



**Kevin Beasley**

- 1 *Your face is/is not enough*, 2016  
Courtesy of the artist and Casey Kaplan, New York

**Peter Downsbrough**

- 2 *AND AS AS PLACE SET*, 2016
- 3 *AND AS THERE*, 2016  
Courtesy of the artist and Barbara Krakow Gallery, Boston; Galerie Thomas Zander, Cologne; àngels barcelona; and Galerie Martine Aboucaya, Paris

**Goutam Ghosh**

- 4 *Nuri*, 2016
- 5 *Further Border*, 2016
- 6 *Low*, 2016
- 7 *Hug Me*, 2016
- 8 *Worm & Pool*, 2016
- 9 *High Altitude*, 2016

- 10 *Gymnasium*, 2016  
Courtesy of the artist and Standard (OSLO), Oslo

**Falke Pisano**

- 11 *The value in mathematics (language)*, 2015
- 12 *Negotiations in exchange*, 2015  
Courtesy of the artist and Hollybush Gardens, London

**Martha Wilson**

- 13 *A Portfolio of Models: The Earth Mother; The Housewife; The Working Girl; The Professional; The Goddess; The Lesbian*, 1973
- 14 *Mirror, Mirror*, 2014
- 15 *Posturing Series: Posturing Drag; Captivating a Man (Butch); Posturing: Age Transformation; Posturing: Male Impersonator, 1973/2008*  
Courtesy of the artist and P.P.O.W.

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**BETWEEN THE TICKS OF THE WATCH**

KEVIN BEASLEY, PETER DOWNSBROUGH, GOUTAM GHOSH, FALKE PISANO, MARTHA WILSON

“Why should actuality forever escape our grasp?” George Kubler asks in his book *The Shape of Time*. He goes on to describe how the slow speed of human perception and the instantaneous receding of the present into the past leave a definitive sense of the world just out of reach. “Actuality is when the lighthouse is dark between flashes,” Kubler writes. “It is the instant between the ticks of the watch: it is a void interval slipping forever through time: the rupture between past and future: the gap at the poles of the revolving magnetic field, infinitesimally small but ultimately real.” If this suspension is fundamental to human experience, our understandings of the world, in turn, come to be shaped by the movement between certainty and questioning, by the dialectic of knowledge and doubt.

The most familiar form of this struggle may be the personal trials of religious faith, but a measure of doubt also underwrites the long philosophical tradition of skepticism and shadows the scientific method, driven by the search for evidence in place of doctrine. Definitive answers to the big questions in life are stubbornly elusive, and once-accepted bodies of knowledge are prone to being revised. This position

can be either daunting or liberating. On one hand, doubt can eat away at the foundations of understanding, even calling into question the possibility of knowledge itself. On the other, it is an essential epistemological method: a means to identify new avenues of inquiry, opening space for the germination of novel forms and concepts, or questioning structures of power that have long been in place.

Featuring artists Kevin Beasley, Peter Downsbrough, Goutam Ghosh, Falke Pisano, and Martha Wilson, *Between the Ticks of the Watch* presents a platform for considering doubt as both a state of mind and a pragmatic tool. Rather than defining the concept or setting out to map its many manifestations, the exhibition explores different valences of doubt, some of the forms it takes, and where it might lead. The five artists occupy different positions, developing individual vantage points while working in relation to different fields of activity or inquiry. The artworks on view offer glimpses of how purposeful uncertainty can open up questions of identity, permeate the construction of language or space, inspire new forms of abstraction or acts of political resistance.

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**Kevin Beasley's** installation *Your face is/is not enough*, comprised of twelve sculptural objects that are designed to be activated, turns to current sociopolitical realities, weighing how protest movements arise from doubt in the system. Each sculpture centers on a gas mask, a powerful symbol that evokes authority, power, discipline, and control. The gas mask has a dualistic character: it is a safety device, but one used by attackers to protect themselves from the weapons they use on other people—say, when officers or soldiers fire tear gas into a crowd. Beasley transforms this equipment, standard issue for police departments and the military, fusing them with materials such as colored foam, or clothing encased in resin (a patterned house-dress, a t-shirt or do-rags). As Beasley appropriates this gear and redeploys it, he creates a more open-ended story: a gathering of individualized masks that are equally carnivalesque and politically assertive. Assembled here, these objects suggest a shift in control: Beasley imagines transferring the gas masks over to a gathered crowd. Paired with megaphones, these sculptures are both functioning means of self-protection and tools of vocal dissent.

