

The Image You Missed



A film between
Donal Foreman | Arthur MacCaig

Funded by the Arts Council of Ireland



Featured in the film series

IT MAY BE
THAT BEAUTY
HAS STRENGTHENED
OUR RESOLVE

Ireland/USA/France | 73mins | 2K digital | 4:3

Written, directed & produced by Donal Foreman

Executive produced by Nicole Brenez & Philippe Grandrieux

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www.donalforeman.com/theimageyoumissed

Synopsis



An Irish filmmaker grapples with the legacy of his estranged father, the late documentarian Arthur MacCaig, through MacCaig's decades-spanning archive of the conflict in Northern Ireland.

Drawing on over 30 years of unique and never-seen-before imagery, *The Image You Missed* is a documentary essay film that weaves together a history of the Northern Irish 'Troubles' with the story of a son's search for his father. In the process, the film creates a candid encounter between two filmmakers born into different political moments, revealing their contrasting experiences of Irish nationalism, the role of images in social struggle, and the competing claims of personal and political responsibility.

Previous screenings



International Film Festival Rotterdam, Netherlands, January 2018

Dublin International Film Festival, Ireland, March 2018

CPH:DOX, Denmark, March 2018

Cinéma du Réel ([French Competition](#)), France, March 2018

Winner: Prize for Best Original Music

Winner: Special Mention, French Competition

BAFICI ([Avant-Garde & Genre Competition](#)), Argentina, April 2018

Winner: Grand Jury Prize for Avant-Garde & Genre Competition

IndieLisboa ([International Competition](#)), Portugal, April 2018

Art of the Real at Lincoln Center, New York City, USA, May 2018

Edinburgh International Film Festival, UK, June 2018

Galway Film Fleadh, Ireland, July 2018

Guanajuato Film Festival ([Documentary Competition](#)), Mexico, July 2018

Dokufest ([International Competition](#)), Kosovo, August 2018

Melbourne International Film Festival, Australia, August 2018

Press

“Premiering in a sidebar at Rotterdam, this elliptical compendium of archival and newly shot footage quickly became a ‘buzz’ picture among the event’s more ardently cinephile attendees ... [An] engaging and quietly rewarding affair ... An impressionistic primer on tumultuous Ulster affairs during and after the Troubles.”

—Neil Young, *The Hollywood Reporter*

“A moving and thoughtful first-person essay film ... No longer beholden to his elder’s legacy, Foreman seems poised to carve out one of his own.”

—Jordan Cronk, *Film Comment*

“It was also great to get another look at Donal Foreman’s superb *The Image You Missed*. Following up *Out of Here*, a narrative hit here in 2013, Foreman’s new film elegantly intertwines Irish history and a study of parenthood to form an intelligent cinematic essay.”

—Donald Clarke, *The Irish Times*

“Foreman has ... plumbed his own unique circumstance to explore deep, delicate questions of national socio-political soul-searching. ... In seeking to locate an individual through his art, Foreman has demonstrated above all his own profound prowess as a maker and interrogator of images.”

—Ronan Doyle, *Scannain.com*

“A beautifully choreographed conversation between two men caught in a perpetual state of diaspora ... Each film is a mission impossible, but Foreman’s plays out at depths few others normally venture in.”

—Leonardo Goi, *The Film Stage*

“A meticulous and challenging comparison of two different ways of being a man, a citizen, and a filmmaker ... A vibrant call for new fictions to be collectively written.”

—Chloé-Galibert-Lainé, *DesistFilm.com*

“Poetic and poignant ... Engaging and evocative ... A film full of vulnerability and bravery ... The profound reflections of a seasoned filmmaker.”

—Síomha McQuinn, *Film Ireland*

“[An] exquisite, elliptical autobiographical essay film ... one of the most charged and beautifully weighted essay films of recent times.”

—Kieran Corliss (*Deputy Editor of Sight & Sound*)

“The film poses cinema itself as the instrument that, at once, links the dispersed members of a political movement, and serves as the thin thread that connects father to son, across time, and beyond death.”

—Leo Goldsmith, *The Brooklyn Rail*

“The question of what we’re really looking for when we partake in the act of watching [was] brilliantly explored in *The Image You Missed* ...”

