

# ABSENCES AND (IM)POSSIBILITIES

## traces of an experimental cinema in Ireland

When the **Irish Film Institute** asked the **Experimental Film Club** to assemble a programme covering the “history of Irish experimental film”, we were both excited and daunted at the prospect. Excited because this would give us an opportunity to bring some of Ireland’s most interesting and underappreciated filmmakers to a wider audience; daunted because, at the same time, Ireland has never developed a strong tradition of experimental and avant-garde filmmaking in the way that countries such as France or the USA have.

One of our programmers, Esperanza Collado, confronted this problem in her programme of Irish experimental film for the 2009 Márgenes festival in Madrid, which is undoubtedly the key precedent to this project. In her programme notes, Collado playfully defined her curation as held together by what it lacks, stating the

*Inexistence  
of Irish cinema industry,  
of Irish experimental cinema,  
of thematic concerns common to these works,  
of Irishness as a main feature present in these works,  
of linking threads connecting Irish experimental films,*

Although “inexistence” may be putting it a little strongly, this list nonetheless touches upon some of the key challenges in putting together such a programme. Certainly, from the existing literature on Irish cinema, one would be hard pressed to find evidence of an Irish experimental cinema. An exception can be found in some of the writings of Maeve Connolly, one of the few Irish scholars who has dealt with the term. She has usefully highlighted the long-standing separation between Irish art and film from the viewpoint of academia and funding entities, and how this may have impeded the convergence and recognition of experimental film practice in Ireland. However, within the general discourse around filmmaking and film culture in Ireland, the word “experimental” is occasionally thrown around (as are “avant-garde”, “underground”, etc) but typically in a loose and inconsistent way, and often completely disconnected from the international and historical uses of the term.

Since the Experimental Film Club’s inception in 2008, we have attempted with our screenings to approach the idea of experimental film in a more serious way, curating programmes of important experimental works of the past alongside contemporary works both Irish and international. While in its more bastardised form, “experimental” is often used simply as a stop-gap category for that which is not easily categorised (if you don’t know what it is, it must be experimental) or, perhaps worse, a bonafide genre of film (defined by recurring familiar elements, such as structural archetypes, visual techniques or iconography) – we would like to assert a different meaning, one that is both more positive and open.

This is experimental film as “a cultural attitude [rather] than a particular work or body of work or mode of expression”, as the film blogger Tom Tsutpen put it. A cultural attitude that, in critic Nicole Brenez’s words

*considers cinema not in terms of its uses or customs, but rather its powers; and it is just as determined to remind us of these powers, to display and renew them, as to contradict or efface them or render them limitless.*

In order to explore these powers fully, it is necessary to take nothing for granted: to break the medium down to its fundamentals, or even further, and build it back up again in different directions, exploring “every potentiality”. If, as scholar Scott McDonald once observed, a common initial reaction to an experimental film is “This isn’t a movie”, it’s precisely this notion of the limits and (im)possibilities of what a movie is that experimental cinema exists to explode, forcing us to redefine “an experience we were sure we understood”. According to Brenez, while “the so-called standard cinema standardises emotions, sensation, perception and belief,” experimental cinema “re-opens the entire field of experience”. It’s the “exploration of all possible conceptions, which don’t pre-exist the exploration itself.”

Of course at this stage in the history of cinema, these explorations and redefinitions have taken on some key identifiable forms – hand-manipulation of the film material, single-frame montage, the use of found footage, abstract imagery and the disconnection of image and sound are just some of the formal techniques that have become established in experimental filmmaking practices. Forms which have in many cases been co-opted by mainstream filmmaking practices, and once again subverted, deconstructed, reinvented by experimental filmmakers.

Ireland, as a colonised and economically underdeveloped nation for much of the twentieth century, has in the European context an almost exceptionally marginal place in this history. Nevertheless, when we delve deeper into the history of Irish cinema, it is possible to find a thin thread that links what could be seen as a series of attempts to access and contribute to this history.

