

BA Hons in Creative Music Production

Thesis

A Study of Expanded Cinema and it's

Application

By Fionn Hibbert

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Mentor: Dr Ruth Moran Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of the genre of film, Expanded Cinema. The study was carried out by watching films in the genre, researching artists involved in this type of film making. The aim of the movement was to push the boundaries in terms of both film making and music and sound production. Following this the research was applied to an original audio-visual artefact created by the author in the style of expanded cinema. The success of the film is that it is an original art piece that has borrowed and referenced tried and tested techniques from this genre of film. All music and soundtracks were created and recorded by the artist and then produced. Part of the success of the piece is its originality and the other is the use of tried and tested techniques that enhanced the piece and allowed the author to give a snapshot of his life.

Introduction

This project is an original audio-visual multimedia artefact called 'Life in Blocks.' The aim of the thesis is to investigate and determine if one can effectively encapsulate a period or block of time in one's life using mixed media.

The objective is to incorporate mixed media to create an immersive experience that captures the feelings and emotions of an individual's life through the abstract film style of expanded cinema, in artistic expression that stretches the boundaries of conventional film on many levels. The emphasis for this artifact will be on the audio and the visual elements. It will seek to use tried and tested techniques from the genre of expanded cinema and personal artistic license. The aim, concomitant with expanded cinema, is to create an immersive environment for the viewer and listener at most or at least screen it in an unconventional setting.

In terms of visuals the author will research expanded cinema and avant-garde film artists such as Mark Leckey, Bruce Nauman, Hollis Frampton and Lis Rhodes as well as referencing the ideas of Gene Youngblood. In terms of audio and music the author will research a selection of artists; Antonio Snachez, Albert Ayler, William Basinski to mention a few. The artefact will also reference some of the theories of Michel Chion. This artefact is an original art piece, and all music, sound, film and photography will be created and completed by the artist.

On completion of the artefact, it will be screened in a venue in keeping with expanded cinema. Following this informal feedback will be gathered from the viewers so the artist can reflect on the efficacy of the film in terms of expanded cinema and determine if the thesis question has been answered.

Literature review

Expanded Cinema

In order to gain a greater understanding of the genre of expanded cinema the author will research the genre and some of the artists who fall into this style of film making in order to gain insight into their films and techniques used but also to gain an understanding of the movement. This is imperative to effectively create an original artefact that falls into the category of expanded cinema.

The article *What is Expanded Cinema / A guide to Art Terminology*, Avantart.com gives an overview of the artistic movement and explains how the movement was formed around the late 1960s or early 1970s by an American artist and filmmaker called Stan VanDerBeek.

According to Annette Kuhn and Guy Westwell in *A Dictionary of Film Studies* they explain how the movement is an artistic expression that challenges traditional filming methods to go beyond the normal standard of cinema.

It includes all forms of multi-media, including film, photography, art, sound, music and video. The film performances are often screened in immersive environments to enhance viewer engagement.

A key aspect of this style of cinema is to challenge the relationship an audience has with the film. As opposed to having a simple one-way relationship with cinema as a spectator, the idea is to get the viewers to participate more in the piece's experience.

In the video *What Is Expanded Cinema* on YouTube by Tate a hugely important piece called *Light Music* (1975) by Lis Rhodes touches on the radical movement of visual music in the early 20th century. *Light Music* features two films projected into a hazy room accompanied by an intense soundtrack created from the flickering patterns on the screens. Rhodes explains how the viewer relationship with expanded cinema is different from more mainstream film media as the audience is immersed in the film and sometimes even plays a participatory role within it. "The audience would be within that space, not outside." Lis Rhodes.

For this reason, expanded cinema pieces are often screened in unconventional settings such as art galleries, warehouses and open spaces often employing multi-screen projection. These larger more open environments allow for higher audience engagement and create a greater sense of immersion by using multiple screens.

The article *Expanded Cinema – Art term* by the Tate Modern website lists some more of the key figures within the expanded cinema scene such as Lis Rhodes. More recent artists include Mark Leckey whose work influences this project.

Mark Leckey

Mark Leckey is an expanded cinema artist who was born in Birkenhead, England in 1964. His work extends across many media including video, sound, sculpture and art installations. He rose to prominence in the late 90s with his film *Fiorucci made me Hardcore* (1999). He often uses elements of pop culture and explores themes of nostalgia and anxiety within his works.

He has had his works showcased around the world and in 2008 he won the British Turner prize for his piece, *Industrial Light and Magic* (*Turner Prize 2008 for Mark Leckey (Städelschule) - Luminapolis.*)

“Leckey has an ongoing fascination with the affective power of images, music and technology, and often uses reconfigured archival footage in his work.” (*Liverpool Biennial 2016*)

Life in Blocks takes heavy inspiration from several of his expanded cinema films because they include themes of life, society, and are very autobiographical drawing from references of pop culture.

His use of archive footage elicits feelings of nostalgia and is hugely important to this project because it creates a sense of time that is personal to one's life and elicits moments of emotional sentimentality. Two particularly important films to this project are; *Dream English Kid 1964-1999 AD* (2015) and *Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore*.

