

aemi

TOOLKIT FOR FILM ARTISTS

aemi's Toolkit for Film Artists brings practical information and resources together to support film artists at any stage of their career



FIRST THINGS FIRST: WHO ARE AEMI?

aemi is an arts council funded organisation, established in 2016 by Co-Directors Alice Butler and Daniel Fitzpatrick. aemi supports and regularly exhibits artist film, working in close partnership with a number of organisations, festivals, and other partners to build and develop audiences for artist film.

As an Arts Council funded organisation, aemi offers a range of supports to artists including individual artist support sessions, mentorship, information on funding deadlines, open calls for bursaries, residencies, festival submissions, as well as a regular newsletter, workshops, masterclasses and now an online toolkit for film artists.

aemi



the arts
council
is chomhairle
ealaíon

funding
the art of film

HOW TO USE THE TOOLKIT

You can navigate the sections in numerical order or skip between the sections that are most relevant to you using the contents page.

Highlight text, click on the link symbol on the toolbar, and select the section in our toolkit you want to explore.



THIS TOOLKIT OFFERS GUIDANCE FOR EACH STEP OF A FILM ARTISTS PRACTICE, INCLUDING WAYS YOU CAN EXPAND YOUR WORK THROUGH COLLABORATION WITH OTHERS AND ADVICE ON REACHING WIDER AUDIENCES.



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SECTION 1:

WHAT IS ARTIST FILM?

SITUATING YOUR PRACTICE

This toolkit is designed to help you understand different funding pathways, find audiences for your work and form a relationship with a community of peers.

One of the first steps in creating a pathway for your practice is a defining of terms in relation to your work.

As you develop your practice you are likely to encounter a lot of new terminology. Some of this can seem confusing.

Many of the terms in the expansive field of 'artist film' have been contested or in flux almost as long as they have been in use. There are fundamental ways in which it is important however to develop an understanding of these terms, how they are applied in different contexts and how to apply them to your own work.

We at aemi use the term '**artist film**' to describe a rich and varied field of practice that includes but is not limited to artist moving image, experimental film, found footage work, essay film and first-person independent cinema.

The 'artist film' term is a broad category that incorporates a multitude of approaches and mediums. **The term is tied however to the primacy of the artist in the creative process**, a mode of filmmaking that challenges or works in opposition to industrial or commercial structures.

Artist films are likely to be more experimental in nature, less reliant upon recognisable narrative forms or they may interrupt the traditional ways cinema is typically made, both behind and in front of the camera.

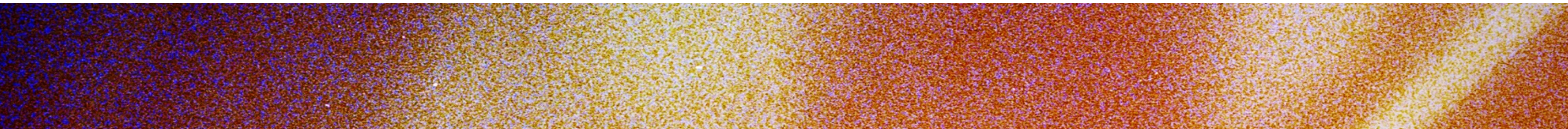
While an important strand of 'artist film' explores the unique properties of a given medium, we at aemi support and present work on all formats, from analogue film like super 8 to ultra high definition digital imagery.

To sustain your practice it can be helpful to be able to situate your work so that you can call on and contribute to a community or network of support made up of others working in similar ways.

It is useful to have an understanding of where you would like to find a place for your work in order to identify the right sources of funding for your practice.

aemi is primarily engaged with the cinema space as a platform for artist film. This means the screenings we present typically take place in a cinema and the artists we support are principally making films for cinema exhibition.

With the name ‘aemi’ - an acronym for ‘Artist and Experimental Moving Image’ - we also acknowledge the degree to which ‘artist moving image’ and ‘experimental film’ cultures are distinct but sometimes overlapping fields of practice.



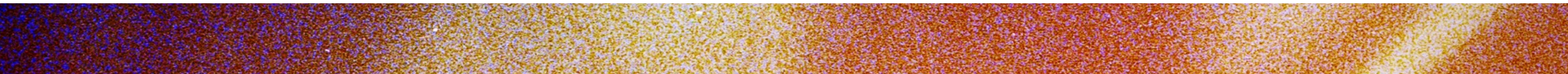
From the earliest stage of development it can be useful to think about an ideal screening context for your work. This can inform and enrich the creative development of a given project.

Film artists making work for a cinema context will typically make single screen work designed to be seen in its entirety from beginning to end. They will make work with a cinema audience in mind, gathered to see a film or series of films together from start to finish in a black box space. Film artists will typically screen their work at film festivals and in cinema spaces or event-based contexts.

By contrast, some visual artists will make moving image work with gallery installation specifically in mind. Their moving image work might form part of a larger sculpture, the work might be presented on a number of monitors or the meaning of the work might be dependent upon the mode of display. The artist might have no linear framework in mind and prefer viewers to exert their own agency in terms of how they experience the work, i.e. whether they are seated or standing, walking or stationery etc.

We at aemi acknowledge that there are always exceptions to the delineations above; some visual artists may well be very interested in making film work that should be experienced from start to finish and some film artists may well show or adapt their work for exhibition in gallery contexts after a festival run.

aemi always endeavours to support artists to make the best creative decisions for the work they are producing.





SITUATING YOUR PRACTICE



FILM ARTISTS WORKING WITHIN A CINEMATIC CONTEXT

IMAGE ABOVE:
DISSOLUTIONS: an experimental film festival
Presented by aemi and supported by Screen
Ireland and The Arts Council
September 2025

MOVING IMAGE WORK IN A VISUAL ARTS CONTEXT

IMAGE ABOVE:
Conor McFeely, Bea McMahon
GOD
The Complex, Dublin
December 13, 2024 – January 17, 2025

The best way to decide where your practice, or even an individual project, might fit is to **dive in and explore the field**.

Make it a priority to spend time getting to know the work of film artists and the field as a whole. Go to exhibitions, aemi screenings, artist and experimental film festivals, filmmaker Q&As and talk directly to other film artists. This will ultimately be the best way to properly situate your own practice.

To begin to familiarise yourself with the field, you could take a look at **our website**, watch the works available through **aemi's 'Artist in Focus' online exhibition platform** which regularly showcases works funded by the Arts Council through film, sign up to our newsletter. Identify works that appeal to you, visit artist websites, watch works in full whenever possible. Identify what it is that excites you about a specific project and what you want to achieve and why.

To see more on film artists the Arts Council have funded visit **this page** of their website. You can also watch every film that the Arts Council has funded through their **Reel Art** scheme on **IFI@Home**.

All of this should begin to give you a clear understanding of the scope and potential of artist film.



SECTION 2:

COMMUNICATING YOUR PRACTICE



COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGIES FOR FILM ARTISTS

Q: Do you have any guiding principles you follow when communicating your practice on your website, on social media or in funding applications?

A: “I try to use simple accessible language to describe a project without giving away too much of the experience of watching the film, or defining the potential reading or meaning of a work. All of my work is highly collaborative although sometimes I may initiate a project or work on it individually for a certain amount of time, with collaborators joining at various stages and for various amounts of time. With this in mind, I don't generally refer to a project as 'my film' or use language which personalises the authorship. I also try and credit collaborators on social media, my website and applications etc - although with word limits in printed programmes etc this can sometimes be difficult to maintain.”

FRANK SWEENEY (MAY 2025)

Communicating Your Practice is about engaging interest in your work from potential funders, collaborators, film programmers, curators and audiences through writing or speaking about your work and sharing details of your practice online and elsewhere.

