

## The Door Ajar

*Jameson Dublin International Film Festival, Irish Film Institute, Dublin*

**By Steven Galvin**

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The IFI was host to Paddy Jolley's artistic imagining of the French poet and theatre director Antonin Artaud's time in Ireland in 1937. Arriving in Cork, Artaud had come to Ireland with what he believed to be St Patrick's Staff, which he wanted to return to its rightful owners and, in the process, seek out certain lost truths. Things didn't quite go to plan and, after a disastrous experience in Ireland, Artaud was eventually arrested and sent back to France where he was placed in an institution.

*The Door Ajar* is a visually stunning, haunting experience, very much of the senses featuring two strong central performances – one visual and one aural – Jolley bombards the screen with the words of Artaud himself gleaned from his poems, letters and essays as his journey through Ireland becomes Artaud's journey into the belly of being itself. The pieced together narration of Artaud own words captures what could best be described as his unconscious breaking out into the conscious world. Jolley brings his own particular artistic vision to bear throughout this atmospheric piece creating a work of provocative intensity.

In an engaging Q&A after the film, Jolley said that he does not make documentaries and that his film was an interpretation of Artaud's experience in Ireland but that he had stuck 100% to Artaud's texts. He admitted to reading as much of Artaud as he could bear.

Jolley maintained that while Artaud did not believe that the staff he carried actually belonged to St Patrick he was, however, very serious about the figurative nature of the

staff and that he was serious about looking for the secret of existence which had been lost.

*The Door Ajar* is a challenging work in both its form and content that attempts to communicate Artaud's often impenetrable texts with an artistic vision that stimulates the senses beyond comprehension into, what for me became, an almost meditative experience into the unknown.

Steven Galvin, March 2011