

Daniel Kotowski

born 1993 in Łomża (Poland), currently lives in Warsaw

My artistic practice is a starting point for reflection on my own existence. It strongly refers to my personal experience influenced by biopower tools – I am Deaf, incomplete. In my artistic practice, I analyse my body through power over biology. I often refer to the concept of biopower (power over biology) and biopolitics (conscious use of bio power in practice) in the view of Michel Foucault. I deal with performance, art of installation, photography and design, I create objects and videos. I am interested in topics such as social communication and social policy. I ask myself questions like: How do I initiate a relationship with another person? or What do interpersonal relationships look like? I often wonder how others perceive me.

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education:

2019-2020

Szkoła Patrzenia/The School of Seeing | Institute of Photography Fort | Warsaw

2016-2018

MA | Faculty of Interior Design | Academy of Fine Arts | Warsaw | diploma in the Studio of Exhibition of Barbara Kowalewska

2012-2016

BA | Faculty of New Media Arts | Interior Design | Polish-Japanese Academy of Information Technology | Warsaw | diploma in the Studio of Exhibition of Marek Kosmulski

performances:

16/12/2020

It's My Duty | Zachęta – National Gallery of Art | Warsaw

18/10/2020

Monument to the Victims of Biopower | former hospital on Poniatowskiego street | Złoty Kiosk | Wrocław

01/10/2020

A Term For Using Speech | as a part of EXIT project | The Centre of Inclusive Art | Zachęta – National Gallery of Art | Warsaw | curated by Justyna Wielgus

30/07/2020

A Term For Using Speech | as a part of in private: in search of identity project | ZOOM platform | Collective of Artistic Experimental Forms

08/07/2020

I Am Reading Aloud II | *We Are People* | Galeria Labirynt | Lublin | curated by Waldemar Tatarczuk

02/07/2020

A Term For Using Speech | Instagram Live | Contemporary Art Promotion Foundation

03/05/2020

The Official Language of the Republic of Poland Is Polish | Facebook Live | Museum of Modern Art | Warsaw

20/12/2019

I Am Reading Aloud II | as a part of Grassomania 11 project | Gdańsk City Gallery 1 | Gdańsk

16/12/2019

It's My Duty | Zachęta – National Gallery of Art | Warsaw

14/12/2019

I Am Reading Aloud II | *Ślad* | W Y Gallery | Art Factory | Łódź

19/11/2019

I Am Reading Aloud after National Independence Day | Radio Kapitał | Museum of Modern Art | Warsaw

02/11/2019

The Official Language of the Republic of Poland Is Polish | Bródno Park | Stroboskop | Warsaw

26/10/2019

The Official Language of the Republic of Poland Is Polish | Palace of Culture and Science | Stroboskop | Warsaw

26/10/2019

The Official Language of the Republic of Poland Is Polish | Constitution Square | Stroboskop | Warsaw

12/10/2019

The Official Language of the Republic of Poland Is Polish | Fort Mokotów | Stroboskop | Warsaw

05/10/2019

The Official Language of the Republic of Poland Is Polish | Sokratesa street | Stroboskop | Warsaw

27/09/2019

The Official Language of the Republic of Poland Is Polish | Stroboskop | Warsaw

solo exhibitions:

22/10-22/11/2020

Monument to the Victims of Biopower | Złoty Kiosk | Wrocław

27/09-02/11/2019

The Official Language of the Republic of Poland Is Polish | Stroboskop | Warsaw

13/04-03/06/2018

The Unreasonable Man Persists in Trying to Adapt the World to Himself | Ludwik Zamenhof Centre | Białystok | curated by Aleksandra Czerniawska

group exhibitions | group shows | public projects:

2021 (upcoming)

Naked Nerve | Master's Atelier | BWA Wrocław Główny Gallery | Wrocław | curated by Joanna Rajkowska

13/12/2020-30/04/2021

You'll Never Walk Alone | Galeria Labirynt | Lublin

20/11/2020-07/02/2021

THREE'S A CROWD | The International Urban Art Festival OUT OF STH/Space Absorbency | BWA Wrocław Główny Gallery | Wrocław | curated by Michał Grzegorzec, Anka Herbut, Gregor Różański