This can involve creating an artist website, using social media to promote your practice and/or sharing details of individual projects in the form of a PDF, through a Pitch Deck or 'Press Kit'. These are documents about an individual work that you can share in a variety of contexts. They could include an artist statement (a short text about about your own practice), a bio (a text that describes your achievements), a logline (typically a one or two sentence description of your film) and a longer synopsis (a clear summary of an individual film or work).

These texts can help potential funders, film programmers, curators, arts professionals and audiences to gain an understanding of your work, the intentions behind your practice as well as any recurring themes or areas of interest.

Putting time and thought into each of these will enrich engagement with your work and open up possibilities for interpretation and engagement.

As elsewhere, **we strongly encourage you to spend time reading how other film artists write about and communicate their practice. Look at how they structure their websites when building or amending your own and use what you learn to strengthen and refine descriptions of your own work. If in doubt keep things as simple and as direct as possible.**



PDF PITCH DECK OR PRESS KIT

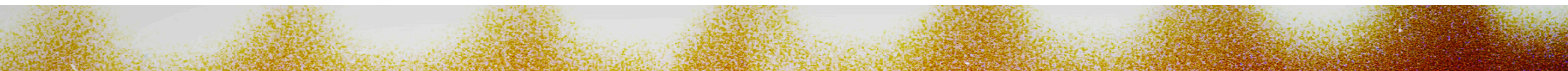
One of the principal ways artist filmmakers can share details of a specific project at different stages of its development is through a PDF in the form of a 'Pitch Deck' or 'Press Kit'. This can be anything from 1-3 pages depending on the work but should include some basics about you and your film.

Preparing a PDF Pitch Deck

In an initial phase a PDF Pitch Deck can be extremely useful in communicating your project to potential funders, collaborators, partners, exhibitors, programmers or curators. This is a document that you can and should revise and adapt over time depending on who you are sharing it with. Keep it as simple as possible initially and add elements as required.

This document could include:

- Your name, contact information and link to your website if you have one
- Your Bio and/or Artist Statement
- A Description of the project of approx 100-150 words
- When relevant, some background to the production; where the film is being made, collaborators, some research or quotes that inform an understanding of the project, how the project fits into the development of your practice as a film artist, any funding you may have in place etc
- Stills from any test footage or images of relevant research material
- Estimated duration of the film.



PDF PRESS KIT

At a later stage then, once the project is complete, you can revise the Pitch Deck so that it becomes what is typically described as a Press Kit or Electronic Press Kit (EPK).

This is a very useful document that you can use in a variety of contexts but particularly when securing film festival screenings for your project. This PDF will typically contain any and all information that a programmer might find useful when trying to find a slot for your film in their festival or event.

This document might include:

- Your name, contact information and link to your website if you have one
- Your Bio / Artist's Statement
- Relevant film info, eg, Film Title, Year*, Format (if relevant), Country, Running Time
- A Film Logline (1 or 2 sentence summary of the project)
- A Film Synopsis (a longer description of the film of about 100-150 words)
- Names of any or all funding sources
- Names of any or all collaborators, partners, etc
- Stills from the finished film
- A Trailer or extract from the film
- In some instances a password protected link for programmers to view the film in full
- Reference to where the film received its premiere, list of any screenings that have taken place thereafter
- Quotes from any reviews of the film or your work in general if relevant

A well designed PDF Pitch Deck or Press Kit should not be long or complicated. It is just about sharing images and compelling features of your work to clearly communicate your vision and attract interest in your project

WHAT DOES A BIO LOOK LIKE?

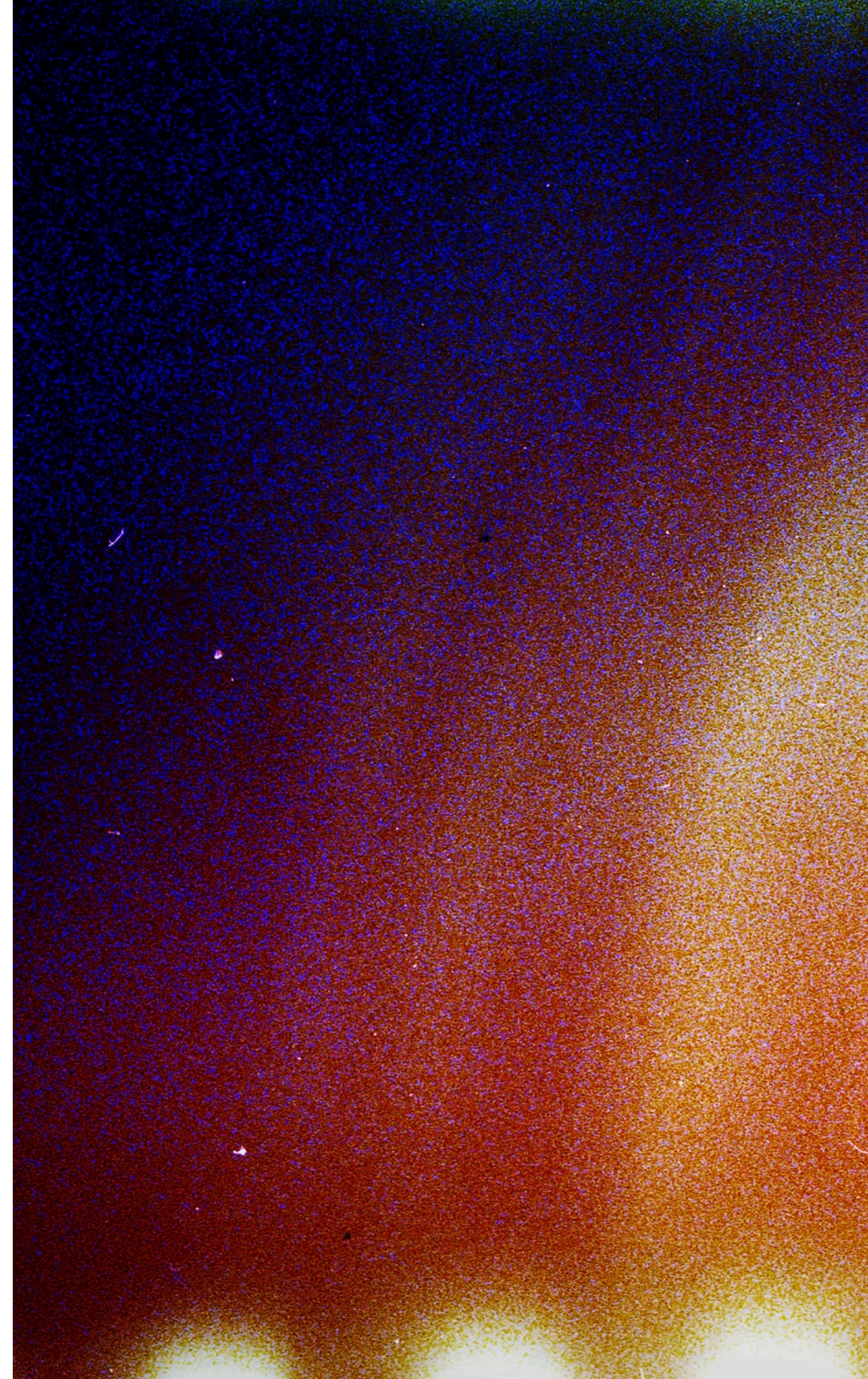
A bio is a concise biographical paragraph (100-150 words) that serves to introduce you and your accomplishments while also presenting a context for your work. A bio can include your educational background (esp if you are an emerging artist), any relevant filmmaking experience, and festivals or recent events where your work has been screened.

