

Friday 2nd November. 1 Day
Errol Flynn, Dean Stockwell in
KIM
(In Color).

Saturday 3rd. 1 Day
Sidney Poitier; Claudia McNeil in
A RAISIN IN THE SUN

Sunday 4th. 3 & 8.30 p.m. 1 Day
Mara Corday, Lita Milan in
GANG GIRLS INC.

Also Grant Williams, Randy Stuart in
INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN

Monday 5th., Tuesday 6th., Wednesday 7th.
(3 Days)

John Wayne, Stuart Whitman, Ina Balin in
THE COMANCHEROS
(In Cinemascope and Color).

Thursday 8th. 1 Day
Doris Day, Frank Sinatra in
YOUNG AT HEART
Also Norman Wooland in
AN HONOURABLE MURDER
(In Color).

Friday 9th., Saturday 10th. 2 Days
Dave King, Robert Morley in
GO TO BLAZES
(In Cinemascope and Color).

Monday 12th., Tuesday 13th. 2 Days
David Niven, Alberto Sordi in
BEST OF ENEMIES
(In Cinemascope and Color).

Wednesday 14th., Thursday 15th. 2 Days
Deborah Kerr, Michael Redgrave in
INNOCENTS
(In Cinemascope).

Friday 16th. 1 Day
Barbara Frey in
NO TEARS AT SEVENTEEN
Also Laurel and Hardy in
THE MURDER CASE

Saturday 17th. 1 Day
James Hayter, Nigel Patrick in
PICKWICK PAPERS
Also Alastair Sim, Kathleen Harrison in
SCROOGE

Sunday 18th. 3 & 8.30 p.m. 1 Day
Eddie Constantine, Dawn Addams in
TREASURE OF SAN TERESA
Also Mickey Rooney, Dick Haymes in
ALL ASHORE
(In Color).

Wednesday 21st., Thursday 22nd.
Daniele Ajoret, Nadine Alari
BERNADETTE OF LOU
Also Lorette Young in
IMMACULATE ROAD

Friday 23rd., Saturday 24th.
Susan Hayward, Dean Martin
ADA
(In Cinemascope and Color)

Sunday 25th. 3 & 8.30 p.m.
June Archer, Flora Robson, Barbara
INNOCENT SINNER
John Beal, Augusta Dabney
THAT NIGHT

Monday 26th., Tuesday 27th.
Janet Munro, Leo McKern in
THE DAY
THE EARTH CAUGHT

Wednesday 28th., Thursday 29th.
Bill Travers, Spike Milligan in
INVASION QUARTER
(In Color).
Also Ezio



Disused Cinema, Rathkeale, County Limerick. Photo: Grainne Shaffrey.

‘Catholic Ireland,’ Father Horan used to say. ‘Decent Catholic Ireland.’ The term itself was vague and yet had meaning: the emergent nation, seeking pillars on which to build itself, had plumped for holiness and the Irish language – natural choices in the circumstance. The painted women of Clancy’s Picture House – sound introduced in 1936 – were creatures who carried a terrible warning. Jezebel women, Father Horan called them, adding that the picture house should never have been permitted to exist.

William Trevor, *The Paradise Lounge* (1981)



Black Day at Blackrock.
Director: Gerry Stembridge,
Venus (Three) Productions, 2000.

The place of cinema in Ireland has always been problematic. It is bound up with tensions between the local, the national and the global. Catching that mood, William Trevor points to the uneasy status that film as a popular artform has had over the past century in Ireland.

One of the earliest pieces of legislation of the new state was the Censorship of Films Act in 1923, yet it was only as recently as 1973 that film was first included in the Arts Council’s remit. This was an absence of some twenty-two years from official arts policy since the establishment of the Arts Council in 1951.

