The Nightshift:
Portraits of British cities at night.

I thought about what I would see on an ordinary midweek evening, once the pubs have emptied out and the people have gone home. As many of the inhabitants of our cities fall into their sleep, there are a small few who will work through the night. These people are working the nightshift. I would like to observe a few of the workers during their nightshift as they prepare the cities for another day. Watching as they perform jobs that many of us may take for granted.

An office cleaner for example, meanders through an empty 'cube farm' environment, with just the hum of a hoover to keep him or her happy. I would like to follow the nurses on hospital wards that see their patients through to the morning. I would like to see the shelf stackers that replenish the supermarket after a busy city day, or the newspaper couriers that mean we wake up to our papers in the morning.

The backdrop for this activity is the eerily empty streets and the shops with shuttered up windows. That rush hour gridlock roundabout with not a soul to be seen. The traffic light still flashing, but with no cars to stop. The lonely tourist landmark. There is almost silence, except for the occasional car perhaps.

The films are delivered in an observational fashion, with no interviews or direct dialogue. First the city is established in a few shots of recognizable landmarks at night. Then there are short visual narratives of two different workers, establishing their role and their environment. These workers are juxtaposed against one another as they plough through the night. Perhaps one is indoors whilst the other is outside. One may be bored whilst another busy. One maybe silent whilst another is being noisy. Towards the end of the short film we watch dawn rising, and the city come alive again. We end as our workers leave the nightshift. The sound will all be onscreen, with no added music, voiceover or effects.

Filming the Nightshift:

I believe these programmes could be shot with two-person crew over a couple of nights in each city. As the films are highly reliant on visuals and good sound, I believe they should be shot on either DigiBeta or DVCPro to ensure good quality.

The style of the Nightshift would be similar to the night sequences in Grant Gee's 'Meeting People is Easy' documentary about Radiohead. The fluorescent office lighting is garish and unsubtle, the street lighting full of shadows. Ultimately, I would like to portray places that we recognise in a different perspective. Unlike 'Meeting People is Easy', in which the action is frantic and accompanied by musical soundtrack, I believe the Nightshift should be relaxed in pace and only have the atmospheric sounds from location. I believe this will contribute to the sense of eeriness and emptiness.

Obviously there will need to be a research period to find suitable nightshift workers and locations. Due to the short nature of the films, the characters and locations need to be established relatively rapidly and therefore should be researched thoroughly. Ideally the workers should reflect the diversity of our multicultural cities, with variety of ages and ethnic backgrounds.