



Only women are allowed to activate Tremble. Tremble (right), a multimedia installation by Irish artist Jesse Jones (above). PHOTOS: ICA SINGAPORE/LASALLE COLLEGE OF THE ARTS, MAXWELL PHOTOGRAPHY



## A woman's touch needed

**Akshita Nanda**  
Arts Correspondent

Irish artist Jesse Jones' installation on witches, feminism and history is an eerie multimedia experience activated solely by women.

Tremble Tremble was presented this year at the Venice Biennale and adapted for Singapore, where it is showcased at the Lasalle College of the Arts until Jan 28 next year.

A key part of the roughly 30-minute experience here involves the gallery sitter – always female – using tools left by Lasalle founder, the late Brother Joseph McNally.

Jones, 39, was an artist-in-residence at Lasalle in July and August under the college's McNally Legacy Project. She was struck by the connection to her compatriot, who spent nearly 40 years teaching in Singapore and Malaysia.

In a phone interview from Venice, she says: "I was thinking of

what an artist leaves behind so other artists can come forward."

She also modified the installation here after encountering the Hungry Ghost Festival here. It now includes ashes and burnt copies of a bill passed in Ireland to repeal a law against witchcraft.

"I had been thinking about the politics of the ancestral and how the living and dead can share the responsibility to the production of the future," she says.

Legacy is a key theme in Tremble Tremble, which was supported by an international partnership with Lasalle.

Three video screens anchor the experience at Gallery 1 at the Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore. A looped recording plays of Irish actress Olwen Fouere in character as a witch – or a woman condemned by the witchcraft trials in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries.

Viewers are led by sound and

lighting cues to focus on different parts of the installation: sometimes Brother McNally's tools, sometimes burnt paper. At key moments, the gallery sitter moves black drapes so that viewers are enclosed in part of the space.

Jones calls Tremble Tremble a "spell" as much as a work of art and says she wants to create installations with "a sense of the uncanny or the paranormal". "Contemporary art allows us to celebrate the space of the mysterious. There are very few spaces in our culture that allow us to do that," she says.

Later, she adds via e-mail: "I feel that we spend so much time online in front of screens and it has become almost a natural world to us. I want to create a world in Tremble Tremble that fights against this and makes the viewer feel that he is in a real space with other people and that requires a responsibility. Our presence is not a given. It is something we have to work towards."

The title of her work comes from a 1970s movement in Italy in which women demanded wages for housework. Their slogan was: "Tremble,

tremble, the witches have returned." Jones is troubled by the fact that during her mother's time, divorce was illegal in Ireland, but marital rape was legal.

She said: "Ireland has changed so much in the last 20 years that I can't imagine going through what my mother's generation went through."

"It will probably be the same for the next generation. They will look back and think, 'Wow. How did they live like that? How did they cope?'"

### VIEWIT / JESSE JONES: TREMBLE TREMBLE

**WHERE:** Gallery 1, Institute of Contemporary Arts Singapore, Lasalle College of the Arts, 1 McNally Street  
**WHEN:** Until Jan 28 next year, noon to 7pm (Tuesdays to Sundays), closed on Mondays and public holidays  
**ADMISSION:** Free  
**INFO:** [tinyurl.com/y8lnrc39](http://tinyurl.com/y8lnrc39)