A bio is usually written in the third person.

WHAT DOES A FILM ARTIST'S STATEMENT LOOK LIKE?

A film artist's statement is a concisely written summation of your work and should emphasise the themes in your work as well as your artistic intentions. This does not need to be overly complicated or written in academic language. The most compelling film artist's statements are often written in the film artist's own vernacular and should offer the reader a direct insight into your ambitions as a filmmaker. Sometimes it is useful to use the voice memos app to record your thoughts and transcribe your statement from these. A text of 150 to 250 words should be enough to convey your thoughts.

A film artist's statement is usually written in the first person.



WHAT IS A LOGLINE?

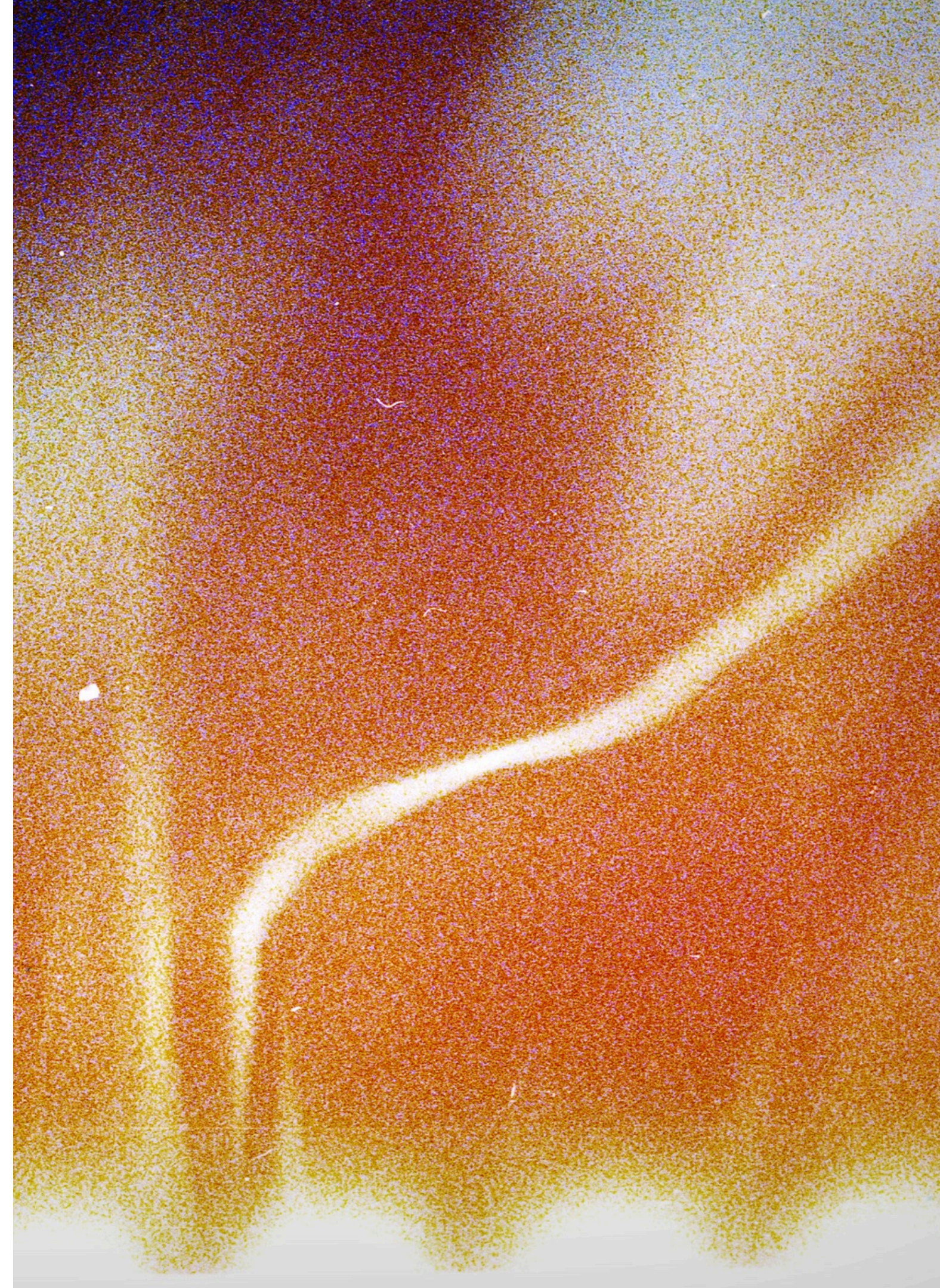
A logline is a very brief (usually one-sentence) summary of a film that states the central theme or vision of your film, often providing a brief synopsis and sometimes including the wider goals of your practice to stimulate interest.

It can be a useful exercise to start thinking about a logline even when a project is still in development.

WHAT SHOULD A FILM SYNOPSIS LOOK LIKE?

A film description, also known as a synopsis, is a concise summary of a film's central concerns and themes. It is often used to give viewers a brief insight into what the film is about. These are sometimes needed for screenings (added to listings on websites etc.).

Reach out to others for feedback and input on these texts. If possible ask someone else who knows your work to take a look when describing a project.



WHAT SHOULD MY WEBSITE INCLUDE?

Having a website is a useful way to direct people to your portfolio of work. A good website does not need to be overly complicated with lots of pages. It should include contact details you are comfortable sharing publicly, a bio, your film artist's statement, and most importantly showcase each of your individual films preferably with log lines, synopses, trailers/extracts (if available) or captivating images. Add information on where the work has screened as that happens. Include links to your public social media channels where relevant.

HOW SHOULD I USE SOCIAL MEDIA?

Much like a website, using social media to promote your work does not have to be overly complicated. Use clear images of your work to promote screenings and events with short texts. It can be useful to document works in progress or images from research material. Add links in your bio to upcoming events on your website. Make sure to tag associated collaborators only and to acknowledge funding or support you might have received to create the work.

SPEAKING ABOUT YOUR WORK

Speaking about your work in a public space might at first feel daunting, but over time and with practice and research, you can quickly develop these skills and speak more confidently. Attend as many filmmaker Q&As as you can to pick up ideas for how to talk about your own work in ways that make sense to you.

'In conversation' or panel discussions are a good way to speak in a setting that feels less pressurised; the presence of your peers or colleagues can feel encouraging. Audiences are keen to hear about your experiences as a film artist and discover how you came to make the work; it can be helpful to remember this when you feel nervous.

Clarity over complexity is a useful guide; try not to get too caught up with jargon or theory, and focus on the important aspects of your work and the aspects of your film you want the audience to engage with closely. With time and practice speaking in public about your work will come naturally.

SECTION 3:

FUNDING STRATEGIES



FUNDING STRATEGIES FOR FILM ARTISTS

“What really helped me when I was first getting out of college, was applying to relevant opportunities as much as possible (residencies, exhibitions, collaborations, etc.). A lot of these opportunities tend to be a few months or even a year ahead, so it’s good to have ideas planned as soon as possible. But something to mention is that it’s hard at first trying to find the balance of admin work and actual creation. So, just be mindful to create boundaries for yourself that allow you to actually take the time to focus on just making work, rather than constantly bombarding yourself with applications.

Another thing that helped was going to openings and film/art events. It’s a great way to get your face out there and connect with more people in the field, but to also keep up to date with what your peers are making. While funding is extremely helpful, if your applications are unsuccessful, don’t be afraid to just go out and film something. It doesn’t have to be the highest quality or with professional equipment. Have a big idea and go for it. Don’t let budget constrain you, try to think creatively about solving issues. Sometimes the best things come out of these limitations.”

