



UOA D32

ART AND DESIGN:
HISTORY, THEORY AND PRACTICE



RESEARCHER

Tessa Giblin

OUTPUT TITLE

Tremble Tremble

OUTPUT TYPE

Exhibition

DATE

2017–2020

FIG. 1

Tremble Tremble, Pavilion of Ireland at the Venice Biennale (Arsenale). Showing a scene related to Mary Wigman's 'Hexentanz'. Photo Ros Kavanagh.



01 / STATEMENT

Tremble Tremble was an exhibition curated by Tessa Giblin for the Irish pavilion of the 57th Venice Biennale 2017.

The exhibition was a collaboration between Giblin and the Irish artist Jesse Jones. It built on Giblin's curatorial practice of 'exhibition dramaturgy' – methods of theatricalising contemporary art installations and enhancing their effects through modes of performance and immersion.

The exhibition explored the relation between women's struggles in the 21st century and the oppression of women in the middle ages, with a focus on the witch trials. It was developed in the context of the national conversation about women's rights in Ireland, amidst the intensifying debates concerning the right to abortion. The exhibition brought this politically-charged backdrop to the international stage. Following its Venice presentation – seen by audiences of over 600,000 – the exhibition toured internationally to four prestigious venues.

Exhibition presentations:

15 May – 26 November 2017,
57th Venice Biennale.

4 November 2017 – 28 January 2018,
ICA, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore.

7 June – 18 July 2018,
Project Arts Centre, Dublin.

27 October 2018 – 26 January 2019,
Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh.

31 October 2019 – 1 March 2020,
Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao.



FIG. 2
Tremble Tremble, installation view showing curtains at left and right, sculpture of enlarged bones of Lucy Astralopithicus and a portrait projection featuring the hand of the actress Olwen Fouéré. Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh. Photo Sally Jubb.

02 / RESEARCH DIMENSIONS



FIG. 3
Tremble Tremble, Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh. A scold's bridal, used to shame and torture women accused of witchcraft. Photo Sally Jubb.



FIG. 4
Tremble Tremble, Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh. A performer inscribing a circle onto the wall with a chisel. Photo Sally Jubb.

The research interrogated the contemporary resonance of historical witch trials, and the way in which contemporary art and its installation can intensify the topical issue of women's oppression and bring it to wider publics.

Giblin drew on her longstanding expertise in curating theatrical and immersive multi-media exhibitions to create an experience that enveloped visitors in the intense historical thematic. She developed a curatorial method, which she calls 'exhibition dramaturgy', drawing on mechanisms of theatre to create an immersive and multi-sensory experience. This enabled innovative approaches to installation that permitted an integrated relationship between artist and curator, gave expression to the multiple narratives of the work, and performatively enhanced its political content. In this way, *Tremble, Tremble* was able to bring emphasis to the subject of women's rights as all-encompassing, dynamic and multi-faceted.

The exhibition was a performative installation made up of several elements and different scenes. It centred on the body of the actress, Olwen Fouéré, who, in a filmed performance that was subsequently screened on high screens, played a cross between a giantess, a witch, and a figure of justice. This performance was extended by further live performances in each venue. In addition, Giblin curated a complex scenography and choreography of the multiple elements of the exhibition – video projections, the movement of curtains printed with an image of the arm of Fouéré, surround sound installation, sculptural artefacts, the movement of performers, and lighting sequence.

