



[art21.org/kevinbeasley](http://art21.org/kevinbeasley)



## Kevin Beasley

### ABOUT

#### Born

1985 (Lynchburg, VA)

#### Education

College for Creative Studies, Detroit, BFA  
Yale University, MFA

#### Lives and Works

New York City

#### About the Artist

Kevin Beasley has created sculptures and installations made from found materials, including clothing, sports equipment, personal artifacts, and cultural ephemera. Using polyurethane foam and resin to give these objects their own solidity and form, Beasley molds them into wall assemblages and standalone sculptures. T-shirts, colorful house dresses, and durags take their own haunting shape, referencing the bodies that may have once inhabited them. These items weave together Beasley's own memories and experiences, along with historical and cultural references, in order to examine the role of power and race in American society. Beasley also incorporates microphones, audio processors, and mixers into his works, activating the sculptures through live performances.

### TEACHING CONNECTIONS

#### Media and Materials

clothing  
installation  
sculpture  
sound

#### Key Words and Ideas

abstraction  
cotton  
family  
history  
home

industrialization  
material  
memory  
preservation  
sound

#### Related Artists

Lawrence  
Abu Hamdan  
Minerva Cuevas  
Leonardo Drew  
Ilana Harris-Babou  
Christine Sun Kim  
Christian Marclay

Song Dong  
Stephanie Syjuco  
James Turrell  
Jack Whitten  
Anicka Yi

“Sound has always been important to me, and it has increasingly become a way for me to process the world.”  
—Kevin Beasley

**How to Use This Guide**

Art21 encourages active engagement when teaching with our films. The questions and activities below are recommendations for incorporating Art21 films featuring Kevin Beasley into your classroom. Each class will likely require different adaptations for best results.

**NOTE:** Please view all films before sharing them with your students.

**Before Viewing**

Establish key ideas, in anticipation of viewing the film(s):

- ① Why do artists use sound?
- ② What materials do artists use?
- ③ How can history be important when talking about the present?

**While Viewing**

Support active viewing, and pause the film to clarify particular ideas:

- ① What sounds does Beasley use? What reasons does he give for using them?
- ② List the materials Beasley uses in the film.
- ③ Which historical moments does Beasley reference? Why is he interested in them?

**After Viewing**

Follow-up on key ideas and synthesize information learned from the film(s):

- ① What does Beasley want the audience to do when hearing the sounds in his installations?
- ② How does Beasley's reaction to cotton growing on his family's farm serve as inspiration for multiple works of art?
- ③ Why does Beasley mix objects from the past and present? What connections does he imply?

**Related Activities**

Engaging in creative activities after watching Art21 films can reinforce learning and stimulate ideas. Art21 encourages educators to adapt these activities to their classrooms.

- ✓ What does your past sound like? Recall a strong or recurring memory—it could be from yesterday, last week, or even 5 years ago. What does it sound like? Is there laughter, cheering, crying, music, or does it sound like something else entirely? Use mixed materials like paper, fibers, or paint to make an artwork about the sound of your memory.
- ✓ What is your favorite material or medium to work with? Conduct research on the history of the material or medium answering these questions: Where does it come from? How is it made? Who makes or produces it? Then use a different material or medium to make an artwork on your research findings.