



Events	Parallel Programs	Workshops
Free entrance, full program on www.betonsalon.net - Friday, October 17, Thursday, October 23, and Friday, October 24, at 7 p.m. <i>Spin Spin Scheherazade</i> with Orla Barry and Einat Tuchman. Performance (in French, duration: 65 min) - Wednesday, November 19, from 7 to 9 p.m. “Lesbian self-representations through practices of architecture, writing, and photography: reasons to live, ways to survive and to resist” Discussion with Milena Charbit and Louise Toth, moderated by Vincent Enjalbert, as part of the Festival des Fiertés of the 12th, 13th, and 14th arrondissements - Friday, December 12, at 8 p.m. <i>Notes from Sheepland</i>, a film by Cara Holmes co-written with Orla Barry. Screening (in English, subtitled in French, duration: 70 min) - Saturday, December 13, from 4:30 to 7 p.m. “Living and being an artist in a rural environment: political terrains” Two conversations: – The first led by Vanessa Desclaux, curator and art critic, with artists Aëla Maï Cabel and Jérémy Piningre, and Marion Vasseur-Raluy, director of CAC Brétigny. – The second by Vincent Enjalbert and Émilie Renard with Orla Barry (in English)	- Monday, October 27, from 2 p.m. to 7 p.m. “Plant Ecologies: Paths and Practices in the Making” A study day with Roberto Barbanti, Marine Fauché, Pauline Lisowski, Sylvie Pouteau, and Eulalia de Valdenebro - Friday, November 14, from 2:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. <i>Parties prenantes</i> #7: Revisiting the Archives of the Exhibition “Tropicomania: The Social Life of Plants” (2012) at Bétonsalon, with Anna Colin and Françoise Vergès (online) - Friday, November 14, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Book launch: <i>L'École du Magasin. Parlons Pratiques</i>, published by Le Magasin CNAC, Grenoble, with Anna Colin and Céline Kopp - Thursday, November 13, from 7 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Book launch: Clélia Barbut, <i>The Rebirth of Wonder. Performing Arts in France and North America during the 1970s, 2025</i>, Presses Universitaires de Rennes - Friday, November 21, from 2:30 p.m. to 6 p.m. <i>Béton Book Club</i>: collective reading session of Sunaura Taylor’s <i>Braves bêtes. Animaux et handicapés, même combat?</i>, Les Éditions du Portrait, 2019 (French edition) - Tuesday, December 16, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. “Archive-tools. How the Practice of Lesbian Archives Teaches Us Ways of Working and Living.” Lecture by Louise Toth, as part of the conference series <i>actions~partitions: retours vers les futurs</i> curated by Clélia Barbut, in partnership with Université Paris 8 Vincennes–Saint-Denis	Free, on registration: publics@betonsalon.net - Saturday, October 25, from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. <i>Georgie</i>: Needle Felting Workshop — for adults - Wednesday, November 5, from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. <i>Felted Horizons</i>: Wet Felting Workshop — for families, from age 5 - Wednesday, November 12, from 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. <i>Cuddly Rattle</i>: Sensory Visit — for parents and children aged 0 to 3 - Saturday, December 6, from 2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. <i>Poetic Sheep</i>: Poetry Banner Workshop — for children aged 6 and up
		Tours Tours are led by a mediator and adapted to all audiences. Tours in a foreign language or in LSF on request, within 4 days.

SHEPHERD & ARTIST WITH MUDDY FEET

¹ Expression used by the American anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes to describe her own work.

² Orla Barry, in Cara Holmes, *Notes from Sheepland*, documentary, Ireland, 2023.

³ Bo-Peep is a character from English folklore, popularised by the children's nursery rhyme 'Little Bo-Peep'. Often depicted searching for her lost sheep, she is a symbol of innocence and pastoral care. The character was revamped in the film *Toy Story 4* (2019), in which Bo-Peep transforms from a simple shepherd in distress to an independent and intrepid adventurer.

⁴ Geneviève Prouvost, "Penser l'écoféminisme, Féminisme de la subsistance et écoféminisme vernaculaire", *Pratiques écoféministes* 2019/2, *Travail, genre et sociétés* n° 42, La découverte, p. 29-47.

