

love is disturbing

reading troupe #04
workshop, wall pasted photographic series, zine

produced by emma haugh in collaboration with louis haugh across a daylong workshop
incorporating gestural, performative readings of
'the cost for love we are not willing to pay' by etel adnan
taking place significantly on may 23rd
at the moment when the votes were being tallied for the same sex marriage
referendum, we used the workshop as a way to reflect on the
occasion, surrounding events and personal experiences

published as part of the exhibition *more than one maker*
at imma - irish museum of modern art
28 may – 12 july 2015

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it's a regular enough occurrence that i find myself looking up the definition of ambivalence, most recently while reading an interview with post-colonial theorist homi k bhabha, bhabha has a theory about ambivalence that allows for beings who are a hybrid of their own cultural identity mixed up with the colonizer's cultural identity, his ideas about ambivalence acknowledge culture as consisting of opposing perceptions and dimensions, i often think of using the word ambivalent but my associations with it's meaning somehow get confused, in a moment of searching my vocabulary i will find ambivalence as the right word and in the next moment i will think of ambivalence as being mixed up with warm and friendly feelings, generally the warm and friendly part doesn't fit with what i'm thinking about so i slide away from ambivalence and think in the back of my mind that i must look up the definition again

over the past months, while thinking about the upcoming equality marriage referendum in ireland, from the distance of berlin and often via posts on facebook, the word would come to mind and i would think *i feel ambivalent* and then the warm friendly associations would kick in, thoughts and responses becoming diffuse, fuzzy, unfocused, split and irritated, in those moments i was holding contradictory thoughts and responses, i was experiencing some level of cognitive dissonance and feeling what can be best described as, well, ambivalent

it's possible that in my continued confusion i am mixing ambivalent with another word that sounds similar but i can't think what that might be, maybe the warm friendly association is part of the contradictory state of the mind occupied in these moments of neither this, neither that, maybe in this state of conflict there is also something warm and friendly, an awkward comfort in indecision

i wasn't unclear about how the referendum needed to go, it had to be and most likely would be a yes, but i have some instinctual concerns that in the longer term marriage will fuck with our *erotic power* (audrey lourde), *potentia gaudendi* (beatrice preciado), *dissident desire* (susanne husse, lorenzo sandoval) and *transgressive sexual practices* (bell hooks) standing outside panty bar in dublin during the last couple of hours of the votes being counted, with my mother, brother and a horde of familiar faces, an old friend danced past in a blur, "yay" she shouted, "*we did it, now let's abolish marriage*" (emma haugh, june 2015)

what follows is an edited transcription of a conversation accompanied by photographic documentation of improvised somatic sculptures both made by emma haugh in collaboration with louis haugh on the grounds of the irish museum of modern art on may 23rd 2015



emma: how do i feel about it? i don't feel emotional, for me, it's a structural part of society that has to be amended to include everyone and it has to happen because this is how our world is built, it's constructed within systems that include marriage, legal rights to property, ownership, so these kinds of things are already in place and everybody has to be on equal terms within those pre-existing systems, otherwise it becomes state sanctioned oppression, homophobia has been institutionalised by our state and that's plainly wrong and has led to homophobic violence, feelings of shame, feelings of inequality and ultimately i'm sure has accumulated in suicides, i think it's all tied up together i have a lot of questions about marriage as a convention, **marriage is a performance, a boring performance,** i think there needs to be a conversation opened up about the problematics of marriage, about why people enter into it, about how it works and doesn't work for people, i have concerns about a certain kind of conservative agenda that comes with marriage, i believe it can operate as an administrative tool for state control, i would also be concerned that a lot of lgbtq people who have experienced forms of oppression and exclusion



will forget very quickly and choose to ignore the fact that that people are still experiencing extreme forms of inequality in this country
louis: do you not think that lgbtq people have already forgotten?

e: oppression?

