

Irene de Andrés
Shipwrecked Species

November 17, 2017 – January 7, 2018

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

Press Release

Irene de Andrés explores the complexity of postcolonial relations and highlights the connections between colonialism and tourism exploitation at Fundació Joan Miró's Espai 13.

***Shipwrecked Species* is based on the discovery of an old ship from the Spanish Armada, sunk off the coast of Colombia more than three centuries ago, and the conflict its discovery has sparked between the Colombian government, the U.S.-based company that provided the coordinates, and the Spanish government.**

De Andrés has developed a set of works, including videos, photographs, documents, texts, sculptural pieces and found objects, which she uses to explore the history of the vessel and the poetic potential of the concepts of shipwreck, remains and discovery.

***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.**

Barcelona, November 17, 2017. More than a thousand ships are estimated to have been sunk off the coast of Colombia, laden with treasure valued at nearly ten billion dollars. In recent years, this estimate has generated intense debate and considerable legislative activity aimed at regulating property and exploitation rights. Under Colombian law, all such valuable objects and elements submerged in the country's territorial waters are known as *shipwrecked species*. For Irene de Andrés, the discovery of this unusually poetic legal term planted the seed for a project that plunges into the complexity of postcolonial relations and emerges with an expository essay on the evocative capacity of the concept of shipwreck.

The artist begins with the discovery of the galleon *San José* in November 2015. This flagship of the Spanish Armada, sunk in the Battle of Barú more than three centuries earlier, was found near Colombia's Rosario Islands. At the time it was sunk, the *San José* was laden with valuable treasure. The vessel's discovery and the possibility of refloating it thus led to strong tensions between the Colombian government, the U.S.-based salvage company Sea Search Armada, which provided the coordinates, and the Spanish government, which claimed ownership. In *Shipwrecked Species*, de Andrés approaches this conflict from a postcolonial perspective and in the context of a new socioeconomic setting that highlights the connections between colonialism and the current tourism industry in the Rosario Islands.

For her project for Espai 13 –her first solo exhibition in Catalonia–, de Andrés has created an installation consisting of videos, photographs, documents, texts, sculptural pieces and found objects, through which she explores the case of the *San José* from multiple perspectives, from historic and economic angles to sociological and literary ones.

The show also taps the poetic potential of the concepts of shipwreck and *pro derelicto* (abandoned) remains, which the artist interprets as a “time capsule that, once discovered, abruptly injects a previous time frame into the present.” In keeping with this perspective, the proposal eschews a historicist approach, showcasing instead a network of anachronistic relationships, in which the present, past and future intertwine. The way the works are displayed is a critique of the nineteenth-century museographic aesthetics of many naval museums, in which a supposedly univocal discourse is articulated in chronological order based on an historical-scientific interpretation of the facts. She uses the museographic devices typical of such institutions (display cases, pedestals, etc.) to build the opposite: a plural, fragmentary and timeless reality through an extensive collage into which she introduces poetic elements.



