

**Desperate Optimists Productions**

*presents*



# CIVIC LIFE

Collection of short films written and directed by  
**Christine Molloy and Joe Lawlor**

Stills: [www.desperateoptimists.com/projects-cltour\\_hires.html](http://www.desperateoptimists.com/projects-cltour_hires.html)

Press: Margaret  
1-4 Hollybush Place, London, E2 9QX  
T. +447974101474  
E. [info@margaretlondon.com](mailto:info@margaretlondon.com)  
[www.margaretlondon.com](http://www.margaretlondon.com)

Distribution in the UK: Independent Cinema Office  
3rd Floor Kenilworth House, 79–80 Margaret Street, London, W1W 8TA  
T. +4420 7636 7120  
F. +4420 7636 7121  
E. [info@independentcinemaoffice.org.uk](mailto:info@independentcinemaoffice.org.uk)  
[www.independentcinemaoffice.org.uk/civiclif](http://www.independentcinemaoffice.org.uk/civiclif)

The CIVIC LIFE tour is a compendium of selected CIVIC LIFE films - including the award winning films, WHO KILLED BROWN OWL and JOY - offering an intriguing insight into the distinctive and compelling body of work that has informed the making of Christine Molloy and Joe Lawlor's critically acclaimed debut feature HELEN.

Since 2003 Molloy and Lawlor have been working on a unique and richly cinematic series of short films made in negotiation with local residents and community groups. At the centre of the work is the relationship these communities have to the environments in which they live and work. With CIVIC LIFE Molloy and Lawlor have generated a meditative and visually arresting body of work that is both theatrical and cinematic, experimental and highly accessible. All of the CIVIC LIFE films are shot on 35mm cinemascope making extensive use of the long take and involving largely non-professional casts made up of volunteers from the local communities.

Although each film has its own distinct qualities, arguably their real emotional power is only fully realised when they are seen together. For the CIVIC LIFE tour the selected films have been edited together without titles or credits and the resulting uncertainty, as to when one film ends and another begins, serves to draw out and intensify the overlapping themes of identity and place, belonging, hope, loss, and new beginnings.

The CIVIC LIFE tour is supported by the National Lottery through Arts Council England.



**Tiong Bahru**

UK/SINGAPORE | 2010 | Colour | 35mm | 1:2.35 | 19mins 28 seconds

Following three people of different ages over the course of one afternoon as they reach a crucial decision in their lives, TIONG BAHRU is a lyrical and thoughtful short film that explores ideas of belonging, place and family. Filmed on beautiful 35mm cinemascope in the hawker centre and market of the heritage estate of Tiong Bahru in Singapore, TIONG BAHRU features a cast of over 150 volunteers from Singapore.

Commissioned by the National Museum of Singapore in collaboration with the British Council. Supported by the National Lottery through Arts Council England, the Urban Redevelopment Authority, Singapore and the Singapore International Foundation.

**Joy**

UK | 2008 | Colour | 35mm | 1:2.35 | 9mins

JOY is a story about a 17-year-old girl, Joy, who has gone missing. The police stage a reconstruction of Joy's last known movements in a local park. But by the time the reconstruction is ended it is clear that what we are watching is more than a reconstruction of a teenager's last movements but rather a meditation on the fragility of youth.

Joy won the Prix UIP Rotterdam award at the International Film Festival Rotterdam 2008. The jury said of Joy:

"This is a wonderfully cinematic short film where content and form are in perfect balance. With its deliberate slow-motion and skillfully choreographed construction, Joy takes us on a journey not just across the public park of its setting, but on an intriguing imaginative journey."

Joy was joint winner of the Best Short Live Action award at Darklight Festival 2008.

Commissioned by Birmingham City Council with support from the National Lottery through Arts Council England.

**Daydream**

UK | 2007 | Colour | 35mm | 1:2.35 | 29mins

DAYDREAM is a highly poetic and meditative work tracing the connection between a city during a moment of great change and how this moment can be reflected in the emotional world of its citizens as they contemplate their lives at a particularly vulnerable juncture, caught between past and future, amidst a sea of transformation.

DAYDREAM was commissioned by the Liverpool Culture Company in partnership with Liverpool Biennial. Funded by the Liverpool Culture Company, as part of the Creative Communities Programme, supported with lottery money from the Millennium Commission and Arts Council England through the Urban Cultural Programme.

## **Leisure Centre**

UK/IRL | 2005 | Colour | 35mm | 1:2.35 | 17mins 40secs

LEISURE CENTRE was filmed in September 2005 in the new, only partly opened, leisure centre situated on Main Street, Ballymun and it follows a young man through the rooms and down the corridors of the building where he works as he struggles to come to terms with his new role as a father. It is his partner, the mother of his child, who helps him to open his eyes and imagine a better future for him and his young family.

