

MACS

Musée des Arts Contemporains
Grand-Hornu

PRESS PACK



Orla Barry

Shaved Rapunzel &
La Petite Bergère Punk
23.06 > 03.11.24

Devised by **artist and shepherd** Orla Barry, the exhibition *Shaved Rapunzel & La Petite Bergère Punk* invites visitors to discover a double world: that of the sheep that Barry raises on her farm in Ireland and that of the stories she records in her **poetic texts and objects** and transmits orally through stagings of her tales. Her hybrid, fluid universe, which intertwines animal and human, reality and fiction, masculine and feminine, art and pedigree, is immediately apparent in the materials (raw wool and felt), objects (crooks) and situations (livestock auctions, pedigree competitions) that she transposes from her rural environment into her work. Working in a profession rarely practiced by women, Orla Barry also sees herself as a "punk shepherd" who resists both patriarchal norms and hippy "back to the land" clichés.

The multidisciplinary work of Irish artist Orla Barry (b. 1969, Wexford) has been presented in **numerous exhibitions** across Europe, notably in Portugal at the Quetzal Art Centre (2017) and the Museu Bernardo in Lisbon (2011), at the Mothers Tankstation (2014) and the Irish Museum of Modern Art (2006) in Dublin, at the Camden Arts Centre in London (2005), and at W139 in Amsterdam (2005). In Belgium, where she lived for 16 years, her work was featured in several solo exhibitions, notably at Mu.Zee in Ostend (2019), S.M.A.K. in Ghent (2005), and Argos in Brussels (2002). After returning to Ireland in 2009 to live on her father's farm, where she subsequently began to work as a farmer raising pedigree Lleyne sheep, Orla Barry has gradually drawn on her professional activity as a shepherd for her art, through a poetic practice that is sometimes written or visual, sometimes sung or performed. In recent years, her **performances** have been presented as part of Performatik 17: The Brussels Biennial of Performance Art at Argos (2017), the WoWmen Festival KAAI (2020) and Playground at the M-Museum in Leuven (2019).



Introduction to the Exhibition

by Denis Gielen, exhibition curator

As an artist and a shepherd, Orla Barry is between fields. From her daily life in the 'world of sheep', she has learned her agricultural trade at the same time as pursuing her artistic practice. Her hybrid status as an artist-shepherd is expressed in her work through the materials (raw wool, felt), objects (crooks) and situations (auctions, pedigree competitions) that she borrows straight from her rural environment. Since 2009, she has lived on her farm in Ireland and since 2011 she has been tending to her flock of Lleyn sheep, a Welsh breed whose pedigree she preserves as her patrimony. In the highly masculine agricultural milieu, Orla Barry cuts a rebellious figure, refusing to be reduced to her gender by her peers. Like a kind of punk Bo-Peep, she contests patriarchal norms and refutes any hippy connotations that her choice to turn 'back to the land' might awaken in the countercultural imagination. Forever on the lookout in this predatory milieu, her awareness sharpened by her feminist sensibility, Orla Barry is particularly sensitive when it comes to language, the primary vehicle of the stereotypes that construct our identities – first and foremost those shaped and perpetuated by representations of women in popular culture.

Inspired by oral storytelling traditions that shift and change over time, the title of her exhibition at MACS - *Shaved Rapunzel & La Petite Bergère Punk* - brings together and subverts two stereotypes of femininity: Rapunzel, the emblematic imprisoned woman, and Little Bo-Peep, a cliché of the shepherdess who attentively watches over her lambs. The exhibition opens with *Spin Spin Scheherazade* (2019), an installation that has recently been integrated by the MACS for its permanent collection. This work can be activated by performance or sound, and is made up a series of stories which convey to the public various interlinked episodes from the artist's "pastoral" life that blend into one another to form an aleatory narrative akin to the *1001 Nights*. Closely attuned to the social, ecological and economic realities surrounding her practice, Barry's exhibition also features a number of works that are equally narrative but which deploy more material media: from triangular frames that enclose significant words (*Shepherd, Scavenger and Slave*, 2022) to an Aran sweater tells the story of the collapse of the wool market (*The Wool Merchant's Calculator & The Curator's Jumper*, 2022), and from a plank of London Plane wood bearing a calligraphic description inspired by the care provided to an animal (*Songwood*, 2022) to woollen pieces into which words and phrases drawn from the artist's vocabulary are felted (*Shearling Felts*, 2023-2024).

