 50.80cm, photo: Jean Vong, Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York

DAT: In your essay "Material Witness," as one strategy to increase the legibility of these extensions, you cite Eyal Weizmann and Anselm Franke's interest in Quintilian's concept of "the mediated speech of inanimate objects." Is this concept a critique of Bruno Latour's "Parliament of Things," or New Materialism and Post-humanism, in support of Vibrant Matter, Biopolitics, and Speculative Realism?

DJ: Well, these theories are complex, quite diverse and often contradictory in their positions. What I think they do share, however, is an effort to understand the agency of objects (politically, socially, materially), and a commitment to de-centering the importance of human perception in conceiving of the world. One of the important things I take away from this is that we need to change our habit of thinking that art objects stand for something else; that their primary function is to represent. Instead, these objects act in various ways, including provoking future events or effects. Representing is always retrospective: something has to pre-exist the art object in order to be re-presented. I think art's special capacity is, on the contrary, its futurity.

Kevin Beasley, Movement IV, 2015, Vintage Steinway piano, mixing console, effects processors, di-boxes, speakers, cables, 61 x 28 x 28" / 154.94 x 71.12 x 71.12cm, 30 x 20 x 14" / 76.20 x 50.80 x 35.56cm, 89 x 42 x 16" / 226.06 x 106.68 x 40.64cm, photo: Jean Vong, Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York

Kevin Beasley, Untitled, 2015, Polyurethane foam, resin, grey jeans, underwear, studio debris, 47 x 17 x 20"/ 119.38 x 43.180 x 50.80 cm, photo: Jean Vong, Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York

DAT: How might this paradigm shift inflect modes of cultural production or the politics of art? Is there a wish for these kinds of actions to spill over outside of the art context?

DJ: I've changed my opinion on that quite a bit over time. When art moves outside of its own context it loses some of the power that is sustained through its connection to art institutions. The desire to go outside that context is also an implicit statement that the art world isn't a place where power relations exist in a material way. In After Art, I argued that, while the art world in fact shouldn't be elided with the world of enterprise or politics, it is in fact a realm of enormous cultural and economic power. Paradoxically, it seems to me that standard Institutional Critique has all but drifted away from engaging with the terms of the actual institutions that support art right now — in part because such critique has found such a welcome place in museums and galleries. The most potent examples I can recall in recent years have interrogated the conditions of labor for art handlers, or for the builders of museums and universities in the Persian Gulf. I wonder if a more productive mode than Institutional Critique is what the DIS collective is doing — which is to mobilize a potentially new model instead of critiquing existing ones. That seems to me ultimately where the future lies.

Kevin Beasley, Untitled (Jumped Man), 2014. Whitney Biennial 2014, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, March 7- May 25, 2014. Collection of the artist. Photograph by Bill Orcutt.

DAT: The line between transparency and opacity may in fact be a gradient: on the one hand transparency seems to operate within a sort of journalistic critical method, while opacity potentially operates within a mobilized form of communication or action. You conclude "Material Witness" with some doubts that the forensic image will be able to speak, coupled with a sanguine reference to Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's concept of "the undercommons," described in their 2013 eponymous book on one occasion as a space where, "the aim is not to support the general antagonism but to experiment its informal capacity." What role can art have in, or learn from, the "undercommons"?

DJ: Since the rise of identity politics and its important achievements of the 1990s, and later through the writing of Jacques Rancière, there has been a strong association between visibility — or becoming visible — and political claims. Harney and Moten argue for the use-value of remaining outside of representation (and incidentally, so has Hito Steyerl in some of her recent works and writings). There are a lot of opaque spaces that art has the capacity to indicate and activate. Since right now almost

anything can be monetized or rendered as information, we are all harvested and profiled as information-capital. Occlusions and opacities might be a means of protecting oneself from such economic forms of alienability or alienation. I think your term gradient is very helpful in this regard. The gradient of consumability is a powerful differential at a moment where the primary goal of a neoliberal system is to make things easy to consume; I think that art can forestall or at least slow down such easy consumption.

DAT: In your recent piece, "Art Effects" for The Cairo Review you present flickers of optimism in your assurance that art may also "participate in the formation of civil society […] putting into form new spaces of public interaction." Do you see a similarity between the space described in Ariella Azoulay's "citizenry of photography" and Harney and Moten's "undercommons?"

DJ: Yes. I think that art has always been able to constitute spaces and publics that were not necessarily anticipated by its makers or commissioners — this is part of what I mean by art's futurity. I think that seeing images of Apartheid, for instance, made a huge difference in mobilizing opposition to that system outside of South Africa. South African photographers addressed not just their own communities through their work, but the world, and this allowed pressure to be exerted from outside. If we live more and more in images, images attain more and more new powers. The question is how to experiment with such power, how to learn to use it for something other than accumulating capital.

Kevin Beasley, Untitled (Focus Black Boy I), 2015, Resin, wood, t-shirts, television mount, 70 x 70 x 16″/ 177.8 x 177.8 x 40.64cm, photo: Jean Vong, Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York

Kevin Beasley, Untitled (Focus Black Boy II), 2015, Resin, wood, t-shirts, jordan jacket, television mount, 70 x 70 x 16"/ 177.8 x 177.8 x 40.64cm, photo: Jean Vong, Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York

David Joselit is a historian, critic, educator and former curator. Prior to joining The Graduate Center at the City University of New York as a Distinguished Professor, Joselit taught at Yale University in the Department of Art History for a decade, where from 2006 to 2009 he served as department Chair. A prolific and at times polarizing writer, he has authored and edited many books and essays including the widely read After Art, and "Painting Beside Itself." He is an editor at the journal October, and regular contributor to Artforum. Joselit received his Ph. D from Harvard University in 1995 and lives in New York with his longtime partner, Steve Incontro and their dog Joey.

Kevin Beasley is an artist working in multiple mediums including sculpture, performance, and photography. In the winter of 2015 he opened his first solo exhibition in New York at Casey Kaplan gallery. His work has recently been included in the permanent collections of The Museum of Modern Art, The Studio Museum in Harlem, and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. In 2014 he was included in the Whitney Biennale, and Cut to Swipe at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Beasley is also part of the collective All Gold whose members include artists, Golnaz Esmaili, Inva Cota and Stephen Decker. All Gold is currently the inaugural resident of the MoMA PS1 Print Shop.

Tasman, David Andrew, "David Joselit: Aganist Representation", dismagazine.com, May 2015.

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Kevin Beasley
February 26 - March 28
Opening: Thursday, February 26, 6-8pm

Casey Kaplan is pleased to announce an exhibition by Kevin Beasley (b. 1985, Lynchburg, VA), the gallery's first exhibition in its new location.

Central to Beasley's work is touch, though not just in the physical sense; his objects function as a register, both for his own engagement, and the histories of his materials. Items of clothing, shoes, studio debris, and others are filtered through Beasley's process of molding, cast and forced to assume the forms of others. Through this, they are broken and rebuilt, expanded in parts as they enact a duality, simultaneously occupying the space of what they were and what they have become. This extends across his work in sculpture, photography, sound and performance, in a strategy that is most akin to reverberation, shaped through an investigation of Beasley's own experiences, his family and home state of Virginia, as well as larger cultural implications, building new meanings and resonances throughout the works' individual transformations.

For his first solo exhibition in New York, Beasley will present an epic work titled ***Movement IV***, from an ongoing series of sound based sculptures, which create immersive environments when activated by a performer. While in previous works, Beasley has embedded microphones into his own sculptures before connecting them to sound equipment, ***Movement IV*** employs a vintage, upright Steinway Piano. Manufactured in the late 1800s in Astoria near where Beasley lives and works, it immediately implies the familiarity of its former domestic setting, broken by the presence of a large soundboard. Beasley, alongside a piano restorer, placed contact microphones inside each individual key before linking them to their own soundboard channel. What results is a hybrid that maintains the instrument's logic while expanding on its vernacular. It picks up on the player's movements that would normally go unheard, a linger on a key, or the hand's movement across, all the while being open to the manipulation of the soundboard, which acts in tandem with the performer. Throughout the duration of the exhibition, the public, performers invited by Beasley, as well as Beasley himself, will create a new history of interactions with the century-old instrument.

Hung on the gallery walls are large-scale acoustic mirrors cast in satellite dishes six feet in diameter, which work to mold sound through their own objecthood. These works at once appear otherworldly, while simultaneously displaying traces of their origins plainly through their transparent skins. The loud, vivid patterns of house dresses, similar to those worn by Beasley's grandmother, reveal themselves through pigmented resin, as do the silhouettes of Beasley's own t-shirts and Air Jordan jacket, the logo clearly visible beneath the sculpture's shell. Combining these histories, the sculptures, functioning similarly to the object from which they are cast, refract and shape the sounds of the exhibition space, both those of ***Movement IV***, as well as the sounds of the exhibition viewers. Refocused into a single echo only tangible upon further inspection, these works force the viewer to wrestle with what is presented and what disappears, and to define themselves not only physically, but also through what they carry with them.

Kevin Beasley will perform with ***Movement IV*** during the exhibition's opening on February 26. Appointments to interact with the work can be made through the gallery by writing to info@caseykaplangallery.com.

Beasley lives and works in Queens, New York and recently participated in the 2014 Whitney Biennial, curated by Anthony Elms, Michelle Grabner and Stuart Comer and New Forms Festival, Vancouver. Beasley's work has additionally been included in: Cut to Swipe, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY, 2014, Rockaway! organized by MOMA PS1, Rockaway Beach, New York, NY, 2014, Material Histories, the Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, 2014, The 2013 Queens International, Queens Museum of Art, 2013, and Realization is Better than Anticipation, Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, 2013. His work "I Want My Spot Back" was performed in the Atrium at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 2012 as part of Ralph Lemon's "Some Sweet Day." Beasley received an MFA from Yale University in 2012, and from 2013-2014 was an artist in residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem. His work is held in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, and the Art Gallery of Ontario. Beasley's work is currently on view as part of When the Stars Begin to Fall: Imagination and the American South, ICA Boston, through May 10.

For more information on Kevin Beasley, contact Loring Randolph or Emily Epelbaum, loring@caseykaplangallery.com and emily@caseykaplangallery.com.

Kevin Beasley's exhibition is the first in our new location in Manhattan's flower district. For further press information and information on our new location, 121 West 27th Street, please contact Alex Fitzgerald, alex@caseykaplangallery.com.

GALLERY ARTISTS: KEVIN BEASLEY, HENNING BOHL, MATTHEW BRANNON, JEFF BURTON, NATHAN CARTER, SARAH CROWNER, N. DASH, JASON DODGE, TRISHA DONNELLY, GEOFFREY FARMER, LIAM GILLICK, GIORGIO GRIFFA, ANNIKA VON HAUSSWOLFF, BRIAN JUNGEN, SANYA KANTAROVSKY, MATEO LÓPEZ, JONATHAN MONK, MARLO PASCUAL, DIEGO PERRONE, JULIA SCHMIDT, SIMON STARLING, DAVID THORPE, GABRIEL VORMSTEIN, GARTH WEISER, JOHANNES WOHNSEIFER

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ARTNEWS

2015: THE YEAR IN REVIEW
THE YEAR IN THE GALLERIES OF NEW YORK

BY Andrew Russeth

It has been a wild, topsy-turvy year in the New York art world, and one full of contradictions. As galleries continued to decamp from the luxury haven of Chelsea, in search of cheaper rents and more space, new galleries, many of them top notch, opened up all over the city. The mood was uncertain, in flux. The standard and very accurate gripes about the cost of living in the city were repeated again and again, and yet remarkable art abounded, thanks in no small part to the flow of money into the business. There were reasons to be hopeful.

The defining event of the year was, for me, Gavin Brown's Enterprise glorious and spooky final show at its longtime West Village home in June. Jannis Kounellis's storied Untitled (12 Horses), 1969, took over the main gallery, with a dozen beautiful horses standing in the room, going about their business. During the day, Rirkrit Tiravanija offered up tacos and beer to all comers, and, at night, Sturtevant's Warhol Empire State (1972) screened in the dark gallery. Slices of art history (and various communities of people), from near and far, past and present, elegantly shared one space. It felt like a quiet, ceremonial tribute to old legends, as well as a surreptitious planning session for strange things to come. After four days, it was over. The space was abandoned. It will become a condo.

Kevin Beasley, Untitled (Focus Black Boy II), 2015.
COURTESY THE ARTIST AND CASEY KAPLAN

In a city that is not always easy on artists, many young New Yorkers had stellar outings, like Kevin Beasley, who christened Casey Kaplan's new location in the Flower District with a show that included dish-shaped wall sculptures made with clothing and resin—simultaneously slick and gritty, exuding a pieced-together, deeply personal power—and a ferocious noise session by Beasley on a wired-up piano. A few avenues over, later in the year, Camille Henrot mounted a wry, winsome New York debut—a welcome gust of warm, exotic air—at Metro Pictures, with oddball, ingenious telephones, drawings, and a zoetrope. Downtown, Emily Mae Smith showed juicy, sexy paintings at Laurel Gitlen that channel figures as disparate as William Copley and Domenico Gnoli with a slick digital sheen. Jamian Juliano-Villani ratcheted up her ambitions with great aplomb in a gallery-filling suite of paintings—an alien, album-cover odalisque, cosmic, cartoon wastelands, and a mysterious portrait—at JTT. And Zak Prekop came out swinging at Essex Street, trading his past stolid, polite abstractions for superb new works that are intricate to a borderline-psychotic degree. They display daring twists and turn, with each crisp line precisely rendered, coming at you like needle-pointed darts.

Russeth, Andrew, "The Year in the Galleries of New York", Artnews (online), December 29, 2015

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THE NEW YORKER

KEVIN BEASLEY

The gallery inaugurates its new location in the flower district, fast becoming an art neighborhood, with a very strong exhibition by this young, musically inclined artist. The centerpiece is an upright Steinway, each of whose keys is embedded with a microphone wired to a soundboard. Even undisturbed, the sculpture emits an ambient drone; ask nicely at the front desk and they'll let you play it, with grandly spooky results. Large, parabolic sound reflectors, hung on the wall like pirated Anish Kapoor dishes, incorporate clothing from the artist, including an Air Jordan jacket. Those touches, along with a few stern photographs from the artist's native Virginia, lend his more formal investigations of sound a welcome personal note. Through March 28.

February 26 – March 28
Kaplan

Scott, Andrea K., "Kevin Beasley", The New Yorker, March 30, 2015

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ARTFORUM

Critics' Picks
March 2015

Kevin Beasley, Movement IV, 2015, mixed media, dimensions variable.

Kevin Beasley

CASEY KAPLAN
121 West 27th Street
February 26–March 28

Kevin Beasley, Movement IV, 2015, mixed media, dimensions variable.

