

One of Many

In *One of Many*, Trouton presents a large-scale collection of still-life paintings that initially appear reassuringly familiar. The trappings of the domestic sphere are painted on wallpaper and presented in nostalgic hues which evoke a sense of comfort and security. Many of these familiar objects, however, hide a duality of purpose. In the hands of countless women, the benign functionality of knitting needles, soaps, washing powders and herbal teas are repurposed as weapons in the female struggle for autonomy and control of their physical and emotional needs.

The ubiquitous nature of religion in the Irish home is suggested through religious iconography embedded within a series of William Morris wallpapers featuring floral or fruit motifs; both of which were Classical references to the female genitalia and fecundity, Trouton also explores the issue of those forced to travel across the Irish Sea to seek medical help.

The shame and stigma attached to women's reproductive rights has silenced and isolated the women of this country for generations. This has allowed them to be marked out as something different from the norm; a deviant; a fallen woman with a story that must never be told. In reality, these individual and highly personal narratives are not bonds of shame. They are common stories that tie together the women of this country. Although every woman has her own story to tell, she is not alone, and like the artist Trouton, she is one of many.

Background Context

The contemporary relevance of this historically influenced work comes as no surprise to anyone who follows Irish politics. The Irish referendum on the 8th Amendment created political and public discussion on the nature of future abortion legislation.

The control of childbirth during the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries has been regarded as a central issue within wider attempts to control women. The criminalisation of abortion provision in 1803, punishable by death, and the criminalisation of women seeking abortions in 1861, punishable by penal servitude for life, are just two early legislative examples of the Government's intervention in pregnancy. Despite separation from Britain, and votes for women, Ireland in the early twentieth-century saw a continuation of the idea that, regardless of other factors, a woman's ideal place was in the home and her accepted role was that of a virtuous mother. The Church's prohibition on artificial birth-control, on divorce and on abortion meant women endured multiple pregnancies in quick succession and continued to die in significant numbers during childbirth.

The 1937 Irish constitution copper-plated the primacy of Catholic ideology, and not only placed 'the family' at the centre of society, but, in black and white, positioned women 'in the home' and envisioned a society that would allow women not to 'neglect of their duties' in their allotted space. The roles, domestication and spaces women occupied were not unique to Ireland of the twentieth-century and can be seen as a continuation of paternalist attitudes and patriarchal structures that controlled women's lives in countless societies.

Regardless of continued attempts to reduce the influence and autonomy of women, women still accessed the tools necessary to control their own reproductive destinies. In many cases, they found the objects of their own emancipation in the domestic spaces in which they moved.