# ALEKS SLOTA 2016 - 2022

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cover image:
"Place I Can't Go" 2022
interactive 3D experience

My multidisciplinary practice mainly consists of performance and sound, presented in both art spaces and the public sphere. The work addresses the construct of the public persona, the cult of personality that often results, and the underlying motivations of such individuals. I also attempt to disarm systemic and interpersonal violence by mocking it and deploying absurd artistic strategies against it. These investigations confront external and internalised power structures, sensitivity to which is borne out of my religious upbringing in Poland, a totalitarian country at that time. This was later reinforced by my family's emigration to the USA where I attended religious schools from primary to high school. Growing up in this advanced capitalist super power with its less obvious but arguably more insidious methods of control was also instructive. Given this background, it may be unsurprising that my performance and sound work is also informed by the aural and visual aesthetics of the punk, metal, and noise music scenes.

In my performances I'm often seeking an intimate connection with the public, simultaneously complicating that intimacy with an uncomfortable and awkward atmosphere. I draw people close by sharing personal stories, gifts, or food, while at the same time revealing the ugly side of personal interactions, filled with power plays, unpleasant innuendos, and literal dirt. I attempt to create a space of tension and imbalance between the audience and myself, a gesture that complicates the reading of my intentions. The performance venue becomes unsteady and unsafe, the rules and borders become blurred.

## This Could Be a Love Song

Public performances, 2022

For 8 hours, over two weekend days, I serenaded random passersby with improvised a cappella love songs. Complimenting their stylish clothes, beautiful faces, or lamenting their lack of interest in me. Most of the interactions were very pleasant, even the very inebriated man that told me my voice was bad and that I had no "passion" was nice in the end. Perhaps the highlight was the two young men who gave me money, one even returning later and giving me more.

https://www.aleksslota.com/this-could-be-a-love-song/

Curated and organized by temporary home 22, part of the ruruHaus an initiative of Documenta 15.

performance views, 8 hour duration over 2 days temporary home 22, Kassel, Germany, 2022











#### I Will Not Kill

Public performance, 2021

Executed at Washingtonplatz, a large square directly south of Hauptbahnhof the main train station in Berlin. The station is both an architectural marvel and a labyrinthine eye-sore, located close to the German federal bureaucracy and one can argue the center of EU power. This station connects Berlin to the rest of Europe, and like the government buildings in the vicinity also projects German power to the rest of the continent.

For approximately one hour I activated the periphery of the square, slowly walking on the curb right next to the street. Through a microphone attached to a portable suitcase amplifier I repeated the mantra "I will not kill, Ich werde nicht töten". These words were an incantation or maybe a hypnotic suggestion to those in power, from the highest echelons down to the humble cop on the street. The mantra also resonated with me personally, informing the choices I can make as someone living in such a rich country.

https://www.aleksslota.com/i-will-not-kill/

Performed in the frame of Performance Crossings festival, organized by Cross Attic and the Association for Performance Art in Berlin, Germany.

performance views, 1 hour duration Washingtonplatz, Berlin, Germany, 2021







#### Place I Can't Go

Interactive 3D experience, 2022

During the Covid pandemic, due to the lack of performance opportunities, I was forced to expand my understanding of audience participation. I started to consider alternative ways of creating experiences for viewers, looking for a medium where I would define the score but the user was free to experience it at their own pace and to follow their own path. This interactive 3D project grew out of my research, combing sound I composed with self built environments that all relate to dreams I've had, a recurring nightmare being the starting point of the whole experience.

'Place I Can't Go' mimics a computer game and follows the standard WASD/mouse look control scheme of most first person shooters; the user sees the world through the eyes of the protagonist. The project is a complete experience that can be downloaded to the end user's personal computer. I'm exploring ways to port this project into virtual reality.

https://www.aleksslota.com/place-i-cant-go/

The project was supported by the Deutscher Künstlerbund e.V. Neustart Kultur grant.

screenshots of the PC version









#### Yeah Well You Know

Performance, 2021

"Crossing" was a ten day performance residency at the DCCC in Dnipro, Ukraine, that brought together artists from Germany and Ukraine for two collaborative interventions. The second action (pictured) happened in the Artsvit gallery and involved sixteen artists. For the 2.5 hour duration I engaged in loud and disruptive activities in the gallery space. The title "Yeah Well You Know" only refers to my part and underlines my fraught relationship with unstructured group performances.