To be among Kevin Beasley's new sound installation, sculptures, and photographs is to negotiate a doubled sense of "here"—both the physical recognition of oneself, and the claim for recognition evoked by discarded materials, bound and shellacked in polyurethane, their histories unknown but deeply felt. In Beasley's debut at Casey Kaplan, these contradictory present-tense sensations come together in circular wall-mounted acoustic mirrors cast from satellite dishes. In Untitled (Focus Black Boy II), 2015, Beasley immobilizes an Air Jordan jacket amid outstretched white T-shirts in coagulated coats of resin, taut and transparent as cellophane, yet thickly refracting ambient noise and viewers' wafting conversations.

As Beasley demonstrated in his 2014 Whitney Biennial performances, in which he activated his sculptures like mutant instruments, sonic experience is inextricable from a corporeal, at times unwieldy, knowledge. This becomes evident in Movement IV, 2015, which wires an elegant Steinway to a massive mixing console. Audiences, invited to play the piano by appointment, will find that even lightly brushing or tapping the keys produces percussive, sticky tremors of reverb, its echoes vibrating in the ribcage for minutes afterward.

Floor-bound sculptures, such as Untitled (Lumbar), 2015, a zippered backpack choked with pooled, festering polyurethane buildup, imply a similarly disjunct, if intimate, relationship: You stoop, lean in, or try to squeeze by, aware of how the body must improvise in constricted spaces. Nearby, a plastic yellow mop bucket is displayed at a slightly further remove: Detached from its original context and fastened to the wall, it's nonetheless unable to exceed the social labor and industrial utility associated with its past life. This work requires a reckoning with the physical and emotional detritus of the familiar, yet often unseen; its brilliance is to collapse this separation, to frame hearing and feeling ultimately as forms of witnessing.
— Abbe Schriber

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ARTFORUM

JANUARY 2015
OPENINGS

Kevin Beasley

THOMAS J. LAX

Kevin Beasley, I Want My Spot Back, 2012. Performance view, Museum of Modern Art, New York, October 26, 2012. Photo: Julieta Cervantes.

KEVIN BEASLEY kneels before two turntables in the lower-level theater of New York's Studio Museum in Harlem. He's in the middle of a set that is by turns haunting and propulsive, mixing samples that range from extra-percussive house beats to attenuated ambulance sirens, as his spoken-word excerpts betray their midwestern origins and unmistakably American character. Lines from Malcolm X's 1962 speech "Who Taught You to Hate Yourself?" are audible one minute; the next, the Cleveland neighbor who helped free Amanda Berry after she was held hostage for a decade recounts the story of her discovery. The set culminates with the sweet and sweaty promise of Detroit techno/house artist Theo Parrish's 2011 track "Black Music," but through it all, the audio clips that kicked off the set never stop reverberating: They killed him for no reason. They killed this nigger for no reason. He dead as a motherfucker. They killed this nigger for no reason. That guy is laying in the street dead. That man dead, man. Say he had his hands up and everything. Still shot him. The man laying in the street dead as a motherfucker.

In her influential essay "Can You Be BLACK and Look at This?," published in the catalogue for the 1994 Whitney Museum of American Art exhibition "Black Male: Representations of Masculinity in Contemporary American Art,"poet and critic Elizabeth Alexander considers the stakes of representing antiblack violence, attending in particular to the video that famously documented the 1991 beating of Rodney King by police officers in Los Angeles. To be black, argues Alexander, is to have no choice but to confront documentary evidence of the spectacularized violence waged against black people in the United States. "In order to survive," she writes, "black people have paradoxically had to witness their own murder and defilement and then pass along the epic tale of violation." Alexander's title is not only an ethical interrogative but an ontological quandary about the difference between blackness and looking—the kind of looking that, in the Western tradition, has long been the birthright of the sovereign subject, who is free to take pleasure without reservation or threat to bodily integrity. To be black is not a biological or even a cultural fact, she suggests; to be black is to be a vexed onlooker.

Yet looking is not the same as listening. Art historian Huey Copeland has recently argued that many artists of color working around the time of King's beating refused codes of visual and racial representation through recourse to "other bodily faculties . . . : the haptic, the written word, the thinly surrogate, and most signally, the voice." The voice, in particular, goes places vision cannot. Indeed, the terrible beauty of Beasley's set ventures onto perilous ground precisely through use of the voice. He pairs audio clips—which, via the words of a secondhand witness, repeatedly describe the August 2014 shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri—with a club track, which he performed at the Studio Museum just over a month after Brown was shot.

The juxtaposition risks aestheticizing Brown's killing, but in fact it subtly underscores the dreadful ordinariness of such acts, as the club and the bloody street are spaces of both eventfulness and habit. To hear a recurring testament of horror from someone who himself did not see Brown's body produces a knowledge of the trauma, not through authenticated firsthand testimony or through the retribution that remains unattainable by due process, but rather in the way such accounts are so often transmitted in communities in which trauma occurs—through a chain of hearsay that feels more reliable than a sworn statement. The chain starts with unwilling looking, which Beasley reproduces by refusing to image it, instead using sound that produces a mental projection of an image in its visual absence. The focused vector of vision is exchanged for something more expansive, even shared. Immersed in and surrounded by the invasiveness of a sound that, once heard, cannot summarily be averted or forgotten, you feel the other listeners rocking next to you.

Beasley—born in 1985 in Lynchburg, Virginia, educated in Detroit and New Haven, and currently based in Queens—works in an expanded sculptural language in which sound not only occupies space but is a material that changes spaces themselves through exertions of mass, weight, content. It's noteworthy that Beasley does not exploit CDJs to the extent his contemporaries in, say, GHE20 G0TH1K or DIS do, instead preferring the physicality of turntables. For him, the materiality of sound seems to have a transitive property, flowing from the haptic immediacy of analog turntablism to the palpable presence of a bass line or a voice. For his 2012 work I Want My Spot Back, for example, Beasley was invited by choreographer Ralph Lemon, on the occasion of a dance series at the Museum of Modern Art in New York, to occupy the institution's atrium gallery. During his two one-hour sets, Beasley mixed and slowed down just under forty a cappella tracks by deceased black male rappers from the early to mid-1990s, using more than ten subwoofers and loudspeakers to transform the music into a physical sensation that literally made the museum's walls shake, creating a vibrational force as architectonic as it was somatic. Beasley's acousmatic music—composed for live presentation using speakers—often functions in negativa, as the listener hears sounds without recognizing their originating sources. But while they may be disembodied, abstracted, even nameless, the rappers in I Want My Spot Back are here, for as long as their voices issue from Beasley's speakers. Vocality in Beasley's work is always mnemonic, recalling and addressing the departed, and redressing the proximity of black life to social death as the artist points to the potential for everyday culture to attend to loss.

Beasley's sculpture likewise explores the physical pressure of things that remain out of sight. He produces assemblages in which detritus, found or saved, is agglomerated with resin and polyurethane foam, a material that, despite its commercial ubiquity in everything from insulation to surfboards, often remains unseen. Beasley combines a polymer catalyst and reactant to produce the foam, which remains malleable for about half an hour. Within that window, he wrestles his combines into shape—molding, wrapping, stuffing, and embedding. In the resulting works, foam spills formlessly from a sneaker; bulges, bound and taut, beneath fabric or plastic wrappings; or serves as a primordial matrix for bits of junk. The sculptures bear the traces of postindustrial urban cycles of use and disuse, alongside the imprints of his body. Yet despite their folds, holes, and seepages, his objects (like his performances) refuse to represent a body, instead indexing the absent body's actions and movements—a fugitive remainder, reminding the viewer of what was once there.

Beasley's absenting presence—presence as voice, as indexical mark, presence that may be active and collective or haunted, spectral, and deferred—strategically negotiates the reality of being an embodied subject who cannot elide the dangers of subjection or its historical and political specificities; it is a mode of presence that quickens and guards against embodiment's enmeshment with the violent dynamics of spectacularization. His practices of dislocation and recontextualization, his stagings of fragmentation and unstable materiality, and his fleeting consolidations of the mnemonic trace seem to ask: What does it mean to assemble things when those things are beats, limbs, corpses, or people brought provisionally together to mourn or to protest? He encourages us to begin our response by swaying in our seats.

Thomas J. Lax is associate curator of media and performance art at the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

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Kevin Beasley: Star Material

This young artist is digging deep and stirring things up.

December 4, 2014 | by Andrew Russeth
Photography by Biel Parklee

At the end of this past summer, Kevin Beasley was packing up to move to his new studio in Queens. He had just spent nearly a year as an artist in residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem, where his bulky, beaten-up sculptures were lying on the floor. Made by melting together foam, resin, and pieces of his own clothing, the scrappy forms conceal a microphone wired to Moog pedals and speakers. "This might get a little loud," Beasley, 29, said with a laugh as he flipped one on and began moving and rubbing the work, sending wails and rumbles crackling from the sound system. Moments later, he slipped on a gas mask outfitted with pantyhose and another mic, and things got even more haunting. A longtime musician, Beasley is just two years out of Yale's MFA program, but his unusual practice, which commingles sound, sculpture, and performance, has already won him slots in a show at New York's Museum of Modern Art and in the 2014 Whitney Biennial. For the latter, he set up a system to amplify the sounds of visitors and also performed using his makeshift instruments, through which he reimagines how bodies and sculptures can interact. Next up is his first New York solo show, in February, which will inaugurate Casey Kaplan's new space, and a Guggenheim Museum commission that will expand on the work from the Biennial. "The art objects have a sort of aliveness to them," he said. "They change the sonics of the room, and it maybe becomes a little more immersive."

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FADER

Kevin Beasely, I Want My Spot Back, 2013

Visual Identity: Kevin Beasley On How Sound Shapes His Art

CULTURE/FEATURE
NOVEMBER 7, 2014

By HARRY GASSEL

Kevin Beasley's studio is in the part of Long Island City that's a far walk from any of the high street style shops, restaurants or bars. The story of how the New York based artist ended up there involves a fluid and somewhat unbelievable set of circumstances, like hearing about a rent-controlled two bedroom in the West Village. Beasley explains that as he was finishing up his year long artist-in-residency at the Studio Museum in Harlem, a collector offered him use of a largely abandoned wreck above a parking garage. He talks in detail about the work he's put into breaking down rooms, putting up dry wall, and wiring the space for sound—something that's become an important part of Beasley's sculpture practice. A room in back that used to house the owner's massive comic book collection has been left intact and turned into a fully functioning music studio.

Originally from Virginia before he settled in NYC, Beasley's work has for the past several years been a mixture of sculpture and audio based works. Like I Want My Spot Back, an improvised soundscape built out of heavily manipulated hip-hop acapellas from dead rappers like Tupac and Ol' Dirty Bastard which he performs on a modified but recognizable nightclub style turntable rig [that's him performing it above at MoMA in 2012]. In it clear snippets, like a passage from The Notorious BIG's "Long Kiss Goodnight" (from which the piece gets its name) seep up out of a viscous, subterranean bed of sound made up of metal and bubble-like effects that could very well be used to score a scene on a near-future battleship. The work stands as a haunting testament to the sheer amount of information that can be pulled out of these left-behind music files.

I.W.M.S.B. was Beasley's first fully realized audio work, but his interest in the material qualities of sound spans back to his time at grad school. “The parties at school were really bad and so I started DJing,” he says by way of explanation. “But immediately I was drawn to it as a tool in the studio. Instead of just throwing music in it, I was throwing in weird sounds.” Eventually he built his own massive pair of subwoofers in order to intensify the corporeal listening experience. When he performed I.W.M.S.B. in October 2012 in the central atrium at MoMA, the sound shook the entire building-tall central column in a way that clearly demonstrated the work's unrelenting physical presence. The curator Ralph Lemon, in a conversation with Art21, talked about the effects of confronting the museum audience with such an overwhelming performance. “Most visitors, I'm sure, just heard it as very loud, terrorizing. MoMA let it happen, as disruptive as it was. That instance crystallized for me this idea of black music as metaphor for some kind of American-ness. An invasive threatening under-rhythm, but also beautiful.”

When talking about his own work, Beasley acknowledges that there are inherent implications of race in the making and perception of his work, but it is clearly also not a central concern. In unpacking a performance he did at this year's Whitney Biennial in which he made sounds by interacting with a set of mic'd and prepared sculptures, he talks about it in terms of how context can influence his process: "You have a really specific body in a particular space. And there are consequences that one must reconcile with that kind of interaction. There's these different connotations or relationships that are really exploratory." Beasley's primary interest, it seems, is in the confrontation of material: how sound fills a room, how a body can subtly or wholly effect the space around it, how social dynamics can inform the movements of a body. In a lot of ways his work is about that moment of contact. The Whitney performance, for instance, was Beasley's way of thinking about the physical properties of a microphone-to-speaker set up. "I've been taking these microphones...[and] thinking about sound through a really physical medium," he explains. "It's not just solely about recording atmosphere but actually the quality or condition of that atmosphere. Like the space between you and that microphone—if there is something obstructing then that conditions the way that you're understood or the way that that information is."

The project is comprehensive in its interrogation of these physical qualities, and Beasley uses different types of microphones as ways to explore different sides of this dynamic. "Each one has their own particular way of picking up sound or picking up vibrations," he says. "This one has a contact mic in it, this one has a hypercardioid microphone in it so it kind of tunnels all of the sound. This one is two microphones—you know when you're holding a microphone and your rubbing your hands on it, it picks up that noise, it picks up the sounds of the actual device. They operate kind of like contact mics. But you can also hear a slight ghost of whats happening in the space." In his loosely scored performances he plays each of these sculptures like an instrument in a way that feels like he's trying to exhaust their potential. He later talks about the connection back to how this helps him understand the bodies that inhabit the space: "I think about the condition of a body," he says. "How do we socially navigate these bodies? Through sound—a really specific kind of sound defines or comes from a certain place. Or maybe its the material of an object like a pillowcase. What does that conjure? Like how you can hear something and that sound that your hearing automatically correlates or responds to some type of really physical thing. Like if I smack my hand on the table, the sound of that is from the hand and this thing. You can draw conclusions about what I'm made of or where I come from, how I feel as a person by the bluntness of that.” The logic is somewhat slippery but then again, so are the categories. We may define something as either physical or aural but the two are in a constant feedback loop, and in a sub-visual world these are both just ways people can experience touch.

Kevin Beasley, ...for this moment, this moment is yours..., 2013 Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, NY

“When I look at a pair of Jordans, I have a really specific experience with that: being a teenager, desiring those so much. I’m also thinking about audio or sound as another sensory experience that is culturally embedded in how we view things.”

