



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 Tasmam 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 Tasmam: 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 infra-structural 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 Yong, 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.

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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

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ARTFORUM

Critics' Picks
March 2015

Kevin Beasley

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

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



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

Schriber, Abbe "Kevin Beasley" *Artforum*, March 20, 2015

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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.

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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 Beasley, *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 what's 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



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.”

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.

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.

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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 on the 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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STUDIO
MUSEUM
HARLEM



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

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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 Bouthillier 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.

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 in 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

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 it's 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. And then you are going to die. That's the way it goes. You know, something's going to happen, you are going to process it, you will feel something, whatever it is and then you are going to die. It's not to be morbid or make light of it but it's just ...

JK: It's an affirming kind of realization because now you better process. Now you better be present.

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 and 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 it's 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 you're 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

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

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Interview

Kevin BEASLEY

The 28-year-old, Virginia-born 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 bundles; 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 sculpture, but his practice eventually returned to his accretion of art materials including a cumbersome 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 amplifying 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

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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



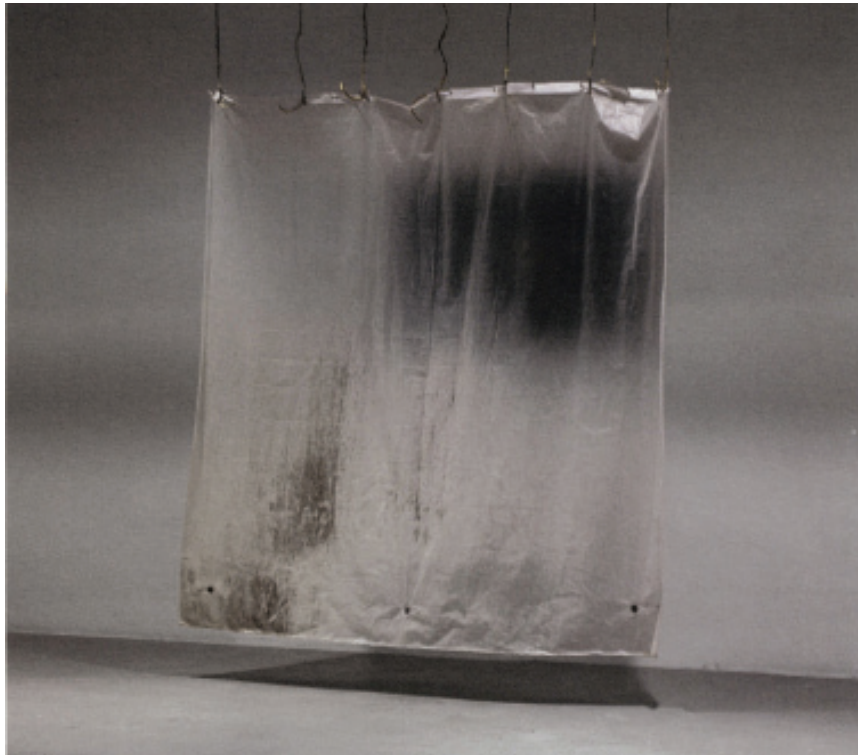
Untitled (Sack), 2012. Foam, resin, T-shirt, mattress cover, cotton, and thermal shirt, 51 x 23 1/2 in. (129.5 x 58.4 x 40.6 cm)

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 anthropomorphic 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. Unflinchingly, 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 object 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 curtain, 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 function. His own body functions as a kind of mold as 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 receiver 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 perceptible, 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 cities that has kept pace with an inequitable America.

Beasley makes reference to particular and contingent bodies, eschewing illusion 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 attention 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, 2012)

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 Project as part of the finale for American choreographer Ishmael Houston-Jones' (b. 1951) platform of experimental 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.org/blog/?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 truncation 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)



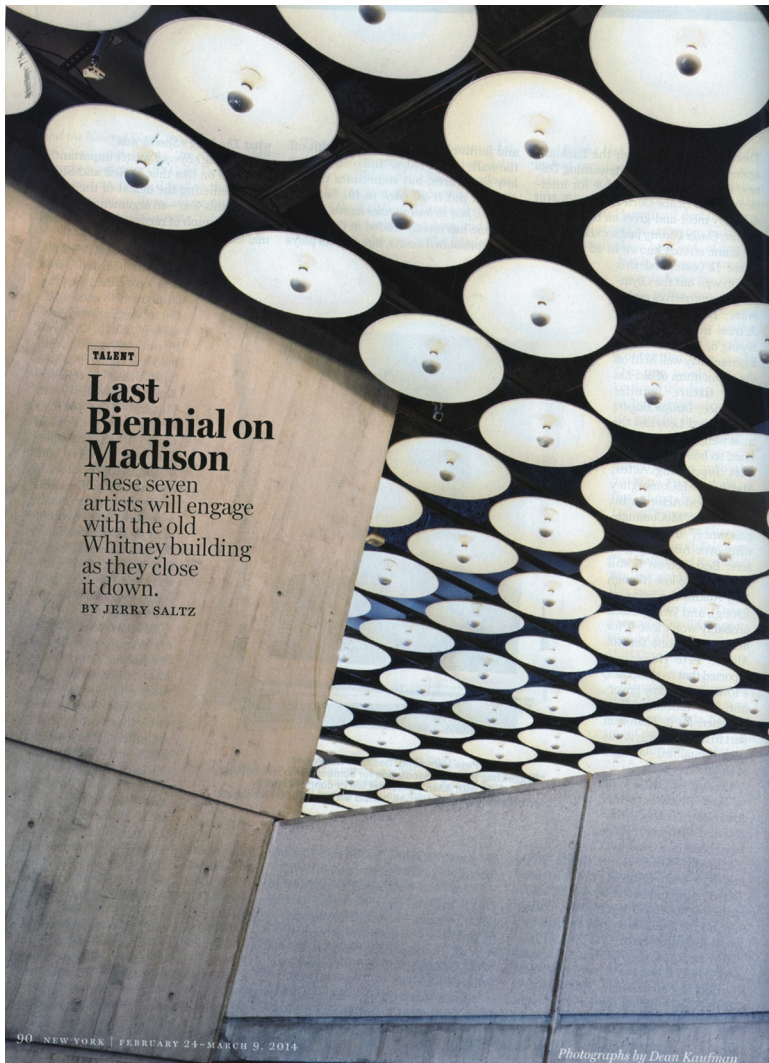
Your Awaited Evening, 2010. Bathrobe and latex, 12 x 7 x 8 in. (30.5 x 17.8 x 20.3 cm)

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NEW YORK

Last Biennial on Madison
by Jerry Saltz

Feb.24-March 9, 2014



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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 Dennis

**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,



“ 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 Paula Court.



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



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.



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

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

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

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.

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 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 adjacent 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

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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 at 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 acting out 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 hip-hop 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 under-rhythm, 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 hip-hop, 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. Jay-Z 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 Jay-Z and Beyoncé are King and Queen of the world? Everyone in my generation grew up with hip-hop, 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 acting out, and its acting out culture. Kanye and Jay-Z 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.

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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 Jacoby 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.