Some examples of my actions:

- -interacted with the audience and invited them to help with the performance
- -took selfies with other performers and audience members
- -played death metal
- -spun chairs into the brick wall
- -cleaned carrots, feet, and the floor with disinfectant
- -made "Ukrainian" carrot salad by throwing carrots into the wall
- -amplified the actions of other's with a phone and Bluetooth speaker
- -moaned and "ejaculated" disinfectant as another artist read wall text
- -made myself beautiful by creating thick and luscious lips

https://www.aleksslota.com/yeah-well-you-know/

Performed in the frame of the Crossing residency, organized by Artsvit Gallery and PAErsche Aktionslabor e.V.

performance views, 2.5 hour duration Artsvit Gallery, Dnipro, Ukraine, 2021











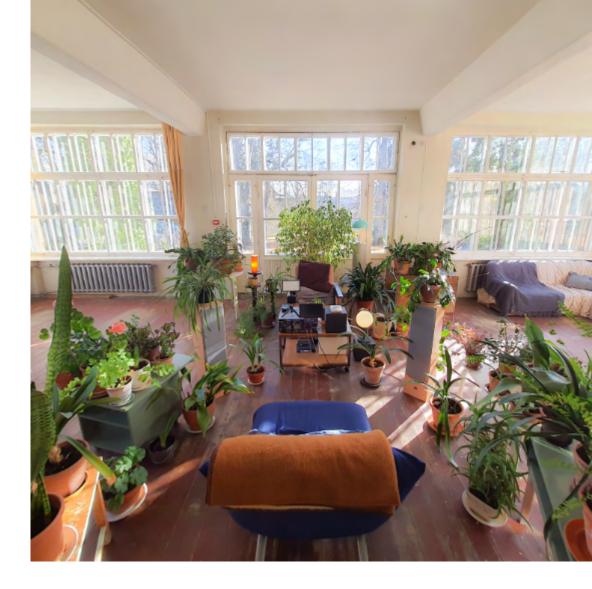
## Healing Veranda

Performance, 2021

For four hours I healed people in a plant filled veranda, part of a former tuberculosis hospital. The twenty minute healing sessions consisted of a diagnostic phase during which the patient filled out a questionnaire and was subjected to various tests, such as listening to different types of music, or looking into a light while I changed the intensity and color temperature. After a short meditation the cure part of the session commenced. The patient was asked to watch a fractal video while they were first subjected to harsh sounds from a synthesizer, and then a soothing sine wave bath, fluctuating between 55 and 105 hertz.

https://www.aleksslota.com/healing-veranda/

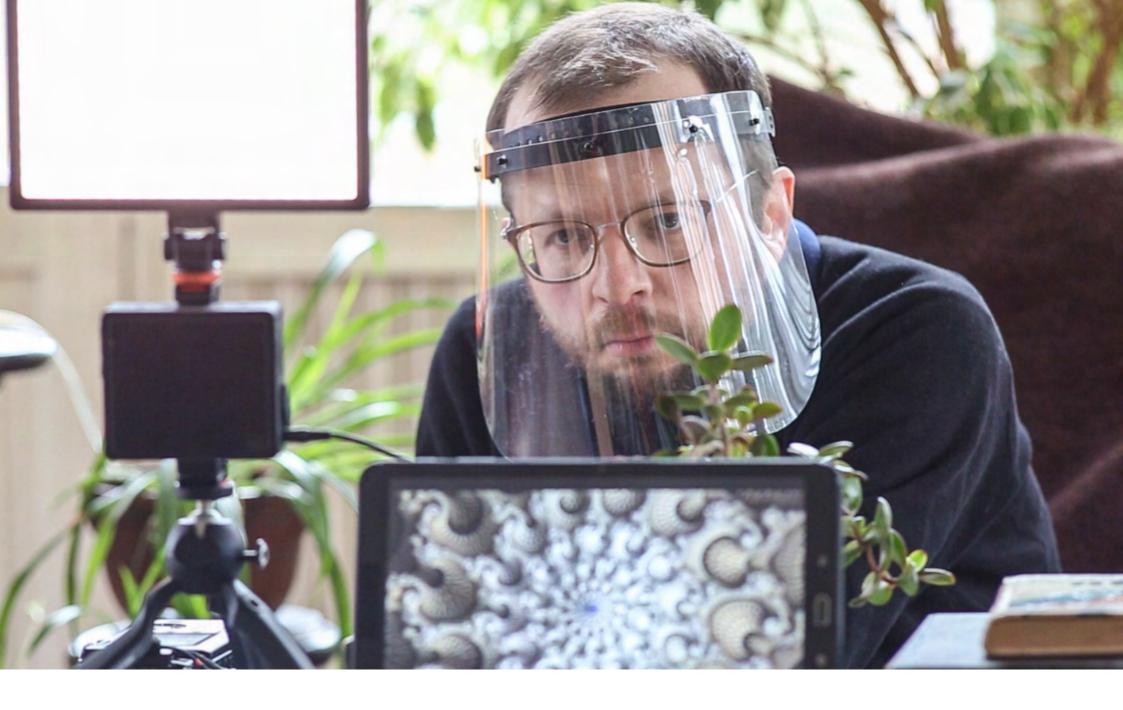
Conceived and executed during the Rucka artist residency, Cesis, Latvia.