VENUS PATEL, (FEB 2025)

The Arts Council is the national government agency for funding, developing and promoting the arts in Ireland.

The Arts Council works to develop the arts in Ireland through funding schemes and focused supports across a number of artforms and arts practice areas.

To see all the artforms supported by The Arts Council [visit this page of their website](#). These include Architecture, Circus, Dance, Film, Literature, Music, Opera, Theatre and Visual Arts.

aemi is primarily funded by The Arts Council through Arts Grant Funding.

While there are lots of different ways to fund your work as a film artist, aemi is most familiar with the awards made available to film artists through Film at the Arts Council.

aemi is one of several organisations supported by The Arts Council through Film.

It is helpful to read about The Arts Council's role in Film [on this page of their website](#).

This is distinct from The Arts Council's role in Visual Arts which you can read [on this page of their website](#).



As a film artist a key decision to make before you start working on an application for funding from The Arts Council is where and how you should apply.

This is where it is crucial to spend time thinking about where you would like to situate your practice (see Section 1 of this Toolkit).

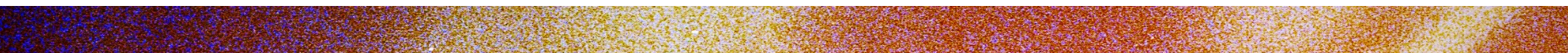
As discussed there:

It is useful to have an understanding of where you would like to find a place for your work in order to identify the right sources of funding for your practice.

From the earliest stage of development it can be useful to think about an ideal screening context for your work. This can inform and enrich the creative development of a given project.

Film artists making work for a cinema context will typically make single screen work designed to be seen in its entirety from beginning to end. They will make work with a cinema audience in mind. Film artists will typically screen their work at film festivals and in cinema exhibition spaces at least in the first instance. **These artists should apply to the Arts Council through FILM.**

By contrast, some visual artists will make moving image work with gallery installation in mind. Their moving image work might form part of a larger sculpture, the work might be presented on a number of monitors or the meaning of the work might be dependent upon the mode of display. The artist might have no linear framework in mind and prefer viewers to exert their own agency in terms of how they experience the work, i.e. whether they are seated or standing, walking or stationery etc. These artists may also show their work in a cinema context but when their first priority is gallery installation **these artists should apply to the Arts Council through VISUAL ARTS.**



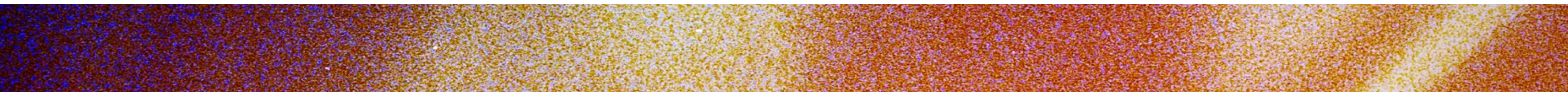
We at aemi acknowledge that there are always exceptions to these delineations; some visual artists may well be very interested in making film work that should be experienced from start to finish and some film artists may well show or adapt their work for exhibition in gallery contexts after a film festival or cinema run.

If you are making a film with the intention of showing it in a cinema in the first instance however then you should apply through FILM. It can then go on to have a life in a gallery or visual art context but if you are interested primarily in cinema exhibition then FILM is where you should direct your attention.

If however you are interested in making a moving image work first and foremost for gallery exhibition then you should apply to fund your project through VISUAL ARTS.

It is also useful to consider where you have received funding to date in making these deliberations. aemi always endeavours to support artists to make the best creative decisions possible for the work they are producing. To see who the Arts Council has funded through Film and through Visual Arts in the past [visit this page of their website](#).

These links should start to give you a clear understanding of whether it makes most sense for your practice to apply to the Arts Council through Film OR Visual Arts.



HOW DO I IDENTIFY APPROPRIATE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR FILM ARTISTS?

Familiarise yourself with and utilise websites such as:

- aemi
- The Arts Council
- Local Authority Arts & Film Offices (where relevant)

Local authority offices are a great place to begin applying for funding such as bursaries, which will allow you some time to develop new work.

Take time to scrutinise the evaluation criteria for each listing and **double check if you are eligible.**

Consider where your practice might fit: are you an emerging, mid-career or established film artist? **Does the evaluation criteria match the stage your film practice is at?**

Due Diligence: Take time to research the funding body and ensure that their mission and values align with your own as a film artist. Check that you will be able to, and are comfortable with any commitments that might arise from a partnership with a funder, such as including logos in your publicity materials and/or end credits etc.

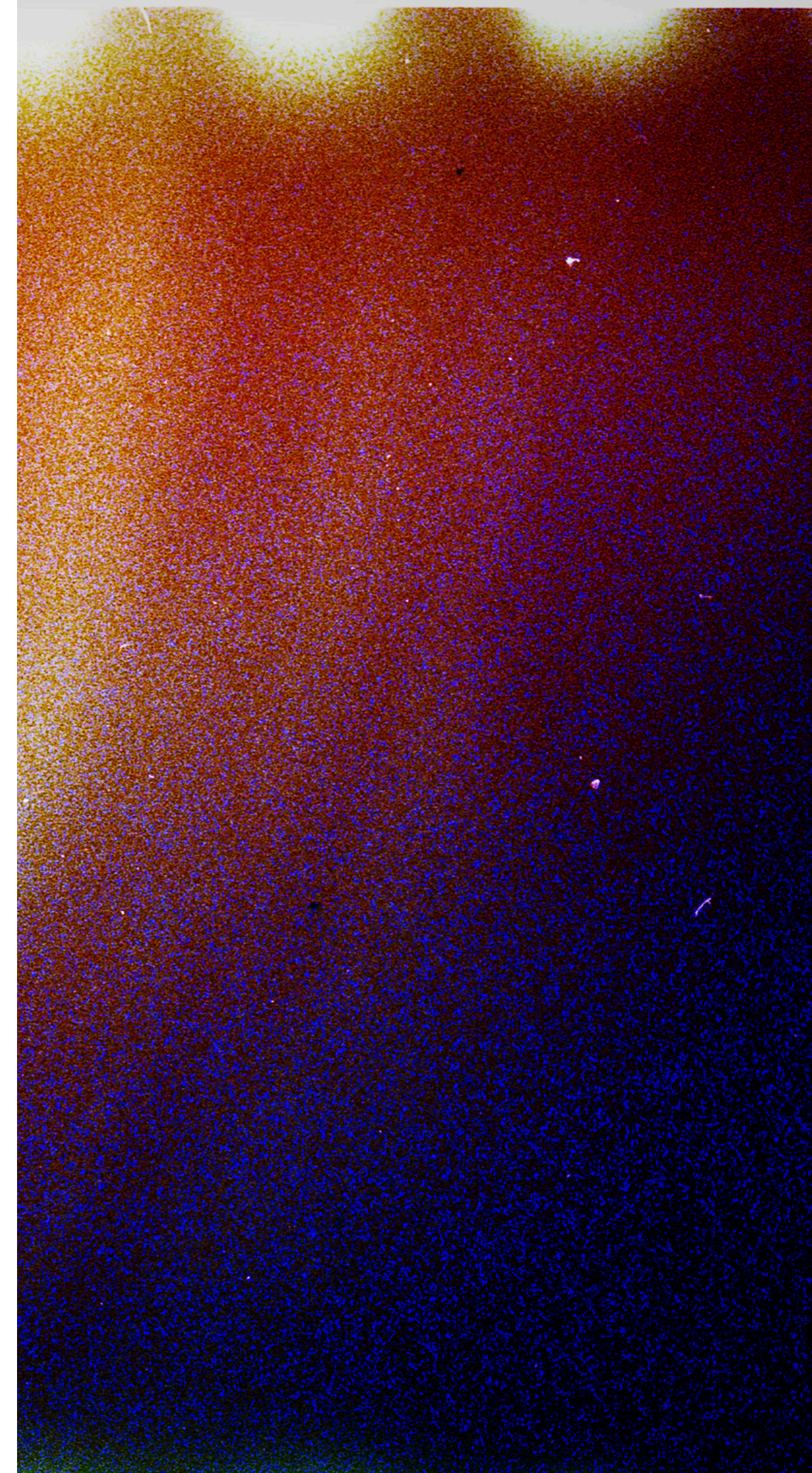
INCLUDING A REALISTIC BUDGET

Your grant application should include a comprehensive budget that outlines the estimated costs of the project. **This budget should be realistic and demonstrate how the requested funds will be allocated to different aspects of the project, such as personnel, technical and practical expenses.**

WHAT ARE 'SUPPORTING MATERIALS'?

