

When consent becomes assent and dissent

Professor Pratap Rughani, University of Arts London, in conversation with Dr Anna Claydon, University of Leicester

Duration of video clip: 2 minutes and 17 seconds

I remember my first meeting with Justine very vividly, and I think I was a lot more nervous than she was. I'd done about a year of exploring and thinking and the workshops I mentioned before then, so I felt reasonably equipped, but I had no idea whether she would accept me or the camera or both and how it would work.

In the event, when I met her she was very warm towards me, and from what I could gather I was seeking - I asked her Mum if I could have the camera, not switched on, but in the room and talked to her about that - because I wanted to establish me and the camera at the same time, and then work out how to seek permission.

And I moved away from this notion of consent and started to fracture into notions of assent and dissent, because I couldn't be confident that the way that when I expressed something how it would land with her, and then how to read her behaviour, whereas I could certainly read dissent through some of the sounds and movements she would make. So I wanted to be more, well to bring out bring the horizons much clearer, not make claims I couldn't substantiate, saying "well she's consented to this". I couldn't say that, I didn't feel I could say it. What I did establish quite early as she was - fortunately for me and her, I mean she seemed to like to be around me and she liked the attention. But she didn't give me permission to film with the camera on the first meeting. So she was happy with me there, and we had fun in her front room and Mum was there. Then when I saw her gestured towards the camera invited her to look at the camera she wasn't interested. Then I would make as we got to know each other more specific requests, but that first meeting it she didn't allow the camera.. From then on, she almost grew to sort of court the camera, or you know, want the attention which was obviously great news for me as I was shooting, I was a cameraman as well as the director. It's hard working with a subject who doesn't want to be filmed, and fortunately I didn't have to go through that, and that may that may have something to do with the work of Kate Adams and the preparation that we did.