The materials Beasley uses in these rigs as well as his stand-alone sculpture also speak to this theme of contact. The objects are a combination of resin, polyurethane foam, and bits of old clothes, usually his. Beasley says he was drawn to these materials for their physical qualities—the way he can work them as they set, the way insulation foam finds gaps and fills them. But he was also drawn to their omnipresent role in our lives. "I was thinking about foam being so present daily. Like how we interact with it. But yet we're not necessarily seeing it all the time. It's not a material that sits on the surface because its meant as a filler, it's meant for beds and couches. It provides us with a certain kind of comfort. It fills in a lot of spaces in our places and houses." In a similar way to the recognizable verbal passages in I Want My Spot Back, the clothes act as touchstones to culture—to the surface material that defines our experience beyond a primal sense of touch. "It becomes more complex when you think about how it's not just about physical object but an object that has a history," says Beasley. "And then you think about what could that potential history be. I'm using my clothes because it's something for me that has a really particular thing, pieces that start to draw on some broader cultural resonance. I'm trying to be very delicate about how these things reveal themselves. There's a lot of loaded conversation to be had." Beasley is referring to instances where he incorporates things like a pair of bootleg Nike Jordans, a striving status symbol that starts to have a more direct, social conversation. "When I look at a pair of Jordans, I have a really specific experience with that: being a teenager, desiring those so much," he explains. "I'm also thinking about audio or sound as another sensory experience that is culturally embedded in how we view things." The material has a history, but in this case its a personal one—these are Beasley's clothes and music; his hands ply and shape the resin and foam as they set, his body informs their scale.

In the past year things have been moving quickly for Beasley. He was added to the roster at the prestigious Casey Kaplan gallery in New York and recently, along with a group of collaborators called ALLGOLD, started a six-month residency in the Print Shop space at MoMA PS1. ALLGOLD—comprised of Stephen Decker, an artist and DJ under the name SYSDJ, and graphic designers Golnaz Esmaili and Inva Çota—is involved in applying their interdisciplinary skill set towards the creation of an events-oriented "curated social space." Beasley is excited about the possibilities: "We're thinking being open for several days a week where people can literally show up and have coffee and tea and sit and have conversation," he says. "So there will be talks and lectures, all different types of things that you wouldn't necessarily consider to be in a proper museum like PS1." The way he talks about ALLGOLD is almost like a thinktank, a social laboratory where the group can test out different event archetypes as a set of interactive experiments that are at once public and personal, improvisational and highly controlled. It sounds like a fitting next step.

Gassel, Harry, “Visual Identity: Kevin Beasley On How Sound Shapes His Art,” Fader, November 2014, Online.

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STUDIO MUSEUM HARLEM

JULY 17 - OCTOBER 26, 2014

A PARTIAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE WORK OF KEVIN BEASLEY

by Lumi Tan

HOW IT LOOKS

Recently, Kevin and I were in his studio discussing how we never find formal descriptions of artworks quite that fulfilling; the words typically used are too objective, when each viewer comes to an artwork from a highly individualized place. He pointed to a sculpture in progress onthe floor, and asked, “How would you describe this?” It was a rhetorical question, but I’ll attempt it here, since—for better or worse—the printed words in this essay will remain long after the ephemeral exhibition it accompanies. Like many of the sculptures Kevin was making at the moment, it was a bulbous, alien thing, that seemed to be halted on its way to becoming overgrown, bundled in clothing and other materials that had now fused together into something halfway between believably anthropomorphic and completely synthetic. I’m going to leave it at that, because looking is the easiest part, and what we’ve come to this museum to do.

HOW IT FEELS

Kevin encourages visitors to his studio to hold his sculptures, which are sized to be cradled in your arms, or gripped like a football. For all their substance—any of these sculptures could contain foam, resin, concrete, and many other quotidian materials—they are unexpectedly light. But this haptic perception isn’t necessary to experience Kevin’s sculptures; through their petrified surfaces, it’s impossible to feel that this is the type of nightgown that his grandmother has favored for the past sixty years, or pick up on the personal significance—small or great—of other family remnants that Kevin has collected over the years. Even these solid objects are vessels, carrying a different psychic weight for each person who encounters them.

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The New York Times

ART & DESIGN | ART REVIEW

The Stuff of Life, Urgently Altered

Artists in Residence Display Work at Studio Museum in Harlem

By HOLLAND COTTER August 28, 2014

David Hammons's "African American Flag" — with its Pan-African red and black stripes and green field of black stars — floats high over the sidewalk outside the Studio Museum in Harlem. Originally created nearly a quarter-century ago, it has become an identifying emblem for a museum dedicated to nurturing the careers of artists of African descent.

In 1980, Mr. Hammons himself was the beneficiary of that nurturing. A Los Angeles transplant still little known in New York, he was chosen that year to participate in the museum's annual artists-in-residence program, which provides on-the-premises studio space, a stipend and a culminating exhibition. Today, he's a star, the program continues, and work by its latest graduates is on view in a show called "Material Histories: Artists in Residence 2013-14."

All three of its artists are, in more ways than one, Mr. Hammons's heirs. Like him, they take race as a subject, one as critical as ever, as the news keeps reminding us. And they address that complex theme in a variety of subtly polemical visual languages with sources in popular culture.

Language itself, viewed as intrinsically racialized, is Bethany Collins's primary material. It's the very substance of the inconspicuous centerpiece of her work done over the past year. Called "Colorblind Dictionary," it's simply a found and well-thumbed 1965 edition of a Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language in which the artist, who identifies herself as biracial, has carefully erased, or scratched out, all mentions of the words "black," "white" and "brown." As you flip through the book, paper shavings fall from the pages like dust.

She applies a comparable editing process to dozens of framed e applies a comparable editing process to dozens of framed tear sheets from a 1987 issue of The Southern Review, a venerable literary magazine published by Louisiana State University. The contents of the journal itself are neither programmatically about the American South nor about race, but Ms. Collins, born in Montgomery, Ala., in 1984, turns its pages into a metaphorical play of black and white by inking out sections of printed text and isolating references to the writers Elizabeth Alexander, Derek Walcott and Carl van Vechten.

Finally, she cuts language loose from obvious meaning in two abstract paintings. Both, despite strongly worded references to race in their titles, are ethereal looking, with clusters of alphabetical characters written in light-blue pencil on a dark ground, like smudges left on a blackboard, or barely legible nebulae seen in a night sky.

The basic language in Kevin Beasley's sculpture is body language, or the compressed traces of it. Several pieces in the show are made in part from clothing worn by the artist or someone he knows. An urn-shape sculpture from 2013 incorporates a floral-patterned nightgown of a kind favored by his grandmother. A 2014 wall hanging consists of a shag rug encrusted with studio debris, sealed in clear resin and festooned with soft-sculpture globes made from bunched-up underwear.

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Kevin Beasley
As I rest under many skies, I hear my body escape me, 2014
Two-channel sound installation
TRT 1:56:24 and 00:38:49

On view as part of: *When the Stars Begin to Fall, Imagination and the American South*, The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, March 27 - June 29, 2014

Kevin Beasley creates sculptures and soundworks that resonate within the viewer's body
While the former are bound and contained, often tied with twine or spilling out of tape or cloth, the sound pieces retain a diffuseness that directly permeates our sensory experience. In *As I rest under many skies, I hear my body escape me* (2014) Beasley draws upon the phenomenological force of sound and its ability to index a time and place, even as it is abstracted. By embedding microphones in resin, clothing and other materials, Beasley creates field recordings on his family's property in Virginia that capture an event, such as a conversation, and the ambient soundscape surrounding it: a chair rocking, floorboards creaking, birds calling. In this way, he transports a document of a specific place to the gallery to explore how a fixed site can be dislocated. This mirrors the portability and influence of the South more broadly and reflects an attempt to explore how Southern tendencies, colloquialisms or ideas may exist in other places.

To complete the installation, Beasley has placed sound-canceling headphones throughout the galleries that play recordings of the small, nuanced noises of the Studio Museum gallery space recorded during his 2013-14 residency. As the visitor becomes immersed in the prerecorded sound of the space in which she stands, the surrounding noises are cancelled out, leaving an uncanny refraction of the sound of another space and time. Beasley describes this experience as "the self disappearing: which generates a simultaneous sense of relocation and dislocation."
Abbe Schriber

Schriber, Abbe. Studio Museum 2013-2014 Artists in Residence: Kevin Beasley, Bethany Collins, Abigail DeVille, The Studio Museum in Harlem, April 2014.

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MOCA

MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART
CLEVELAND

April 12, 2014

Since 2011, artist Kevin Beasley has developed a series of live audio performances, mixing found and recorded sounds into layered arrangements that address personal and collective histories. Beasley's newly commissioned work for MOCA Cleveland will be his most complex sound work to date, and will occupy both the Museum and the Cozad-Bates house, a historic Italianate mansion just across the street. The house is the only surviving pre-Civil War structure in University Circle, with the original section being built in 1853. The Cozad's were a prominent landowners and abolitionists, and the house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, and designated as a Cleveland Landmark in 2006. Stripped down for renovation, it has been vacant for the past seven years, creating a unique, transitional environment loaded with a deep sense of the past, and ongoing change.

Titled *And in My Dream I Was Rolling on the Floor,* Beasley's sound work will consider the architecture, history and the condition of the bodies that move(d) through the house and the Museum. It will be presented as a sequence of four live, multi-channel audio performances at the house. Each 30-45 minute piece *(Civil Twilight I, Transit, Civil Twilight II, and Night)* is composed for a specific time, charting the shifting atmosphere over the course of a day. At the Museum, the entire scope of the compositions can be experienced in a daylong listening environment in the Gund Commons. Audience members will be immersed in a complex arrangement of sound that alters their perceptions of space and the passage of time, linking the oldest and newest building at the heart of a rapidly evolving community in Cleveland.

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Physical bodies making sound with Kevin Beasley

April 11, 2014 by Jimmy Kuehnle

Kevin Beasley presents a one day only sound performance, And In My Dream I was Rolling On the Floor, at Cozad-Bates House, the only surviving pre-civil war structure in University Circle, and MOCA Cleveland on April 12, 2014 from 6:45 am – 8:45 pm. Organized by Rose Bouthilllier and Megan Lykins Reich, Kevin's performance will take place over 4 arrangements in what he calls, Intersection. IV Arrangements on Presence. MOCA says that the audience will be immersed in a multi channel audio experience, over the changing atmosphere of the day that will link the oldest and newest structures in University Circle. Although space in the house is limited, MOCA offers a full day listening experience in the Gund Commons.

While Kevin was in town preparing for his performance, I sat down with him to talk about his work, this performance and some other shows happening simultaneously.

Jimmy Kuehnle: So you went to the College of Creative Studies and then to Yale, were you making sound pieces then?

Kevin Beasley: I played drums and have a music background. I played in a prog metal band. It was the best. I played a lot of funk and jazz but it wasn't until graduate school that I actually started realizing the relationship between sounds, music and more object based visual art. It came through DJing really. I started Djing when I was in graduate school. There were a lot of bad parties with bad Djs, bad music, and I wanted to take that on.

JK: How do you start DJing? Do you just buy a turntable?

KB: It's funny because nowadays you can just Youtube everything but living in Detroit I was already linked in to DJ culture, techno and electronic music. Not from a creation standpoint or producing anything but listening to it. I downloaded some software, called Virtual DJ. Then I realized that it really wasn't sufficient but I noticed some potential in the practice so I saved up money and got some turntables. From there the connection between working with turntables, physical music and then also my artwork, just made sense.

JK: Did DJing get you thinking about sound and objects because a turntable is a thing, unlike an iPod?

KB: It bridged the connection between this analog thing for me. It got me thinking about sound as a physical thing, because with a turntable it's not just in the object itself, it's in its movement. It's playing and you hear a sound and then when you put your hand on it, the sound changes. The rate, the speed, the pressure, all of these things in a turntable, they give you different sounds through a direct link or connection between this tactility or being very physical with this motion, in the same way an instrument operates. That manipulation has a correlation with a block of clay. When you start pressing on it you start manipulating its form, the way it's perceived, how fluid it is. You start changing its properties.

That felt really close to sculpting sound by DJing and putting tracks together. Also, when you are layering, sound there are other accents, spaces and frequencies that start to do things like different phases and how sounds can cancel each other out. This isn't all in the headphones, you have speakers in the space and the architecture of the space. Sound is so physical because it's waves and you're moving particles, you're moving molecules. DJing for me just made it more obvious, like duh, of course, this is what this is. So then it kinda freaked me out because I had a set of tools that I could use to think about sound maybe in a different way.

Not long after, I didn't really DJ that much, because I got roped up into that, it became another tool in my studio. I started taking sounds from anywhere, making field recordings of whatever, other music and pulling it apart and finding software or programs to stretch it and change the frequencies around. This opened me up to thinking you should be searching for all these tools, these things that help you manipulate and change the form to ask a questions.

JK: Sound is physical, right, moving through us. You use the word body a lot, and usually in the plural form bodies. You talk about bodies and people affecting sound. How is that audience component necessary to the work, more than you just making sounds by yourself?

KB: It's so important. I think it's the crux of why I'm sharing the things I'm working on in the studio. They find resonance when they are in a context, a context made of people, made of places. I think the audience is so crucial because they bring their own personal histories, they bring their experiences and they allow something else to be generated and that's what I'm really invested in. Maybe developing meaning or if not just developing meaning, generating some type of conversation, thinking about things differently. If I felt the way I was moving through the world was perfect, I would just sit, in a chair. I wouldn't do anything but obviously its not that. There are so many unknowns, so many discrepancies, and incongruencies. There is a lot of tension, friction and there's also harmony and love. It's really complex and ultimately I'm just trying to process my world because I feel that's the way I'm able to do this, through art making.

JK: You mentioned movement and you also mentioned process. It's kinda like you're an organic sound board with your own dials and knobs and then move your own body which is this other physical thing, it is a tool in itself. How do you use your actual body's motion in a performative aspect both in the creation of the sound and when you perform later?

KB: For this performance in particular, I made a decision to exist outside of the public spaces. There are four spaces and then I'm in a fifth space outside the piece, so you won't see me at all. That decision was made because I'm trying to allow for a directness between the site, location and the audience. I'm fully aware of what my body and the actions are doing. I think about that a lot even if I'm not sort of dancing because maybe its not music, maybe the compositions and rhythms are spread over a longer sequence of time but my body is still very invested in those movements. Those movements are what produces the sounds.

It depends on different contexts. When I performed a piece in the atrium at MOMA, in that work I was centrally located. Everyone was there and watched that happen. But it wasn't so much about people seeing what I was doing as much as it was trying to get people to exist in a zone, in a sound field. Because the way the speakers were situated, there was one central point which was the heart of where the work was happening and I wanted as many people as possible to be in that space. I know then the draw of my presence, the draw of my body, my movement also allows for that. It becomes a facilitator for a different kind of arrangement or experience

JK: Does that affect the sound, having that many people or is it too big of a space for that to happen? Having them close, since they are soft.

