

Matt Turner on *All Light, Everywhere*

In *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger writes that ‘the relation between what we see and what we know is never settled. Each evening we see the sun set. We know that the earth is turning away from it. Yet the knowledge, the explanation, never quite fits the sight.’ When *All Light, Everywhere* opens with a close-up of writer-director Theo Anthony’s optic nerve, on-screen subtitles tell us that what we are looking at is his blind spot: an area that connects the retina with the brain but holds no photoreceptors of its own. As the subtitles say, ‘At the exact point where the world meets the seeing of the world, we’re blind.’ As well as being a striking image with which to start a film, this proves to be a clever way to signal not just the distances that exist between what we see and what we know, but also the things we are not willing, or able, to perceive. You can’t see your own blind spot; the brain approximates what would be present in the absence, and fills in the spaces in between.

*All Light, Everywhere* is, to quote the filmmaker’s own description, a film about ‘shared histories of cameras, weapons, policing and justice’, but it is also a film about seeing. Cataloguing a history of the connections between camera technologies and policing, the film’s central inquiry into police body-cam usage stems from the observation that a camera, despite regularly being presented as an instrument of objective record, is weapon-like in its usage and design. As well as exploring historical precedents and compiling various schools of thinking through the essayistic, expansive form, Anthony’s act of reimagining is to redirect the perspective and actively work towards exposing the fallacy of objectivity, taking the camera out of the hands of the axes of power and turning it towards himself and others in order to scrutinise its usage, and demonstrate how it is manipulated to surveil, suppress, and abuse.

Interviewed recently by Jordan Cronk, Anthony said that his work involves ‘an attempt to understand power through the ways in which the world becomes known – through images, through technology, through maps, through bureaucratic policy and procedure.’ He is also interested in what has gone unseen and what has been ignored – that which has not been made known. In that opening shot of Anthony’s blind spot, when the camera scans his eye, we see one optical device examining another, two lenses that each show only a selective and subjective frame of reference. In *Ways of Seeing*, Berger writes that ‘every image embodies a way of seeing’. It is noteworthy that the first image Anthony chooses for *All Light, Everywhere* is one that not only reveals the apparatuses of vision, but also exposes the fallibility of these tools.

*Matt Turner is a writer and film programmer*