performance view, 4 hour duration Rucka residency, Cesis, Latvia, 2021



performance view, 4 hour duration Rucka residency, Cesis, Latvia, 2021

#### Cosmos#2

2 sound performances, 2022

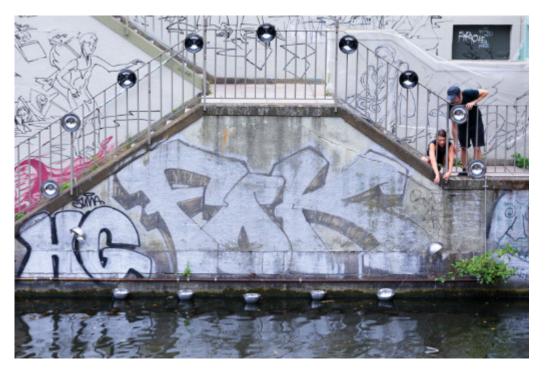
Cosmos#2 was a collaborative sound sculpture conceived and executed with Laure Catugier. Using two sets of five speakers wired in series I activated five of the bowls hanging from the railing. For the performances I used a metal bowl for the percussive element and various analog and digital sound makers to mimic the urban soundscape. Because of the small size of the speakers and the direction of the bowls the best sound was experienced across the canal, or in a boat on the canal. The performance was repeated twice.

https://www.aleksslota.com/cosmos-2/

Performed in the frame of the "Unter der Brücke = Auf der Schwelle" festival at the Kunstbrücke am Wildenbruch communal gallery in Berlin, Germany.

installation and performance views 2 performances, 30 & 45 minutes Kunstbrücke am Wildenbruch, Berlin, Germany, 2022











## Solidarity Born of Despair

Performance, 2017

A performance involving the whole audience, where everyone became instrumental in the successful completion of the piece. The ten main participants were asked to hold light fixtures and with my direction to enact various shapes in the space. After the completion of each shape the other participants were instructed walk through it and to thank the light holders with energetic clapping. The performance began in total darkness and ended the same way after I stomped out the lights.

https://www.aleksslota.com/solidarity-born-despair/

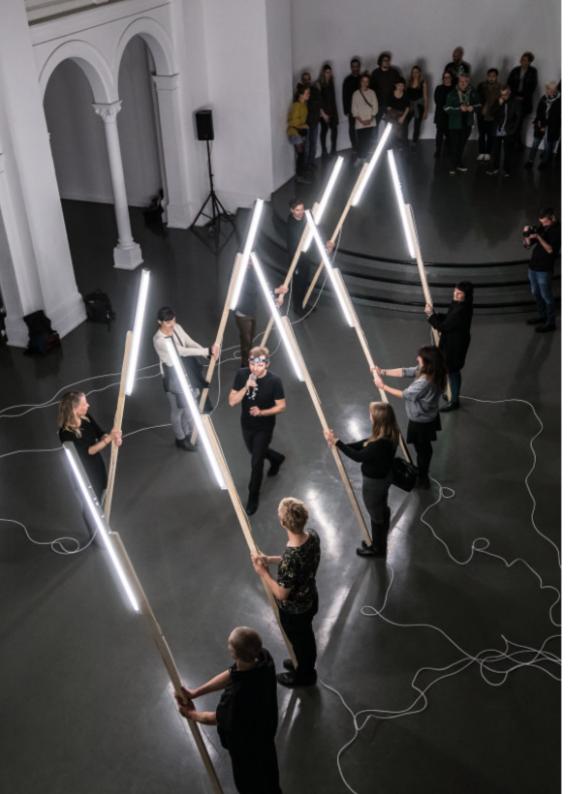
Performed in the frame of Polenbegeisterungswelle at Kunstquartier Bethanien, curated by Iwona Bigos, Berenika Partum, and Jagna Anderson