The article *Mark Leckey* by Harry Thorne from *Freize* takes an in depth look at Leckey's film *Dream English Kid 1964-1999 AD* is referred to as, “...a form of archeology...” (*Thorne, Harry; Mark Leckey, Freize.com*)

The film is a collection of adverts, found footage, TV programmes and music and was made after he attended a Joy Division gig in 1974. He attempted to recreate that memory using sources that were very specific to this time. The film is his take on trying to create a memoir of his life. In the interview *Mark Leckey – I Wallow in the Mire of Nostalgia* by TateShots on YouTube, he mentions how this film is an artifact depicting the late 20th century.

“It's more particular to a time than a place, it's about growing up in the latter part of the 20th century.”

The film is created through spliced video and audio of major events during the time such as a speech by the British Prime Minister of the time, Harold Wilson in 1963, this immerses the viewer in events of the era. Similarly, the music used throughout; Simon & Garfunkle, The Beatles and Joy Division hints to the viewer about the period this film encapsulates; 1964-1999 while simultaneously documenting the evolution of music culture. These were all significant moments in Leckey's life. (Thorne, 2016)

One of Leckey's trademark filming styles is having constant quick edits as opposed to having one single scene or time occurring at any one point. The film opts to alternate quickly between different scenes, videos and pictures quickly flashing and changing in a non-linear order.

Meanwhile, the music and audio that plays does not seem to correlate with the visuals. This

deliberate juxtaposition creates a sense of chaos and a feeling of unease. However, it also effectively visualizes the social environment of chaotic and busy life with no central character.

An article from the Samm Lung Goetz website describes how Leckey works and edits film “Mark Leckey works with film in a way similar to the work with music, where found musical material is dissected into its smallest bits, pulled apart, accelerated, amplified, distorted, and compiled anew on a thousand different layers.”

Leckey’s influence on Life in Blocks

Although this project’s film, *Life in Blocks*, centers more around the individual, the feeling of constant action can be applied to our busy lives in contemporary society.

The chopping and changing of images within Leckey’s work will help to dictate the speed and pace at which this project’s film occurs. For example, a hectic and busy part of life might be represented by faster more sporadic film edits to dictate the pace at which life is moving. The same can be applied to the audio and music, using slower tempo more mellow music to illustrate how life might be moving at a more leisurely or manageable pace.

The other film by Mark Leckey that is important to this project is possibly his most famous work, *Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore*.

This film is also influential to the project because it helps capture the zeitgeist of the 80s and 90s UK rave culture and other important subcultures that can be applied to this project.

Although this project will not directly be referencing these decades it certainly will use the stylized approach of heavily referencing pop culture moments of the present era.

“Highlighting the importance of early 1990s clothing brands upon a generation of working-class youth” (*Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore* | *Akeroyd Collection*.)

Leckey’s fifteen-minute film is a collection of old VHS videos and archive footage compiled together to create a sense of nostalgia, freedom, and sentimentality.

It was created as a sentiment to UK nightclub culture that Leckey was part of when growing up in Liverpool as a teenager.

This film is integral to the project because not only does Leckey create a film that represents his youth, but he also created a film that relates to many other people’s lives.

The nostalgia created within *Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore* is a stark reminder and contrast to the dying nightlife of Dublin’s club scene.

“The physical spaces that dance music and club culture thrived in over the past 40 years had greatly diminished, many being demolished to make way for hotels and upmarket student accommodation.” (*O’ Sullivan, Caroline. The Steady Decline of Club Culture in Dublin: Neo liberal Policy, Touristification and the Pandemic.*)

The use of found footage and taken photography are important to Leckey's films because the found footage helps the viewer gain greater understanding of the world at the time, while the taken photography allows the pieces to be more personal to Leckey himself.

Both these media will be used in this project, however there will be less archive and found footage used due to copyright law.

Hollis Frampton

Hollis Frampton is an American avant-garde filmmaker who explores themes like nostalgia, communication and structure in his films *Nostalgia* (1971), *Critical Mass* (1971) and *Zorns Lemma* (1970).

His film *Nostalgia* creates feelings of nostalgia by burning old photographs and memorabilia while juxtaposing it with desynchronized audio of a man describing the photographs. "Filming the burning of a selected number of photographs he had taken in the previous ten years or so," (Moore, Rachel) HOLLIS FRAMPTON: (NOSTALGIA) 2007

His piece *Critical Mass* depicts an argument between a couple, the audio and visuals are chopped and repeated creating a visceral experience for the viewer as the film replays unpleasant moments of shouting and anger. The constant glitching audio and visuals makes it a much more emotional watch. Although the themes *Critical Mass* do not directly apply to 'Life in Blocks,' it analyzes how Frampton alters sound and visuals to create more emotive viewings.

However, Frampton's use of structure in his film *Zorns Lemma* creates a sense of time by looping similar images throughout the film.

Bruce Nauman

Bruce Nauman is an expanded cinema artist who creates art in a multitude of media including film, sculpture and wordplay. Some of his most famous pieces are *Clown Torture* (1987), *Poke in the Eye/Nose/Ear* (1994) and his art installation *A Rose has No Teeth* (1966). His films often elicit feelings of terror, anxiety and confusion. "Bruce Nauman's wildly influential, relentlessly imitated work explores the poetics of confusion, anxiety, boredom, entrapment, and failure." Art Institute Chicago.

