

Kevin Gallagher  
*Beacon*

11 November 2021 - 7 January 2022

Royal Academy of Arts  
Burlington House, Piccadilly  
London, W1J 0BD

Open Tuesday - Sunday 10am-6pm , Free Admission

<https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/exhibition/kevin-gallagher-beacon>





*Corn Sculpture*, 2021  
Jesmonite, acrylic paint, pebbles, polystyrene, MDF  
Edition of 2, 1 AP



*Corn Sculpture*, 2021  
Jesmonite, acrylic paint, polystyrene, MDF  
Edition of 2, 1 AP



Left

*336 Hour Breakdown, 2017*

Silver-gelatin print treated with simulated stomach acid  
(hydrochloric acid, potassium chloride, sodium chloride, water)



Right

*160 Hour Breakdown, 2017*

Silver-gelatin print treated with simulated stomach acid



*Beacon*, 2021  
Polyurethane, sleeping bag, straps, MDF, paint, steel



*Beacon*, 2021

Polyurethane, sleeping bag, wadding, straps, MDF, paint, steel





*Corn Sculpture*, 2021  
Jesmonite, acrylic paint, polystyrene, wood, steel, MDF  
Edition of 2, 1 AP



*Beacon*, 2021  
Polyurethane, sleeping bag, straps, MDF, paint, steel





*Beacon*, 2021

Polyurethane, sleeping bag, straps, MDF, paint, steel



Left

*Beacon*, 2021

Polyurethane, sleeping bag, wadding, straps, MDF, paint, steel

Right

*Beacon*, 2021

Polyurethane, sleeping bag, straps, MDF, paint, steel





*Beacon*, 2021

Polyurethane, sleeping bag, wadding, straps, MDF, paint, steel



*Commune*, 2020-2021  
Plaster, acrylic paint





*480 Hour Breakdown, 2017*  
Silver-gelatin print treated with simulated stomach acid



*Corn Sculpture, 2021*  
Jesmonite, plaster, wax, paint, polystyrene, wood, steel, MDF

Exhibition photography by Andy Keate

**Kevin Gallagher**

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Speaking with round Chicagoan vowels, my father recounts the story of Barbara McClintock. He tells me how McClintock pioneered research in the field of genetics by studying reproduction in maize. She developed theories to explain the *expression* and *suppression* of genes through photographically documenting the variation in kernel form over generations.

Marina City, affectionately known as ‘the corn cob’ building, is one of the most iconic skyscrapers in downtown Chicago. It was built in the 1960s with a modular structure made of reinforced concrete; each apartment building occupies a kernel’s hollow spot, the dual cobs rising to a height of 61 stories. The structure represents a commingling of urban sprawl embedded within the agrarian state of Illinois.

Once reaching the farmland, you could drive for hours and not see anything but corn. They say the majority of *that* corn isn’t for human consumption, but for ethanol, animal feed, and industry. This monocultural practice has an effect of creating ‘food deserts’, areas where fresh produce is scarce.

Do you carry a place with you when you leave it?

The suburban city I grew up in perpetuated segregationist urban planning. *Bussing* and *redlining* were words that I would later learn to describe simple facts like who my friends were, where they lived, and how long it took them to get to school. We inherit codes before we have words for them.

