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Cinema as Community

The Emancipatory Potential of Watching

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I declare that this **Critical Cultures Research Project** is all my own work and that all sources have been fully acknowledged.

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Chapter 1: Origins

Introduction

Standing on Dublin's South Circular Road it is hard not to notice the huge white elephant - Rialto Cinema - stationed about halfway down the street. A space which once would have had the billings of the day's entertainment and their show times now has become boarded up and in its place there is an advertisement from BNP Paribas - the largest bank in Europe - announcing the property as 'for sale'. Splayed over this advertisement is a garish red and white sticker declaring that the property has, in fact, been 'SOLD'. Bought by Corks based enterprise Mologa Capital Ltd - acting on behalf of Dider de Witte, a Belgian property tycoon and tax fraudster - the property is now in the planning stages of being turned into a 317 bed student accommodation. With the average price for a room in private student accommodation in Dublin falling at €940 per month in a period that represents the most intense housing crisis in the country's history, it is no wonder local residents and the public at large feel aggrieved by such plans. Indeed, the case of Rialto Cinema is a microcosm of a much larger issue at the core of Dublin's urban and political terrain: that of the destruction of cultural, artistic venues and public space in favour of overpriced student accommodation, hotels and private enterprise which favour profit over culture and community.

Specifically within this context I aim to look at cinema in relation to the public sphere, what role is played by cinema within a community and how cinema and collective viewing

constitute an active praxis that can play a role within reclaiming public space and the city more generally. Taking the definition of American communications academic Gerard A. Hauser, a public sphere can be defined as "*a discursive space in which individuals and groups associate to discuss matters of mutual interest and, where possible, to reach a common judgment about them*" (Hauser, 1999, p.61). The history of cinema, early cinema in particular, reveals a rich lineage of interaction with this very series of questions, giving platform to conversation and creating a space in urban centres where boundaries of class and gender are erased. The exact origin and definition of cinema can become disputed but for this text the working definition of cinema I will be using is any experience which is based around collective viewing of moving image. Working from this idea and by looking abroad and into the past, an idea of cinema as a liberation project begins to emerge, a project which can fit within the parameters of Dublin and enunciate a new view of the city more generally.

The Nickleodeon

In 1956, there were 56 cinemas in Dublin and its surrounding areas. On a practical level this meant that essentially every main suburb and living area of Dublin had its 'own', local cinema and that these communities fostered a bond with their 'local', much like a pub or any such space that is interacted with on a regular basis.. Since 1956 there has been a gradual but very real decline and destruction of Dublin's rich cinematic history: at the time of writing there are only 19 cinemas in the city, two of the 19 - Brooks and Denzille - being private (*The Edge*, 2014). Naturally this has consequences, quite disturbing ones, for the cultural landscape of the city.

To begin to chart a more emancipatory view of how cinema can - and has - questioned the urban landscape, one must look toward the early history of cinema, to the nickelodeon within

the context of the United States. The nickelodeon derives its name from the 'nickel' - a slang term for five cents, which was generally the price of admission to screenings - and odeon, a Greek term denoting a place where music or poetry is performed. Nickleodeons were small neighbourhood proto-cinemas where moving picture shows and oftentimes live singing or dancing performances in concurrence would take place. Often situated within ghettos and immigrant neighbourhoods, nickleodeons offered culture to a strata of society that was economically barred from participation in much of the rest of more established and bourgeois art forms like theatre.

New Technologies, New Hopes

Up until the latter portion of the 19th century, the still early forms of moving image displays were found in technologies like the mutoscope and kinetoscope, devices wherein one person would peer through a lens to see moving pictures, peep shows and or light shows. This individualised manner of viewing was soon surpassed as technological advancements in display made it so that early forms of projectors like the cameragraph and the projecting kinetoscope broke with the atomistic past and opened up a new chapter in the history of moving image: collective viewing. It is in this sense that nickleodeons represented a significant leap in the history of film moving image and a precursor to cinema as we know it.