02/10/2020-17/01/2021

Something in Common | Warsaw Under Construction 12 | Museum of Modern Art | Warsaw | curated by Tomasz Fudala, Natalia Sielewicz

11/09/2020

Death in Everyday Life | as part of Jasna 10 project | Warszawska Świetlica Krytyki Politycznej | Warsaw | curated by Wojtek Zralek-Kossakowski

06/09/2020

Warsaw Preview (small sculptural forms) 2020 | Warsaw

07/08-04/09/2020

Freedom of Speech | Contemporary Art Gallery MD_S | Wrocław

16-30/07/2020

Praise for Transience | virtual exhibition | 01 Gallery | www.01gallery.pl

01/06-31/12/2020

Solidarity And Agency | virtual exhibition | Arsenał Gallery | Białystok | curated by Katarzyna Różniak, Eliza Urwanowicz-Rojecka

10/12/2019-10/01/2020

Directions And Phrases | Spokojna Gallery | Warsaw | curated by Zuzanna Sadowa, Marta Jarnuszkiewicz

15/10/2019

Foreign Bodies | video screening | Stroboskop | Zachęta – National Gallery of Art | Warszawa

23/09/2019-2020

OSA/The Open Anti-fascist Studio | touring exhibition and a tangible archive of the grassroots initiative called the Anti-fascist Year | Polska | RUCH art collective

21/09/2019

Attrape | WL4 Mleczny Piotr Gallery | Wolne Pokoje | Gdańsk

01/09-11/11/2019

Three Plagues | Galeria Labirynt | Lublin | curated by Agnieszka Cieślak, Magdalena Linkowska

28/06/2019

Witamy w piekle #5 | Galeria Śmierć Frajerom | Warsaw

27/05-11/06/2017

The point of view | Fotofestiwal | MEOK Gallery | Łódź

07/06-22/06/2014

Somewhere | Fotofestiwal | Our Gallery | Łódź

15/09/2012

Deaf Art | Krasiński Library | Warsaw

residencies:

01/10-07/11/2020

Important matter | COVID-19. The World After the Pandemic | Biennale Warszawa | Warsaw

performative lectures | lectures:

24.10.2020

Republic of the Deaf | 12th Theatre Meetings Close Strangers | Teatr Polski | Poznań | with Anna Łazar, Ilia Kamiński, Martyna Zaremba-Maćkowiak, duo Mixed Tomasz Melissa and Mikołaj Chylak

03/09/2020

Incomplete | Scena Robocza | Poznań

awards:

2020

nomination for Allegro Prize | Allegro and Contemporary Lynx

2019

nomination for “Bo wARTo” special award | MocArty RMF Classic

texts | interviews | debates:

23/12/2020

We're heading there together. Around the exhibition “Solidarity And Agency” | Postmedium | interview conducted by Karolina Różniak | z Edka Jarzab, Rita Müller and Marta Romankiv | [LINK](#)

16/12/2020

THREE IS A CROWD: body, voice, protest! | BWA Wrocław | debate conducted by Marianna Dobkowska | with Yulia Krivich, Agata Kubis and Ania Nowak | [LINK](#)

03/12/2020

Post-truth and the Exclusion of the Deaf | Museum of Modern Art in Warsaw | the debate conducted by me | with Helena Chmielewska-Szljajfer, Joanna Ciesielska and Bartosz Marganec | [LINK](#)

07/11/2020

Daniel looked for for his own language for a long time. Like each Deaf | Polityka weekly | Mateusz Witczak | [LINK](#)

21/07/2020

In the past, I used to have feeling that it was inappropriate for me to speak | Culture.pl | interview conducted by Piotr Policht | [LINK](#)

01/01/2019

Rebellion of the Deaf | Zachęta – National Gallery of Art | interview conducted by me | with Bogna Burska | [LINK](#)