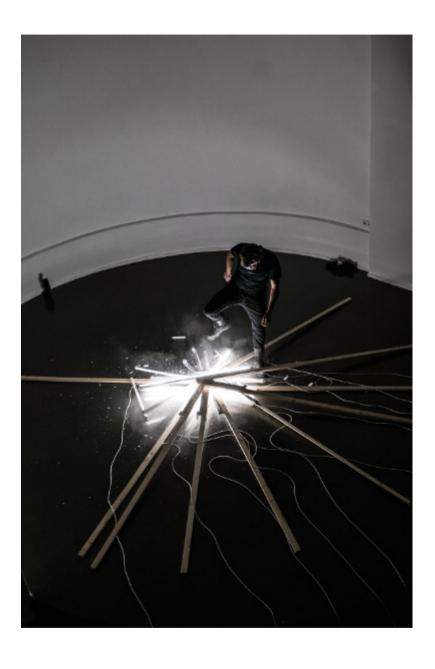
performance view, 35 minute duration Polenbegeisterungswelle Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, Germany, 2017





performance view, 35 minute duration Polenbegeisterungswelle Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, Germany, 2017





performance views, 35 minute duration Polenbegeisterungswelle Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, Germany, 2017

# Asphyxiating Grip of Anxiety

Performance, 2021

23 minute sound performance that began with holotropic breathing, the rapid circular intake of air. I used the energizing effects of this type of breathwork to help me explore the space with my body and voice.

https://www.aleksslota.com/asphyxiating-grip-of-anxiety/

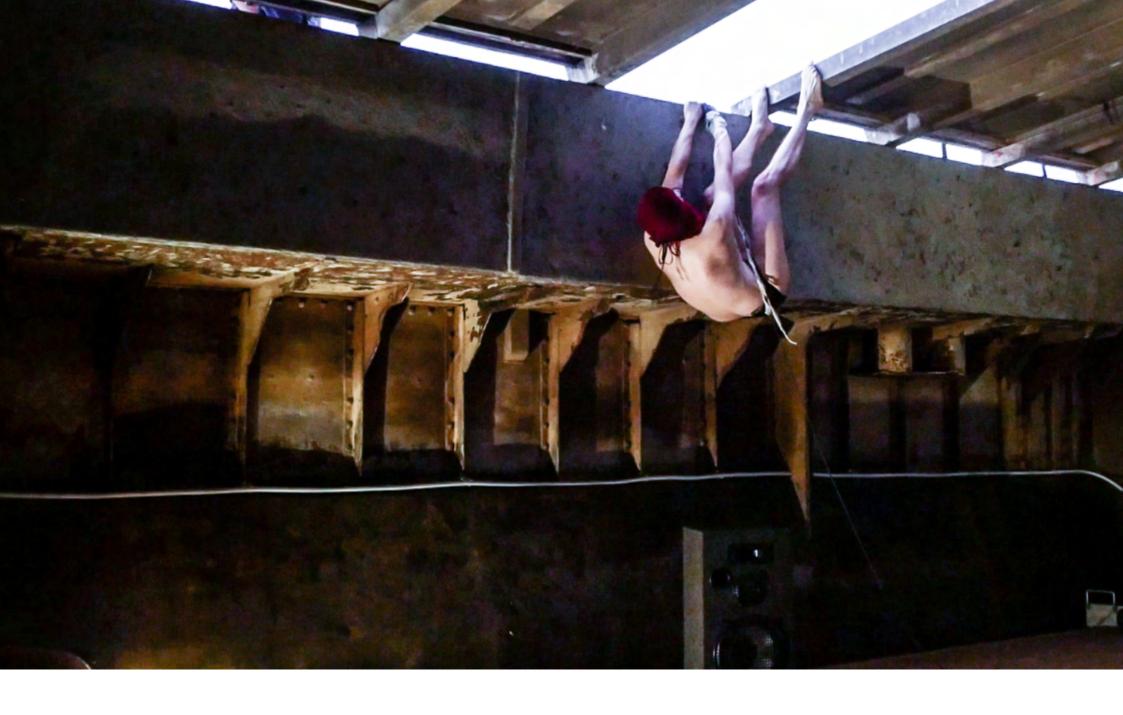
Performed at Hošek Contemporary in the frame of the TENSION festival, Berlin, Germany.

performance views, 23 minute duration Hošek Contemporary, Berlin, Germany, 2021











## Beautify

Instagram performance, 2020

The project started with a simple plan: take a self-portrait with my phone every day in May. The images were augmented with a body-editing app, accentuating and exaggerating certain physical traits, and posted to Instagram the same day. I did not plan what the next day's image would look like; I continued this protocol for the duration of the month, using props and clothes that I had in the studio or had borrowed.