KB: I don't think it affected the sound because it was so damn loud. But by me being located in the field of that sound really affected the way I was playing it. Its not like I am sitting in a control booth blowing people's heads off, sitting it a comfortable cozy room that doesn't have any of the vibrations.

JK: In the piece here by isolating yourself, are you forcing the viewer to think about the place, the sound, their experience?

KB: Yeah, one thing I'm playing with also is the idea that it is something that is unfolding live. I don't just hit play on my iPod and

sit back. The fact that it's being performed or that there is a performative aspect, I'm not interested in removing my responsibility or my agency. I'm as connected to that or trying to be connected and to be connected you gotta show up and be there. Totally immerse yourself in a way that also helps facilitate something much broader than yourself.

JK: You said that you make work not just for yourself but you make work for an audience. If you find yourself in the studios by yourself playing could you do the same thing that the audience will hear when they are there? Does even the thought of their presence change the way you move and get into the flow?

KB: No audience at all? I need something. I need some type of substance. Maybe if its actually slow and there are things I can do to make myself even more invested or immersed in what's happening around me. But I'm really invested in responding to something that carries some type of history, whether personal or broader cultural issues. I'm not trying to look externally because I have to find relevance just for myself for the thing I'm thinking about. The decision between doing it at the Cozad Bates House versus doing it in the elevator in MOCA. It's not just because the house is historical but I find some connection to the specifics of its history. I can maybe understand something about that.

Living in Detroit and having all my friends buying a bunch of abandoned buildings, I'm kinda fantasizing about that. To think about generating a work in an abandoned building is also another thing I can probably do. I can realize something that allows me to approach that in a different way or I can understand what that experience is or could be. Or maybe not, maybe I just leave a bunch of questions and now it's even more complicated. Say the house is going to be developed for corporate use. What did I do? I draw attention to something and that ends up being its demise. That house hasn't been broken into in the past seven years. After i do the performance, maybe it gets broken into now because it has a profile that is much broader than what it is.

JK: You mentioned a thought experiment of someone who had known the house before, maybe had been familiar with it. What would it mean for them to come and see the performance? What would it be like for someone to have that deep experience of the performance and then the experience of the accumulation of the performances?

KB: In using recordings I'm trying to collapse time in some way. What your are going to be hearing aren't live feeds of what is happening today. In a rapid changing neighborhood, over a year a lot has changed. For example it could be a new experience sonically. If that railroad line all of a sudden got rerouted, which possibly could have happened in a year. What you are hearing in this piece is from a different time. I feel like that is interesting because I'm trying to collapse that into one experience. Because I think when you are accumulating all of these different layers or these layers have sort of built up, at the end you still have to do something with it. It still has to go somewhere or maybe it just sits and you just have to recognize that's where it ends or that's where it stops. Or it doesn't accumulate in the way that it has been, because I think everything accumulates even if you try to stop it. It still finds a way.

JK: You talked about following the chirping of a traffic light, taking a cell phone snapshot of cows along the highway or not having wind when you have an exhibition of wind chimes, and then adapting to those situations. Does serendipity come into play during the collection and in the ultimate performance of the sound piece?

KB: Yeah it does. It's great that you are bringing that up because I'm trying to process how. When something's done I feel like I just skated by. If that wind wasn't there those chimes would have been quiet. It would have been the most atrocious thing ever but they were quiet and people said the opposite. They said, "Are you sure you didn't time that?" They were totally blown away and I was blown away too. I left room for that possibility and I also believe that if the wind chimes in that performance didn't go off, that's fine because that is a part of the way we are moving through the world. That's the way you are experiencing it. What I'm trying to do is set up for something I can't anticipate. I couldn't anticipate what would

happen either way. I'm going to do this. We're going to be present. We're in this together and whatever it is we're going to adapt to that and we're going to accept that's the moment that it is.

There are still generative qualities in that experience. The people may say, "That was just boring and really dumb." But I actually believe in that because I think that those minutia and those subtleties, that's where the challenge is, where the difficult part is. When its raining outside and you are riding your bike it doesn't feel good but maybe it's just a point of perspective. Maybe that's what needs to be shifted because ultimately it goes back to us. It goes back to how we are relating to these things. I'm always up for that, I'm always trying to leave space or leave room in what I'm doing for that. Oddly enough I feel they unfolded in way that has been kind of ideal. Maybe that was the best result? I don't know because I don't know what the other result might have yielded. The fact that they did something and people responded, I think that happened because I left room, not because it was so calculated and organized in a way that brought it to that. You have to leave room for something for maybe some other possibilities.

JK: I like that you have a very realistic outlook of the world. This is the thing that is there and that's how it will react to us who are also here. That's it and we better try to navigate, as you say process.

KB: Right. There's a work now, this cassette tape thing that I've been working on for Casey Kaplan in New York. It's up an running until April 26. They prompted me saying that the show is going to be up for two months and they wanted a performance. I don't know but that's kinda crazy because thinking about sound for two months has all these problems. What is the device that's playing that sound? What am I going to play? Why would people want to come to a space and listen to anything that isn't something they selected? Where is the foundation for it? I could just play some recordings of trains? You know? What am I going to do? It almost doesn't work that way.

Then I stopped thinking about what the sound was in particular and started thinking about why are people going to be coming here, not even for sound but just for anything. I said well maybe that's just it, maybe people will just be present. I tried to focus people in that moment. The moment you are experiencing is what you get. If you come back the next week you will experience something different, because it is a different time in the same place but what you are experiencing in that space is different. How do I do that for two months? I was like, dang that's a really big sound file.

So then I started thinking about it physically because its actually more feasible. I started gathering cassettes and thinking about the duration. It's 52 reels. Each reel has 40 hours of sound and music. It plays 5 days a week when the gallery is open. It's all cassette tapes spliced together. When you walk into the gallery you're going to hear Celine Dion or something and maybe the next, I don't know, the next 30 minutes you will hear an audio clip or you will hear a lecture about Shakespeare or whatever. The range is all over the place.

The idea is that moment is your moment, that's your like time, because as you are hearing it your'e not going to hear it again. No one is going to rewind it for you. It's not going to come back next week. That's the moment. The work relies on human presence so it's not like an infinite loop that goes 24/7. When the business is open or when that venue is open and there's people there to turn it on and turn it off, that's when it's going to operate. So that's kinda how I developed that piece.

JK: It seems like you are purposefully putting in entropy and randomness by the human presence, the type of machines, the tape you select and also by your collection method including sources from everything from your mother to some tape head in Brooklyn. Do all these things come together to make it unique and in that moment?

KB: That is the connection for me and where the cultural capital exists. This thing exists in a context. The actual reel to reel itself has an 8-track insert on the side. 8-track was very American. It didn't make it to anywhere else. This player was made by Akai which is a Japanese company. Also, cassettes are from a very specific time period. For people who know the cassette there's a relationship there. That's the way it is connecting and I'm interested in that. I'm not necessarily super invested in tape culture but I grew up with cassettes. There's a relationship there. Also, for presenting sound as a mass or as a physical thing, it's the most accurate because there isn't a clear set way to measure it, the duration of a track. This much tape, this is about 60 minutes, this is about 90 minutes and you record onto it and well it's not quite full so its not quite 90 minutes. We're just kinda guessing but it is a mass produced, manufactured system that is supposed to be really precise. Whatever it's supposed to be, I find it to be really interesting because it's really organic. It parallels ourselves, it deteriorates over time. Its a bodily type of material.

JK: It almost is a way of giving a farewell to the physical media of our experience that will remain physical as it migrates to digital forms.

KB: Of course, I'm just thinking about all the cassette tapes. There's almost 5000 cassette tapes in my studio, so many boxes of exoskeletons. The other thing too is that it's the first sound work and maybe the last sound work that I've made that I don't know what it sounds like. I don't know what it sounds like in all its entirety. It's a work I've been able to compose and I think I've been able to have that relationship because it is such a physical investment to put together. You don't necessarily have to listen to all of it to compose the piece. It's exciting because when I do go into the gallery to see, I got an opportunity to experience that aspect. It's really refreshing.

JK: Hopefully its at a good point when you are there.

KB: I've also put in a reel that is total silence. Each week coincides with a week in the year so for the certificate for the work, I said you may not want to program any promotional events during this week because its gonna be silent. If you are promoting a show and the opening is on this week, people are going to be arriving and its just going to be total silence, running but nothing coming out. I felt it was necessary to have a week where it's not just resting. Its working but its work is to be silent.

JK: You have work up in the Butcher's Daughter Gallery in Detroit as well?

KB: I have some objects that are there. That's another thing, that space in between them, that simultaneous existence where these objects are situated in a space. They have their sort of aesthetic and their visceral qualities. There's also this tape machine

running, having a different sort of relationship to its context and then me being here able to do this. The fact that its on Saturday, the fact that I'll be performing in this space doing something and then that tape piece will also be playing.

JK: Like a thought experiment, what is that experience like to have work in Detroit, work in the Whitney, work playing at a gallery that you never heard before and performing in a house that's the oldest structure in University Circle?

Its like a crazy constellation. Are they aware? Are they speaking to one another? Maybe. It takes us to tease that out. Because we are the conduits for it.

JK: We're the physical things thinking about the physical things that we are.

KB: Yeah, exactly.

JK: Like Carl Sagan said that we're the universe thinking about itself.

KB: Yeah, yeah, I was just watching the Symphony of Science the other day and he [deGrasse Tyson] says, "We are put here by the universe to know itself." I love that though. Its like, of course. "We are all connected, to each other, biologically, to the earth, chemically, to the rest of the universe, atomiclly."

JK: Exactly. Kevin that is a perfect place to wrap up. I am so excited to hear the performance. Thank you.

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Interview

Kevin BEASLEY

The 28-year-old, Virginia-bom Kevin Beasley is an artist-in-residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem. One of the requirements of the year-long program is that he work in his assigned studio space for a minimum of 20 hours a week–a number far below his usual, self-imposed quota. Over the course of his residency, Beasley's temporary space has become a tossed salad of rubber, resin, boxes of cassette tapes, and antique audio equipment, materials that correspond to the two fundamental threads of his recent work: sculpture and sound.

As a sculptor, Beasley tends to make artifacts of the culture that surrounds him. He ties old, shredded T-shirts into compact hundles; he smears tar; he pours liquid foam makeshift molds, fashioned from shoes, to arrive at elegant, vase-like forms. Beasley carries these collected pieces– a trash-can liner, for example– around for years until they're worn from age and handling. For a short time, he forwent having a physical studio space and making sculpturc, but his practice eventually returned to his accretion of art materials including a cumbrous cotton-gin motor that he hauled from Alabama–all of which now fill a storage unit he rents in Connecticut. "It's really hard for me to totally abandon something," he says, "unless it's completely spent. And by then it's probably a sculpture." Beasley is also a longtime musician–most often a drummer–and his sound art emerged from a quasi-sculptural interest in the physical materiality of analog tape and reel-to-reel players. Last year he performed in MoMA's atrium as a kind of DJ, remixing and screwing a cappella tracks by deceased rappers (including Guru, ODB, Eazy-E, Biggie Smalls) into a menacing sonic soup he titled I Want My Spot Back.

For the Biennial, Beasley plans to conflate his two practices, creating sculptures from concrete and fabric each with a microphone buried within, so as to capture what he calls the object's "internal architecture." As of now, the idea is that, over a week, the objects will be scattered through the Whitney's ground-floor gallery, and the microphones will remain live, continually amplyifying the room's vibrations through haunting delays and humming reverbs. "It's supposed to just echo presence in that building," Beasley explains, "so that when people are there, they're listening to a filtered version of their own presence in the space." Three times during his installation, the artist will step into the space and perform–literally inserting himself into the work, which makes sense for a man who is in a near-constant state of production. "Making art is like shaking something out of your system," he says. "It's like the flu. You have all these symptoms, and some go away and some come back. For me, making work is survival, and afterward, I feel good."

–ROSS SIMONINI

Simonini, Ross. "Kevin Beasley," Interview Magazine, March 2014.

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WHITNEY BIENNIAL

Kevin Beasley

Untitled, 2011. Winter glove, latex, cast resin, peanuts, and polyurethane foam, 7 x 7 x 8 in.(17.8 x 20.3 cm)

Born in 1985
Lynchburg, VA

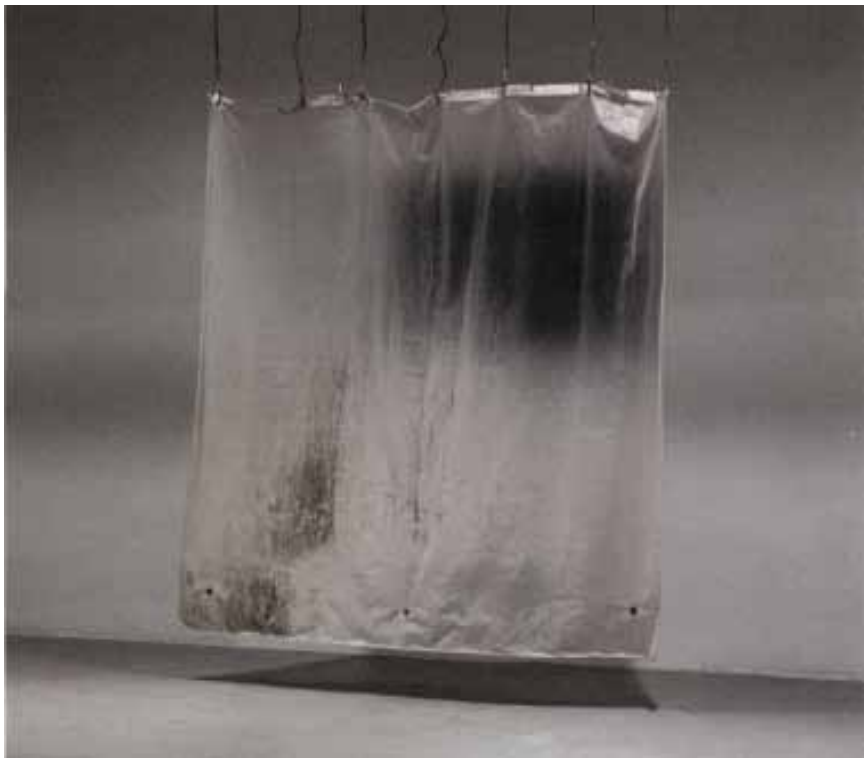
Lives in
New York, NY

Untitled (Sack), 2012. Foam, resin, T-shirt, mattress cover, cotton, and thermal shirt, 51 x 23 16 in. (129.5 x 58.4 x 40.6 cm)

The white T-shirt-stretched taut over a transparent mattress cover, a thermal shirt, and polyurethane foam-bears an uncanny resemblance to its original function: the stitches and seams along the object's side would have once withheld an armpit from view. Stretched and removed from the body of its previous owner, the hole is one of *Untitled (Sack)*'s several allusions to the gaps and folds out of which the sculpture's contents seep through and reveal its holdings. The hardened resin that gives these extrusions their luster also makes the object look wet, as if it were recently produced or a point of entry or refusal. At 4 feet in length, *Untitled (Sack)* (2012), is anthropormorphic in scale, and its compressed form resembles a body bag. The shirt's threads construct a barrier between the unknown, bounded form beneath and the viewer; like the armpits it housed before, the shirt fails to fully withhold the found and used materials that it struggles to encase.