—Kiva Reardon, *Filmmaker Magazine*



Welcome to our battle of images! An Irishman never speaks to the person in front of him, but to an image.

—Paddy Doherty in *Nous étions tous des noms d'arbres* (1983, Armand Gatti)



Production notes



Origins

The inspiration for *The Image You Missed* can be traced to the Paris apartment of Arthur MacCaig where, in 2009, Donal Foreman sorted through MacCaig's belongings shortly after his death. Here, he discovered his father's extensive archive of film reels, videotapes, photos and notebooks—a powerful experience that would serve as the foundation of the film.

The material

After a funding award from the Arts Council of Ireland, work on the film began in earnest in November 2015. Foreman spent six months delving into MacCaig's archive, now mostly housed at the Irish Film Archive in Dublin, reviewing all of the surviving raw footage from MacCaig's films, most of which had never been seen publicly.

During this time, Foreman also returned to his own filmmaking archive, dating back to his first efforts as an 11 year old in 1997, and along the way, unearthed the work of a third filmmaker: his mother's uncle, Seán Brennan, who shot over seven hours of 8mm home movie footage in the late 1960s in Ireland and the US. Brennan's work had never been digitized or publicly seen before, and it ended up playing an important supporting role in the fabric of *The Image You Missed*.

In March 2016, after the archival research was completed and as the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising unfolded, Foreman started shooting new material for the film, travelling

through Dublin, Belfast and Paris with a Digital Bolex camera and MacCaig's own 16mm cine lenses with which he had begun his filmmaking career in the 1970s.

The edit

In the end, the film was sculpted out of over 100 hours of footage from the archives of MacCaig, Foreman and Brennan - from 16mm and 8mm film reels to practically every analog video format of the past 50 years. It was edited in New York City over an intensive period of a year and a half, during which time rough cuts of the film were workshopped at the Brooklyn Filmmakers Collective.



The sound

For the majority of its production and post-production, the film was very much a solo affair, but in the final months, Foreman enlisted the help of the sound designer Andrew Kirwan, as well as three composers: celebrated Irish jazz musician, Michael Buckley, Israeli electronic musician Ohal Grietzer, and Berlin-based Irish musician Christopher Colm Morrin. The work of all three formed part of a complex soundscape designed in collaboration with Kirwan. The film is narrated by both Foreman and MacCaig, with MacCaig's narration drawn exclusively from interviews with and texts written by the filmmaker over his 35-year career and performed by the New York anarchist filmmaker and novelist Ernest Larsen.

“It May Be That Beauty Has Strengthened Our Resolve”

After seeing a rough cut in early 2017, the French critic and Cinémathèque Française programmer Nicole Brenez, who had participated as an advisor on the film since its inception, offered to include *The Image You Missed* in the film series she produces with filmmaker and artist Philippe Grandrieux. The series, entitled “It May Be That Beauty Has Strengthened Our Resolve”, began in 2011 with Grandrieux's film about Japanese radical filmmaker Masao Adachi, and now includes titles on René Vautier and the Newsreel collective.

A note on...

IT MAY BE

THAT BEAUTY

HAS STRENGTHENED

OUR RESOLVE

In response to André S. Labarthe and Janine Bazin's wonderful series *Cinéastes de notre temps*, dedicated to classical auteurs described by their spiritual heirs from the Nouvelle Vague, our series pays tribute to known and unknown filmmakers who have participated with guns, cameras, or both simultaneously, in the struggles of resistance and of liberation throughout the 20th century, and to those who today continue to fight against all dictatorships. Fearless and often heroic auteurs, they are examples of relevance and courage for which the cinema thankfully represents their collective history; filmmakers of the struggles for liberation, often with romantic trajectories, are also those who have most encountered censorship, prison, death, and today are consigned to oblivion.

The series does not stem from a dogmatic list of the rules of the game. It is precisely the opposite, which conducts the movement of films; a gesture of freedom, without weight, by which the filmmaker can witness the work of another filmmaker, of his aesthetic, ethical, and political engagement, of his struggle with the world and with himself.

Each film from the series is thus in itself a particular object which will have been thought out, produced, and realized according to the necessity that it brings. Each film addresses a common concern shared by all the others—that of transmitting the power of cinema when cinema and life are so deeply affected by one another. It is this concern that forms the unity of the series.