⁵ In an interview with Kathleen Weyts, Orla Barry compares her self-taught apprenticeship as a shepherd alongside her peers to the oral transmission of knowledge in "hedge schools". Developing in various rural areas during the 18th century, these secret, nomadic and illegal schools sought to circumvent the obligation of English education programmes (to the detriment of Irish bardic schools) by promoting learning based on the sharing of experiences, skills and vernacular knowledge. See "The lived experience", interview with Kathleen Weyts, *Glean*, no. 5, Orla Barry (guest editor), 2024, p. 45.

⁶ "L'orboe" in Orla Barry, *The Shepherd's Progress*, MAC'S / Musée des Arts Contemporains au Grand-Hornu, Belgium, 2024, n.pag.

In 2009, Orla Barry's life takes a different path: she's 40 years old and she leaves Brussels to take on her family's farm in Seafield, Ireland. Anxious to find other means of subsistence there, she started a sheep farm with Lleyen sheep in 2011. This change of direction was not a renunciation of urban life, but rather a way of interlacing her artistic practice with a harsh and demanding rural profession. Here, Orla Barry opened up a vast space for her artistic work, which she approaches like a "barefoot anthropologist"¹, finding her materials locally (wool, felt, shepherd's crooks) and drawing inspiration from situations (sheep fairs, pedigree competitions, sheep discussion groups). For her, it is a question of working in and with this terrain. A shepherd with "punk Bo-Peep" tendencies, she is rebellious and feminist, and she has developed a non-romantic pastoral style of writing. Retracing the different stages of the reproduction cycle, selection and sale of her sheep and bearing witness to the systemic sexism within the masculine social circles she frequents, her brief stories rooted in her daily working life activate parallels between animal rearing and contemporary art because of similarities in their processes of selection, competition and variation in value systems of small production caught up in a flawed international market. Despite her iron will to keep track of all these strands, in Cara Holmes' documentary, she confides that: "My art life, my farm life, my sex life. I mean, it's all blurry."² This exhibition at Bétonsalon is situated precisely within this triangle of the romantic, poetic and political. Here, Orla Barry opens her "shepherd's heart" with enthusiasm and humour, and within that heart, flows sheep blood.

Contrary to the idyllic image of the nomadic shepherd who wanders the meadows and mountains with the transhumance, the seasonal droving of livestock, the punk Bo-Peep³ embodies a rough and wayward version that resists all romantic mystification and symbolic appropriation. Caught in the double precarity of both artistic and rural worlds, Orla Barry's daily life passes according to the rhythm of her sheep's life cycle, which dictates the amount of time she can devote to producing her artworks. Her companion species are not just a means of subsistence but also a cause of constant physical exhaustion (which forced her, after an injury, to sell part of her flock), a vehicle for intimate communion with the living through an increased attention to her animals and their environment (she herself being the guardian of their mutual survival) and a catalyst for narratives that testify to the profound interdependence of both existences.

There is something in her practice akin to "vernacular ecofeminism"⁴, which makes economic subsistence, learning by doing⁵ and the denouncement of the sexism entrenched in the farming world she frequents the basis of an embodied and situated experience of the earth. This is most markedly expressed through the relative frugality and slowness of her production, which runs counter to the productivism imposed by the art market in order to maintain appeal. In this sense, her approach could be likened to a kind of strategic ecology that aims to exhaust the formal and semantic possibilities of the materials she uses, taking advantage of the material debris and linguistic dregs she salvages and rearranges at will. Above all, it's about "making the wool talk"⁶, as she puts it: whether that be through retracing, with humour, the history of its devaluation from a symbol of wealth and prestige to a near worthless material (wool was one of the most profitable natural

fibres up until the mid-18th century before the advent of synthetic fibre in the 1950s); by perpetuating the operational chain of selection and preservation of genetic heritage (pedigree), lambing and grazing, and by activating a continuum of gestures (marking, shearing, cleaning, preparing and felting wool) passed down from generation to generation; or even by drawing from myths and folktales to formulate a caustic language that undermines gender stereotypes and complicates representations of rurality.