Despite, or even because of, official attitudes towards film, Irish cinema attendances have remained high, receiving additional impulse when Irish content is to the fore or the local landscape provides a setting. The highly central and visible social role of the local cinema in the 1950s, with its power to transport and delight, inevitably changed with increasing urbanisation, the advent of television and the domestic VCR. And while the main extent of local government involvement may have been

only in relation to planning permission in earlier days, the growth in locally funded arts activities and centres and the appointment of arts officers throughout the country in the mid-1980s mobilised increased involvement with film and cinema alongside other artistic, cultural and heritage developments.

The cinema landscape has changed too. Many of the locally owned cinemas have disappeared or changed use with the arrival of multiplex chains. In some cases, buildings have been demolished, removing all traces of those twentieth-century palaces of delights.

The emphasis on location and setting throughout Ireland’s patchy history on the screen has become even more sharp in recent decades, as the number of films shot in Ireland has increased, these films benefitting from support from An Bord Scannán as well as the various tax incentives introduced by governments in the 1990s. It is within this framework that the initiatives of local authorities and local individuals and groups can be sketched.

Disused cinema, Athlone,
County Westmeath.



Poitin
Director: Bob Quinn,
Source: The Irish Film Archive
of the Film Institute of Ireland.
Courtesy Bob Quinn.



The powerful intersection of people, places and production has begun to tilt the frame away from the partial representations of Ireland and Irish people on screen to a wider engagement of local people with how films are made and exhibited. Pivotal to much of this activity is a core commitment to the development of local tourist industries. Cinema's origins in the late nineteenth century at the time of the expansion of tourism provide an apt context in which to view current developments, since film of all artforms is the most global and since it also pulls together the twin tensions of commerce and culture. The challenges thrown up by this global artform open up possibilities for local authorities to enhance their activities significantly and to plait together a dynamic of local arts, heritage, tourism, economics and education.

Legacy, Landscape and Dislocation

From its earliest days, film in Ireland has been the cinema of place. In 1910 the Kalem Company selected Killarney as a film location for adaptations of Dion Boucicault's plays. As Luke Gibbons points out, scenic landscapes were often included, not as a visual backdrop but as key elements in the film: thus 'Gap of Dunloe, Lake of Killarney' suitably captioned for a tourist viewer. Although captions were dropped as cinema moved from the silent

era, landscape and scenery continued to play major roles in films produced about Ireland, through later epics such as *Ryan's Daughter* (1970), in which a stormy beach scene is a major metaphor within the narrative.

It was to counter this extravagant use of landscape as visual pleasure that many Irish film-makers in the 1970s deliberately set out to subvert the visual excess in films such as Bob Quinn's *Poitin* (1978). It is clear, however, that the landscape as a commodity is central both to tourist endeavours and to the drives of the eight regional screen commission initiatives in Kerry, Wexford, Wicklow, Leitrim, South Kilkenny, Galway, Meath and Donegal, several of which are based within their county councils. These initiatives 'localise' the role of Screen Commission Ireland (recently integrated within Bord Scannán na hÉireann), which promotes and markets the indigenous industry and promotes Ireland as a location for film production, providing links between the local, national and international industry. Bord Failte's brochure, *Ireland: Film Locations*, displaying a map of the island's key film sets and locations north and south, underpins the close tie between landscape and the tourist and film industries. Film locations tend to be concentrated around some of the island's key tourist trails.



