

## **'Indecipherable Yearning of (the) Soul'<sup>1</sup>**

### **A Poem of Friendship Exhibition: Daniel Kane, Breda Lynch, and Padraig Robinson**

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*(Essay commissioned to accompany the exhibition in 2010)*

Exhibitions that come under the heading of queer would not normally evoke the same kind of critical engagement that the artworks in *A Poem of Friendship* do. While the exhibition applies pseudo-stereotypical tropes in queer culture by referencing fetish clubs, dykons<sup>2</sup>, cyber-cruising and AIDS, the show transcends the myopic conventions of many previous queer exhibitions, by (re)presenting and reinterpreting them in a decidedly more subversive way. Take the exhibition title *A Poem of Friendship* as an example. The unusual title derives from the short story of the same name from the book, *The White Peacock* (1911) by D. H. Lawrence, well known for queer, sadistic, and apparent misogynistic connotations in his work. The story describes a young boy revelling in the pleasure of another boy. Their 'friendship' is described as love, and the story, written when Lawrence was about twenty, is the first of many of his homo-erotic allusions in his published works.

The title literally suggests the friendships between the three artists exhibited, but it also references a sense of community within queer culture, which becomes a connection and familiarity via otherness – inclusion through exclusion. In a similar vein, the use of Lawrence's title suggests an exploration of binaries to create an ambiguous liminality. Linda Ruth Williams, in her book *Sex in the Head: Visions of Femininity and Film in D.H. Lawrence*, writes about the transgressive nature of Lawrence and his aversion to prescribed notions of sexuality and selfhood. Williams writes:

'Lawrence plays with light, and with sexual identity, so powerfully and anxiously that the metaphysical bedrock begins to crumble. (...) Light and darkness, identity and absence, female and male, are so intricately crossed that metaphysics becomes sexual-physics or photo-sexuality, a marriage of gender and light. So when the invisible man dresses up, the act of cross-dressing is not only reliant upon the charged mixture or contradiction of genders, but upon the ambiguity of seeing and not seeing a thing at the same time.'<sup>3</sup>

I feel that the reference to Lawrence in the exhibition's title and the work of the exhibiting artists evokes a fusion of alterity that provides a space whereby disparate notions of inclusion and transgression can be challenged, mingled, and ultimately redefined.

#### **Daniel Kane**

Linda Ruth Williams' quote about 'light and darkness' leads me to the first work in the exhibition, Daniel Kane's series of photographs entitled 'KOPFKINO' (meaning 'cinema

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<sup>1</sup> Lawrence, D. H., *The White Peacock*, Read Books, London, 2007, p. 248

<sup>2</sup> 'Dykon' is not yet in OED, but can be found in the Urban Dictionary as 'Any celebrity or cultural icon (almost always a woman) who is popular among lesbians and considered a gay icon.'  
<<http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=dykon>> , (accessed 26<sup>th</sup> May 2010)

<sup>3</sup> Williams, Linda Ruth, *Sex in the Head: Visions of Femininity and Film in D.H. Lawrence*, Wayne State University Press, Michigan, 1993, p. 149.

of the mind'). The images on display are photographs taken by Kane at the BöseBuben ('naughty boys') club in Berlin, which is a venue for sexual fetishes. Although the protagonists permitted the images to be taken, Kane has not felt that he could exhibit these images in Berlin, and is showing them for the first time in *A Poem of Friendship*. The curator, Breda Lynch said that Kane had termed the series 'bottom drawer' work. No pun intended, or is there?

These ten black and white photographs have an eerie quality to them, the lighting is unreal and there is a slow realization that infrared film has been used to illuminate Kane's dark and candle-lit surroundings. This sense of invisibility evokes the suggestion of a nature documentary, an exploration of something that cannot be seen by the naked eye, something that Kane is revealing to us by covert means. The images are ambiguous, presenting the protagonists as comfortable in their surroundings, but while the infrared technique is intended to be non-intrusive, its visual harshness and chiaroscuro renders a potentially more sinister and darker underbelly of the BöseBuben club.