Supporting Materials vary depending on the application but often include:

- CVs for key personnel involved
- Bios with links to individuals' websites
- Examples of your recent (& most relevant) work
- Significant reviews of your work (where requested)
- Additional budgeting and reporting forms (these templates are often supplied by the funder)



WRITING A CLEAR AND PERSUASIVE FUNDING APPLICATION

To submit a successful grant application, it is essential to understand the evaluation criteria supplied by the funder and to tailor your application specifically according to these guidelines.

Take time to carefully read the application guidelines and ensure that you are eligible before you begin planning and writing. It is also useful to ask yourself whether your proposed project and your overall artistic vision align with those of the funder at this early stage of planning.

Before you begin your grant application look at the deadline for submission and work backwards from this date to create a timeline towards completion.

Bear in mind that if the grant application needs to be submitted via a portal these are often busy on the day of the submission deadline and delays can ensue. **To avoid unnecessary stress, it is advisable to submit at least one day before the deadline (or earlier). Allow plenty of time for proofreading and last-minute edits to supporting documents.**

The key element within a successful grant application is developing a compelling narrative.

You will need to efficiently communicate your film project's significance for the art form and outline its impact on audiences of all kinds.

The key is to align the film project's unique strengths with the funders mission for the art form and the goals outlined within the specific fund.

Your application needs to demonstrate artistic quality and ambition, and so there are several questions that you can ask yourself as you write and proofread your application.

Why is it necessary for the funder to realise this film project? Does your proposal's ambition match the funders? Is your proposal creatively and perhaps technically innovative? Does the scope of the project match the funding amount requested? Will your proposed project enhance the artform? And finally, will it engage audiences?

These are very important questions to bear in mind when applying for film funding. **Your task is to establish your proposal as significant and demonstrate clearly why it is deserving of financial support.**

Is the proposal feasible? Have you clearly showcased your experience and expertise and that of anyone else involved in your film project? Is the timeline included (if relevant) realistic? **Are there hidden costs that you have not anticipated or included in the application that might hinder the completion of the film project if not adequately funded? Sometimes you might receive a grant which would cover part of the realisation of your project. This isn't an ideal scenario, but will you be able to pivot to develop a scaled back version if this happens? This is worth considering before you begin your application.**

Have you included any relevant partners that might help to realise the film project? It is vital to list any relevant partners and showcase their expertise if there is space in the application form and/or within the supporting documents. Have you addressed the practical elements within your proposal and outlined clearly how your film project will be realised should you secure funding? If you plan to work with producers, editors and a wider team, it is important to clarify this (depending on the fund and criteria).



PROOFREADING TIPS FOR YOUR GRANT APPLICATION

In order to submit an eligible grant application, you must set aside time to proofread carefully and/or have another person proofread the application too. This allows time to refine your answers, check your spelling, punctuation, and improve the structure and overall flow of your application.

Before you begin this last step, it is a good idea to take a break between writing and proofing so that you return to the application with ‘fresh eyes.’ Begin by checking all the basic information is there and all relevant boxes are ticked.

Look carefully at the question and critically at your answer. Have you answered the question succinctly, hitting all the key points you need to cover so that the funder will clearly understand your response? A useful tip is to imagine that the person assessing the application is new to the field so that you can write a response that is clear in its intention.

The answers you submit should help to build your case for support and within the structure of the application form, should therefore emphasise your achievements, goals and vision as a film artist.

Be careful to check if any of the answers are repetitive. Have you said the same thing twice in two different ways across two different answers? It is better to say less and get to the point efficiently, rather than using up the word count because you feel you should with what could be interpreted as ‘waffle.’

Sometimes if you have spent a long time on an application by yourself, it can be useful to have a person you trust, who works in a completely different field proofread it for you. Their distance from the art form (or even from the arts), can allow for a fresh perspective and they should find it easier to spot any errors and advise you on whether your proposal makes sense, is compelling and is realistic in its ambitions.

MOVING ON AFTER REFUSAL

Whether you receive your funding or not, it is always advisable to ask for feedback on your application. Once you have received this, take some time to look at these comments and your application in tandem. Then write up some brief notes. These will be an invaluable guide for your next application.

Writing grant applications can be time consuming and it is disheartening when you don't secure funding, but **it is important to remember that open grant rounds are often extremely competitive with an increasing number of applicants.**

Life as a film artist can be full of knocks and unfortunately obstacles and challenges are all part of the development process. **It is important to recognise this and avoid overly harsh self-criticism and instead try to retain a balanced perspective.** Stay engaged: reach out to your peers and possible mentors for support, and remain in touch with the wider film artist community.

Don't dwell on refusals, instead look ahead to your next application with optimism.





FUNDING STRATEGIES FOR FILM ARTISTS

Q: What advice can you give someone looking to fund their practice as an artist filmmaker in Ireland for the first time?

A: “Start small by applying for artist grants from local county councils to build a track record, focusing on funding your time rather than materials or equipment. When applying for production funding, I always develop a comprehensive ‘film treatment’, essentially a visual proposal, that balances conceptual ideas with vivid descriptions of visual and acoustic elements, making it easy for funders to envision your project. Include imagined details, even if they may evolve later, to create an engaging and visually compelling proposal. It also becomes invaluable later down the line when pitching the project to prospective collaborators.”

PATRICK HOUGH, (FEB 2025)

SECTION 4:

NAVIGATING THE FILM FESTIVAL

CIRCUIT

NAVIGATING THE FILM FESTIVAL CIRCUIT

Identifying festivals that are the right fit for your film is a process that takes time and commitment. It is something that should be written into the development of your project rather than left until after the film is complete.

There are no short cuts or one size fits all solution. Instead artist filmmakers must carve out time in their practice to gain an understanding of the film festival landscape, of individual festivals, film programmers and the kinds of work they are interested in showing.

Finding festivals that may be a good fit for your work also involves time spent having conversations with your peers, talking to other film artists, asking questions and identifying where the work that excites you is being screened.

Most importantly where and when possible attending festivals is the best possible work you can do in this regard; showing up, engaging with what they do, seeing as much work by other film artists as you can and meeting the festival programmers. This will always be the most effective and rewarding way of finding the right festivals to platform your work.





NAVIGATING THE FILM FESTIVAL CIRCUIT

Q: How do you research and identify film festivals that are a strong platform and generative exhibition context for your work?