Behind a pile of unsold wool (*Stockpile*), with no other purpose than its museum-like presentation, lies the implicit history of how wool's technical characteristics (texture, thickness, strength and flexibility of the yarn) have been optimised through genetic selection aimed at maximising yield through the overexploitation of certain breeds, notably Merino, and the neglect of others deemed less profitable. This was the case for Lleyn sheep, a breed native to Wales that would have disappeared after the Second World War if it weren't for the work of the Lleyn Sheep Society founded in 1970 to promote the breed in the UK and Ireland. The production of wool, therefore, is situated within a long process of co-domestication, through which both animals and humans derive mutual and strategic benefits: if humans chose sheep for their wool and meat, sheep also chose humans for the protection offered against predators and the comfort afforded through the shearing of their fleeces.⁷ Wool is therefore the fruit of this inter-species "pact", the conditions of which are undeniably defined in large part by the humans, but which evolve according to the economic, socio-political and environmental context in which the farm is situated.

Thus, although Orla Barry's main activity as a shepherd is not a hobby but an economic and pragmatic reality, it nonetheless remains a space from which to experience other relationships with the living. From here, her practice evolved within a tight interweaving of a dual activity in which life/lives and art shape each other. Georgie, Big Daddy, Little Daddy, Ugly Mut, Big Betty, Gillian, Lovely Marilyn, Lovely Patsy, Iris, Ivy, Giga are not simply characters in her stories about sheep farming, any more than they are the subjects of her observations as an artist. By staging herself alongside them, Orla Barry gives an account of a mutual apprenticeship, a companionship from which knowledge, affection and disillusionment are interlaced and exchanged. In this way, beyond their role as characters in her stories, the sheep appear as true partners in both life and writing. To Orla's regular "ham ham" calls, her companions respond. "Why talk to animals?" asks Vinciane Despret. "To remind yourself that someone is there."⁸ Beyond this echo effect, there is something in this "ham ham" akin to the mutual acknowledgement of a presence, the invention and inscription of a language within the time and space of a life – as a group. While talking to the animals has always been a taboo among livestock farmers, Orla Barry goes as far as composing a language alongside her sheep – leaving us with no choice but to speculate about the nature of their conversation. With Orla Barry, pastoral life appears less like a material than a method: a way of paying attention and learning, from which to then weave in ways of seeing, feeling, saying and being as a group rather than as humans.

In *Composer avec les moutons* [Composing with Sheep], Michel Meuret recalls how, from the 1970s onwards, farmers were encouraged to abandon the transhumance tradition in favour of a more "efficient" approach to feeding livestock. Animals were enclosed in buildings until a rise in cereal prices forced the reintroduction of grass grazing. When asked about their training, many sheep farmers – from this new generation – replied: "It's the sheep who taught us; they taught us to teach them."⁹ From this perspective, a sheep farmer could literally become a herbivore with their fingers, observing the plants selected by the sheep themselves. This opens up what Vinciane Despret calls a "relational syntax"¹⁰ that blurs the classic categories of action: a syntax in which activity and passivity combine until we do not know who is making who do what. Is Orla Barry making her sheep talk or is it the other way around? "I see sheep everywhere, we speak to each

7 Stephen Budiansky, *The Covenant of the Wild, Why Animals Chose Domestication*, Yale University Press, 1999.

8 In "Démêler les pinceaux #10 Vinciane Despret", recording of a conversation between Vinciane Despret and Denis Gielen about Orla Barry's work as part of the exhibition "Shaved Rapunzel & la Petite Bergère Punk" at the Musée des Arts Contemporains au Grand-Hornu, Belgium, 2024, URL: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yJuTOH3dBE8> (viewed 26 August 2025).

9 Vinciane Despret and Michel Meuret, *Composer avec les moutons. Lorsque les brebis apprennent à leurs bergers à leur apprendre*, Cardère, "Collection HORS LES DRAILLES", Sault, 2016.

10 Vinciane Despret, "Démêler les pinceaux #10", *op. cit.*

other through sound. Sheep are part of my air song, my wind song, my sea song. We are unison, a collective. We are a collaborative endeavour.”¹¹ As Vinciane Despret explains, “it’s not a question of becoming other but *becoming with*”¹². It’s about imagining a world that can be inhabited with the other: being shepherd with her sheep, like being artist with her sheep.

