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VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Visual anthropology logically proceeds from the belief that culture is manifested through visible symbols embedded in gestures, ceremonies, rituals, and artifacts situated in constructed and natural environments. Culture is conceived of as manifesting itself in scripts with plots involving actors and actresses with lines, costumes, props, and settings. The cultural self is the sum of the scenarios in which one participates. If one can see culture, then researchers should be able to employ audiovisual technologies to record it as data amenable to analysis and presentation. Although the origins of visual anthropology are to be found historically in positivist assumptions that an objective reality is observable, most contemporary culture theorists emphasize the socially constructed nature of cultural reality and the tentative nature of our understanding of any culture.

There is an obvious relationship between the supposition that culture is objectively observable and the popular belief in the neutrality, transparency, and objectivity of audiovisual technologies. From a positivist perspective, reality can be captured on film without the limitations of human consciousness Pictures provide an unimpeachable witness and: source of highly reliable data. Given those assumptions, it is logical that as soon as the technologies were available, anthropologists attempted to produce wit] the camera the sort of objective research data the could tee stored in archives and made available for stud by future generations (Edwards 1992).

Contemporary thought is more tentative than positivist theory about the nature of cultural know edge and about what film can record. In a postpositive and postmodern world, the camera is constrained by the culture of the person behind the apparatus; that is, films and photographs are always concerned with two things-the culture of those filmed and the culture of those who film. As a result of viewing pictures representations of an ideology, it has been suggested that anthropologists use the technology in a reflexive manner, alienating viewers from any false assumptions about the reliability of the images they see, and that visual ethnographers seek ways to share their authority with the people they study.

Conceptually, visual anthropology ranges over all aspects of culture that are visible-from nonverbal communication, the built environment, ritual and ceremonial performance, dance, and art to material culture. (Excluded from this discussion are the varied research uses of audiovisual technologies in physical anthropology and archaeology.) Although some visual anthropologists do work in all of these areas, the field lacks a tradition of a commonly accepted all encompassing theory-an anthropology of visual or pictorial communication (Worth 1981). Given the fragmentary nature of contemporary theorizing, it seems unlikely that such a grand theory will ever become commonly accepted. The field may be conceptually wide-ranging, but in practice visual anthropology is dominated primarily by an interest in pictorial media as a means of communicating anthropological knowledge, that is, ethnographic films and photographs and, secondarily, the study of pictorial manifestations of culture.

Visual anthropology has never been completely incorporated into the mainstream of anthropology. It is trivialized by some anthropologists as being mainly concerned with audiovisual aids for teaching. The anthropological establishment has yet to acknowledge the centrality of the mass media in the formation of cultural identity in the second half of the twentieth century. Consequently, visual anthropologists sometimes find themselves involved with the research and thinking of professional image makers and scholars from other disciplines-visual sociology, cultural studies, film theory, photo history, dance and performance studies, and architectural theory-rather than with the work of other cultural anthropologists.

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ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY OF IMAGES

The scholarly study of photography has been dominated by the art historians' search for significant works by important artists and the discovery of the naive products of vernacular practitioners. During the past decade a social approach to the history of photography has emerged in which photographs are seen as socially constructed artifacts that tell us something about the culture depicted as well as the culture of the picture taker. Such studies concentrate more on the social contexts of making and using images and less on the photograph as text. Visual anthropologists have contributed to this movement with their analyses of historical photographic practice as cultural behavior (Ruby 1988; Edwards 1992) and ethnographic studies of vernacular practices, such as snapshots (Musello 1980).These studies attempt to provide insight into the conditions of production and consumption, so that the meaning of the images can be comprehended as something negotiated rather than fixed. For example, the photographs of Edward Curtis can be understood as the products of a nineteenth century romanticized view of Native Americans and criticized as being racist and ethnocentric (Lyman 1982). At the same time, the Curtis images can be examined for their value to contemporary Native Americans who wish to use them in constructing their cultural identity (Lippard 1992).

The anthropological analysis of film, television, and other forms of mass media began with the 1940s studies of Gregory Bateson, Margaret Mead, and Rhoda Metraux that focused on culture as a distance in which the cultural elements of commercial cinema were ascertained through textual analysis (Bateson and Mead 1942; Mead and Metraux 1953). Since the 1980s, there has been less interest in studies of the producer and the text and more concern with the role of film and television audiences in the construction of meaning. Scholars from a number of disciplines, such as cultural studies and communication, now employ ethnographic methods to conduct reception studies of Western viewers. In addition, some ethnographers have studied the reception of television among native populations (Michaels 1987; Kottak 1990) and the cultural processes employed in the production of a U.S. television program (Intintoli 1984). Wilton Martinez (1992) has undertaken a distressing study of the reception of ethnographic films by college students in an introductory anthropology course. He found that although the purpose of the course and the films was to cause viewers to gain respect for other peoples' life-styles, the films tended to reinforce the ethnocentric attitudes of students.