A: “I think it’s about finding affinities with festivals and film programmers whose interests align with your own and where your work might have something to offer. Like anything, it’s about honing your own preferences and tastes. And I guess that comes from spending time with festival archives, looking at selections made for previous editions and seeing if your work would be a good fit. And often, one festival might lead you to another through common interests in artists or ideas. But the most important thing is finding festivals that you personally would want to attend. Do the programmes excite you, and do you share the broader concerns and ethos of the festival? Would you pay money to see their programmes? Once you’ve identified these, attending in person and experiencing first-hand is essential. Many festivals run workshops or ‘school’ programmes that offer a more structured experience alongside groups of like-minded people. Over the years, I’ve found these extremely beneficial on many levels.”

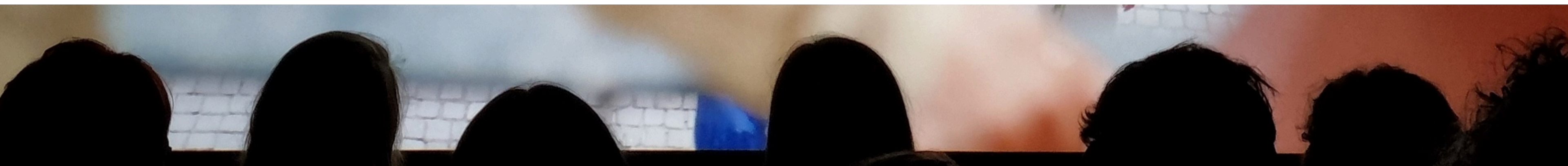
JENNY BRADY, (JAN 2025)

IRISH FESTIVAL CIRCUIT

If your work has been funded through Film at the Arts Council a strong first step is to consider the film festivals supported by the Arts Council. These include major festivals like Dublin International Film Festival, Cork International Film Festival and Galway Film Fleadh, each of which platform work by artist filmmakers to varying extents every year. Of particular interest in relation to these is the Parallax strand of artist and experimental film at Cork International Film Festival and the Reel Art screenings funded by the Arts Council that premiere at Dublin International Film Festival every year.

A number of other festivals in Ireland will also make space in their programmes for artist and experimental film. These include GAZE International LGBTQIA Film Festival, IFI Documentary Festival, IndieCork Film Festival, Fastnet Film Festival, Offline Film Festival and Kerry International Film Festival. Festivals north of the border that always present excellent line ups include the brilliant Belfast Film Festival and Docs Ireland.

aemi partners with a number of the festivals above to screen programmes of artist and experimental work. We present screenings as part of Parallax at Cork International Film Festival each year, we launched a new partnership with Galway Film Fleadh in 2024 and we presented an industry event on the festival circuit for film artists with Dublin International Film Festival in 2025 so it's always worth attending our events with these festivals wherever possible. We are also very proud to present a screening in partnership with GAZE and Docs Ireland every year.



In 2024 aemi also launched DISSOLUTIONS, its own festival dedicated exclusively to work by artist and experimental filmmakers (panel discussion from DISSOLUTIONS 'fanvid: a mixtape' pictured below). While we have plans for another edition of DISSOLUTIONS to take place in 2025, full details are yet to be announced.

These are not the only festivals in Ireland to pay attention to; we mention them just to give you some sense of the film landscape here but new festivals emerge in Ireland all the time, new festival directors and programmers are appointed so the landscape is always evolving with new opportunities arising in places not listed above.

Across the board we would ALWAYS encourage artist filmmakers to attend any screenings of their work. Seeing your work with an audience is the most valuable learning experience you can have as a filmmaker. Films land very differently depending on the context so it is important for you to start to have an understanding of the kind of environment that best suits your work and to do that you have to be there in the room with your film.

The conversations you will have at screenings of your work with festival programmers, peers and audience members will only serve to enhance your practice.



INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL CIRCUIT

There is now a greater range of possibilities for artist film on the international festival circuit than ever before. This means there are more options than there were in the past in terms of film submissions and this can make the process of submitting your film to international festivals seem overwhelming.

Something that can help in the first instance in terms of deciding where to submit your film is to think about what your ideal festival screening for your film might be and why. Is a general film festival going audience what you're aiming for? Is it at a festival dedicated exclusively to work made by film artists and experimental filmmakers? Is it in a documentary specific context? Or a festival devoted to work in the short form?

One of the fundamental tools for self-distributing your film is **FilmFreeway**, this is the primary way to share your work with programmers and apply directly to festivals but while it is difficult to function outside of this platform, **putting your film on FilmFreeway and submitting to an abundance of festivals hoping they take notice is not a festival strategy.**

Try instead to **identify models for your practice**. This means selecting one or two films you've loved in recent years that were maybe made with similar means of production to your own and taking note of where these films have screened. Try then to apply to those same festivals with your film but only after you have familiarised yourself with what they do and can see why they might legitimately have a place for your film in their festival.



Below is a list of festivals that we at aemi would recommend for the quality of their programming.

There are countless other excellent festivals besides those listed below but these are festivals that typically make significant space in their programmes for excellent artist film and most if not all have screened work by Irish and Ireland-based artists in recent years such as Frank Sweeney, Ross McClean, Myrid Carten, Jenny Brady, Patrick Hough, Tadhg O'Sullivan, Cáit and Éiméar McClay and Amanda Rice.

FESTIVALS DEDICATED TO THE SHORT FORM

- London Short Film Festival
- Glasgow Short Film Festival

FESTIVALS DEDICATED TO DOCUMENTARY

- Hot Docs
- IDFA
- Open City
- DocLisboa
- CPH:DOX

FESTIVALS DEDICATED EXCLUSIVELY TO ARTIST AND EXPERIMENTAL FILM OF ANY FORM AND DURATION

- Alchemy
- Berwick Film & Media Arts Festival
- Prismatic Ground
- FIDMarseille
- Media City Film Festival
- Lausanne Underground Film & Music Festival
- Rencontres International Paris / Berlin
- VIDEOEX Zurich

FESTIVALS WITH A DEDICATED STRAND FOR ARTIST AND EXPERIMENTAL FILM

- Indie Lisboa
- Edinburgh International Film Festival
- IFFR
- Experimenta at LFF
- Currents at NYFF
- Wavelengths at TIFF