Albert Ayler

Albert Ayler is a free jazz saxophonist who came to prominence in the 1960s through his technique of overblowing which created an emotional 'screaming' sound from the saxophone. In the article *Healing Force: The Songs of Albert Ayler* by Vinny Golia, Aurora Josephson, Henry Kaiser, Mike Keneally, Joe Morris, Damon Smith, Weasel Walter it discusses many of the great jazz artists he played alongside including John Coltrane and Pharaoh Sanders. Later the article discusses how his solos "often developed through timbral manipulation rather than harmonic, melodic or rhythmic variation." (Goila Vinny) *Healing Force: The Songs of Albert Ayler*.

Antonio Sanchez

The jazz drummer and composer Antonio Sanchez, most notably known for his work on the film *Birdman* (2014) and working on the album *Migration* and *Lines in the Sand* with Pat Metheny. On the Antonio Sanchez website it discusses other musicians he has recorded with such as Chick Corea, Gary Burton, Michael Brecker, Charlie Haden and Toots Thielmans.

In an interview with Antonio Sanchez, he describes his drumming style saying, “*You can be the loudest instrument, and you can be as soft as anybody else, and just the element of surprise and the dynamic range that the drums give you, I think it's great if you can really manage that*”

Antonio Sanchez. Interview. By Jo Reed, 19th April 2013.

Antonio Sánchez's drumming style is characterized by its dynamic range, musicality, and deep emotional expression.

William Basinski

William Basinski is an American avant-garde composer, multi-instrumentalist and video artist. His most famous piece of work is *The Disintegration Loops* (2002) which is created through the slow decay and disintegration of analog tape deteriorating while recording.

In the article *Archival Time, Absent Time: On William Basinski's The Disintegration Loops* by Paul Benzon he describes how Basinski made the pieces of ambient music after deciding to preserve some recorded found sound as digital files. However, in the digitization process parts from the tape began to shred and splinter off. Basinski recorded the destruction of the tape resulting in the recordings becoming their own compositions.

The Disintegration Loops is relevant to *Life in Blocks* not only due to its themes of decay and destruction but also because it is an artifact that captures a specific moment in history, the 9/11 tragedy. “*The piece has become recognized as a quasi-official elegy, through its performance at publicly funded memorial concerts and its upcoming induction into the National September 11 Memorial & Museum.*” (Jones Ellis, 2014)

Methodology

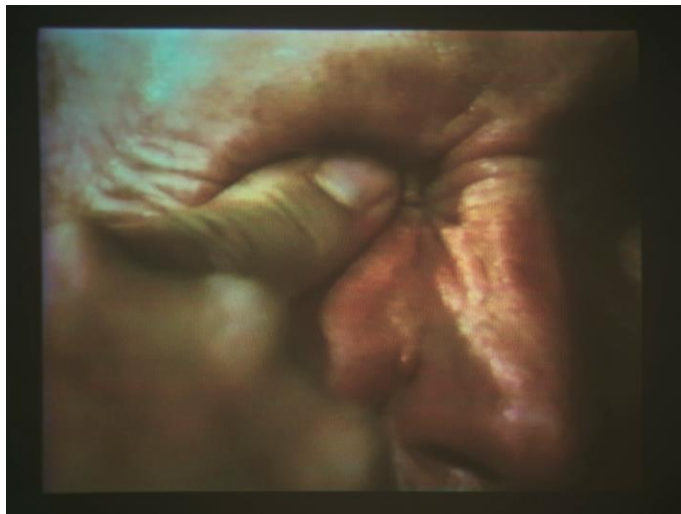
The author will explain the film scene by scene in terms of both audio and visual. An explanation of the motivation and the influences will also feature. The plan to create an expanded cinema film fell into three phases; pre-production (the planning and sourcing of equipment, a venue and

software), the production phase (filming, photography, music and recording) and postproduction phase (editing, mixing, screening).

Teeth Flash Scene

The first scene in the film is a twenty second clip of a black screen with flashing images of teeth quickly jumping around the screen. The close-up photographs of the gritted teeth are scaled up in size which creates a very visceral image, with a sense of intrusion, as if the viewer is in someone's personal space. The video of the teeth references Bruce Nauman's piece "*Poke in the Eye/Nose/Ear*" (1994). In the video Bruce Nauman: "*Poke in the Eye/Nose/Ear*" | Art21 "*Extended Play*" by Art 21 he mentions how these uncomfortable activities take place while being projected on a big screen, this references the feeling of intrusion mentioned in 'Life in Blocks.'

Figure. 1 A still from Bruce Nauman's piece "*Poke in the Eye/Nose/Ear*" (1994).



The teeth on the screen signifies the feeling of worry, anxiety and loss of control which comes from the idea of teeth falling out in dreams which is analyzed in this study, *The Loss of Teeth in Dreams: An Empirical Investigation* by Frederick L. Coolidge and Duane D.Bracken. In which the study says, "Personality questionnaires indicated that the dreamers about teeth were significantly more anxious..."

The colour of the teeth in this section of the video are inspired by David Lynch's movie *Mulholland Drive* (2001) where he uses lighting and an extremely blue colour palette to create surreal dreamlike sequences throughout his film.