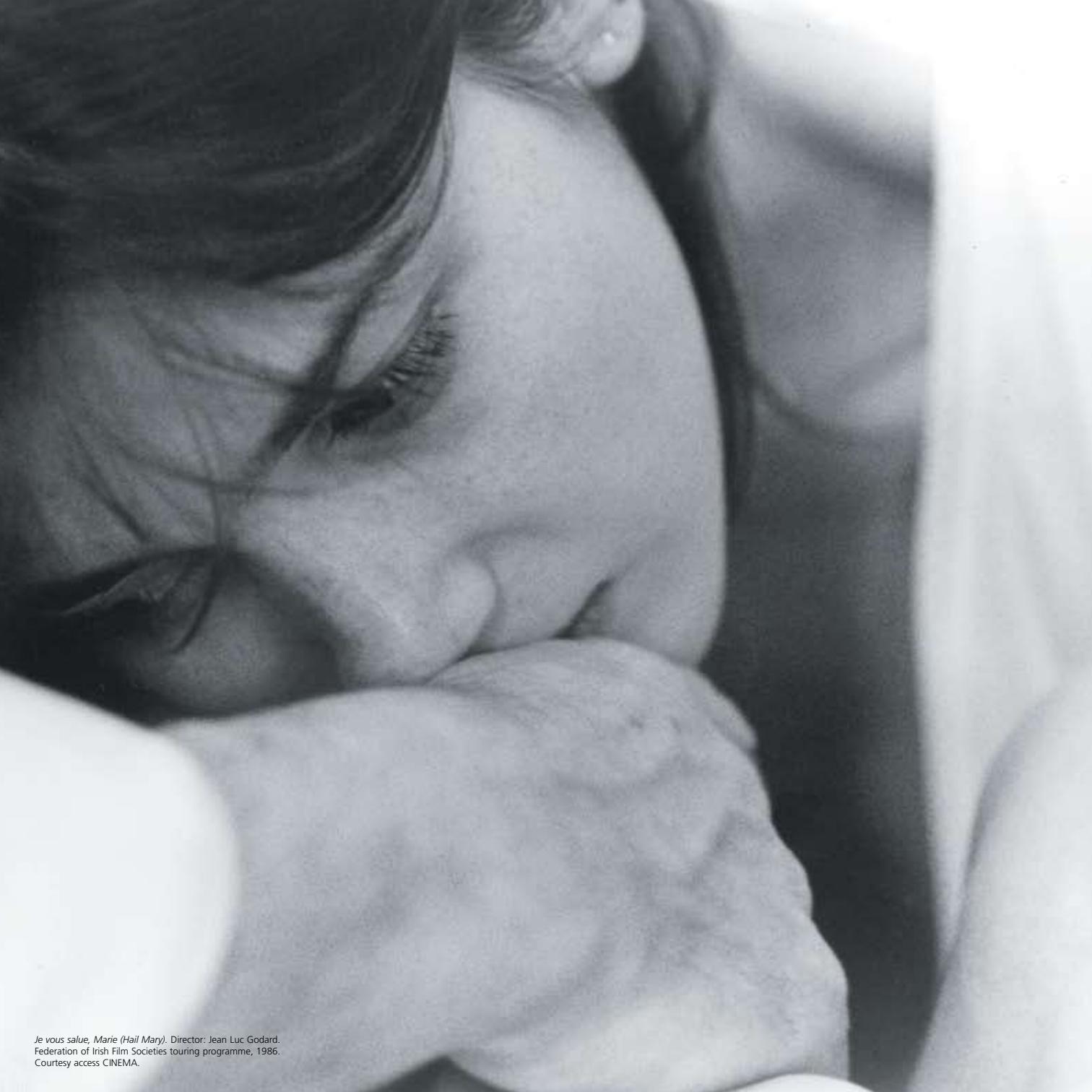
Dancing at Lughnasa, Director: Patrick O'Connor. Screenwriter: Frank McGuinness.
Shot on Location in County Wicklow, 1998. Source: Irish Film Archive of the Film Institute of Ireland



Brian Hand, *The Car Called the Manager*. Curated by Fiach Mac Conghail and Valerie Connors. Commissioned under Carlow County Council's Visual Arts Programme. 2001.