—Philippe Grandrieux, Nicole Brenez.

Films in the series

Masao Adachi (Philippe Grandrieux, 2011, 72')

Salut et Fraternité. Les images selon René Vautier (Oriane Brun Moschetti, 2015, 67')

The Image You Missed (Donal Foreman, 2017, 73')

Newsreel : du cinéma anonyme vers des luttes nommées (James Schneider & Ivora Cusak, 2018)

Q&A with the director



The film seems like quite a departure from your first feature, *Out of Here*, which was a more or less linear, character-driven fiction film. Was that a conscious decision on your part?

Although I was developing the idea of a film about my father's archive long before I shot *Out of Here*, I think after that shoot I definitely felt an urge to push myself in a different direction. Most of my previous work, both documentary and fiction, tended towards the observational, sensual, experiential... I had been wary of anything remotely didactic or expository. At the same time, since film school I'd developed a real passion for radical political cinema, particularly films that linked militant political ideas with formal experimentation, such as the essay films of Jean-Luc Godard, Chris Marker and Robert Kramer. But I hadn't really found an outlet for that passion in my own films. So while *Out of Here* felt like a natural summation—and end point—of the series of shorts I had directed over the previous five years, *TIYM* presented an opportunity to really challenge and transform my own practice as a filmmaker. It had a lot of elements that were completely new to me: the use of voiceovers, archival footage, overt political and historical material, not to mention its overall essayistic, self-reflexive tone.

How did you find the film's structure?

Not very easily! This was one thing *TIYM* has in common with some of my previous short films – particularly *You're Only What I See Sometimes*, *Repeat* and *The Ghost Said*, fiction films which all have non-linear structures. With those films, I had no idea how the scenes or even

individual shots would be arranged until I got in the editing room. It was the same on *TIYM*, albeit on a much larger, more complex scale. I knew from my original outline that the film was going to consist of an interplay between my archive, Arthur's, and images of the contemporary world, and I had a notion early on that the film would be divided into three thematic chapters. But beyond that, I really had to discover it in the editing, through trial and error. A lot of time had to be spent exploring unexpected links and associations between images, and even longer spent finding the right balance between the different elements—our respective archives, voices, times, as well as the personal and political narratives...

But as well as being an opportunity to challenge yourself as a filmmaker, this is clearly an intensely personal film.

For sure—and in a way I find it difficult to separate the personal challenges from the stylistic ones. For me, the film is really an expansion and evocation of the experience of sorting through Arthur's apartment after his death—the difficult and uncanny ordeal of piecing together an image of him through his archive, through what he left behind; someone who I didn't really know, but feel inextricably connected to. This "piecing together" of another also inevitably becomes a reflection on myself and my own biases and preoccupations. So it became a working through of my feelings and confusions not only about my father but about Ireland, cinema and politics—and it was these multiple levels that made it a worthwhile project for me.

There are a few elements in the film that come from outside of Arthur's archive, most notably your mother's uncle, Seán Brennan.

Seán's films were something I stumbled across in my mother's house as I was sorting through Arthur's archive. I had known Seán as a child—he had seen and encouraged my first few attempts at filmmaking—and I was aware he had shot some home movies years ago, but I hadn't realized the extent of it: seven hours of really gorgeous Kodachrome 8mm footage from the late '60s, ranging from travelogues to short fiction skits and animations. I had a hunch that the material would be useful as a counterpoint to Arthur and as a sort of alternate cinematic ancestor for myself. Sean's work, for me, is really emblematic of the middle-class Dublin world that I grew up in, removed from the rumblings up North, as well as resonating with the sensual and playful style of my previous films.

The other two key "alien" elements in the film are excerpts of dialogue from two really important Northern Irish films of the 1980s that I wish were better known. *Maeve* (Pat Murphy, 1982) is a unique and beautiful film that tackles the Northern Ireland conflict through a defiantly feminist, modernist lens. It was also, I've learned from Pat, partly made in reaction *against* Arthur's first film *The Patriot Game*, and a feeling that its linear and didactic approach had failed to represent the "political truth" of the situation. In *TIYM*, I've excerpted several audio clips of the eponymous Maeve arguing with her IRA militant ex-boyfriend about the merits and limits of Irish Republicanism and armed struggle. I've also taken a single line from *Nous étions tous des nom d'arbres* (Armand Gatti, 1983), a film made by the French avant-garde theater maker with a Derry youth group that also features some deep reflections on the function of images within the conflict.

