

# Lodown



## No.89

© Eddie Otchere - Metalheadz session 1995

Andrew Jeffrey Wright  
Discodeine  
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Harold Diaz  
Bernhard Moosbauer  
Nik Novak  
Eddie Otchere



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## Sound Machinery Operations



TWITTER, 2011  
TWITTER, SCULPTURE, FIBER GLASS, RESIN, VARNISH, ELECTRONICS  
H 30 X L 75 X B 170 CM

Nik Novak was born in Mainz in 1981. From 2002-2007 he attended the Universität der Künste (UDK) in Berlin and is a master student of internationally-acclaimed artist Lothar Baumgarten. He received several scholarships, one was a travel scholarship to New York in 2006 and in 2007 he visited the sculpture class by Xiang Jing at Normal University Shanghai. In 2014 he'll receive the Casag Kunstpreis.

Nik is working in the field of surveying space with mobile sound sculptures. Among others he has built the "Mobile Booster", a mobile soundsystem suitable for pushing, the "Baron Bass" - a mobile bass soundsystem producing low frequencies only and his biggest sound-sculpture so far, "Panzer" (tank). Nik built a 4000 watt speaker compartment on the dumping mechanism of a small Japanese industrial mini dumper, that can be raised hydraulically. The mini dumper has steel tracks like a real tank.

BARON BASS, 2008  
STEEL, TRUCK WHEEL, POCKET BIKE, CHOPPER WHEEL, SUBWOOFER, SOUND  
H 100 CM X L 200 CM X B 200 CM





BACKLAPSE, 2010  
POCKET BATTERY, BATTERY, CAR BATTERY, SPEAKER, WALKMAN, TAPES, HELMET, GLOVES, SOUND  
H 106 CM X L 145 CM X B 106 CM

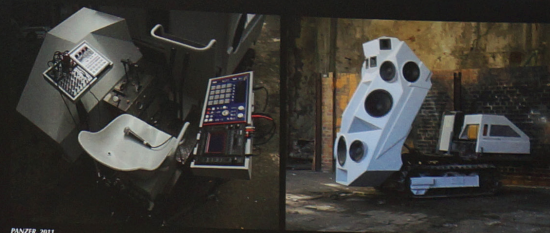


When he wanted to do a performance in Berlin with Panzer, a joint venture between him and DJ Rashad and DJ Spinn (pioneers of the Chicago juke and juke and footwork phenomena), he didn't get the permission to drive the tank because it would cause too much damage to the streets. Nik then decided to put Panzer on a flatbed truck and register the whole operation as demonstration. It worked and even got him the respective streets blocked by the authorities. A very nice victory over the system...

The cosmos around his sound-sculptures is informed by the analysis of military configuration and pop cultural phenomena. There's a reference that seems to explain it. Although Nik grew up in a pacifist home, he was faced with military war machinery every day. His home was in the Rhein-Main era where a lot of G.I.s were stationed. According to him, the Cold War, and later the first Iraq war, were in front of his door. There was a military training area of the US army right across the street and Nik says that he felt that in a sense 50% of his hometown was American territory. So on one end of the influential spectrum was the military and on the other contemporary American culture, especially hip-hop which was brought to young Nik by the American soldiers stationed in his hometown.

Nik is interested in phenomena like car-tuning, acoustic weapons, drones and soundsystems of all kinds. Right now he's curating an art show that will be held at MARTa in Herford next year. It's called "BOOSTER - Art, Sound, Machine.", and deals with the worldwide phenomena of mobile soundsystems. Sound sculptures and vehicles will be presented alongside historical objects. The exhibition examines the cultural relevance of these constructions and their utilisation in fine arts. Participating artists among others are: Tamara Grcic, Lothar Baumgarten, AUDINT / Toby Heyes and Steve Goodman, Jean Tinguely and Tom Sachs...

One of Nik's future plans is a collaboration with Kevin Martin (Techno Animal, The Bug). Nik wants to build a sculpture 5 times as big as Panzer and Martin is meant to provide the sounds. But before that he has a solo show at the Berlinische Galerie, for which he already is planning sound drones using the ultrasonic technology that is utilised in LRADs (Long Range Acoustic Device), the advanced version of a water gun which is a mean sonic weapon. LRADs are used as crowd control weapons and can produce an array of sounds that are very painful. But Nik doesn't plan to use it in a harmful way.



