

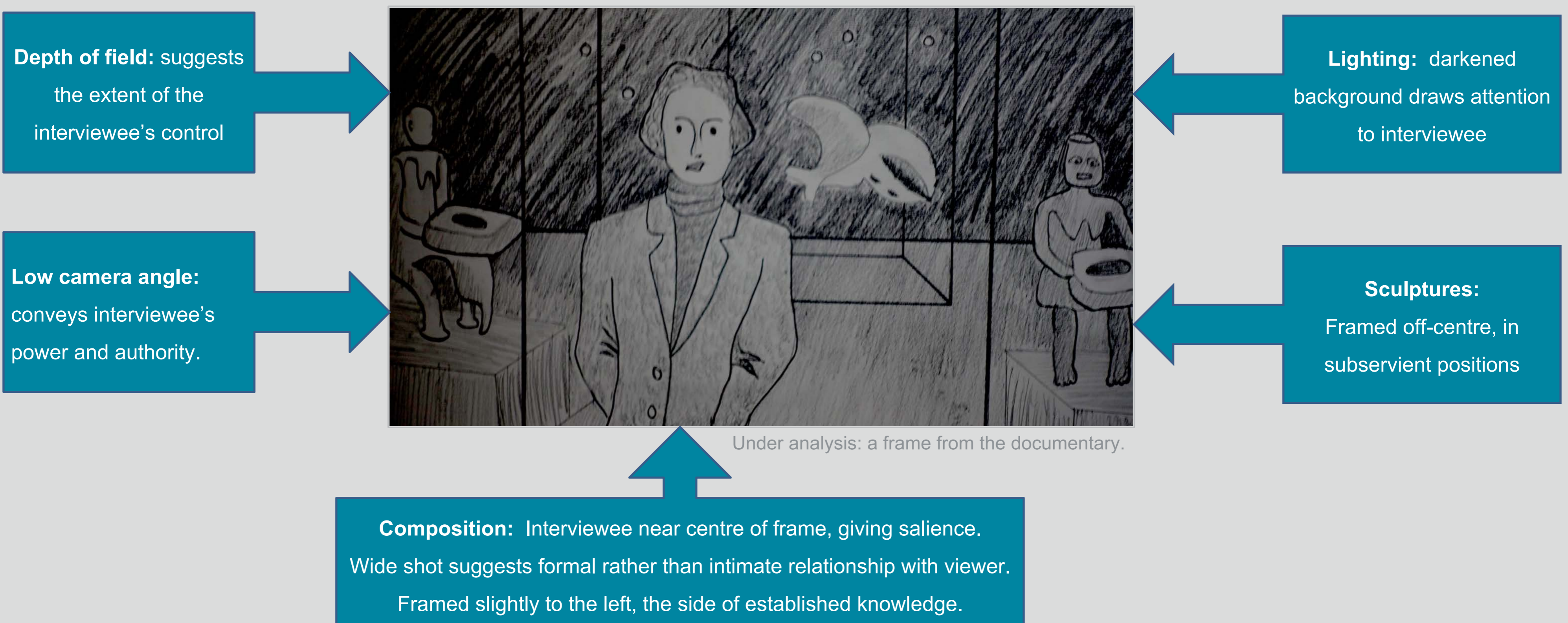
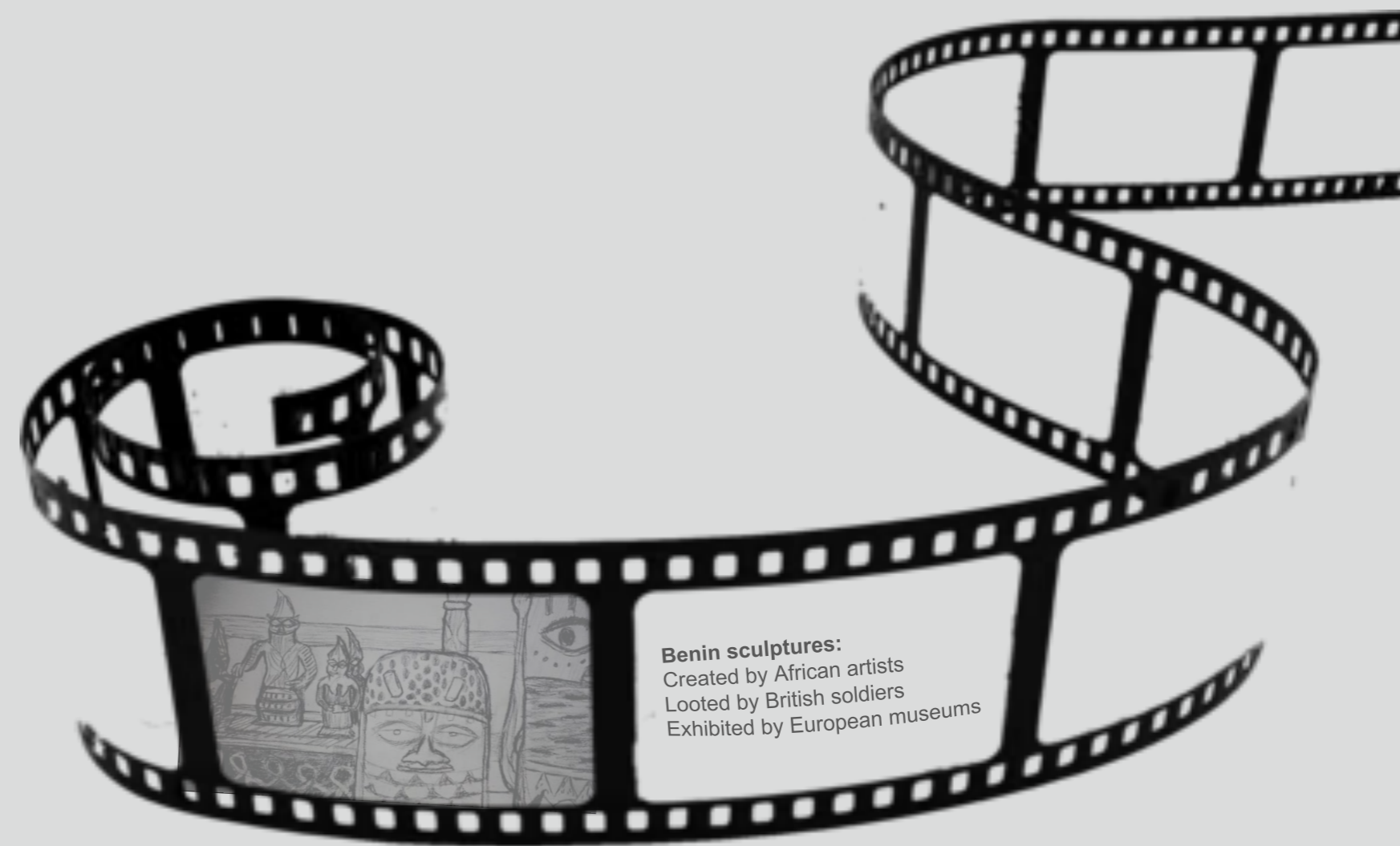
Exploring **power** and **knowledge** in an educational documentary