The images were presented on social media partially as a comment on the daily grind of content creation during the pandemic lockdown, but also as a personal exploration of the value of selfies. Each image is a reflection of some part of my identity.

https://www.aleksslota.com/beautify/



## **Ticking Bomb**

Performance, 2018

A 20 minute performance during which I was questioned and tortured by a video interrogator. I walked on stage and put a black bag on my head, my hands were bound and I was helped to my seat by an audience member. As I sat down the video started playing and asking questions, at random intervals torture music played and I submerged my head underwater, then the questions began again. The performance ended when I was rejected by my torturer and told to leave. A song from the children's television show 'Barney and Friends' started playing, still bound and hooded I left the stage.

All the music played was used in real interrogations: Barney and Friends, Slayer, Throbbing Gristle, and Diamanda Galás, or is of a similar sonic sensibility such as Brighter Death Now and Prurient.

https://www.aleksslota.com/ticking-bomb/

Presented during the Musrara Mix Festival #18 in Jerusalem, Israel, curated by Avi Sabag and Sharon Horodi.













# Bring out the Gimp

Sound performance, 2016

Sound performance utilising a head mounted speaker and custom-made BDSM mask. The vocals were channelled through a stomach mounted distortion pedal that could be manipulated by me or the audience. In the second version the Total Noise Unit was also deployed.

https://www.aleksslota.com/bring-out-the-gimp/

Performed as part of Menschen! Krisen! Sensationen! at the Sophiensaele, curated by Jörn J. Burmester and Florian Feigl.

performance view, 3 day event Sophiensaele, Berlin, Germany, 2016









# No Dignity in Death

Performance, 2019

35 minute performance incorporating an improvised vocal soundtrack. I first created a white painting surface by rolling out paper on the stage. I then changed into an all white outfit and donned a light blonde wig. With a brush and black paint I sketched a large circle, I then began painting the circle with my wig. Once the circle was complete I spoke the words "no dignity in death" into a microphone connected to a delay pedal. I stood in the center looking out into the audience as my words slowly faded out over 3 minutes.

https://www.aleksslota.com/no-dignity-in-death/

Performed at the Acción!MAD festival, curated by Marita Bullmann













# I Heard Shakespeare Wrote 'King Lear' In Quarantine

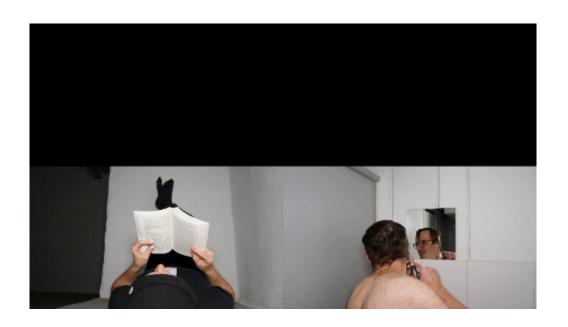
Performance for video, 2020

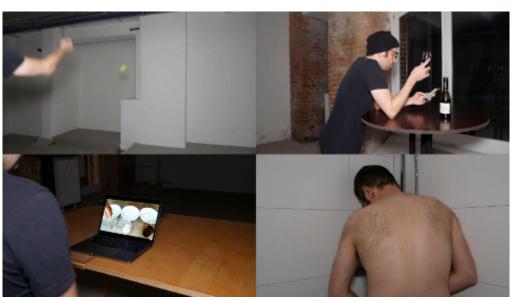
During the height of the covid-19 lock-down I performed seven actions in the empty gallery. The activities were all things people stuck at home during the quarantine have been doing, like exercising, reading, drinking, masturbating, and learning how to bake sourdough bread. The whole performance is presented as a single channel video with the individual actions fading in and out. The title refers to social media motivational messages that prodded us to do great and meaningful things while stuck at home. Total video duration 13:57

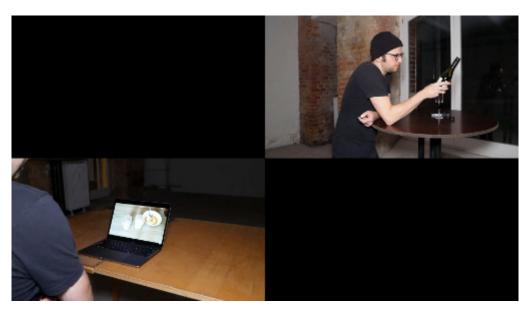
https://www.aleksslota.com/i-heard-shakespeare-wrote-king-lear-in-quarantine/