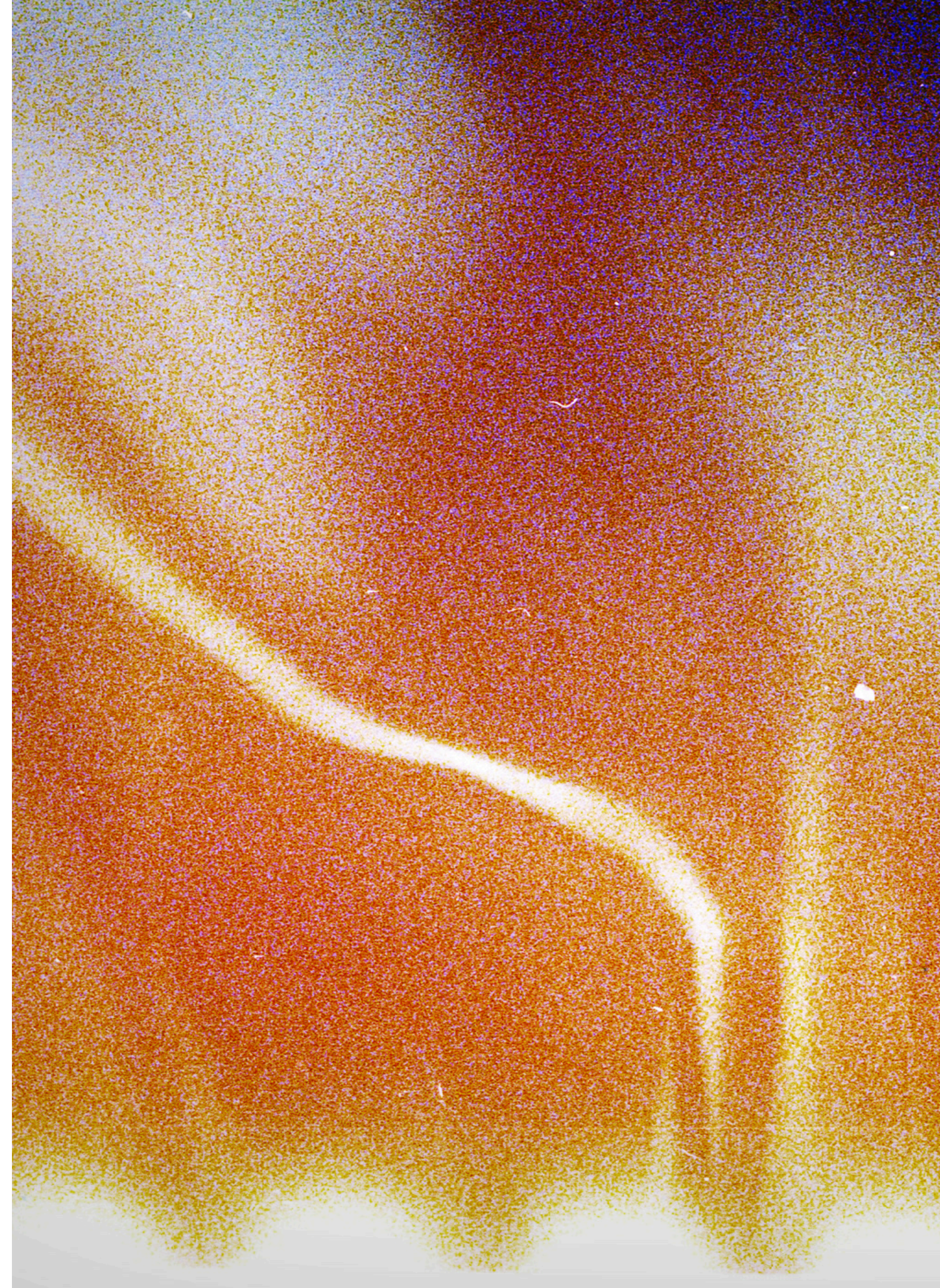
DATING YOUR FILM FOR FESTIVALS

Something important to bear in mind in relation to dating your film; generally a film is dated not with the year in which it was completed but instead the year in which it premiered.

This is important because festivals can have specific requirements around when a film is made so you generally want to date a film as late as possible in order to buy yourself as much time as possible to get your film onto the festival circuit.

AN IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT PREMIERES:

- World Premiere = 1st screening in the world.
- Irish Premiere = 1st screening on the island of Ireland.
- European Premiere = 1st screening in Europe.
- International Premiere = 1st screening of the film outside of home country (if it has played in your home country, which is not Ireland)



ON FESTIVAL SUBMISSION DEADLINES

In a recent conversation between Alice Butler (co-director of aemi) and Anastasia Lukonikova (a programmer at IndieLisboa -another excellent festival very engaged with artist film practices) Anastasia spoke among other things about submission deadlines. Early submission deadlines are not only often cheaper but Anastasia spoke about how submitting your work early can also really help get your work seen as programmers will often start thinking about the shapes of their programmes once works start to come in, so if you submit early and don't leave it to the last minute there is a chance your work is more likely to be included.

Anastasia also goes into a lot more detail about how festival programmers build relationships with filmmakers, the role of sales agents, shorts versus features.

You can listen to that conversation in full on aemi's website [HERE](#)



SECTION 5:

DEVELOPING YOUR PRACTICE

DEVELOPING YOUR PRACTICE AS A FILM ARTIST

HOW AEMI CAN HELP

Film artists often work independently, making it difficult to find time and space to focus on practice development. This is an important facet of any artistic process however as it can serve to re-energise and fuel new ideas for creative projects.

aemi offers a tiered support programme directly to artists and we regularly screen work by film artists in a variety of cinema or event-based contexts. Both of these activities provide film artists with important means to develop and strengthen artistic practice.

aemi screenings provide opportunities to experience new work that can inspire ideas and prompt new directions for existing projects.

Attending screenings, exposing yourself to as wide a range of artist film material as possible as part of a cinema audience is the single best way to gain a deeper understanding of what is possible to say and do through the moving image.

www.aemi.ie



aemi events also provide opportunities for peer exchange through artist talks and Q&As. Listening to artist filmmakers talk about their process, practice and approach will also always help to generate new ideas for work in development.

aemi also showcases the work of Irish and Ireland-based filmmakers through its online platform 'Artist in Focus', a resource that over time will be possible to use as a reference by artist filmmakers trying to find new points of connection for themselves within the culture and history of Irish practice in this area.

Developing your practice is something that takes time and we encourage all film artists to carve out space in their practice to advance their work. This can be done by availing of any of the free support that we offer to all film artists from or living in Ireland through our Tier 1 Artist Support Programme.



AEMI'S TIERED PROGRAMME OF ARTIST SUPPORTS

aemi offers a three-tiered programme of supports directly to film artists.

Tier 1 comprises a range of FREE supports to any and all film artists from or living in Ireland.

These include but are not limited to:

- aemi's newsletter through which we highlight upcoming screenings, events and opportunities. Subscribe at the bottom of the homepage of our website.
- aemi's regularly updated listing of upcoming film artist opportunities as well as funding and festival submission deadlines.
- FREE hour-long artist support sessions with one of aemi's co-directors to discuss any aspect of your practice that you are looking to develop, for more information see [here](#) or email info@aemi.ie
- FREE information sessions on a range of subjects from 'Funding Your Film For First Time Applicants',
- 'Writing a Funding Application', 'Festival and Exhibition Strategies for Film Artists', 'Access and The Moving Image' and 'Building a Practice in Artist Film'
- FREE Film Funding Clinics presented in partnership with the Arts Council, the most recent edition of which you can listen back to [here](#).
- FREE masterclasses, workshops or career interviews with filmmakers such as Lynne Sachs, Kevin Jerome Everson, Fern Silva, Laida Lertxundi and Tadhg O'Sullivan which you can listen back to [here](#)
- FREE panel discussions on subjects ranging from Artist Film and The Cinema Space, the interconnectivity between artist film cultures in Ireland, the North of Ireland and Scotland, Film artists and the archive and architecture in Irish artist film.
- *Consulting this Toolkit for Film Artists, a live document which we will update regularly in order to keep the information and advice current and relevant.

AEMI LAUNCHED ITS TIER 2 ARTIST SUPPORT PROGRAMME IN THE SUMMER OF 2024

‘Developing Your Practice as a Film Artist’ is a 12 month programme through which aemi offers regular support to a group of 9 film artists selected through an open call.

Details of the nine participants in the 2024/2025 programme can be found on [this page of the aemi website](#).

- aemi meets with the nine participating artists on a monthly basis. This provides the participants with regular opportunities for peer to peer support and exchange.
- The participating film artists each receive a second artist support session with one of aemi’s co-directors.
- They also each present a film work in progress at one of aemi’s Rough Cut events through which film artists share an extract from a film in process to a critic, curator or programmer and an invited group of peers for feedback and reflection. If you are interested in attending one of aemi’s Rough Cut events please contact us at info@aemi.ie
- Through Tier 2 aemi can also help establish mentorships for the participating artists from more experienced practitioners or film professionals.