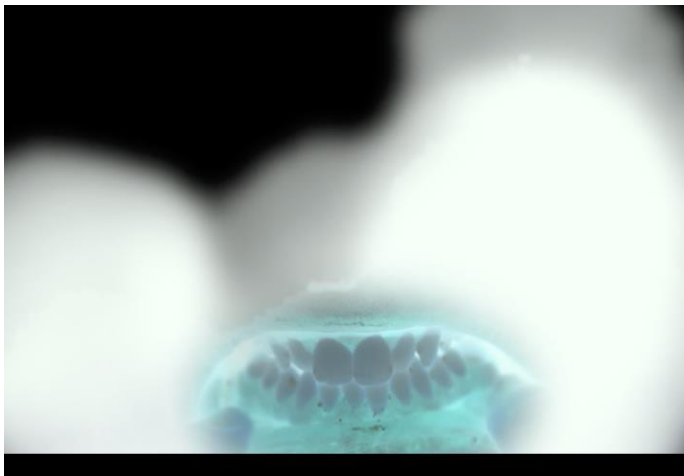
This blue hue in *Mulholland Drive* creates a visual modification of real life, because such an intense shade of blue is not found in everyday life, suggesting an element of surrealism.

This idea of surrealism is employed in the coloration of the teeth in *Life in Blocks*, the use of inverted colours indicates a dream-like feel to the project.

Figure. 2 Is an example of how David Lynch used colour in – *Mulholland Drive* (1999)



Figure. 3 is a still of the teeth scene from ‘Life in Blocks’



Garden Scene with overlay

There is a sharp transition from the scene with flashing teeth, to the second scene. This is deliberately done to replicate drastic changes in mood and emotion. The film changes from a feeling of panic and worry to a sense of calmness and serenity. This sudden change in visuals

and audio references some of Mark Leckey's work especially, *Dream English Kid 1964-1999 AD* (2015) as many of the transitions within his films appear intentionally unpolished.

The images move from turmoil to comfort. The aim is to provide the viewer with a sense of calm introversion. The length of this scene in comparison to others is to mirror our longing to stay within our comfort zone in times of adversity.

The use of a suburban garden is to draw the viewer into something familiar. The piece features several videos of two individuals repeatedly completing the same task at different angles. This draws from techniques in Gene Youngblood's book *Expanded Cinema* (1970) Where he describes how image, sound and environment can occur simultaneously defying a linear narrative.

Figure. 4 is a still from 'Life in Blocks' featuring multiple images of figures moving furniture.



The imagery is complimented by the music lyrically and sonically, with the phrase, "*looking in the mirror and the mirror looking back at me*" being sung over an ethereal electronic-folk track reinforcing the themes of introspection that are present throughout the project.

The track is inspired by *A Dream Goes on Forever* (2024) by Vegyn featuring John Glacier from *The Road to Hell is Paved with Good Intentions* (2025)

In the reference the vocalist repeats the phrase "*you know the sun still shines*" bringing reassurance to the listener. This technique is mirrored in 'Life in Blocks' underlining reflection and self-awareness. The track in this project takes inspiration from the production techniques used in the reference. In an article with Clash Music written by Jay Fullarton describes Vegyn's track "It envelops you in the sense of nostalgia with its melancholic, twinkling bells and reversed

keys.” As the track evolves visuals of spinning vinyls unfold transitioning into the next section of the project.

Vinyl

The spinning vinyls reference the artist's memories of late nights out at garage and acid house music gigs. The records shown are either illegally pressed records from the 80s and 90s rave scene or are from the acid house and garage genre. This reference alludes to Mark Leckey's film *Fiorucci made me Hardcore* (1999) which explores the UK rave scene of the 80s and 90s through archive footage.

The calm music from the previous track of the garden continues to play over the visuals, contrasting with the fast hectic genres that are depicted on the vinyls. The ethereal vocals of the music reflect the feeling of catharsis the artist derives from these chaotic nights out.

Throughout the project there is a visual motif of introspection, this is seen on the first vinyl that features a graphic of an eye. The reoccurring lyrics, “*looking in the mirror and the mirror looking back at me,*” reinforce this theme of introspection. Visuals of an eye reappear within the film, representing a constant within the artist's life. The final record mimics the Heineken logo, which represents the relationship between nightlife and alcohol.

Figure. 5 A still of a vinyl mimicking the Heineken from ‘*Life in Blocks.*’



Black and white flash scene.

After the spinning vinyls the entire screen begins to flash black and white with no discernible pattern or rhythm creating a sense of unease and ambiguity. This references Peter Tscherkassky's film *Outer Space* (1999) in which the Austrian Avant-Garde filmmaker cuts up bits of the horror film, *The Entity* (1982) by Sidney J. Furie to create disorientating footage that alternates

between black frames, blasts of white light and overexposed images evokes a sense of terror and panic for the viewer.

This black and white flashing technique is used in 'Life in Blocks' contributing to a heightened sense of unease because the viewer cannot find any discernible pattern or structure to the flashing. A sensory overload is created for the viewer using strobe-like flashing and a constant barrage of indistinct imagery culminating in a feeling of discomfort and panic amplified by the disorienting sequence.

The audio enhances the overstimulating visuals using repetition and free rhythm. A male voice can be heard repeating the phrase, 'How long?' throughout this section. The vocals are intensely panned left and right encompassing the viewer in noise. The phrase is constantly repeated with no answer which alludes to a sense of impatience and helplessness, as the viewer does not have enough time to formulate an answer, this creates a sense of panic. The audio becomes more layered, with separate recordings occurring in the background enhancing the sensory overload as the track builds. A subtle drum pattern plays a swing feel, taking inspiration from the improvisation jazz drumming on *Birdman* (2014) that is scored by Antonio Sanchez. The drumming in the background slowly gets faster as it builds to a crescendo.