A Person Who Does Not Speak Is Not a Person

video, duration 1 min 3 sec
2020

Daniel Kotowski is inspired by the work by Mladen Stilinović “An Artist Who Does Not Speak English Is Not an Artist” (1992). Similarly to Stilinović, Kotowski would like to talk about exclusion, however, from the perspective of Deaf people. In 1992, the Croatian artist drew attention to what we consider common today – the domination of English language in the global art world. Kotowski is concerned to the same extent with the domination of one way of communicating – through the use of phonic language. In his work, the artist uses a fake sign styling it to resemble a sign language word. In fact, a multiplied gesture is an arrogant or rude act that expresses a disrespectful attitude towards someone else’s speech. A sign everyone recognises. The work evokes discussion about the limits of visibility and audibility of people whose senses (sight, hearing and others) function in a disturbed manner. How can a voice that is very silent fight for its own place in the discussion and in the world? How to build new meeting and communication platforms not relying on the old excluding models?

text by the curator Michał Grzegorek

film, editing: Karolina Zajączkowska

Project realised as part of the 4th International Urban Art Festival OUT OF STH. Space Absorbency.

video frames

video link

<https://vimeo.com/498885068> - password: mowa



Monument to the Victims of Biopower

performance, object (plasticine, plywood, MFP board, acrylic, wheels, handle)
2020-...

“The Monument to the Victims of Biopower” is a mobile and universal object that commemorates forgotten and often invisible individuals who experienced violence in a normalised society. Anyone can fall victim to biopower – in the political, social and capitalist context. What the monument commemorates is not only the distant past, but also the close past, and even the present.

The project refers to the planned monumental projects, the concepts of which were created in the context of the Wrocław '70 Art Symposium – works such as “Art Centre (pillory)” by Anastazy Wiśniewski or “Self-sufficient pedestal” by Andrzej Wojciechowski. The “Monument to the Victims of Biopower”, however, mainly refers to the topics related to the forced sterilisation of people who were considered by the Third Reich to be “undesirable”, “unwanted”.

The symbolic unveiling of the monument – carried out as an on-camera performative action, the record of which was presented in the ŻŁOTY KIOSK – took place on October 18th, 2020 next to the building of the former hospital at Poniatowski street in Wrocław. Established in the 19th century under the name of the Hospital of the Women's Patriotic Union Foundation (also known as the Augusta Hospital) and functioning after the war until 2006 as the Public Clinical Hospital No 3, it was one of the places where fertility treatments were performed under the law introduced in the Third Reich (Law of 14th July 1933 for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases).

The date of this one-person event is also not accidental – it was on that day in 1935 that the Law for the Prevention of Offspring with Hereditary Diseases of the German Nation was passed. According to its provisions, the rights in the choice of the spouse were limited, forbidding marriage to a person suffering from hereditary or mental illness, as well as to people previously sterilised.

The project begins in Wrocław and is going to be continued – I plan to travel with a mobile monument dedicated to the victims of biopower to places where similar practices took place.

film: Yuriy Biley
editing: Daniel Kotowski
assistance in performative action: Magdalena Kreis

creating object: Daniel Kotowski, Yuriy Biley, Magdalena Kreis

Implemented as part of the “Żłoty kiosk 70/20” project organised by the Wrocław Culture Zone and the ŻŁOTY KIOSK group with the support of the Ministry and National Heritage.

photo credit Marta Sobala

video link
<https://vimeo.com/487583479> - password: pomnik





Important Matter

2 videos, duration 52 sec
2020

One day, Sławek asked me to create a film with him. Sławek wants to say something to you in the video.

film: Daniel Kotowski
sound, subtitles: Wojciech Ulman
starring: Tomasz Nowakowski

Realised as part of the “COVID-19. The World After the Pandemic” residency programme organised by Biennale Warszawa.

video frames

film link without sound, without subtitles
<https://vimeo.com/475255971> - password: sprawa
film link with sounds and subtitles
<https://vimeo.com/465782160> - password: sprawa



A Term For Using Speech

performance, zoom
2020

During the performance, I encouraged anonymous participants to send me sentences, words, lines and slogans via the ZOOM application, which, being devoid of original content, were then spoken aloud by me. I became a tool for using language, a living synthesiser of speech for texts sent by anonymous viewers. An important element of performance was verbal activity, which I consider to be one of the most important forms of human activity. Speech plays an important role in interpersonal communication (mutual relations between the speaker and the hearer). Speech is a social product that is biologically, psychologically and socially conditioned. It has the power to influence. In recent times, the concept of freedom of speech has been very easy to grapple with. It has become a bargaining chip also in political discussions. Can a word, in the name of freedom, become a violation of another person's freedom? Is the limit of language also the limit of our thinking about freedom? Are the language, its phonic expression and graphic notation in conflict with each other? In the performance "A Term For Using Speech", I examine the performativity of language as well as its political character and potential.

