

FOREWORD

Máiréad Casey and Barry Nevin, Editors-in-Chief

The present issue marks the first step in the latest initiative by the *Irish Screen Studies* group: a peer-reviewed journal. Although there is no shortage of journals in the field of screen studies, this was created with three core goals in mind. First, to bring together the voices and thinking of early-career and established scholars. Second, to guarantee open-access scholarship to our contributors at a time when this can be a financially prohibitive choice, especially for independent scholars. Third, to ensure that scholarship presented at our annual *ISS* conference reaches a wider audience.

What is now *Irish Screen Studies* was founded in 2002 by Kevin Rockett (*Trinity College Dublin*) and John Hill (*Ulster University*) and began as the “Irish Postgraduate Film Research Seminar”. It was successfully developed as a cross-border initiative to connect postgraduate and early-career researchers in screen studies on the island of Ireland and beyond. For over twenty years, the annual conference has been hosted by a variety of third-level institutes in Ireland – North and South – and has provided a research platform for emerging and established researchers, many of whom have gone on to play key international roles in screen scholarship, industry, and popular culture. The event has also hosted prolific keynote speakers including Richard Dyer, Catherine Grant, Liz Green, Tom Gunning, Laura Mulvey, and Laura Rascaroli.

Momentum behind the annual gathering has grown in recent years, and the *Irish Screen Studies* network has expanded the scope of its activities to include practice-based research and to provide information sessions about research, job opportunities, and the real challenges involved in an increasingly precarious professional context where the arts and humanities lack sufficient funding. We have also organised online coffee mornings to provide scholars with a supportive environment in which to discuss the rewards and challenges that their research, teaching and vocational duties entail.

Like the *ISS* network, the *Irish Screen Studies Journal* embraces an expansive view of the field traditionally referred to as Film Studies, so that

now covers screen culture in the broadest sense: including cinema (the most widely studied category), as well as short film, television, digital media, networks, transmedia, technoculture, video gaming, video art, and any other cultural artefact that takes place on screen. Cinema's boundaries have never stopped shifting in its relatively short history, and our deliberate inclusion of other media within the fold of screen research provides evidence of this. The journal – like our conference – has the aim of accounting for and encapsulating the shifts initiated by the current phase of digitisation, which are subsequently reflected in the specific themes of annual conferences.

As current editors-in-chief, we wish to thank the many contributors to our inaugural issue, whose dossier shares its theme – “Cinema and Loneliness” – with our 2025 conference. We especially wish to express our gratitude to the issue editor, Barry Monahan, who worked tirelessly to determine the kind of publication that could match the ambitions of *Irish Screen Studies*; and the Boole Library in University College Cork, which has generously agreed to host our journal online on an open-access basis. Finally, we want to thank our readers and members for supporting *ISS* activities, and we invite you to contribute to the journal, to our conferences, and to our other events in future.