Yet, what immediately stands out is the artist's proximity to the events. Via the point-of-view photograph, especially in the image of the 'trainer-fetishist', Kane becomes involved in the activity, and rather than becoming simply a documentary voyeur, his presence transcribes an experience that is closer to the reality of the event. The work recalls Kohei Yoshiyuki's series 'The Park', and evokes a similarly intricate relationship to voyeurism. In a similar use of infrared, Yoshiyuki follows voyeurs around parks and inconspicuously photographs them watching couples having sex. The photographer gained the voyeurs trust for six months before he secretly photographed them, and subsequently the images oscillate between an illegal sexual act by the copulating couples, a scopophilic act by the stalking voyeurs, an act of betrayal by the photographer, alongside the audience being imbibed in this seedy and questionable act. Like Kane's series, this action posits both photographers in a vicious circle between documentation, involvement/implication, and fetishism. While Kane has been given permission by the people to photograph them, and Yoshiyuki has not, there are definitely questions in both series that surround the use of infrared in photographing sexual activities, issues surrounding surveillance, alongside the intricate and problematic artistic practice that deals with the gaze and the nature of voyeurism. Kane's images exemplify these controversies while allowing the audience to make up their minds as to where the artist is situated in relation to it. This ambiguity makes the work so decidedly challenging and compelling.

While issues of voyeurism are very important to the piece, I also feel that Kane attempts to capture a more provocative edge to some of the activities in the club. The image that stood out for me, (well, it literally stands out, as it is separated on the wall by a large distance from the other photographs in the series) presents what seems to be a blurred Bukkake<sup>4</sup> event whereby many men are surrounding a singular figure in a Christ-like pose. The history of Bukkake is an interesting one; while having been introduced into porn since the 80s, it was originally a form of public humiliation in Japan (12<sup>th</sup> - 19<sup>th</sup> centuries) for unfaithful wives (and occasionally husbands). The woman was tied up in the town centre and all the local men would be told to ejaculate on her face, an allusion to her 'promiscuous' nature. Through the pose of the Bukkake recipient Kane's photograph suggests allusions to self-sacrifice and torture, sado-masochistic sexualities and religious blasphemy. Again, imagery referencing Christ can be seen in another photograph, where a submissive man has been tied to his ankles by ropes, and hung from the rafters upside down, evoking an iconoclastic inverted crucifix. The very politicized notion of homophobia in certain religions, particularly Christianity, is evoked in these two images, and the photographs disclose a subversive and wry sense of negation, in which the protagonists seem to revel (or revere) in religious disapproval.

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<sup>4</sup> Bukkake is the sexual practice whereby a group of people circle a single person, masturbate and subsequently ejaculate upon the central figure.

The title 'KOPFKINO' evokes a dream-like sense, in which the harsh reality is very different. This daydream provides the audience with the knowledge that there is still a problem with the nature of fetish, homosexuality and even 'alternative' sexual practices in general culture. The photographs capture a 'cinema of the mind' that permits a space to envision change; an erotic, hidden and deeply personal experience that questions the nature of phantasy, presence, desire and ultimately becomes a liminal space whereby through the protagonists, the audience's desires can attempt to be fulfilled but simultaneously excluded.

## Padraig Robinson

On a very simple table, constructed by a sheet of plywood and two trestles, Padraig Robinson has placed two A4 pieces of paper with black text. The writing is a transcript from an online conversation on the German-based GayRomeo.com dating/networking website. Within this online world that oscillates between reality and invention, Robinson creates a profile called *IamAPieceOFart*. Speaking to members of the site, the profile begins to discuss the connotations of its profile-name, the exchange of virtual and reality, whereby the 'piece of art' suggests both the literal art-piece presented in front of an art audience and a corporeal body. In the text, *IamAPieceOFart* explains to the other profile that the profile is actually an art piece created by two artists, Robinson and artist Rodrigo Novaes, but the person behind the other profile still alludes to potential sexual activities, a possible virtual threesome – when the GayRomeo profile suggests kissing, *IamAPieceOFart* retorts with 'Sorry I am married to art'.

Robinson has tapped into the world of online websites like GayRomeo and Gaydar.com as they have created a powerful change in the relationships of the queer community, and in particular they have significantly affected gay men. The social activity 'cruising', which had typically been seen as a gay male 'pursuit', has seen its numbers reduce in recent years, as many men prefer the safety and security of getting to know each other online before they meet. Yet this online process of filling out a profile, documenting your 'stats', chatting, and providing a photograph elicits a potential for imagination, fabrication, and down-right deceit. This process of providing information in which 'truth' is pliable, creates a fluidity in the notion of 'identity' or a sense of 'self', and *IamAPieceOFart*, while ever honest about its intention still elicits doubt, denial and negation. It is this liminality that makes the piece so persuasive.

