



Kevin Beasley  
*A body, revealed*  
February 11–April 30, 2022

The Hill Art Foundation is pleased to announce *A body, revealed*, a site-responsive exhibition of works by Kevin Beasley, curated by the artist and spanning the past decade. On view at the Foundation’s space at 239 10th Avenue, *A body, revealed* will be open to the public from Friday, February 11 through Saturday, April 30. In developing this presentation, Beasley was granted full access to the Hill Collection and to the Foundation’s galleries, designed by architect Peter Marino. Beasley chose to activate the interstitial spaces in the Foundation, placing key works from the last decade in dialogue with an important bronze from the Hill Collection, Giovan Battista Foggini’s *Laocoön* (circa 1700–1720).

Beasley is concerned with how abstraction can bridge the gap between a figure and its signifiers. His use of lived-in garments charge abstract works with explicit references to the body and probe the limits of representation. Another primary material, raw Virginia cotton, connects to his childhood in Lynchburg, VA, and to land owned by his extended family in Valentines, VA, that in recent years has been leased to a farmer growing cotton. Beasley’s lexicon of cotton, clothing, and other objects that might be seen in a home—works in this exhibition incorporate a neck brace, a mop head, and carpet padding, among other objects—probes the impact of the cotton industry and other cycles of commerce that perpetuate inequity while simultaneously producing the things we use to buttress our individual identities.

The exhibition also foregrounds Beasley’s exploration of the connection between bodies and land, and what happens when a person moves between environments. *A body, revealed* includes works with varied relationships to the space of the gallery: free-standing, wall-mounted, works that lie flat on the floor, and works that sit tucked away on bookshelves and stairwells. His interest in space extends to his engagement with sound, a medium that Beasley has described as “just as physical, tactile and experiential as any other material . . . it’s another material I can use to help understand myself and my environment: where am I located, where are other people located in relationship to me?”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Beasley, quoted in Jenny Schlenzka, “Shaking the Museum: Kevin Beasley,” *Mousse Magazine* 41 (December 2013–January 2014), p. 169.

The presentation includes two works from the Hill Collection, made at different points in the artist's career. *Slab (Site/Picked A Constellation)* was added to the collection in 2017, the year it was made. The work is an important early example of Beasley's "slabs," a term that the artist has used to describe his sculptural formations that reflect on ancient stone reliefs (specifically 9th c. BCE Assyrian reliefs that depict battle or courtly scenes and religious rituals in rich detail and highly schematic imagery). The interplay of du-rags and socks evokes floating bodies against a backdrop of colorful housedresses and kaftans. The bright colors and patterns of the dresses draw focus and upend the figure-ground dynamic, a term borrowed from Gestalt psychology to describe the eye's ability to perceive a figure as distinct from its background. For Beasley, exploring the figure-ground relationship is central to his larger preoccupation with how people are shaped by, and connected to, their environments.

*The Beginning of the End* (2021), a new acquisition to the Hill Collection, prominently features the image of a woven basket printed onto a grid of twelve t-shirts. The photograph was taken by Beasley in 2012 in Maplesville, AL, at the workshop where he purchased the cotton gin motor that became the focus of his 2018–19 Whitney Museum solo exhibition, *A view of a landscape*. The handmade basket was woven roughly sixty years ago by a farm laborer to aid in the collection of cotton. Now, it is framed in a field of recently harvested Virginia cotton and fossilized in resin. Images and material are interchangeable and reference the same origin. In this work, Beasley connects his own familial history with the complex, shared histories of the broader American experience as it relates to the production of cotton and black land ownership in the South.

The exhibition coincides with a groundswell of activity for Beasley. In February 2022 The Renaissance Society will publish *Kevin Beasley: A view of a landscape*, a monograph and double LP providing a comprehensive look at Beasley's work that innovatively places sound on equal footing with images and the written word. He was also recently included in Prospect New Orleans, a citywide contemporary art triennial, for which Beasley established a community garden and gathering place in the Lower Ninth Ward.

**Kevin Beasley** (b. 1985, Lynchburg, VA) lives and works in New York. His practice spans sculpture, photography, sound, and performance, while centering on materials of cultural and personal significance, from raw cotton harvested from his family's property in Virginia to sounds gathered using contact microphones. Beasley alters, casts, and molds these diverse materials to form a body of works that acknowledge the complex, shared histories of the broader American experience, steeped in generational memories. A selection of recent exhibitions and performances include Prospect.5, New Orleans (2021), in which Beasley realizes a multiyear site-specific project in the Lower Ninth Ward; a series of outdoor performances for the Performa 2021 Biennial, New York; *The Dirty South: Contemporary Art, Material Culture, and the Sonic Impulse*, at Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (2021); *Grief and Grievance: Art and Mourning in America*

at New Museum, New York (2021); a month-long residency and solo exhibition at A4 Arts Foundation, Cape Town, South Africa (2020); and *ASSEMBLY*, co-organized by Kevin Beasley, Lumi Tan, Tim Griffin, and Nicole Kaack at The Kitchen, New York (2019). In 2018-2019, Beasley transformed the eighth floor of The Whitney Museum of American Art for his first solo exhibition in New York, *A view of a landscape*, in conjunction with a series of performances. Other past exhibitions include *Kevin Beasley*, Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston (2018); *Hammer Projects: Kevin Beasley* (2017), Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; *inHarlem: Kevin Beasley*, The Studio Museum in Harlem (2016); and *Storylines: Contemporary Art at the Guggenheim*, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York (2015). Beasley's work is included in the collections of The Museum of Modern Art; Art Institute of Chicago; Guggenheim Museum; Dallas Museum of Art; Minneapolis Institute of Art; Pérez Art Museum Miami; Tate, London; San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; ICA Boston; The Studio Museum in Harlem; Hammer Museum; Whitney Museum of American Art, and others.

**The Hill Art Foundation** is a public exhibition and education space that presents rotating exhibitions and ongoing arts education programs. Opened in 2019 in a custom-built 7,700-square-foot space in New York's Chelsea neighborhood, the Foundation is free and open to the public. Exhibitions typically include works on loan from the Hill Collection, as well as collaborative projects with leading artists, collections, and institutions. The Foundation was founded by J. Tomilson and Janine Hill, collectors and philanthropists based in New York. The Hill Collection focuses on in-depth collecting within four major categories: Renaissance and Baroque bronzes, Old Master paintings, Post-War figurative Modern Masters, and emerging Contemporary artists. Artists whose works are collected in-depth by the Hills include Kevin Beasley, Christopher Wool, Francis Bacon, and Peter Paul Rubens.