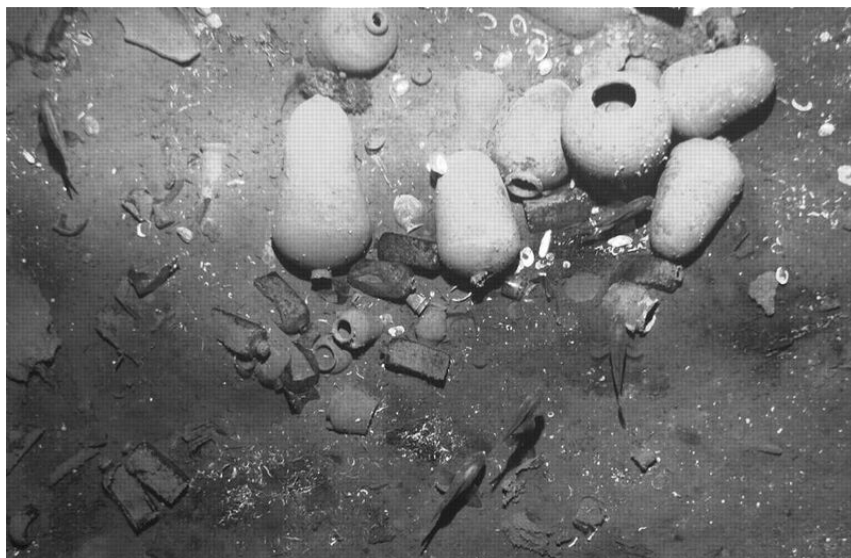
Examples include a newspaper article about the galleon's discovery juxtaposed with, among other objects, a page from *Love in the Time of Cholera* that mentions a shipwreck; a map of Colombia's maritime boundaries drawn by de Andrés exhibited next to an abstract depiction of the prospecting that led to the discovery; and a Cartagena tourism catalogue that the artist has appropriated alongside a reproduction of a fragment of Samuel Scott's painting *Wager's Action off Cartagena, 28 May 1708*, depicting the battle in which the galleon was sunk.

In a display case, the copper plates the artist used to produce photogravures of underwater images of the galleon are contrasted with aerial photographs of the area of the wreck reminiscent of both a military visual language and current monitoring of the site through geolocation technologies. Meanwhile, a series of images featuring the hands of various players involved in the discovery's management – from a member of Sea Search Armada to the president of Colombia – introduce, in the words of the curator, Alexandra Laudo, “gestures with echoes of colonialism, associated with conquest, domination, and ownership of the plunder.”

The videos included in the show likewise offer multiple perspectives on territorial discovery and recognition, in which the unequal relations between foreign and local agents, the connections between colonialism and tourism, and the contrast between commercial sailing and sailing for pleasure are all on display.

Drawing on the contradiction implicit in the title of the show, in which the term “species” is used to refer to inert material elements – as opposed to its usual meaning of living beings – de Andrés displays on pedestals various sculptural elements in which form and content are paradoxically related: a cannonball made of ceramic, an ingot full of water from the Caribbean Sea, a sea snail filled with lead, and another, emptied, in bronze. Through the form or the materials, many of which are used in weapons, these sculptures allude directly to both the armed conflict that led to the sinking of the *San José* and the subsequent dispute over its remains.

Finally, a handful of coins stuck together, representing the currencies of all three of the parties to the dispute over the wreck (Colombian pesos, euros and U.S. dollars) conjure images of treasure, but also the commercialization thereof and the plans to profit from the galleon through its refloating and conversion into a museum, already announced by the Colombian government.



Irene de Andrés (Ibiza, 1986) holds a fine arts degree and a master's in artistic research and production from Complutense University of Madrid. She was recently the resident artist at the FLORA Ars + Natura school in Bogotá (Colombia). She is the recipient of numerous prizes and grants, including the 2012 Circuitos de Artes Plásticas Prize, the 2013 Generaciones Prize, the 2014 Injuve Prize, and a 2015 Vegap Grant for Visual Creation. In 2012, she was the resident artist at Fundación Bilbao Arte and, in 2015, at Beta Local (San Juan, Puerto Rico). De Andrés has participated in many group exhibitions, including *Un lugar y el tiempo* (Espacio Odeón, Bogotá), *Energy Flash. The Rave Moment* (MuHKA, Antwerp) and *Depois do futuro* (Escola de Artes Visuais do Parque Lage, Rio de Janeiro). She has also had solo shows at art centers such as Galeria Marta Cervera (Madrid) or Casal Solleric (Palma), as a recipient of the 2015 City of Palma Prize. She currently lives and works in Madrid.
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Images and material for the press are available at www.fmirobcn.org/premsa and <http://bit.ly/2tqjyFs>. Follow Espai 13's activities on #illaEspai13.

In collaboration with

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