Describing Wicklow as 'Ireland's Premier Film Location', the promotional material of the county's film commission draws on the history of the representation of the county on screen and identifies a range of reasons for choosing Wicklow. As well as underlining the availability of production expertise and the proximity and facilities of Ardmore Studios, the material also emphasises the more tourist-friendly attractions such as 'a beautiful rugged coastline dotted with sandy beaches', 'incredible mountain scenery with magnificent valleys, woodlands, rivers and lakes', 'a wide variety of streetscapes', 'quality visitor attractions', and 'a very warm Irish welcome from the people of Wicklow'. The amalgamation of the touristic and the industrial highlights the interdependence of these economic sectors. Indeed, this interdependence is constantly manifested in the large numbers of visitors to the sets of the television series *Ballykissangel* and in the increasing interest in the provision and design of local 'film trails'.

Stressing the importance of local access (to all levels of government), County Wicklow Screen Commission's comprehensive *Feasibility Study Report* (1999) also raises the potentially uneasy relationship between the local community and visiting film crews. The tensions between local unease about the disruption caused by production crews and what is clearly a boost to the local economy through location fees and auxiliary services for film crews, as well as established longer-term tourist dividends (by means of a film trail and wider visitor attractions), remain to be resolved. And as with many tourist attractions, the tensions between service provision at an attraction and the maintenance of the 'natural beauty' exert a pressure on local planning authorities.



Je vous salue, Marie (Hail Mary). Director: Jean Luc Godard.
Federation of Irish Film Societies touring programme, 1986.
Courtesy access CINEMA.

But if certain counties are well known for their screen presence and representations, another concern is emerging for local government and community. It is the cinema of displacement: of ignoring some places altogether or replacing them with other places. Echoing the findings of Robert Christenberry's report on Ireland's 'tourist potential' in the early 1950s which, while recognising the potential for American tourism in County Donegal, noted the county's poor infrastructure and 'unfortunate geographical position', art curator John M. Cunningham, in association with Letterkenny Arts Centre, highlighted the very physical and material issues associated with this Death by Geography in the exhibition of this name in spring 2000. Focusing on the relationship between land and culture, people and place, the curatorial assembling of diverse works (national and international) raises significant questions for cultural practices and, more specifically, local agencies' potential and the problems associated with their geographical location. One pertinent implication of this is the screen representation of places such as Donegal, where Wicklow landscape and townscapes

stand in for Donegal in *Dancing at Lughnasa* (1998). This is not to make a narrow argument for some ill-conceived one-to-one realism but rather to draw out the politics of location and of visual representation as it connects with local experience and the wider economic imperatives of the tourist service. In a curious rethink, being perceived as marginalised by their geographical location and their position on the tourist map may in fact generate other forms of cultural and film practices for some counties. This may include the interrogation implied in the Death by Geography label, and in the process it can reconfigure the contours and horizons of local organisations and individuals engaged in making their own filmed images.



Kerry Film Festival, 2001. Initiated by Kerry County Council in association with Samhlaiocht Chiarraí in 2000.

Despite the hyperbole surrounded the possibilities of digital effects for creating virtual sets, physical place still matters. Infrastructure and location continue to be the norm for the high-budget film enterprise. While Wicklow is well placed to continue to represent different areas from Germany to Donegal, there is evidence that other local agencies are looking at the wider picture. A recent report, *CorkScreen 2001–2005*, commissioned by Cork Corporation and Cork Film Working Group, sets an agenda for the development of a screen commission for Cork but, significantly 'is driven by the desire to open up film-making to all regions in Ireland'. The report emphasises the economic and cultural opportunities for a region, and its overall thrust is to encourage 'locally-originated projects', pointing to the necessity of developing networks with all elements of local government, including county councils, corporations, local chambers of commerce and urban district councils.

Offering insights on the international and national contexts for increased film and, significantly, digital content, this emphasis on location reveals interesting insights into the current state of film production. In the

context of a developing national industry, the report asserts, 'this level of activity cannot be generated just from the Dublin/Wicklow environs alone where the industry is traditionally based but will have a greater chance of success with the expansion of production into other parts of the country'. In the context of the most global of visual art forms, the writers of this report noted that several production personnel, including production designers, 'cited the increasing difficulty of using Dublin/Wicklow as a location'. 'There is undoubtedly a 'sameness' creeping into the "look" of Irish films' – so much so that films are increasingly singled out by the critics for their different look, e.g. Gerry Stembridge's *About Adam (2001)*. Such an insight of itself might mobilise local interest – whether oppositional or otherwise – and the observations informing the drive and desire of the Cork agencies is the translation of home-grown material into 'grassroots production activity in an area'. Among the proposed incentives for generating activity are locally funded bursaries for script and content development.

