

Lamb Gift

Nicola Godman – Josefin Gäfvert

5–21 February 2021

Vernissage: Friday 5 February, 16–20

Address: CRUM Heaven
Högbergsgatan 38
118 26 Stockholm
(T-bana Slussen)

Opening hours: 6–7 February, 13–16
13–14 February, 13–16
20–21 February, 13–16

The exhibition is open on weekends and by appointment.

To book a time for an individual visit please contact us at flat.octopus@gmail.com or +46 (0) 728 49 29 89 (Alice)

There is also a satellite part of the exhibition in our Exhibition Case at Grindsgatan 27 (in collaboration with Crash Boom Bang) with opening hours on weekdays 10–17 or by appointment.



Nicola Godman & Josefin Gäfvert, 'Wall', damask weave, handspun wool, linen, 55 x 80 cm, and HD video loop, sound, 1:20 min, 2020

Lamb gift, a gifted lamb, a gift of lamb, a lamb given, a giving lamb. A poisoned lamb, a roasted lamb, the Lamb of God, the risen lamb, lamb bleeding, lamb bleating. A lamb grows into a sheep, a sheep is sheared, is wool, is weaved, is turned into felt, is worn, folded, torn, unlambed.

Lamb Gift used to be Lammgiftet. It is a play on the origin of words and people, on identity; a pondering on misinterpretation and the language's power to change the very core of the meaning of things. In Gotlandish (Gotland-Swedish, originating in the old Gutnish) the word *lambgift* could be read as 'sheep-giving', related to the verb *att giva* = to give. A *lambgift* is a building for sheep where they can take shelter from harsh weather and feed in winter, a building specific for Gotland and Fårö. Traditionally these lamb shelters have been made with stone or wooden walls, earthen floors and thatched grass-roofs, even though today more modern materials are used. Hay and leaves are stored in every *lambgift*, and the sheep can roam freely in and out through an opening in the basement of the building. Inasmuch as sheep farming forms a vital source of Gotland's economy, *lambgift* plays an equally key part in the island's history, protecting the sheep and therefore the wool trade. The wool production on Gotland gave rise to a rich textile handicraft where its hand-made knitted goods are popular far outside the island and the craftsmanship and artistry contribute to its charisma as a touristically attractive destination.

Nicola Godman and Josefin Gäfvert are Gotland-born artists. They studied together at a gymnasium in Visby, Gotland's main city, and are currently both finishing their last year at Konstfack in Stockholm (in fine art and craft, respectively). The two artists started working together and developing the project Lammgiftet about a year ago, looking at the traditions and identity connected to their birthplace. I am always very fond of coming across artists who do not only set off to work together or present their work jointly, but who actually deeply complement each other and commit to a project to their utmost. The two artists' practices seamlessly overlap in their disparate mediums – the striking hand-made weaves created from raw Gotland wool on a drawloom by Josefin Gäfvert, and Nicola Godman's alluring and reflective video installations that are rooted in her farming background. The contrast of the raw and the smooth, the traditional and the modern in the artworks is further highlighted by the rawness of the exhibition space. The process of creating the works has been a journey

and a collaboration, from researching and documenting the *lambgift* in-situ, collecting the raw wool to producing the pieces and reinventing them for a new space.

Relating to a certain cultural identity, especially as a young person or artist can be challenging, since adhering to one definition can rid us of other options. All too easily do we want to forget about where we come from and who we once have been. We tend to see the past as a burden, or a nostalgic bittersweet memory, but not always as something that drives us forward or contributes to who we are. Too much focus on tradition is labeled as nationalistic, an attachment to one place seen as limited, local products need to be specifically trademarked under EU law in order to be recognised as authentic, creating a validating system on traditional culture. Our imperfect past selves fastened to one point have no role in the present; tied to the ground they cannot develop. Forgetting that without coming from somewhere we would not be going anywhere, that with a hegemonic ahistorical society there would be nothing to relate to.

Traditions are commonly intertwined with the local economy, which, if not stimulated, would eventually die out. In Lamb Gift Gäfvert and Godman ponder the impact of traditions on our lives – as well as the impact our lives have on traditions and local trade. If the model of the *lambgift* has had such strong role throughout the island's history, how has it transformed and what kind of function can a small sheep house fulfill in today's society? Do the picturesque huts 'only' contribute to the idyllic image we have of Gotland, or is their function more symbolic, a part of the island's identity and future direction; is *lambgift* something that should stay, or is it a symbol that does not belong to the present, similarly to our past selves meant to stay in the past? Gäfvert and Godman ask these questions and present a multilayered and attentive take on Gotland's traditional identity. The project admits that romance and nostalgia have a key role in our perception of certain places, but aims to reinterpret this image through various textures backed by the artists' intimate connection to the island and a thoughtful local research. Through this contemporary reiteration the *lambgift* can dream new dreams of its sheep-filled existence.

The exhibition is curated by Alice Mäselníková.



You are both from Gotland, an island in the southeast of Sweden. Do you think where an artist comes from is reflected in their work? Is your origin important to you as an artist?