Part of the programme of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union
With the support of Culture Ireland, Arts Council Ireland and Wallonie-Bruxelles International

Spin Spin Scheherazade, performance, 2019 - 2023





‘The recent work SPIN SPIN SCHEHERAZADE (2019) focuses on what it means to be a farmer, a queer female farmer. The autobiographical stories are intense and gripping, beautiful and raw. The cliché image of the farmer is challenged. In this performance, Einat Tuchman takes on the various roles and Orla returns to the exhibition space, where setting and props are also autonomous works. Here the audience does not just spectate but is involved in the performance. The guiding principle is the experience of maintaining a life on and with the land.’

Eva Wittocx
Extract from the exhibition catalogue



The Wool Merchant's Calculator & The Curator's Jumper



Songwood



List of works

Spin Spin Scheherazade, sound installation, variable dimensions, 2019.
Collection Musée des Arts Contemporains au Grand-Hornu, donation by the artist, 2023

Shaved Rapunzel's Shepherds, hand-painted shepherds crooks, wood, buffalo horn, ram horn, variable dimensions, 2019.
Collection Musée des Arts Contemporains au Grand-Hornu, property of Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles

Shepherd, Scavenger, Slave, aluminium, luminous paint, 180 × 130 cm, 2022.

Songwood, hand-painted London plane, 330 × 113 x 6 cm, 2022.
Wexford County Council Art Collection, Irelande

Filling Egg Shells, vidéo, 9'36'', 2011-2023. Voice and texts: Orla Barry.
Drums: Boris Gronemberger

Primal Counterpoint, Orla Barry and Paul Bradley, sound sculpture, 6'40'', 240 x 700 cm, 2022.

Frogs Are Female Toads, felted raw wool from Hebridean, Tiroler Bergschaf and Merino sheep, 200 × 80 cm, 2023.

Filling Egg Shells, felted raw wool from Hebridean, Tiroler Bergschaf and Merino sheep, 140 × 85 cm, 2023.

Punk Bo-Peep, felted raw wool from Gotland and Merino sheep, 107 × 107 cm, 2023.

Scheherazade, felted raw wool from Gotland and Merino sheep, 150 × 85 cm, 2023.

Shaved Rapunzel's Shame, felted raw wool from Gotland and Merino sheep, 115 × 120 cm, 2023.

Shaved Rapunzel, felted raw wool from Tiroler Bergschaf, Lleyn and Gotland sheep, 110 × 100 cm, 2024.

Form Is Destroyed, felted raw wool from Tiroler Bergschaf, Lleyn, Merino and Drenthe Heath sheep, 90 × 80 cm, 80 × 70 cm, 140 × 95 cm, 2024.

The Wool Merchant's Calculator & The Curator's Jumper, print on Eco-Board, 158 x 178,3 x 1,6 cm, 2022.

Crowstone, print on Eco-Board, 200 x 140 x 1,6 cm, 2024.

Curlewtoast, print on Eco-Board, 158 x 188,3 x 1,6 cm, 2024.

Bo-Peep's Kiss, printed on Spray Up, 130 x 40 cm, 2024.

The Shepherd's Warning, polystyrene, epoxy, gold foil, paint, 120 x 190 x 60 cm, 2024.

Shaved Rapunzel's Shepherds



Dirtgold

There is something ecopolitical for me about making these felt works from scratch. The physical labour and the work of times past. The repetitive gestures of shearing, washing, carding and felting raw wool from my own sheep and other people's sheep with my own hands.

Creating value where there is none. Creating value through time spent. Giving wool a voice: speaking in dark dystopian tones.