Kevin Beasley's sculptures shuffle between the thrown away and not yet formed, but they almost always relate in some way to abjection. Feminist cultural theorist Julia Kristeva has described the condition thus: " Apprehensive, desire turns aside; sickened, it rejects...But simultaneously, just the same, that impetus, that spasm, that leap is drawn toward an elsewhere as tempting as it is condemned. Unflaggingly, like an inescapable boomerang, a vortex of summons and repulsion places the one haunted by it literally beside himself." 1 Between subject and object, the abject is a frontier, a stray, an ambiguity: a state of abandon. Installed in direct relationship to their architectural container, often on the floor directly in the viewer's path, Beasley's objects makes use of- and continue to look like- biological matter, geological debris, and organic waste. Their near life size renders them anthropomorphic, yet these are disconcertingly truncated, compressed forms. They are at one nonhuman and human-like—distinct from the viewer's body, yet threatening and dissolving that boundary all the while.

To make sculptures such as *Untitled (Sack)*, Beasley fills found and discarded clothing and objects with polyurethane foam made by combining a resin polymer catalyst with a reactant. He has a brief, half-hour window to give his materials shape and form—manipulating, wrapping, and binding the object before the foam solidifies.



Untitled, 2012. Shower curtian, hair clips, twine, foam, and inkjet print, Dimensions variable

Beasley's intervention marks his objects: their form is an index of his very physical handling. His technique is itself a variation of the casting process- a basic tool of sculpture and industrial production alike. Beasley makes use of molds, including found objects such as shower caps and yoga balls, that allude to the body even if they cannot be recognized in their imprint. He also produces handmade molds whose shapes bear little representational funtion. His own body functions as a kind of mold a he wrestles and grapples with his materials. Although Beasley inserts himself into the chain of reproduction, constructing unique objects by hand and with his body, he does not relinquish references to industry and automation. Indeed, the chemicals he uses to fabricate his foam are industrially manufactured, produced, and sold. They fill the insides of any number of domestic products, like car seats and sofas; and as insulation, packaging, and soundproofing, they expedite the transportation of goods. Combining the industrial with the organic, the ready-made with the handmade, Beasley's foam not only mediates between the artist's laboring body and the imprints of his production, it makes visible the otherwise unseen links between commercial circulation and a consumer corpus.

Beasley explores an expansive language of sculpture and its "capacity for investing in the body as a reciever and safe for our experiences,"2 which he extends to time as well as space. The artist's sonic experiences, like his objects, invite their respective viewers and listener into relationships with one another. For his breakthrough *I Want My Spot Back (2012),* Beasley placed himself with three turntables in the center of the atrium of New York's Museum of Modern Art. 3 Over two days, he mixed and slowed down approximately forty a cappella tracks, all by deceased black male rappers prominent in the early to mid-1990s- the moment when hip-hop gained worldwide as a black-authored commodity. 4 Beasley improvised with extracts of the artists' voices, digitally manipulating their frequencies, volume, and equalization and playing the turntables by hand with his fingers. Miming the process by which producers make beats and DJs embellish and mix tracks, Beasley emphasized the sounds, as the subwoofers thundered throughout the building and their vibrations shook its architecture. Both elevating and reducing the original tracks, he transformed the music into a physical sensation.

The performance's phenomenological intervention relates structurally to Beasley's objects. Evoking ubiquity and invisibility, interiority and enclosure, they bear perciptible, contradictory pressures on the body. The title of *I Want My Spot Back* directly references the Notorious B.I.G.'s posthumously released song "Tonight" (1999), but the work's overtones also made larger claims to time and space, institutional and urban. Occurring one week before the then year-old Occupy movement would turn its attention to the Superstorm Sandy relief effort, the performance's title and physical intervention cited a tale of two citities that has kept pace with an inequitable America.

Beasley makes reference to particular and contigent bodies, eschewing illustion and pushing the materials he uses to the limit of their capacity. While his objects and time-based works evolve from experiences in specific places that happen to bear autobiographical relation to where he grew up, attended school, and currently lives (Lynchburg, Virginia; Detroit; New Haven, Connecticut; and New York), they refuse personal representation, save for the traces of their ongoing formation. Emerging from ready-made materials and everyday beats, the artist's materials are returned-assisted, remixed, and worked over- now rendered unfamiliar and ambiguous. Through a confusion of material and physical identity—corpse or trash, excess or lack-Beasley draws our attnetion to the kinds of dislocation, crisis, and doubt that habitually lie before us, quietly asking us to take notice even if we might again look away.

I Want My Spot Back, 2012 (installation view, Some Sweet Day, The Museum of Modern Art, New York, October 15-November 4,

1. Julia Kristeva, Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 1.
2. Kevin Beasley, "WTF Is My Sculpture," Unpublished artist statement.
3. I Want My Spot Back took place during the dance exhibition Some sweet day, organized by American artist Ralph Lemon (b. 1952) and curator Jenny Schlenzka. The work was previously performed at Lemon's invitation in the East Village's Danspace Projec as part of the finale for American choreographer Ishmael Houston-Jone's (b. 1951) platform of experiemental dance by black dance makers, Parallels. See Ralph Lemon and Melissa Perel, "Gimme Shelter | Infiltrating the MoMA Atrium, Part 1: An Interview with Ralph Lemon on the Curation of 'Some sweet day,'" http://blog.art21.org/2012/12/07/gimme-shelter-infiltrating-the-moma-atrium-part-1-an-interview-with-ralph-lemon-on-the-curation-of-some-sweet-day/#.UnHQ846hDzI(accessed October 30, 2013); and Danielle Goldman, "Judson Now Writer-in-Residence Danielle Goldman on Conversations Without Walls: Reflections on Some sweet day, " http://www.danspaceproject.orgblog/?p=836(accessed October 20, 2013).
4. An abbreviated list of the names and birth and death years of some of the artist whose songs Beasley appropriated demonstrates the trunication of their lives: Big L (1974-1999), Eazy E (1963-1995), Guru (1961-2010), the Notorious B.I.G. (1972-1997), Ol' Dirty Bastard (1968-2004), Tupac Shakur (1971-1996)

Your Awaited Evening, 2010. Bathrobe and latex, 12 x 7 x 8 in. (30.5 x 17.8 x 20.3 cm)

Comer, Stuart, et al. Whitney Bienniale. Whitney Museum, New York, NY, 2014. p.50-53

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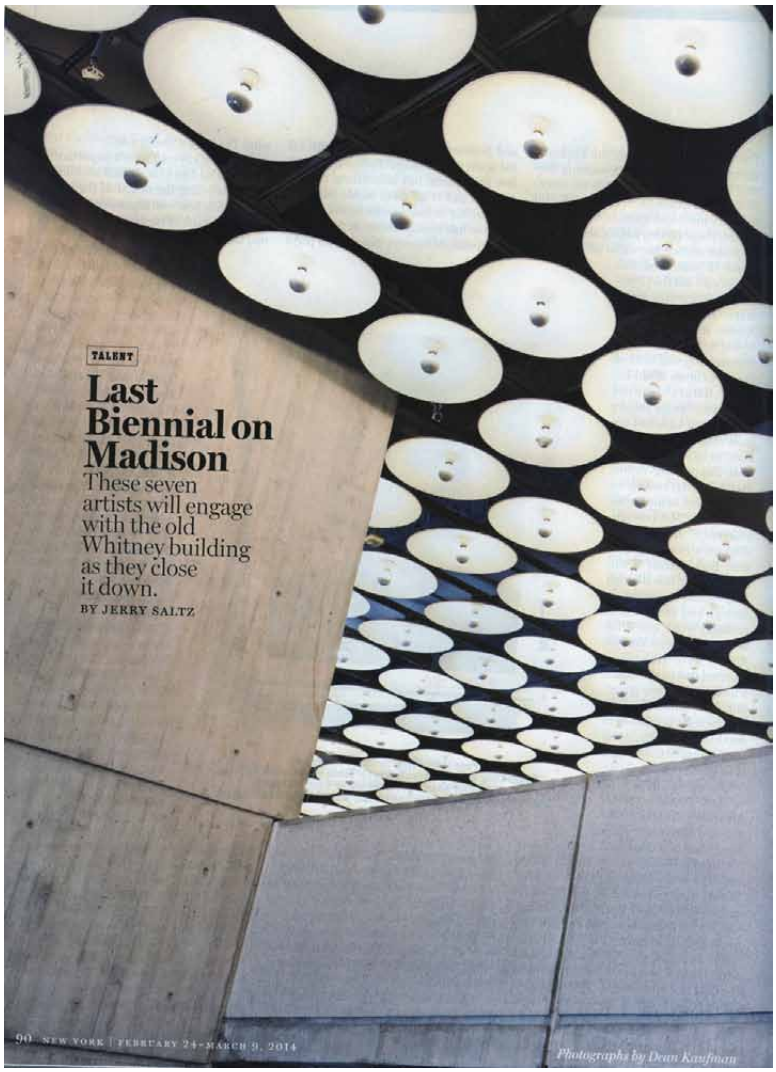
NEW YORK

Last Biennial on Madison

by Jerry Saltz

Feb.24-March 9, 2014



Saltz, Jerry. "Last Biennial on Madison," New York Magazine, Feb.24-March 9, 2014, p. 90-91.

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Harold Ancart, Kevin Beasley, Mateo López
February 27 – April 26
Opening Thursday, February 27, 6 – 8pm

Casey Kaplan is pleased to announce an exhibition of solo projects by Mateo López (b. 1978, Bogotá), Harold Ancart (b. 1980, Brussels), and Kevin Beasley (b. 1985, Lynchburg, Virginia).

Mateo López's work is an investigation of drawing itself, and the spaces between its mental and physical actions. Crucial to this is an examination of how drawing moves from line to form and object and a conflation of the boundaries between two and three-dimensions. Through the process of observation itself, López begins a dialog between two seemingly opposed motivations: the making of a realistic representation of his surroundings and an investigation of their implications.

López presents a new installation comprised of drawings, sculptures, as well as an animation, an element that is new to his practice. Following a single character – a drafting compass fashioned into a dancer, the protagonist himself presents a contradiction. He is a tool designed for rigidity and precision that instead makes loose, gestural movements. Tracing clockwise or counterclockwise, he begins to form a series of objects: a clock, a door, a globe, among others. Exhibited alongside the animation itself are these artifacts of the dancer's actions crafted meticulously out of paper, simultaneously suggesting a choreography that creates play and narrative and a drawing extending from the second to third dimension.

Harold Ancart's work recombines and repeats familiar tropes and forms in a series of permutations, functioning almost as a stutter. Ancart has previously created works in which lines of pure pigment traverse the walls of the exhibition space, as well as found images of pools and tropical landscapes that have been sullied with burn marks, all sharing a sense of immediacy in their creation – the laying of a mark or a gesture.

Ancart continues his previous explorations in a series of large-scale drawings titled "Ultra Deep Fried". Pre-cut forms of vegetation are layered onto paper as he creates textural, black and white backgrounds with oil stick. It is traces of their immediacy that are consistent throughout, vestiges of the lush color layered into the negative vegetal spaces are found across the surface. For the first time, Ancart arranges these works as a set, with their compositions sprawling across four panels. Their vibrant foliage and color splashes imply a distance that suggests a fascination with another place. This sense of longing recurs throughout Ancart's work, finding a parallel in a tension specific to drawing itself – the simultaneous desire to create and communicate a future while acting in relation to the past; a process through which motivations and intentions are continuously reversed. Additionally, he presents two sculptures immediately reminiscent of furniture, with a proportion and surface that denies function.

Kevin Beasley's work utilizes media including sculpture, photography, sound, and performance to navigate notions of origin and identity. Familiar objects, personal effects and sound elements from various sources are manipulated, distorted, and mixed, acts of removal from their original context that simultaneously investigate their histories. Through this process, they are broken into minutiae and partial forms and also expanded – gaining resonance and new meaning.

For the exhibition, Beasley has sourced approximately 4000 cassette tapes from family, friends, record stores and the Internet. Ranging from commercially sold audiobooks, popular music, independent labels, mixtapes, and home recordings, they have been cut and spliced together to create 52 reels, holding approximately 40 hours

of sound and music each. These reels exist as mixes – combinations of various sounds by a number of authors that play constantly during the gallery's opening hours, corresponding to a cycle of human consistency. Spanning intentions, genres, and decades, the resultant sound demonstrates a complex relationship with the history of the work's materials. Their obsolescence at the same time triggers a series of familiarities and emotional connections.

Played through a reel-to-reel player, an incompatible device, both sides of each tape are heard at once. Interrupting even the most familiar of referents is a layered, alternate track (albeit played in reverse), an ambiguous and sometimes unintelligible sound that asserts itself as an unknown entity. The work hinges on the presence of a listener yet the exhibition itself represents only a partial span of its length with the same sound never played twice. Over the course of the exhibition, performances by Beasley and invited guests will occur in the space, with a live recording made on the reels. Replacing the previous recordings, these newly introduced elements contribute to the ever-evolving nature of the work and its experience; it is growing and deteriorating at the same time.

Mateo López was recently a participant in the Rolex Mentor-Protégé program alongside William Kentridge. In 2013, his work, A Trip from Here to There, was the starting point for an exhibition of the same title at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. Recent solo exhibitions include Travesía Cuatro Gallery, Madrid, 2013, Casas Riegner Gallery, Bogotá, 2012, Galeria Luisa Strina, São Paulo, 2011 and Gasworks, London, 2010. Group exhibitions include: Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, 2013, The Art Gallery of York University, Toronto, 2013, The Drawing Room, London, 2012 and the 8th Bienal do Mercosul, Porto Alegre, 2011.

Harold Ancart has recently had solo exhibitions at Veneklasen Werner, Berlin, 2014, Clearing, Brooklyn, 2013, and Xavier Hufkens, Brussels, 2013. Additionally, Ancart has participated in group exhibitions at the Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin, 2013, Palais de Toyko, Paris, 2013, WIELS / Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels, 2012 and Sculpture Center, Queens, 2011.

