



A SHEPHERD'S HEART

ORLA BARRY

Exhibition:

from 18 October to 20 December 2025

Opening: Friday 17 October, from 6pm to 9pm

Curator: Émilie Renard

PRESS KIT

Wednesday to Friday, from 11am to 7pm
Saturday, from 2pm to 7pm · Free entrance
9 esplanade Pierre Vidal-Naquet 75013 Paris
M14 & RER C: Bibliothèque François-Mitterrand
www.betonsalon.net
+33.(0)1.45.84.17.56 · info@betonsalon.net

BÉTONSALON
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Deeply rooted in her activity as a shepherd and her flock of pedigree Lleyn sheep flock on her farm in Wexford, Orla Barry's work offers a singular and comprehensive reflection on the living conditions of a rebellious, feminist "Punk Bo-Peep", subverting the gendered stereotypes and patriarchal norms that shape the representations of the farming milieu, either idealized or silenced. Attentive to the economy of the natural materials used in her work (wool, horn, felt, wood) and to the gestures of the operative chain that underpins the production of her works, Orla Barry highlights the relationships of solidarity, trust and care that she maintains on a daily basis with her "companion species", but also of (inter-) dependence with the economic structures (auctions, competition) that condition their existences.

The exhibition will feature a selection of works by Orla Barry, centred around the performative installation *Spin Spin Scheherazade* (2019). Composed of various modules, including a podium, printed texts on panels, sculptures and audio recordings, *Spin Spin Scheherazade* will be activated at several moments by performer and long-time collaborator Einat Tuchman. In a narrative combining auto-fiction, and auto-ethnography, the text looks back at the situations, obstacles and dilemmas that Orla Barry faced when she decided to turn to a pastoral life.

Tracing the various stages in the cycle of breeding, selecting, selling and showing sheep, and bearing witness to the systemic sexism within predominantly male circles of sociability, these narratives are marked by a peculiar sensitivity to the world, shaped by a form of mutualism which philosopher Vinciane Despret and ecologist Michel Meuret have identified as the source and product of reciprocal learning¹. Through references to popular characters (*Scheherazade*, *Rapunzel*, *Bo-Peep*²) and the polysemy of a language that thwarts all semantic fixation, Orla Barry explores our relationship to rurality and its vernacular cultures, while questioning our understanding of its social, political and ecological realities.

↵ This exhibition is supported by Culture Ireland and is in collaboration with MACS, the Museum of Contemporary Arts at Grand-Hornu, Belgium.

1 Vinciane Despret and Michel Meuret, "Composer avec les moutons. Lorsque les brebis apprennent à leurs bergers à leur apprendre", Avignon, Cardère Publishing, 2016.

2 Bo-Peep is a popular Anglo-Saxon character described in the nursery rhyme "Little Bo-Peep", which tells the story of a shepherdess who lost her flock of sheep after falling asleep.

Agenda

Free entrance, full programme on
www.betonsalon.net

- Friday 17, Thursday 23
et Friday 24 October, at 7pm
Spin Spin Scheherazade
with Einat Tuchman & Orla Barry
Performance (in French, duration 65')

Biographies

Orla Barry (Ireland, 1969) is both an artist and a shepherd. She teaches sculpture and performance at SETU (South East Technological University). After living in Brussels for 16 years, she decided to move to her father's farm in rural Wexford where, alongside her artistic activity, she keeps a flock of Lleyn sheep. Through performances and video and sound installations, her work deals with the physicality and poetics of oral language, drawing on the correspondences and tensions between the art practice and the farming environment in rural Ireland. Drawing on non-linear narratives imbued with research methodologies akin to autoethnography, her work addresses the history and semantics of words through an approach to writing and speaking that aims for a physical and embodied understanding of language as a visual form.

Her work has recently been shown in international exhibitions including MAC's Grand Hornu (2024), Mu.Zee in Ostend (2019), Quetzal Art Centre (2017), Mothers Tankstation (2014), Museu Bernardo in Lisbon (2011), Irish Museum of Modern Art (2006), Camden Arts Centre in London (2005), W139 in Amsterdam (2005), S.M.A.K. in Ghent (2005), Argos (2002). Her performances have been presented as part of Dublin Theatre Festival (2023/2016), 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), the south London Gallery (2013), Bozar Brussels (2013), and Saturday Live, Tate Modern (2008).