Figure. 7 and 8 are stills from Peter Tscherkassky's film *Outer Space* (1999)



Figure. 8



Burn Jar

This short section visually references Hollis Frampton's works, *Nostalgia* (1971) where Frampton burns photographs.

The Canadian artist Micheal Snow describes the video in his essay, *"Word Pictures: Frampton and Photography"*, writing how Frampton burnt photographs to stage his abonnement of photography in favour of filmmaking, "*filming the burning of a selected number of photographs he had taken in the previous ten years or so. As, in the completed film, each of the chosen photographs turns to ashes,*" The video encapsulates a feeling of nostalgia as Frampton burns old photographs and memories.

Figure. 11 Still of a photograph being burnt from Hollis Frampton's film *Nostalgia*. (1/4) (1971)



The artist references this idea in *Life in Blocks*, by burning scraps of paper over the top of a jar and watching as they disintegrate. Under the video of the burning paper is a visual of an eye.

This is a visual motif throughout the project as it attempts to create a feeling of introspection. However, in this case the imagery of the eye creates the idea of nostalgia by looking back on memories. This also references the lyrics heard at the start of the project, “looking in the mirror and the mirror looking back at me.”

Figure. 12 A still from *Life in Blocks* of a paper burning over an eye.



Gig

There is a very brief pause in the film followed by a black screen. After this the film restarts with what looks like a VCR screen, however, this is a recording of a large light, being shone against a wall. Visually this section of the project references *Light Music* (1975) by expanded cinema artist Lis Rhodes.

Figure. 13 is a still from part of the film *Light Music* (1975) by Lis Rhodes.



This section of the project explores feelings of frustration, loneliness and the fear of missing out, commonly known as FOMO. A shadow of the artist appears on screen, this is visual metaphor of the phrase, “a shadow of yourself,” depicting how loneliness, self -doubt and frustration makes one feel like a shadow of themselves as opposed to one's authentic self. As the shadow moves across the screen the words, *Life in Blocks*, come into view, this is the title of the film and is written in the artist's handwriting. This is a visual reference to Mark Leckey’s film *Dream English Kid 1969-1999 AD*, where Leckey’s name is scribbled across a chalk board.

As this block of film evolves more audio and visual elements are added, including footage of inside a nightclub, shown with people dancing and strobe lights. However, the artist is absent from the video, instead they are on the outside, being referred to as the shadow. This emphasizes the distance between the artist, the viewer and the people in the nightclub. Enhancing the feelings of exclusion and imposter syndrome as they observe life from the outside.

The music in this section is a combination of distorted piano and synths, resampled into a loop until the musical phrase slowly becomes indistinguishable, this portrays the artist’s growing sense of frustration.

Reverb and distortion effects are used throughout the track, so no loop ever sounds the same. The music slowly becomes increasingly distorted and indistinguishable from its original loop creating the sense that the music is falling apart or disintegrating. This portrays the growing frustration of the artist as things become undone. This is a reference to William Basinski’s album, *The Disintegration Loops* (2002-2003) where a series of tape loops slowly disintegrate throughout the recording process. The article *Disintegration and repetition: an analysis based on William Basinski* by Manuel Bogalheiro explains how the music was created, “Basinski digitized the sound of old tape loops he had recorded in the 1980s, storing them in a computer drive; as the loops were played in the magnetic reader, they began to deteriorate due to the accumulation of dust and oxidation. The reproduction of the sound and the effort to preserve it led to its destruction,”

There is an abrupt break in the audio in which the music changes to a jazz piece, this is used to subvert the viewers' expectations as the jazz music juxtaposes the melancholic ambience of the rest of the piece. The feelings of frustration and loneliness in this part of the film are heightened by using found sounds from a night out that consist of a low thudding of a kick drum and bassline. A low-pass filter was put on the kick and bass in this recording to take out the high-end frequencies removing some of the clarity and detail in this recording.

In the article, 'Spectral content as a cue to a perceived auditory distance' by A D Little, D H Mershon and P H Cox they discuss how frequency content can affect one's perception of distance saying, "*The results indicate that a decrease in high-frequency content (as might physically be produced by passage through a greater amount of air) can lead to increases in perceived auditory distance,*"

A reverb effect was also used on the audio of the kick and bass to create a sense of space in the mix, making the recordings feel further away. This use of a low-pass filter and reverb are used to signify the distance the artist feels to the event, because they are not actually present or at the nightclub.

Window

The window scene evokes a sense of nostalgia, capturing the familiar act of watching the sunset from home. The aim is that this resonates with the viewer. The picture is purposely out of focus and ill-defined to avoid recognition of the artist's home. Instead, it functions as a liminal space, and a widely relatable event. This idea references Mark Leckey's film *Dream English Kid 1964-1999* in which recurring images of a motorway pass appear throughout the film.

Figure. 14 is a still of a sunset outside a bedroom window from *Life in Blocks*



Figure. 15 Depicts an image of a motorway bridge in Eastham Rake from Leckey's film, *Dream English Kid 1964-1999 AD* (2015)



In the article, *In Conversation Under the Bridge*, from Tate Modern by Paul Farley and Mark Leckey, they discuss some of the meanings behind Leckey's work. Discussing how *Dream English Kid, 1964–1999 AD* 2015 is like a collage made from found footage. "All these are threaded through with images of a new motorway and a bridge (from Eastham Rake on the Wirral)," (Farley, Paul) *In Conversation Under the Bridge*, Tate Modern.

