Visual Anthropology appears to be in a perpetual state of flux. Unable to find a niche with a reasonably secure power base, it occupies a position marginal to mainstream academic social science and to the commercial worlds of independent film and educational television. In North America, its most enduring feature is the fact that teachers use ethnographic films, and college television courses such as *Faces of Culture* are successful (1).

While the anthropological use of pictorial media may be as old as the technology itself, the field still has an unclear public image. In the popular mind, an anthropological film is a documentary about any <<exotic>> people. International festivals supposedly devoted to anthropological films have organizing committees with no anthropologists. Frequently, the films selected for special recognition are produced by documentarians who have no apparent knowledge, training, or even interest in anthropology. Some are overtly hostile to the idea of social science, regarding it as <<ideologically incorrect>>. Apparently, when one films native people, it's not necessary to know anything about anthropology. Perhaps it is a legacy of the first amateur ethnographer who made films - Robert Flaherty.

When social documentaries are labeled anthropological, our field becomes confused with social reformist/liberal-leftist politics espoused in most documentary films. While many anthropologists might agree with the sentiment, confounding a political aesthetic with anthropology helps no one. It merely serves to thwart the socio-political agendas of documentarians and scholarly/educational desires of anthropologists.

In addition, there are the economic factors. Film work is expensive. Location productions can cost in excess of US Dollars 4,000 per finished minute. If one seeks broad exposure, videotaping is not a viable alternative since it is often impractical to shoot under field conditions and finishing costs.
are sufficiently high to make the final figures comparable to shooting 16mm film. In Great Britain budgets have been artificially increased by intransigent labor unions. They insisted upon large crews and strict adherence to union regulations regardless of how destructive these demands were, for example, <<tea breaks>> in the middle of filming a ceremony! In the U.S., the production funds which do exist are difficult to secure. Anthropological filmmakers compete with all other independent producers for the limited resources available through government agencies.

In universities, the funds to purchase or rent films are severely limited. The market existed a few years ago, has shrunk. The rental for one classroom film is usually over US Dollars 100 per screening. Few departments have the funds to support a course where film is a frequent component. Consequently some academics find themselves violating copyright regulations by acquiring clandestine video copies, thus further decreasing the rentals and sales. An informal VCR <<distribution>> network has been created in recent years which parallels the <<Xerox>> publishing network.

As the academic job market withers, anthropology becomes more conservative. Graduate students who aspire to university posts feel the pressure to stay within the safe confines of <<mainstream>> research and not risk their potential careers by studying visual anthropology or by doing a dissertation on the anthropology of visual communication. The number of social science dissertations containing filmed material remains minuscule.

In spite of the <<inevitable logic>> of the factors stated above, the field shows encouraging signs of growth and vitality. The Commission on Visual Anthropology, national organizations like North America's Society for Visual Anthropology, and regional entities such as the European Association for the Visual Studies of Man are growing bodies of active professionals with periodical and monographic publications, meetings and film festivals. Graduate training programs at (Temple University), New York University, the University of Southern California, the University of Manchester and elsewhere are attracting more and more students.

It's within the context of these struggles and contradictions that these remarks on the training of visual anthropologists are to be understood. My perspective is North American and reflects the fact that in the U.S. ethnographic film has always been intimately involved with the independent documentary film movement. My remarks are not based upon any specific training program, but on a general familiarity with several undertakings.

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The field of Visual Anthropology encompasses three separable but related areas: 1. the study of visual manifestations of culture-facial expression, body movement, dance, body adornment, the symbolic use of space, architecture,
and the built environment; 2. the study of pictorial aspects of culture from cave paintings to photographs, film, television, home video, and so on; 3. the use of pictorial media to communicate anthropological knowledge.

While this article concentrates on questions raised by the training of people interested in the third aspect, some brief comments about the other areas are in order. The study of pictorial and visual manifestations of culture have, by and large, been ignored by anthropologists. This is partially the result of conservative forces within university graduate programs, public and private granting agencies, and publication boards which tend to regard anthropology as being exclusively the study of traditional aspects of non-industrialized societies. Although lip service is paid to the notion that anthropology should be the study of all aspects of all cultures, those in power have tended to discourage anyone interested in the anthropology of visual communication.

There is a profound need for training in these areas. For too long anthropologists have allowed the study of the impact of mass mediated messages upon traditional, fourth-world, and aboriginal peoples, and the analysis of the production of culture in television to be conducted by people untrained in the study of culture (see Michaels 1986 and Intinoli 1980 as exceptions). Scholars interested in issues such as the cultural analysis of media, the qualitative studies of television and film, the role of the spectator in the construction of filmic meaning, or the validity of multiple aesthetic viewpoints recently “discovered” the techniques and ideas of anthropology. In the absence of a tradition within our field, these media scholars have had to muddle their way through the issues without the benefit of any professional anthropological input. For example the recent debate in UNESCO between those advocating “The Free Flow of Information” vs. “The New World Information Order” occurred with no significant anthropological involvement (Roach 1986).

The training of dance ethnologists, non-verbal communication specialists, ethnographers of the built environment, and media scholars, should be conducted within regular department programs. The technical and conceptual needs of these students are no more complex than those of archaeologists, linguists, or urban anthropologists. If we are going to develop an anthropology which involves itself in issues such as the extension of North American Media Empires into the far reaches of the globe, we need students to develop a professional identity as anthropologists. To create an intellectual “ghetto” by organizing them into separate programs is to perpetuate the marginal place of these studies-We have had a separate identity for too long. It is therefore argued that all training programs in Visual Anthropology should be located centrally in the general body of graduate training. It is the only way to ensure the incorporation of Visual Anthropology into the mainstream of our profession.