ETHNOGRAPHIC PHOTOGRAPHY

Ethnographic photography is a practice without a well-articulated theory or method. Since the 1890s, when outdoor photography became relatively easy, most anthropological fieldworkers have produced images of the people they studied. Some ethnographers employ photographs in the field to induce responses in an interview. The primary function of photographs taken in the field is as an aide-de-memoire, similar to written field notes, to help reconstitute events in the mind of the ethnographer. Some images become illustrations for publications, slides for lectures, or, occasionally, the basis for an exhibition. Once the fieldwork is written up, the photographs are deposited either in a museum or in the author's personal archive along with written field notes and are usually forgotten.

On a formal level, photographs taken by anthropologists are indistinguishable from the snapshots or artistically intended images taken by tourists-that is, there is no discernible anthropological photographic style. Although ethnographic photography shares some affinity with the documentary, the aesthetic and

political intent of most documentary images separates them from ethnographic photography. Bateson and Mead's Balinese Character (1942) and Gardner and Heider's Gardens of War (1968) are among the exceptional attempts at publishing a photographic ethnography. Such ethnographic sociologists as Douglas Harper and others in the International Visual Sociology Association are extending the tradition of photo ethnographies. In the 1990s, experiments with multimedia-hypertext technology opened up the promise of a future with computer-generated pictorial ethnographies-a new kind of text producing a different type of learning experience.

ETHNOGRAPHIC FILM

Ethnographic film is the dominant interest and practice among visual anthropologists. There is no standard agreed-upon definition of the genre, and the popular assumption is that it is a documentary about "exotic" people, thereby broadening the term "ethnographic" to stand for any statement about culture. Some scholars argue that all film is ethnographic

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(Heider 1976), whereas others (e.g., Ruby 1975) wish to restrict the term to films produced by or in association with anthropologists.

The literature about ethnographic film has been hampered by a lack of a conceptual structure sufficient to the task of allowing anthropologists to theorize about how film can be used to communicate knowledge. It is a failure that burdens all discourse about nonfiction film. As a result, authors have concentrated on making proscriptions and programmatic admonitions, and telling war stories about how a film was made. Other topics of discussion have been the assumed dilemmas between science and art; questions of accuracy, fairness, and objectivity; the appropriateness of the conventions of documentary realism; the value of film in the teaching of anthropology; the relationship between a written and a visual anthropology; and collaborations between filmmakers and anthropologists and the native production of visual texts. Theoretical explorations are consequently limited to arguing about whether or not a particular film is objective, accurate, complete, or even ethnographic. With the erosion of the positivist underpinnings of anthropology and documentary film comes the possibility of a new examination of the politics and ideology of filmed ethnography. Like the documentary, the ethnographic film seems on the verge of some serious theoretical debates. Perhaps as a result of the criticisms from film theorists such as Bill Nichols and the challenge of indigenously produced media, visual anthropologists have become increasingly aware of the need for a more secure conceptual basis.

The earliest ethnographic films-one-reel, single-take episodes of human behavior were indistinguishable from theatrical actualities. Anthropologists, like everyone else, were fascinated with the technology and its promise to provide an unimpeachable witness. Felix-Louis Regnault, perhaps the first anthropologist to produce researchable footage, proposed in 1900 that all museums collect "moving artifacts" of human behavior for study and exhibit. Scholars, explorers, and even colonial administrators produced footage for research and public display. The crude technology, the lack of familiarity with the equipment, and the vagueness of the makers' intentions greatly limited its use.

Filmmaking conventions eventually developed that tended to interfere with the assumed scholarly needs for researchable data. The perceived conflict between the aesthetic conventions of filmmaking and the scholarly requirements of positivism for researchable data caused film to be underutilized as an analytic technique. For example, filmmakers tend to fragment and reconstitute action into synthetic sequences that suggest time relationships sometimes at variance with the photographed action. Some anthropologists believe that only footage shot at eye level with a minimum of camera movement and with real-time coverage of the event are scientifically usable. Strategies appropriate to fiction were believed to create barriers between anthropologists and film professionals. These naive assumptions about the differences between the art of film and the science of anthropology are slowly being replaced by a conception of film as a culturally bound communication usable in a variety of discourses. The lack of a method for extracting researchable data about cultural behavior from film footage continues to inhibit the use of the camera as a

research tool.