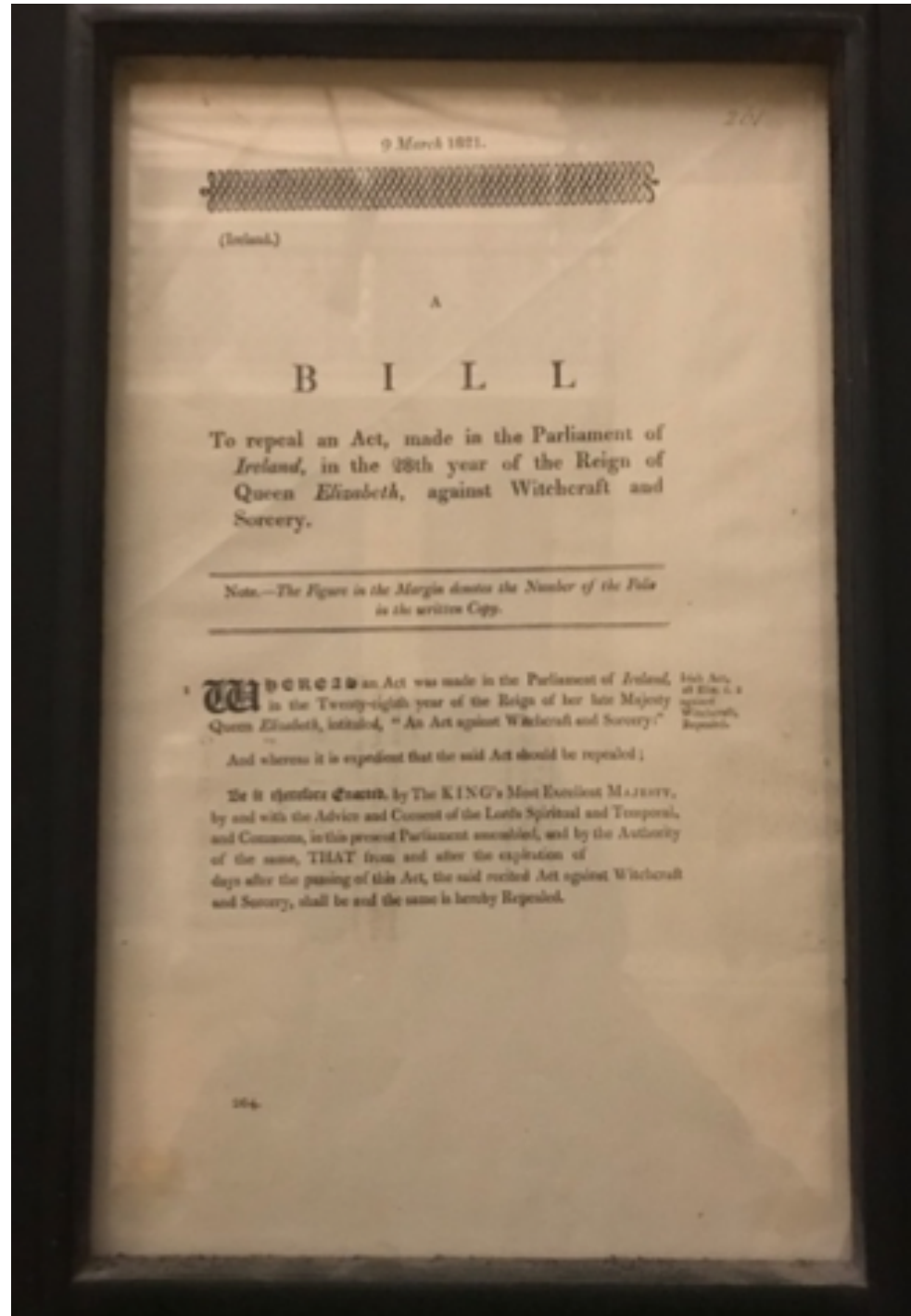


FIG. 5
Tremble Tremble, Talbot Rice Gallery,
 Edinburgh. An Irish declaration
 from 1821 repealing the Witchcraft
 Act of 1586. Photo Tessa Giblin.



FIG. 6
 Installation view of the scene 'Temperance Lloyd',
 accused of witchcraft and burned at the stake in the
 town of Bideford, Devon, in 1682: 'Did I disturb ye
 good people? I hopes I disturb ye, I hopes I disturb ye
 enough to want to see this, your house, in ruins all
 around ye! Have you had enough yet? Or do you still
 have time for chaos? Hah? More?' Photo Sally Jubb.