Paul Virilio writes that '(w)e are entering a world where there won't be one, but two realities: the actual and the virtual. There is no simulation, but substitution.'<sup>5</sup> Robinson alludes to this when *IamAPieceOFart* writes 'virtual interaction as a substitution to real physical interaction.....where the language, the text and the nothingness is the only thing to respond to.....but this can create a sense of somethingness.....'<sup>6</sup> Yet there seems to be more to the work's concept of 'virtuality' when the audience never discovers if the 'somethingness' ever occurs. Maybe Robinson and Novaes never meet their potential collaborator, the unnamed GayRomeo profile. Maybe they do. Thus what is left is the potential for a return to corporeality, a space for 'reality' and 'truth' that may or may not return. The bare, stripped back presentation of the piece, consisting of simply the index, a trace of the event, presents the audience with the intangibility of online connections. In fact, the piece imbricates the obscure and incorporeal presence of online or digital media and art practice – the very fact that *IamAPieceOFart* could either mean that the corporeality of the artist is a 'piece of art' or the profile itself is a 'piece of art', creates a powerful dichotomous ambiguity which leaves both the unwitting participant and thus the audience unsure about their role in the conversation and subsequent installation.

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Rush, Michael, *New Media in Art*, Thames and Hudson, London, 2005, p. 181.

<sup>6</sup> Transcript from *IamAPieceOFart*

Ultimately, this piece presents us with questions surrounding 'reality', 'virtuality', 'truth', perception and desire.

The artist Daniel Kane is present again, in Robinson's second piece, the untitled video diptych. The piece consists of two flatscreen monitors playing two very similar images. Similar to Kane's own work, Robinson presents us with a documentary-style aesthetic, in each video Kane (the sole protagonist) is shown in a pseudo-interview, and has been made to sit behind a table with a microphone, ashtray and a packet of cigarettes. Kane speaks about his memories of dealing with friends that had contracted HIV and their subsequent deaths. Once finished, Kane is asked again to recall the same memories, and both 'takes' are shown together on the two separate monitors, whereby each sound clip interferes with the other creating an almost cacophonous overlaying of voices. The piece evokes issues dealing with memory, loss, history and personal perspectives, via an almost Brechtian awareness of artifice. The audience is being re-presented with two versions of the same 'event', yet the story is different. There is a sense of pretence via the interview set-up, the positioning of the ashtray and the duplication of the takes.

Watching the audience interact with the videos is very interesting. Some people would stand between the monitors and absorb the imbricated sound while capturing some words, short sentences, etc., while others would come closer to a particular monitor and lay their ears either on the monitor's speakers or very close to it, which creates a sense of intimacy with the video. This closeness recalls the very politicized fear of HIV and AIDS in the 80s, an erroneous fear that you could catch it by touch. The very fact that HIV and AIDS have no defining symptoms, but rather an eventual collapse of bodily immunity, evokes a sense of breaking down of representations of self and other. Thomas Yingling notes:

'Like the systematic depletion that allows AIDS to appear as a seemingly endless number of symptoms and thereby remain both the same and different from itself, the material effects of AIDS deplete so many of our cultural assumptions about identity, justice, desire, and knowledge that it seems at times able to threaten the entire system of Western thought – that which maintains the health and immunity of our epistemology: the psychic presence of AIDS signifies a collapse of identity and difference that refuses to be abjected from the systems of self-knowledge.'<sup>7</sup>

By presenting a personal narrative of a man dealing with the effects of HIV and AIDS on his friends and gay 'society', and simultaneously showing it via the looping, double channel video installation, Robinson presents us with this dichotomous relationship between self and other, fear and desire, and the doubling posits an almost uncanny experience. Alongside the memory of the physical death of Kane's friends, the metaphor for potential death rears its head through the duplication of Kane in both videos; an allusion to the uncanny Doppelgänger.

Freud describes the uncanny as 'that species of the frightening that goes back to what was once well known and had long been familiar'<sup>8</sup>. Freud believed that this 'compulsion to repeat' derives from infantile psychology and 'depends on the essential nature of [our] drives', yet the fact that 'anything that can remind us of this inner compulsion to repeat is perceived as uncanny'.<sup>9</sup> In his essay, *Beyond The Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud writes about the compulsion to repeat that:

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<sup>7</sup> Yingling, Thomas, 'Acting Up: AIDS, Allegory, Activism', in Fuss, Diana (ed), *Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories*, Routledge, New York and London, 1991, p. 292.