Commissioned by Breaking Ground, the Ballymun Regeneration Ltd per cent for art commissioning programme with additional funding from Film London, British Council and Project Arts Centre.

## **Town Hall**

UK | 2005 | Colour | 35mm | 1:2.35 | 10mins 35secs

TOWN HALL was filmed on the 29th May 2005 in the stunning surrounds of the West Bromwich Town Hall with the involvement of over 200 local residents. In TOWN HALL the camera takes a restless, sweeping point of view on the issues that matter to the assembled local residents.

TOWN HALL was funded by the Greets Green Partnership New Deal for Communities, The Public and Arts Council England.

## **Twilight**

UK | 2005 | Colour | 35mm | 1:2.35 | 5mins 20secs

TWILIGHT is the fourth film in the Civic Life series in which desperate optimists look into the hopes and fears of the disparate communities upon which they turn their lens. Shot on a boat on the Tyne against the spectacular backdrop of the seven Tyne Bridges, TWILIGHT is an intimate exploration of the ebb and flow of life involving 5 residents from Tyneside. The film was shot on the 18 May 2005.

TWILIGHT was commissioned especially for *navigate*.

## **Moore Street**

IRL | 2004 | Swahili/English | Colour | 35mm | 1:2.35 | 5mins 45secs

MOORE STREET is a single tracking shot filmed on Dublin's famous MOORE STREET with members of the Dublin-based African production company, Arambe. In the film, which is a continuation of our fascination with changing urban terrains, we follow the thoughts of a young African woman in Ireland as she considers her future, and her unfolding sense of identity as she walks along the city street at night. MOORE STREET documents an iconic street in Dublin at an interval in its official re-development, where already the everyday hopes and dreams of new communities are reshaping the city as home. MOORE STREET was Part of Ireland's entry into the 26th São Paulo Bienal.

MOORE STREET has been co-produced by desperate optimists, The Cultural Relations Committee at the Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism/ An Roinn Ealaíon, Spóirt agus Turasoireachta and the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon and Project Arts Centre in partnership with British Council.

UK/IRL/SINGAPORE | 2004 - 2010 | Colour | 35mm | 1:2.35 | 73mins

1. DAYDREAM (EXTRACT NO.1)
2. WHO KILLED BROWN OWL
3. TWILIGHT
4. DAYDREAM (EXTRACT NO.2)
5. TOWN HALL (EXTRACT)
6. LEISURE CENTRE
7. JOY
8. MOORE STREET
9. TIONG BAHRU

Complete cast and crew lists for each film can be found on:  
<http://www.desperateoptimists.com/civiclif/index.html>

Born in Dublin, Ireland Christine Molloy (b 1965) and Joe Lawlor (b 1963) studied theatre in the UK in the late 80s. From 1992 to 1999 they devised, directed and performed in six internationally acclaimed touring theatre shows before shifting their attention towards moving image based work. Between 2000 and 2003 they directed a number of episodic, interactive works for the internet, and large-scale community video projects for galleries. Between 2003 and 2010 Christine Molloy and Joe Lawlor, produced, wrote and directed 10 acclaimed short films, under the title CIVIC LIFE. All shot on 35mm, the CIVIC LIFE films have screened extensively around the world including screenings at the 33rd Telluride Film Festival, the 36th International Film Festival Rotterdam, the 49th Thessaloniki International Film Festival and IndieLisboa'09. HELEN, their acclaimed debut feature film, premiered at the Edinburgh International Film Festival in June 2008 before screening at over 50 film festivals worldwide.

The collection of short films, known as the CIVIC LIFE series, have been made over the past 7 years with a common set of rules running through them. Namely, they were all shot on 35mm cinemascope on relatively low budgets, they predominantly use long takes, and they mostly feature people from local communities with little or no acting experience. When we started out on this venture we didn't have a clear sense that one day we might screen the films together. It was perhaps when we had completed the fifth or sixth film in the series that we felt that there was something about this methodology that could lend itself to the films being assembled together.

Because these short films were each shot in one day, sometimes involving hundreds of people, with little or no time for rehearsals, the shoots themselves were often a case of staged chaos – a kind of under rehearsed performance event played out in real time over the minutes of the take. You see this in the completed films, the contradiction between something very composed and rigorously structured on the one hand, with people looking and waving into the camera on the other. Also, with the exception of TIONG BAHRU the most recent film in the series, we only ever processed one take from each shoot, in effect having nothing to 'edit'. Normally the editing process allows the filmmaker to eliminate or disguise mistakes but with CIVIC LIFE the imperfections and flaws have become one of the defining features of the works. The result is very much a cinema of 'making do'.

We like this very much and feel this tension between the slickness of 35mm production values and the rawness in the performances allows for something admittedly flawed but ultimately human and honest to come through.