

BEHIND THE SHADOW OF MERRICK

MUSIC

TITLE SCREEN, 'BEHIND THE SHADOW OF MERRICK'
TINA FACING THE CAMERA, MOVING IN AND OUT

VOICE - OLIVIA, AGED 9

IMAGE OF CALLING CARD WITH A PHOTOGRAPH OF JOSEPH MERRICK AND
OTHER ITEMS

There was a man called the Elephant Man, also called a freak. His real name was Joseph Carey Merrick.

OUTSIDE THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM

TINA TALKING TO CAMERA

I first came across Merrick in the 80s, I knew nothing about him before that but instantly because he had a facial disfigurement I knew we had something very much in common.

INTERIOR OF THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM

JONATHAN READING FROM A BOOK

VOICE – JONATHAN EVANS

I'm Jonathan Evans I'm the archivist at the Royal London Hospital and I'm manager of its Museum.

JONATHAN TALKING TO CAMERA

Well Joseph Merrick's probably the most famous patient we've had here at the London since it opened. And we have an interesting collection of records and artefacts about him.

EXTERIOR OF THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM

OLIVIA PLACING MERRICK'S VEIL ON ROWAN'S WHEELCHAIR

VOICE-ROWAN

I remember when I was about the age of seven first hearing about Merrick.

ROWAN TALKING TO CAMERA

As a child, I knew that Merrick lived in a museum. I knew he was dead but I knew he was there because his body was different. I also knew that my body was different and I had nightmares about the fact that doctors might put me in a museum, they might put me there before I was dead and that gave me really scary nightmares.

OLIVIA AND ROWAN

VOICE – OLIVIA

One group over whom Joseph Merrick casts his shadow are disabled people.

EXTERIOR OF THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM

TINA TALKING TO CAMERA

Because he had a facial disfigurement I knew we had something very much in common. We were hidden inside this mask and I think it's so hard to show what you feel, what you feel in your heart, who you really are. The face seems to say so much sometimes I feel really cheated by that and I think there's not a lot I can do about it. And I'm sure Merrick felt like that even more than me maybe because he had less of a defined face.

INTERIOR OF THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM

JONATHAN TALKING TO CAMERA, CAMERA MOVES DOWN WHILST HE IS TALKING TO SHOW AN ILLUSTRATION OF JOSEPH MERRICK

This is an illustration from a medical journal 'The Transactions of the Pathological Society of London' and it is an article by Frederick Treves with an illustration of Joseph Merrick. It was published in 1885 and it was the first time that Joseph's medical case appeared in the medical press.

EXTERIOR OF THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM

TINA WALKING TO THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM ENTRANCE AND GOING INSIDE

VOICE – TINA

Merrick had a similar life to me in that sense. He was in institutions, started off in a workhouse because he couldn't get any employment. He didn't have a home right until the end of his life almost.

EXTERIOR OF THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM

TINA FACING THE CAMERA

VOICE – TINA

A home he could call his own

EXTERIOR OF THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM

ROWAN FACING THE CAMERA, CAMERA MOVES UP TO OLIVIA AND BACK DOWN TO ROWAN

VOICE – OLIVIA

Merrick could be seen as a disabled pioneer, because he lived in a typical disabled person's life of impairment, surgery, unemployment, isolation, stared at, and fear of hounding.

VOICE – ROWAN

I grew up with the myth of the beauty and the beast, knowing that the beast isn't wanted, the beast is isolated.

EXTERIOR OF THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM

TINA FACES THE CAMERA

VOICE – ROWAN

And if you don't look right you're automatically the beast.

VOICE – TINA

People kind of making the comments that they think you don't hear as they go past you, 'urgh, that's disgusting' or 'God look at that, did you see that?' Of course it's a searing pain that goes right through your head, you know, certainly

mentally but it's quite a physical thing as well. And it just seems so unfair that people think that they can do that.

EXTERIOR OF THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM

TIM FACES THE CAMERA

VOICE – TIM

Merrick had that being a spectacle, being made a spectacle, for him was a big thing and it's something that still happens to me and to disabled people today. There's an element of spectacle and we sometimes spectacularize ourselves for different purposes. Sometimes we have to, sometimes society or the world makes spectacles of us for various reasons, so, and so that is a link I mean I have with Merrick and that he would have with lots of disabled people today.

EXTERIOR OF THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM

ROWAN FACES THE CAMERA, CAMERA MOVES UP TO MERICK'S VEIL

VOICE – ROWAN

I think Merrick stood out for me so much as somebody that was treated differently

WHITECHAPEL HIGH STREET

ROWAN FACES THE CAMERA, PEOPLE WALKING ROUND HER

Because of the way he looked, that's all it was about him, the way he looked.

EXTERIOR OF THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM

TIM FACES THE CAMERA

VOICE – TIM

Merrick when we were at school was an insult. It was like 'spaz' because we had all read the Elephant Man and we'd all seen the film and we were very, there was no politics, we were nasty, nasty little critters. And so it was, it meant really disabled, it meant a freak or something because we'd taken that on.