Figure. 15 is a still of a sunset outside a bedroom window from *Life in Blocks*



Beer Visuals

The visuals used in the music video, *Stuck on Loop* (2025) by the rapper Jeshi and directed by Tom Andrew and Sam Davis emulate life through the lens of alcohol. This is created in a literal sense in the music video as it is shot through the bottom of a pint glass.

It also depicts how a night out drinking or in the pub unfolds as the viewers can see it occurring through the top of the glass, immersing the audience in the video.

Fig. 16 Is an image taken from the music video, *Stuck on Loop* (2025) by the rapper Jeshi directed by Tom Andrew and Sam Davis.



This idea is alluded to in 'Life in Blocks' as it also aims to capture the effect alcohol can have on a person. This is created by putting a pint glass of beer on the lens of the camera, this is the same technique that is used in '*Stuck on Loop*'. When the pint is full it creates a literal feeling of swimming in alcohol, the feeling people get after having too much to drink.

The visuals section in this section features the artist's face peering down the glass depicting the idea of looking for more on a night out, or just one more drink.

In the article Alcohol-induced impairment of inhibitory mechanisms involved in visual search by Ben D. Abrams and Mark T Fillmore they discuss how the use of alcohol disinhibits the individual, saying, "Alcohol's primary acute behavioral effect is disinhibition, which leads individuals to act on impulse rather than deliberation." Quick edits of different alcohols flowing depict multiple drinks which creates a faster tone to the piece. Describing how nights out can move quickly especially when drunk. The use of blur effects and filters to augment the shape of the artist's face depicts the augmented reality people see through when drunk. The blur effect is used to put the original visuals out of focus mirroring the feeling of intoxication. At the end of this piece the artist is seen looking down through the beer glass again before moving into the next section of the film. Like before the visuals are blurred and out of focus, but the colour has

altered. Not only does the change of colour help with a smooth transition into the next piece but it also examines how lights and colours bleed into each other, further exaggerating the drunkenness of the artist.

The music in this section is brief and ever-changing, depicting how things seem to constantly change when one is intoxicated. Throughout the track the vocals are pitch shifted, depicting how things are not quite as they seem. The artist describes themes of surprise and confusion in their lyrics saying, “I feel like a deer in the headlights, trying to figure out which is up, which is up, which way is up.” No found sound is used in this section however, the mixing techniques used in this section replicate the sounds heard on a night out, with loud drums and a heavy bassline, often the first sounds heard on night out.

Rose

Basinki’s Disintegration Loops portrays the idea of destruction over time. The rose on fire takes the idea of something so delicate and beautiful and juxtaposes it with the destructive nature of fire. Visually This creates a feeling of pain and discomfort for the viewer as they watch the rose burn. However, the rose also symbolizes feelings of love, romance and intimacy and the fire represents the visceral breakdown of a relationship.

This idea of love mirrors the piece *Fuses* (1965) by Carolee Schneemann in which her film contains scenes of Schneemann engaging in lovemaking. “Fuses was made as an homage to a relationship of ten years...” Schneeman in the article, Notes on Fuses, 1971 from the Carolee Schneemann foundation.

The saxophone that plays in Life in Blocks has a screeching overblown tone that sounds like a person screaming. This technique was often employed in Albert Ayler’s style of playing such as *Bells* (1965) and *Love Cry* (1968).

“Saxophone player Albert Ayler revealingly put it, he was looking to “escape from notes to sounds.”” This describes the idea of trying to achieve the screaming sound found in this part of the project. (Wallmark, Zachary) Theorizing the Saxophonic Scream in Free Jazz Improvisation The screaming of the saxophone paired with the complimentary imagery of burning roses creates a visceral sense of unease throughout this section of the project. In the same article mentioned above Wallmark says, “the “scream” effect so ubiquitous among saxophonists—is crucial to the style’s heightened powers of inducing ecstasy or revulsion in listeners.” This statement establishes how the screaming style can heighten this sense of revulsion and displeasure.

Streetlights

The second last scene in the project is of a foggy street shot out of focus, allowing the colours to bleed into one another creating a dream-like feeling. The colour palette in the video references

Stan Brakhage's film *Text of Light* (1974) As the colours within his pieces are often muted blurry colours. This scene evokes feelings of nostalgia as it captures a distant dreamlike quality within the music. As this piece also elicits feelings of introspection and looking in on oneself. Distance within the mix is used in a literal sense to create how people can feel quite distant when they are thinking about memories and have feelings of nostalgia.

Figures. 17 and 18 are stills taken from Stan Brakhage's film *Text of Light* (1974).



Garden Repeat

The final section of the video loop is a repeat of the garden scene that is shown near the start of the project. The music for this section is nearly identical to the music that plays at the first garden scene.

This repetition is employed to create a feeling of continuous looping, as if the project never ends. This idea references Hollis Frampton's film, *Zorns Lemma* (1970) which uses repeated visuals to create the feeling of a continuous loop.