The hopes attached to the burgeoning cinema experience are best put by Jacques Ranciere when he said that cinema was ''*the popular art of the 20th century, which allowed the greatest number of people to be thrilled by the splendour of a ray of light on an ordinary setting*" (p.81, 2011). It is for this reason - the 'mass' appeal and the ability for a projector to seize an ordinary space and change it into a cauldron of collective experience - that cinema was seized upon by both production companies - seeing its potential mass profit - and also by

idealogues like Vladimir Lenin, who is purported to have said to the Soviet minister of Education A. V. Lunacharsky in 1922 ‘for us of all the arts cinema is the most important’ (Lenin, 1922)

The early 20th century represented a period of unique transformation both in technology, art and society at large and it is no coincidence that communism, the revolutionary project of emancipation of the 20th century, eyed cinema, growing in popularity and means at the same time, as its primary vehicle for its expression. The interloping relationship between technological progress, mass movement and cinematic popularity can be seen in Edison’s Manufacturing Company - which had the patent on projecting kinetoscopes - selling 1,500 projectors in 1906 and 3,500 in 1907 (Altman, 2007, p.120) This kind of growth continued well into the early 1910s and is matched by a similar trend in nickleodeons, which were sprouting up at an incredible rate: numbering around 2,000 in 1907 and expanding to over 10,000 by 1910. (Butsch, 1990. p.137) In that same year in the US Nickleodeons were attracting 26 million people per week, almost one fifth of the population. (Merritt, 2004, p.27)

The cinematic revolution was very much in full effect and also taking place in Europe, for example in Germany *ladenkinos* [cinema shop] - the equivalent of a Nickleodeon - were gaining traction and so too was itinerant cinema showings, a mobility based cinema experience wherein itinerant showmen would travel from town to town and do screenings of short films in ‘cafes, community centres, opera houses and churches (’Helgesen Fuller, 1994, p.168).

Mobility and Community

The ‘society of spectacle’ critique of cinema advanced by Guy Debord, which located cinema as a medium which perpetuated capitalist relations by affirming the status quo in an avalanche of images, in this respect fail to contend with the dynamic approach to space and culture prevalent in early cinema experiments. Following from this, such critiques only succeed in addressing cinema as fully embourgeoised, a process which happened later in the early 20th century. . A perk of cinemas confined to a specific place was that a program could be outlined that addressed the particular socio-economic makeup of a given community, thus altering the very dynamic of how they perceive the film. Differing from the spectator of the Debord’s Spectacle then, Miriam Hansen explains by way of Alexander Kluge, in this respect offers up the viewer as different from the ‘*empirical viewer as socially contingent individual*’, but to ‘*an audience endowed with historically concrete contours, conflicts, and possibilities* (p.14, 1991).

Counterposing that, early cinema and its malleability, but also its locality, is what defined an audience’s reaction and reception to the moving images on screen. In her 1911 study of German audiences and their class character and desires, Emilie Atenloh observed that ‘’*films that allow members of an audience to make a connection with their own social environment, whether depicting life as it is or as they wish it could be, are the most popular*’’ (2001, p. 259)

These observations and studies coalesce and point towards early cinema being a very different prospect to the latter Hollywoodified ‘movie palaces’, instead positing early cinema experiments like nickleodeons, itinerant showings and ladenkinos as intimately connected with their audiences. Owing both to lower prices offering greater opportunity for working class elements to take part in the burgeoning art form and also the flexibility of these

experiments in how they navigated the urban terrain. Walter Benjamin noted that early cinema modes of exhibiting exuded a "*revolutionary primacy*" and that it "*produced reactions that were difficult to control and politically dangerous*" for entrenched powers (Brenez, 1970, pg.3). Whether permanent or mobile, what is consistent to all these experiments is inhabiting any such space - be it shop front, community centre, church etc - and harnessing the socio-spatial dimensions to engender a collective experience. Early cinema, with this dynamism, in the words of Miriam Hansen '*provided a social space, a place apart from domestic and work spheres, where people of similar background and status could find company [...] outside of their own kin*' (1994, p. 223)

Bourgeois Fear

This was integral to its successes among working people and it's due to this very fact - the proletarian composition of early cinema audiences - that organs of the bourgeois elements of society and church and state treated cinema with scorn. Cinema was viewed as corrosive to the national character, a place wherein people of the lowest class elements go to indulge themselves in something akin to adultery, to collectively believe in the lies and squalor of the moving image. These fears and anxieties are best typified in German novelist Alfred Doblin's description of the cinema as a place of '*couples making out… children wheezing with consumption… badly smelling workers with bulging eyes… women in musty clothes… badly made up prostitutes (*1910, pg.38).