EXTERIOR OF THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM

ROWAN FACES THE CAMERA, OLIVIA PUTTING THE VEIL ON ROWAN'S

WHEELCHAIR

VOICE – OLIVIA

Joseph Merrick sometimes wore a veil not to hide beauty but to stop the staring from strangers.

VOICE – TINA

The face is so, so important

EXTERIOR OF THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM

TINA FACING THE CAMERA

It's the first impression that people have of you. And if you're, if that's masked by contortion it's very difficult to rearrange your face really so that you look happy or sad or, people don't know sometimes when I'm happy or sad or when I'm unwell because they can't read my face.

INTERIOR OF THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM

JONATHAN TALKING TO CAMERA WITH MERRICK'S VEIL

This is Joseph Merrick's hat and veil and it was made for him and he wore it as part of his travelling clothes. He was certainly wearing it before he came to the London Hospital and it stayed with him to the end of his life. And it's been in the Hospital ever since.

CLOSE UP ON TINA

VOICE – TINA

I guess it's because my face doesn't tell the story, it doesn't tell my feelings. I hate it, I really hate it. I don't like people to see me cry because my face looks horrible when I cry. Even to the point of having relationships with people I don't like them to see my face too much.

INTERIOR OF THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM

JONATHAN TALKING TO CAMERA WITH MERRICK'S VEIL

The hat's made of felt and the bottom, the veil is made of linen. It's got a single eye hole and the hat's got a peak as you can see.

CLOSE UP ON TINA

VOICE – TINA

When I had long hair I used to hide my face a lot with my hair, I used to love it, it was a security blanket. And I felt protected by it. He was literally thought of as a thing, an animal and people actually think that now sometimes about disabled people and I guess that he just had to hide away from it

CLOSE UP ON TINA IN REPLICA OF MERRICK'S HAT AND VEIL, REMOVING VEIL

VOICE – TINA

Through that hood to protect himself against the harsh comments and stares.

INTERIOR OF THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM

JONATHAN TALKING TO CAMERA WITH MERRICK'S VEIL

VOICE – JONATHAN

The hat is the size of the circumference of a man's waist and it indicates just how large Joseph's head was. It caused him great difficulties throughout his life, the overgrowth of bone and flesh on his head.

CLOSE UP ON TINA IN REPLICA OF MERRICK'S HAT AND VEIL

VOICE – ROWAN

I think it's natural to be interested in difference.

CLOSE UP ON ROWAN BEING SHOWN MERRICK'S CALLING CARD BY OLIVIA

VOICE – ROWAN

When I look at a picture of John Merrick I want to know what his face feels like. I want to touch it. I want to know whether it's lumpy, or squidgy or hard. I think that's natural. What I don't want to do is fear him or ridicule him as so many seem to have done.

EXTERIOR OF THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM
ROWAN AND OLIVIA FACING THE CAMERA
VOICE – OLIVIA

But what is it like to be stared at and isolated this way?

CLOSE-UP ON TINA, FACING THE CAMERA
VOICE – TINA

Oh public property you know I'm, I like many other people, we're public property. We get on a bus we're a spectacle. From the moment we open the front door we're a spectacle, you have to be prepared for that, be prepared for the onslaught.

WHITECHAPEL HIGH STREET, PEOPLE WALKING; CLOSE-UP ON ROWAN ON THE PAVEMENT, PEOPLE WALKING ROUND HER
VOICE – ROWAN

Well really whenever I go out in public I'm stared at, I'm watched, I'm talked about, we get people approaching and asking questions. Often people do come up and say 'are you okay?' or say to the person with me 'is there any hope?' And sometimes they'll put their hands on me and pray and for me that's a pretty much every day experience.

CLOSE-UP ON TINA, FACING THE CAMERA
VOICE – TINA

It depends, some days I go out and I feel full of confidence and think sod you all, think what you like. And then other days I, especially when I feel delicate and mentally, emotionally delicate, I feel that people can just stare at me as they want to and intrude upon me and I can't get away from it.

CLOSE UP ON ROWAN, FACING THE CAMERA
VOICE – OLIVIA

Sometimes Joseph Merrick lived in the dark. You have to feel strong to take on the staring.

CLOSE UP ON ROWAN, CAMERA MOVES UP TO CLOSE-UP ON OLIVIA
VOICE – TINA

Oh I completely understand that. That Merrick didn't want to come out except for at night.

EXTERIOR OF THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM, TINA WALKING, THEN MOVES TO INTERIOR OF THE HOSPITAL MUSEUM, TINA LOOKING AROUND THE DISPLAY
VOICE - TINA

I went through a few years where I would only let people come to my house if it was past ten o'clock when the light had gone down, the light had faded and it was dusk. And I could join the vampires.

CLOSE-UP ON TINA, FACING THE CAMERA
VOICE – TINA

And come out and play.

