

**Gideonsson/Londré*****I Am Vertical***

June 29 — September 11, 2018

Inauguration: Thursday, June 28, 2018, at 7 p.m.

***The Possibility of an Island***

Exhibition Program at Espai 13 at Fundació Joan Miró

September 22, 2017 — September 11, 2018

Curator: Alexandra Laudo [Heroínas de la Cultura]

In collaboration with Fundació Banc Sabadell

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**Press Release**

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**The Swedish duo Gideonsson/Londré close the exhibition program for the 2017-2018 season at Fundació Joan Miró's Espai 13 with the show *I Am Vertical***

**The project is a video installation exploring the idea of verticality that invites visitors to think of the world's highest mountains as terrestrial islands.**

**Through direct experimentation, the artists have examined the effects that human beings experience at very high altitudes and how these sensations enhance mental states of isolation or introspection.**

***I Am Vertical* closes *The Possibility of an Island*, the exhibition program for the 2017-2018 season at Fundació Joan Miró's Espai 13, organized in collaboration with Fundació Banc Sabadell. Curated by Alexandra Laudo, the project explores some of the symbolic and sociocultural meanings that have historically been associated with a paradigmatic space in the collective imaginary: the island.**

**Barcelona, June 27, 2018.** The human body functions especially well at sea level, where atmospheric pressure and oxygen levels are high. This is largely why humans have historically spread out over the land horizontally, and why so many civilizations have been founded at altitudes near sea level. Nevertheless, humans have always felt an irresistible urge to explore sites that soar or plunge vertically, such as mountains or ocean trenches. And yet this "vertical colonialism," in the artists' words, has been hampered by the fact that we are physically ill-equipped to thrive at great depths and extreme altitudes. It is no coincidence that places located more than 8,000 meters above sea level, what mountaineers call the "vertical limit," are known as "death zones."

Gideonsson/Londré have probed the effects of very high altitudes on humans and how these sensations can enhance mental states of isolation or introspection. The artists sought to experience this phenomenon first-hand through mountain-climbing expeditions and specific training sessions simulating some of the conditions found in such zones. The show, organized with the support of Konstnärnämnden, presents a work of video art created from a recording of one of those sessions. The video shows Gideonsson clinging upside down to a rope that hangs from the ceiling until she faints. The artists sought to hold these inverted positions as they produce some of the sensations experienced in death zones: swelling, impaired vision, lack of circulation to the feet, etc.



Still from *I Am Vertical*, by Gideonsson/Londré. Courtesy of the artists

Gideonsson accompanies this strenuous physical action with an exercise in poetry reading. Upside down and with increasing difficulty, the artist reads a text that alludes, among other things, to climbing a mountain, to the physical effects humans experience in such conditions, to the history of mountaineering, and also to the specter of death. For the curator, Alexandra Laudo, the text and the way it is read reflect what could be a form of speech and writing inherent to the death zone: extreme, fragile, and devoid of formalities.

With a title borrowed from a poem by Sylvia Plath, Gideonsson/Londré's proposal uses human verticality as a metaphor for our singularity. Just as Plath expressed in

her poem, the artists approach the difficulty we have bearing the tragic awareness of this difference – the perception of being *islands* – through the image of the inverted vertical body as an unsustainable position. According to Laudo, the show also explores how the world's vertical extremes challenge human verticality, so much more fragile and modest than that of mountains.

Other elements displayed in the room reinforce the concept of verticality and the image of the capsized body. The artists' mountain boots rest on a structure for holding shoes affixed to the ceiling. Sculptures depicting the upper parts of their heads rear up at medium-height, reminiscent of snow-capped mountain peaks. Plinths scattered throughout the space recall the training sessions, but also, symbolically, islands and mountains, and the idea of ascent. The installation is rounded out with the graphic work *The World at 26247 Feet*, a blank map with fourteen small holes. The image is an imagining of a cross-section of the world at the stated altitude, that is, at the vertical limit. In this cross-section, only the vertical points farthest from the earth can be seen, in the words of Laudo, "like small gaps, like islands in an invisible landscape."

The exhibition will also include the final session of *Biblioteca de les illes* (Island Library), an activity involving the reading and discussion of selected texts related to the program's theme. The session is entitled *Saber-se illa: la consciència d'aïllament en la poesia escrita per dones a mitjan s. XX*, (Knowing Yourself to Be an Island: Awareness of Isolation in Poetry by Women from the Mid-20th Century) and will be led by the poet Míriam Cano at the Fundació Joan Miró's Jacques Dupin Library on July 12, at 6:30 p.m. Featured texts will include works by Sylvia Plath, Adrienne Rich and Anne Sexton. For more information: <https://www.fmirobcn.org/ca/activitats/adults-i-altres-grups/0/64/biblioteca-de-les-illes>

**Gideonsson/Londré** is the duo formed by the Swedish artists Lisa Gideonsson and Gustaf Londré in 2009. They live and work in Kallrör, Sweden, and hold fine arts degrees and an M.A. from the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm. Often, their work has a performative dimension and is based on the exploration of issues related to temporality, bodies and natural space, as well as the relationships between them. Gideonsson/Londré have exhibited their work at museums, art spaces, and artistic platforms, such as Bonniers Konsthall, Borås Internationella Skulpturebiennial, Andquestionmark, Iaspis, Moderna Bar (Stockholm), Fluxee (Helsinki), or the Bodrum Biennale (Turkey). They have done artistic residencies with various international platforms, such as Iaspis, Skaffell Residency and Aeringur (both in Iceland), and ZK/U (Berlin), and have been the recipients of grants such as the Maria Bonnier Dahlin Foundation grant and the Molly och Ragnar Rudemars grant. [www.gideonssonlondre.com](http://www.gideonssonlondre.com)

***The Possibility of an Island*** is the exhibition program for the 2017-2018 season at Fundació Joan Miró's Espai 13, organized in collaboration with Fundació Banc Sabadell. Curated by Alexandra Laudo, the project explores some of the symbolic and sociocultural meanings that have historically been associated with a paradigmatic space in the collective imaginary: the island. An island is a symbol of independence and self-sufficiency, but it can also be a place of segregation and confinement. It can evoke images of paradise, but also of self-contained tourist resorts. Historically, islands have been objects of colonial power, but also places for social and political utopias. Above all, an island is a metaphor for a state of solitude, retreat and introspection.

Gerard Ortín, Irene de Andrés, Lucía C. Pino, Bárbara Sánchez, and the duo Gideonsson/Londré probe some of these meanings using a variety of approaches and perspectives and with the aim of raising questions and reflections about them that are pertinent to our contemporary context. *The Possibility of an Island* is the first program in a series of projects that Fundació Joan Miró's Espai 13 will dedicate to current curatorial practices, emphasizing not only the usual question of *what* is being curated, but also *how*.

Images and material for the press are available at [www.fmirobcn.org/press](http://www.fmirobcn.org/press) and at <http://bit.ly/2tqjyFs>.

Follow Espai 13's activities on social media with the hashtag #illaEspai13.

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