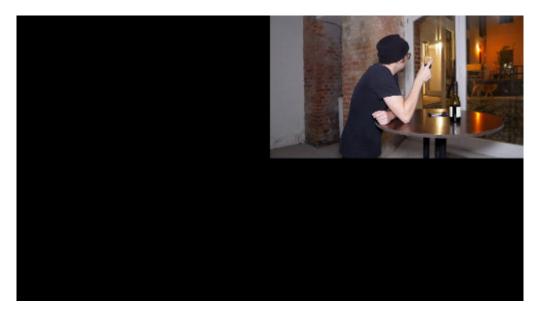
Part of the Tipping Point exhibition with Katja Hommel, Karin Kerkmanns, and kate-hers RHEE, at the m3 project space. The exhibition can be experienced virtually here: tippingpoint.aleksslota.com











video stills, 13:57 duration m3 gallery, Berlin, Germany, 2020



# Lucky

Public performance, 2019

For three hours I handed out "luck" to the public in the area of Rathaus Neukölln, Berlin. I approached people and asked them if they wanted to be lucky, or to have good luck. If they said yes I took a small golden whip out of a gold bag and whipped myself. Once I've punished myself "enough" I took a glass stone out of my bag and imbued it with luck by blowing on it and handed it to the person. The performance ended once I gave away 70 pieces of luck.

https://www.aleksslota.com/lucky/

The performance was curated by Teena Lange and was part of the Interiors to Being festival.









# **Pied Piper**

3 public performances, 2019

"On the surface Schlager isn't political at all, but that's what makes it political" Wolfgang Seidel

"Pied Piper" can be defined as: a charismatic person who attracts followers, a musician who attracts a mass of people, or a leader who makes irresponsible promises. For Ravensburg I created a three day performance that addressed all of these definitions. Between the 22nd and 24th of April I wandered the streets of the city and serenaded the citizens with an improvised medley of musical styles, mixing German Schlager, Polish Disco polo, and American pop-country. I did not sing any hits, but rather used the musical vocabulary of these popular and populist styles to create something new, familiar sounds re-interpreted for my own expressive needs. I slowed down and chopped up the music, creating hypnotic bass heavy loops, danceable in the short term but unnerving in the long run.

https://www.aleksslota.com/pied-piper/

The performance was a part of the Art Without Audience festival curated by the Neuer Ravensburger Kunstverein.





performance view, 3 day duration Art Without Audience festival Ravensburg, Germany, 2019



# House of the Lord

Sound performance, 2016

A twenty minute explosion and expansion of noise: distorted beats, profanities, screams, pseudo religious utters. Truth through sound.

https://www.aleksslota.com/house-of-the-lord/

Part of the Faith and Terror performance art festival at Meinblau Projektraum, curated by Tristan Deschamps, Anne Hölck, and Bernhard Draz





performance view, 20 minute duration Faith & Terror festival, Meinblau Berlin, Germany, 2016

## Mešita for Miloš

Public performance, 2016

Mešita – Czech word for mosque.

Miloš – referring to Miloš Zeman, president of the Czech Republic since 2013.

On Sunday February 28 I constructed a cardboard mosque in front of the Prague Castle which is the official residence of the Czech president Miloš Zeman. Mr. Zeman has in the past made disparaging comments about immigration in general and Muslims specifically. Not coincidentally the February 6th Pegida protests were organized in the vicinity of the castle. This was due to the nationalistic overtones of the location and also because of a lack of disapproval from the president. I represented Pegida's big fears with a small and fragile mosque.

The performance lasted about an hour and a half. During this time I constructed the mosque, pointing it towards Mecca using a smartphone app. After constructing and reinforcing the building I tried to take a photo with the Prague skyline. At this point I was intercepted by four police officers, who checked my ID, and ordered me out of the old town. I walked home carrying the mosque.

https://www.aleksslota.com/mesita-for-milos/

performance views, 90 minute duration Prague, Czech Republic, 2016









# Aleks Slota I aleksslota.com I aleks@aleksslota.com

## 1978 Rzeszow, Poland

#### Education

School of the Art Institute of Chicago, M.F.A, IL, US 2003 Goat Island Summer School, performance workshop, Chicago IL, US 2003 State University of New York at Buffalo, B.F.A., Photography, NY, US 2000