video frames

video link
<https://youtu.be/DLBNk3M0tP4>



Death in Everyday Life

video, duration 2 min 38 sec
2020

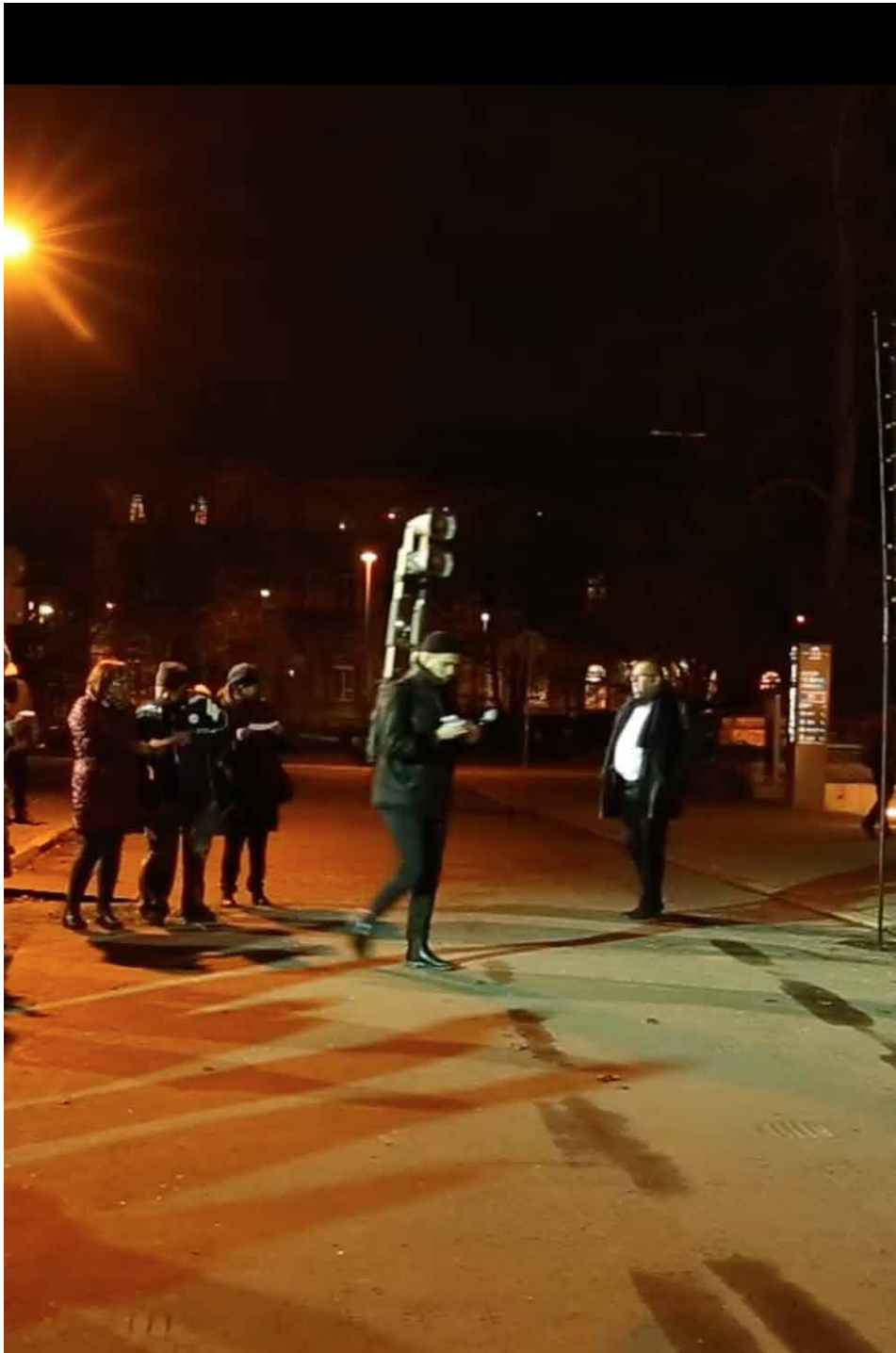
The film “Death in Everyday” was inspired by my own life, language and communication experience. Before the film was made, I conducted short interviews with 22 Deaf people with hearing parents who shared their experiences and signs. The film shows domestic signs related to notions such as death, die, not live. The Deaf I interviewed communicate with each other in this “language”, using mentioned signs even today. We see that death should be taken seriously, but in the work some signs look somehow very funny while reflecting fear.

