

# REGEN PROJECTS

Knight, Christopher. "Like a Life Trapped in Amber." *Los Angeles Times* (May 18, 2022)  
p. E3 [ill.]

*Los Angeles Times*

ART REVIEW

## Like a life trapped in amber

With Regen Projects debut, Kevin Beasley uses resin to give his work a subtle edge.

**CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT**  
ART CRITIC

Polyurethane resin became a regular medium for art more than half a century ago, largely through its ample use by Light and Space artists working in Los Angeles. Tech-minded, they were attuned to the plastic material's abstract capacities for luminous translucency and perceptual insight.

That's not exactly what Kevin Beasley is up to with polyurethane resin these days. The Virginia-born, New York-based artist has something more down to earth in mind, while the toxicity of the material, which requires caution in its use, adds a subtle edge. Beasley wields resin like an embalming material — an industrial-strength amber for trapping life's transient flies.

Mortality buzzes in the quotidian atmosphere of his quietly involving debut exhibition at Regen Projects. Some is emitted as actual sound, the popping and crackling that comes from speakers attached to a full-scale, ceiling-height utility pole installed in the second room. That work — dubbed "The Source" — is adapted from a community-intensive piece Beasley recently made for Prospect 5, a New Orleans art invitational.



CHRISTOPHER KNIGHT *Los Angeles Times*

**KEVIN BEASLEY** embeds cotton into resin for paintings and "the last bath."

He bought a vacant lot in the Lower Ninth Ward, still devastated almost 17 years after Hurricane Katrina wrecked countless lives, and erected a utility pole that provides free Wi-Fi. A bereft plot of weedy land gets globally connected absent any commercial draw, like the one at your neighborhood coffee shop.

Something along those lines happens with Beasley's sculptural relief paintings, which loosely suggest abstract landscapes. (Many are titled "Site.") Plain T-shirts and house dresses, often cut up or shredded, are embedded within large, clear, polyurethane resin sheets six or seven feet on a side. Like an updated Pleistocene woolly mammoth trapped in an ice floe or ancient arthropods caught in tree resin, the plasticized reclining body, it also resonates as the container for a sarcophagus. Like Jacques-Louis David's famously poignant painting of Jean-Paul Marat, the French revolu-

tionary leader is caught between an industrial past and its faltering present.

Also critical to the mix: raw Virginia cotton.

Wads of it are incorporated as the binding that holds everything together. The racially coded material harks back to the source of the pedestrian clothing's fabric. Beasley, as a Black man and an artist raised in the American South, is surely attuned to the simultaneous beauty and horror contained within the plant material.

The show's most exquisite and haunting piece, titled "the last bath" — lower-case intended — is visually its simplest. Raw Virginia cotton encased in clear resin is formed into a modern bathtub as sleek as a Brancusi sculpture.

A place of warmth and respite that would envelope a tioneary leader ignominiously killed in his bath, Beasley's sculpture commemorates monumental tragedy — albeit without a hero's body in evidence.

### 'Kevin Beasley: On Site'

**Where:** Regen Projects, 6750 Santa Monica Blvd.

**When:** Closed Sundays and Mondays. Through June 25

**Info:** (310) 276-5424, [www.regenprojects.com](http://www.regenprojects.com)