The film forgoes a lot of the techniques one might expect from biographical or historical documentary—like, say, talking head interviews.

Actually, interviews were originally going to play a significant part in the film, and I did record a few with my father's friends and collaborators: his editor and ex-girlfriend, his sister, his writing partner, his cameraman... There is a brief medley of these voices that remain in the film, but I realized that at the heart of the project was my attempt to make sense of Arthur through his archive. Interspersing the accounts of those who, unlike me, knew him intimately, was only going to dilute that sense of mediation and ghostliness.

It's also important to me that this is a film made primarily *through* and *with* his images, not a biopic that uses his images as illustration. The idea from the start was to try to think through the film's concerns *in* the relationships between images, and between images and sounds, and let the film's style and structure emerge from that.

When we see filmmakers make films about their parents or family, we also expect the author to be more of a front and center, on-screen presence in their own film. Here, your presence is more subtle. Why is that?

My own visibility in the film is something I definitely wrestled with. I was wary of the film's personal aspect overshadowing the political and cinematic concerns, even while they are all obviously deeply intertwined. It's perhaps parallel to my instincts on *Out of Here*, where I was determined for the film to transcend the limits of its main character's aimless, depressed attitude and encompass a wider view of the city and its problems.

In my first conception of the film, the narration was going to be a third person dialogue between two fictional characters, sorting through our archives as if from another time. It took me probably longer than it should have to realize I was bending over backwards to avoid the most apt solution: simply to narrate the film in my own voice. But I still chose to be very careful and sparing in how I used that voiceover, seeing it as one mosaic element among others. As for my on-screen appearances: I tried to treat myself as a ghost in the archive in the same way that Arthur was, while giving us both a more of a "present-tense" presence in our competing voiceovers.

How do you feel now that it's over? Is there any kind of closure or catharsis for you?

There's a line that used to be the last line in the film, spoken by me. I ended up removing it because it felt a little too conceptual for where I wanted the film to end, but it's one answer to that question: "Cinema is the art of conjuring ghosts, not of getting rid of them."



Cast and crew

Directed, produced & edited by Donal Foreman

Executive producers Nicole Brenez
..... Philippe Grandrieux

Images Arthur MacCaig
..... Donal Foreman
..... Sean Brennan

Cinematography Arthur MacCaig
..... Donal Foreman
..... Seán Brennan
..... Philippe Gandner
..... Piers McGrail
..... Theo Robichet
..... Jean-Marc Pillas
..... Richard Prost
..... Arlette Girardot
..... Hugues de Rosière

Original music Ohal Grietzer
..... Michael Buckley
..... Christopher Colm Morrin

Sound design..... Andrew Kirwan

Featuring Arthur MacCaig
..... Donal Foreman
..... Maeve Foreman
..... and Ernest Larsen as Arthur's voice

Script editor Patrick Harrison

Title design Brendan Foreman

Post-production services Windmill Lane, Dublin
..... ProMedia, New York City

Donal Foreman



Donal Foreman (born in Dublin, 1985) is an Irish filmmaker living in New York City. He has been making films since he was 11 years old. Since then, he has written, directed and edited over fifty short films, and in 2013 he completed his first feature film, *Out of Here*. The film was

theatrically released at the Irish Film Institute in 2014, receiving 4-star reviews from major newspapers including the Irish Times, the Independent and the Sunday Business Post. The Irish Times praised the film as "profound, humorous and touching" with "note-perfect performances".

At age 17, he won the title of Ireland's Young Filmmaker of the Year, and more recently he has been nominated for the Rising Star award at the Irish Film & TV Awards, and awarded the Discovery Award from the Dublin Film Critics Circle. He's an alumnus of the Irish National Film School and the Berlinale Talent Campus, and, since 2011, a member of the Brooklyn Filmmakers Collective. As a film critic, he has written for many publications including Cahiers du Cinema and Filmmaker Magazine, and as a teaching artist, he was worked with public school students across New York City for the Tribeca Film Institute among other organisations.