Realised as part of the “Mikrozamówienia” programme implemented by Jasna 10: Warszawska Świetlica Krytyki Politycznej.

video frames

video film
<https://vimeo.com/492285638/99aec85aa2>

<https://krytykapolityczna.pl/o-nas/warszawa/program/mikrozamowienia-kotowski/>



It's My Duty

performance
2019-....

The performance took place on the 97th anniversary of the death of the first President of the Republic of Poland, Gabriel Narutowicz, who was shot in Zachęta National Gallery of Art on December 16th, 1922 by nationalist activist, Eligiusz Niewiadomski. The action is not only intended to commemorate President Narutowicz and to recall the tragedy from nearly 100 years ago, but also to draw attention to the need to comply with the law, fulfil civic duties and become aware of the consequences of hate speech.

It has become the tradition that every year on December 16th people involved in political and social affairs organise a picket at Zachęta on the anniversary of Narutowicz's death. The action began at 5:30 p.m. I used the available scenery for my performance and supplemented it with my banner that read "The Official Language of the Republic of Poland Is Polish". During the performance, I set up a portable sound system in the form of a backpack and used it to read articles from the constitution, which, in my opinion, were violated by the authorities and the society. After I finished reading each of the pages, I handed them to the audience.

film: Tomasz Grabowski
sound: Wojciech Ulman

Performance organised in cooperation with Zachęta – National Gallery of Art.

video frames

link of the film fragment
<https://vimeo.com/381682067> - password: obowiazek



The Official Language of the Republic of Poland Is Polish

performance, video installation
2019

The title “The Official Language of the Republic of Poland Is Polish” underlines the paradox. The constitution represents all citizens and is an instrument of equality and justice. However, an excerpt of the article 27 of the Constitution includes a provision about the Polish language, which is clearly discriminatory, for example for people who do not use speech. It poses a challenge for them. On the other hand, by performing, and thus by making the effort to speak phonic Polish, not Polish sign language, I point to the value of the obligation to defend the constitution. This way, I show those places and moments when the law has been violated by the authorities, I demand justice and respect for something that also belongs to me as a citizen. During the performance, I set up a portable sound system in the form of a backpack and used it to read the Constitution of the Republic of Poland in various places.

photo credit Piotr Kruszek

link of sample films

<https://vimeo.com/374293536> - password: jezyk

<https://vimeo.com/417736175> - password: jezyk1



I Am Reading Aloud II

performance
2019

The concept of the performative action “I Am Reading Aloud” in the form of a performance based on the film “I Am Reading Aloud”. During the performance, I read aloud 222 pages of the Polish National Anthem. The number of pages is related to the year 1797, when this patriotic song was created by Józef Wybicki. I read the anthem, pronouncing its words thoroughly each time. After I finish reading each of the pages, I release them slowly. An important aspect of this performance is the use of MY OWN speech since it is faulty. The speech is the result of a disorder in which speech organs do not work properly. I am aware that I cannot speak for a long time. I show my effort in this verbal activity.

photo credit Aneta Wawrzóła and Grzegorz Habryn

video film
<https://vimeo.com/385474090> - password: hymn

I Am Reading Aloud

video, duration 2 min 56 sec
2019

Normalisation of everyday life is a problem for me. As a Deaf person, I do not use speech on a daily basis. The majority of the ordinary do not accept my ordinary. The ordinary see a faulty part of me or my deficiency, feeling the need to fix or supplement it. They expect me to belong fully to their circle – the circle of the ordinary. I decide to rule my own speech, my own voice, my own message. I use them to meet expectations of the ordinary. Some groups of people strongly oppose me in accordance with their norms. They claim that I should not use speech. They may feel uncomfortable, bad, be ridiculed or offended by my lack of reverence to the speech. In my verbal activity, I emphasise the existing ambivalence between nonconformity and conformity.