**Peter Downsbrough's** works respond directly to the sites in which they are presented. His precise interventions are specific “positions” that reorder one’s field of vision or physical surroundings, while turning words into materialized elements on the floors or walls. At the Renaissance Society, one of Downsbrough’s works occupies the narrow entryway to the gallery. A set of words is mirrored on the two facing walls, interpolating the viewer in between. In his careful placement (or displacement) of

language, lines, and geometric forms, he draws attention to the architecture or to one’s own situation as an embodied subject in the intermediate space. While this foregrounds a physical position, to acknowledge the “in-between” also points to the conjunctions and disjunctions of language. Thoughts of doubt are formulated in language, but this tool itself is forever in flux. To acknowledge the space in-between, then, can have an intellectual dimension as well, an openness to shifting viewpoints.

**Goutam Ghosh's** delicate sculptural boxes and drawings on cloth may appear to have been paused mid-execution, the remaining empty space evoking a state between inception and resolution. Emphasizing a degree of ambiguity and uncertainty in his work, Ghosh develops his own provisional stance on what abstraction might be and how it might function. The artist looks equally to science, religion, and magic, which he observes were once a more unified field of knowledge—now segregated in the modern world. These touchstones provide visual points of reference in certain drawings, such as the hint of an orderly grid. Just as often, Ghosh draws inspiration from science and spirituality as different ways of deciphering the same worldly phenomena. Drawing and painting become mediums in which he reconciles his research across disciplines, reuniting or working through different kinds of knowledge. On one hand, he incorporates empirical methods, using drawing to measure things such as light, shadow, height, and mass. On the other, he sets out, in his own words, to “measure” more nebulous entities, using art “as a medium to challenge what scientific methods cannot reach,

namely the essence of matter, pulse, spirit, and consciousness.”

*The value in mathematics (language)*, a recent video by **Falke Pisano**, centers on a conversation between the artist and two mathematicians as they discuss how closer evaluation can undermine what are otherwise considered to be objective truths or scientific, universal principles. As one speaker observes, mathematics serves to bridge the gap between human cognition and socio-material world—something seemingly fundamental with which to decipher a world that evades a definitive grasp. It may seem at first like there’s little room for doubt when numbers are at stake, but in that “social in-between” there is a lot of variation, from one person to the next, or moving between cultures. Pisano’s sculpture *Negotiations in Exchange*, which is accompanied by a small plaque resembling a museum display, further draws out the direct and indirect relations to power that can go unnoticed. “In practice, the relations among arithmetic elements become entwined with other kinds of concerns in the world. Behind the numbers are the interests of others.”

**Martha Wilson's** photographs scrutinize standard notions of individual identity, delving into acts of self-questioning and pressures to conform to standard types. Wilson’s performative gestures go beyond simply illustrating variable personas or the prevalence of stereotypes. On a deeper level her work challenges the strictures of categories in general, unraveling the ways in which they are applied to identity as a means of easy recognition or control. In *Portfolio of Models*, Wilson “tries on” the various “models” of

womanhood held out to her in the 1970s. Finding that none of them fit, Wilson writes, “All that’s left to do is be an artist and point the finger at my own predicament. The artist operates out of the vacuum left when all other values are rejected.” In the series *Posturing* Wilson also assumes a variety of guises, further amplifying the malleability of identity and the ambiguity of interpersonal experience. These works involve a “double transformation”: in each image she plays the role of a person playing a role, whether dressing as a man in drag dressing as woman, or as a “twenty-five year old artist trying to look like a fifty year old woman trying to look like she is twenty-five.”

Doubt at its core, as these artists’ work suggests, is an urge to think again, to question, and to investigate. More than a passive state, it is an active position, in which one might re-evaluate what seems to be true, reconsider longstanding beliefs, pull at the loose threads of knowledge, or weigh the status quo (and frequently find it lacking). The five artists in *Between the Ticks of the Watch* chip away at assumptions about which ways of understanding the world are most efficacious, and challenge inherited narratives that can infuse our thoughts. While we may always be between the ticks of the watch, doubt can still change one’s perception or overturn received bodies of knowledge. It can be a spur to action.

Curated by Solveig Øvstebø