PANZER, 2011  
MINI-DUMPER, WOOD, STEEL, RESIN, FIBER GLASS, AUDIO-EQUIPMENT, SOUND  
H 210 CM X L 350 CM X B 140 CM



DUNK DRAWING, 2012  
DUNK DRAWING, VARNISH, MED  
H 200 CM X L 200 CM





BOOSTER 2.11.2011  
WOOD, STEEL, FIBER GLASS, SPEAKER, TIRES, AUDIOEQUIPMENT  
H: 110 CM X L: 300 CM X B: 95 CM

#### What is fascinating for you about sound vehicles?

My mobile boosters take the concept of mobile soundsources to occupy and transform public space temporarily. The mobile soundsystem in terms of being a cultural weapon always intrigued me.

#### How important is music for you and what relevance does it have in correlation with your output?

I think we're all heavily influenced by music even the music of our parents, no matter if positive or negative. Especially pop music proceeds a lot of identification. It started in the womb of our mothers where we heard her dead-sounding heartbeat... we are steadily in spheres that we integrate in the spectrum we perceive as familiar. Shock and usage alternate steadily since birth. The music I make serves as a certain reflection.

I try to create a sound that is coherent with my inner self. While at it, I find myself in an atmosphere that is constantly mutating. I would describe it as a room: a wet cathedral-like cave with a squishy, furry surface. I don't know if this makes any sense but I noticed that it seems I try to create this kind of atmosphere again and again.

I think it's an appropriate comparison. At the same time I lived in Wedding, mobile phone became able to play mp3s; teenagers used their phones on public transport to clarify with squeaking sounds who's the boss in the cabin or the backseat. This guerrilla method of acoustic challenge reminds me of the use of ghetto blasters when I was young whereas the tiny but loud speakers of a mobile phone aren't used to listen to music but to occupy the room with a noise that is riddled with a certain quotation. Observations of this kind led me to an involvement with acoustic warfare since the beginning of the 20th century and caused a whole series of sound-sculptures.

At that time I started making electronic music intensively, and tried to create a soundsphere in my apartment that shielded and protected me from outer noise simultaneously. This kind of self sound exposure was a strategy to develop soundscapes that allowed me to operate especially well. I often made sounds and drew synchronicity.

#### What other artists inspire/interest you?

As a juvenile, I drew intensively. Otto Dix's painting of Anita Berber, was like a door to another time. Dix paintings gave me a feeling to hear and smell how the 20s might have been. When I was 14 I copied the Berber pic and sold it without feeling guilt. It was more like an appropriation. I bought my first, almost premium-quality camera with the money. Another big influence were Dadaists like Marcel Duchamp and Kurt Schwitters.

BOOSTER - ART SOUND MACHINE  
15TH FEBRUARY - 1ST JUNE 2014  
MARTIN THEATRO  
GÖTTENSTRASSE 2-10  
10852 BERLIN

RECOMMENDED LISTENING:  
DJ BASHAD "DOUBLE CLIP" RELEASED ON: HYPERDUR, OCT. 22ND

RECOMMENDED READING:  
STEVE GOODMAN: SONIC WARFARE: SOUND, AFFECT, AND THE ECOLOGY OF FEAR  
THE HOT PRESS (NOV. 13, 2014) 80N277929

NINKSCHWILDE  
WORDS: IBA HUSSEIN

My sound-sculptures allow for it to not always be me at the forefront producing tracks. However, with my band Schockglatzte I work on an album that is rather like club music.

#### How did you conceive the idea to your sound-sculptures?

My first sound-sculpture, the mobile booster, came into being through my fascination for pimped-out vehicles. I lived in Wedding and just outside my front of my door were these steady meetings of lowered cars with darkly tinted windows and extremely powerful soundsystems. I was affected by this territorial takeover of public space by extremely loud music even in my apartment. At the same time I found this antisocial elbow gesture for self-assertion in urban spaces highly interesting. The car as capsule for extreme self sound exposure to keep oneself in a state of being alert is pretty wicked.

The bass blast waves that get through outwards, signal danger to everyone in the surrounding area in a rudimentary way and they disrupt the individual soundspaces. Animals interpret a loud and deep noise as an alert signal that hints to a bigger and most likely more dangerous animal.

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