03 / ORIGINALITY

FIG. 7
Tremble Tremble, Pavilion of Ireland
at the Venice Biennale (Arsenale).
Curtain formation. Photo Ros
Kavanagh.



The exhibition was conceived collaboratively by Giblin and Jones. It built on Giblin's previous curatorial work using theatres, as well as Jones' performative and filmmaking practice. Its form was innovative in its fusion of visual art, film and theatre, performed live all day, every day.

The socio-political context of the artwork – with its emergence during an intensifying people's movement in Ireland to repeal the 8th amendment – was key to its impact. Giblin and Jones contextualised these contemporary struggles within a longer history of oppression.

This was the first exhibition curated by Giblin to engage with what she describes as the national conversation. This type of curating later became a pronounced agenda of Giblin's work at Talbot Rice Gallery, which she has discussed in a number of public lectures as beginning with *Tremble Tremble*.

Tremble Tremble presented an innovative form for socially and politically engaged visual arts, using constructs and mechanisms of theatre to create an immersive experience that directly impacted public awareness and engagement with the subject of female self-determination in Ireland.

FIG. 8
Tremble Tremble, Talbot Rice Gallery,
Edinburgh. A chasm hacked into
the floorboards of William Henry
Playfair's 'Georgian Gallery', out
of which emerges intermittent
puffs of hazer smoke. Photo
Sally Jubb.



FIG. 9

Tremble Tremble. Production image.
Photo Jesse Jones.

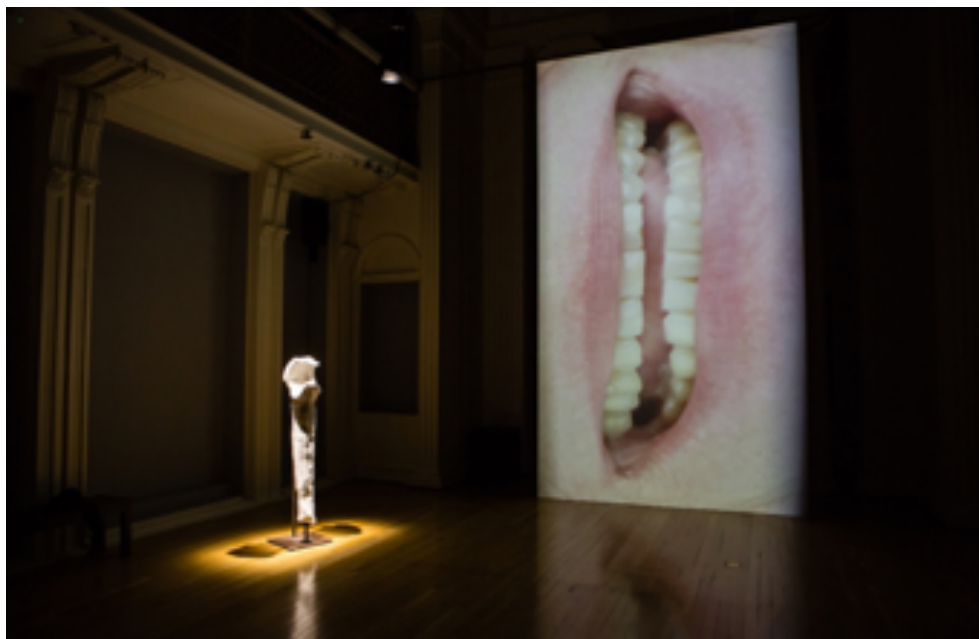


FIG. 10
Tremble Tremble, Talbot Rice Gallery,
Edinburgh. A sculpture of an
enlarged bone and one of the
screens during the 'Oracle' scene.
Photo Sally Jubb.

04 / RIGOUR

Jones and Giblin embarked on a research investigation that combined archival and collaborative research.