Shane McGowan at the screening of *If I Should Fall from Grace*, at Galway Film Fleadh, 2001. Courtesy galway Film Fleadh.



Abbas Kiarostami and Galway Film Centre Manager Anna O'Sullivan at Galway Film Fleadh, 2001. Courtesy galway Film Fleadh.



Common to the impetus of the screen commissions is the acute awareness of the need to capitalise on locally-based agencies and environments which can generate substantial tourism expenditure (the BBC-originated *Ballykissangel* series is frequently cited as an example of a successful tourism spin-off of film production). There are, however, concerns expressed at the disruption to the local environment. So commissions, aware of the dilemmas, attempt to strike a productive relationship which assists both individual film projects (providing liaison with local and national agencies) and the wider enterprises associated with film production, including tourism – but which might also extend into more diverse locally based initiatives in formal and informal educational activity.

Localising the Curriculum

While films and film-makers are key parts of the equation, so too is the local film audience. Writing in *The Crane Bag* in the mid-1980s, Richard Kearney noted:

'... the potential in the new technologies waiting to be tapped; and what is essentially required is a sort of cultural leap, a new act of imaginative faith in the future of communications in this island ... What is the most important kind of understanding to develop in the young generation facing into the 1990s? How do they become literate with both the pen and the camera?'

Developments in Irish education have traditionally been slow, yet in the past decade there have been far-reaching changes in the overall curriculum at post-primary level and in the nurturing of new media skills. Two key developments of interest here are the introduction of media studies in English at Junior Cycle and the inclusion of film within the Leaving Certificate English curriculum. In tandem with in-service support for the teaching of these new areas, several publications aim to support the effective teaching of film in the classroom. While the diverse publications are broadly to be welcomed there is always an inherent threat that any prescribed syllabus will militate against a fresh and dynamic approach to the material. For many years, teachers of English lamented the sameness of the curriculum as represented by the list of modern novels and set poetry and prose which dominated the teaching of Leaving Certificate English for nearly two decades. The curriculum itself was bolstered by the proliferation of various notes and model answers from the educational publishing industries – tending towards a potentially dull and bland set of responses. While it is too early yet to say whether the current list of films leans in a similar direction, (particularly with a set of titles that is smaller than in English, and a dominance of Hollywood films within such lists), other local developments link with the formal classroom experience while extending and presenting alternative uses of film. In essence, these point to key ways in which to 'localise' the curriculum.



Laura Gannon, *Underswim*. Placing Art Programme, Sligo County Council, 2000.

Wicklow County Council through its county arts office and Wicklow Screen Commission has established a range of ongoing film projects through the Film-maker-in-Residence Scheme. These have included artists working with groups in nursing homes and film workshops with transition year students as part of English studies, using low-budget equipment to script, direct and edit short screen narratives. Choice of material owes much to the global film and television industry, here refocused with a local dimension – a productive integration of theory (studying the genre) and practice (making a local version).

While these have taken place within the formal school sector, proposals are advanced for other projects with the County VEC Youthreach programme. Funded via Wicklow County Council and the Arts Council and using the resources of the film-maker-in-residence to compile video diaries, the emphasis is on a sense of place and its people, enabling young people to explore their world through film. Global formats, whether from cinema or television, provide a familiar framework for the local twist and also function to widen the study of film art.

