

I'm Herdsman of a Flock *Alizée Gazeau*

24 November 2024 - 31 January 2025
opening 23 November, 4 - 8 pm

opening times: Mon - Tues, 12 - 6 pm

Alizée Gazeau presents *I'm Herdsman of a Flock* at Stallmann, Berlin, an installation of horse saddles mounted in a straight line on a grey wall. The installation is minimalistic, an impression emphasised by the grey colour of the wall alluding to concrete. The strict mounting, sleek leather, and sharp forms create a radicality forcing its presence onto us.

The saddles are presented upside down, with their insides facing the viewer, the flaps outstretched. The variety of positions among the same object recalls sheep of a herd; some are resting, some are fighting, some shy, others showing up.

Gazeau first started working with the saddles in 2020 after finding one at her friend Raoul's stables in Yvelines. What struck her was the changed nature of the saddle when being turned around; suddenly, it became a flower, a butterfly, a womb.

Transformation is at the core of Gazeau's artistic practice. In her paintings and sculptures, the artist takes objects of use out of their original position and function, employs them as artistic tool or turns them into puzzling encounters. The imprints of fishing nets become reptile skin and parchment; saddles become sheep, beetles and breasts.

Accordingly, the artist does not aim at representing an object. She wants to reduce the distance to reality, render an object perceivable by taking it out of its ordinary position and use, and opening up the manifold natures of what we think we know. This ability to change perspective, embrace the mysterious, and to subtly but deliberately include a – female – sensuality into her work aligns Gazeau with artists such as Meret Oppenheim or Louise Bourgeois. The process is an evolution from Surrealism, the *Objet trouvé* and the readymade over Minimalism to a 21st century form. A metamorphosis, giving the factual – concrete, object of use – a poetic touch.

Having completed a double degree in art history and philosophy before dedicating herself to her visual artistic practice, Gazeau finds inspiration in literature and poetry. The title of the exhibition is taken from *The Herdsman* (1925) by Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935), whose writings deeply influence Gazeau's work.

I'm herdsman of a flock.
The sheep are my thoughts
And my thoughts are all sensations.
I think with my eyes and my ears
And my hands and feet
And nostrils and mouth.

To think a flower is to see and smell it.
To eat a fruit is to sense its savor.

The poem expresses a shared artistic, and indeed life approach. Commenting on why Gazeau feels such a strong connection to the writer's work, the artist names Pessoa's ambiguity between being a grounded realist and utopian dreamer. By reducing the physical to its poetic and sensual existence, Gazeau confronts the essence of things; and she wants us to do so, too.

For Gazeau, *I'm Herdsman of a Flock* constitutes an artistic statement illustrating in a direct way Gazeau's perception as an artist: She works with found objects in an intuitive and sensitive way.

In the gallery, the saddles amount to a flock. Stallmann is becoming a stable for the lost sheep of sensation.

- words by Christina-Marie Luemen -