

## ALEXIS BLAKE

### *Crack Nerve Boogie Swerve: the archive*

07.06 – 11.08.2024

WIELS, Brussels

Originally conceived as a performance, *Crack Nerve Boogie Swerve* embraces concepts such as transparency, resistance, resonance and disruption—breaking free from norms, liberating oneself from the constraints of oppression and stretching the boundaries of art institutions. At WIELS, Alexis Blake (b. 1981, US/NL) expands the scope of a live work into a performative exhibition that encapsulates its past iterations while slowly transforming the present one.

Building on extensive research Blake developed the first outlines of *Crack Nerve Boogie Swerve* in 2019. For her first presentation of the work at TENT in Rotterdam, she decided on three consecutive performance sequences which she rehearsed on site, in front of an audience. In 2023, Blake developed and completed a new, comprehensive iteration of the performance which she first presented at KW Institute for Contemporary Art in Berlin, and later at the High Line in New York City.

For its newest iteration *Crack Nerve Boogie Swerve: the archive*, Alexis Blake — a former WIELS resident and recipient of the prestigious Prix de Rome — invites the audience to conceive of performativity without prejudice and to look at the exhibition space as a speculative archive and a site for process. She creates an environment that allows the glass to become a performer, conductor, instrument and metaphor for the individual and collective body: vulnerable but resilient.

**“Glass is amorphous, it’s always changing, it’s neither liquid nor solid.  
And like the human body it’s extremely fragile but extraordinarily  
strong—depending on how you handle it.”**

- Alexis Blake

The malleability of glass, able to be shaped into any form or size and consisting of varying degrees of hardness, becomes the very essence of its materiality. Glass

exists between a state of 'whole' and 'broken'. If 'broken', it renders itself 'useless'. This perceived fragility supersedes a literal interpretation of materiality and extends into the socio-political realms. The act of 'breaking' puts one in contention with opposing forces, creating tension between the notions of oppression and liberation. In order to break free from stagnant and retrograde hierarchies, many forms of civil disobedience take shape within the allegory of smashing through glass obstacles, may that be metaphorical ceilings or the destruction of storefront windows. The imagery of broken windows is often construed, erroneously, as a crime. When that happens, broken windows become a signifier for societal decline and decay.

By pairing a custom-made glass-paneled floor that boasts a series of reflective sculptural glass and steel elements, with a low frequency sound score, Blake actively engages with the architecture. She explores how both the space, the installation and its audience might resonate when exposed to the subliminal vibrations of several heavyweight subwoofers.

During weekends, segments from the original iteration of *Crack Nerve Boogie Swerve* are selectively performed by dancers and musicians, facilitating a dynamic interplay among all the different elements of the exhibition. By isolating certain segments of the performance and recontextualising them as stand-alone ventures, this deliberate choice invites contemplation imbued with introspection. It juxtaposes the broken with the unbroken, summoning echoes from the past while offering glimpses of prospective futures, all in an attempt to carve out fleeting moments of coherence. Each new performance unfolds either as a solo or a duet, usually reprised on multiple occasions, affording both performers and spectators the latitude to reimagine the experience of the collective body engendered by the original performance.

Finally, the audience is invited to interact with the glass installations by walking across the glass floor. The resulting cracks will act as a physical marker of the passage of time and people's movements throughout the exhibition space. As such, glass breaking and resonance are not only used metaphorically, but also as a

means of communication, collectively creating a new vocabulary of sound and physical expression.

**Curator:** Helena Kritis

**Curatorial assistant:** Josue Aliendre Carvani

**With the support of:** The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Belgium, Mondriaan Fund, europalia

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## Artist Biography

Alexis Blake's multidisciplinary practice coalesces visual art, performance and dance. She investigates the way in which the body is represented and treated as an archive, which she then critically examines, disrupts, and re-negotiates. Her work directly engages with the representation and subjectification of women's bodies while activating them as sites and agents for socio-political change. In doing so she creates languages of resistance and spaces to expose and elude systems of power.



Liz Ligon

Blake received an MA in Fine Art from Piet Zwart Institute, Rotterdam (2007) and was an artist-in-residence at WIELS, Contemporary Art Centre, Brussels (2020+2021), the Delfina Foundation, London (2016), Jan van Eyck Academie, Maastricht (2014–15), Fondazione Antonio Ratti with Yvonne Rainer (2015). Her work has been presented at numerous locations, such as: KW Contemporary (Berlin), Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Holland Festival (Amsterdam), 1st Riga Biennial (Riga, Latvia), BOZAR (Brussels), Performatik19 (Brussels), IMMA – Irish Museum of Modern Art (Dublin), Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam), British Museum / Block Universe Performance Festival (London), TENT (Rotterdam), ExtraCity (Antwerp) and La

Triennale di Milano XXI (Milan). She is the winner of the Dutch art prize, Prix de Rome 2021.

## **CREDITS**

Low frequency sound composition and subwoofer arrangement: Stefanie Egedy

Co-producer, mixing and mastering of soundscore: Zeno Mainardi

Light designer: Ofer Smilansky

Steel elements produced by: Bart Boots (CMS)

Glass 'Z-profi le' brackets made with: Zeno Vogel (offi ce haratori), Johannes Husmann (Raumbau)

Glass sculptures made with: Van Tetterode Glass Studio

Garments: Elisa van Joolen with Mika Perlmutter

Assistance: Helena Julian (studio manager Alexis Blake Studio)

WIELS interns: Josue Aliendre Carvani, Vivien Kämpf, Elena Silena Roccetti

Special thanks to: Uri Gilad, Léon Kruijswijk, Yeb Wiersma, Krist Gruijthuijsen, Meredith Blake, Ula Sickle, Zoë Gray

## Events

**Public opening:** Thursday 6 June 2024, 19:30

### **Nocturnes with guided tours (NL/FR/EN)**

Every 1st Wednesday of the month, 11:00-21:00

### **Performances**

Every weekend between 15:00 and 17:00

### **Artist talk (EN)**

Alexis Blake & Léon Kruijswijk

Sun 11.08.2024, 15:00

### **Family Funday (FR/NL)**

Every first and third Sunday of the month, a WIELS guide takes children and their parents through the exhibitions together. For children between 2 and 12 years old.

More events & registrations: [WIELS.ORG](http://WIELS.ORG)

## For kids

### **Baby Bag**

Available for free in the exhibition

For baby's and toddlers

### **KETS Poster**

Available for free in the exhibition

4-14 years old

### **Family Funday (FR/NL)**

Every first and third Sunday of the month, a WIELS guide takes children and their parents through the exhibitions together. For children between 2 and 12 years old.



## **Practical information for press**

**Press conference:** Thursday 06.06.2024 between 14:00-16:00 (RSVP via fran@wiels.org)

Open from Tuesday to Sunday from 11:00 to 18:00  
Open every first Wednesday of the month until 21:00

### **Press contact for interview and image requests:**

Fran Bombeke, Fran@wiels.org, +32 (0) 494 907 166

Press images + credits:

[Download link](#) to digital press kit

### **WIELS**

As one of the leading institutions for contemporary art in Europe WIELS presents temporary exhibitions by national and international artists, both emerging and more established. WIELS is a site of creation and dialogue, in which art and architecture form the basis for a discussion about current events and issues, not only through its exhibitions, but also through an international artist-in-residency, an education and community-oriented programme and complementary activities.

Avenue Van Volxemlaan 354

B-1190 Brussels

[www.wiels.org](http://www.wiels.org)