Einat Tuchman (1968, Belgium/Israel) is a performer and choreographer. She is primarily interested in dance as an extension of the ordinary, of familiar movements and gestures drawn from everyday life. She focuses on themes such as human behaviour, communication and aspects of life that lie just beneath the surface of reality, while exploring the complex relationship between the self and the social environment in relation to territoriality and property. She collaborates with artistic institutions such as Beursschouwburg, KVS, Hiros, Buda, Pianofabriek... and is part of the political and artistic movement "State of the Arts". She performs with Orla Barry, Guy de Cointet, Needcompany, Alain Platel, among others.



The Anthropologist's T-shirt and The Shepherd's Warning, 2022, print on paper.
 Exhibition view from Orla Barry's "A Shepherd's heart", Bétonsalon – centre for art and research,
 Paris, 2025. © Orla Barry / ADAGP, Paris 2025. Photo : Aurélien Mole.



Exhibition view from Orla Barry's "A Shepherd's heart", Bétonsalon – centre for art and research, Paris, 2025. © Orla Barry / ADAGP, Paris 2025. Photo : Aurélien Mole.



Exhibition view from Orla Barry's "A Shepherd's heart", Bétonsalon – centre for art and research, Paris, 2025. © Orla Barry / ADAGP, Paris 2025. Photo : Aurélien Mole.



Stockpile, 2025, raw lleyn wool from Orla Barry's flock, the year's clip.
Exhibition view from Orla Barry's "A Shepherd's heart", Bétonsalon – centre for art and research,
Paris, 2025. © Orla Barry / ADAGP, Paris 2025. Photo : Aurélien Mole.



Form is Destroyed, 2023-2024, from "Shearling Felts series", felted raw wool from Tiroler Bergschaf, Lleyn, Merino and Drenthe Heath sheep.

Exhibition view from Orla Barry's "A Shepherd's heart", Bétonsalon – centre for art and research, Paris, 2025. © Orla Barry / ADAGP, Paris 2025. Photo : Aurélien Mole.



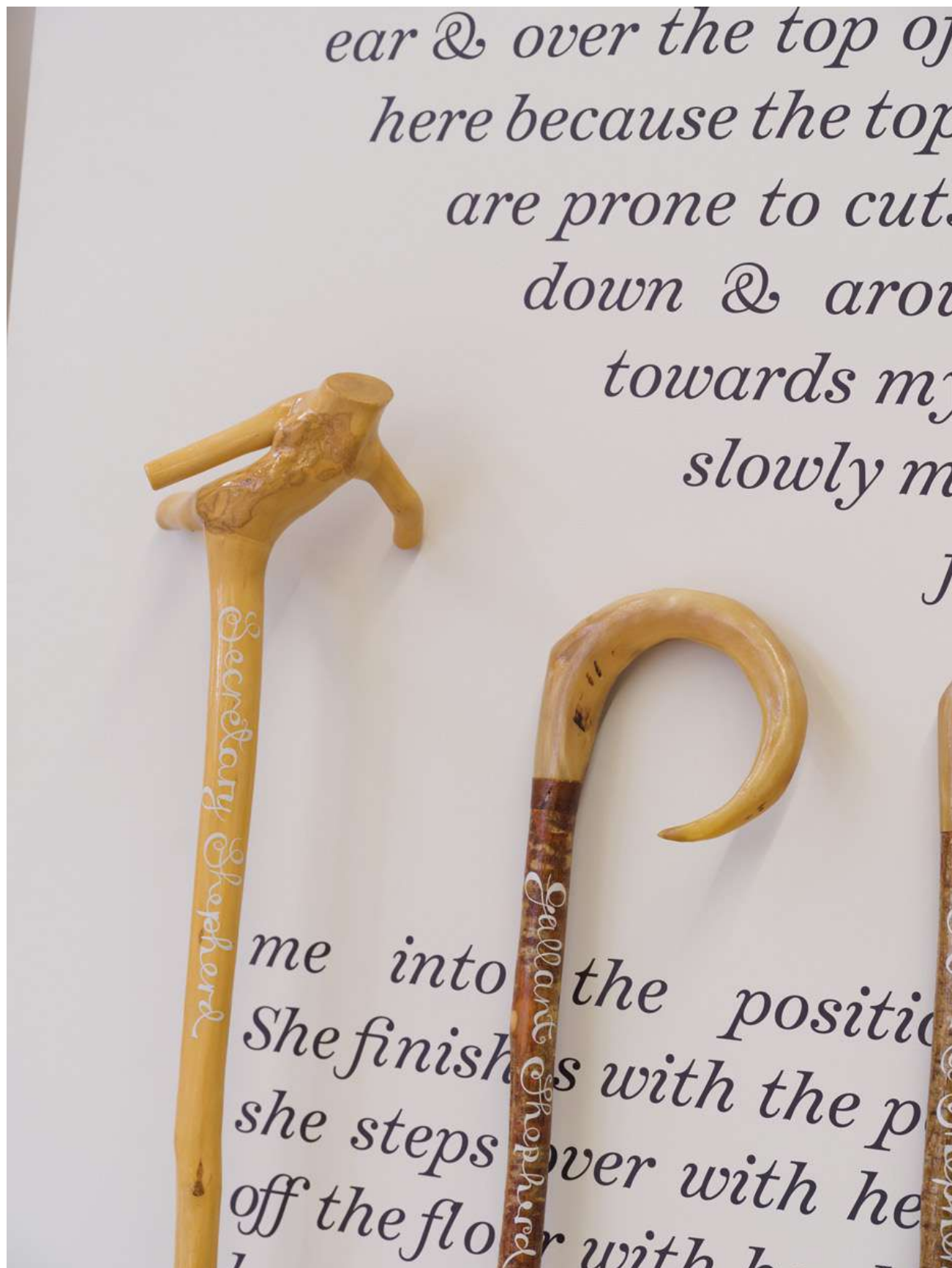
Shaved Rapunzel's Shepherds (performance version), 2025, Hand-painted wooden sticks.
Exhibition view from Orla Barry's "A Shepherd's heart", Bétonsalon – centre for art and research,
Paris, 2025. © Orla Barry / ADAGP, Paris 2025. Photo : Aurélien Mole.