<sup>8</sup> Freud, Sigmund, *The Uncanny*, Penguin Books, London, 2003, p. 124

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, p. 145

'It seems, then, that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces; that is, it is a kind of organic elasticity, or, to put it another way, the inertia inherent in organic life.'<sup>10</sup>

There is a need to return to death to understand life. Memory brings this about as shown in Freud's first reference to the 'compulsion to repeat'; an early text entitled 'Remembering, Repeating, and Working-Through' (1914). In an interesting parallel to Robinson's work, the essay is based on a process of psychoanalysis that attempts to 'overcome resistances due to repression.'<sup>11</sup> This essay discusses how the analysand represses their 'impulsion to remember' by a form of 'compulsion to repeat'; they deny or make up fragments of memories to hide their true feelings, and cannot truly heal or learn from psychoanalytical therapy. Rather, the 'compulsion to repeat' becomes a tendency for the psyche to constantly repeat traumatic events that are both painful and destructive, the death drive. Robinson's video installation evokes each level of this 'compulsion', via the 'memory' that has been duplicated; the installation of the videos presents confusion in remembrance, existence, and identity.

The t-shirt worn by Kane in the video is blue, an interesting connection to the exhibition title, as D. H. Lawrence had an 'obsession with blue as the colour of (both) intellect and inauthenticity.'<sup>12</sup> I feel that both Robinson's pieces have this dichotomous quality. Like the *lamApieceOFart* installation in which 'truth' and reality come into question, the video installation interrogates and challenges concepts of 'self' and memory. Through both installations, subjectivity and objectivity collides to form a space or a potential for something else to occur.

## **Breda Lynch**

'Hidden' away in the back of the gallery is the work of Breda Lynch. I use the word hidden in this context because I feel that Lynch's intention was to remove herself from the other pieces in the show. While separate in content to the two boys, and also needing darkness for the projected piece, it is clear that Lynch's work is entirely 'different' to the practices of both Robinson and Kane. I believe that Lynch's position in the show, which I feel not only tries to avoid the presumed unification of the word 'queer' (which obviously just means other to heteronormativity and does not give individual presence to each group in the LGBT community), but also evokes the 'representation of the lesbian' in culture. In the words of the theorist Terry Castle:

'Why is it so difficult to see the lesbian - even when she is there, quite plainly, in front of us? In part because she has been 'ghosted' - or made to seem invisible - by culture itself. It would be putting it mildly to say that the lesbian represents a threat to patriarchal protocol: Western civilization has for

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<sup>10</sup> Freud, Sigmund, 'Beyond the Pleasure Principle', (1920), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XVIII, Vintage, London, 2001, p. 36.

<sup>11</sup> Freud, Sigmund, 'Remembering, Repeating and Working-Through (Further Recommendations on the Technique of Psychoanalysis II)', (1914), in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Volume XII, Hogarth Press, London, 1958, p. 148.

<sup>12</sup> Williams, Linda Ruth, *Sex in the Head: Visions of Femininity and Film in D.H. Lawrence*, Wayne State University Press, Michigan, 1993, p. 117.

centuries been haunted by a fear of 'women without men' – of women indifferent or resistant to male desire.'<sup>13</sup>

Castle argues that one of the ways patriarchal culture has dealt with the lesbian, particularly in literature and popular culture, is to turn her into a hidden or ghostly figure. By placing the projection screen on the floor in the corner of the dark room, Lynch's installation of *The Kiss* video evokes this hidden characteristic. Yet the power in the spectral lesbian is her unnerving invisibility, as Castle notes, '(t)he case could be made that the metaphor [of the apparitional lesbian] meant to derealize lesbian desire in fact did just the opposite. For embedded in the ghostly figure ... was inevitably a notion of reembodiment: of uncanny return to the flesh.'<sup>14</sup>

The video itself presents slowed-down sequences from three very different sources. The first is a full-length film entitled *Mädchen in Uniform* (Leontine Sagan, 1931). Based on a relationship between a schoolmistress Fraulein Von Bernberg and one of her pupils, Manuela, the young girl is infatuated with the teacher and the plot revolves around this provocative premise. The film is one of the first ever narratives in early cinema to represent lesbianism, however subtle, and it has been hailed as cult lesbian film. The kiss between the teacher and her adoring student is a very important scene, whereby the teacher reciprocates the girl's feelings by kissing her on the lips as opposed to the kisses on the forehead she gives to the other students. The adolescent girl in Gothic and horror stories evoke a sense of 'awakening sexuality', and the subsequent repression of it. Manuela, the main protagonist in *Mädchen in Uniform*, is a young teen, pubescent and very innocent - her very nature as an adolescent evokes ideas of uncertainty, fluidity and liminality. Yet her actions evoke a transgressive power. Lynch appropriates this kiss; by showing the sequence in slow motion, she sensually presents the climactic moment of transgression, before quickly moving on to completely different images.

