

Basic Detail Report



Form is destroyed

Date

2012

Primary Maker

Barry, Orla

Medium

Raw Zwartbles Shearling Wool Hand shorn, washed, carded and felted by the artist from her own wool

Description

Artist's text: There was something political for me about making these felt works from scratch. The physical labour of work of times past. Repetitive gestures of shearing, washing, carding, and felting raw wool from my own 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. These were the first works I made after I moved back to Ireland from Brussels. The shearling felt series are directly inspired by the farm and the animals I am still working with and learning from. It has been a long road, ten years long now. From felting to farming to genetics and livestock showing: a perennial labour of love, adopting the past to understand a way to the future. An on-going autoethnographic study. I can make psychological artefacts from wool, but I am doing this to draw attention to the material itself. A rhetorical gesture? Am I a blind and terrified guide? Sheep were bred 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 is still stored in a shed on the farm because its worth would not cover the work of the shearer. It's the real metaphorical pile. 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, September 2021 --- These felt works began as part of the performance MOUNTAIN. At a later stage they were then shown in the exhibition NOUGHT YTAUGHT TO SPEKE BY CRAFT NOUPER BY KYNDE at Mother's Tank Station, in 2014. In her exhibition 'Nought Ytaught to speke by craft nupper by kinde', Orla Barry has hung felt things. There are nine altogether, arranged on the inner gable wall of Mother's Tankstation, Dublin. In the ante-chamber of the gallery rests The Shepherd's Triangle, its peak brightly tipping into the grey wall; a white, wooden triangular board, inscribed with black letters fit mimetically into its acute shape. The letters make up words that are indices of occupations. Words like Spouse, Prophet, Tramp, and Landlord make up the base, and at the very apex; Shepherd. The figure of the Shepherd is not one that looms large in the contemporary social imaginary. Orla Barry, however, has come home to Ireland, to find that her occupations have become unexpectedly triangulated as artist, teacher and shepherd.[1] This estranged figure of the

Shepherd, poised on the 'onwards and upwards' trajectory of the triangle, invokes Wassily Kandinsky's seminal text 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art': "At the apex of the top segment stands often one man, and only one," writes Kandinsky, "His joyful vision cloaks a vast sorrow. Even those who are nearest to him in sympathy do not understand him. Angrily they abuse him as charlatan or madman." [2] It is this figure which opens up the nine felt-things hanging noisily within the mute gallery space, allowing a deeper and more troubling consideration of what is tricking about in Barry's work. Orla Barry's Shearling Felts (Marilyn, Patsy, Iris, Ivy) are physical and psychological artefacts, yielded through a Wexford flock of pure-bred Zwartbles sheep. They are literal-metaphors. Felt-Things. They tenderly parody a woolly language shored up into its own lyric. Heaving with animal personality and the labour of human hands, Barry's felt-things are rendered, paradoxically, through fierce and violent gestures of erasure; rubbing, beating, rolling, washing in all directions. These felt-things have no smell. Barry is not uncomfortable with metaphor. She is not uncomfortable letting her 'props' indicate what to do. In this case, her felt-things hang a kilometre away from where they had been intended as props for the set of Barry's performance work MOUNTAIN, staged recently at Project Arts Centre on the 20th and 21st of June. They were deemed "too porous". [3] Too leaky, or too wild, or too domestic perhaps. Needing their own field. It would be straightforward enough to read Barry's work as a kind of expression of affinity with home, a reconnecting with land and language; with a sense of vocation. "When I go back to the countryside where I am from," says Barry, "the language always amazes me, how my friends and family speak, the roundabout way they go about saying things..." [4] But there is a darker and more intensely engaged activity going on within her felt-things. The nine hangings evoke an impression of muffled tongues, smothered mouths, and seem further to incite something of Kandinsky's elegy: "The night of the spirit falls more and more darkly. Deeper becomes the misery of these blind and terrified guides, and their followers, tormented and unnerved by fear and doubt, prefer to this gradual darkening the final and sudden leap into the blackness." [5] There are ill-formed questions disturbing the rural and material narratives packed into this work, most particularly for this visitor: How fares the artist in the 21st century? How fares the Shepherd? From a review by on ARTDUBLIN by Jessica Foley, Writer and PhD. Researcher at CTVR

Dimensions

Object: 80 × 120 cm