In the 1930s Mead and Bateson extended Regnault's ideas. The results of their fieldwork were such published films as Bathing Babies in Three Cultures (1941), which were designed to make their data available for other scholars. The tradition of group research of filmed behavior they championed continues with Alan Lomax's Choreometrics study of dance as cultural behavior. Whereas Ray Birdwhistell (1970) and Edward Hall (1959) have proposed the cinematic study of body movement and the use of space as culturally conditioned communications, and dance ethnologists often employ video and cine cameras, the microanalysis of filmed behavior has been more attractive to social psychologists like Paul Ekman than to anthropologists.

In the 1950s the Institut fur den Wissenschaftlichen Film in Gottingen launched its Encyclopedia Cinematographica project, which included an archive and center for the study of filmed behavior. A similar organization, Human Studies Film Archives, is housed at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Although the idea of generating researchable information about culture with a camera remains theoretically possible, few anthropologists have actually conducted a study employing motion-picture footage produced by other people. Some indigenous people have begun examining film footage of their culture's ceremonial life stored in archives in the hope of revitalizing their old traditions.

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Production of ethnographic films for public edification and amusement began as part of a general educational-film movement in the 1920s. Prior to that, films of "exotic" peoples were produced commercially, sometimes with the cooperation of anthropologists and screened in theaters as selected short subjects. For example, the Pathe brothers sought the assistance of the Department of Anthropology at Harvard when producing People and Customs of the World in 1928.

There were a number of early attempts to represent native life in feature-length theatrical films shot on location. Edward Curtis' *In the Land of the Head Hunters* (1914), a romantic epic of the Kwakiutl of British Columbia, was a box-office failure but it established a precedent for Robert Flaherty's Nanook of the North (1922), a portrait of the struggles of an Inuit (Eskimo) family of the Hudson Bay region of Canada against a harsh environment. The international success of Nanook prompted Paramount Pictures to finance Flaherty's second film, Moana (1 926), and to distribute Meriam Cooper and Ernest Scheodsack's Grass (1926), a study of the annual migration of the Bakhtari of Iran.

Although the academic world by and large ignored these films, Hollywood saw the box-office potential for productions that featured exotic locations and starred native people. Moreover, the procedures that were instituted at the major studios were essentially incompatible with ethnography. When Cooper and Schoedsack traveled to Siam (Thailand) to shoot Chang (1927), they carried a fully approved script, ensuring fidelity to executive preconceptions and to popular folk models of the lives of people exotic to the West. Hollywood was beginning to develop its own traditions of Asian, African, and South Sea Island adventure drama that were increasingly at odds with anthropological concerns.

In The Silent Enemy: An Epic of the American Indian (1930), director H. P. Carver employed an all-native cast to tell the tale of an Ojibway warrior. The film begins with Chief Yellow Robe, the lead actor, in a complete Indian costume, confronting the camera directly to inform audiences, "This is the story of my people...Everything that you will see here is real... When you look at the picture, therefore, look not upon us as actors. We are Indians living once more our old

life." Never has a film before or after The Silent Enemy been so authenticated. The advent of sound caused the film industry to move into the studio stage and abandon the location adventure film about exotic cultures until the 1970s. For forty years, movie audiences learned about the "exotic other" through backlot Tarzan films employing African Americans as natives and in cowboy and Indian movies using Mexican Americans as Native Americans. Because of the popularity of these films, anthropological filmmakers are still forced to disabuse audiences about their expectations of seeing cannibals,

headhunters, and other savage clichés when viewing films about cultures foreign to their experience.

Only a few ethnographic films were produced by or with anthropologists in the 1920s and 1930s. The rapid disappearance of native peoples, as well as Western culture's folk and peasant customs, caused a few salvage ethnographic-film projects to be undertaken. For example, the Heye Foundation supported a series of films on Native Americans from 1912 to 1927 that were produced by Owen Cattell with the assistance of Frederick Hodge. Similar projects were designed to salvage European folk traditions and were motivated by a sense of nationalistic pride rather than a need for anthropological study. Prior to World War II, most eastern and central European countries had a department of folklore that produced hundreds of short films, most often about peasants dancing in colorful costumes. In colonial countries such as India, agencies such as the Anthropological Survey, Films Division, and state television maintained a continuous if weak tradition of recording native societies for research, publicity, developmental advocacy, and nation-building activities. These films were seen in movie houses and at some of the larger museums. Until the l950s they were seldom shown in university classrooms.