Through this attentiveness to *becoming with*, Orla Barry resists romanticising nature and work: lambing season disrupts her own rhythm, bringing with it instead long sleepless nights; the industry of farming compels her to mourn her animals, who she accompanies to the moment and place of their slaughter. “*There’s no cure for that feeling [...] I have to create creatures that fit packages. My heart goes numb.*”¹³ While she does not deny the reality of an extractive and a destructive capitalist market, within which she also has to maneuver, Orla Barry places herself within a complex and important statement whereby destruction (market surplus and absorption) and loss form part of the place where she finds herself and situates herself, with which she also becomes shepherd and artist. We see in her a certain melancholic refusal to “get over” the traumas and losses associated with her work, a recognition of the simultaneity of life and death where mourning is an integral part of everyday life. “*I still miss Georgie. At the pedigree sales this year I buy a new Lleynstock ram named Giga. It’s a complicated transaction of G’s. I buy Giga via a guy named Glenn. All the G’s in my life seem to line up. There was George. Now there is Glenn the super tall shepherd and Glen the stick figure. (...) So I pay him and take Giga home and put him in the field with my best ram lamb who is, wait for it, also called Glen. I swear to you. And Glen’s dam is called Glenda and his dam’s dam is called Gwenda! I am sure that Giga is a reincarnation of George. So George is back on earth in the form of Giga and he’s ready to go.*”¹⁴ This refusal to “get over it” is all the more powerful within the context of livestock farming, where it is considered that certain lives cannot (or should not) be mourned. Catriona Sandilands uses the term “queer melancholia”¹⁵ to describe this resistance: a melancholia that allows us to cling to loss in defiance of the capitalist injunction to forget, move onto something else and transfer our attention to a new relationship or object. Georgie, Big Daddy, Little Daddy, Ugly Mut, Big Betty, Gillian, Lovely Marylin, Lovely Patsy, Iris, Ivy, Giga will pass and others will follow, but each one mattered and will matter. And for each sheep, Orla Barry will make eye contact – the etymology of the word ‘respect’.

¹¹ Orla Barry, *Notes from Sheepland*, *op. cit.*

¹² Vinciane Despret, “*Démêler les pinceaux #10*”, *op. cit.*

¹³ Orla Barry, *Notes from Sheepland*, *op. cit.*

¹⁴ Extract from the text from *Spin Spin Sheherazade* (2019), in Orla Barry, *The Shepherd’s Progress*, *op. cit.*, p. 24

¹⁵ Catriona Sandilands, “Melancholy Natures, Queer Ecologies.” *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*, 2010. p. 339.

¹⁶ Extract from the text for the performance *Breaking Rainbows* (2017), in Orla Barry, *The Shepherd’s Progress*, *op. cit.*, p. 51.

¹⁷ Rapunzel is a character from European fairytales, popularised by the Brothers Grimm (*Rapunzel*, 1812). She is known for her long hair, which she uses to help her prince climb up her tower, a symbol of both captivity and the desire for emancipation. In Orla Barry’s felt piece *Shaved Rapunzel*, we see a desire to break free from a certain idea of femininity (associated with long hair) and the belief that we do not need to be saved by someone else.