l: i'm often shocked when people don't know about the history of lgbtq people in concentration camps

e: or that there was a network of gay men involved in the nazi party, for example, and of course now is not the moment to parade these stories around but it's all part of a complicated and broad discussion that i feel is important to raise and talk about, looking at the awkward complexities of history, reminding people not to just shift the power balance to include themselves, maintaining a power structure that they can be part of, ignoring the slipping of oppression onto the shoulders of other people

l: i think a yes vote will be mostly positive for younger lgbtq people who haven't made their minds up about marriage but to be a young person and to be coming into yourself at this particular time can only be a positive, welcoming, and re-assuring experience

e: i think what's most positive about it is that it's a **huge symbolic gesture** of national support, there are people who are isolated and they see public support for a yes vote, i think symbolically it will make a big difference to a lot of people



l: i see it from a lot of different perspectives, i don't see myself getting married and i certainly wasn't out campaigning for my own right to marry, i see it from the perspective of a younger person, like a teenager, a kid in school, from the perspective of somebody who is silent not knowing what is going on in their own head, they don't know where these feelings are coming from and they haven't spoken to anybody about it but they're **hyper aware of the media through you tube, facebook, and instagram, these no campaigns have been literally streamed into their computers, i was angry, angry enough to write an official complaint, a nine year old lgbtq kid doesn't know what to do with that anger and they internalise it and i think that's very damaging and it was probably the most damaging part of the whole referendum, the effect it will have on silent young people, i think the yes vote is a way to wipe those feelings away and for them to feel included in a society that they're going to grow up in**

e: and if there was a no vote, which could still happen?

l: no, it's a case of how much we've won by now, it's looking like it's two to one which is 66% yes and 33% no

e: it's been quite a dangerous situation for people you're talking about there because if it was a no?



I: that would be very dangerous, ireland has the highest rate of suicide for young lgbtq teens in europe and that comes from a twisted network of negative attitudes and opinions towards lgbtq people, throw away remarks, it comes from lgbtq people being legally lesser citizens than straight people, i think it's also quite monumental for ireland because it's the first referendum i know of where it was church against state, every political party whether they were in government or not were one hundred per cent behind a yes vote, the taoiseach and tanaiste were one hundred per cent behind a yes vote, the seanad, even commercial businesses like google, facebook, ebay, all of these big giants who employ a lot of people were all behind a yes vote and the no campaign was run by the church it was black and white, it was yes and no and i think it was the first opportunity ireland has had to vote away from the church, which is quite telling because they still claim that 96% of ireland is catholic, they're claiming ownership of people, ownership of peoples ideas and their CONSCIOUSNESS through figures, these figures are black and white now and i think that's another quite important part of the referendum, again nothing to do with actual marriage, you can tell that people really feel that it's a significant change



e: so before we start reading the etel adnan text i thought i'd ask you what you think love has to do with marriage?

l: very little actually, historically marriage has been a political contract about money power, land