The second clip is captured from the first scene of Siouxsie and the Banshees's music video 'Spellbound' from 1981. The background of the clip depicts Siouxsie Sioux crawling across the screen in a feline position, while the foreground presents a solarized sequence of a black cat coming towards the audience. In the video the two images (cat/Siouxsie) are layered; black becomes invisible, whereby both cat and woman blend into each other. Siouxsie Sioux is powerful figure in popular culture, her transgressive and goth(ic) fashion aesthetic was very influential in the 80s, and while parents were shocked and afraid of her, devoted teenagers would freely show their adulation and desire, and I believe Sioux's persona links to the character of Fraulein Von Bernberg in *Mädchen in Uniform*. Like Sioux, the cat as an animal is both revered and feared. Ancient Egypt believed cats to be sacred, while many western cultures believe that they bring bad luck, particularly black cats that cross your path, as mythical witches are well known to keep these little felines. Thus the imagery of the cat in Lynch's work presents a set of fascinating contradictions – but the anthropomorphic representation clearly evokes femininity, even the term puss or pussycat may come from the Swedish 'kattepus' or the Norwegian 'pusekatt' which denotes a woman and by extension, a female cat.<sup>15</sup> Julia Kristeva discusses that 'the abject confronts us (...) with those fragile states where man strays on the territories of animal.'<sup>16</sup> This personified cat becomes a space of repugnant rupture whereby the emotion of abject disgust is a defence mechanism against a breakdown between binaries such as subject and object or self and other.

The next appropriated clip comes from the little-known short film 'The Private Life of a Cat' (Alexander Hammid, 1947). The short (22 mins) presents a story of a female cat,

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<sup>13</sup> Castle, Terry, *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1993, p. 5.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*, p. 63

<sup>15</sup> Paraphrased from *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*, Gramercy Books, New York, 1996, p. 1571.

<sup>16</sup> Kristeva, Julia, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, Columbia Press, New York, 1982, p.12.

which includes her offspring's gestation, birth and development. The use of this short is a strange one, but I feel that the director's investment in the cat is very interesting. Here again, the exploration of the cat's 'private' world represents an uncanny investment in the exploration of the other.

At different stages throughout the video, Lynch uses a very short almost frozen image of the smiling student Manuela from *Mädchen in Uniform*. The face of the young girl engenders the point of view shot whereby the audience is positioned in the role of the teacher just before she kisses Manuela. This camera angle is a very powerful one in the relationship with the gaze in cinema, and more importantly here, to queer representation. The theorist Patricia White writes that the POV shot 'align(s) the spectator (...) with something – for effect and affect.' White believes that this view that:

'play[s] on representational adequacy, on the border, on the anxious reversal of subject and object positions, on the drama of emergence into the field of vision, has specific resonance for a theory of homosexual representation at the margins.'<sup>17</sup>

What is striking about Lynch's video is this 'reversal of subject and object' through a powerful negation of narrative. Like lesbian artist Deborah Bright's series *Dream Girls* in which Bright superimposes her image into stills of classic 'heterosexual' Hollywood movies, there is space for the audience to enter into the imagery, thus becoming the unsexed 'possessive spectator'. Theorist Laura Mulvey believes that new digital technology has manipulated our way of viewing, and subsequently the nature of the cinematic Freudian 'repetition compulsion' (as mentioned in Robinson's work) changes. Mulvey is interested in the use of DVD Players to subvert or accentuate the fetishistic gaze, by discussing that the aesthetic pleasure of delayed cinema, via the pause button, moves towards a new form of fetishistic scopophilia.

The 'fetishistic spectator' becomes more fascinated by image than plot, returning compulsively to privileged moments, investing emotion and 'visual pleasure' in any slight gesture, a particular look or exchange taking place on the screen.<sup>18</sup>

Mulvey subsequently questions whether these new practices of spectatorship have effectively erased the difficulty of sexual difference and the representation of gender in cinema. If applied to Lynch's video installation I would posit an affirmative. As Lynch's practice explores the Gothic as a vehicle for sexual transgression, particularly female (homo)sexuality; the German Expressionist film *Mädchen in Uniform*, the cat as sacred and profane, alongside Siouxsie Sioux's image, encapsulate this fear and desire dichotomy – possession of the image need not necessarily be a negative experience, possession in this context can be a crucial exploration into the rebuttal of patriarchal binaries. The audience in the video installation are constantly bombarded with slow motion sequences of different clips whereby a sense of rigid conclusion is never attained, it is 'the in-between, the ambiguous, the composite' of Kristeva's abject that never allows a sense of complete understanding, it denotes a powerful and fearful potential of alterity.