Orla Barry shares this intimate and plural experience with us, between labour and care, through a multitude of forms and narratives. Very often our keyboard slips and Orla becomes Oral. Whether auto-correct or a slip of the tongue, we see it as a clear sign that something within her is addressing us through the voice. Or rather through voices, because there is her own voice – a stream of consciousness voice-over of an inner thoughts in Cara Holmes’ documentary – that of Einat Tuchman – long-standing performer, keeper of the verbose but constantly interrupted speech in *Spin Spin Scheherazade* (2019) – that of a nostalgic letter addressed to her beloved lost ram (*A Letter To My Stock Ram*, 2022), and even the voice that takes shape through typographical games – screaming capital letters like in *Shepherd, Scavenger, Slave* (2022) or text that shrinks away – all these voices express themselves under the auspices of a first person, herself multiple, scattered, melded, overwhelmed. These words recount the extraordinary and trivial everyday experiences of a prodigal girl, an embarrassed heiress, a perseverant artist, a pluri-loving woman, a social recluse, an angry, swearsy feminist, an ally to her flock, an unrivalled competitor, a lifeguard for lost sheep. Among these voices, there are also those of drowned, lost or furious sheep: “[*The breeder*] is trying to get me to walk in circles; it’s like he doesn’t fucking care about me, man... I’m the one who is gonna earn him the money... I’m like, this is fucking too much, man; I’m gonna fucking kill you when I get out of here.”¹⁶ Ultimately, all these voices recall those of other powerful women – Scheherazade, Rapunzel¹⁷, the shepherdess Bo-Peep – who knew how to make themselves heard and who also forged their own paths.

Orla Barry’s writing is anchored in a certain physicality in step with the harshness of livestock farming, it is merged with fleeting sensations made up of

intuitions, fatigue, joy, dilemmas, excess, remorse and romantic impulses. In us, she looks for a particular level of attentiveness, the feeling of being or having been in her shoes, and she has the ability to transport us quickly like a story, a poem, a joke, an anecdote or a folktale does. There again, it's about not saying too much and about ensuring the scene rings true. We can imagine that these stories have been told and retold, that they have been refined, reduced, reworked. In this respect, her writing is clearly part of an oral tradition. However, she breaks free from the conventions of the genre to undo any linearity or logic, creating a narrative with complex intertextuality made up of quotations, mantras, recomposed dialogues: *"I'm scavenger. The words are scavenged from life from the farm from other people's mouths from the back of the milk carton."*¹⁷

These snippets of stories create knots, curls, refrains, repetitions between themselves; elliptical and inconclusive stories, short scenes like flashes of moments in life, an intermittent flow where different levels of perception compete with one another for attention, to occupy an entire consciousness and then disappear just as quickly into the warrens of fleeting memories. Orla Barry describes these disconnections as an essential part of her work: *"This type of disjuncture is integral to my work; it is how my dyslexic mind works, and it is how farming works."*¹⁸ On the farm as in the exhibition, the text never stops moving, from one spoken word, it bounces around the space: on a panel, a banner, stuck in a pile of wool, tangled in the stitches of a jumper... In Orla Barry's work, words - like wool - become this surplus raw material, which must be laid down, brushed, felted, given shape and the value of which varies widely according to the context in which it is received.

¹⁷ Orla Barry, *Notes from Sheepland*, op. cit.

¹⁸ Orla Barry interviewed by Ciara Healy, in "The Agri-Cultural Summer Show", *Visual Artists' News Sheet* | September – October 2023.

Vincent Enjalbert, Elena Lespes Muñoz, Émilie Renard

Spin Spin Scheherazade, 2019

In an immaculate white installation, made up of platforms, ladders, stools, panels of text and benches, Einat Tuchman addresses the public as a storyteller. Guided by them, she launches enthusiastically into a story: “*Georgie is lovely, but he’s useless...*”. And so begins one of the stories – fable or poem – that make up this performative and sound artwork, which is regularly interrupted by a toaster. The actress tells us about moments in Orla Barry’s life as a sheep farmer. A succession of comical and incongruous anecdotes unfolds – a ram in rut, the sudden appearance of a pair of bright red Batman socks during an overly long general assembly. There are also more prosaic scenes – a broken slurry pit – and technical ones, with Orla Barry acting as a judge at a sheep show. Darker notes emerge as well: the painful bleeding of Georgie, her favorite black ram; the dull brutality of vacuum-packed chops; the casual sexism of a “Warthog Shepherd”; or the muffled reminiscence of a sexual assault.