The research investigated specific artefacts, such as the bones of Lucy Astralopithecus, an original English magistrate's court, a Scold's Bridal, and the *Malleus Maleficarum* (a 15th century treatise on witchcraft) in museums, archives and antique yards. It involved collaboration with Irish academics and researchers – Lisa Godson (material culture academic), Tina Kinsella (feminist and cultural academic), Mairead Enright (legal historian), and Silvia Federici (feminist and writer) to build a body of research concerning the history of the witch trials.

This research was used by Jones to write the script and lyrics of *Tremble Tremble*.

Giblin designed the exhibition installation. A leading AV programmer, Aaron Kelly, and actress Olwen Fouéré were brought onto the team. Emma Dalesman was commissioned as cinematographer, and Susan Stenger as sound designer and composer.

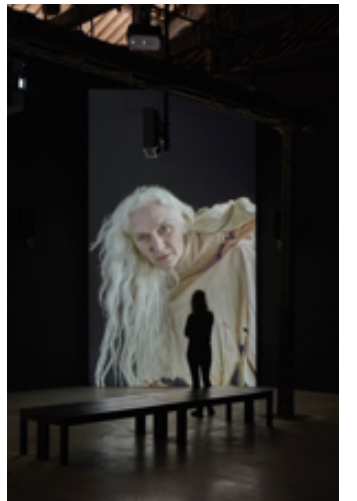
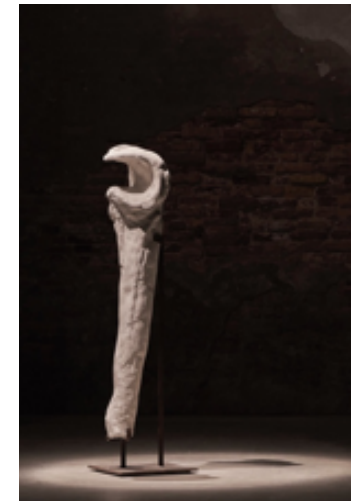
The performance ran in a continuous, approximately 25-minute loop. For this, theatre programming technology (QLabs) was used to programme a specific sequence of video clips, sound stems, lighting cues and smoke hazer emissions in each venue, enabling the exhibition to be timed and nuanced in relation to scale, visitor movement, and atmosphere. This was interspersed with the movement of performers who continuously occupied the space.

Tremble Tremble took different forms in its five different iterations. For the Venice presentation, the exhibition included two portrait projections of Olwen Fouéré performing and singing different scenes in different contexts; two printed curtains pulled by performers on winding tracks; surround sound installation; sculptures; historical artefacts; performance gestures; and a lighting sequence. With each subsequent iteration of the touring exhibition new elements (sculptures, historical artefacts, haze machine, performance gestures) were added to integrate local context and thereby enhance impact on audiences:

- For the Edinburgh presentation, a Scold's Bridle was created and a chasm emitting smoke (hazer) was made to look as though it was carved into the William Henry Playfair floor, to reference Scotland's particular history of witch trials.
- An Irish declaration from 1821 repealing the Witchcraft Act of 1586 and an ancient Irish millstone were highlighted in the Dublin presentation.
- A burning table in the tradition of the Hungry Ghost that displayed burned copies of the bill to repeal the witchcraft act, effectively sending it back to the ancestors were included in the Singapore presentation.
- In Bilbao's Guggenheim Museum a selection of domestic objects of ritual practice and witchcraft-related belief, original from Gipuzkoa and Navarra, based on the Basque wax tablets called Argizaiola.

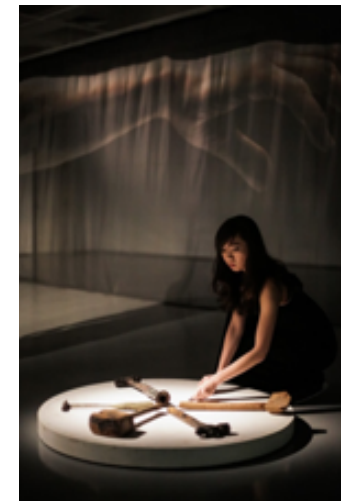
Venice

FIGS. 11–19
Tremble Tremble, installation
images. 57th Venice Biennale,
15 May – 26 November 2017.
Photos Ros Kavanagh.