NG: Yes, I think it can be reflected in an artist's work, but not always. For me, my origin if you can call it that, or my background, is important to my work as it informs my interests and is a part of my identity. Rather than ignore that I'm raised in an agricultural environment, I try to embrace it.

JG: I think it often is, especially if you grew up in the countryside. For me it is not important in my artistic work. Many times people have assumed that I work with wool because I come from Gotland, but the truth is that I hated traditional handicraft when I grew up. This project is my first intimate meeting with gotlandsullen.

Are you 'an islander'? Can you imagine living on Gotland your whole life?

NG: Well I consider myself an islander since I'm born and raised on Gotland, but I haven't properly lived there since I graduated from high school. So I haven't lived on Gotland my whole life, but I would probably like to be buried there.

JG: I always knew that I would move away from there as soon as I could. If I moved back it would be for the landscape.

Why have you decided that you would like to connect your art practice to Gotland's traditions?

NG: The collaboration with Josefin started with the common denominator that we are both from Gotland and are old friends. I think why we decided to re-evaluate Gotlandish things, such as grey sheep and wool, is that we both don't know how to place our art practices within what is usually thought of as Gotlandish, like sheepskin souvenirs and handmade ceramics. So we were curious about what would happen if we made new interpretations of something 'authentic' – in this case the traditional sheep house called lambgift. For us it was a way to combine our practices of weaving and working with installation.

JG: It is always interesting to work with things that you have contradictory feelings about, here the romanticised image of Gotland. I think that Nicola's answer speaks for us both.

It can be a challenge to collaborate with another artist, or another human being in general. How has it been for you – has it been easy to work together, or is it much easier to work alone?

NG: Sometimes it has been challenging haha. But we have been working separately on parts to be joined together, me filming and Josefin weaving which has worked out well. I usually like collaborations when there are clear roles and responsibilities. Since Josefin and I know each other from before and are quite honest people, I think we are pretty good at communicating with each other.

JG: I had to spend a lot of time with the wool, washing, combing and spinning it at home on my balcony. It took all summer for me to make the yarn, as I have never spun before. To spend so much energy on just the material to be able to try out an idea was stressful. Nicola's process was totally different, so our intense work periods in this collaboration were at very different times. I don't think I could have done this with anyone else than Nicola, and I could never have done it without her. Collaboration is strengthening and makes you do things you wouldn't do alone; that is worth it even if it is sometimes difficult.

What do lambs dream about?

NG: Food.

JG: The old and traditional lambgift.



Josefin Gäfvert, untitled, double cloth, wool, linen, cotton, 145 x 125 cm, 2020

Biography

Nicola Godman (b. 1989, Gotland, Sweden) is an artist working with video, photography and installation. She holds a BA in Fine Arts from the Gerrit Rietveld Academie, Amsterdam, and returned to Sweden to do her master's degree in Fine Art at Konstfack, where she is currently in her final year. In her interdisciplinary practice she investigates the ideas of rural identity, land ownership and storytelling. Most recently she has been researching the folklore traditions in Gotland, Sweden.

Godman is represented in the collection of LAPS, Research Institute for Art and Public Space, Amsterdam, and in 2019 she published her own artist book *Temporary Country Life*. Her work has been exhibited at PuntWVG, Galerie Jansen & Kooy, Marres House for Contemporary Culture in the Netherlands, as well as at the Contemporary Art Centre of Montenegro and Nida Art Colony, Lithuania.

www.nicolagodman.com
[@temporary_country_life](https://www.instagram.com/temporary_country_life)

Josefin Gäfvert (b. 1988, Gotland, Sweden) is a weaving artist based in Stockholm. She obtained a BA in Textiles from Konstfack in 2016, where she is currently in her final year in the master's program CRAFT!. Her work is about what she can do with the loom in its restricting format, to reach the point where form and colours take another meaning. She constantly strives to develop her understanding of weaving and its language.

Gäfvert is represented in the collections of the Swedish National museum and she recently won the Design-S price in the textile category. Her work has been exhibited at Konsthantverkarna, Stockholm; Olseröds Konsthall, Malmö Konstmuseum; Marabouparken, Sundbyberg; HV Galleri, Stockholm and Parsons, New York.

www.josefingafvert.com
[@craft_star](https://www.instagram.com/craft_star)

About Flat Octopus

Flat Octopus is an international artist- and curator-run collective in Stockholm, Sweden, initiated in 2019. It consists of seven people of different professional and cultural backgrounds. Flat Octopus organises exhibitions in different apartments located in Stockholm, as well as external collaborations and projects.

Flat Octopus are: Edit Fándly, Juanma González, Paulina Granat, Amr Hamid, Alice Máselníková, Franziska Sperling and Erik Wijkström.

About CRUM Heaven

Gallery CRUM Heaven is an artist-run gallery located at Högbergsgatan 38 in Stockholm. In its role as an exhibitor, CRUM strives to fill the void that arises between governmental institutions and commercial galleries by highlighting both young unestablished and established artists and designers in larger group exhibitions. A place where collaborative projects are given the highest priority with the goal to provide an open and inclusive platform.

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