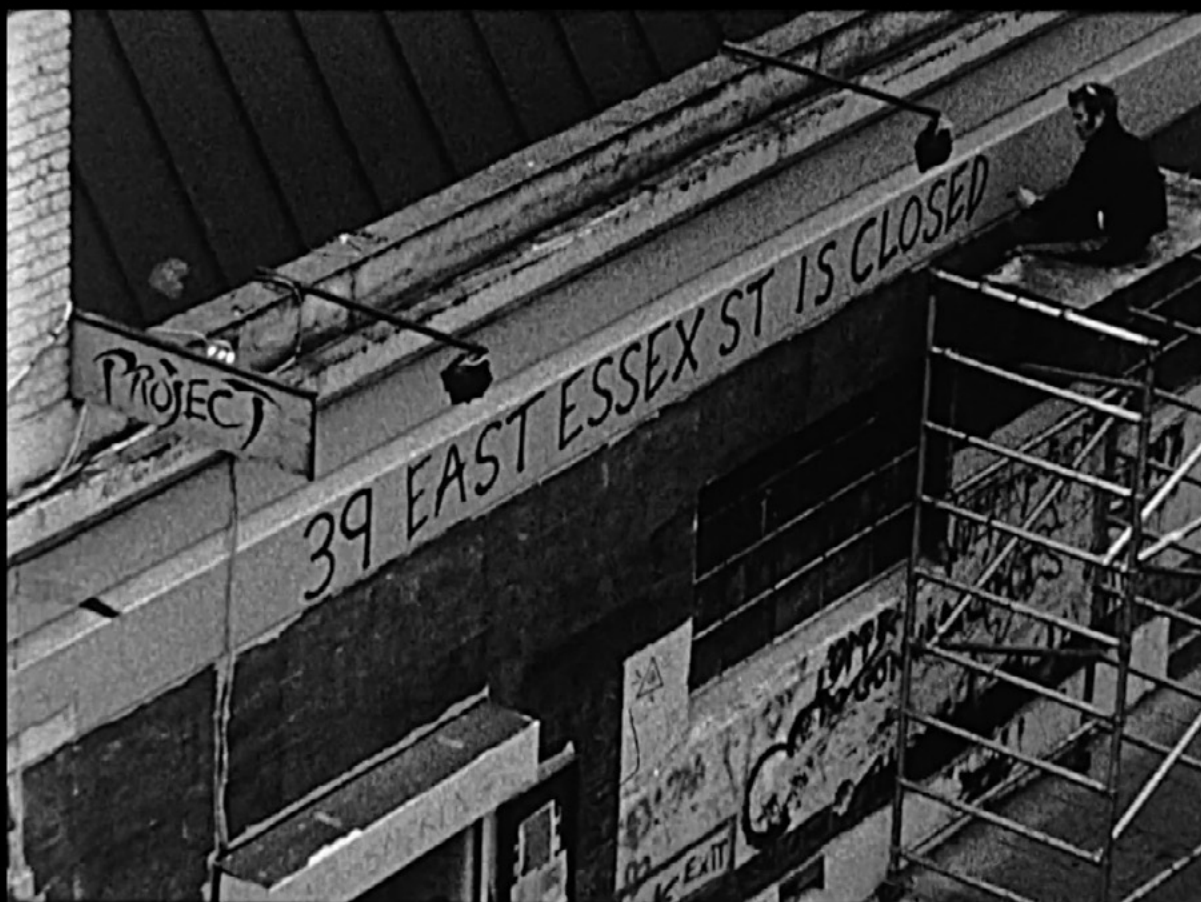


Active Archive - Slow Institution: The Long Goodbye

Project Arts Centre, Dublin, 2019

BRIAN HAND PROJECT '98 - 'under the one roof'

1998/2018



Still from Brian Hand: *PROJECT '98*. 16mm film transferred to digital, b/w, sound.
Film and editing: Brian Hand 1998/2018. Courtesy the artist and Project Arts Centre, Dublin
Supported by Project Arts Centre within the framework of Active Archive – Slow Institution.

In August 2018, Project Arts Centre launched *Active Archive–Slow Institution, 2017-2020*, a major research project that delves into the institution's rich 50+ year history. The inaugural event on 30 August presented a recently recovered 16mm documentary. The film is a portrait of the former Dollard Print Works, which had housed Project between 1974 and 1998, and was made by the artist Brian Hand during the final days of the largely dilapidated building.

Together with Hand, we prepared a double projection that juxtaposed the digitized raw 16mm footage with his newly re-edited version. Hand's commentary set the documentary material in the wider context of the late 1990s Celtic Tiger era, [1] and points out inter-relationships with the present. Hand reflects on the histories of Project in the context of social, cultural, economic, and political history. The collage of quotes and sources include fragments of a quixotic speech given by Peter Sutherland (1946-2018, chairman of the investment bank Goldman Sachs) [2] at *No Ifs, No Butts, No Violence*, a 2007 exhibition of the work of writer, playwright, actor, and politician Mannix Flynn in Gruel café, Dublin.

'The film work's title, *under the one roof*, takes its cue from three gestures,' says Hand: 'A 1960s idea of the multidisciplinary arts centre; the 1980s proposal to demolish a derelict Temple Bar and create a central Bus Station; and the expansion of recent museum practices to capture and tame dissent and antagonism. The film is also about memory and the fallout of representation between the edits and the challenge of even attempting to sum up the closure of the old printing factory turned arts centre under the one art form.'