Selected filmography (as writer, director & editor)

<i>Removal</i>	(2006, short)
<i>You're Only What I See Sometimes</i>	(2008, short)
<i>Declarations</i>	(2009, short series)
<i>Pull</i>	(2010, short)
<i>Refuge</i>	(2011, short)
<i>6 x Occupy</i>	(2012, short series)
<i>The Ghost Said</i>	(2012, short diptych)
<i>Out of Here</i>	(2013, feature)
<i>The Image You Missed</i>	(2017, feature)

Arthur MacCaig (1948-2008)



Born in Weehawken, New Jersey in 1948, but living most of his life in Paris, Arthur MacCaig directed and produced political documentaries for cinema and TV beginning in 1978. He received a degree in anthropology from the University of Hawaii in 1971, and a degree from France's National School of Cinema in 1977.

He is best remembered for his debut feature (and film school graduate project), *The Patriot Game* (1979), a searingly intense history of the conflict in Northern Ireland narrated unapologetically from the point of view of Northern nationalists. Produced by Iskra, the French film collective founded by Chris Marker, it was described as “thorough and thoughtful” by Janet Maslin in the New York Times and “informative, vivid and partisan” by J. Hoberman in the Village Voice. It was also described by the UK Foreign Office as “damaging and highly critical of Her Majesty’s

Government.” MacCaig went to make seven more films in Northern Ireland, charting the evolution of the struggle over a 25 year period and, along the way, earning unprecedented access to the clandestine Irish Republican Army.

He also made several films about another nationalist struggle: that of the Basque-Spanish conflict, beginning in 1984 with *Euskadi: the Stateless Nation*, which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival and was described as “serious, intelligent, and effective” by Libération. Although never produced, MacCaig was also the author of several feature-length screenplays co-written with journalist Stéphane Gillet, mostly based on his experiences filming in the Basque country and Northern Ireland.

He died in Belfast in 2008.

Selected Filmography (as director)

<i>The Patriot Game</i>	(1979, feature)
<i>Euskadi: The Stateless Nation</i>	(1984, feature)
<i>The Jackets Green</i>	(1987, short)
<i>Irish Ways</i>	(1989, feature)
<i>Against Her Majesty</i>	(1991, short)
<i>Irish Voices</i>	(1995, short)
<i>I Am Become Death</i>	(1995, feature)
<i>War and Peace in Ireland</i>	(1998, feature)
<i>Song of Ireland</i>	(2002, short)

The composers

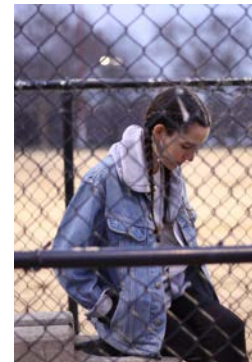
Michael Buckley

Regarded as the most important and influential musician on the Irish jazz scene, saxophonist/ flautist and composer Michael Buckley has been playing professionally since the age of six when critics hailed him as a child prodigy. Born in Dublin city in 1971, Michael first came to prominence on an international level when, aged 10, he played flute with the legendary saxophonist George Coleman in the National Concert Hall. Buckley has found his own unique voice playing both on saxophone and flute. As a producer, he has countless albums from jazz to traditional to hip hop to his credit. As a session musician, he has collaborated on recordings with Glen Hansard, Donovan, The Cranberries and The Corrs.



Ohal Grietzer

Ohal is a composer and mixed-media artist working primarily with audio and video. She is focused on the production and performance of electronic music using synthesizers, field recordings, and voice. Ohal's score for Lior Shamriz's film *Cancelled Faces* and her debut album *Acid Park* were released last year on Styles Upon Styles. She has previously worked on music and film with TV On The Radio's Tunde Adebimpe, collaborated with Tyondai Braxton and toured in Rain Machine. Ohal has performed her work at the Fridman Gallery, MoMA PS1, and NTS Radio. She is currently working on a second album and is completing the score for Tzion Avraham Hazan's video installation *Ashkelon Augmented*.