Kevin Beasley is currently an artist in residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem. He will participate in the 2014 Whitney Biennial, curated by Anthony Elms, Michelle Grabner and Stuart Comer, opening March 7. His work was included the 2013 Queens International as well as group exhibitions at Museum of Contemporary Art, Cleveland, 2013, and The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York, 2012. His work "I Want My Spot Back" was performed at the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 2012 as part of Ralph Lemon's "Some Sweet Day."

For further information, please contact Loring Randolph, loring@caseykaplangallery.com

GALLERY HOURS: TUESDAY – SATURDAY, 10:00AM – 6:00PM

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Art in America

MAGAZINE DECEMBER / JANUARY 2014

KEVIN BEASLEY

Interview by Mike Pepi
Studio Photography by Jonathan Den-

IN THE STUDIO

An obsolete Akai x-1800SD reel-to-reel eight-track player stood in the corner of the back room at Casey Kaplan gallery. Nearby, a simple wooden cabinet held 52 reels, each containing around 40 hours of audiotape combining portions of record albums, personal recordings, audio books and music mixes. During the gallery's opening hours, the reel-to-reel was rigged to play both sides of the tapes simultaneously, emitting often incoherent combinations. Created by Kevin Beasley, this installation—titled . . . for this moment this moment is yours . . . and dated 2013—was shown at the gallery as part of a three-artist exhibition earlier this year. In the far corner of the same space was one of Beasley's sculptures, its purple hue and almost corporeal shape the result of a slow accumulation of resin, foam and cotton. Though the two works—one largely audio-based, the other a physical object—seem different in kind, both simultaneously emphasize and obscure their materials, suggesting the artist's view of our experience of the world as a combination of the immediately perceived and the partially concealed.

Beasley grew up in Virginia and currently lives in New York. He received his BFA from the College for Creative Studies in Detroit in 2007 and his MFA from Yale University in 2012. We met last spring at the Studio Museum in Harlem, where he was an artist-in-residence. In his studio there, we spent time handling his sculptures, which have an intensely haptic quality. They are heavy, molten-looking pieces—pregnant with items such as shirts, pillows and dresses, trapped in foam and resin. Even his sound pieces—whether focusing on icons of popular music or exploring the landscape of human emotion—maintain a strong sense of tactility.

For *Movement I: DEF/ACHE/CRYSTALLINE/SLEEVE (2014)*, performed in this year's Whitney Biennial in a gallery off the museum's lobby, the artist connected his sculptures to microphones, which amplified the sounds of the surroundings. He physically manipulated the sculptures, moving them around and placing them in different arrangements, allowing them to pick up new sounds and produce feedback. It was a typical work by Beasley, who claimed, in a 2012 interview, that sound is "just as physical, tactile and experiential as any other material."1

MIKE PEPI How do you choose the objects that your sculptures contain?

KEVIN BEASLEY Each item has some personal connection to me. It's really important that an object comes from me or at least someone close to me. I have some story of where everything came from and why. That's the starting point, and the work sort of opens up from there.

PEPI During an earlier studio visit, you showed me a video. In one part you're driving on a rural road at night, and then suddenly we see a burning ball with a beam of light shining on it. You also capture this scene in a photograph. Iconography aside, this immolation seems to be a counterweight to your sculptures, which deal with accumulation.

BEASLEY That image is from a very rural property in Virginia that has been in my family for a long time. Since my grandparents passed on, it has become a place for us to convene, really just to maintain it and keep it in the family. It's also where a family graveyard is. The property holds a lot of personal experiences and information, a sort of residue of my family in a way. I was spending time down there just trying to understand, in some way, what makes me: How am I here? What am I doing? Why am I making work?

“ I am constantly thinking about the physicality of the content I use. I also ask what it is about sound that can get us so emotional, that can affect us so deeply.”

So I got to thinking about these graves, the family members, the lineages, my connection. I was dealing with a lot of personal, internal questions. The interest in working there came from a project I had started when I was in graduate school, involving this antique cotton gin motor. The motor was used from the 1940s to the 1970s on a cotton farm in Maplesville, Ala., which is about 15 minutes from Selma [the historic civil-rights flashpoint]. I was in Virginia for a family reunion when I noticed that our property was planted with cotton. That was not only the first time I had seen cotton plants in person, but also the first time I had seen the property planted at all, and it seemed really strange to me. I couldn't figure out what the plants were at first. I had an emotional response, and felt like I had to deal with that in some way. So a lot of these photos and a lot of the work I was doing—involving this burning ball—were me trying, for the first time, to deal with this pent-up emotion. Whether I was deconstructing a thought or burning this thing to get my frustration out, I was putting myself in a vulnerable place and confronting something deep-seated. I am constantly chewing on those emotions, and it gave me a lot of material to continue to work with. I am still sort of forming it all, and I think that's why I haven't really been showing those images.

PEPI Viewers can’t know everything that lies beneath the surfaces of your sculptures in the same way that the audience can’t listen to all the recordings in . . . *for this moment this moment is yours . .*

BEASLEY I’m interested in the ways in which small elements make up a whole. Even if you can’t immediately perceive those elements, they’re still critical to whatever that object is. There will always be information that you can’t quite put your finger on but that somehow plays into your perception of the object. Your experience of an object involves taking in all that is accumulated within it—which might be reaching you by way of the object’s surface qualities or the context in which it is shown—and forming it or making it into a different thing.

Since most of these works are shown in gallery or museum contexts, they are usually accompanied by wall labels or similar texts, and I actually rely heavily on the material lists. I think that type of information can be a way of understanding works, particularly if you can’t actually see what they consist of. Whether someone chooses to delve into that information or not is totally a choice, just as it’s a choice whether to spend time with a particular piece or to walk into a gallery in the first place.

Beasley during his performance Movement I:
DEF/ACHE/ CRYSTALLINE/ SLEEVE, 2014; at
the Whitney Museum of American Art. Photo

Installation view. . . for this moment, this moment is yours . . . ,2013,
wood, cassette tape, Akai x-1800SD reel-to- reel player and mixed

Untitled (Queens, NY. November 21, 2013), Photograph.

PEPI In one of your Whitney Biennial works, you "activated" the sculptures by hooking them up to audio equipment. In another, you used processors and microphones for a piece composed of dissonant sounds and accompanied by a movement performance by Leon Finley and Christian Diaz. The latter work in particular seemed to explore a vast range of nonverbal communication. You've spoken about how it was an attempt to express the ineffable.

BEASLEY The purpose is not the materials in themselves, or even the process. It's really about how all of those things actually connect, and then how we sort of react and respond and negotiate.

People experience the world in so many different ways. I try to parallel that in my practice. I can sometimes limit myself, working in certain ways or with certain materials. And I always try to push against that, to try other ways. Even if I am failing and it's not actually getting to what I want to say, I am going to try.

The Whitney performances were the first time I felt like I was really conscious of my body and my movements because I was relying so much on them. I felt really vulnerable because there are so many precedents for using your body in that kind of space.

PEPI The biennial also included a foam and resin work titled Jumped Man [2014]. It consists of two almost rock-like pieces, placed on the ground, with very recognizable and prominent objects affixed to them—two Air Jordan basketball sneakers. Does the title relate to a narrative of any kind?

BEASLEY The work comes from a photograph I took in Queens. There was an abandoned pair of Air Force 1s, just sitting on a grate, and the spacing between the two shoes was really odd. It felt like they belonged to somebody, as opposed to being just some sneakers discarded on the street. I wanted to do a piece with shoes in some way because I am always working with the relationship of a thing, including the body, to its extremities. But I kept thinking about it, and it evolved into an interest in this ownership, this missing body, an interest in disembodied experience—and in trying to find a connection. This led me to the industry developed around these shoes. Everything about the brand is really absurd. Maybe it was cool in the early '90s or something, but by now it's just a ridiculous industry that doesn't address the problems of violence that surround it.

PEPI I did detect a sense of violence in the work. Maybe because it evoked an image of someone's shoes getting knocked off while getting jumped, given the way the shoes are askew in the sculpture.

BEASLEY I don't think that the work is ambivalent. Jordans are specific. If you're a young black male, then they are very specific. I had a tough decision in the studio while I was making this work: should I get generic Jordans or the really serious ones? In the late '80s, a few years after the original Jordans were released, a young man was killed [for the shoes] and his body left in the woods. Recently, when the Air Jordan 11 Gamma Blues came out, there were news reports about similar killings. I finally realized that my intention was not to single out a specific style of Jordans but rather to call out the presence of the brand, which carries its own weight.

So I feel like that violent narrative is there in the work or that understanding is there. For those who are in tune, that's a quick read. I am interested in addressing the disparity that the shoes represent, or at least in having the work contain some element of that.

PEPI What attracts you to working with analog media—like the tape and the reel-to-reel player—in addition to digital tools?

BEASLEY It's funny because I didn't actually anticipate working with tape. Prior to . . . for this moment . . . , most of my sound works were digital; for example, I Want My Spot Back [performed at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, in 2012] was driven by software. It's kind of beautiful how today you can merge analog and digital—how you can combine a turntable from the early '70s with software that was put out a year ago.

I am constantly thinking about the physicality of the content I use. I also ask what it is about sound that can get us so emotional, that can affect us so deeply. That's not just about the sound itself. It's about where that sound is coming from and our personal histories. The tape was really me thinking about the physicality of walking into a space and hearing something. When you're listening to something, there is a physical process that is happening—not only in the movement of sound waves, but also in the act of being present.

There was so much tape in that work that there was no looping. I was really specific about not having a loop, or at least about having the time of the loop be so long that no single viewer would experience repetitions. So the physical qualities of the tape allowed people to walk into the space and experience something really particular that they wouldn't experience again, at any other point during the exhibition.

PEPI Would you say there was an element of "analog purism" there?

BEASLEY I am very interested in analog media as a physical, tactile thing, but I'm not necessarily a purist. I think all ways are adequate. When you speak about a purist, the question is always, "A purist of what?" You could say that electronic sound is a bastardization of analog technology, but you could also say that analog technology is a bastardization of acoustic instruments. Last night I was thinking about the Beatles' tape edits and how invested the group was in coming up with different sounds in postproduction. It's about the emotion and the feelings that are elicited when you combine disparate elements, or try to expand the medium or push it beyond what is given to you.

PEPI Take me through your thinking regarding the wooden cabinet holding the reels in the Casey Kaplan installation.

BEASLEY If I am thinking about the sort of sculptural quality of tape and sound, then I'm interested in any opportunity to demonstrate that, and so that's how the cabinet came in. The different shades of brown in the tapes recall wood grain and wood furniture. That relationship is very physical and succinct. I'm interested in the aesthetic and formal properties, but also in the practicality of being able to see all of the tapes there. You're not listening to them all, but they're all present; you're experiencing them in some way. You can even count them if you'd like. There's a closeness and tactility to that. And that is how the work begins to reveal itself.

CURRENTLY ON VIEW Works by Beasley in "Cut to Swipe," at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, through Mar. 22, 2015

MIKE PEPI is a writer living in New York.

Pepi, Mike. "In the Studio: Kevin Beasley," Art in America, December 1, 2014

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Cleopatra's

Cleopatra's and Kevin Beasley at Interstate Projects

June 25, 2013

All Different: For I do, I suppose, take part in multitude.

Cleopatra's: Let's begin with the title for this project. Where does it come from?

Kevin Beasley: It's a quote that comes from a book that is comprised of all these audio essays by Christoph Cox and from a section written by DJ Spooky, who was quoting Plato- It's one of Plato's dialogues, Parmenides- It's a section out of that where he is talking about form, and multiplicity and the body.

C: Maybe we should begin with our invitation from Tom Weinrich for this project? We were offered the courtyard and with that in mind, we thought about how to activate the space. It seemed appropriate to integrate some kind of sound installation so we met with Kevin for inspiration. Kevin, how did you decide to hang 30 wind chimes in the Interstate Projects courtyard?

KB: I think my initial impression was thinking about a space and a duration of time and the duration is potentially longer than 15 minutes or 45 minutes and it's something that would be or could possibly be on view. All of those variables opened up potentiality for me because it was nothing I would ordinarily think about: doing an outdoor piece that is situated in a semi-public, semi-private, residential, industrial, commercial gallery of a show organized by a group of curators who are interested in exhibiting work; all of that meshed together.

I thought about the possibility of there being multiple instances of 'something' that can be generated out of one initial act. That sort of leads back to the title and also that prompt. And I think that a bell delineates this idea in that out of so many different instruments it is often times multiplied in tones, like in the case of wind chimes. However, the bell remains a singular thing. You wouldn't have that with a trumpet or any kind of string instrument. Anything percussive has that ability. Continuing that thought about multiplicity, the bell, even in its makeup (as in strike-tones) you have these different resonant points that happen. When you hear a bell, you hear a very sharp noise that is a certain note. That noise or sound is multilayered with several different keys and tones in just one bell. You get partials, but it is all part of one thing. I was very much interested in that, it sort of paralleled what's happening with Cleopatra's (four women working under one moniker) and what's happening in this courtyard with Interstate Projects and the context of the show inviting numerous curators and spaces and people who are all brought to one place.

C: So many more points of contact than an individual show.

KB: Yes, that became really interesting to me because I found a parallel in wind chimes, in the way they're handled and sound speaking.

C: Not to demystify the wind chime too much, but how did you come to a wind chime versus a series of bells that you could string up?

KB: Because the wind chimes also possess this other element of uncontrollability or the of possibility of it being arrested and taken from me or taken away from people. For example, during the opening everyone was here and there was no sound (from the chimes). They were just very still.

KB: Maybe I'm assuming but I feel like there is a parallel in this and how Cleopatra's is giving up your space for this particular project. Pushing it further and thinking about how you're not in total control of the gallery or the space. Between curators and artists, there is always that

control thing happening. As the work developed, one thing that became interesting for me was having this sort of variable that would just produce (manifest) something completely on its own but would always be a part of the initial conversation.

C: Was the idea of chance built into the project? Did you have expectations one way or the other?

KB: Yeah, it is built in, because I'm asking the wind to perform for me. Also, for these things to not come down; for the weather to conduct, the conditions and the people to activate the objects. That was something that I hoped - that it would be perfect.

C: There was a moment where we were installing and we asked "what happens if the whole thing just collapses?", and you said "well then the whole thing collapses". The wind chimes, could break, each time I have been here, it's been different; The one you're sitting under was mangled during the performance and has now kind of gotten itself together. It's been kind of amazing to see the piece transition. We keep referencing the performance and I think there is something important about change and installation. Do you think you could relay some thoughts surrounding the performance from it's inception? For example, the placement of the event in the middle of the exhibition period.