In the late 20s, for instance, a group under the name Irish Amateur Films began producing films independently in Dublin. Many of the group were also members of the Dublin Film Society, which was attempting (apparently unsuccessfully) to organise screenings of art films from the Soviet Union and elsewhere that were not receiving distribution in Ireland. Our programme features two films from this group, which each represent unique Irish contributions to Europe’s pre-war avant-garde. Between this period and the emerging independent film activity of the 1970s, there was little production as far as avant-garde filmmaking and exhibition are concerned, although the foundation of the Irish Film Society stands out. The IFS or ‘Cuman na Scannán’, founded in 1936 and active for over twenty years, was a public voluntary organization for film activities; an intellectual forum whose aim was to introduce non-mainstream artistic cinema from abroad – mainly from non-English speaking countries – to Irish audiences as well as to produce artistic films.

But it was the early 1970s before the first real movement of independent, indigenous filmmaking emerged in Ireland – the aptly named “First Wave” – and with it the first flowering of a “cultural attitude” towards cinema that desired to challenge established norms both aesthetically and politically. The collective AIP (Association of Independent Producers) was one of the most identifiable formations to emerge from this period, with independent filmmakers Bob Quinn, Cathal Black, Pat Murphy, Joe Comerford and Thaddeus O'Sullivan as founding members. These filmmakers worked collaboratively, with many involved initially in the production company established by Bob Quinn in Connemara in 1973. The establishment in 1981 of the Irish Film Board, the country's first state funding agency for cinema, was in one way a vindication of the First Wave's efforts to encourage indigenous production – but it also served to displace their more radical aspirations towards a film culture that was critically engaged both formally and politically. According to Maeve Connolly, by 1982, Project Cinema Club (at the Project Arts Centre in Dublin), previously a centre of a vibrant indigenous film culture, was increasingly less active. In the years to come, some of the First Wave filmmakers, such as Thaddeus O'Sullivan, settled into more conventional narrative formats, while others, such as Joe Comerford, found their work increasingly marginalised.

So, what to do for a history of Irish experimental film then?

We will admit that this programme is in some ways a revisionist endeavour, and one in opposition to the common strategy in Irish film culture, as Maeve Connolly has observed, to historicise “in terms of the emergence of an indigenous industry.” But, rather than attempting to create an unquestionable and static statement, our intention is to trace a genealogical thread that links all these works in their critical nature towards established norms or art and cinema. Of course, we do not assert that this selection is definitive or comprehensive: we hope it will be the beginning of a new dialogue on this area of Irish cinema rather than the final word on it. Counter-arguments and counter-programmes are strongly welcomed. There have inevitably been some omissions in the selection of works and filmmakers represented; some are due to limitations of length, but others simply because there are, without a doubt, other great experimental Irish films that we have yet to discover.

“Absences and (Im)Possibilities” features a selection of films from 1897 to 2011, divided into three historical eras, chosen because of their relation to the *possibility* of an Irish experimental cinema in Ireland – in other words, these are films that, to varying degrees and in various ways, embody, aspire towards or hint at the “cultural attitude” that we see as defining experimental film. This is not a history of Irish experimental film but rather a programme of Irish film curated in a dialogue with a broader experimental film history. One could say this is in the spirit of what Fergus Daly called “the ethics of the experimental filmmaker” in his documentary *Experimental Conversations*, which forms the epilogue of this programme. He described this as

*a simultaneous commitment to “a legacy your work is made in relation to” (Gerard Byrne) and to multiplying the possibilities for perception and sensation of life in its most rich and raw state, even if it means finding new roads of access to “the most archaic, primal, ordinary sensations” (Philippe Grandrieux).*

This is an ethics one can see embodied in the resurgence in experimental film activity in Ireland in recent years, especially since the turn of the century. In the case of our programme at large, we could say that the legacy in question is the traditions of experimental film, a legacy that while primarily international nonetheless belongs to all of us who claim it – and the possibilities and “new roads of access” we intend to multiply are those of an expanding formal innovation in Irish cinema, and a re-contextualisation of what has been produced to date.

# PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The Historical Prologue features a selection of little-known silent works from the early days of cinema. The innocent nature and almost unconscious experimentation evident in these works, provides an uncontaminated vision of the medium, nearly free of the norms and conventions that would dominate the emerging film industry. It begins with two extremely short pieces whose motivation was admittedly commercial: one produced by the Lumière Brothers in Dublin, and the other by the pioneering animator James Horgan. Nonetheless, side by side they suggest the split in filmmaking practices between documentary and fantasy that emerged early on in the history of cinema. Two longer films from Norris Davidson and Irish Amateur Films follow this, both from 1930. Placed side by side, they also evoke questions of what might have been, if films like these had initiated a spate of cinematic experimentation in Ireland, rather than the isolated fragments they now appear to be. *By Accident* suggests the influence – or simply an affinity? – with the expressionistic montage of the Soviets, while *Screening in the Rain* has foreshadows (albeit from within a more conservative social context) of the mixture of theatricality, amateurism and observation that characterised Jack Smith and Andy Warhol's film work in the 1960s.