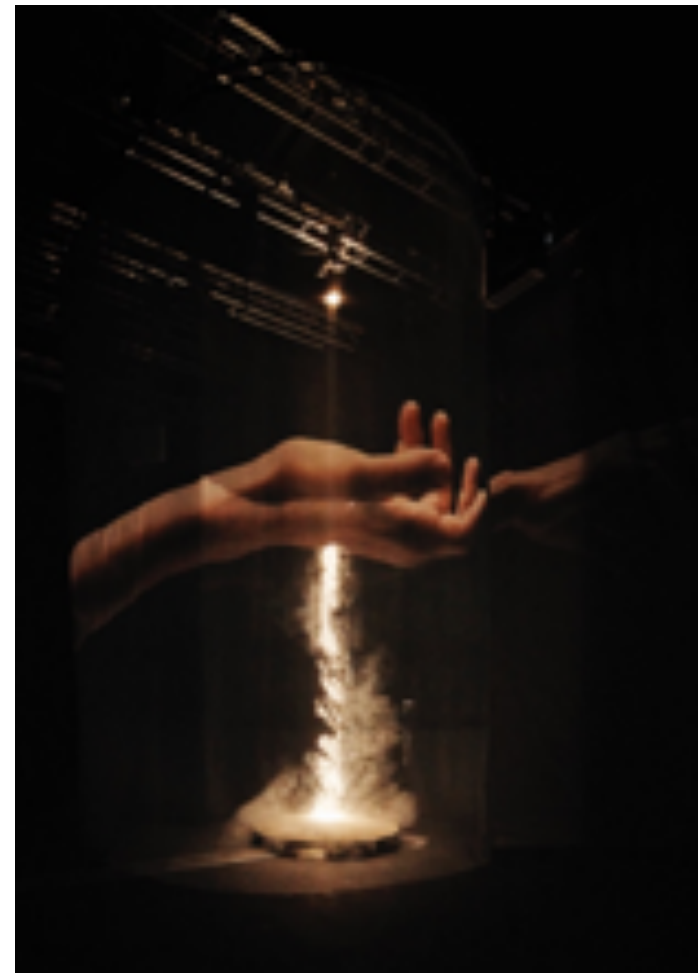
Singapore

FIGS. 20–27
Tremble Tremble, installation
images. ICA, LASALLE,
Singapore, 4 November
2017 – 28 January 2018.
Photos by Truphotos.