EXTERIOR OF HOSPITAL MUSEUM LOOKING UPWARDS TO THE SKY

VOICE – OLIVIA

Joseph Merrick was given a room of his own at the London Hospital where he wrote, went to the theatre and had royal visitors.

INTERIOR OF HOSPITAL MUSEUM, CLOSE-UP ON JONATHAN

VOICE – JONATHAN

Joseph Merrick lived at London Hospital for the last four years of his life and he's become one of our most celebrated patients.

INTERIOR OF HOSPITAL MUSEUM, CLOSE-UP ON JONATHAN HOLDING MERRICK'S CALLING CARD

VOICE – JONATHAN

This is Joseph Merrick's calling card or carte de visite as they were known in his day and it was taken, it has a photograph which was taken about 1889 shortly before his death. It shows him wearing his best Sunday suit and he's looking quite old, his disease was an aging disease. It was quite a nicely produced artefact and the sort of thing that he would have given to visitors. In this instance you can see on the back that he had given this particular example to the Chaplain of the Hospital

EXTERIOR OF HOSPITAL MUSEUM, CLOSE-UP ON TINA HOLDING MERRICK'S CALLING CARD

VOICE – JONATHAN

Reverend Christian Valentine, somebody he would have seen regularly when he was at the Hospital. It was later given to a medical student, Miles Phillips.

VOICE – TINA

He kind of owns it. He kind of, it kind of transforms him into something, the real him.

CLOSE UP OF POSTER WHICH READS: 'TIS TRUE MY FORM IS SOMETHING ODD / BUT BLAMING ME IS BLAMING GOD / COULD I CREATE MYSELF ANEW / I WOULD NOT FAIL IN PLEASING YOU / IF I COULD REACH FROM POLE TO POLE / OR GRASP THE OCEAN WITH A SPAN / I WOULD BE MEASURED BY THE SOUL / THE MIND'S THE STANDARD OF THE MAN. JOSEPH CAREY MERRICK, THE ELEPHANT MAN'

CLOSE UP OF POSTER AND PEOPLE WALKING OVER IT

VOICE – OLIVIA

Joseph Carey Merrick's humanism did come through. Merrick left his version of a poem to be remembered by.

EXTERIOR OF HOSPITAL MUSEUM, CLOSE-UPS OF TINA SPEAKING MERRICK'S POEM
'Tis True my form is something odd, but blaming me is blaming God. Could I create myself anew I'm sure I would not fail in pleasing you. If I could reach from pole to pole or grasp the ocean with a span, I'd be measured by the soul. The mind's the standard of the man.

EXTERIOR OF HOSPITAL MUSEUM, CLOSE-UP OF TIM SPEAKING AND PUTTING ON MERRICK'S HAT AND VEIL

The mind's the standard of the man

EXTERIOR OF HOSPITAL MUSEUM, CLOSE-UP OF TINA PLAYING WITH MERRICK'S HAT AND VEIL, WHICH BECOMES A CLOSE-UP OF TINA HOLDING MERRICK'S CALLING CARD

VOICE – OLIVIA

What would disabled people say to him now if they could talk to him across time?

VOICE – TINA

If I met Merrick today. But Merrick might not like me when I think about him because he'll probably be looking for the perfect woman, so called.

EXTERIOR OF HOSPITAL MUSEUM, CLOSE-UP OF TINA PLAYING WITH MERRICK'S HAT AND VEIL

VOICE – TINA

You know someone who's beautiful and certainly without scars. I fear that that would be the case. But if he wasn't like that, even if he was like that, it wouldn't matter

EXTERIOR OF HOSPITAL MUSEUM, CLOSE-UP OF TINA HOLDING MERRICK'S CALLING CARD

VOICE – TINA

But I would, I would tell him to hold his head up high. Merrick made his mark on this planet and it was a pretty good one.

CLOSE-UPS OF ROWAN

VOICE – TINA

And I think he's a role-model for a lot of us crips.

VOICE – ROWAN

Knowing that Merrick was around as a disabled person, not always hiding who he was but being out and proud

INTERIOR OF HOSPITAL MUSEUM, ROWAN AND OLIVIA LOOKING ROUND THE DISPLAY

VOICE – ROWAN

As an individual feels as though I've got ancestry, he is my ancestor

CLOSE-UP OF OLIVIA HOLDING MERRICK'S CALLING CARD, CAMERA MOVES DOWN TO ROWAN

VOICE – ROWAN

And I am part of his family. Knowing that I am still dealing with the issues that he was dealing with over a hundred years ago makes me feel sad in some ways but also proud. It's as though he's a fore-father, he went before me, and hopefully

CLOSE-UP OF TINA

VOICE – ROWAN

There'll be generations like us who'll go after us.

VOICE – TINA

Merrick's my hero definitely.

EXTERIOR OF HOSPITAL MUSEUM, CLOSE-UP OF TINA SPEAKING

Merrick the human being. Merrick the guy with the mind, with the emotion.

Merrick with the feeling. Merrick quite a personality and something to be reckoned with. Merrick the beautiful.

MUSIC AND END CREDITS