film, editing, subtitles: Tomasz Grabowski
sound: Wojciech Ulman

video frames

video link
<https://vimeo.com/343069574> - password: oralizm



Bodziem Polakami.



untitled

object (glass, stone)
2018

The work refers to the concept of biopower (power over biology) and biopolitics (conscious use of bio power in practice) in the view of Michel Foucault. The object indicates the relationship between stone and glass. Both stone and glass have their own individual character, however, they are made of the same atoms. The first material expresses durability, opacity and roughness, the second – delicacy, transparency and smoothness. Glass is the result of human production, which can symbolise utopia and biopower, while stone belongs to the sphere of nature and is not consistent with the theory of biopower. My work is a utopian attempt to perfectly combine both materials to maintain balance between both spheres despite visual contrast between them.

The work was created as an annex to the diploma work created in the Intermedia studio of Zuzanna Sadowa, PhD at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw.

photo credit Piotr Kruszak





The Unreasonable Man Persists in Trying to Adapt the World to Himself

installation, sketches, photos, video
2018

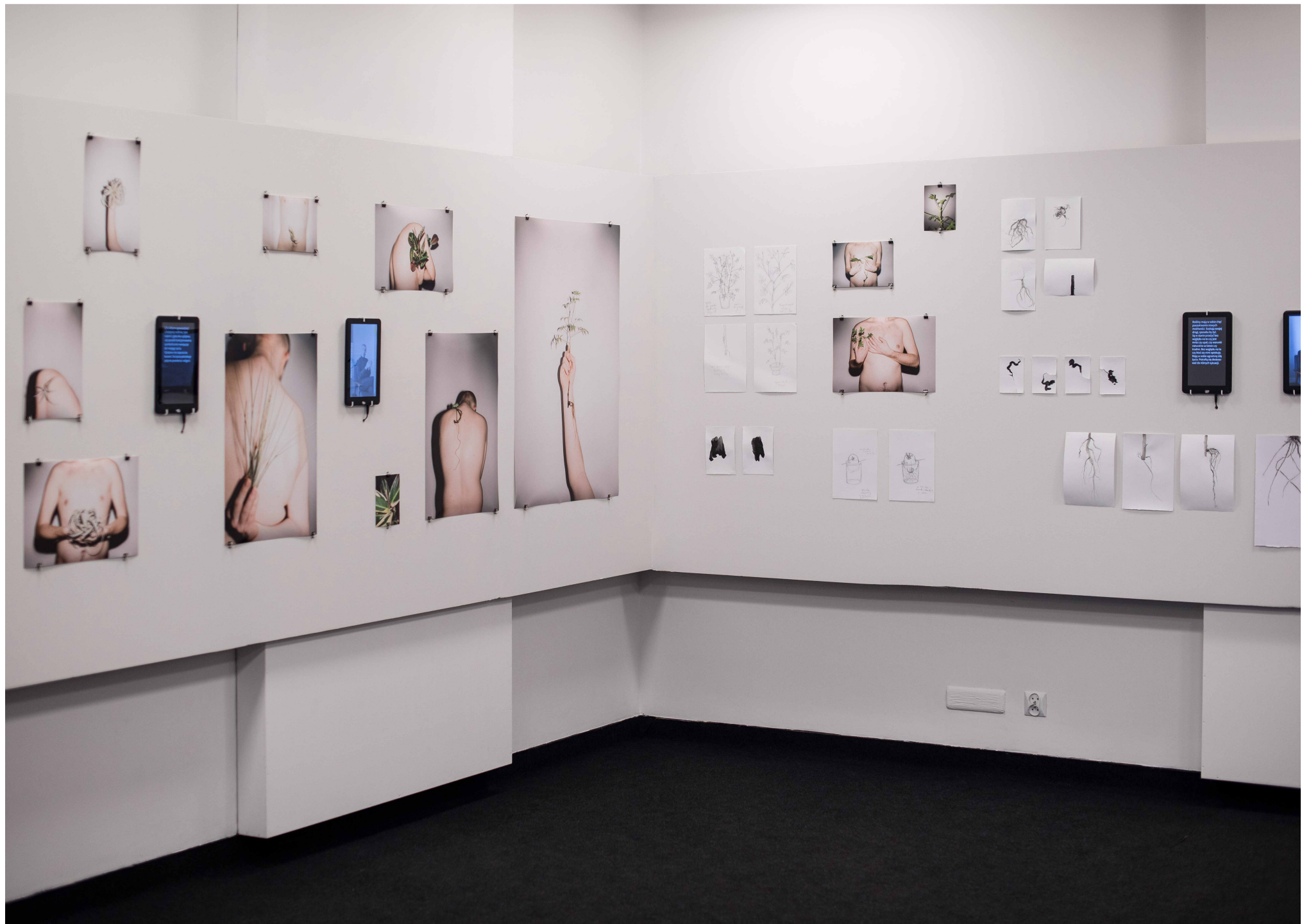
I grew up in the countryside and later in a boarding school in a forest in Otwock town. For this reason, I developed a great sensitivity to the beauty of nature. I look closely at the plants and give names to those I grow at home. In the presented photos, this relationship is emphasised by tender physical contact. Also in the videos there are stories about green friends and about myself: "My name is Daniel, am I a plant?". For me, the natural world is not only a source of delight, but also a starting point for reflection on my own situation. I see an indomitable will to live and the possibility of regeneration among plants. I can see that damage, such as breaking a branch, does not stop the plants from growing, it just changes their direction. I am similar – I feel shaped by the fact that I am Deaf, but I find that it doesn't stop me from growing. I live my life to the fullest. Following Michel Foucault, please do not call me ill. I am Deaf and I am fine with it. I don't want to be changed.