Paralleling local initiatives and central to the Film Institute of Ireland's national outreach programme is a commitment to local and community film-making. Focusing mainly on groups outside the formal educational sector, Outreach has worked with diverse groups from Waterford to Ballina, from rural County Dublin to Limerick, with youth drama workshops, travellers' groups, Macra na Feirme and women's groups. The art and process of film-making is both productive and creative, opening up links with other local agents and attracting support in diverse and unique ways from local business as well as from local government.

Mirroring these activities are local film squads, such as that from Galway Film Centre, who work with local groups to help them shoot, produce and express themselves through video/film. Core to all these initiatives is an engagement with film on different levels – but more significantly with different age groups whose access to production would be limited. One way of seeing these film squads develop in the future is in performing a similar role for education and film to that which TEAM developed for education and theatre.



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A GOOD
NIGHT!**

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YOUR FILM
SOCIETY**

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Give Up Yer Aul Sins.
A short film by Brown Bag Films from the Frameworks Scheme, 2001.
Courtesy of Cathal Gaffney, Brown Bag Films.

A potent example of how diverse skeins of local history and heritage can be harnessed occurs in the film which was commissioned by Sligo Corporation and is now in the municipal collection. Laura Gannon's *Underswim* links place (Sligo Jail) with very contemporary concerns of gender and the body, suggesting other story spaces not limited by scenic landscapes, embedded in local practices but not necessarily bound by them.

Supported by Carlow's County Council, Carlow Urban District Council and the Arts Council, Brian Hand's temporary drive-in installation, *The Car Called the Manager* (College Farm, St Patrick's College, Carlow, 28 September–7 October 2001) is a compelling weave of local and national narratives, occupying a 'rarely seen part of Carlow town'. The ambitious use of a range of media dramatises the space, setting up multimedia interfaces not bounded by the computer screen and re-energising the concept of a site-specific commission. Curated by Valerie Connoe and Fiach Mac Conghail, the project sets new agendas for video, film and imaging practices in local spaces.

Alliances, Alignment and Links

The gradual growth in arts activities following the appointment of arts officers is reflected and refracted in the increase in local arts festivals. Although some

commentators have noted the tendency towards a 'festivalisation of culture', these festivals do operate as a clear focus, especially in the case of film, because the availability of highly visible, global product has tended to keep lesser-developed film industries off local screens. For this reason, the development of Cork Film Festival and Galway's Film Fleadh – through their specialist programmes, directors' visits and workshops – are crucial to a rich national film culture. As an alternative to the multiplex experience, a festival functions with a concentrated, sharp focus to provide lasting emphasis. Programming for a festival also operates a dual dynamic – screening international cultural cinema and also building a local, national and international audience, through competition, retrospectives and master class series. In a programme initiated by Kerry County Council and administered by Samhlaíocht – celebrating the art of Kerry's imagination – Kerry's Film Festival amalgamates a diverse range of activities, linking artists, local schools, workshops, a short film competition and the visit of the Cinemobile with its own programme of screenings. Kerry County Council are the coordinators of the schools section, concentrating on participation and audience development. The Short Film Screenings programme is an important platform for up-and-coming film-makers.

Cinemobile, 2001.



Aisling Gheal.
Leitrim Cinemobile, 2001.



Cinemobile projection room.



Festival focus is also a means to develop links between specialised institutions and more diffuse local cultural initiatives, so that local libraries and museums can add value to the festival programme while extending their reach into newer audiences. Such links are also open for development at local and national level. The recent establishment of a branch of the National Museum in Castlebar sets new agendas for national cultural institutions. In another form of outreach, the establishment of the Cinemobile (funded by the Arts Council, RTÉ, An Bord Scannán, Northern Ireland Film Council [NIFC], the ESB and ESAT Fusion and supported by each county council) is enriching film culture across the country. Its programme is tailored to the locations it services and seasonal demands. Taking cinema as a cultural form means that unlike conventional multiplex programming with a sole economic imperative, programming the Cinemobile amalgamates commercial and cultural interests – adjusting the screenings to the dynamics of the local towns on the itinerary and involving structured educational input from the Film Institute of Ireland’s education department. In a parallel development, Aisling Gheal Liatroma is Leitrim’s dedicated mobile cinema, bringing regular screenings to all parts of the county.