The felt works are directly inspired by the farm and the animals I am collaborating with and learning from. It has been a long road; fourteen years long now. From farming to felting to genetics and livestock showing: a perennial labour of love, adopting the past to understand the future. An ongoing auto-ethnographic-artistic study.

I can make psychological artefacts from wool, but am I doing this to draw attention to the material itself? A rhetorical gesture? Or am I a blind and terrified guide?

Sheep were breed and genetically selected for their wool – that's why they look like they do. Wool, a beautiful, highly valued material, has become a worthless by-product. My own wool from 2020 and 2021 was stored and exhibited as an artwork in 2022 because its worth would not even cover the work of the shearer.

It's the real metaphorical pile. The material poetry of our dying world.

Can the family farm survive in Ireland? Can nature survive with it? How can city folk support farmers directly? How can farmers with a creative voice influence the industry? Can young farmers do things differently? Work in harmony with nature? Give something back and still survive? Keep it smallish and ethical and still survive? Keep it ecological and still survive? Look how farmers are struggling. What a moral dilemma we are all in. And how it all matters now...

Orla Barry

FORM

IS

DESTROYED

Catalogue

Conceived and designed in close collaboration with Orla Barry on the occasion of her exhibition at the MACS, *The Shepherd's Progress* brings together a large part of the body of work (texts, installations, performances) produced by the artist since she returned to live in her native Ireland.

The book attests to the links Orla Barry has forged between her career as an artist and her career as a shepherd.

Its form pays tribute to the book *Eva Hesse* by Lucy Lippard (New York University Press, 1976) – borrowing its exact dimensions and form – which has been a source of inspiration for Barry throughout her artistic life.



- Published by MACS
- Edition of 500 copies
- Texts in English and French
- Texts by Orla Barry, Sebastian Cichocki, Denis Gielen, Ciara Healy, Eva Wittocx
- Printed in full colour
- 28 x 18 cm
- 148 pages

'Orla Barry's artistic work is situated in various fields: visual arts, agriculture and writing. The blurred boundaries between these fields run parallel: the professional and the creative, the natural and the technological, the urban and the rural, the human and the non-human, the animate and the inanimate. Barry describes herself as 'both visual artist and shepherd'. Her third, equally important, role derived from both experiences is that of a storyteller. Barry's hybrid work moves fluidly between the farm and the museum.'

Sebastian Cichocki
Extract from the catalogue





Bo-Peep's Kiss

Notes from Sheepland

By Cara Holmes

BEST DOCUMENTARY AWARD

Winner of the Best Documentary Award at the Dublin International Film Festival in 2023, *Notes from Sheepland* Orla Barry as she goes about her daily life having taken over the family farm in Ireland, and shows us how she brings together the professions of artist and shepherd.

The film is dominated by the wild and beautiful nature of the farm. Carefully composed images are set against a captivating soundscape and accompanied by Barry's candid observations on the relationship between caring for sheep and making art.

THIS DOCUMENTARY WILL BE SHOWN ON SUNDAY 22 SEPTEMBER AT THE PLAZA ARTHOUSE CINÉMA IN MONS.



Trailer :

<https://mubi.com/en/films/notes-from-sheepland/trailer>



**FEATURING ARTIST AND SHEPHERD ORLA BARRY
AND HORN PLAYER HANNAH MILLER**

**ORIGINAL MUSIC VERITY SUSMAN AND MATTHEW SIMMS EDITORS MICK MAHON AND CARA HOLMES
DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY LUCA TRUFFARELLI PRODUCTION SOUND MIXER SIMON MURPHY
AUDIO POST FACILITY AVATAR POST PRODUCTION PICTURE POST FACILITY OUTER LIMITS
PRODUCER AIDEEN O'SULLIVAN EXECUTIVE PRODUCER NUALA CUNNINGHAM DIRECTOR CARA HOLMES**

