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Damien Murphy, 28<sup>th</sup> July 2015



## **In a Derelict Inchicore Warehouse, an Experiment with Cinema**

This Saturday sees the return of [Open Night Cinema](#). WTF is Open Night Cinema, you ask? Good question. “It’s a bit different,” says Michael Higgins, film-maker and co-founder of Open Night Cinema. “It’s hard to pin down, but it’s like art-gallery cinema.” Open Night Cinema (ONC) is a non-profit, experimental film studio and cinema that Higgins started with actor Cillian Roche in early June. Located in a derelict industrial warehouse in Inchicore, ONC experiments with and showcases techniques of expanded cinema, blending live performance, cinematic exhibition and other multidisciplinary art practices. Its first night saw a showing of Higgins’s feature film *At One Fell Swoop*, which was preceded by a performance of *Stone Boat*, a theatre performance piece based on a portion of poet and philosopher John Moriarty’s *Dreamtime*.

“*Stone Boat* is very much a theatre performance piece, and I’m bringing elements of cinema to that,” Higgins says. The performance ran for about half an hour before the film. It was a “one-man show in near complete darkness with light and projection trickery.” Using old analogue Super 8mm and 16mm projectors to provide abstract effects – either spot lights or film loops – adds textures to and reinforces

some of the content of John Moriarty's words, says Higgins. "His words are very poetic, very hypnotic, and these elements of projection give you something else to hang on to in terms of visual aesthetics," he adds.

Another event they ran was *Super-ate Smut*. "I'm a collector of 60s and 70s porn," Higgins says. "I tracked down some more and so it was a live performance of projected smut from the 60s and 70s."

Regrettably, there was no preceding live performance. The performance element Higgins is talking about comes from him as projectionist. "You're not in a projector booth; it's visible. You know, pulling the film through, scratching it, allowing it to melt and to jam and get chewed up in the projectors. There was also live audio soundscapes running off the projectors like industrial mechanical sounds that feeds back into the space."

What you got, says Higgins, was this violent, energetic performance that meshed perfectly with the industrial environment in which it was staged. The warehouse was a perfect fit, "because of the nature of the Super 8 film: it's plastic, it's material, it can melt, and it can destroy itself just as much as some of these industrial factories do when they lie around for ten years." They ran *Stone Boat* again earlier this month, but this time they'd extended it and done away with the feature film that had followed it originally. *Stone Boat* is lyrically and verbally very heavy, says Higgins, and they wanted to slow it down. Using the huge space offered by the warehouse, they staged a 360-degree performance with multiple projection screens around an outer circle and then a projector that pivoted around a 360-degree point on the inner circle. Actor Cillian Roche would move around the projectors and the 360-degree space, and audience members were either on the outside circle looking in or the inside circle looking out. "We used Super 8mm projectors as spot lights, a lot of candles, hanging tungsten light bulbs; it was a very atmospheric," says Higgins. "You get a very small, domestic warm-feeling space in the darkness of a giant industrial warehouse."

While this form of cinema is a break from traditional cinema, Higgins says that it is heavily influenced and inspired by cinema itself and the history of cinema, not just what it produced but the techniques of how it was produced. Open Night Cinema is doing it again this Saturday night in association with [Experimental Film Society](#) (EFS), of which Higgins is a member. ONC will be showing a unique programme of underground short films. EFS members Rouzbeh Rashidi, Dean Kavanagh, Maximilian Le Cain and Michael Higgins will design, present and document the event, engaging fully with the site and the audience. The resulting footage will make up part of their "mammoth upcoming feature film *Homo Sapiens Project 200*." Here's what the press release says: "The goal is to employ this vortex-like space as a projection and shooting location that functions as a living organism containing the memories of a future cinema."

- Damien Murphy