

# Elevation 1049 – Avalanche LUMA Foundation / Gstaad

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*Douglas Gordon and Morgane Tschiember, “As close as you can for as long as it lasts” (2017). Courtesy the Artists and LUMA Foundation. Photography by Stefan Altenburger.*

Nestled among snowdrifts and Louis Vuitton boutiques, the Swiss resort town of Gstaad gives off an eerie, unnatural vibe — luxury seems to flow down its tiny, sun-drenched streets. Here, Olympia Scarry and Neville Wakefield have curated a selection of site-specific works on the edge of the unreal for the latest installment of [Elevation 1049](#).

Each piece gives off a certain uncanny reality effect, none more so than Nicole Wermers’s *The Violet Revs* (2017), situated in a deserted pavilion terrace next to an iced-over swimming pool. A collection of cheap plastic chairs are reserved by black leather biker jackets. Silver studs glisten in the afternoon sun, but there is no sign of the rebel owners. Have they been abducted, perhaps? Will they return? Or are they all dead, lying at the bottom of the pool? The silent scene inspires a mixture of fear and glamour, and something else that is on the tip of your tongue.

Yngve Holen’s *Leichtmetallräder* (2017) also lends a touch of horror to the Swiss architecture. Bespoke alloy hubcaps glisten, their rims having been removed by a five-axis water-jet cutter. The sharpened and reappropriated readymades are mounted on the outside of a Bugatti showroom situated on the main promenade. The works blend into the ornate carved façade, mimicking Switzerland’s national flower, the Edelweiss. Traditionally the flower grows only amid the highest mountain terrain. Its bloom symbolizes a wild and daring temperament, for which the convertible cars below are just a modern-day symbol, their metal bodies drenched with adrenaline

and a lust for hairpin turns.

A sense of the immaterial and our own insignificance is reflected in nearly every viewing experience. Douglas Gordon and Morgane Tschiember’s work *As close as you can for as long as it lasts* (2017) pays homage to the kind of ephemerality often found in early Land Art. A simple fire ring billows smoke into the glass-blue sky, accompanied by a call and response between the two artists — an oblique reference to yodeling. Their interpretation, however, takes on a more bloodthirsty, wolf-like cadence, as if stalking the range in a fit of desire and loneliness.

It is admittedly hard to define the exact narrative links that Elevation 1049 conjures, but this, in a way, is its strength. The exhibition offers moments of reflection as you wander up tiny alleys or hover in cable cars above alabaster peaks. In an art world that is normally dedicated to art-star tourism, the satisfactions of “Avalanche” are refreshingly fleeting. The surreal works sit majestically inside a traditional Swiss landscape, familiar to all. Like a luxury chocolate bar, the festival conveys an evanescent pleasure, sweet and fleeting.

*by Penny Rafferty*