



How the Cinematography of 'Women Talking' Plays With Time

[Jazz Tangcay](#) Dec 2, 2022

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At the core of [Sarah Polley's](#) "Women Talking" (in limited release from Dec. 2, expanding Jan. 6) are the titular women, who, as cinematographer [Luc Montpellier](#) says, are "in the process of dismantling an old world that has been part of their lives their entire life."

In the film, an ensemble of actors led by Rooney Mara, Claire Foy and Jessie Buckley, discuss the sexual and physical trauma inflicted upon all the women of their isolated religious community and the difficult decisions and choices it would take to build a new life outside that community. It all unfolds while their husbands are away in town. It unfolds mostly in a barn loft. "It was important for the imagery in the film to mirror the weight of this seemingly impossible decision, all the decisions that we made, needed to mirror that," Montpellier says.

Visually, Polley and Montpellier decided to present scenes that were nonjudgmental, but, he adds, "we weren't afraid to present images to the audience that would draw you into how these women were feeling."

A gothic-inspired color palette would make the audience feel a conflict between this suppressive community and the repression that women had experienced. Says Montpellier, "We wanted to shift the audience from these very intense dialogue scenes to the landscape outside and the children that are playing [outside] so that you're constantly reminded [that] this is what is at stake."

The moments of silence, he says, were for the audience to experience what

they had just seen. "The whole film is designed to challenge your ideas visually," says Montpellier.

A factor Montpellier needed to consider was conveying the idea of a ticking clock, since the women didn't know when their husbands would return and discover their plotting. "I had the light shift subtly throughout the entire film so that you had this subconscious feeling that the days were running out in that they could arrive at any moment," he says.

Leading up to what Montpellier calls the "visual climax," the women sing a hymn-like song.

"Despite the day having run out, they still take this moment to take care of what is most important to them, which is this child that needs to be comforted. That's the shot where the sun sets right behind in real-time as our little girl falls asleep. To me, there was no better way to play with time and with this beautiful moment." He adds, "There's this impending return of the men underneath all of this."