It was not until after World War II that there was substantial film activity by anthropologists. By 1952 there was sufficient interest in the field to form the International Committee on Ethnographic and Sociological Film, which was associated with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Festival dei Popoli in Florence, the Conference on Visual Anthropology in Philadelphia, Cinema du Real in Paris, the Margaret Mead Film Festival in New York, and the Royal Anthropological Institute's Ethnographic Film Festival in Manchester were organized in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s to encourage the growth of anthropological cinema. Every year, new conferences, festivals, and seminars appear, attesting to an increasing interest in visual anthropology. There are three quar-

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terly periodicals devoted to the field: Studies in Visual Communication (1974-1985), Visual Anthropology (1987-), published in conjunction with the International Commission on Visual Anthropology; and Visual Anthropology Review (1986-), a publication of the Society for Visual Anthropology. Graduate-study programs currently exist at the University of Southern California, New York University, and Temple University in the United States and at the University of Manchester in England. Numerous other institutions offer single courses.

A number of impressive ethnographic films emerged in the 1950s and 1960s from diverse institutions in the United States that were directed toward university audiences as well as the larger world of documentary-film viewers. The Hunters (1958) was the first North American ethnographic film to gain worldwide attention. The story of some hunters and gatherers living in the Kalahari desert, it continued the Nanook theme of humans struggling with a hostile environment in order to eke out a living. It is part of John Marshall's thirty-year-long film study of the San (Bushmen) of southern Africa. He has produced dozens of African and North American films including N'ai (1980), a life history of a San woman, which was broadcast on U.S. public television. Since the late 1980s, Marshall has combined his role as a filmmaker with that of an activist by assisting the San in their efforts to create a cultural and economic identity for themselves while he films the process.

In 1964, Robert Gardner, a former associate of Marshall's at the Film Study Center at Harvard University, released Dead Birds, a study of ritualized warfare among the Dani of New Guinea. The film grew out of a project in which ethnographers, a novelist, and a filmmaker all described the same culture, permitting audiences to compare the presentations. Gardner later produced films in East Africa, India, and South America and was instrumental in establishing the Program in Ethnographic Film, subsequently renamed the Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communication and now known as the Society for Visual Anthropology. Gardner's films are a source of constant debate, because his evocative style seems altogether too implicit for some anthropologists.

Timothy Asch, former director of the University of Southern California's Center for Visual Anthropology, worked collaboratively with anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon to create a series of popular films on the

Yanomamo of Venezuela, including The Feast (1968), Ax Fight (1971), and A Man Called Bee (1972). The films, along with written ethnographies and study guides, were designed to teach cultural anthropology to college undergraduates. Asch, working with his wife, Patsy, pursued his interests in collaborative filming in Indonesia with James Fox, creating The Water of Words (1983), and in Bali with Linda Conner, making Releasing the Spirits (l990).

The pioneering work of anthropologist-filmmaker Jean Rouch at the Musée de l'Homme brought new impetus to the field in Europe, gaining the attention of both academics and cineastes. In the early 1960s technical advances made it possible for small crews to produce synchronous-sound location films. The equipment encouraged some filmmakers to record actions and events as detached observers, naively assuming that they were not significantly influencing the actions being followed. Rouch adopted an opposite approach. He felt that the presence of the camera could provoke a cine-trance in which subjects revealed their culture. Chronique d'un été (1961) was produced with sociologist Edgar Morin and was the first cinema vérité film combining the ideas of Flaherty with those of Soviet film theorist and practitioner Dziga Vertov. Rouch took cameras into Paris streets for impromptu encounters in which the filmmaking process was often a part of the film. Filmmakers and equipment were in evidence in the frame. Those filmed became collaborators, even to the extent of participating in discussions of the footage, which were in turn incorporated into the final version of the film. Chronique marks the advent of portable synchronized-sound 16mm equipment, which made possible modern participatory and observational documentary styles. The impact of Rouch's work was immediately evident in the films of French New Wave directors, such as Chris Marker and Jean-Luc Godard and later among documentarians and ethnofilmmakers.

Rouch developed his collaborative approach for almost forty years in a number of films made with West Africans. Some early efforts, such as Les Maitres Fous (1955) were criticized as ethnocentric by some because of an assumed overemphasis on the bizarre, but others celebrated Les Maitres as a definitive surrealist text. Rouch wanted to produce a shared anthropology in which those in front of the camera shared the power with the director. This idea reached

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an apex with his so-called ethnographic science-fiction films, such as Jaguar (1965), Petit a petit (1968), and Madame l'eau (1992). His attempts at collaborative filmmaking are mirrored in the Native Alaskan Heritage Film Project of Sarah Elder and Leonard Kamerling. Since the early 1970s, this team has produced more than twenty community films, such as Drums of Winter (1988) in which the people filmed played an active role in the film from conception to realization. Given the shift in power and awareness in a postcolonial and postmodern world, some argue that the only ethnographic films that should be produced in the twenty-first century are those that result from an active collaboration and sharing of power between ethnofilmmakers and the subjects of their films.

