

**CASEY KAPLAN**

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Kevin Beasley: *Sport/Utility*

May 2 - June 17, 2017

Opening Reception: Tuesday, May 2, 6-8pm

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*A solo presentation at Frieze New York will coincide with his exhibition at Casey Kaplan. STAND A7, May 5-7.*