The inclusion of the image of a prostitute is telling here in that it indicates the deep fear that was prevalent among the conservative upper class elements of society: that of the number of women among early cinema audiences. At a time when an increasingly larger number of women were entering the workforce and birthrates were declining, female participation in

cinema was seen as both a symptom and reason for social breakdown. Patrice Petro in his book 'Joyless Streets: Women and Representation in Weimar Germany' accurately diagnoses the unique threat female participation in cinema posed to the patriarchal, bourgeois establishment when he says *'the presence of a female audience [..] not only represented a threat to divisions between public and private, cultural and domestic spheres; it represented a threat to the maintenance of social legitimacy, to the distinctions preserving traditionally defined male and female gender roles and responsibilities*' (1989, pg.8). Figures around audience composition from this time are hard to come by but certain data suggests that at a given screening in the early 1910s in the US men only outnumbered women by six percent, at least in Italian neighbourhoods at the time (Singer, 1995, pg. 26). In a time where female participation in any sphere of society beyond domestic labour was lacking, these numbers speak for themselves and it is no coincidence that cinema reform movements like *Reformkino* in 1908 in Germany and *Board of Censors of Motion Picture Shows* in 1909 in the US sprouted up around the same time, just as cinema was getting a hold of the general public. (Rosenbloom, 1987, p.309)

Cinema's status as a public sphere can just as much be seen through bourgeois and establishment opposition to it as through its own stand alone virtues. Miriam Hansen wades through bourgeois fear mongering and neurosis over cinema and plainly describes why it was feared when she says '*cinema as an institution threaten to blur not only the boundaries maintaining the hierarchic division of class but also the boundaries between public and private, between individuals with access to social representation by virtue of their economic position and those traditionally confined to the domestic sphere'* (1994, p.239) . It is through the unique contours of the early cinema environment that we see an artform that possessed distinctly emancipatory capabilities, a place where experience paved pathways for collective discussion and sensation in a way that disrupted hierarchies and created a new consensus

among traditionally downtrodden members of society, a place where the glittering light of the projector seized urban environments and anticipated a new society in doing so.

Chapter 2: A Liberated Phenomenology

Theories of Spectatorship

The twentieth century, it can be said, had two main conceptions of spectatorship. Though both theories were developed primarily with theatre in mind, the lessons and influence of these schools of thought bled out into every realm of art and were hugely influential in art/viewer discourses. The first of these conceptions was formed by Antonin Artaud, who built a body of work relating to the viewer and theatre called the 'theatre of cruelty'. Artaud, despite his status as a playwright, was skeptical as to the power of words to evoke the untranslatable, 'higher' feeling that the best art can evoke. Thus in his conception of a new, more evolved theatre Artaud wanted to tap into experiential and sublime feelings within the viewer and he did this by eroding the boundary between stage and audience, actor and spectator. For Artaud, the 'cruelty' in the 'theatre of cruelty' comes in the form of sensory overload, the theatre delineated and made a cauldron of sight, sound and physicality wherein the audience is as much part of the action as the actors (Tripney, 2007).

Brecht's formulation of art and theatre, meanwhile, takes an alternate route. 'Epic theatre' as it was called, was Brecht's attempt through the conventions of theatre, to enliven the audience to their potential to intervene in and change material reality around them. An avid Marxist, Brecht's methods of *Verfremdungseffekt,* or 'alienation effect', involved devices such as breaking the fourth wall, ironic song and dance cues, narration and montage. At every step Brecht was opting for an art style that was counter to escapism, instead creating something explicitly confrontational to the audience, breaking their immersion with questions

and facts about societal issues (Levin and Kaes, 1987, p.32). In this way Brecht's formulation relies on increasing the distance between spectacle and spectator whereas Artaud's relies on shrinking it. Despite both of these schools of thought offering great insight as to how an artist should incorporate the viewer into the art, the element of placing distance at the centre of the discourse is amiss. The following section will draw frequently upon the work of film phenomenologist Julian Hanich and French academic Jacques Ranciere to illustrate a synthesis of their works toward the goal of a liberated cinema practice.