Rouch's desire to allow us to see the world through the eyes of the natives was shared by Sol Worth and John Adair in the Navaho Film Project (1966), in which Native Americans were taught the technology of filmmaking without the usual Western ideology (Worth and Adair 1972). The project of Worth and Adair was part of a more general movement in the 1960s and 1970s toward the expansion of production to people who were traditionally the subject of films.

The idea of a reflexive ethnography that actively seeks the participation of those who are studied and that openly acknowledges the role of the ethnographer in the construction of the culture's image reflects a growing concern voiced by both anthropologists and documentary filmmakers about the ethics and politics of actuality filmmaking. Through the efforts of such people as Vincente Carelli in Brazil (l980s), Eric Michaels in Australia (1987), and Terence Turner in Brazil (1992), indigenous people have started producing their own videotapes, thus raising anew the possibility of making available new visions of the world.

The varied educational values of ethnographic film are demonstrated in two large projects. Man: A Course

of Study was a mixed-media curriculum developed by the Educational Development Corporation of Newton, Massachusetts, under the guidance of Canadian anthropologist Asen Balikci and others. Films on Netisilik Eskimo life originally designed for use in a grammar-school course have been repackaged for college-level courses, a commercial television special (The Eskimo Fight for Life), and a Canadian preschool children's series. Although Man is undoubtedly the most ambitious ethnographic educational project, it was not greeted with enthusiasm by conservative. journalists and politicians in the United States, who saw the course as being subversive to the U.S. we' of life because it taught cultural relativism. The second project, The Faces of Culture, was designed by a team of filmmakers, anthropologists, and television producers at Orange Coast College in California as an introductory cultural-anthropology course to be broadcast on local public-television stations and offered for credit through local community colleges. Each show in the series was derived from already existing footage on the Yamonamo, San, Amara, and others. The programs were designed to complement the readings from a required textbook.

Whereas most European and North American ethnographic filmmakers travel to distant places to film exotic peoples, white Australians have been filming the Aboriginal people of their country since about 1900. The British-organized Torres Straits Expedition of 1898 is reputed to have been the first such expedition on which an ethnographer took a motion picture camera in the field. The Australian Commonwealth Film Unit and later Film Australia made it possible for Ian Dunlap to undertake long-term filming projects, such as his Peoples of the Western Australian Desert series. The Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies employs a staff ethnographic filmmaker. In that capacity, Roger Sandall produced a number of films on the ceremonial life of various Aboriginal peoples, including The Mulga Seed Ceremony (1969). Since the late 1980s, these films are now restricted in their public showing, owing to the secret quality of some of the portrayed ceremonial acts. David and Judith Macdougall served as the institute's resident filmmakers during the l980s, and they are noted for a film trilogy, "Turkana Conversations," including Lorang's Way (l979) and The Wedding Camels (1981), shot in a distinctive observational style that has caught the attention of cineastes as well as anthropologists.

Television has become a significant source of support for ethnographic film activity. In Great Britain, Granada's long-running television series Disappearing World established a fruitful tradition of collaboration between field ethnographers and filmmakers, resulting in such films as Brian Moser's Last of the Cuiva (l971), shot in eastern Colombia. Granada's interest in ethnographic film caused them to be a major benefactor for the University of

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Manchester's program in ethnographic film. BBC-TV anthropological projects have included the series Face Values, produced in cooperation with the Royal Anthropological Institute, and Worlds Apart, in which series producers Chris Curling and Melissa Llewlyn-Davies explored the impact of Leni Riefenstal's photography in The Southeast Nuba (1983). In the United States aired Odyssey, a series that covered all aspects of anthropology. In a similar fashion, Nippon TV's Man, produced by Junichi Ushiyama, continues to be among the most popular programs in Japan. Television systems in many parts of the world have scheduled series for school and college use, drawing on the growing anthropological-film resources.

CONCLUSION

Anthropology is a word-driven discipline. It has tended to ignore the visual-pictorial world perhaps because of distrust of the ability of images to convey abstract ideas. When engaged in ethnography, the researcher must convert the complex experience of fieldwork to words in a notebook and then transform those words into other words shifted through analytic methods and theories. This logocentric approach to understanding denies much of the multisensory experience of trying to know another culture. The promise of visual anthropology is that it might provide an alternative way of perceiving culture-perception constructed through the lens.

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