

JOAN

Yalda Afsah, *Eye to Eye*
September 9 – October 21, 2023

JOAN presents an exhibition of work by Berlin-based artist, Yalda Afsah in her first solo exhibition in Los Angeles. The video installation features two of the artist's most recent films from an ongoing series documenting different ritualized encounters between humans and animals.

Curro (2023), Afsah's most recent film, documents a centuries-old Galician tradition known as Rapas das Bestas, in which wild horses are corralled into an arena to be tamed. Named after the Galician term for this arena, the film progresses from slow shots of people idling in a mountainous landscape to the adrenaline-fueled scene that takes place within it. In a performative display of masculinity, men are shown clipping horses' manes and tails, and holding their heads tightly in a posture indistinguishable from an embrace.

The second film, *SSRC* (2022) focuses on the Los Angeles-based Secret Society Roller Club, a group of amateur roller pigeon enthusiasts, as they gather to watch the aerial choreography of the birds they have trained and cared for, sometimes for generations. Pointing to the intimacy of the relationship between pigeon and trainer, the film characterizes pigeon breeding as a process involving both affection and the imposition of human will. It also touches on the role this ritual plays within a particular community, and the way human-animal relations often intersect with the social axes of race, class, and gender.

The interactions depicted in these films oscillate between care and control, strength and will, instinct and manipulation, revealing an ambivalence central to human-animal relationships. Afsah's films question and dissolve these dichotomies, carving out a space to reflect on the overarching empathy between species.

German Iranian artist and filmmaker, **Yalda Afsah** (b. 1983, Berlin, lives in Berlin) has had recent solo exhibitions at Between Bridges Foundation, Berlin, Kunstverein München, and HALLE FÜR KUNST Steiermark, and has presented her work at numerous other exhibitions and festivals including Manifesta 13; Locarno Film Festival; New York Film Festival; Internationale Kurzfilmtage Winterthur; Institute of Contemporary Arts London; Kunsthalle Düsseldorf and Neuer Berliner Kunstverein. She attended CalArts in 2011/2012 for an exchange as part of the MFA Film/Video program. In 2018, she received the Karl Schmidt-Rottluff scholarship and from 2019–2021 she was a fellow at the Berlin University of the Arts' Graduate School. She is currently a mentor for the Berlin program for artists (BPA).

This project is organized by Hannah Spears, Associate Curator.

Support comes from the Senate Department for Culture and Community, Berlin.



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CHECKLIST

Yalda Afsah, *Curro*, 2023
2K, color, sound
30 min

Yalda Afsah, *SSRC*, 2022
2K, color, sound
20 min

Book covers from various found Roller Pigeon manuals, n.d.
Dimensions variable