Mediating Distance

In his book *The Emancipated Spectator*, Ranciere says plainly "*Distance is not an evil to be abolished, but the normal condition of any communication*" (2009, p.10). Ranciere correctly highlights that the obsession with distance in both Artaud and Brecht and much of their descendants is predicated on the basic point that the audience is inherently *passive* and only in adjusting the distance can the audience be made *active.* Purely for film this is categorically untrue when we consider what a viewer most do at every moment of the film, as film cognitivist Tim Smith observes when he says "*the viewer must process the rapid sequence of audio visual information; perceive what is represented on the screen, comprehend the characters, spaces and actions depicted and engage in the construction of narrative throughout the film*" (2013, pg. 167). A typical 90 minute feature film will garner 21,600 eye movements from a spectator (Smith, 2013, pg. 167). When one makes the concerted effort to go to the cinema, this is seen as an active thing, but when a person enters the cinema, their actions from then on are perceived as passive somehow. What this serves to say is not so much that cinema viewing is 'active' in the traditional sense, but that the terms 'active' and 'passive' are binaries that are enmeshed with ideological hang ups that they need not have. Ranciere clarifies his above point about these issues, furthering that "*emancipation begins when we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting; when we understand that the*

self-evident facts that structure the relations between saying, seeing and doing themselves belong to the structure of domination and subjection." (2009, p. 13) The viewer seated in the audience in the cinema is thus outside of these binaries, now newly located as a seat of immense potential. If one viewer is consistently creating and measuring their idea of a film, then a whole audience represents this action repeated manifold times over and it is here again that cinema posits itself as a medium with unique discursive potential. "*It is the power each of them has to translate what she perceives in her own way, to link it to the unique intellectual adventure that makes her similar to all the rest in as much as this adventure is not like any other*." (Ranciere, 2009, p.17) When a viewer enters the cinema, they may do so individually, but once they are in front of the screen, they cannot help but experience it collectively.

Discursive Dimensions

This dialogical potential of cinema we talk of has a dual function, the audience both engaging in a dialogue with the film and each other. The first comes in the obvious form of the conversation before, after and sometimes even during the film. Roger Wakeling describes watching the film *Witness* [1985] in a packed Dublin cinema and overhearing conversation happening when upon a scene of a main character's near death, he hears "*Mother of mary, that reminds me of my poor Joseph going, didn't have the anemia, and the Hodgkiss, and a touch of leukemia too. How's your own then*?" (Breakwell and Hammond, 1990, p.30) and a myriad of other chatterings, wherein the audience are simultaneously explaining the film to each other and also relating the events on screen back to their own lives and perhaps reaching a deeper understanding through this process. In this respect the dialogical and discursive elements of the cinema experience fulfil the outlined goals of what cinema should be when film critic Jonathan Rosenbaum describes a system where the collective "uses the film as a means of communicating with itself" (1980). And even from this seemingly innocuous

example of conversation we see the potential for the curation of a collective of, as Ranciere puts it, 'translators'. 'Translators' in the sense of how people should "*play the role of active interpreters, who develop their own translation in order to appropriate the 'story' and make it their own story*" (2009, p.22). With the previously mentioned capacity for cinema to occupy space in cities, this 'appropriation' then becomes double-fold, an appropriation of space and narrative. This symbiotic appropriative relationship then has within it a distinctly charged potential for change, encased within it a power to change social relations.

In the Dark

One aspect of this is afforded by the possibilities of darkness and silence. As well as the more immediate and direct qualities of immersion like increasing concentration, darkness has an equalizing effect of stripping the individual of self consciousness and making it easier to identify with the 'whole'. In this sense, class, race and gender distinctions are all done away with by the thick blanket of darkness as the unitary object of the film takes everyone's attention and even for that moment creates a 'we' rather than an 'I', as Umberto Barbaro points out when he says "*enveloped by the darkness, [the spectator] cannot show himself or his clothing off*" (Hanich, 2019, p.78). What we see here is the implicit social contract that is agreed upon by going to the cinema, viewers all agree to sublimate themselves into the whole, remain quiet and let the spectacle take place.