The proliferation of county museums, heritage and interpretive centres in recent decades has in many ways reinvigorated an interest in the past. There are, however, dangers inherent in the close links between the tourist and heritage industries – in the economics-motivated drive to ‘package’ the past for easy consumption. Perceiving the target audience in many instances primarily as the foreign visitor can close down opportunities for a critical engagement with the past and displace local interest in favour of an easily-digested (tourist) menu of objects and attractions. Film, unlike objects in a museum display, takes time to view as it unfolds in time and is, therefore, well suited to prompting critical thinking about the past – however imperfect that past may appear. As the national institution for film culture in Ireland, the Film Institute’s archive has in its collection a vast amount of material of local and national interest. Archive screenings of local interest as part of the Cinemobile programmes can recover and open up the past to different generations – offering dynamic links between formal and informal education and different branches of local structures and providing further links between the local and the national. In a two-way process, the Cinemobile also plans to operate as a conduit for finding material for lodging in the archive, building on the richness of local historians’ publications and collections, and in turn preserving these films by local and amateur film-makers and feeding them back into the local community.



Delicatessen.
Director: Jean-Pierre Jeunet, Marc Caro, 1990.
A Federation of Irish Film Societies touring programme, 1991-2.
Courtesy access CINEMA.

Networked Exhibition

The Federation of Irish Film Societies was founded in August 1977 after proposed changes to the constitution of the Irish Film Society were rejected. Among the supporters for a federation, in which all member societies would share in the assets of the organisation, were Tralee Film Society, Killarney Film Society, UCC FS., Limerick FS, Wexford Arts Centre, Naas FS and Furbo, County Galway. Almost a quarter of a century later, the number of federated societies has contracted to sixteen but they continue to represent an active network engaged in film exhibition in a variety of spaces, from hotels and theatres to yacht clubs and college lecture-halls. The majority of the societies screen their programme in local arts centres and over half the venues have 35 mm screening facilities, others having 16 mm and DVD operations. In several cases, local arts officers were able to assist through grant-aid for the purchase of equipment and with set-up costs and promotional support. The Federation's operations offer a clear indication of the gaps in provision of cultural cinema exhibition, especially outside major urban centres. They also offer a strong existing foundation upon which to generate and promote local film initiatives.

While local arts centres and arts officers have offered and continue to offer significant support, it is crucial that arts centres be ready to engage fully in cultural cinema exhibition with 'enhanced programme and educational activities' according to a recently published report, *Developing Cultural Cinema in Ireland*. According to the

Federation's current director, different types of society have different programming needs. Newer societies need advice while longer established societies, such as Sligo, are keen to structure their own programmes in association with the local arts centre. There are encouraging signs about Irish film on the Federation's circuit: for example, *I Could Read the Sky* played very well around the country. This again indicates the potential for local material in selected programmes, linked with other initiatives to localise the curriculum in the wider educational arena.

Melting the Global and Local

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James Joyce, Finnegans Wake (1939)

If Joyce in *Ulysses* showed how the metropolitan centre could be a small town with its familiar streets and shop fronts, he also showed how the local is embedded in the global. He embedded his Dublin itinerary in the ancient Homeric tale – drawing his local flaneur, Leopold Bloom, into different cultural exchanges from the national(ist) Citizen to the wider issues and figures which Bloom enumerates to the Citizen. Bloom's musings, as he ambles through his day, draw different thoughts and ideas into an exchange, the erotic rubbing shoulders with the innocuous, his own local anxieties brushing up with international concerns in a random flow.

About Adam
Source: The Irish Film Archive of
the Film Institute of Ireland.



Paddy
by Cashell Horgan. From the
Kerry Film Festival/Samhlaíocht
Chiarral, 2001.