**Programme One** primarily explores Ireland's First Wave, with a selection of shorts emphasising the more experimental and avant-gardist tendencies of the movement. The exception here is the inclusion of Samuel Beckett's piece, which comes from a different historical context (a decade before the emergence of the First Wave of the 1970s). Nonetheless, the literary experimentalism of Samuel Beckett's oeuvre, undoubtedly transferred into *Film* (1964), and the avant-gardist tradition cultivated by the author, share affinities with the First Wave filmmakers, for example in the form of a common subversion of cinematic forms, or the presence of a conscious critique towards the cultural values established at the time. On the other hand, the question (and the questioning) of Irishness becomes stronger in these works. A question that does not just refer to the fact that most of these artists opted for temporal exile in order to see their work evolve, but the importance that politics, identity and site take in their work at large. It is worth noting that most of the filmmakers that have contributed historically to the emergence of the so-called First Wave of avant-garde filmmaking in Ireland, have restlessly continued to work and keep producing films and film-installations in contemporary times, challenging the limitations of the historical and cultural frames that the present programme suggests.

**Programme Two** comprises a selection of contemporary Irish and Irish-based filmmakers who began making films since the 1990s. The proliferation of international influences and, subsequently, the effects of globalization – the many exchanges and connections with international and local filmmakers, curators, and programmers that have resulted from increased travel and new technologies – becomes quite significant, and provides a new understanding of film distribution and exhibition. At last, the legacy of international experimental film of which Vivienne Dick's work constitutes a clear precursor, is felt: sometimes more explicitly, as in Dónal Ó Céilleachair's piece and its bond with Oskar Fischinger; sometimes more vaguely, as the influence one can sense in Moira Tierney's work

from the filmmaking style of Jonas Mekas. The thriving visual arts scene and the way that it has appropriated/incorporated experimental film is also evident by the fact that many of these filmmakers – such as Maximilian Le Cain, Rouzbeh Rashidi, and Patrick Jolley – have made site-specific work for gallery spaces as well as for cinemas. The choice of technology among these filmmakers is significant too: although only a few have chosen to work exclusively with celluloid, others, such as Le Cain, Michael Higgins, Jesse Jones, Ó Céilleachair and Jolley, combine video and film. On the other hand, the spectre of film's physicality is ever-present in the video work of Chris O'Neill, Dean Kavanagh and Barry Ronan, for instance.

We have chosen to close Programme 2 with four short pieces of our own. Although we have usually refrained from showing our own work within our regular Experimental Film Club screenings, we felt it relevant to do so here as a reflection of the fluid and cross-disciplinary activity typical of experimental film culture, and an acknowledgement of our own participation in the territory we are attempting to map. All four of us were practising artists and filmmakers before we were programmers, and see the curatorial process as the flip-side of that practise – another way of making film culture. It's a duality shared by many of the other selected filmmakers, such as Vivienne Dick, Maximilian Le Cain and Rouzbeh Rashidi, who have each presented experimental films as part of Live@8, Black Sun, and Experimental Film Society events in Galway, Cork and Dublin respectively.

***Experimental Conversations (Fergus Daly, 2006)***, as the only documentary film to have dealt with Irish experimental film (and one that features several of the filmmakers featured here), is an apt epilogue to this programme. It is also notable for its formally unique approach to its subject matter, which can be usefully contrasted with *Ourselves Alone* (Donald Taylor Black, 1996), perhaps the definitive documentary to date on Irish cinema. *Ourselves Alone* takes a broad historical view, charting the development of indigenous filmmaking in Ireland since the early 20th century and raising questions of industry, policy and national identity along the way. There is, however, little focus on questions of style and no mention of experimental cinema. Daly's film reverses this emphasis by ignoring commercial and narrative cinema completely – but more importantly he also rejects the linear articulation of a history. Instead, interviews and clips from a range of Irish and international experimental filmmakers are interweaved under a series of conceptual headings, as a way of exploring the question of, as Daly puts it, "What's at stake in the new wave of Irish artists? What's the international context for their sounds and images?"