Amidst the Silence

It is here again that the debate over passive and active is fractured when we analyse how in a cinema, in an auditorium or space with anywhere from a dozen to a few hundred people, maintains silence. As Bernhard Wadenfels, translated by Julian Hanich, says of sound "*silence does not mean that nothing is heard but that not something is heard*" (2019, pg. 78) and we can deduce from this, when considering the natural inclination of a gathering of many

people gathered together is to speak to one another or at least make noise, that “silence is a particular type of communication: it signals that the film and its collective reception overall prevail over individual reactions” (Hanich, 2019, pg. 85). Pedulla says “*in the system of constraints and prohibitions that require everyone - rich and poor, educated and illiterate - to submit to the same imperatives*” (2004, p.57) that perhaps this cinematic fraternity can lead to alternate ideas of societal and political arrangement afterwards. This set of constraints and prohibitions can also be said to have a disciplinary effect, to a positive degree, creating an expectancy within viewers that they must respect and finish a given film in a way that they would not if they were alone, as Hanich says ‘’*I am far more likely to channel-surf or turn off the DVD, and thus not finish the film* [as opposed to the cinema]’’ (2019, p.90). The invisible power of the collective rears its head again here and it proves that even in examples where individuals think they’re outside the collective, their decision making is still extremely marked by what the darkness cloaked masses think.

Body and Feeling

As an audience we do not go to the cinema merely to pass the time but to ‘*experience the mutuality of sensations, concomitant feelings and effective responses, trying to stay close and exchange feelings with each other*’ and it is in this sense that cinema is more than a passive act but phenomenologically constitutes itself as important tool in community building even before the explicitly discursive element arises, the dialogical elements of cinema have already begun in sensation and physicality. This takes on further dimensions when we consider how these things fit within public space, when a mass of bodies situates themselves in the city to spectate - and in doing so, seize - a given space. “*Feeling in the middle of things, at the place to and from which streets flow, where people come not to escape the city but to be inside it”* (p.18, 2016) is how architecture critic Michael Kimmelman describes the joy of inhabiting a public space and this joy is double fold when watching a film in harmony

with a community of like minded people, concentrated solely on the same thing. And it is not just a fleeting feeling of joy provoked by such experiences, but a genuine piece of political praxis in an age where cities are increasingly cordoned off, sliced up and delineated between private interests and individuals.

Programming Emancipation

Ranciere generally argues against the idea that an 'emancipated spectator' need necessarily to be spurned into political action and is cautious of the idea that collective or individual realisations will necessarily lead to liberation in saying "*there is no straightforward road from the fact of looking at a spectacle to the fact of understanding the state of the world*" (2009, p.75). But this is not taking into account the specific history of cinema and the ways in which its status as a public sphere *can* and has created a space where people come together to understand and act upon the world. The error in this statement comes in, in the classic academic manner, in Ranciere's separation of ideas from material reality. "*The production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness, is at first directly interwoven with the material activity and the material intercourse of men, the language of real life*" says Marx in The German Ideology, finishing: "*conceiving, thinking, the mental intercourse of men, appear at this stage as the direct efflux of their material behaviour*" (1968, p.11). What Marx eloquently observes here is the dialectical relationship between ideas and material reality, showing how these interloping concepts are constantly informing one another. So whilst there is no immediate and direct consequence of a collective experience, as is the case with cinema, there are very pertinent ramifications for what the feelings and discussions produced by such experiences can lead to. This takes on an even more salient angle when considering Emilie Atenloh's above highlighted point that audiences get more invested and engaged with films that respond to their material reality. Early cinema's communitarian successes were based around the experiments - like nickleodeons or itinerant screenings - having an

approach that was intertwined with the hopes and anxieties of its community. Ranciere later says in the above highlighted passage within spectator to spectacle dynamics an emancipatory "*shift from a given sensible world to another sensible world that defines different capacities and incapacities [...] cannot be calculated*" (2009, p.75) and whilst this may be true in the absolute sense, what is also true is that a program and project that is in touch with its audience and locality is uniquely well placed to prompt this shift.

