

Observational filming includes interpretation

Professor Brian Winston, University of Lincoln, Professor Pratap Rughani, University of the Arts London, Dr Anna Claydon, University of Leicester, and Professor Phil Powrie, University of Surrey

Duration of video clip: 4 minutes and 13 seconds

Audience member (Phil Powrie): We often see her [Justine] standing at one remove looking at the window at something that's happening, all that kind of thing - and I wondered, going back to the art of not knowing, if your framing of her is actually making us know, something about her?

Pratap Rughani: I worked off the long end of a zoom, its a very deliberate decision partly because there are times where when I wanted to be out the way, and there were times when she almost came to court the camera.

Brian Winston: Yes when she walks toward...

PR: ...and that was quite unusual and I found that so so touching.

BW: She obviously trusted you ... it's like the little children in "Hold me Tight (Don't Let Me Go)" - Kim Longinotto has that ability. By the way, its an essential talent, unspoken and unexamined of great documentary filmmakers that they have that. You know, that people just respond to them even though they are behind the camera, so you can take that as a compliment...

PR: Well that's a high compliment.

BW: No, no, I've often thought that, and it's really, it's critical, but it occurs to me this talk about, the interesting problem about consent is really I think to do with the whole issue - the Rouchian issue of "mentalité", right? That there's what you're trying to do, really is to give us some sense of what the world - how this person experiences the world without coming to any judgement or putting her into any pigeonholes. Which is extremely admirable but it speaks to the difficulties of actually penetrating surfaces. And that why Rouch does all the re-construction and the re-enactments and all those sorts of things - which obviously she can't do because...

PR: That's generous - but it's not what Phil's saying - he's saying come on, be straight about it - you've made a load of judgements here - it's not open...

BW: Oh Sure.

PR: I want to acknowledge that that's true, but also that there's an aspiration to be a little bit broader than maybe in my case I would have been, if I hadn't attempted to put down some of my reflexes and try to step into that not knowing..

AC: Yes

PR: ...and it is really hard cause I was there - "I'm getting nothing here" I have no idea what kind of form this story will take, and then, slow down. Advocates of the slow movement argue for this, and you start to see small gestures become major story points. The opening of a gate...

AC: I think that's one of the things. This tension between-how in shooting something we are aware of, and use certain "narrativising", rather than storytelling, devices - like the zooming in to give a sense of affect, and the extent that we are trying to represent a subject on the screen. You know one of the things - two particular shots - that I found powerful apart from this one - the first while shopping and you're inside the car, and there's the whole thing of opening the door, coming in and out of the door and that does seem to penetrate into certain depth. It seems to have different level of engagement about it. It's more you are in an internal space and Justine wanting to come into you as a kind of meeting point. And the other one is in the party sequence where they are singing happy birthday, and she's in the centre of that group. She is clapping and she's even mouthing the words but the moment that is over she moves to the edge. These are two very different shot set ups, but they give us a different sense of how the filmmaking process is working alongside using a sense of implying and interpretation, and also trying to stand back this tension between the two. I think stylistically comes through.