In the video, *Bruce Nauman: "Poke in the Eye/Nose/Ear" | Art21 "Extended Play"* posted by Art21, Nauman talks about the structure of film and how many artists viewed their work as continuous pieces with no set beginning or end. "They thought of their works as just ongoing...you could come and go, and the work was there and there wasn't a specific duration..." This tried and tested technique is applied to *Life in Blocks*. The film operates in a loop with no real beginning or end. This symbolizes the continuous, cyclical and repetitive nature of life.

Analysis

The objective of the project was to capture the essence of life and emotions of a young man living in Dublin in the 2020s through mixed media, using the experimental film technique of expanded cinema. The use of this film technique allowed for the creation of a more immersive and visceral experience, allowing the audience to gain a deeper understanding of the life and times of the artist.

The artifact depicts the life and emotion of a twenty-three-year-old living in Dublin. The film uses found sound and recorded audio snippets of real-life events that the artist has collected over the years to create an authentic atmosphere...

As well as this the project is uniquely scored, taking inspiration from a wide variety of artists and musicians using a multitude of different genres to enhance and complement the emotions and events that occur in the artist's life on-screen.

Why is this artifact significant?

The project captures elements of nightlife, culture and everyday activities that take place in the artist's life. However, the project only focuses on the life of one person in their twenties and therefore cannot be applied to everyone in this age group in Dublin in the 2020s.

According to Collins Dictionary the definition of a cultural artefact is; “an ornament, tool, or other object that is made by a human being, especially one that is historically or culturally interesting...”

The aim of this project is to capture a snapshot of life in the 2020s of a young Irish man in contemporary Dublin. This makes this project a cultural artefact. Mark Leckey's films can also be considered as cultural artefacts because they consist of moments of cultural and historical significance. His film *Fiorucci made me Hardcore* represents the British rave culture from the 70s through to the 90s.

Outcomes of methodology.

The outcome of the methodology was to create a mixed media piece of expanded cinema that looked to encapsulate the life of a twenty-three-year-old in contemporary Dublin in the 2020s. Originally in the methodology there was a plan to include a survey to collect data from the audience. However, following discussions it was decided that a survey was not going to be used. The reasoning behind this is that art is subjective material; there are no right or wrong answers and limits the outcome of the project to people's responses. This seemed reductive and diminished the creativity behind the art piece. The lack of survey gave viewers freedom to derive completely individual meanings from the film, depending on different factors, such as personal history, background knowledge of the film and whether they were acquainted with the artist. All

their opinions are equally valid and narrowing these opinions into data felt very menial to the author.

The screening was held in Nick's Coffee shop in Ranelagh, an audience of around twenty-seven people attended. The audience consisted of family and friends. This presented potential bias as audience and some personal knowledge or experience with the artist.

A larger audience would have benefited from providing fewer biased opinions on the film, but it was just not possible given time and financial constraints.

After the screening informal opinions of the piece were given anecdotal evidence was gathered some viewers stated how they found it difficult to grasp the concepts while others connected with it deeply.

Many commented on the contrast between the calm and chaotic elements enhancing each other. The artist viewed the audience's opinions of both confusion and connection in regard to the film as equally valid.

One attendee, a music producer, made contact with the artist, writing a short email outlining their thoughts on the film.

Figure. 19

Hi Fionn,

Watched that a couple of times. Honestly it is Outstanding work. The mesh of surreal audio + visual is on point. Full on immersion. very trippy yet Visceral.

You 100% have the gift of a great eye and a true creative talent.

best of Luck.

Collaboration potential

The creative process of Life in Blocks included collaboration with multiple musicians, to create a sonically dense piece of art that works in unison with the visuals.

Female vocals can be heard singing intermittently throughout the Life in Blocks. This was another collaboration within the project that is most prominently heard at the start and end of the project, featuring snowy garden visuals. The ethereal vocals elevated the feeling of calm and nostalgia that was intended for this part of the project.

A light acoustic guitar is also heard on this track which was played by a fellow student.

The author collaborated with a saxophonist during pre-production and production phases of the project. The author wanted to use jazz references such as Albert Ayler to depict feelings of

revulsion and anger and to create a hellish soundscape that is paired with visuals of a burning rose.

The saxophone was used in a more traditional jazz sense to create a calming accompaniment alongside drums and a guitar in the project depicting a dreamlike and serene quality to the music. The reason a live saxophone piece was recorded was because a pre-existing sample felt inauthentic to the film. The sound needed to be tailored specifically to suit the visuals. The guitar performance on this track was a spontaneous idea after mixing. It enhanced the distant dreamlike quality of the track.

This project already features a considerable number of collaborations and if a second installation of the same quality and length were to be created by the artist, collaborating with other musicians would be necessary to achieve the final product.

There was no collaboration involved in the visual aspect of the film, however, in future projects working with other artists like graphic designers and photographers could help enhance the visual depth.

Discussion

Interpretation of results

This chapter looks to discuss the results of the creative findings and how they relate to the objectives set out in the introduction of this project.

The aim was to create a film, *Life in Blocks*, using the experimental film technique of expanded cinema using elements of multimedia to create an engaging film that encapsulates a period in the life of a twenty-three-year-old living in contemporary Dublin. In the context of the literature review the outcome of results regarding the film as a piece of expanded cinema operating as a zeitgeist of the artists life are overall positive.

Comparison with previous studies.

Comparing the installation of *Life in Blocks* with previous studies of expanded cinema shows how the project adhered to the idea of using an unconventional venue to screen the event.