# PROGRAMME NOTES

## 1. HISTORICAL PROLOGUE

### **PEOPLE WALKING IN SACKVILLE STREET, Alexandre Promio, Lumière Brothers (1897, 50secs, b&w, 35mm)**

In 1897, Alexandre Promio, an agent of the Lumière Brothers visited Ireland to get some footage of Dublin and Belfast at the very beginnings of cinema. This 50 second actuality film depicts a diagonal view of O'Connell Street, known at the time as Sackville Street. Following a predominantly realist approach, the Lumières – responsible for the birth of cinema in the 1890s- inaugurated 'actuality cinema', a non-fiction film genre consisting in the depiction of everyday life without the argumentative structure distinctive of documentary.

*Alexandre Promio was taken on by the Lumière firm in 1896 and became responsible for the training of the Cinématographe operators who were to exhibit the machine the world over.*

### **YOUGHAL CLOCK TOWER, James Horgan (1910, 30secs, b&w, 35mm)**

*Youghal Clock Tower* is a light hearted and playful exploration of the possibilities of animation in its infancy. Depicting the well-known landmark dancing into frame, the clock gate comes to life, spinning and dancing through the main street of the Cork town. A representation of the clock tower is given as a trophy for best first animation at the Galway Film Fleadh every year.

*James Horgan was one of the pioneers of filmmaking and animation technique in Ireland, beginning to experiment in stop motion animation as early as 1909.*

### **BY ACCIDENT, Norris Davidson (1930, 20mins, b&w, 16mm)**

*By Accident*, the first film by Davidson, is a rare example of independent film production from the early years of the Irish state, and one of the first films to emerge from the group Irish Amateur Films. Only the final third of the film remains intact, obscuring the film's narrative, dark and psychological elements, but allowing its more innovative qualities – stark, disjunctive editing, poetic juxtapositions and freewheeling camerawork – to take centre stage.

*Norris Davidson was a pioneering filmmaker of the silent years and a founding figure of Irish documentary cinema. He also did television broadcasts with RTE and opera programmes on the radio.*

### **SCREENING IN THE RAIN, Norris Davidson (1930, 10mins, b&w, 16mm)**

Filmed during the annual garden party of Dublin's Gate Theatre, *Screening in the Rain* was presented together with *By Accident* presumably as an additional attraction. Likewise produced by Irish Amateur Films and directed by Norris Davidson, this shorter piece is a dynamic and enlightening screen test in which a number of personalities connected to the theatrical scene of the time perform uninhibitedly before the camera.

## **2. PROGRAMME ONE**

### **FILM, Samuel Beckett/Alan Schneider (1964, 21mins, b&w, 16mm)**

In 1969 Samuel Beckett was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in recognition for his development of a circular form of reasoning that implies entrapment in circumstances of one's own design. *Film*, directed by Alan Schneider in New York and written by Beckett, emanates directly from such reasoning, in which the main character, Buster Keaton, carefully blots out all external reality according to a prevailing philosophical principle: George Berkeley's "Esse est percipi" (to be is to be perceived).

*One of the key-writers of the Theatre of Absurd, Samuel Beckett is widely known for his avant-garde writing, which includes poetry, playwright and prose. Alan Schneider was an American theatre director and one of the leading directors of Beckett's work in the US.*

### **SELF-PORTRAIT WITH RED CAR, Bob Quinn (1976, 20mins, colour, 16mm)**

Made in collaboration with Joe Comerford (camera), Roger Doyle (music), and Brian Bourke (painter), *Self-Portrait* has been described as an aesthetic joke, although it is essentially an exploration of how sound controls our visual perception. The author himself explains: "The sub-plot of the film is the way we carry our past experience into new situations [...]. There are gaps in the soundtrack of this film for audience participation, to let them hear the echoes in their own heads."