Mentorship is something any film artist can establish for themselves however by identifying a filmmaker or film professional they feel they could benefit from a set of conversations about their practice with. We encourage artists to write mentorships into Arts Council Film Bursary applications so that mentors can be paid for the time they give to support an emerging filmmaker’s practice.

aemi announces Tier 2 Artist Support Programme participants 2024



AEMI WILL FORMALLY LAUNCH ITS TIER 3 PROGRAMME AT THE START OF 2026.

This programme will offer a single established film artist sustained curatorial and dissemination support over a 12 to 18 month period.

Click [HERE](#) to read our Strategic Plan and EDI Policy

COLLABORATION

While many artist filmmakers work independently that does not mean they do not work collaboratively with a range of other creative professionals. When talking to artist filmmakers who are unsure how best to develop their practice or a specific project we will often suggest collaboration as a means of furthering ideas for a new film.

For a fascinating and detailed conversation about working with collaborators see this brilliant resource dedicated specifically to [this issue on the LUX Scotland website.](#)





DEVELOPING YOUR PRACTICE AS A FILM ARTIST

Q: Can you talk about the work you do to ensure your films reach as broad a set of audiences as possible both on the film festival circuit and beyond?

A: *"I aim to keep films playful, using recognisable narrative structures, tropes and pop culture materials in an attempt to bring people into a space where they may be able to think about more complex ideas or contradictions. My research process often relies on the participation of people who contribute knowledge, interviews or materials and I try and keep these participants involved throughout the filmmaking process, sending on early film cuts for feedback etc. These participants are often the first audience for a work and I try to utilise these relationships and networks when attempting to reach people who may not be used to engaging with art or experimental film."*

FRANK SWEENEY (APRIL 2025)

For those seeking support for the first time we recommend signing up to aemi's newsletter (which includes information on upcoming deadlines, opportunities for artists, screenings etc.)

aemi ARTIST SUPPORTS

TIER 1 INDIVIDUAL ARTIST SUPPORT SESSIONS

One-on-one advice sessions for Irish and Ireland-based artists working with the moving image. These informal hour-long sessions take place on an ongoing regular basis and are facilitated by aemi's directors. These sessions can typically include advice on funding, exhibition strategies, creative feedback, etc. Sessions are open to all and are made available to artists either online or in-person.

**TIER 1.
OPEN
TO
ALL**

**TIER 2. ARTISTS
TYPICALLY APPLY
FOR TIER 2 UPON
COMPLETION OF
AN INITIAL ONE-
ON-ONE
ADVISORY
SESSION**

TIER 2 DEVELOPING YOUR PRACTICE

This tier gives access to:

- Rough Cuts aemi Mentorship
- External Mentorship
- Access to workshops and information sessions
- Additional peer support



**TIER 3. FOR
THOSE WHO
HAVE
COMPLETED
TIER 2**

TIER 3

AEMI ADVANCED MENTORSHIP PROGRAMME

Tier 3 will offer long form support, working together on more ambitious projects with more involved external mentorship.

Many of the artists we work with are not familiar with artist film distribution/distributors and together we hope to engage with artists with this in mind; to professionalise their practice further and in turn amplify the reach for their work.

Our goal with Tier 3 is to facilitate pertinent mentoring (including pitching & project development advice) and facilitate productive introductions to professionals across the film industry.

**ONGOING
SUPPORT**



aemi are delighted to stay in touch with all of the artists we collaborate with, on an ongoing basis, even after completion of the tiered support system.

You can also sign up for a free one-on-one artist support session (these sessions are open to all and are available remotely or in-person).

SECTION 6:

MAKING YOUR WORK ACCESSIBLE

Making work accessible to audiences with a variety of different needs is a vital part of any artist filmmaking practice.

Anyone in receipt of Arts Council funding through Film is now required to provide a captioned version of their film for Deaf or Hard of Hearing audiences. Some film artists will always choose to show the captioned version of their film regardless of the screening context to cater for anyone in the audience who may have hearing difficulties or for audience members for whom English is not their first language. We would also recommend factoring some budget into your filmmaking process to create an Audio Described version of your film for blind or vision impaired audiences.

We also recommend taking accessibility into consideration with regard to the spaces where you screen your work; is the space wheelchair accessible? Is there a lift for anyone with mobility issues? Is there a disabled toilet? The more these questions are asked of venues, festivals and arts organisations by the filmmakers whose work is screening there the sooner they will be made a priority. For guidance around disability and the arts we always refer artists to our friends at **Arts & Disability Ireland**, the national development and resource organisation for arts and disability that works towards arts programmes and arts venues becoming fully accessible experiences for all audiences.

If you are interested in thinking more deeply about the role accessibility can play in your filmmaking practice [listen back to 'Starting to think about Access and the Moving Image'](#), an excellent presentation given by Sarah Hayden for an aemi event we presented online in 2022 that considered what it means and what it takes to make artist film work more accessible. The presentation also explored what purposes captioning and audio description serve and what possibilities they open. You can listen back to a recording of this presentation [here](#).

RESOURCES & FURTHER READING:

SoundScribe

We are a global majority collective of multi-disciplinary audio describers and consultants specialising in access for performance work, arts institutions and moving image. Founded by audio describer and captioner, **Elaine Lillian Joseph** and co-led with dance artist and audio describer Shivaangee Agrawal, we are activists, allies and access workers.

Lucie McLaughlin & Eat The Pips

Lucis creates closed captions, audio description and transcription for artists, filmmakers and organisations.

Collective Text, is a Disabled & Deaf artist-led integrated & creative access organisation offering captioning, audio description, translation and advocacy.

SEE ALSO: **Collective Text; Thinking of Captioning an Artist Film?**

<https://www.nottinghamcontemporary.org/record/collective-text-thinking-of-captioning-an-artist-film/>

SEE ALSO: **‘Accessibility in the Arts: A Promise and a Practice’, Carolyn Lazard**

<https://promiseandpractice.art/>

SECTION 7:

FURTHER EXHIBITION POSSIBILITIES

FURTHER EXHIBITION POSSIBILITIES

Screening at film festivals is not the only way to show your work. In some cases a festival screening might not even be the best way to platform your film. It might well be the case that your film needs a context of your making for audiences to experience it properly. Be creative about the presentation of your work and don't feel that you have to be bound by existing structures.

There are lots of exciting ways to show your work independently, maybe with [fanvid](#), a brilliant DIY film club with a rolling open call for submissions and curated events. You could also approach the [Irish Film Institute](#) about the possibility of showing your work as part of their monthly [Irish Focus strand](#) or reach out to the [Triskel](#) or [The Guesthouse in Cork](#) about screening opportunities there.

If you're finding it difficult to screen your work, organise a screening yourself, ideally alongside other artist films, works that you are inspired by and that might draw a crowd. Part of the culture, history and make-up of this practice is self-organisation.

Don't feel you have to rely on others to create a space for your work; make it happen yourself if you need to and in many cases these events might end up being the ones that are most beneficial to you and your practice.



FURTHER EXHIBITION POSSIBILITIES FOR FILM ARTISTS

Q: What are some features that distinguish artist film from other types of moving image practice?

A: “Artist films can move freely between gallery and cinema contexts, reaching diverse audiences and blending contemplative, immersive experiences with narrative and communal elements. This fluidity challenges boundaries and expands the work’s reach. Beyond festivals and galleries, I host screenings in unconventional spaces, like my parents’ pub, J.J. Hough’s in Offaly, where I’ve had some of the most engaging conversations about my work. It’s this ability to slip into unusual contexts and provoke dialogue that excites me most.”

PATRICK HOUGH, (FEB 2025)

aemi

the arts
council
= chomhairle
ealaíon

funding
the art of film