KB: I think I understood that the performance was in some way a focal point. Initially, the performance was the crux of the whole thing. It was a point where something happens - like some type of explosion. This is something that I keep wanting to get into: the possibility of people revisiting and listening, and their listening being shaped by the revisit. There's the space and there are these events that have taken place. If someone comes for the performance, it will be totally different. People will say 'this is completely different than what I saw before' and not only because its on a different day and different time. The fact that there is a performance and there wasn't a performance before... I wanted to highlight the ideas of change in condition as something that drives our perception of time, place, and objects. There was a kind of shift that happened post event, a rupture that had potential to re-generate an alternative awareness of the installation.

C: Can you explain the request you made for audio files from the four curators (Cleopatra's)?

KB: By the time I asked you all for audio files, we had already decided that there would be wind chimes installed, which, to me, seemed like a kind of simple beginning or premise. Everyone knew what the installation was, so thinking about how wind chimes would be present, and thinking about that object and that sound and what I do, taking sound and making objects or art or experience out of them, then - what would you send me if I just asked you? In the email I wrote to you all, I kind of explained the hum tone as a premise; I felt like I was trying to shape the thoughtfulness, wanting that thoughtfulness to be there in the giving of this audio but it didn't matter in what format or what it was actually, just that this sort of attentiveness was carried through. I asked everyone to send me audio snippets from wherever. Anyone could find a bunch of audio files but that wasn't interesting to me; what was interesting to me was the possibility of what would you all would present and that kind of inclusion. Whether you actually recognize what you heard or not, I was really curious about what could be extrapolated from that. As Tom was asking you guys to do something and not knowing what you would come up with, I was being thoughtful in the same way. I think the repetition in these acts generates something that I could not have anticipated.

C: When we first met and you told us about the kind of sound projects you had done previously, the content was a lot more charged. It was political in some cases - specifically the sounds from the LA riots - and personal in other cases. What changes in the performance when the content is "lighter"?

KB: It's actually really refreshing to me. I think that was maybe the prompt in the email. There are these levels of sensitivity carried through everything. I pick the tracks and have all the control, but even with the riots, I had interest in wanting to hear recorded content from the riots. By making that decision and not really knowing what else would happen, you kind of fall into the same thing where elements jump out at you and present themselves to you. How do I deal with that? How do I navigate this content? Then, it becomes important to me. I think maybe it's too full because there are these personal connections here, geographically, where we live, our friends, that can perhaps be embedded in the work without being totally explicit. The relationship we were able to have on a very sort of local level can be maintained. It doesn't mean that that's not important. I don't want to deny that in any way. I'm aware that it also shapes the work or the project because this wasn't something that you guys thought 'well we want that one (talking about the courtyard),' you were interested in developing something. If we're going to develop something than I'd like to think about it in as many possibilities.

C: I'm wondering what interests you more: the textured multitude or the single ion, you know, the origin. I do think that the origin is not getting lost, but being layered. It's literally what you do in your performances. Is your ultimate goal to erase that origin?

KB: No, I think that maybe I have a backwards way of thinking about that origin. I can investigate that origin. This is why I am so interested in the powers of 10 - thinking about this videos by Charles and Ray Eames - I talk about it so much now- but it's what we consider to be or what we may have thought to be the original and how it expands or how it gets smaller and smaller. How getting very close to something becomes very expansive and you can't really grasp what that is or it's so dense that you can't actually grasp what that is. I feel like that's what I'm trying to do. The sounds or the manipulation is fairly simple. I'm either stretching or slowing everything down. I had a drum teacher who would say 'if you could play really fast, you can do that as much as you want, but to really understand a note you have to be able to play it as slow as possible and maintain a rhythm'. If you can maintain a rhythm at a very, very, very slow tempo then you have a different understanding of time. You're not really realizing time when you're playing as fast as you can. So, I'm always trying to slow things down and I feel like maybe I have a better understanding; Or I get closer to what it actually is in a way; Then there is this other thing, this manipulation that I'm constantly doing, which is breaking up all the sound files into partials. It's like an explosion, a nonabrasive explosion.

C: What is a partial?

KB: A partial is when you take the little parts that make up the larger thing. There is a software that I've been using called Spear that actually takes audio files and explodes them into these partials. Each partial holds a key and a frequency. You take all of your frequencies and you add them all up and then you have your song. It analyzes everything backwards so if you were to select certain frequencies you could then maybe hear what the track was originally, but it's only through these partials.

C: Would a partial be comparable to a pixel?

KB: Yeah, it would take you forever but if you were able to select all of these different pixels to be visible, but you didn't select ones that were right next to each other, this is sort of the same thing.

C: Do you think visually when you are utilizing sound?

KB: Well yeah, with the software I'm using there is a visual. But I don't always use software and it does always, at some point, come to a visual realm, where I can see the sound wave, and, in which case, I'll just turn the monitor off and listen.

C: Is there any reason for the laying out the wind chimes in this four-stringed linear format here in a triangular courtyard?

KB: It maps the architecture but it also maps the possibility of what we can do. We weren't allowed to hang from the adjascent building, so the triangle from corner to corner is the longest element.

C: You could have done one line.
KB: Yeah, I could have but I don't think that would have been interesting

C: So you were thinking about the volume of the space?

KB: Yeah, the volume of the space and also where the chimes are. Sonically, you can be here and not be able to hear that bamboo, but I'm sure when you're at the door you can hear it. I'm sure that when people are in here, the flow and movement of changes. In wanting these different sounds to have a space - especially when perceiving all the wind chimes - they're so varied that some you don't want next to each other and others you do.

C: Aesthetically...?

KB: Aesthetically and sonically. That was something Erin and I talked about during the installation. The color of one or the height of another one – we wanted them to be at varying heights, so you can play with that – there's a tangibility to that.

C: Can we talk more about the wind chime? Do you think of a wind chime as being something meditative or soothing or spiritual? People then pull it so far away from that; The aestheticization of them, you know, they're really tacky!

KB: They're like characters, with personalities.

C: Right, you're sitting under one now that holds six different angels praying, handpainted, which is spiritual I suppose. And that fish! Is there anything about that aspect? Or did you just completely ignore the instruments.

KB: I do think about the fact that a lot of them came from the Midwest and that being interesting. There is this personalization of them. I don't know how many

of them are actually hand made and perhaps a lot of them are manufactured. The fact that they appeal to a demographic and that you can get them at a flea market indigenous to that area.

C: They're passive. It takes something to move them or to provoke a noise. There is a design in place that is wonderful and yet nothing happens until the wind comes. With bells, in a social way- whether it's from church or it's an alarm or it's a warning, it's more aggressive. Wind chimes are so passive and pleasant which is why they're hanging on someone's porch or outside your window. You don't mind if you're hearing it off and on for however long, you wait for them to sort of act up. Similar to the collaging of the sound that we gave you, the sounds are found materials. Even though you made a call for the materials, they're still found not made. Do you think about the connectivity of the work made here, you sound work and other sculptures too?

KB: Yeah, this is the first sound installation that I have done. I haven't made an art object that possesses sound, one you can go and see it and it's on view for however long. I don't really have a precedent for that.

C: I've been thinking about your sculptures, the motor, the gin. We've talked about manipulation, you manipulating raw material into this thing. There is an element that preexists and then you come in. Parallel with the wind chime, the thing exists, statically, not doing more than that. Your work, it seems, observes, and slows down things - whether that is the strange patina and massive size of this gin. How you recognize and freeze this moment, observe it in a natural state and see what it wants to do. I wonder if you have the same approach to these different objects, sounds and material?

KB: Well I do feel like I'm constantly thinking about material. I think about where material can be found. Every piece of material has gone through some kind of processing or has reached a certain point to where we then find it and work with it. So then thinking about what is raw material is really only raw by comparison, relatively speaking. I'm trying to suspend that and then think: these wind chimes are a certain material. They have a history and have gone to different places. I feel like I have to deal with whatever that is - maybe its because all of this history is already embedded in the material, I don't necessarily have to add more shit on. Beyond what the thing is, in that of itself and its context, who is seeing it? Where it is located?

C: It seems like there is a social history to these things: the found sound, it's us, or even the riots, these wind chimes, as you were saying, you could have made chimes from steel tubing. We would have come in and you would have had 30 steel tubes hanging and that is a much more formal piece. It wouldn't be about this colloquial thing that exists in the world. Same for the social history of the gin or other things. You could make cast metal objects, instead of finding this one or framing that one as you do.

KB: I remember talking about making wind chimes and that being an interest but then I feel like this way presented many more questions. Instead of me having control over whatever it is, what I am learning or realizing more and more is that we would know too much as opposed to other questions and things I don't normally think about that much. I started this project, you guys sent an image of some crazy wind chimes, I opened it and started to think about all of the different wind chimes. There's one that my parents have in their house that I feel has just been there forever. But, it's inside. It's in the kitchen. It has a little baseball and a baseball bat and it's really tiny. I was thinking about that, the visual of that and the fact that it's inside so it doesn't really make any noise at all. It just sits there. That is a point of departure that I can continue to think about. In relation to my own work, in terms of where it comes from, it's sort of a point of origin, through these little objects.

"Cleopatra's and Kevin Beasley at Interstate Projects: All Different: For I do, I suppose, take part in multitude," June 25, 2013. Online.

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Cleopatra's

Immediate Release:

...all different: for I do, I suppose, partake of multitude

Kevin Beasley

Curated by Cleopatra's

June 14 – 30, 2013 Performance: June 22, 7:30pm

When one strikes a bell there are several tones that prevail, yet the hum tone is one that lies an octave below the strike tone, the resonance being that of multiple tones within one note/or tone of an instrument. A layering that happens at the time of the actual singular act where a multitude is always produced. So what happens when "we" recognize the initial parts as a multitude and seek to expand that multitude exponentially?

...all different: for I do, I suppose, partake of multitude is an exhibition by Kevin Beasley, comprised of two parts: a site specific installation made from 30 varying wind chimes and a performance building live feed from the installation and pre-recorded sound bites.

Kevin Beasley (b. 1985, Lynchburg, VA) received his BFA from the College for Creative Studies, Detroit and his MFA in Sculpture from Yale University in 2012. He has exhibited nationally with The Butcher's Daughter, Detroit and in group shows in Los Angeles, throughout Michigan, and New York. Beasley's performances were featured during Some Sweet Day at the Museum of Modern Art, New York and Danspace Projects, New York. Beasley's work was also featured in Fore at the Studio Museum in Harlem.

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Gimme Shelter | Infiltrating the MoMA Atrium, Part 1: An Interview with Ralph Lemon on the Curation of "Some sweet day"

December 7th, 2012 by Marissa Perel

Marissa Perel [MP]: Where did you grow up? What was the cultural landscape like?

Ralp Lemon [RL]: I grew up in Cincinnati, Ohio and Minneapolis, Minnesota, with my mother listening to Dinah Washington and Louis Armstrong, while I listened to the Beatles and the Stones and Jimi Hendrix and Captain Beefheart. I learned the blues through brilliant white musicians from England. So, I feel like my creative world started from that constellation. I had a very black highyellow mother, from a very black South Carolina culture, while I grew up in Cincinnati and Minneapolis, which were racially promiscuous, a miscegenation of culture, especially Minneapolis. There was a riff, a kind of improvisation going on all the time between race and culture. The tricky music I was listening to felt right to my body.

When I studied art in a Minneapolis high school, I studied Pollock, DeKooning and Warhol; there were no black artists I was looking at, or black art, whatever that was at the time. And the art I was looking at–I wasn't looking at it as art done by white men; I was looking it as art that I found [either] compelling or not so interesting. This was before I started looking at the rest of the world, and the origins of black art, or black music, Africa or Mississippi. As I grew older but while still a youngster, I was looking at artists that seemed to be working within an idea of freedom, contained, transgressive freedom, but it was freedom, capacious. Charley Patton, Son House, Dinah Washington, Louis Armstrong, Ella Fitzgerald, Charlie Parker, Frank Zappa, Cream, Nina Simone, Herman Melville, William Faulkner, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, David Hammons, Bruce Nauman, Katherine Dunham, Merce Cunningham, Viola Farber, Steve Paxton…and all of the artists in Some sweet day. The cosmology is wide.

MP: How did your history, your experience of the 'riff between race and culture' inform your curatorial vision for Some sweet day?

RL: The idea was originally conceived for the ICA in Boston in 2006-7, a show about the blues, blues music as a metaphor for American culture. The ICA show never happened, but I was still interested in pursuing its themes. Blues as blackness as a radical actingout of culture– radical action not for the sake of radical action but radical because there is no other alternative. Black music as a metaphor for a kind of creative source material coming from a very violent and suppressed history. Something like that.

In 2009 Connie Butler invited me to be part of the 2010 On Line exhibition at MoMA, and to work in the Marron Atrium. Okwui Okpokwasili and I performed a duet, it was a remarkable experience because of how unmanageable it felt. The audience politic factor in particular; it wasn't a theater, and it didn't seem like a museum. It wasn't something I completely understood, which excited me. So, I thought it might be a good place to pursue what was then

the Blues project. I proposed the idea to Kathy Halbreich, who liked it and boldly got the idea in through the doors.

Danielle Goldman, in her writing for the Danspace Project blog on the recent Conversation Without Walls reflections on Some sweet day, described the concept more inclusively, as a kind of "fugitivity." And I suppose that fits in the matrix. So I was working with a translation of this idea of blackness but primarily I was working with the question of being a curator versus an artmaker.

I had this idea of bringing different artists, artists that I admired, into this complex container. I wanted to share a concept that is personal and has been generative to me, but one that might also be useful to a larger community.

MP: Did it work out the way you expected? Did your perception of what it was change from your initial vision of what you thought it might be?

RL: I had a lot of fun! It was also a lot of work, and much of my work was about discovering MoMA's system, the precision and rigor of the place. The Atrium is not really a performance space, and certainly not a theater; there was a large learning curve for both of us. We had to figure out how to accommodate groups of performers without dressing rooms and without a wood floor, lights, etc. Sound and acoustics were an enormous issue.

A part of the curatorial team was specifically from the theater world to help translate a technical way of working within the MoMA system. The larger collaborative team from both worlds instrumentalized the idea; the whole was exceptionally supportive of the work. Eventually, I was able to just watch. After the performances, people would just hang out and talk. That was a surprise. Near the end I thought, we should have a portable bar, to wheel in and out, for the hanging out part.

MP: I never thought of that space as a place to hang out before. It was just a thruway to get another room or another floor.

RL: I think that speaks to its publicness. There is a potential for exchange in that space, and the series seemed to open that up.

MP: Steve Paxton said that MoMA should open up the space for dancers to experiment there.

RL: Yes, he proposed giving dance artists longer residencies in MoMA, to be in the building longer to make work. We didn't have that kind of time, so Some sweet day felt more like an infiltration. So, yes, in the future for dance to become more realized in the space, artists should be able to spend more time there, so that they are having as much of a conversation with the space as possible, versus just enough time to propose an idea.

MP: Time is also necessary to understand the various audiences that come through MoMA, it's a different world than the theater.