The work "The Unreasonable Man Persists in Trying to Adapt the World to Himself" is an in-depth self-portrait. You can see the naked body of a young man in it. However, I also show myself as a person: a sensitive, self-aware individual, following his own path.

photo credit Piotr Kruszak

link of all films

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Y97pYiYaHhR6G5oJ2nEZi56F4pSfFPFk>



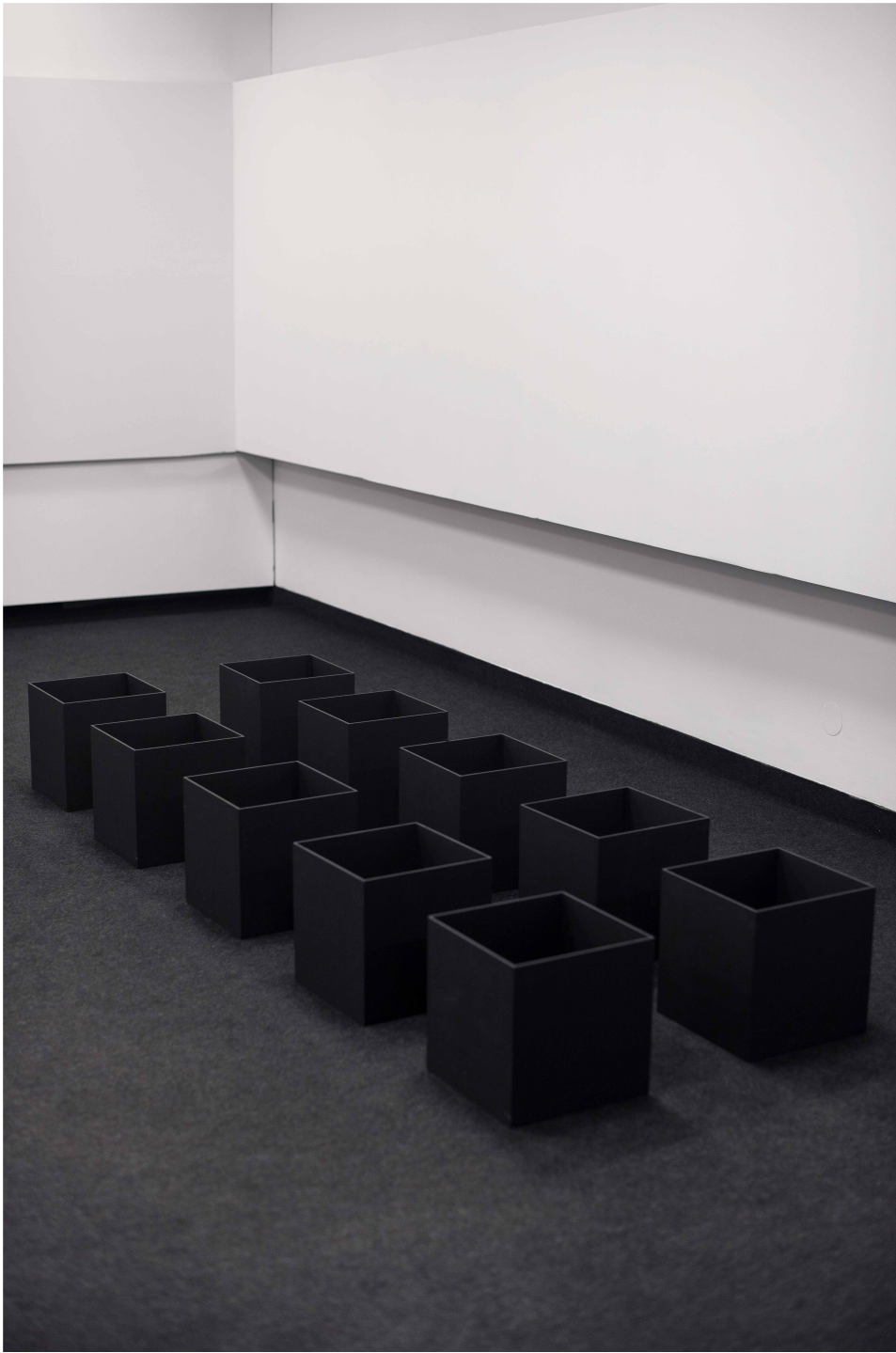
Sin

10 objects (HDF 45 x 45 cm and photo prints)
2017

The inspiration for this work was a conversation I carried out with a nun when I was a child. Then she said: "To be sinful means to have a black heart. In the hospital, you can open your chest and see what colour your heart is". As a child, I was deeply moved by this statement. The work presented is an artistic interpretation of this vision. In a way, I take up the gauntlet from childhood. I look inside myself. I strive for discovery of the dark sides of myself as well.

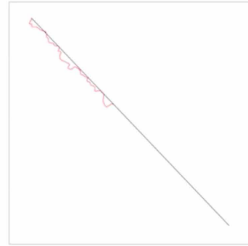
photo credit Piotr Kruszak





11km/2:33h

installation, video, duration 2 hours 33 minutes
2017



Apparently, Tsar Nicholas I of Russia drew the Moscow-Petersburg railway line on the map with a ruler and a pencil, completely ignoring the conditions of the area. Fascinated by the radical nature of this gesture, I set myself a similar task. I decided to go in a straight line from my home to the Academy of Fine Arts, where I was studying. I made a video documentation of this walk with a sports camera attached to my clothes. Additional information about the travelled route is provided by an animation showing a straight black line of the plan and a red line of the actual route.

In the film recording, I present the study of the limitation of my own body in the context of time and space. In the film, I show unselected, non-aesthetic frames of space, I record everything I pass along the way, without controlling the image while recording it. The only choice I make is the route and the way to get to my destination. This film brings you closer to the experience of walking around Warsaw in an architectural or urban context, also in the area of land conditions.

A clean approach to time is of great importance for the reception. Time is accurately measured and given in the title of the work, which indicates its importance. At the same time, I do not force viewers to experience it in its entirety. I leave the possibility of scrolling and jumping to any moment in the film using a tablet.

video frames

video film

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B2Rj1waMQeFfQUFqYnBESFdwa3c/view>



Silence

object (wooden frame 112 x 112 cm, acrylic, lines)
2015

What is silence? I try to answer this question in this work. Maybe it is just the lack of sound. In my opinion, the concept of silence does not exist, but I was brought up in the dominant world of sounds and also taught what the world of sounds is. There is a constant contradiction between what I feel and what I have been taught. The object resembles a conventional framed painting. In a place where you can expect canvases or boards and paints on it, there is a transparent surface, full of slits, shrouded in elusive reflections. The surface made of veins is an element of the metaphor of the border between the existing and non-existent definition.

photo credit Piotr Kruszek

