

**ORLA BARRY**  
**BREAKING RAINBOWS**

25>26/03 • 19:00 • 1h10  
performance • in English • Argos  
+ 29/03>1/04 • 11:00>18:00  
exhibition • Argos

**nl/** Van verhalen op een schapenboerderij tot wat categorieën onthullen over ons brein. Van pastorale zangwedstrijden in het oude Griekenland tot ecologische vraagstukken vandaag. Met twee performers en haar eigen wolproductie van één jaar stelt Orla Barry onze complexe verhouding met de natuur aan de kaak. Het resultaat is een performance en een video-installatie, opgebouwd uit vignettes die de primitieve, poëtische en onvoorspelbare band weergeven die we hebben met de natuur.

- Orla Barry is zowel beeldend kunstenaar als schaapherder. Ze woonde 16 jaar in Brussel, nu runt ze op het Ierse platteland een boerderij met Lleyne-schapen. Ze worstelt in haar werk met de tastbaarheid van poëzie en gesproken taal. De kannibalistische, symbiotische spanning tussen leven en kunst maken op het platteland, is een recent leidmotief. Ze toonde al werk in o.a. The Irish Museum of Modern Art, het SMAK en Tate Modern, en nam deel aan Manifesta 2. Tijdens Performatik13 toonde ze het gelauwerde *Mountain* in Bozar.

**fr/** De récits de ferme de moutons à ce que les catégories (au sens philosophique du terme) dévoilent sur notre cerveau, de concours de chants pastoraux (amébée) dans la Grèce antique à des questions écologiques contemporaines : avec deux performeurs et sa production de laine d'une année, Orla Barry dénonce notre lien compliqué à la nature. Le résultat est une performance et une installation vidéo, construit des vignettes qui reflètent le lien primitif, poétique et irrégulier qu'on a avec la nature.

- Orla Barry et à la fois artiste plasticienne et bergère de moutons. Après avoir vécu 16 ans à Bruxelles, elle exploite désormais une ferme de moutons Lleyne dans la campagne irlandaise. Son œuvre se débat avec la tangibilité de la poésie et du langage parlé. La tension cannibalique, symbiotique entre la vie et la création artistique à la campagne et un leitmotiv récent. Elle a présenté son œuvre, entre autres, à l'Irish Museum of Modern Art, au SMAK et à la Tate Modern, et a participé à Manifesta 2. Lors de Performatik13, elle s'est produite à Bozar avec sa performance très applaudie, *Mountain*.

**en/** From stories on a sheep farm to what categories reveal about the mind. From singing competitions in Ancient Greece to ecological issues today. With a year's production of her own wool and two performers, Orla Barry addresses our complex relationship with nature. The result is compelling live performance and a video installation, made up of a series of vignettes that reflect upon the primal, poetic and unpredictable bond we have with the natural world.

- Orla Barry is both visual artist and shepherd. She lived for 16 years in Brussels and now lives and works in South East Ireland where she runs a flock of pedigree Lleyne sheep. In her work she deals with the physicality and poetics of oral language. A recent leitmotif is the cannibalistic, symbiotic tension between being an artist and a farmer in rural Ireland. She has shown work at The Irish Museum of Modern Art, SMAK and Tate Modern, amongst others, as well as taking part in Manifesta 2. During Performatik13 she performed the much-lauded *Mountain* at Bozar.

## “PRIMAL CARE FOR THE SOUL”

a note on the performance by Noelia Ruiz

*Breaking Rainbows* is an exploration of the poetry of farming, of the physicality of both language and of nature, a relationship that is far more symbiotic than one might initially suspect. Orla Barry's experiences as a shepherd in rural Wexford for the past 6 years are presented here in artistic form in an attempt to capture one of the most intimate relationships between wo/man and mother earth, that of animal husbandry, the science of breeding and caring for farm animals.

However, *Breaking Rainbows* is more than an artistic presentation of farming experiences, for Barry cannot dissociate her work as a visual artist from her work as a sheep breeder: both experiences feed each other cannibalistically. This is palpable in the stories being told but also in the materiality of the installation and performance, which uses video, live action, a 300 kg pile of wool produced on her farm in 2015, and an aural landscape which touches many different forms of speech to create the series of vignettes which make up *Breaking Rainbows*.

This is in line with Barry's trajectory as an artist who has always played with an eclectic variety of mediums in her work. One of the main characteristics of Barry's aesthetic is her understanding of language as simply words, that is, physical entities void of meaning in the most semiotic sense: words are just visual representations of sounds and concepts; words in themselves are only forms, a mere collection of letters. Thus, for Barry writing is a visual art, a drawing of signs and a cacophony of sounds. Her playful approach is reminiscent of semantic satiation, the psychological phenomenon in which the visual or verbal repetition causes a word or phrase to temporarily lose meaning, being perceived as repeated meaningless sounds or as an assemblage of letters. On the other hand, Barry also embraces the poststructuralist stance in her understanding that language structures both the world and thought but in itself it is only a construct in constant change, both an iteration and an improvisation.

This led Barry to introduce chance procedures not dissimilar to those of Merce Cunningham to dictate the dramaturgy of her last performance work, *Mountain* (STUK, 2012; If I Can't Dance, 2013; South London Gallery 2013; Project Arts Centre, 2014). She also introduced a collaborative approach to the development of the text in which, via improvisation, original stories were played by the different collaborators. This resulted in the stories being reinvented and reshaped, defying notions of ownership, authorship and authenticity, and thus also reflecting on the nature of oral storytelling as transferred throughout generations.

*Breaking Rainbows* explores these ideas further, affording a multitude of meanings for that poetic relationship between wo/man and animal. Barry offers us an art work in which caring for a flock of sheep cannot be dissociated from the effects of global warming or the production of art or from the Amoebae singing competitions shepherds run in Ancient Greece to help pass time.

“Zeus! and who asked thee, foul knave, whether the flock was mine or Sibyrta's' ?  
Lord, what a babbler is here!”

– Theocritus

*The Greek Bucolic Poets*, translated by Edmonds, J M. Loeb Classical Library Volume 28. Cambridge, MA. Harvard University Press. 1912.

**written and directed by** Orla Barry | **collaborators** Einat Tuchman, Derrick Devine, Marcus Lamb | **performers** Einat Tuchman, Dick Walsh | **commissioned and produced by** Wexford Arts Centre, Temple Bar Gallery & Studios | **co-production** Kaaithheater, ARGOS centre for art and media, Crawford Art Gallery | **funded by** Arts Council of Ireland and by Culture Ireland | **support** Dublin Theatre Festival, Midsummer Festival Cork, Opera Festival Wexford & IMMA's residency program



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