In *Spin Spin Scheherazade*, Orla Barry reveals herself in fragments, drawing the audience into a narrative motion – to spin, to tell – where speech and words captivate through their very physicality (to spin, to turn, to make turn), and where fiction creates a protective distance from a sometimes harsh reality. A master of trivial time, the toaster recalls the night that suspends Sultan Shahriar’s listening pleasure, deferring until tomorrow the storyteller’s reprieve in *The Thousand and One Nights*. Orla Barry’s shepherd’s crooks appear here at once as working tools, social objects, and performative instruments: extensions of the shepherdess’s body, they become talking sticks. Beyond autofiction, Orla Barry does not position herself as the sole author of this testimony. If there are Scheherazades, they are several – like that ewe whose first-person tale escapes the artist’s own. For this is what is at stake: telling in order to continue, narrating in order to survive. Orla Barry shares her fragile interactions with the land, agriculture, humans and animals, questioning the limits between art and daily life in the grip of regimes of domination and exploitation against which she resists. “*We have to tell stories to get what we want.*”

Let’s get the oral going again, meet up, make fire [...]. Say no to power”¹, yells Einat Tuchman in another performance by the artist. A ‘we’ that is definitely not just human here.

Elena Lespes Muñoz

1 Orla Barry, *Breaking rainbows*, performance, Crawford Art Gallery / Midsummer Festival, Cork, 2017.

Form is destroyed, 2024
Stockpile, 2025

Orla Barry has produced several piles of wool originating from around a hundred sheep, the sale of which, because of the devaluation of wool, would not even cover the fee of the sheep shearer. She chose to try her hand at the technique of felting because of the significant physical labour and, above all, time it requires in order to create “*value where there is none*.”¹ Feltmaking allows for a certain flexibility that permits errors and readjustments and fosters a physical and organic relationship to the woolly material, which, although increasingly fixed through heat, humidity and the pressure exerted upon it, remains fundamentally alive. This tension between form and formlessness pervades *Form is destroyed*, made up of three pieces of felt produced from a mix of wool from different breeds (Tyrol, Lleyn, Merino and Drenthe Heath). Playing on the contrasts in textures between the soft surface on which these three words are written and the raw, chaotic appearance of the fibres of wool that splay and spread freely out from the edges, this work seems like it has been ripped out in a gesture comparable to that used to make a *cut-up*², where terms taken from their original context are singled out through a game of multiple and meaningful assemblages and reassemblages.

While the statement “*Form is destroyed*” could be interpreted as a snubbing of the legacy of formalism in Western art history, it also brings to mind the concept of anti-form and Robert Morris’ *Felt pieces*³, in which felt defined its own form through gravity. In this way, it revives debates around the so-called “autonomy” of an artwork,

a notion defended by the art critic Clément Greenberg, who claimed a distance from the social and political issues underlying a work's production. However, in Orla Barry's work, the material defines its own language from a multitude of substrates: by amalgamating wools with different histories and properties, by transporting plant fibres and feces from the areas roamed by her animals, or even by composing random colour combinations through the myriad of traces left on the raw wool. Occupying the exhibition space through its imposing size and strong smell caused by the grease it contains before treatment, the work *Stockpile*, a pile of wool, breaks with the image of a noble and immaculate material as much as it corrupts the fiction of the museum-like space as a sanitised environment (the sacrosanct white cube), the aesthetic neutrality and climatic regulation of which are supposed to guarantee optimal understanding and conservation of artworks. The destruction of the form passes via a latent leeching of the minimalist design that, at first glance, seems to connect the pieces, allowing for the subtle emergence of points of contention that resist the process of institutional polishing in order to better embrace the punk non-conformism dear to the artist.

Vincent Enjalbert

1 Orla Barry on the series *Shearling Felts*, [online], URL: <https://www.orlabarry.be/shearling-felts-marilyn-patsy-iris-ivy> (viewed 8 October 2025).

2 A literary and artistic technique invented by Brion Gysin and brought to fame by William S. Burroughs in the 1960s.

3 'Anti-form' is a concept developed in the 1960s, notably in the US, describing works that break out from strict geometric forms, allowing structure to instead be guided by the material, chance and gravity. Robert Morris' *Felt Pieces* (1967-1969) are an example of this.