*Bob Quinn has made an immense contribution to Irish cinema, primarily in the documentary form and as a polemicist and agitator for a critically engaged film and broadcast culture.*

### **GUERRILLERE TALKS, Vivienne Dick (1978, 24mins, colour, Super-8)**

Vivienne Dick began making Super 8 films in New York in the late '70s as part of a group of filmmakers and musicians whose affiliation to the aesthetics of punk became known as 'No Wave'. *Guerrillere Talks* is her first completed film, which according to Jim Hoberman 'can be seen as the extension of Warholian pragmatism to Super 8 talkies'. The film depicts a series of portraits of – or encounters with – women in Lower Manhattan; each allowed a full roll of Super 8 film to perform for a camera characterized by its handheld anarchic style.

*Originally from Donegal, Vivienne Dick now lives in Galway and continues to produce film and video for gallery and cinema contexts. Her work has been reviewed in several international publications focused on avant-garde and independent filmmaking.*

# **PROGRAMME TWO**

## ***part one: the filmmakers***

### **GLASS HOUR, Clare Langan (2002, 8mins, colour, 16mm)**

Clare Langan's work sits within both fine art and film traditions. The use of hand made filters gives a distinctly sensuous and oneiric appearance, mixing painterly values with a strongly cinematic use of sound and space. Part of a post-apocalyptic trilogy, this film portrays a lone figure moving through a volcanic landscape. Shot in Iceland, the harsh natural landscape forms part of an abstracted and sublime world.

*Clare Langan studied art in NCAD and film at NYU. She has exhibited widely, and in 2002, represented Ireland in the 25th Bienal de Sao Paulo, Brazil.*

### **HEREAFTER, Paddy Jolley, Rebecca Trost / Inger Lise Hansen (2004, 10mins, b/w, 16mm)**

An atmospheric study of a decaying and crumbling flat complex in Ballymun, *Hereafter* emerges from the residue of unknown events. Paddy Jolley's film projects often begin with this sense of memory, time and place, inspiring experiments that explore the materials that embody them. Jolley's multi-disciplinary background informs this exploration and contributes sculptural, painterly and conceptual elements to this film collaboration with Trost and Hansen.

*Another NCAD graduate, Paddy Jolley focused on photography before moving to film, and directed two feature films, *Sugar* (2005) and *The Door Ajar* (2011), along with many shorts. Jolley died suddenly in New Delhi in January 2012, while working on a new film project.*

### **ST. FRANCIS DIDN'T RUN NUMBERS, Chris O'Neill (2009, 2mins, colour, MiniDV)**

The first in an on-going series of 'found-footage' film projects, *Saint Francis Didn't Run Numbers* is an eulogy to the personal interpretations of cinema with a fetishistic fascination with the imperfections of ageing celluloid. By re-filming a well-known classic of American cinema, compositions are magnified and fragmented to find film within film favouring minor characters and empty, abstract spaces on the periphery of the frame. Maximilian Le Cain suggests that the film prompts us to ask "what are we missing on a perceptual level as we watch films?"

*Chris O'Neill was the manager and programmer of Cork City's independent arthouse venue, the Kino Cinema. He has since become a freelance film programmer and distributor.*

### **LATE ARRIVAL, Barry Ronan (2006, 3mins, colour, MiniDV)**

Stripped of sound and language, *Late Arrival* relies entirely on its jittery and accelerated camera movement and overlapping imagery to create a kinetic and charged perception of its subject (the filmmaker's wife) that could not have been expressed in a more ordered form.

*Barry Ronan is an Irish cinephile living in London, England. He is interested in the political relationships between thought, language and the senses.*

**MONGOLIAN BARBEQUE, Maximilian Le Cain  
(2009, 11mins, colour, video)**

*Mongolian Barbecue* presents us with the edge of an abyss circumscribed by cinematic possession. The corporeal ritual involved falls at its ultimate climax into the rhythmical interstices of red frames that opens the way to static images from vampire B-movies, the feminine paradise a cinephile could encounter after taking a glimpse at cinema's interior cavities. *Mongolian Barbecue* shares with much of Cork-based Le Cain's prolific output (over 60 films in the past five years) the presence of TV static and the use of sounds that directly refer to medium specificity.

