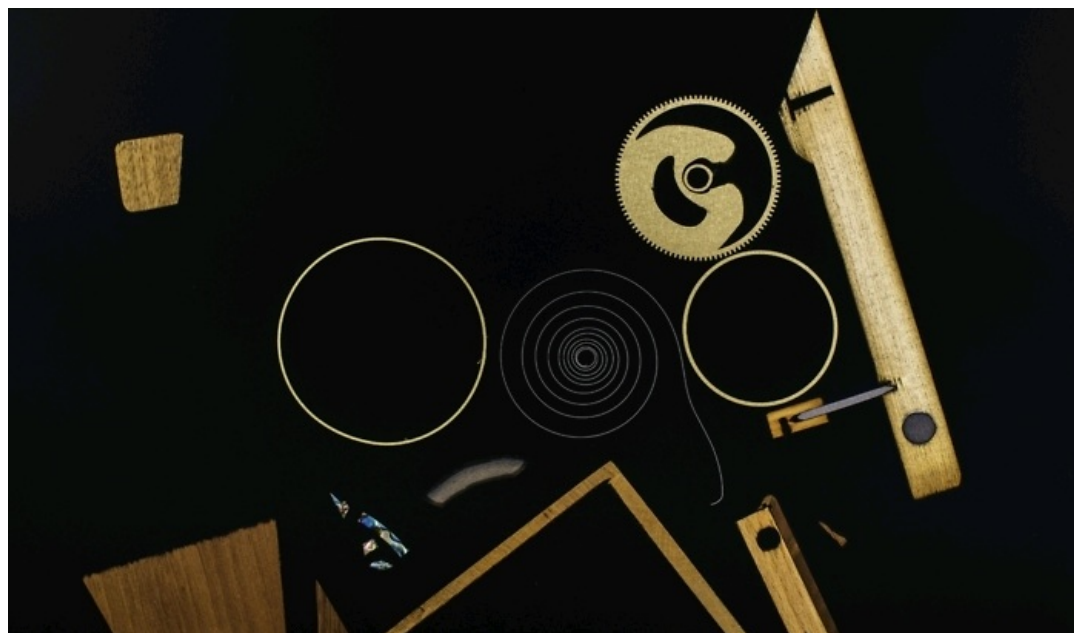


## OLIVER BEER

## HOUSEHOLD GODS

PARIS MARAIS

12 Jan 2019 - 16 Feb 2019



**Opening: Saturday, 12 January 2019, 6 - 8pm**

**Performance: Saturday, 12 January 2019, 6 pm**

*Every civilisation has taken objects and elevated them to the point where they are idolatrous and animistic. It's about investing an object with a spirit – which happens when you make it sing.*

With *Household Gods*, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac Paris is pleased to present an exhibition of new sound installation and sculptural works by Oliver Beer, which reflects the artist's current exploration of the relationship between sound and form, and the innate musicality of the physical world. The exhibition will also feature a new performance piece, presented on its opening day.

The "Household Gods" of the title are physical objects, placed on plinths in a whitened room and idolized to the point where they can sing. In the main space of the gallery, they are given voice and raised to the status of household divinities. Beer uses microphones to amplify the ambient sound ricocheting within the internal spaces of the objects, creating gentle acoustic feedback loops, that allow us to hear the innate sound of each object. These notes are determined by volume and form of empty space, and have remained unchanged since the day each piece was created.

Reflecting the omnipresent tradition of animism and pan-cultural reverence to objects, Beer acoustically invests his unique collection with a spirit. Encouraging aural interaction with each object's histories, the installation gives rise to a complex narrative of cultural assimilation, appropriation and access.

Chosen by the artist for their specific musical resonances, their harmonies represent invisible but unmistakable relationships between the objects.

An Arita Amsterdams Bont urinal sings its inherent note, humorously referencing Duchamp's *Fountain*, 1917. Imported white from Japan and stylised by its Dutch owner to match the tastes associated with the burgeoning empire, it speaks to colonial politics and the articulation of power in aesthetic form. This is brought into musical harmony with a remnant of a chimney purportedly salvaged from the Palace of Westminster following the destructive fire of 1834, inside which the hand marks of the child labourers who made it are still visible. A tiny pot in the shape of the Egyptian divinity Bes, from 4th-1st century BC, adds its high descant of a high B.

The installation reflects Beer's experience in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York where he has been invited to produce a major new sound installation drawing on the museum's encyclopaedic collection to be unveiled in the summer of 2019. In the same way that the Met Breuer show will be a portrait of the Met's collection, this new installation is a portrait of the material reach of the artist's own life. Beer explains: "As you spend more time with these diverse objects, thinking about their harmonies as much as their physical forms, you start to see patterns over history. There are certain notes which recur more over time. It raises questions of whether there is a relationship between the geometry of the body as you make an object; or something deeply rooted in culture and psychology across civilisations. Each object brings with it a complex and often troubled history of survival."

Like his sound installations, Beer's new black 'two-dimensional sculpture' confronts perceptions of space, sound and materiality. Intensely personal and symbolic items from Beer's life become drawings of themselves and are ossified in infinite empty space. The white pictorial plane of Beer's earlier two-dimensional sculptures intimated a perfect modernist flatness; for the first time the deep black background of these new works implies an endless depth. Expanding his repertoire to include vessels and other humble objects from his daily life, new facets of the physical world become Beer's colour, line and texture. These objects have outlived their cultural context; the diverse, predominantly domestic materials are given iconographic status. Tuning pegs from Beer's own deconstructed guitar interact with laughing gas canisters collected from outside his studio and fragments from his first metronome. Vessels, which once articulated musical notes, shatter and spread into constellation forms, investing items from the immediate material world with sublime value. His grandmother's enamelled jug, which once resonated at a perfect low B is silenced into a visualisation of its aural abilities.

Beer's immersive live performances extend this enquiry. To celebrate the opening of the exhibition, his latest performance *Composition for Mouths (Songs My Mother Taught Me)* will be presented in a new staging. Originally developed by the artist during his residency at the Sydney Opera House for the Sydney Biennale in 2018, Beer worked closely with the singers, asking them to recall their earliest childhood songs and incorporating these melodies into his score. In the composition, the pair of singers join their lips in a tight seal to create a single mouth cavity, allowing them to explore the resonant frequencies of each other's faces as they unite to become a single instrument.

**Oliver Beer** (b. 1985) lives and works in London and Paris. Within and alongside his work with sound, he creates subtle and diverse sculptural, installation and film projects whose provenance sometimes seems autobiographical; but in which his play with universal – often intimate – concerns draws on shared emotions and perceptions. Oliver Beer has notably been exhibited at MoMA PS1, New York; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Palais de Tokyo, Paris; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; MAC Lyon and at the Istanbul Biennale in 2015. He has held residencies with the Fondation Hermès,

the Villa Arson and the Watermill Center, New York and is the winner of several awards, including the Daiwa Anglo - Japanese Foundation Art Prize (2015). His work is in many private and public collections including the Centre Pompidou, Paris; FRAC île de France, Paris; MAC Lyon; Kramlich Collection, San Francisco; National Museum of Art, Osaka, New National Museum of Monaco, and MONA Tasmania. In 2017, the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham hosted his first survey show. In 2018, he was invited to create a new performance piece and film for the Sydney Biennale. In summer 2019, a solo presentation of his work will take place at the [Met Breuer](#), New York.