The Wool Merchant's Calculator & The Curator's Jumper, 2022

The Anthropologist's T-shirt and The Shepherd's Warning, 2022

Woolly Poppy, 2024, from the series *Bo-Peep's Kiss*

*"This is a snakeskin jacket. And for me it's a symbol of my individuality, and my belief in personal freedom."*¹ So says Sailor, clinging to his jacket like a second skin. This comeback spread like wildfire through the 1990s, perhaps even reaching the shores of Ireland

and Orla Barry. From then on, we knew that a piece of clothing was able to carry a message and speak volumes about the person wearing it. Through clothing, we could assert our identity, advertise our values and, above all, when worn over time, see them gather a certain emotional weight that distinguishes them from the other thousands like them. Far from any obscure machine recycling codes, fashions and logos, three accessories – a jumper, T-shirt and lipstick – were developed in a sheep barn in Seafield, where they intermingled with other values: a sense of manual work, Marxist doubts, disgust for international trade, prayers made in vain, powerful wishes, self-sacrifice and, above all else, a strong desire to break with the tacit and drab dress codes of the neighbourhood. According to a letter to Giga², her beloved ram, *TEARBLOCK™* was the name given to this venture.

'Oversized' black and white photographic prints, the image quality of which does not try to create an illusion but conveys alternative narratives to paler original versions. Their titles alone sound like real stagings of a series of characters dear to the artist: *The Wool Merchant's Calculator & The Curator's Jumper* without doubt being the most verbose of the three in its combination of two "true" (according to the artist) stories: one about an Irish cable knit jumper belonging to the curator Patrick Murphy – these patterns themselves already having been revisited and conferred ancestral and sacred origins for commercial purposes³ – worn for over 50 years (again, according to the artist); and then a conversation with an ex-wool merchant turned flat-pack furniture specialist, John Conron, in which he retraces the journey of the wool, and in particular its devaluation on the global marketplace until there was no alternative but to leave it to rot on the farms, a journey very precisely calculated with the help of several conversions from one currency to another. This dialogue with accounting overtones ends with a flash of disillusioned nostalgia, with "an ovine tear" rolling down the artist's cheek. As for the T-shirt, copied-pasted-adapted from a 1950's holy banner, it bears the simple prayer "Shepherd's Heart Save Us", illustrated with a powerful siren standing on a large pedestal, like an equestrian statue, brandishing a bloody heart like a trophy, a threat, the declaration of a new era. Finally, tempted to change direction and combine two of her passions – lipstick and the sheep farm – Orla Barry considered creating a new brand of lipsticks for shepherds. After all, the red she wears in all seasons is a symbol of her individuality and her belief in personal freedom. It becomes,

therefore, a support for a chance encounter between several worlds, creating poems destined to resonate in the Irish countryside: “Fuzzy Fandango, Show Coral, Raddle Red, Woolly Ruby, Lamb’s Rosewood, Honeysuckle Rouge, Ram’s Red Mystery, Ruby Ewe, Bo-Peep’s Kiss, Mary’s Crush, Sentient Scarlet, Rock and Roll Shearling”.

Émilie Renard

1 Sailor, in David Lynch, *Wild at Heart*, film, US, 1990.

2 *A Letter to My Stock Ram* (2022), in Orla Barry, *The Shepherd’s Progress*, op. cit., p. 92-94.

3 The idea that Aran knitwear designs come from a sacred tradition and history turns out to have been fabricated by Heinz Edgar Kiewe, a fashion journalist who owned a wool shop in Oxford. His frivolous descriptions went on to be used to market the jumpers in export markets, targeting in particular the Irish diaspora in the United States.

Source: Wiki

Bétonsalon’s team: Manon Barbe, administrator; Sarah Bidet, communications assistant, apprenticeship; Camille Bouron, mediation and public outreach growth officer; Vincent Enjalbert, head of exhibitions; Romain Grateau, Kevin Gotkovsky, Clément Gaillard, Camille Berthelin, technical team; Timothée Perron, coordination assistant, internship; Elena Lespes Muñoz, head of public outreach; Émilie Renard, director; Philippine Talamona, public outreach assistant, civic service.

Cover: Composition Catalogue Général. © Orla Barry / ADAGP Paris, 2025.

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A SHEPHERD'S HEART

ORLA BARRY

Exhibition:

from 18 October to 20 December 2025

Curator: Émilie Renard

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