

# Brexit or not brexit

BY ISABELLE RODRIGUEZ

London's mythic Saint-Pancras station is the terminus for the Eurostar train, which transports over nine million riders each year. For many travellers coming from Western Europe, it will now be impossible to cross the hall without coming face to face with Tracey Emin's work. The British artist, who says with characteristic emphasis that she cried when she heard the results of the referendum in June 2016, proposes a "subliminal anti-Brexit message" in the shape of a declaration of love. Spanning twenty meters, giant pink letters spell it all out above the central clock: *I Want My Time With You*.

Tracey Emin is one of 282 British artists involved in a campaign published by The Guardian pleading the case for "remain". Others include Martin Parr, Damien Hirst, Banksy, Tacita Dean, Bob and Roberta Smith, and even Jeremy Deller, who all present artworks in favor of staying in the European Union, from a simple declaration of love for their European neighbors to a more direct expression of anxiety concerning the country's fate. Artists of other nationalities residing in the UK also reacted, like Laure Prouvost and Wolfgang Tillmans.

Grayson Perry, a British sculptor and ceramist born in 1960 and also known as Claire, his alter ego that dresses in feminine costumes to attend exhibitions and cultural events, did not publicly take sides on the Brexit issue as the debate was raging. In 2017, however, he launched a call on Channel 4 and his Twitter account asking the public for help in creating a new piece on the topic. The Brits were invited to send the artist photos or texts that, for them, illustrate *Leave* or *Remain*, which would then be integrated to his post-referendum project, of which he would post regular updates on social media.

The result of this work is a pair of large pots, each about one meter tall, identical in shape and size, and painted in hues of blue that, at first glance, are difficult to tell apart. Each hue, however, represents an opposing side of the turbulent political debate.

The *Matching Pair* were revealed in a documentary made by Grayson, *Divided Britain*. There the artist brings the piece to different regions and jokes about how people cannot easily identify which pot corresponds to which opinion. "I thought it would be an interesting experiment to make a work that involved, to use the fashionable term, crowdsourcing via social media. The two pots have come out looking remarkably similar, which is a good result, for we all have much more in common than that which separates us," he says.

At closer look, however, the similarities quickly fade beneath the painted details, portraits of important people who are committed to one side or the other, immediately recalling the painful oppositions that shake British society during this historical debate.