RL: There were three kinds of audiences, at least. The tourist art audience, the visual art audience, and the dance audience. Three very different gazes of looking at art, at least.

MP: Do you think that Some sweet day might have opened up a space for these different audiences to want to see more of what before might have been foreign?

RL: For what I would call the downtown dance audience, I think there was a breakdown of what they thought MoMA was, is. Maybe a breakdown of what has been perceived as a place

of privilege, a place and privilege not completely theirs. A breakdown of some outsider status, perhaps. For the visual art world, that kind of viewing, lens, maybe they saw dance as relevant and part of their art discourse. Maybe. For that other randomlike audience, the tourists, I think dance in the space remained a curiosity at best, like any other kind of art in the museum.

MP: I wondered in that context if the visual art viewers or tourist viewers were able to see dance as other than entertainment.
Performance

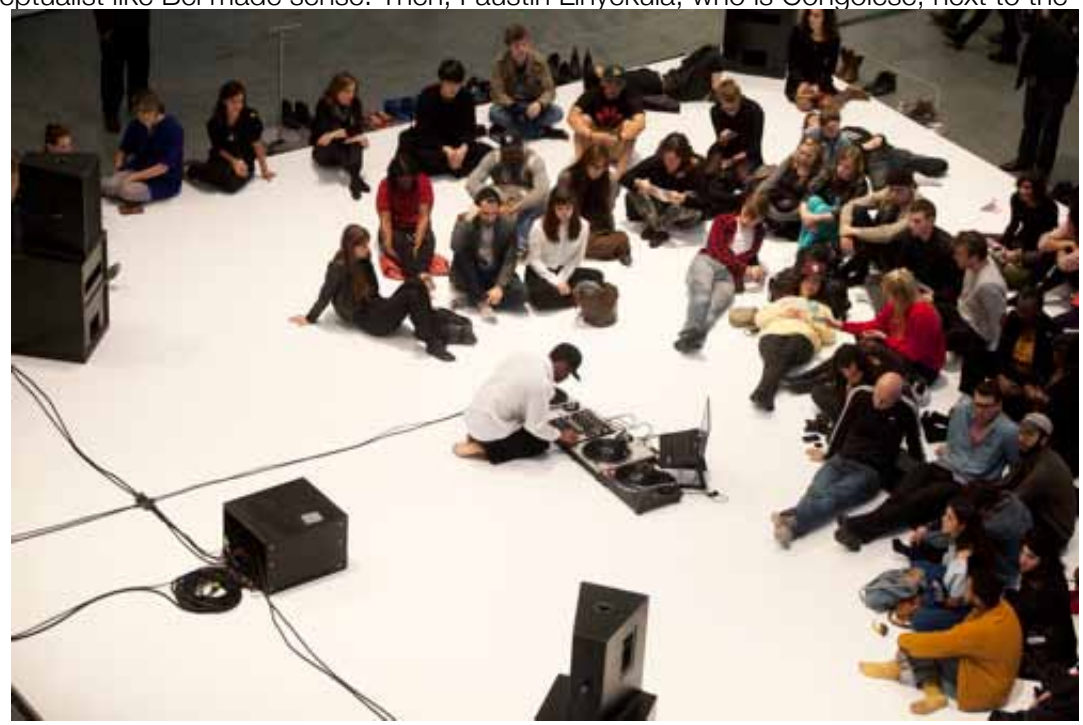
RL: I think they did with particular works, like Paxton's Satisfyin' Lover, for instance. Because of its stillness, its perfect nothingness? But all art is entertaining on some level, making you think, stimulating one's intellect or stupidity, entertaining a darkness, or delight, entertaining a spirit or arrogance.

MP: I wondered how the audience perceived the "Macarena," performed in Jérôme Bel's The Show Must Go On. Was it art or entertainment?

RL: There's that façade of dance or theater. It calls to mind a quotation from Roberta Smith on a Jeff Wall photography show a few years ago, something about the 'awkward immediacy of theater.' It's immediate, but it's not real. But what's real about a beautiful object? Or about a painting that purports to be communicating something beyond its paint and canvas? The way we disregard these different creative processes is a little silly.

MP: How did you decide on the pairings of the artists, was it purposeful to situate two white male choreographers together, two black male choreographers together and two white female choreographers together?

RL: The pairings seemed obvious to me. Putting a Judson artist like Paxton next to a French conceptualist like Bel made sense. Then, Faustin Linyekula, who is Congolese, next to the



Kevin Beasley. "I Want My Spot Back." The Museum of Modern Art, October 2012. Part of "Some sweet day" (October 15 to November 4, 2012). © 2012 Museum of Modern Art, New York. Photo by Julieta Cervantes.

American Dean Moss. They are both so ensconced in race and yet both working very much around it. Then, I thought of the contrast between a contemporary dance fixture like Sarah Michelson and a Judson and contemporary fixture like Deborah Hay. Those pairings just found themselves in my body somehow before they became public.

Kevin Beasley, and his interstitial entry, was terrifying; there were a lot of complaints. The whole building was literally shaking from the reverberations of the music. He was sampling dead hiphop artists from the 1990's like Biggie Smalls and Tupac Shakur. It was a very black and very loud hour. But most visitors, I'm sure, just heard it as very loud, terrorizing. MoMA let it happen, as disruptive as it was. That instance crystallized for me this idea of black music as metaphor for some kind of Americanness. An invasive threatening underrhythm, but also beautiful.

I thought all the works of Some sweet day broke some established spatial and programmatic code, but for me, Beasley's I Want My Spot Back was the most transgressive. It was not a dance, though it was a performance. Kevin sculpted sound. He grew up with hiphop, and he's a DJ studying sculpture. For him, sound is material. He's 23, so race is a different issue for him than it is for me. What is race when you've grown up with it being so ensconced in popular culture? Biggie Smalls and Tupac are wildly popular icons, in life and death. JayZ and Beyoncé are King and Queen of the world, not of black people, but of the world. So, it's a very exciting time. We're able to be fluid, and challenged, and destabilized.

MP: Do you think white people question their privilege, even if JayZ and Beyoncé are King and Queen of the world? Everyone in my generation grew up with hiphop, and all the white people sing it, too.

RL: Like thousands of young white people screaming, "Hell! Yeah! Nigga!" They are really saying it, and they are really feeling it. On some level, they are actually believing it and identifying with it. That is totally absurd, but it's also amazing.

MP: What are they identifying with?

RL: Its blackness. Not its blackpeopleness,its blackness. Its actingout, and its actingout culture. Kanye and JayZ become the messengers. But then the radicalism becomes impotent at the same time. Once it has filtered through its blackpeopleness, it becomes impotent. It becomes more inclusive, and less dangerous. Nigga becomes benign. But black people remain scary, a threat. Those who aren't privileged, those who are suffering, impoverished, disenfranchised are still a danger to a world of privilege.

MP: Each of the artists brought a unique form of transgression to the series, but I found that in order to fully understand how it figured into the work in the Atrium, I had to see the artists within their own contexts.

RL: They were all dealing with being outsiders in that space. None of them belonged in the Atrium, or they didn't belong until they belonged. Fugitives. They had to create their own presence in a space not meant for them. They were all dealing with a "rightness" and "wrongness" in how they were using the space, and how their work was perceived. This brings up something for me about the art tourist audience I mentioned earlier. I saw something happen within that particular audience that really shifted their rhythm. Just being able to sit and be curious and see something live, that they experienced something in that space that was out of the normal rhythm seemed like a good thing. They also became part of a larger community, or an instant community that formed around the performances.

Perel, Marissa. Gimme Shelter | Infiltrating the MoMA Atrium, Part 1: An Interview with Ralph Lemon on the Curation of "Some sweet day," Art 21 Magazine, December 7, 2012. Online.

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The New York Times

Racial Redefinition in Progress
'Fore' at Studio Museum in Harlem

By HOLLAND COTTER
Published: November 29, 2012

In 2001 the Studio Museum in Harlem opened a group exhibition called "Freestyle," the first in what would be a series intended to introduce freshly minted African-American talent. And in the catalog for that show the curator, Thelma Golden, dropped a neat little cultural bomb. She referred to the group of artists she'd chosen, most of them then in their 20s, as "post-black."

Even some young artists to whom it was applied weren't quite clear about what to do with it. Overnight the dynamics of contemporary art changed.

Although little noted in the midst of the uproar at the time, Ms. Golden herself held the term "post-black" at a critical distance, floating it out as a proposition rather than advancing it as a polemic. For her it meant artists who were adamant about not being confined to the category of "black," though, as she wrote, "their work was deeply interested in redefining complex notions of blackness. Post-black," she added with a wry twist, "was the new black."

More than a decade later it still is, to judge by the fourth and latest of the museum's new-generation shows, this one titled "Fore," organized by three young staff curators, Lauren Haynes, Naima J. Keith and Thomas J. Lax. Like its predecessors it keeps racial politics alive but discreet and covers the waterfront in terms of mediums, which it samples and mixes with turntablist flair.

In line with current New York trends, painting gets major attention. Three smallish portraits by Jennifer Packer (born 1985; Yale M.F.A. 2012) of art-school friends kick things off. They're traditional looking and beautiful, their suave brushwork finessed with a palette knife. Portraits by another artist, Toyin Odutola, who was born in Nigeria and now lives in Los Angeles, are more offbeat and generate interesting ideas. Ms. Odutola makes her sitters so black that their forms read like solid, featureless silhouettes from across a room. Only up close do you see that their eyes are wide open, and their skin is a porous weave of ropy ink lines, with rainbow color glinting through like light from behind.

Another Los Angeles artist, Kenyatta A. C. Hinkle, uses images from colonial-era postcards, made for European eyes, to make a point about the vulnerability of the body when seen through a racial lens. In her paint-altered version of the original cards, nude and seminude "native" women from West Africa are under assault from swarming lines of white pigment that bring to mind flames, microbes and spermatozoa.

Then the figure vanishes. It's just a shadowy smudge on an abstract gold field in a diptych by Noah Davis, and absent altogether in abstract paintings by Kianja Strobert, Sienna Shields and Brenna Youngblood.

Ms. Youngblood looks particularly impressive here. She has, however temporarily, exchanged her complicated, object-laden painting mode of a few years ago for a near-Minimalist austerity. But nothing she does is simple. One 2012 picture in the show consists primarily of a plain white unmarked panel, yet the addition of a small scrap of stuck-on signage keeps her art in painting-plus-something-else terrain.

And "something else" in this show covers a lot of ground. What conventional formal category, or categories, can describe Harold Mendez's filmy, soot-black Veronica veils made from dryer sheets, ink and fabric softener? Or Cullen Washington Jr.'s "Caped Crusader," with its collaged black baby superhero anchored to the floor by a T-Mobile sign? Or Eric Nathaniel Mack's "Honey Hollow," consisting of nothing more than a paint-brushed blanket hanging loose on the wall and stirred by the breeze from a nearby fan?

Unprepossessing to the eye, it does a lot of conceptual hard work, mashing together the essences of painting, sculpture and kinetic installation. Depending on who's looking, the piece is either barely there, or a sly celebration of material movement in space, of performance art without bodies.

Performance art has a significant place in "Fore," as it does in the local art world these days, with blackness weaving in and out of it. It's hard to locate in a choreographically executed wall drawing by Taisha Paggett, but forms the troubled heart of a two-channel video by Nicole Miller.

On one screen Ms. Miller appears, coached by a white ballet instructor in a pristine studio as she practices classical barre exercises she learned as a child. On the other screen a group of young black woman, with men hovering, rehearse a sexually explicit form of Caribbean popular dance called daggering in a murky Brooklyn nightclub. The piece asks: Is there a connection between the two scenes? Yes. And what's the connection? No answer.

Quite different in spirit, though in its way no less inquiring, is a video called "Reifying Desire: Model It," by the speedily emerging young artist Jacolby Satterwhite. The piece was made for the show and connects whole cultural worlds.

Mr. Satterwhite is its star, and a natural one. Resplendent in spandex suits and sequined wraps, he vogues up a storm in one digitally enhanced setting after another. But the dance sequences are just one part of an exercise in multimedia maximalism that encompasses fashion, Dada, the Home Shopping Network, Sun Ra, CVS pharmacy chic and highly specialized household appliances designed by Patricia Satterwhite — the artist's mother and collaborator — who calls on art to keep schizophrenia at bay.

Mr. Satterwhite will be doing his complex thing, live, in a two-part performance art program that the museum will roll out in December and February, events that give several other artists a chance to extend their range beyond what the galleries can hold.

Steffani Jemison — one of the museum's 2012-13 artists in residence along with Ms. Packer and Mr. Washington — will present a text piece based on urban street fiction of a kind sold in the neighborhood around the museum. The polymathic artist named Narcissister will offer staged equivalents of her gender-bending photo-collages in the show. Jamal Cyrus, from Houston, will deep-fry a tenor saxophone. And Kevin Beasley, whose faintly sinister, bundle-like sculptures sit on the floor here and there, will introduce an immersive sound environment, to which no one will be admitted late and from which no one will be allowed to leave early.

An environment of a different kind, Abigail DeVille's "Haarlem Tower of Babel," is already in place in the museum's open-air courtyard. Assembled by Ms. DeVille from locally scavenged objects and materials (shopping carts, bottles, trash bags) and memorabilia from her grandmother's Bronx apartment, the piece speaks of life on the street, generational bonds, confusion, dispossession and not-having as a chronic, punishing but toughening condition.

These were themes often tackled by African-American artists in the past, including by some of those who founded the Studio Museum in Harlem in the 1960s. And the themes remain relevant now, when the country is coming out of a presidential election shot through with racism, when African-American citizens are being hit disproportionately by a brutal economy, and when the art world, despite the multicultural surges of the recent past, still has scant room for black artists, black anything.

In the circumstances post-black feels like an iffy and unrealistic proposition. Yet it can work. Without identifying itself as "black art," Ms. DeVille's installation brings hard, pertinent existential politics into the museum. And so, in less monumental ways, does other art in "Fore," simply by bearing the clear, proud influence of older artists, living and gone, black and not. Romare Bearden and Robert Rauschenberg are among them. So are David Hammons and the other artists in "Now Dig This! Art and Black Los Angeles 1960-1980" at MoMA PS1. Some of the artists took part in the Studio Museum's three previous important post-black shows.

The young artists in "Fore" take something from all of these forebears but do something to and with it: reshape it, update it, understate it; conceptualize it, magnify or shrink it; and, increasingly it seems, cut it loose from labels. The point is that the something is always there, ready to be passed on, being passed on, no "post" about it.

"Fore" continues through March 10 at the Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 West 125th Street; (212) 864-4500, studiomuseum.org.

Cotter, Holland. "Racial Redefinition in Progress 'Fore' at Studio Museum in Harlem," New York Times, November 29, 2012. Online.