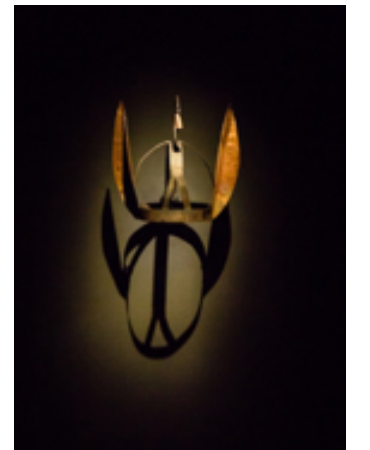
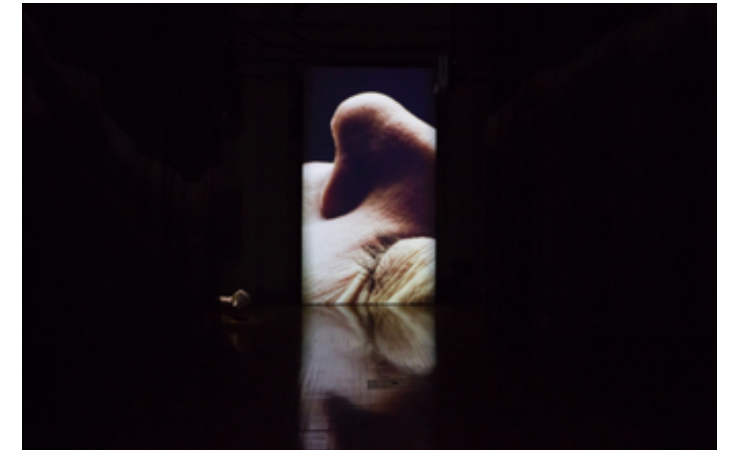
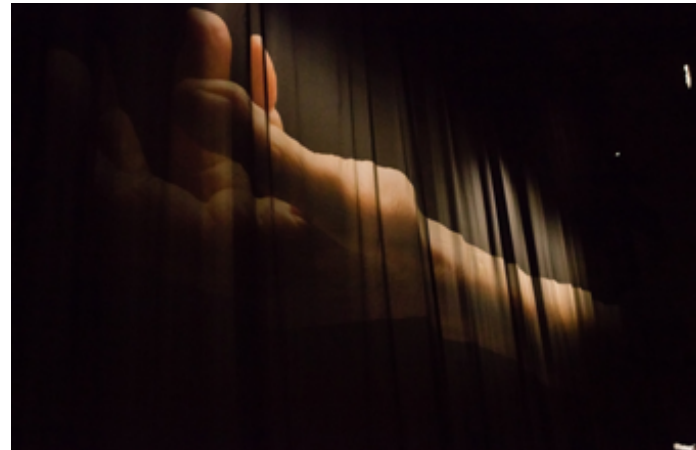
Dublin

FIGS. 28–34
Tremble Tremble, installation
images. Project Arts Centre,
Dublin, 7 June – 18 July 2018.
Photos Ros Kavanagh.