### Residencies and Grants

Lademoen Kunstnerverksteder residency, Trondheim, NO 2022 Crossing performance residency, Dnipro, UA Deutscher Künstlerbund e.V. NEUSTART KULTUR grant 2021 Rucka Residency, Cesis, LV 2021 Research residency, Takasaki, JP 2018 Antonio Gramsci residency, Cagliari, IT 2017 Research residency, Prague, CZ 2016 Arteles, Haukijärvi, FI 2014

#### Selected Exhibitions and Performances

## 2022

Two solo sound performances for a collaborative sound sculpture Cosmos #2 with Laure Catugier, Kunstbrücke am Wildenbruch Kommunal Galerie, Berlin, DE 'All I'm Thinking of Is You' video screened at Lumbung Lounge, Stellwerk Galerie, Kulturbahnhof, Kassel, DE 'This Could Be a Love Song' solo performance, temporary home 22, ruruHaus,

Documenta 15, Kassel, DE Solo sound performance, egæl event, Loophole, Berlin, DE

#### 2021

'Yeah Well You Know' group and solo performances, Artsvit Gallery, DCCC, Dnipro, UA 'I Will Not Kill' solo public performance, Performance Crossings festival, Berlin, DE 'Asphyxiating Anxiety' solo performance, Performance Crossings festival, Prague, CZ 'Asphyxiating Grip of Anxiety' solo performance, Hošek Contemporary, Berlin, DE 'Healing Veranda' solo performance, Rucka Artist Residency, Cesis, LV 'Night Creeper' and 'Part-time Patriot' solo public performances, Rucka Artist Residency, Cesis, LV

#### 2020

'Today's Specials' solo performances, Performance Crossings festival, Prague, CZ 'Beautify' 31 performative self-portraits, Instagram 'I Heard Shakespeare Wrote 'King Lear' in Quarantine' performance video, Kunstraum m3, Berlin, DE

#### 2019

'Deviant Order' solo performance, Sonntag book launch, Café Kosmetiksalon Babette, Berlin, DE

'No Dignity in Death' solo performance, Acción!MAD festival, Madrid, ES 'Uncanny Apocalypse' solo sound performance, Matters symposium for Industrial Culture, Kaunas, LT

'Hopefully Nothing Will Happen' duo performance with Laure Catugier, Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris, FR

'Pied Piper' three public performances, NRVK, Ravensburg, DE 'End of the World Blues' solo performance, University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond, Oklahoma, US

'In Three Parts' solo sound performance, In Parallel Spaces festival, Leipzig, DE

## 2018

'Powerful Secrets' solo performance, Elementa residency, Berlin, DE Trio sound improvisation with Ryosuke Kiyasu and Utku Tavil, Loophole, Berlin, DE 'Domestic Communication' solo sound improvisation, Tempting Failure festival, London, GB

Solo vocal improvisation, Primal Uproar festival, Hamburg, DE

'Ticking Bomb' and 'Verschärft essen' two solo performances, Musrara Mix festival, Jerusalem, IL

'Takasaki Series' five public performances, Takasaki, JP

Sound improvisation with Marie Takahashi and Yukari Misawa, Idiom, Takasaki, JP 'MILF' solo performance, Kleiner Raum für aktuelles Nichts, Berlin, DE

### 2017

'Solidarity Born of Despair' solo performance, Kunstquartier Bethanien, Berlin, DE 'Becoming, or the Impossibility Of' durational solo performance, Cagliari, IT 'Whipped Into Shape' solo performance, tête, Berlin, DE 'It Happened Here' solo exhibition, Exgirlfriend gallery, Berlin, DE 'Meat Puppet' solo performance, Artburst Berlin, Lettrétage, Berlin, DE 'Incident' sound performance, DAF festival, Geneva, CH

### 2016

'House of the Lord' solo performance, Faith & Terror performance festival, Meinblau, Berlin, DE

'Nothing's Free' and 'Snuff Out' solo performances, Swab art fair, Barcelona, ES

'Bring out the Gimp' sound performance, Sophiensaele, Berlin, DE

'Black Buffet' solo performance/installation, Teatr Academia, Warsaw, PL

'Party Hard!' sound installation, Summer Salon, tête, Berlin, DE

'Mešita for Miloš' solo performance/public intervention, Prague, CZ

#### 2015

OKO with Any Pretty collaborative sound performance with Dylan Cram and Jaime Hyatt, Vesselroom Project, Berlin, DE

