

Unsung



With the advent of the internet, smartphones and social media, today's politics happens under an unprecedented level of scrutiny. Our leaders live their lives out in the open, permanently exposed, public figures made more public than ever. While its never been possible to please all the people all the time, now everyone with a bone to pick can tell you to your face.

An amoral political chameleon with a darting lizard tongue to match

All of which begs the question, what kind of person would be willing to undergo this constant exposure and criticism just to seize and hold power?

These are questions that Valentijn Dhaenens, the one-man, one-vote behind *Unsung* attempts to answer with his fractured collage of the modern politician. His unnamed leader of an unnamed party in an unknown country could be any one of many men of power and, indeed, shows flashes of several. The Blairite wheeler-dealer, the Cameronian shirt-sleeved 'bloody decent bloke', the gloating Trumpian frat-boy and the sleazy bestial Weiner/Weinstein crossbreed. Prowling the stage, an amoral political chameleon with a darting lizard tongue to match, Dhaenens captures each aspect vividly before transitioning back to his ground state - a blank canvas of a man who'll be anyone he has to be in order to win.

Balancing out the political operator are glimpses into the man behind the mask in the form of his FaceTime conversations with loved ones. In this respect, a unintended technical hitch gave the show its most potent metaphor: a man struggling, just out of the spotlight, to right his public image. However, the candid videos do offer an effective and elegant way to show how a decent person can lose sight of morality in their quest for validation and approval.

Unsung offers very few new insights into the self-obsessed psyche of the modern politician. However, by taking these key characteristics, placing them side-by-side and thrusting them in our faces, it shows us in sharp contrast just to what kind of damaged human being we have handed the reins of power. We see very little of the sympathetic human side but, given their better natures are not the problem, perhaps a focus on the dark side is exactly the wake-up call we need.