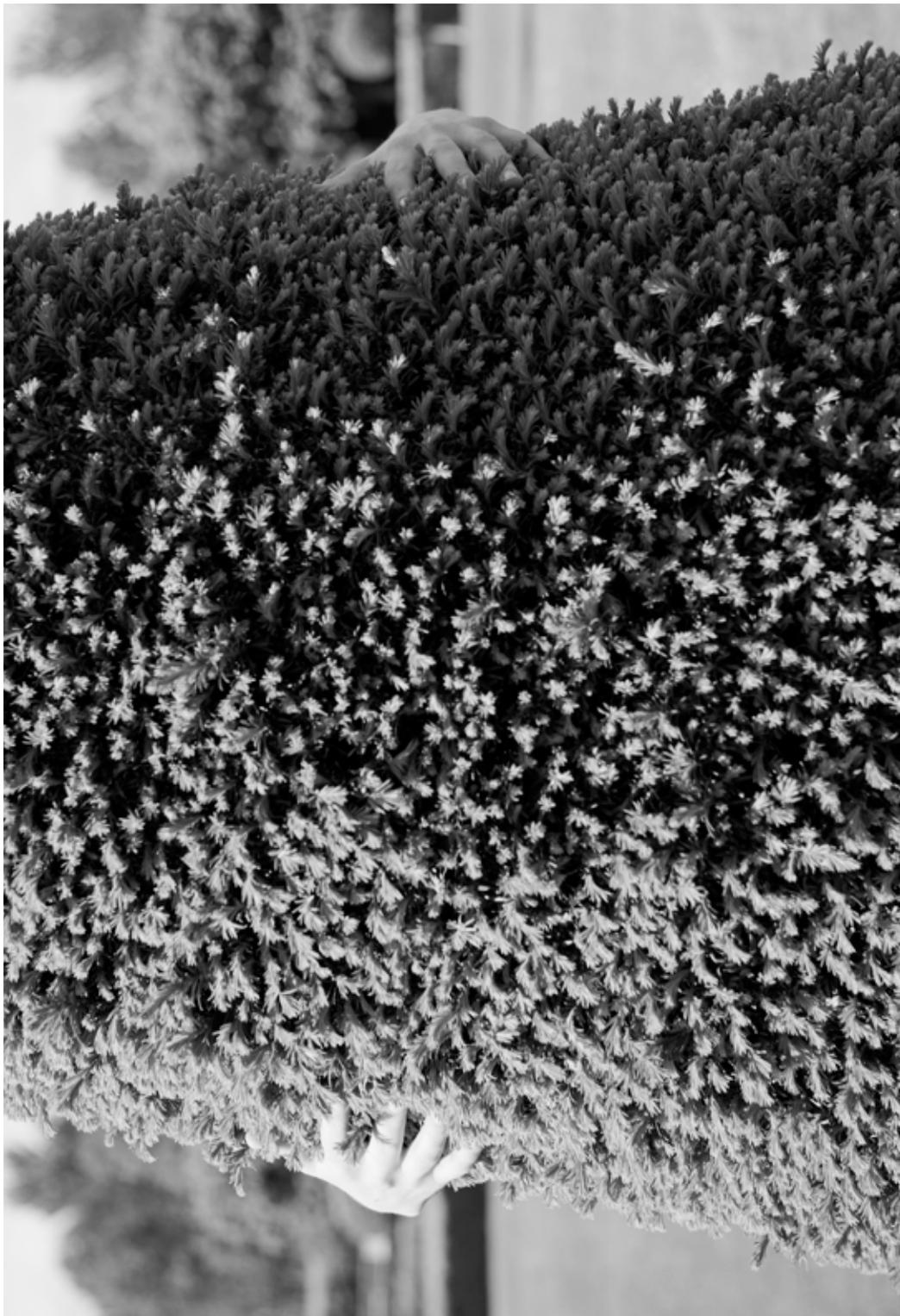
e: and ownership

l: and **ownership**, it was about two families coming together and combining what they own and also it was to do with ownership of a woman and of her body, and particularly of her womb, i think in ireland it still is very much about that, considering that there is still legislation in our constitution about womens bodies, nobody owns men you know nobody owns mens genitalia, and in a contemporary sense i don't think there's much to do with love in marriage because, well just consider the divorce rates, you know if marriage and love went hand in hand divorce wouldn't really be as prevalant, i think it's actually quite unusual to see two people who truly love each other and belong together and end up in a long term marriage, and it's a lovely thing when you see that, but it's rare

e: do you think that this constitutional ownership of womens bodies is why women still can't get abortions in ireland?

l: yes

e: it's as if **there's something stuck in the back of the brain**, some cord or something, some little things that got stuck somewhere, it's like this referendum, it's been a slow disconnecting of this **nAs-ty, rotten stuff** that we've been living with, this catholic, postcolonial sewage in the psyche



that's caused so much harm and has done so much damage, this yes vote is one uprooting of old toxic oppressions but the archaic legal and medical situation in relation to abortion is another huge one to rip out
l: i think it's really telling that a country would legalise same sex marriage before equal rights for women, that's shocking

e: hopefully that will be next to be remedied, a lot seems to have changed in peoples thinking in a relatively short period of time

l: i think the recession had a lot to do with it, it doesn't surprise me that huge things have changed in the past six years, people lost a lot and it put things in a different light, there are obviously more important things to be worrying about than two people getting married

e: what etel adnan writes about in this text towards the end, she says that less and less people are willing to take **this big risk** for love, whatever kind of love, whether it's activist love, or love for a place or love for a person, that people want comfort more and more, so i wonder maybe, if things **become destabilised** anyway then possibly it is like you said a time for other things to change because people are already knocked out of their comfort zones

l: when i think about this landslide yes vote in ireland, i don't get excited about all the gay weddings i'll be invited to, i think about all the people voting in favour of these younger lgbtq kids, it's not about them getting married it's more about them **feeling hugged** by their country