I believe that this breakdown of the narrative in these sequences is the key to Lynch's subversion of the original clips. By not allowing the cinematic tropes to restore order, through the constant looping and negation of the climactic moment of desire fulfilment or 'enlightenment', this subversion dissolves limits or conclusion, and represents liminality. The audience feels an imbrication of images, as previous footage is

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<sup>17</sup> White, Patricia, *Uninvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representability*, Indiana University Press, Indiana, 1999, p. 63.

<sup>18</sup> Mulvey, Laura, **Death 24x a Second – Stillness and the Moving Image**, Reaktion Books, London, 2006. Pg. 166

(re)displayed in different contexts, alongside an uncomfortable sense of duplication and dislocation. This multiple doubling, again evokes, like Robinson's video, a sense of the Freudian uncanny. By representing these sexualized protagonists (cats included) in this ambiguous and unnerving nature, Lynch invokes the still-frightening potential of the lesbian as formidable spectre - and to quote Terry Castle, 'For even at her most ethereal and dissembling, as when seeming to 'wave off' the intrusive pleasures of the flesh, she cannot help but also signal - as if by secret benediction - the fall into flesh which is to come.'<sup>19</sup>

There is certainly a difficulty in the contemporary art world when having to define an exhibition that deals solely with specific, and perhaps marginal, social groups. As a recent symposium in Birmingham City University entitled '*Troubling Desire(s) in Art: Queer Symposium* (Nov 2009) shows that the issue of queerness in art has become a very debated issue. While the show deals with issues surrounding 'queer identity and lifestyles, sexual interaction and gay history,'<sup>20</sup> and each individual work deals with issues that do suggest an affinity with the notion of queerness, yet their concepts embrace practices and issues that engender readings of otherness and 'selfhood' that need not be confined to simply a queer aesthetic. Due to the strength of the art shown, the show does not need the adage 'queer' to 'draw the crowds', but I feel that what the show attempts to do is present a notion that queer art practice is there, and it will always be present in a society that still proscribes to a heteronormative perspective. In the words of an unnamed lesbian, interviewed after the Stonewall riots of 1969 and asked what she hoped the riots would achieve, she retorted 'We'll be queer as long as you continue to be straight, then I hope we can finally all just be people together.'<sup>21</sup> Idealistic notions of 'togetherness' and unity will never be realized; sexual difference is, and will always be, bound up in the construction of binary oppositions. Yet, there is a fluidity to the concept of queer, its very nature as an 'umbrella term' imbricates sexualities and practices that are other, thus it would be inimical to deny the social context in which the work in this exhibition was made. Each exhibiting artist creates their sense of identity through marginality, and it is reflected, however diminutively, in their practices. In the exhibition, and to a powerful effect, each work deals with the question of queer identity from an apposite range of liminal and dichotomous perspectives, and shows that it is important to (re)define, explore, and challenge this notion of queerness as much as it is important to investigate other areas of society.

In the introduction of this essay I quoted Linda Ruth Williams about the writer D. H. Lawrence, and so to conclude I shall again use her words as I think they wholeheartedly apply to the artwork in *A Poem of Friendship*. Like D. H. Lawrence, the artwork engenders a new way of looking at queer identity, and the esoteric quality of identity itself. Because:

'[t]here is an exquisite pleasure to be had from playing with the apparently separate identities of light and darkness, the visible and the invisible. That which metaphysics has fundamentally laid asunder, Lawrence will marry and mix and subvert. If there is a radical, physical difference between light and dark, the seen and the unseeable, it is there to be transgressed, even if transgression brings with it another set of paradoxes.'<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> op cit, Castle, p. 65.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted from 'A Poem of Friendship' Press Release, Breda Lynch, 2010

<sup>21</sup> Quoted in Katz, Jonathan D., 'Allen Ginsberg, Herbert Marcuse and the Politics of Eros', 2009, <://www.queerculturalcenter.org/Pages/KatzPages/Marcuse\_Ginsberg.pdf> (accessed 18<sup>th</sup> June 2010)

<sup>22</sup> Williams, Linda Ruth, *Sex in the Head: Visions of Femininity and Film in D.H. Lawrence*, Wayne State University Press, Michigan, 1993, p. 149.