*Maximilian Le Cain is the editor of Experimental Conversations journal (named after Fergus Daly's film), and has organized avant-garde film screenings since 2006 with Cork Film Centre, Cork Film Festival, and Black Sun.*

**WITH WIND & WHITE CLOUD, Dónal Ó Céilleachair  
(2005, 5mins, b/w, Super8)**

*With Wind & White Cloud* pays homage to Oskar Fischinger's 1927 film *Walking from Munich to Berlin*, which is one of the earliest films recorded in single-frame exposure. New York based filmmaker Ó Céilleachair repeats this process on his own travels between Istanbul's Bosphorous shores and the heart of Berlin's Alexanderplatz, using the single-frame technique to create an intense, high-speed staccato viewing experience.

*Donal Ó Céilleachair returned to Ireland in 2007, after many years in New York where he founded the long-running Ocularis screening series. He has directed and produced an extensive filmography that includes documentary and experimental film.*

**AMERICAN DREAMS #3 : LIFE, LIBERTY & THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS, Moira Tierney  
(2002, 5mins, colour & b/w, 16mm)**

Based in Brooklyn, N.Y. in 2001, Moira Tierney caught the aftermath of September 11th on Super 8 film and subsequently set it to the poem *Ozymandias* by Percy Bysshe Shelley and the music of Charlemagne Palestine. For much of the film we see only sky and smoke, and occasionally revealed architectural structures. This sense of dislocation is emphasised by alternating between colour and black and white film stocks.

*As well as producing her own work, Tierney has programmed screenings for Anthology Film Archives, Ocularis and the Solus film collective of which she is co-founder.*

**HOMO SAPIENS PROJECT (93), Rouzbeh Rashidi  
(2012, 12min, DSLR, B&W)**

The 93rd film in Rashidi's ongoing *Homo Sapiens Project*, *HSP (93)* evokes, like much of his prolific output, the atmospheric unease and suspense of horror cinema removed from its contextual and narrative confines. A man (played by Rashidi himself), inhabits a series of eerie environments, climaxing in a ravenous engagement with a field of daisies. Working primarily with the Canon 5D DSLR camera for the past year, Rashidi has become an important innovator of digital cinema, achieving complex visual effects through an elaborate mixture of filters and in camera color grading.

*Rashidi is an Iranian filmmaker based in Dublin since 2004, author of 22 feature films and almost 200 short films. He is also the founder of the Experimental Film Society, an international organization aiming "to produce and promote films by its members" who are "distinguished by an uncompromising, no-budget devotion to personal, experimental cinema."*

**SORRY, Dean Kavanagh**  
**(2008, 3:26mins, Colour, HDV)**

Structured in a broken narrative, Sorry is a filmic note on inflicted isolation that takes us to a place of wordless contemplation. Abiding in the spirituality of the moment, the interweave of sounds and images speak through sinuous poetic reflections; mediated visions of atemporal objects and quotidian gestures of domestic life.

*Dean Kavanagh is a Wicklow based independent, experimental filmmaker. He is a member of Experimental Film Society and of Cinema Cyanide, a sound project in collaboration with Rouzbeh Rashidi and Maximilian Le Cain. Kavanagh's independent films feature non-professional actors, natural/available light and no budgets. As Le Cain has put it, rather than telling stories in any traditional sense, his best films generate a slow, throbbing ache that invades and haunts his viewers. A selection of his works have been officially selected, won awards and screened internationally.*

**THE PREDICAMENT OF MAN, Jesse Jones**  
**(2010, 3mins, Colour, 16mm and Digital Mixed Media)**

This film is the second in the collection of films *The Trilogy of Dust*. Using footage shot in an opal mine in Cobber Pedy, Australia, intercut with over a thousand still images that appear momentarily on screen, Jones subliminally contrasts the desolate landscape with flashes of often recognisable 20/21st century icons and events. *The Predicament of Man* creates an uneasy and foreboding slippage in time that hints at an apocalyptic future. Its title is borrowed from an essay in *Limits to Growth*, by the economic think tank, The Club of Rome in 1972. *The Predicament of Man* examines the consequences of exponential growth theories of late capitalism and how they may not only over stretch our resources carrying capacities, but also our sensory capacity to perceive reality itself.

*The work of visual artist Jesse Jones primarily takes the form of short films, works which renegotiate the material and ideological structures of cinema. They are concerned with how cultural artefacts can be restaged to reveal embedded histories of dissent - and their contemporary relevance.*

**04:59, Michael Higgins**  
**(2013, 6min, PXL2000 Tape Cassette, B&W),**

04:59 features Maximilian Le Cain, Karen Power and the work of Gorging Limpet. Inspired by cinema and visual narrative, Michael's work involves a range of both digital and analogue technologies, and concerns people's perception of time and reality. In following an initial idea through, he makes a point of being open to changes and external forces that occur throughout the various stages of production, allowing the development of the work to be self-driven. He simply assists it in materialising.