Curriculum Vitae

PERFORMANCES

2020

WoWmen Festival KAAI, Kaaitheater Brussel

2019

Museum M & TAZ, Ostend

Performatik 17, Brussels

Crawford Art Gallery, Cork

Argos, Brussels

Tempel, Bar Gallery + Studio, Dublin

Project Arts Centre, Dublin

South London Gallery, London

Tate Modern, London

If I can't dance, Amsterdam

De Appel, Amsterdam

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2019

Mu.Zee, Ostend

2017

Quetzal Art Centre, Vila de Frades, Portugal

2014

Mothers Tankstation, Dublin

2011

CCB, Museu Bernardo, Lisbon

2006

Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin

2005

S.M.A.K., Ghent

Camden Arts Centre, London

W139, Amsterdam

2002

Argos, Brussels

1998

Manifesta 2 - Biennale européenne d'art contemporain, Luxembourg

39^{ème} EVA international, Limerick, Ireland

COLLECTIVE EXHIBITIONS

2022

A Growing Concern, RHA Gallery, Dublin

2003

Prix de la Jeune Peinture belge (Palais des Beaux-Arts), Brussels

Événements



A discussion with Vinciane Despret

Tuesday 17 September – 8PM

On the occasion of Orla Barry's exhibition *Shaved Rapunzel & La Petite Bergère Punk*, the MACS welcomes Vinciane Despret for a discussion. In dialogue with Denis Gielen, director of the MACS, Vinciane Despret will share her point of view on Orla Barry's singular practice and approach it through the broader context of contemporary creation.

A philosopher, psychologist and professor at the University of Liège (ULiège) and the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), Vinciane Despret has published numerous works in the fields of philosophy of science and ethology. Her research centres on our relationship with animals and death.

PROGRAMME :

6PM – 8PM: Exhibition open to visitors

6PM – 8PM: Drinks and light dinner by Rizom

8PM: Discussion with Vinciane Despret

9:30PM: Drink

10€ / free for students



Ciné Expo around the work of Orla Barry | Plaza Arthouse Cinema (Mons) Sunday 22 September – 11AM & 2PM

As part of Orla Barry's exhibition *Shaved Rapunzel & La Petite Bergère Punk*, the MACS and the Plaza Arthouse Cinema are partnering for a screening of the documentary *Notes From Sheepland*, directed by Cara Holmes. The film was awarded the prize for Best Documentary at the Dublin International Film Festival in 2023. A visually stunning documentary, *Notes From Sheepland* follows the artist's daily life after she took over the running of the family farm in Ireland and shows us how she combines her work as an artist and a shepherd. Following the screening, the public is invited to the MACS for a 2PM guided visit of Orla Barry's exhibition *Shaved Rapunzel & La Petite Bergère Punk*.

6€

Screening followed by a light lunch from local markets

Reservation recommended



Two performances ORLA BARRY | ARIANE LOZE Sunday 6 October – 11AM

PROGRAMME :

11AM: Guided exhibition visits

2PM: Spin Spin Scheherazade | performance by Orla Barry

4:30PM: Bonheur Entrepreneur | performance by Ariane Loze



Free admission all day

Foodtrucks and bar



Activities

Family

Sunday 21 July: Fête nationale at the Grand-Hornu
4, 11, 18 and 25 July: Family Thursdays
1, 8, 22 and 29 August: Family Thursdays

Adults/Teenagers

Sunday 7 July: Creative mending workshop
Sunday 18 August: Wool spinning workshop
Sunday 8 September: Crochet workshop
Sunday 13 October: Writing workshop

Young Audiences

15 to 19 July: Theatre course
5 to 9 August: Free your talents workshop
Sunday 1 September: Baz'art wool and felt workshop
Sunday 6 October: Baz'art punch needle workshop



ON THESE DATES

Orla Barry

Shaved Rapunzel & La Petite Bergère Punk

23.06 > 03.11.24

COMING SOON

MACS. Grand-Hornu. Extra-muros |

Alec De Busschère

Memory Cache Collection 99

01.09 > 22.09.24

37, RUE DU RUISSEAU - 1080 BRUXELLES (LA VALLÉE)

Daniel Turner

15.12.24 > 06.04.25

Practical Information

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