I Could Read the Sky
Director: Nichola Bruce.
Co-producers: Nicholas O'
Neill and Jamie Marmot.
Detail with Dermot Healy.
Source: The Irish Film
Archive of the Film
Institute of Ireland.



Jason Forde,
FilmMaker-in-Residence,
Wicklow County Council, 2001.



It is this apparent randomness and the duality of the local–global that may well underpin future cultural and social development. Irish small towns have experienced rapid social shifts – and although they carry traces of the kinds of small towns that William Trevor’s Irish fictions describe, demographic and other changes have fundamentally altered the rural and urban landscapes.

Local authority planning for roads, housing and water are all embedded in the changing contours but so too are the cultural shifts which are occurring. Irish people more than ever before in the history of the state are being drawn into new cultural exchanges, as overseas workers, asylum seekers and refugees set up home here in cities but also in small towns and villages. It is this melding of differences and the emergence of several voices and images that will shape the contours and futures of local identities. In a scene from Gerry Stembridge’s television drama, *Black Day at Blackrock*, transmitted in early 2001, the local schoolteacher suggests that asylum seekers tell their stories as a means to appease local anxieties and set up channels of negotiation. This depiction of the power of individual narratives to dispel hostility may seem overly optimistic, but stories of places and people, Stembridge suggests, can build bridges and connections.

The increased availability of portable digital imaging resources has engendered an increase in knowledge of visual culture and increased engagement in visual representation and narratives of local places. Globalisation, so often associated with a flattening-out of edges and differences, also involves its reverse. The blandness and cliché associated with a global process can

also produce the impetus to reject those clichés, whether emanating from national or international image banks. Visual culture can be used to produce other ways of knowing, imagining communities other than they are as well as recovering lost histories. While material and physical infrastructures will continue to be important, we also need to continue to invest in creative and intellectual infrastructures to find new ways of visually representing the shifting contours of the social world.

There are strong signs that the local authorities in different ways and at different levels, through arts officers and networks of local enterprise and agencies, have begun to harness the possibilities unleashed by film and digital media. Although hampered by budgets and often by geographical challenges, the exchanges still flourish. Ireland has had some form of local government since the Middle Ages, and the structures of this local government have come under occasional review. While the following areas are likely to remain stable – housing; roads and traffic; water supply and sewerage; development plans; environmental protection; recreation and amenity; education – the report entitled *Better Local Government – A Programme for Change* (1996) argues for reform to encourage wider, more comprehensive, and integrated responses to local issues. The granting of a power of general competence to local authorities by the Local Government Act 1991 continues to open up opportunities for a realignment of the pragmatic and the cultural in the local context – examples of which have begun to emerge through a focus on film and related video initiatives.

Irish broadcaster RTÉ’s recent announcement that it is to launch four digital channels is just one indication that the demand for local content is likely to increase enormously over the next decade. Local authorities need to invest in their local futures, opening up more than a one-way relationship with digital media. While local cinemas have all but disappeared, displaced by shopping arcades and the multiplex experience, people are exposed to more and more visual images than ever before. It is time to refocus the images and frame a future where place is a potent expression of a culture and society. Investment in this cannot be seen simply as an appendage of the tourist market. Rather it calls for a social and cultural commitment, so that the global media process does not inevitably mean an erasure and displacement of the local and the regional.

Index of local authorities mentioned

County Carlow	County Leitrim
Cork City	Limerick City
County Cork	County Louth
South Dublin	County Mayo
County Donegal	County Meath
Galway City	County Sligo
County Galway	County Wexford
County Kerry	County Wicklow
County Kildare	
County Kilkenny	

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The purpose and content of this publication is to make more visible the work and achievements of local authorities in the promotion and development of the arts, with particular emphasis on the area of film. It provides a snapshot of what is happening at the current time and focuses on some local authorities programmes and direct promotions. It does not purport to detail the many other services and supports provided by the local authorities throughout the country.

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