Spin Spin Scheherazade, 2019, sound installation / performance, 65', various materials, lacquered metal structures, lacquered composite panels, laminated multi-plex panels, text, polyester form, framed photograph, toaster, basket, printed jute bags, stools.
 Exhibition view from Orla Barry's "A Shepherd's heart", Bétonsalon – centre for art and research, Paris, 2025. © Orla Barry / ADAGP, Paris 2025. Photo : Aurélien Mole.



Shaved Rapunzel, 2024, felted raw wool from Tiroler Bergschaf, Gotland and Merino and Lleyn sheep.
Punk Bo-Peep, 2023, felted raw wool from Tiroler Bergschaf, Gotland and Merino and Lleyn sheep.
Vue de l'exposition « Cœur de Bergère » Orla Barry, Bétonsalon – centre d'art et de recherche, Paris, 2025. © Orla Barry / ADAGP, Paris 2025. Photo : Aurélien Mole.



Shaved Rapunzel's Shepherds, 2019, Hand-painted shepherd's crooks, wood, buffalo horn, ram horn.

Exhibition view from Orla Barry's "A Shepherd's heart", Bétonsalon – centre for art and research, Paris, 2025. © Orla Barry / ADAGP, Paris 2025. Photo : Aurélien Mole.



Spin Spin Scheherazade, 2019, sound installation / performance, 65', various materials, lacquered metal structures, lacquered composite panels, laminated multi-plex panels, text, polyester form, framed photo-graph, toaster, basket, printed jute bags, stools.
Exhibition view from Orla Barry's "A Shepherd's heart", Bétonsalon – centre for art and research, Paris, 2025. © Orla Barry / ADAGP, Paris 2025. Photo : Aurélien Mole.