The venue in line with expanded cinema unconventional; and its primary function was not to facilitate film screenings, but to instead to operate as a creative free space for local artists. The *Life in Blocks* film was the first screening to take place in this venue.

The set-up for the event was very DIY, consisting of a homemade projector screen and the artist's personal KRK studio monitors. In contrast the DIY approach to the event set up loosely leans into the expanded cinema ethos, by looking to free film from the commercial constraints of the cinematic environment.

However, unlike other expanded cinema projects such as *Light Music* by Lis Rhodes, which employs two huge screens situated opposite each other with a large space in-between. This allows for greater audience immersion and for audience members to even participate in the In an interview with Tate Modern titled *Lis Rhodes - An Opposition to Commercial Cinema' | The Tanks*, Rhodes says, "The actual spacing of the screens, the two screens. It was in a sense an opposition to commercial cinema, where the screen is very dominant and the audience sits."

However, the installation for *Life in Blocks* was quite one dimensional, only utilizing one projector screen and unlike other expanded cinema pieces had no surround sound, which limited the immersive quality of the experience. In the case of the screening of this project the screen was the main dominant feature, and the audience sat and watched, adhering to more conventional cinema techniques in that sense. The creation of immersion within the viewing experience could be improved going forward.

Limitations and implications

One of the main limitations of this project was the restriction of incorporating pre-existing material. This was not inherently a negative limitation to the project because it forced the outcome of the piece to be something more creative and personal to the artist rather than if it were to use pre-existing archive footage and audio.

The other main reason pre-existing footage and audio was not allowed to be used in the film was due to copyright and breaching academic integrity.

However, one of the main forms of visual media used to create many of the expanded cinema films referenced in this project incorporate pre-existing archive footage and audio. Artists like Mark Leckey and Peter Tscherkassky use pre-existing material to create their films.

Leckey is a more appropriate example because throughout his films, especially, *Dream English Kid 1964–1999 AD* he combines items of pop culture references and pre-existing material to evoke memories and nostalgia. These references also create a zeitgeist into the period he is trying to emulate in his films.

His film *Dream English Kid 1964-1999 AD* starts with visuals from the Apollo 11 moon landing which took place in 1969. Culturally this was a hugely significant moment, this footage of the moon landing operates as a zeitgeist opening a window of memory into the late 60s including the moon landing phenomenon.

Although no surveys were included in this project and no data is being collected from other's opinions of the art piece, the number of people who viewed the screening limits the variety of feedback available to the artist inherently creating a bias towards what they thought of the film.

Conclusion of discussion

By adhering to many of the ideas in the expanded cinema film technique and taking reference from a variety of different artists within the field including those outside of the field that are

more musically based, the project has been allowed to convey a convincing and accurate depiction of how life can feel for a twenty-three-year old man living in contemporary Dublin.

By following the many of the ideas set out by Gene Youngblood, such as utilizing non-linear storytelling and experimenting with repeating images, like the motif of the eye throughout *Life in Blocks*. The film exceeds conventional storytelling, allowing for a more engaging experience focusing on atmosphere, emotion and relaying fragmented memories of life.

As well as using the medium of film the project heavily focuses on sound and music to guide the audience through the project. The audio and music sometimes play more pivotal roles within the film than the visuals, influenced by the expanded cinema techniques blurring the boundaries between medias.

The plethora of artists mentioned throughout the project influenced the outcome of a uniquely personal film, that used a wide variety of techniques to elicit an array of emotions that could also be universally interpreted by the audience. Artists like Bruce Nauman helped to conjure a sense of fear and intrusion through his pieces like, *Poke in the Eye, Ear, Nose*. Other visual artists like Hollis Frampton conveyed ways of portraying introspection and nostalgia in his films *Nostalgia*. These themes heavily influenced the project *Life in Blocks*. The project referenced a variety of musicians to help craft an emotionally dense and engaging soundtrack. Taking reference from a multitude of different genres like jazz and ambient music. Jazz musicians such as saxophone Albert Ayler and drummer Antonio Sanchez influenced the project in how they physically play their instruments. The timber and a lack of distinctive tempo and form gave the musicians free reign to express themselves as much as possible through their instrument.

William Basinski's ambient piece *The Disintegration Loops* was used as a reference to portray destruction and decay over time, which are themes explored within *Life in Blocks*.

Conclusion

The project was a success with the exhibition being screened in Nick's Coffee Shop in Ranelagh on the 18th and 19th of April, with an additional screening held at IADT on the 29th of April after the submission date.

In the future the artist looks to refine some of the editing within the Life in Blocks to create more fluid transitions between scenes. There are some edits within the film that need readjustment but could not be made due to time constraints.

Future opportunities may include exhibiting the installation in some of the art galleries previously mentioned in this thesis, (like the Temple Bar art gallery, as well as other galleries like the Douglas and Hyde Gallery as well as IMMA) as well as submitting the installation to film and art festivals.

The artist is presently studying music and had previously not delved into audio visual language and art before this project. 'Life in Blocks' allowed the artist to express themselves through visual media and music. This has opened the artist up to the possibility of creating future expanded cinema pieces and audio-visual art. If the artist produces future expanded cinema projects, they would be mixed in Dolby Atmos to create a complete surround sound immersive feel to the project.

Future projects might expand further into mixed media including but not limited to; sculpture, live music performance and graphic design

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