'I'd Die for a Good Coffee' solo performance, Berlin, DE

OKO, collaborative sound performance with Kris Barnett, installation by Stefan Reiss, L'espace de l'espèce, Berlin, DE

'Without Hesitation' performance and public intervention, Berlin, DE

'Waiting for a Miracle' solo performance, Funkhaus, Berlin, DE

'Hermetic Circle' solo performance, Meinblau, Berlin, DE

'Waiting for a Miracle' seven solo performances, USA embassy, Berlin, DE

'Dance Like Everybody's Watching' and 'Over the Mountains the Dream Comes Untrue' solo performances, Excentricités VI performance art festival, Besançon, FR

#### 2014

'OKO Scum' sound performance, Institut Für Alles Mögliche, Berlin, DE

'OKO Void' sound performance, Arteles Creative Center, Haukijärvi, FI

'WIITBU' solo exhibition, Tarleton University, Stephenville, Texas, US

'Social Moment' solo performance, Pop-up exhibition, Potsdamerstr. 71, Berlin, DE

'Denial' solo performance, Transart Institute exhibition, Mila Kunstgalerie, Berlin, DE

OKO, screening of performance, Laut KlangKunstFestival, Mainz, DE

'Quiet Violence' exhibition and sound festival, HB55, Berlin, DE

'High Risk of Recurrence' four solo performances, Alexander Platz, Berlin, DE

'What It Is To Be Us' four solo performances, Boxhagener Platz, Berlin, DE

### 2000-2013 (selected)

OKO, sound performance, Fylkingen, Stockholm, SE

'Silence' seven solo performances, Month of Performance Art, ReTramp, Berlin, DE

'Peradam' solo performance, Box 32 Gallery, Berlin, DE

'5730±40' audiotape, released by Land of Decay

'Mountain Building' solo performance, USArtBerlin, Berlin, DE

'Tongue Tied' solo performance, HomeBase residency, Berlin, DE

'The Artist is Tele/Present' solo performance, Temporary Home, Kassel, DE

'Oh Jeszcze Einigkeit' solo performance, Szczecin, PL

'Let's Talk' group show, The Polish Museum of America, Chicago, IL, US

'Art Play' Lipe Art Park summer exhibit, Syracuse, NY, US

'The 14th Annual Chicago Performance Art Celebration' group show, South Union Arts, Chicago, IL, US

Hexacron, 11 band performances, various venues in the Midwest US

'The Next Generation' group show, Noyes Cultural Arts Center, Evanston, IL, US

'The Summer Show' group show, Gallery 312, Chicago, IL, US

'Untitled' group performance, Goat Island Summer School, Chicago, IL, US

'Gaijin' solo performance, Osaka, JP

'Plastic Fantastic' group show, 1926 Exhibition Studies, SAIC, Chicago, IL, US

'Graduate Exhibition' SAIC, Chicago, IL, US

'Time-Space' performance executed in conjunction with the Critical Mass

Exhibition, Smart Museum of Art, Chicago, IL, US

#### Press and Publications

Emergency Index Volume 9, 2020

Sonntag book, 2019

Emergency Index Volume 8, 2019

Dewezet, May 11, 2019

Schwäbische Zeitung, April 17, 2019

XAOS: Aleks Slota's It Happened Here, November 2017 by Patrick J. Reed

L'unione Sarda newspaper, September 20, 2017

Antagonistic Sharing: On the Performances of Aleks Słota, June 28, 2017 Bpigs

Emergency Index Volume 6, 2017

An Interview with Aleks Slota: Language is a Shell Game, June 9, 2017 Art F City

Spokehub Presents: Aleks Slota, video interview December 12, 2016 SPOKEHUB

 $\label{thm:condition} \mbox{Towards the Quiet, or with Larger Amplifiers: an Interview with Berlin Performance}$ 

Artist Aleks Slota, January 15, 2016 Momus

Miracle Man: interview with Aleks Slota by Göksu Kunak, May 18, 2015 MPA-B

Emergency Index Volume 3, 2014

High Risk of Recurrence – A Review and Interview by Tina Mariane Krogh Madsen,

May 22, 2014 MPA-B

Bild newspaper, May 17, 2013

# **Curatorial projects**

'Underdog' visual and sound art festival, co-curated with Laure Catugier and Maycec, Vesselroom project, Berlin, DE 2016 'Quiet Violence' visual and sound art festival, co-curated with Laure Catugier and Fabio Campagna, Kunstfabrik HB55, Berlin, DE 2014