

The family by paula rego



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

This essay is an evaluation of my work and the work of others during the six hour work shop. When I first saw 'The family' by Paula Rego I was both amused and intrigued. I had no real views on the painting until I could decide on an interpretation of it; I kept asking myself the question 'what's going on here? ' This has does have an advantage when thinking of different scenarios to perform because there are so many different ways to interpret the painting. However, one thing in the painting projects the true atmosphere of the image, the mans exposed eye, it betrays fear and panic.

To make our scenes successful, the interpretation of the man being smothered must be the most striking. I think the picture portrays some hard hitting issues about bullying, feminism, society, domestic violence and sexual desire. We wanted to get these messages across to the audience by combining different dramatical techniques and making them clear to the audience. I think we pulled it off quite well and our ideas were very good. The only thing that really let us down was the acting. On paper we had a good structured meaningful piece.

I think we highlighted the different issues well by contrasting each scene with another very different scene. I think this worked well and coming up with the idea challenged us to think of more original scenarios. I was also pleased with how well our chosen techniques worked out. Monologues and thought tracking probably worked out best as they really allow us to express a characters motivation during certain scenes. This also projected the issues involved a lot more thoroughly and clearly.

I also think finishing each scene with a still image mimicking the original painting was an interesting idea as well. Making one scene altogether completely innocent worked well as it brought out an interpretation of the painting I don't think Paula Rego would have wanted. We also added a scene where the man condoned and even instigated what was happening. Something which also seemed to work was a style of acting we adopted in one or two of our scenes to try and mirror the overall style of the painting. The picture itself concentrates a lot on gesture and posture.

It is also painted with a surreal cartoonist style, perhaps to exaggerate the image and make it more disturbing or to make the shocking picture seem less real, adding a bit of humour. In an attempt to bring this across to the audience we used a slightly more melodramatic style of acting with exaggerated movement and gesture to add a comedic malice to the scene. I would like to see what the result of doing this to create an even more frightening scene would be. Maybe we could have used Shakespearean style acting for a more surreal, but terrifying effect.

I think some of the direction in the scenes was a bit flawed. I wasn't really happy with the ways we were moving around stage. In some parts we had our backs facing the audience too much and sometimes the still images didn't quite come together. Also I don't think my group took the paintings' issues seriously enough at the time so the acting wasn't what it could have been and I think some members of the group weren't quite sure of their character. As a result some of the characters in the scenes weren't very convincing. I think the audience enjoyed and understood our piece.

They chuckled during the aforementioned scene, but (I think) still got the message and appeared tense in the horrific moments. All in all our piece had an apt response from the audience. I particularly enjoyed a part of a performance by another group. They performed one scene without dialogue, entirely in mime. It could have been done better, but it was a very clever idea. The painting itself manages to adorn a narrative without the use of words or language and so to did this groups piece. The 'John and Rachael' story is a gripping and thought provoking tale of love, jealousy and murder.

It is a great plot for a dramatic piece and the scope for the characters and the techniques you can use are endless. It all depends on how you approach it. We chose to follow the story in chronological order and used what we felt were key parts of the story as a basis for each scene. Again there needs to be certain issues that we must project to the audience, but stay true to the story and the personalities of the characters as much as we can. In particular we wanted to bring out Johns love for Rachael, but also his possessiveness, his violent nature, his great selfishness and the way he manipulates people without batting an eye lid.

So we chose parts of the story we felt brought out these facets of Johns personality. Also it was important that we brought out a naive youth in Rachael and contrasted it with a mature experienced John so if ever Rachael could be accused of being at fault at anytime it could be excused by this. I think our piece was quite effective and came together quite nicely in the end. We did manage to a certain extent to get our interpretation across, but it was difficult having so little time in which to really explore the characters and plot.

I think we gave the right impression of John and Rachael as we saw them. We stayed true to the story and just told it like it was. The techniques we used were quite original and we tried to think of devices ourselves like making two scenes one (having Jon centre stage writing his fake letter to Rachael while two policemen walk around him picking up his discarded versions and reading them to the audience oblivious to Johns presence). It was a complicated scene to do because John would do no talking, he would just be writing and mouthing the words of the inspector as she read the letters.

Also John had to start writing just as the inspector began to speak to maintain the effect and I think it was quite successful. The monologues in our piece also made an impression. They appeared very deep and heart felt and I think we chose just the right moments to use them. My personal favourite is one spoken by Rachael: she is washing the dishes with her back facing the audience and John creeps behind her, just as he take a knee with a ring in his hand she turns round, sees him and instantly lapses into a monologue of how she feels at that moment.

There is one scene I thought needed a lot of work. We chose to use the part of the story where John tells Rachael he has cancer. I think it was a boring interpretation of a scene which has a lot of potential. There was little in the way of device or technique and the whole thing was a bit of a cliché in its dialogue in the acting. Also I don't really think we got the mental age difference we were so keen on across well enough, in fact sometimes Rachael seem less impressionable than John. The audience was silent throughout our piece.

I think they appreciated the tension in our performance and really felt terror John could inflict. They understood our perception of the characters and why we had chosen the parts of the story we had. I was really interested by one groups idea to have the basis of the piece be John being interviewed by the police and then having flash backs between each section of interview. I liked for its originality you could slowly see events unfold as John begins to crack and eventually confess. I found it truly gripping and felt they had captured the mental anguish John must have gone through and the essence of the story.