She tips me up & drags me onto a slippery wooden board. She holds one leg with one hand & my chest with the other. She puts my front legs behind her left arm & stretches my belly out & holds me firmly between her legs. Then she starts to move from the bottom of my chest across & down, making sure to finish her blows with the points near to my flesh. She uses her left hand to keep my skin tight between the cuts. I am pleading telepathically be careful when you get near the bottom of my belly. She receives my message & uses her left hand to protect me as she moves down between my legs towards the bottom right & insides the last leg. After that, she places my front leg to my left knee & goes up the flank on my first leg & throws the rest clear. She's got a good touch. She places her left hand into my other flank to control & straighten my leg so she can move down towards my tail. I love my little tail. I think she likes it, too. Then she steps forward slightly with her right foot & slightly back with her left while pulling slightly upwards on my hamstring to roll me up. She steps forward on her right foot & clears the inside of my leg. I struggle a bit here. She curses loudly. After that, she brings my right foot through & goes down between my back legs. Then, starting on the top side of my chest, she goes up my neck towards my left knee. I am moving with her now. When she is about three quarters of the way to the knee

she lets my head come around so she can break open the softness near my skin. That feels good. Then she starts back down my chest & goes up the other side of my neck & around behind my ear & over the top of my head. She slows down here because the top of the chest & front legs are prone to cuts. She then continues down & around the first side towards my backbone, she slowly moves her left foot

into the position for the long roll. She finishes with the points near my skin. Then she steps over with her right foot & keeps me off the floor with her left heel as she executes at least one more of blows over the back bone. She steps up from the long bow, goes down in front of my ear, then down behind & around it, then across the side of my face. She uses her left foot to roll me onto my back & goes down my neck to the top of my front leg, then around & down the front leg again. She uses her left hand to bring my head through & then finally around the neck & down the last side. Then she straightens my leg, taking care around my hamstring & joint. She uses her left hand to finish with me.

Shaved Rapunzel's Shepherds, 2019, Hand-painted shepherd's crooks, wood, buffalo horn, ram horn.

Exhibition view from Orla Barry's "A Shepherd's heart", Bétonsalon – centre for art and research, Paris, 2025. © Orla Barry / ADAGP, Paris 2025. Photo : Aurélien Mole.



Woolly Poppy, 2024, from Bo-Peep's Kiss's serie, print on paper.

Exhibition view from Orla Barry's "A Shepherd's heart", Bétonsalon – centre for art and research, Paris, 2025. © Orla Barry / ADAGP, Paris 2025. Photo : Aurélien Mole.



The Wool Merchant's Calculator & The Curator's Jumper, 2022, iprint on paper.
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Exhibition view from Orla Barry's "A Shepherd's heart", Bétonsalon – centre for art and research, Paris, 2025. © Orla Barry / ADAGP, Paris 2025. Photo : Aurélien Mole.



Performance still from Orla Barry's "Spin Spin Scheherazade", Bétonsalon – centre for art and research, Paris, 2025. © Orla Barry / ADAGP, Paris 2025. Photo: Camille Bouron



Performance still from Orla Barry's "Spin Spin Scheherazade", Bétonsalon – centre for art and research, Paris, 2025. © Orla Barry / ADAGP, Paris 2025. Photo: Camille Bouron



Performance still from Orla Barry's "Spin Spin Scheherazade", Bétonsalon – centre for art and research, Paris, 2025. © Orla Barry / ADAGP, Paris 2025. Photo: Andrew Finlay

Upcoming

A project by Jean-Alain Corre
in collaboration with Gaëlle Obiégly
“Hibou TV Show”
From 30 January to 18 April 2026
Opening: Thursday 29 January,
from 6pm to 9pm

Practical information

Bétonsalon
centre for art and research
9 esplanade Pierre Vidal-Naquet
75013 Paris
+33 (0)1 45 84 17 56
info@betonsalon.net
www.betonsalon.net

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Free entrance
from Wednesday to Friday,
from 11 am to 7 pm
Saturday from 2 pm to 7 pm

All events are free of charge.
The entire space is wheelchair-
accessible. Group visits are free
of charge with advanced booking.

Please check our programme
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Press contact

Sarah Bidet
presse@betonsalon.net
+33 (0)1 45 84 17 56

With the support of

Bétonsalon – Centre for Art and Research is supported by the City of Paris,
the Île-de-France Regional Board of Cultural Affairs – Ministry of Culture,
and the Île-de-France Region, with the collaboration of Université Paris Cité.

Bétonsalon – Centre for Art and Research is a cultural institution of the City
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This exhibition is supported by Culture Ireland and is in collaboration with
MACS, The Museum of Contemporary Arts at Grand-Hornu, Belgium.

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Graphic design: Catalogue Général