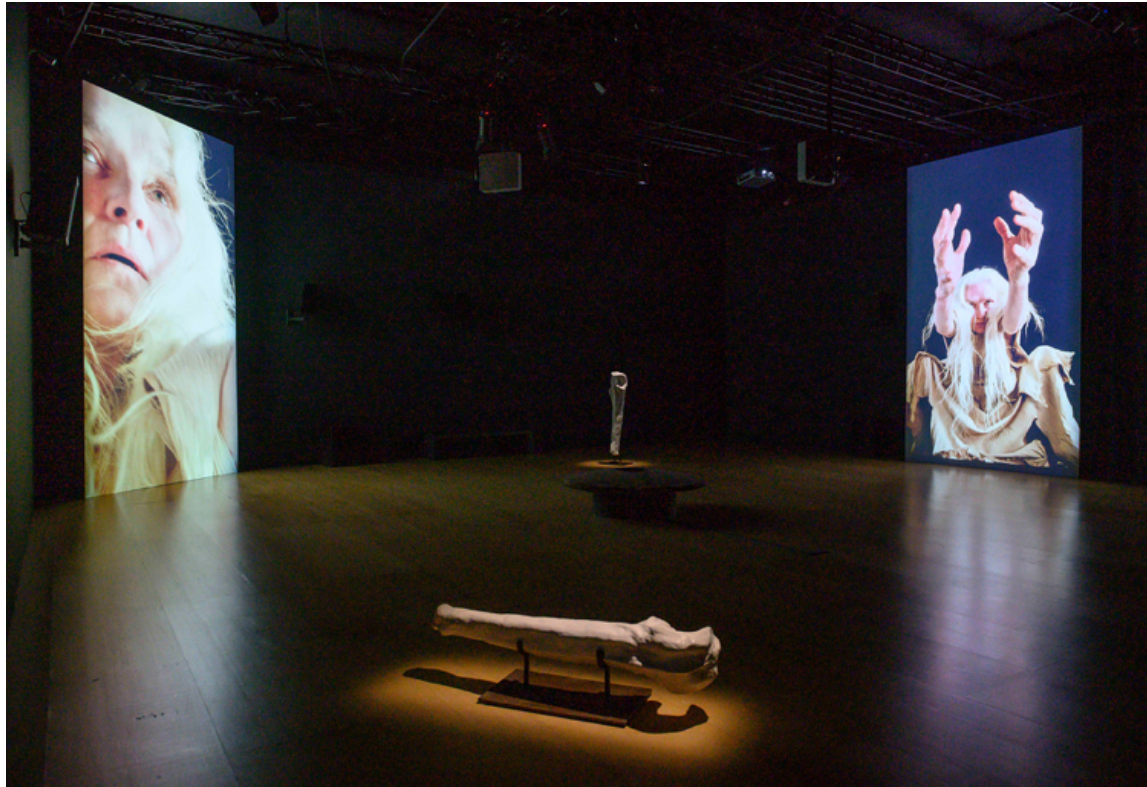
Edinburgh

FIGS. 35–43
Tremble Tremble, installation images.
Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh,
27 October 2018 – 26 January 2019.
Photos Sally Jubb..



Bilbao

FIGS. 44–47
Tremble Tremble, installation
images. Guggenheim, Bilbao,
31 October 2019 – 1 March 2020.
Photos courtesy Guggenheim
Museum Bilbao.



Bilbao

FIGS. 48–50
Tremble Tremble, installation
images. Guggenheim, Bilbao,
31 October 2019 – 1 March 2020.
Photos courtesy Guggenheim
Museum Bilbao.



05 / SIGNIFICANCE

Tremble, Tremble was selected by Culture Ireland for the representation of Ireland at the Venice Biennale 2017, following a competitive three-phased process open to applications from across Ireland and judged by an esteemed international panel consisting of Culture Ireland, Arts Council and Government representatives and leading international experts in the field of contemporary art.

The exhibition and its related events – launches, book publication and international exhibition tour – contributed to broader awareness of the politics of abortion in Ireland and the national conversation on women’s rights.

Publicity generated through media coverage and visits by high-profile individuals such as the President of Ireland and Ailbhe Smyth, leader of the YES Campaign to repeal the eight amendment who spoke at the exhibition’s launch in Dublin, May 2018, the week after the referendum was won highlighted the vital and enabling connection between contemporary art practice and contemporary politics.

The exhibition was presented at:

15 May – 26 November 2017,
57th Venice Biennale.
Audience figures 610,000.

4 November 2017 – 28 January 2018,
ICA, LASALLE College of the Arts, Singapore.
Audience figures 2,347.

07 June – 18 July 2018,
Project Arts Centre, Dublin.
Audience figures 4,083.

27 October 2018 – 26 January 2019,
Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh.
Audience figures 4,251.

31 October 2019 – 1 March 2020,
Guggenheim Museo, Bilbao, Spain.
Audience figures 220,534.

06 / APPENDIX

Video excerpts from the installation

Part 1

https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/t/0_6dufl1og

Part 2

https://media.ed.ac.uk/media/Tremble+Tremble+2/1_5s2ja569

Reviews

Sue Hubbard, writing in *Elephant – the Art and Culture Magazine*, May 2017, remarked on the way the exhibition emerges ‘from the rising social movement in Ireland that calls for a transformation of the historic relationship between Church and state.’

News articles

<https://www.newstalk.com/news/higgins-visits-venice-biennale-ahead-of-audience-with-the-pope-535071>

<https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/higgins-is-first-sitting-irish-president-to-visit-venice-biennale-1.3091748>

<https://www.rte.ie/culture/2017/0810/896509-dee-forbes-on-jesse/>

<https://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/jesse-jones-tremble-tremble-venice-biennale-2017-video-interview-ireland>

<https://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/arts/a-womans-touch-needed>

<https://studentnewspaper.org/article/tremble-tremble-and-at-the-gates-talbot-rice-gallery>

<https://www.scotsman.com/arts-and-culture/art-reviews-jesse-jones-gates-john-byrne-200965>

<https://elephantmag.com/confessions-biennale-virgin>



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