Project '98 was the last documentation that was made at the premises. It consists of 16mm film and video footages that capture the last days of the Project building, as well as bits and pieces of in-between actions, and the making of the last event of *Demolishing Project–39 East Essex Street is Closed*, which took place from 2–14 February 1998 and was orchestrated by

late Maurice O'Connell. [3] The footages were shot as random act of walkthroughs during quiet times, and as documentation of the building, rehearsals and events.

For the exhibition *The Long Goodbye*, Hand presented a new five-channel video work edited from his *Project '98*, the video documentary material he shot in February 1998. Re-engaging with this material, he continues a conversation with his edited single channel video *under the one roof*, and the original silent black and white 16mm film from the same period. These short films largely explore the interior of the building, its lights and darks, a poetics of demolition, the sounds of the last gig, and the materiality of Hi-8 video. Most shots are recorded on a tripod. Video 1 mostly depicts the abandoned theatre guided by the resonating sounds of an LP of a Hammond organ. Video 2 presents the technicians' spaces. Grunge guitar and drums flow through Video 3, together with shots of performers and audience. Video 4 is shot mostly in the green room and backstage exits, capturing small details on doors and walls. Video 5 records the culmination of Maurice O'Connell's *Demolishing Project–39 East Essex Street is Closed*, in which the roof is 'burnt' and broken down.

Brian Hand had a strong artistic relationship with Project which began in the 1980s when he studied at National College of Art and Design (NCAD) in Dublin (1984-89). His solo exhibition *Threefold Prediction* (November 1997) occupied Project's two gallery spaces before breaking into a storeroom at the rear of the premises. It consisted of: a video projection, previously shown at PS1, NYC (where the research began and most of the work was made); a sound work; printed images; and an installation in the rear space.

Prior to this, the media art group Blue Funk, [4] of which Hand was among the founding members, was invited to work with the institutional archives of Project in 1993-94, a project that did make it to fruition. Based on his interest and involvement with archives as an artist, Hand was commissioned in March 1998 to prepare

a feasibility study to support the planning of the future archive and its operation in the forthcoming new Project building. On several occasions, Hand photographed exhibitions and projects including *Somewhere Near Vada* (curated by visual artist Jaki Irvine), the exhibition which opened the new building on 12 June 2000 and spread through all its spaces.

BIO

Brian Hand's art practice is broadly concerned with creatively exploring and researching events, spaces, agents, and ideas from the past. Hand has made many temporary public works and time-based installations, often in site-responsive ways. He believes that we can find alternative images in the past that disrupt the naturalness of the present. Hand has worked on several collaborative projects with Orla Ryan.

NOTES

[1] The term 'Celtic Tiger' refers to the strong economy of the Republic of Ireland during the mid-1990s and through the '00s, which was a period of rapid real economic growth fuelled by foreign direct investment. However, the boom was dampened by a subsequent property bubble, which resulted in a severe economic downturn. While Ireland was considered a poor country according to European standards in the early 1990s, the Irish economy expanded at an average rate of 9.4% between 1995 and 2000, and continued to grow at an average rate of 5.9% during the following decade, until 2008, when it fell into recession. Ireland's rapid economic growth has been described as a rare example of a Western country matching the growth of East Asian nations, meaning the 'Four Asian Tigers' (Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan).

[2] Peter Sutherland played a transformative role in the Irish economy and was responsible

for the 1992 reforms, which included free movement of goods, persons, capital, and services. He was Attorney general, director general of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), director general of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and chairman of BP among others. Between 1985 and 1989 he was European Commissioner for Competition. Irish independent politician Mannix Flynn, former board member of Irish Museum of Modern Art, and Hugh Lane Municipal Gallery Dublin, and Commissioner of Irish Lights, has served as a Dublin City Councillor since 2009. A well-known author and playwright, Flynn since 2006 has presented a series of public information arts installations at East Essex Street, Temple Bar (Dublin's International Cultural Quarter) which brought the subject of child abuse, institutionalisation, and human rights permanently into the public domain. His documentary feature film, *Land Without God*, examines the legacy of institutional abuse by the Irish Church and State over the last century through a deeply personal lens.

[3] The Demolishing Project—39 East Essex is Closed was conceptualised and organised by the late Maurice O'Connell who was 'artist-in-office' at Project July 1997–February 1998. The two-week event marked and celebrated the re-development of Project in Temple Bar. The series was the last project before reconstruction began. Running from 2–14 February 1998, it included 'slide shows, videos, installations, performances, rehearsals, roll calls, a bogus nightclub, ambient Project sounds and crude light shows.' (from the event's press release)

[4] The media art group Blue Funk was founded in 1990 by Evelyn Byrne, Brian Cross, Tom Green, Jaki Irvine, Valerie Connor, Brian Hand, and Kevin Kelly. The group were to set up a mixed media production studio (video, film, performance, sound), and facilitate technical support and networking of time-based arts, as well as presentation of moving image works with planned government funding. The group planned to establish a discursive platform, a forum for debate in relation to questions of art, the artist, and contemporary society.

Livia Páldi, Curator of Visual Arts