Thinking Together

Walter Benjamin in this respect espoused the virtues of cinema for its ability to create a simultaneous collective experience, balancing it against things like galleries and salons, noting how cinema allows the audience to ''*control and organise themselves in their response [to the on screen viewing]* [...]" (1936, pg. 42). This 'control and response' on the viewer noting themselves as part of a larger whole and then preceding from that fact into action, a possibility which naturally includes social and political praxis within that. The pattern emerging is evidently that collective viewing lends to very specific outcomes that would not come with individual viewing, but the unique nature of communal cinema viewing needs expansion. Although audiences can differ, and traditionally audiences had more integration and involvement with their local cinema as shown above, even when an audience is completely randomised the fact remains that "*people can intend, believe, and act jointly as a group without explicitly and reflexively thinking of themselves as a group* [...]" (Hanich, 2019, pg. 75). The presence of other viewers is always a factor in the spectator's head, even as their cognitive functions are primarily concerned with deciphering and contextualising the images on screen. And whilst in this context, in talking about silence and darkness - realms where collectively is imagined as lessened - still show strong collective instincts, it is evident how in cinema situations where silence is interrupted by emotion - fear or laughter for example - the collective dimensions of film viewing are obviously increased.

Infectious Emotions

Hanich speaks of the "*emotional contagion' of watching a film together, how 'viewers are affected - and 'infected' - by someone else's emotion and have no control over this process once it is under way [...] suddenly being overcome by a contagious urge to laugh with others might be a case in point*" (2019, pg. 176). This is a core part of cinema's ability to bring people together, to enmesh people from different backgrounds together in a specific place and incite them into feeling collectively. Outward signs of laughter or fear can also differentiate sections of the audience from one another depending on the scene and in this way can prompt a debate after the film about the context of such scenes and what they meant to different people. This is why cinema's status as a public sphere expands beyond a definition of just a place to talk together, but extends to a place where people come to feel together. Naturally following this, "*an exchange and discussion of what was experienced occur, various viewpoints are posed and sometimes even more or less spectacular actions or the making of further films are stimulated*" (Schoeber, 2013, pg.27).

Networks of Solidarity

An example of this stimulated action would be initiatives like that of Bridge of the Red Army, the workers council in Austria, who showed revolutionary films in Vienna's second district and had an apparatus that distributed radical literature at these screenings. When such collectives and initiatives linked up with other such projects, even if they were decidedly less political, the potential to establish counter infrastructures for public, free cinema events grew, as is the case when Expanded Cinema was formed. Expanded Cinema was an umbrella organisation consisting of cinema groups from Cologne, Munich and Vienna. From the 1970s this organisation worked together across these urban centres to establish "*cinema pubs, political film clubs, student cinemas, communal cinemas and early forms of programme or*

art-house cinemas" (Anna Schoeber, 2013, pg.57). Such ventures are real, historical examples of cinema interacting with the public and social dimensions in a wholly positive way, embodying Ranciere's theory and shaping a consensus which challenges the status quo in ways both artistic and liberatory.

Chapter 3: Conclusion

The State of Things

The status quo faced by a 21st century citizen of Ireland or indeed any western state is a uniquely different one that the socio political circumstance would have permitted in any of the periods highlighted above, from the early 1900s nickleodeons in the US or the latter free film clubs in mid twentieth century Austria and Germany. The early 1900s were a time of an old order falling away with rapid technological advancement and a turbulent economical and social environment. These changes and gaps in governmentality allowed for new public spheres and way of organising to emerge, such as the nickelodeon. Whereas in Austria around that time these communal film clubs would have taken place during a high tide in European social democracy, where Keynesian economics reigned and there was a large influx of government spending, thus making it easier for such experiments to happen. The situation in Dublin in 2022 is different to both of these in that it finds an entrenched capitalism, reanimated through neoliberal ideology, with its claws sunk into the neck of the city and Ireland more broadly. The general consensus is one of privatization and austerity, and increasingly the ability for alternate social arrangements within that are quashed as public space becomes privately managed and cultural hotspots become routed and turned into places of profit and capital circulation. "*Urban space in Dublin has been subjected to an intense process of privatization, a process linked to the dynamics of financialization" (*pg.40, 2014) Patrick Bresnihan and Micheal Byrne highlight in their 2014 paper about the production of urban space in the capital, adding "*The city has served as a terrain of expansion for the*

financial sector, granting finance a central role in urban dynamics" (pg. 41, 2014) . Eight years on from when those words were written, 'the great enclosure', as they call it, is a process that is much further along, the forces of capital even more emboldened.