Christopher Colm Morrin

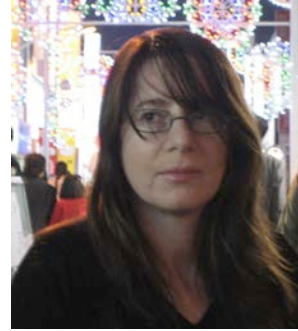
Previously known as Robotnik, Christopher Colm Morrin is a Dublin born poet, singer-songwriter, filmmaker, film composer and visual artist currently based in Berlin. In 2012 he finished Robotnik's second album *The Death Of Robotnik* in Berlin's Funkhaus studios. He moved to Berlin at the end of 2012 to follow a new path and take time out from being a live performer. Since then, he has recorded the ambient soundscape album *Real World* (2015) and poetic video installation *Black Hole Berlin* (2016).



The executive producers

Nicole Brenez

Nicole Brenez is the author and editor of several books and the curator of the Cinémathèque française's avant-garde film series since 1996. She contributes to several film magazines, including *Cahiers du Cinéma*, *Trafic* and *Sight & Sound*. She has organized many film events and retrospectives, notably “Jeune, dure et pure, A History of Avant-Garde Cinema in France” for the French Cinémathèque in 2000 (80 screenings, 400 films). She is also the curator for the Experimental Section for the Cinéma du Réel Film Festival since 2010, and organized series or events at the Louvre Museum, Lincoln Center, Anthology Film Archives and the Tate Modern.



Philippe Grandrieux

Philippe Grandrieux's work crosses boundaries: TV, experimentation, video art, research film, documentary essays, installations... In the 1980s, he worked in collaboration with the French Institut National de Audiovisuel and the television channel La Sept Arte where he helped develop new cinematographic forms and formats that called into question some basic principles of film writing: for instance, the conventions behind documentary, information and film essays. His two first feature films, *Sombre* and *La Vie Nouvelle* were real milestones in terms of photography, sound work and narrative or figurative experimentation. Grandrieux's films deliver intense sensory experiences, at the junction of genre cinema and experimental forms of cinema, to stimulate the audience's psychological investment. They display a world of energies, rooted in sensations and affects.



Additional crew

Andrew Kirwan (*sound design*)

Andrew Kirwan is a sound designer and composer based in Dublin, Ireland. Graduating with a diploma in sound engineering and an degree in music technology, he splits his time between working as a freelance composer and working on sound design for animation in Windmill Lane, one of Ireland's largest post production houses. His past projects in sound design include *Coda*, which was shortlisted for an Academy Award for Best Animation, and *Dangermouse*, which won Best Music & Sound Design at the Irish Animation Awards.



Ernest Larsen (*Arthur's voice*)

Ernest Larsen is a New York-based novelist, filmmaker, media critic, and curator. His new book, *The Trial Before the Trial*, a factual expose of the secret grand jury system in the U.S, is forthcoming from Automedia. He is co-curator of the DVD sets, *Disruptive Film: Everyday Resistance to Power*, Vol. 1 & 2, from Facets Multimedia, that gathers dozens of short-form experimental/political films. With his collaborator, Sherry Millner, he has produced many films including *Rock the Cradle* (2012) and *How Do Animals and Plants Live?* (2018).



Seán Brennan (1927-1997) (*cinematography*)

Born in Dublin in 1927, Seán Brennan lived in New York City with his partner Martin from the 1950s until a few months before his death in 1997. After working for decades as a graphic artist for various companies, he eventually turned freelance so that he had more time to travel and watch movies. In the late 1960s, he started shooting 8mm home movies, ranging from travelogues to short fiction skits and animations, accumulating over seven hours of material. He apparently lost interest in the practice by the early 1970s. Excerpts of his films feature in *The Image You Missed*.



Piers McGrail (*cinematography*)

Piers McGrail shot his first feature, *Kelly+Victor* in 2011, which recieved a BAFTA for 'Outstanding Debut'. Since then he has shot a number of features that have premiered at major festivals including Sundance, Tribeca and Toronto. A classmate of Donal Foreman at the Irish National Film School, they collaborated on nine short films together and Foreman's debut feature *Out of Here* (2013). Clips from their work together, most notably *The Ghost Said* (2014) and *Out of Here*, are featured in *The Image You Missed*.





Filmmaking is nothing more than people who find themselves in front of a camera, confronted by a filmmaker and their own experiences. In effect, they must have the courage to account for their lives. Where are you coming from? What have you done? Why and how? What was the motivation and sense of your actions? What were the consequences for yourself and others?

— *Arthur MacCaig*