

Elizabeth McTernan: Altitude Sickness

on view 16 October - 13 November A: I don't want to go to outer space. I like it here.

B: We're just visitors here.

Then it came. This must be what it feels like to touch the ceiling. It was the nausea of the body, a violent revolt of the flesh against the leaving. There was a lot of vomiting.

The monsoon was at its end. We were walking up the mountain, walking to where the air and vegetation thins, walking to where it is harder to be, to that invisible line where humans can no longer exist in simple flesh and bone. We were walking to outer space. I had recently been living at the Baltic Sea. By coming here, I wanted to traverse the lived human interval between sea level and outer space, to climb to the roof of the world and touch the ceiling. The high altitude made it impossible to think. I told Luke I had to go throw up again. He teased me, Isn't this what you wanted?

At the monastery, I was told I'd better descend. The young monks were playing volleyball. The ball clapped against hands and earth in a whir of orange: up, down, up, down, up, down, up... Walking down the mountain, gravity jumped up to meet me with every step. Hello! The thickening air started to feel like soup in my lungs. I was hungry again. I thought about Snickers. Peas and rocks peppered the road, having been tossed from bounding trucks. We ate the dirty peas. I thought about cosmonauts coming back down to Earth after long missions above, and putting their faces on the ground. After holding the whole Earth in their eyes, they blind themselves with the soil.

Why do Earthlings dream of leaving? Why do we crave the outside, the escape from gravity? What lies outside but erasure? As we run the Earth into ruin, they say there's always Mars. But I don't want to go to Mars. I like it here on Earth. There's Snickers here.

-- Excerpted from "Walking to Outer Space," Elizabeth McTernan, 2016

Exhibition programming:

22 October: Film screening, "Out of the Present," Andrei Ujică

5 November: Listening session, "Altitude Sickness: Asteroids and Angels (and the Weight of the World)"

Extended programming:

August 2017: "All cats are gray in the dark: A philosophical expedition to the Dark Sky Reserve," in collaboration with curator/researcher Desiree Foerster

Altitude Sickness, Elizabeth McTernan's first solo exhibition in Berlin, presents a body of work made over the last two years, spanning Germany, Lithuania, Finland, and the Indian Himalayas. Her artistic research of landscape is performed worldwide in the form of actions, drawing, video/audio installation, storytelling, printmaking, and artist books. She is based in Berlin. More at www.astheworldtilts.com