Artwashing

And it must be said that capital, vampire like as it is, doesn't hesitate to dig its fangs into art and look toward culture not just as a place where financial capital can circulate, but as a place where social capital can be generated. This process, described as artwashing, is where the forces of capital use art to both improve their public image and obscure their raison d'etre, that is, profit. We see examples of this happening increasingly in Dublin. A particularly relevant example is that of the Wilton Park adjacent 'Living Canvas' on the southside canal, a project which IPUT chief executive Niall Gaffney said they initiated to "*enhance the public realm*". The screen features art and design from a curated selection of Dublin based artists and on a cursory level appears to be of benefit to the city's cultural landscape. But this bait and switch obscures the real order of things, "*a rhetorical device which masks the primacy of private capital with the illusion of public good*" (Guinan, 2016, pg.24). Boasting about managing a property portfolio worth "over €2.75 billion", IPUT are one of the architects of the cultural degradation of Dublin. Merciless profit extraction and public art, or at least authentic public art, are irrevocably counterposed to each other and no amount of cosmetic, extravagant gestures on behalf of capital can change this. Without a radical public intervention, "*the result is that art will continue to be used, when at all, to attract commerce while independent 'authentic' art organisations remain precarious*" (Guinan, 2016, pg. 25)

Hope in the Struggle

But the prognosis is not all grim. *"Social relations of dependency, trust, care and mutuality can arise when people are forced to sustain forms of life in the city outside commercial*

interests and state funding" (Bresnihan and Byrne, 2014 p.48), and this is true of Dublin, especially considering its position as a beacon of financialization and neoliberal interests. What we see in absence of an authentic government intervention on behalf of the arts in a genuine manner is a burgeoning culture of mutual aid and solidarity among friends and collaborators across the city, where spaces are rented through shared renting and the materials needed for events are shared across many disciplines. This idea of organisation, of mutual solidarity as a method to throw off the shackles of privatization and austerity, is how we can imagine an community based, emancipated cinema project, a project which facilitates a phenomenological and discursive experience with the already outlined contours.

The situation in Dublin differs from the above mentioned Nickleodeons of the early 1900s or the Austria film clubs in the 70s in that an antagonistic idea of cinema doesn't arrive through ease of possibility, but inversely, it must arrive through the drive of necessity. What these historic precedents are important for is imagining how that necessity will look. From our study of cinematic history, the manifold and dynamic ways in which it has created space for downtrodden and marginalised sectors of society along gender and class lines to come together without judgements, experience together and discuss together prove to be a blueprint of how we can imagine a new, deterritorialized cinema in the 'enclosed' Dublin, a cinema which is at once mobile in its physicality and tied to a community in its ideology. The nickleodeon offers inspiration and outlines in relation to the latter and the itinerant screenings of Europe chart ways in which we may imagine the former. By establishing this type of cinema in Dublin, a new public sphere will be constituted, one that offers an entirely alternative idea of a previously existing medium, taking origin from its early history, and from that prompting ruptures in the ways of seeing and perhaps inspiring perhaps new ways of social organisation. And what we see from a combination of Ranciere's analysis of what an emancipated spectator is and what cinema historically can and has been, is that cinema

finds itself situated perfectly to enunciate a platform where people can watch, translate, narrate, think and then act together. As emancipated spectators both individually and collectively.

Describing the end of a film in a cinema, Resi Langer quoted in the book The Promise of Cinema supposes "*accompanied by music, everyone streams towards the exits, and what was once a whole disintegrates into atoms, for today. Perhaps tomorrow the individual will once again form a vital part of the whole* […]" (Anton Kaes et al, 2016, pg 162). The mission of an emancipated cinema, a liberated communal watching, is to not leave the formation of a 'whole', of the collective, to chance, to not hope on tomorrow for the formation of a cognizant body of viewers but through a scientific analysis of the given material and social conditions to engender these ephemeral experiences into a framework that is lasting and potent.

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