



Workshop – Lima – June 2020

Case study: *Your Face Is Not/ Is Not Enough* by Kevin Beasley

Tate – Time-based Media Conservation

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Your face is/ is not enough (2018), by Kevin Beasley. Performance at Tate Liverpool, Liverpool Biennial 2018, 14 July 2018. Image courtesy of the artist and Casey Caplan, New York. Photo: Pete Carr. Source: <https://www.biennial.com/2018/exhibition/artists/kevin-beasley>

Your face is/ is not enough performance video at the Renaissance Society, 2016: <https://renaissancesociety.org/publishing/703/performance-kevin-beasley-your-face-is-is-not-enough/>

Between 2016 and 2018, Tate acquired the performance-based artwork *Your face is/ is not enough* by American artist Kevin Beasley. The artwork was commissioned for the *Ticks of the Watch* exhibition at the Renaissance Society in Chicago in 2016 and besides its performative aspect, it is also comprised by unique sculptural props using masks and megaphones that after been worn are left installed in the gallery. Both the gas masks and the megaphones might suggest for many images of protest or police riot gear. These have been associated to situations of unrest such as Ferguson, Baltimore, Syria or Turkey.¹

¹ In *Your face is/ is not enough* Trustee Note by Tate curator mark Godfrey (internal document).

This work consists of twelve NATO-issued gas masks with megaphones altered by the artist with several materials such as polyurethane foam, eleven microphone stands and the participation of 12 performers. Performers in *Your face is/ is not enough* are ideally from minority racial or ethnic backgrounds, are part of local communities, and they do not have to have prior experience or training in performance or performing arts.

The performance occurs at least once, on the opening of the exhibition. Prior to the performance, eleven stands should be installed in the exhibition space. When the performance takes place the twelve performers wear the altered gas masks and carry the megaphones. Each enters the gallery space, stops beside a microphone stand, attaches the hand-held voice-receiver of the megaphone to the nozzle of the gas masks using Velcro, and begin a series of three deep and audible breaths followed by a loud 'AAH' sound. This sequence is repeated thirty times over a period of approximately 25 minutes. At the end the receiver is detached from the gas mask and is re-attached to the megaphone. The megaphone is rested on the floor, and the mask is placed on top of the stand except for one. The performers bow and leave the space. The masks are now installed and can be experienced as a sculptural installation.

The logistics of activating this artwork involve a call for 13 performers (12 performers plus one back-up). In addition, the involvement of the artist studio is required in the production of the work with the artist's presence or a studio representative to work with the performers in preparation for the performance. Hence, the performers are required to attend two three-hour rehearsals/ workshops in days prior to the performance.

Your face is/ is not enough was shown at Tate Liverpool directly after its acquisition. It formed part of an exhibition in the Liverpool Biennial in 2018 with two performances of the work taking place on two different days during the opening weekend. This activation was crucial for the time-based media conservation team to further understand this performance and to identify resources at this stage that will help retaining its "live-ness" in the future.

During our fieldwork in Liverpool we observed and captured both performances but also the rehearsals where the artist transmitted the work to the chosen group of performers. Experiencing the rehearsals and different performances in Liverpool as well as analysing all the data gathered from them contributed for the creation of three different documentation tools in use to document performance-based artworks at Tate: performance specification, activation report and instructions for performers:

Performance specification: this identifies important aspects that we must transmit when showing the artwork at Tate or when we are coordinating a loan. Some of these aspects are simply logistics that must be taken into consideration but also the constant elements and the flux that comprises *Your face is/ is not enough*.

Activation report: is a record of stakeholders involved and the type of alterations to the artwork that might have occurred. In the future, when reflecting on different activations of the work, these reports will allow us to track changes and the ways the artwork is evolving within the collection. Information from this report can feed back into the performance specification.

Instructions for Performers/ Instructions for Facilitator: this is something we want to explore with the artist. How can we transmit this work in the future when he is not around anymore? What does it mean to replace him? What is the role of the conservator as a facilitator?

For this workshop we will be revisiting the activation of this performance at Tate Liverpool in 2018 and the documentation that we have been developing since then. We will also discuss issues related with the artist as a delegation agent, the activation of the performance when the unique sculptures required to display this work are not wearable anymore and how these aspects should influence the way we are now documenting this artwork now.

Further reading on Your face is/ is not enough and Kevin Beasley's work:

- Liverpool Biennial Archive 2018: <https://www.biennial.com/2018/exhibition/artists/kevin-beasley> (accessed 25 May 2020)
- Andy Battaglia, 'Kevin Beasley', *frieze*, June 2015: <https://frieze.com/article/focus-kevin-beasley> (accessed 25 May 2020)
- Mike Pepi, 'In the Studio: Kevin Beasley', *Art in America*, December 2014: <https://www.artnews.com/art-in-america/features/in-the-studio-kevin-beasley-63047/> (accessed 25 May 2020)

Further reading on documentation of performance at Tate:

- Documentation and Conservation of Performance at Tate: <https://www.tate.org.uk/about-us/projects/documentation-conservation-performance> (accessed 25 May 2020)
- Lawson, L.; Finbow, A.; Marçal, H.; Developing a strategy for the conservation of performance-based artworks at Tate, In *Journal of the Institute of Conservation*, volume 42, 2019 : <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/19455224.2019.1604396> (accessed 25 May 2020)