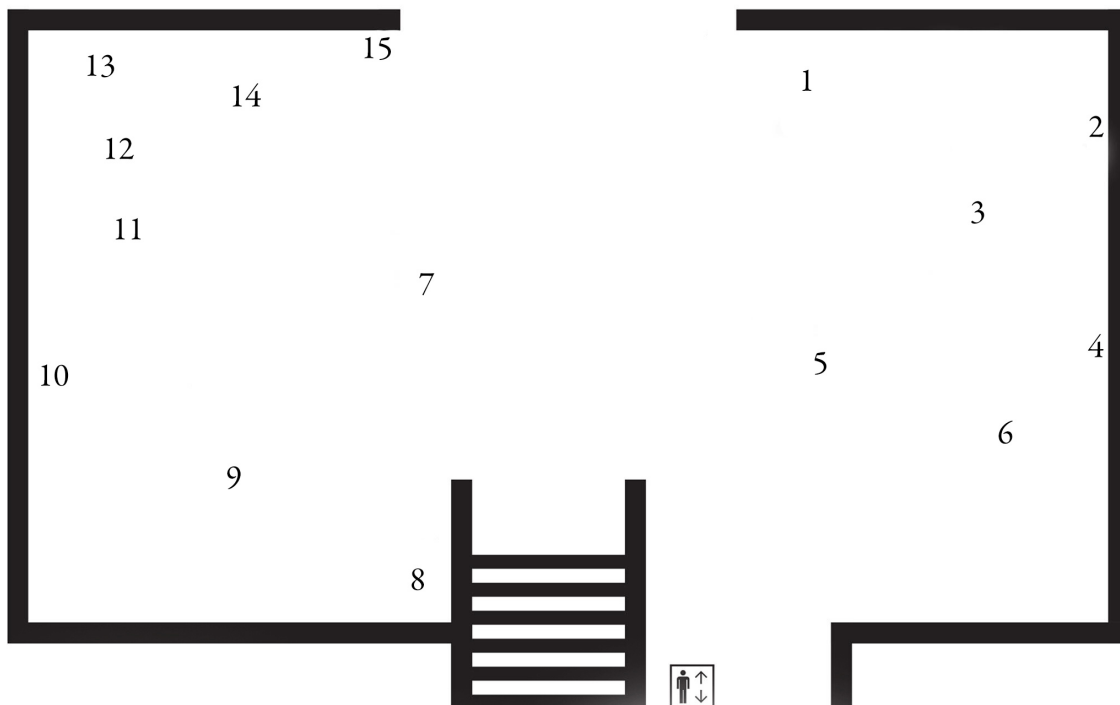
Expression and suppression are modes of carrying. Traits like a nervous laugh, an eye crease, an immunological condition – are expressed or suppressed in the ragged kernels of our DNA. Whether implicit or latent, generations of social policy have similar ways of carrying: the right to vote, to housing, to inherited wealth. Each generation intervenes in the work of previous ones, re-coding what is expressible.

The immense photo archive of Barbara McClintock documents her experiments with corn. First in black and white, and later in color, they depict in detail the complexities of inheritance across generations. Some of the photographs show greatly magnified images of single kernels, each a unique portrait: speckled, withered, luminous. Others show the multitudinous patterning of the kernels along a single cob. Maize was such a prescient subject because the structure already resembled strands of DNA. It illustrated something that wasn’t yet articulated.

Children are the image of the future, and the past. I see my mother in my gregarious greeting, my father in my receding hairline. I’m a young Kevin’s parent – transported from 1960 to 2060. With my wet index finger I roughly draw our features in the smoky glass of the shower and watch the dewy contours fade slowly back into steam. In the following days I see traces of that face again in the greasy imprint that my finger has left behind, etched into the chalky remnants of hard water.

– Kevin Gallagher is the Royal Academy of Arts 2021 Starr Fellow. He was born in 1986 in Evanston, Illinois, US. Gallagher has shown previously at Alma Sarif, Brussels; Fluent, Santander; Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Triangle France, Marseille; Lodos, Mexico City. Together with Perri MacKenzie he co-operates Kantine, an artist-run space in Brussels.

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1. *Beacon*, 2021  
Polyurethane, sleeping bag, straps, wadding, steel, MDF, paint
2. *336 Hour Breakdown*, 2017  
Silver-gelatin print treated with simulated stomach acid (hydrochloric acid, water, potassium chloride, sodium chloride)
3. *Corn sculpture*, 2021  
Jesmonite, acrylic paint, pebbles, polystyrene, MDF  
Edition of 2, 1 AP
4. *160 Hour Breakdown*, 2017  
Silver-gelatin print treated with simulated stomach acid
5. *Corn sculpture*, 2021  
Jesmonite, acrylic paint, polystyrene, MDF  
Edition of 2, 1 AP
6. *Beacon*, 2021  
Polyurethane, sleeping bag, straps, MDF, paint, steel
7. *Corn sculpture*, 2021  
Jesmonite, plaster, wax, fabric, paint, polystyrene, MDF
8. *Beacon*, 2021  
Polyurethane, sleeping bag, straps, MDF, paint, metal
9. *Corn sculpture*, 2021  
Jesmonite, acrylic paint, polystyrene, MDF  
Edition of 2, 1 AP
10. *480 Hour Breakdown*, 2017  
Silver-gelatin print treated with simulated stomach acid
11. *Beacon*, 2021  
Polyurethane, sleeping bag, straps, steel, MDF, paint
12. *Beacon*, 2021  
Polyurethane, pigment, wood, paint, sleeping bag, straps, metal
13. *Beacon*, 2021  
Polyurethane, sleeping bag, ribbon, steel, MDF, paint
14. *Beacon*, 2021  
Polyurethane, pigment, sleeping bag, ribbon, steel, MDF, paint
15. *Commune*, 2020-21  
Plaster, acrylic paint