This research uses visual analysis to explore how an educational documentary portrays power and knowledge. I examined a documentary I had made about an exhibition of the Benin sculptures in 2007. Returning to it in 2018, I was surprised to find out how much the framing, lighting and composition of shots reveal about a museum's control of knowledge.

Theory and methodology:

Theory: post-structuralism (drawing on **Foucault**) and Post-colonialism (drawing on **Said** and **Fanon**);

Methodology: visual analysis (**Kress** and **van Leeuwen**).



Findings:

My analysis supports Foucault's (1972) ideas about power-knowledge and Berger's (1974) argument that the interpretation of antiquities is often left to "a narrow cultural hierarchy of relic specialists". Its post-colonialist critique clearly shows which voices were given weight when the film was commissioned, and which voices were marginalised.

Key ideas:

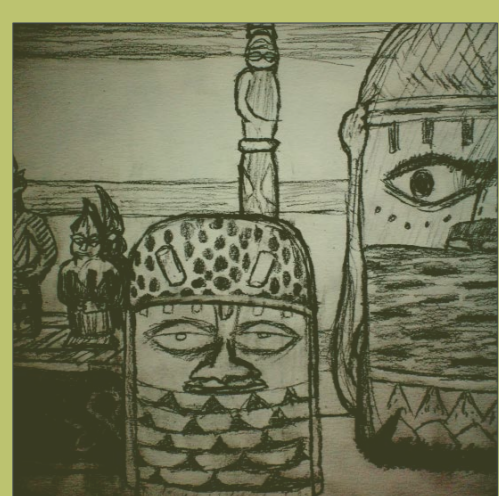
According to Foucault (1972) power and knowledge are inextricably linked. They relate to **discourse**: the way powerful institutions speak about the world and influence what is **thinkable**. Foucault called this **power knowledge**. Bennett (1995) suggests that museums, like prisons and schools, are wielders of power-knowledge. Said (2003) and Fanon (1967) have argued that all of Western academia is based on ideas brought back by early colonists about the colonised as subjects to be ruled.



On reflection:

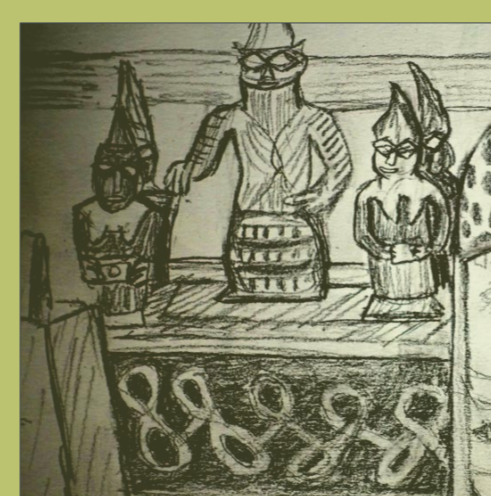
This film was commissioned in 2007. My role as producer-director was to convey the arguments of the museum about modes of display to first year students. During this research, it was sobering to discover that as a film-maker, I too was subject to power-knowledge.

By Gail Gauron, MA in Education student, 17038623@brookes.ac.uk



Filmography:

Producer/director: Gail Gauron (née Block)
Commissioner: British HE institution
Faculty: Arts (history of art)
Target audience: 1st year students
Year of production: 2007



References:

Bennett, T. (1995) 'The multiplication of culture's utility', *Critical inquiry* 21, p28
 Berger, J. (1972) *Ways of seeing*, London: Penguin
 Fanon, F. (1967) 'The fact of blackness', in Evans, J. & Hall, S. (eds) *Visual culture: the reader* London: Sage
 Kress, G., Van Leeuwen, T. (1996) *Reading images: the grammar of visual design* London: Routledge
 Foucault, M. (1972) *Power/knowledge* Brighton: Harvester Press
 Said, E. (2003) *Orientalism* London: Penguin