*Michael Higgins is an experimental filmmaker living and working in Dublin.*

## ***part two: the curators***

### **FILM FROM THE SEA, Alan Lambert (1999-2011, 5mins, 35mm, colour)**

*Film from the Sea* is a strip of 35mm cine-film found on a beach in Valencia, Spain. Corrosion has only allowed little photographic emulsion left, although two uniformed figures (possibly Spanish revolution soldiers) in heated discussion can be perceived. The 80 frames found (3.2 seconds) have been mounted in slide holders and screened on a slide carousel, with no fixed duration. Viewing the film this way intends to explore a different sense of time and scale in the individual frames, here presented like large abstract expressionist canvases.

*Alan Lambert has been making films independently for over a decade. He is a founding member of Solus Collective and has collaborated in a diversity of creative ways with DEAF and Darklight festivals.*

### **HORSES, Esperanza Collado (2011, b&w, silent, 16mm on video, 2mins)**

Rewinding the film in a Super 16mm Bolex camera to shoot a triple exposure, *Horses* was shot at different speeds and home-processed using an extreme unorthodox procedure. The resulting footage shifts unexpectedly from negative to positive and vice-versa, while scratches and other chance factors dominate its length. Shot at a rural location in northern Spain, and featuring Maximilian Le Cain, *Horses* imposes itself as material and process, rather than image.

*Esperanza Collado is an artist-researcher and her practice expands in curation, film-programming, critical writing and lecturing.*

### **DECLARATIONS 25, Donal Foreman (2010, 2mins, miniDV, b&w)**

From 2009, Donal Foreman completed 25 short films using personal video footage shot over the previous five years, uploading one on the Internet every two weeks. This final film in the series consists of the disjointed image and sound of Jonas Mekas, the New York-based Lithuanian filmmaker-critic-programmer who has been central in supporting and disseminating experimental film culture since the 1950s. The footage was taken during a public discussion in what would soon become the first venue for the Experimental Film Club, Dublin's Ha'penny Bridge Inn.

*Donal Foreman has recently begun to screen his work internationally as part of the (An)Other Irish Cinema screening project ([anotheririshcinema.blogspot.com](http://anotheririshcinema.blogspot.com)) with Max Le Cain and Rouzbeh Rashidi.*

### **ORCHARD REVISITED, Aoife Desmond (2012, 4 mins, Super-8)**

This film re-visits both a physical orchard and the idea of an orchard. In 2010 Desmond filmed apple trees in autumn at South Circular Road Community Garden using super 8 film. Her research led her to read the philosopher Martin Heidegger writings on 'authentic dwelling' in relation to orchards. The film footage was badly damaged as the camera had stopped reading light accurately. In 2011/2012 Desmond salvaged some footage and interviewed Dr Sarah Barry (a member of the Heidegger 'Being and Time' reading group that they were both part of) about Heidegger and authenticity. The soundtrack also uses field recordings from the garden. Desmond's art practice questions human relationships to place and nature, particularly urban wastelands and areas of neglect.

*Desmond is a visual artist and filmmaker. Her work is interdisciplinary, she combines film, photography, drawing, performance and installation to make ephemeral site specific works.*

# **EPILOGUE**

## **EXPERIMENTAL CONVERSATIONS, Fergus Daly**

**(2007, 98mins, colour, video)**

Featuring a host of well-known filmmakers and critics including Nicole Brenez, Philippe Grandrieux and FJ Ossang (in France) and Maeve Connolly, Grace Weir, Clare Langan, Vivienne Dick and Maximilian Le Cain (in Ireland), *Experimental Conversations* draws links between Irish and French experimental filmmaking, highlighting the fact that experimental cinema can be an aesthetic and philosophical international dialogue.

*Fergus Daly has directed four feature-length documentaries, each dealing with the intersection of art, cinema and philosophy. He has also worked extensively as a film critic, and is the director of Ireland's only experimental film festival, Different Directions ([www.differentdirections.ie](http://www.differentdirections.ie)).*