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The teaching of media production does require some special attention, if for no other reason than it requires a commitment of considerable proportions. Until recently, visual anthropologists either taught themselves or took courses designed for documentary
filmmakers. In the last two decades several anthropology departments instituted training programs. Since production programs outside of film or art departments are rarities, these programs simply attached themselves to existing film schools. After twenty-five years of experience it still remains unclear exactly how appropriate these models are for our needs.

The training of imagemakers is never merely technical (2). Students are offered a way of seeing and constructing in concert with an epistemology. We do not perceive the world directly but through ideological filters. Images - photo-chemical, electronic, or painted - are cultural products, even those we are taught to believe are objective records of reality (3). As students of culture we know technologies arise from out of and support an ideology. We should apply that understanding to our own behavior and examine the conventions of documentary realism as an expression of a world view when deciding how to educate our students. Otherwise, we run the risk of relying on commonsense or <<folk model>>

explanations of human behavior, narrative structure, and film form which may run contrary to the purposes of anthropology (Ruby 1980a). The documentary film was not created to communicate anthropology. It should therefore not surprise us if it fails to completely satisfy our needs. Our association of the documentary with ethnographic film is based upon the mistaken assumption that the aesthetics of realist cinema best portray ethnography.

We seldom offer our own production courses. They are cooperative ventures with faculty from film departments. The custom parallels the way we often make films, that is, collaboratively. While some maintain sole authorship of their films, many of us find it expedient and useful to work with professional imagemakers. It is the nature of that collaboration in teaching and production which we must ponder. We have tended to defer to imagemakers about organizing films and teaching production skills. We logically assumed that because they know how to make <<good>> films, these tasks are best left in their hands. We are subject matter specialists - concerned with content. We translate dialogue for subtitles and hope to infuse the film with an anthropological perspective through narration and a study guide. We deal with what we have been trained to examine - words. Questions of camera angle or the pacing of scenes are thought to be the job of others. It is not that simple. We must recognize the obvious: form instructs, shapes, even creates the content. We cannot teach students about the cultures of the world while they are being conventionally trained to become imagemakers and assume that somehow they will magically transform themselves into visual anthropologists.

The difficulties experienced in the development of a truly anthropological cinema may be a consequence of our unreflective acceptance of cultural notions about pictorial media. We seem to accept the current conventions of documentary realism without examining the fit of these conventions to our needs. We permit our students to be taught how to make something called a good film without ever questioning the implication of that concept for the anthropological enterprise. It is an unwise division of labor which leaves significant decisions and training in the hands of people uneducated in anthropology.
We need to become more concerned with production matters if we are to teach students to be anthropological imagemakers. We must recognize ethnographic films, indeed all films, as texts amenable to a cultural and critical analysis similar to that proposed by written ethnography (Marcus and Clifford 1986) and to develop canons of criticism which critique our films as contributions to anthropological knowledge (Ruby 1975). The function of literary criticism of ethnographic writing is not to make us better writers but better anthropologists (Geertz 1988). Our goal should be similar in intent.

It behooves us to seek an identity distinct from our imagemaking brethren without alienating them in the process. There are compelling reasons why documentary and anthropological films should have distinct identities. Most simply put, documentarians are more like journalists than social scientists. Critiques of documentaries as anthropology are not very enlightening. Documentaries are seldom intended as social science and when examined in that fashion appear inadequate.

We need to be able to cooperate with imagemakers in a way which does not compromise our needs to make <<acceptable>> anthropology. If we are anthropologists and we consider our imagemaking to be an anthropological activity, it is to our own community that we must turn our attention-seeking a scholarly dialogue. It is therefore only logical that our students be given instruction necessary to cultivate a critical attitude towards film. To accomplish these goals, we must overcome common sense assumptions about pictorial media, separate ourselves from our own cultural assumptions about film. In the remainder of the paper I will examine three culturally normative attitudes about film and their relevance to the education of visual anthropologists.

1. There is an inevitable conflict between the art of film and the science of anthropology

It is commonly assumed that film (all film) is art, that is, constructed according to aesthetic principles to appeal to the emotions. To deny the art of film is to thwart its essence, or so the argument goes. Because of its creative, impressionistic, emotional attributes, art is assumed to be in direct conflict with an objective, value-free science, thus apparently creating an unavoidable conflict between the goals of film as art and anthropology as science (Heider 1972 and Macdougall 1978). The consequences of this attitude are far reaching. It causes people to assume limited possibilities for film. Imagemaking becomes an adjunct activity practiced occasionally by anthropologists much in the same way we write novels, plays, or poems-a humanistic sideline to significant scientific work designed to satisfy the <<creative>> urge for the more sensitive among us. Visual Anthropology is viewed as an <<artistic>> hobby- tolerated but seldom taken very seriously, and our field is relegated to something called Audio-Visual Aids.

The idea that film is art and science is an objective chronicler of reality and they are therefore in opposition, dominates the public mind and our relationship to the image
industry. It is based upon outmoded nineteenth century positivist notions discarded by many artistic and scientific communities, yet maintained among some journalists and documentary filmmakers. This paper is not the place to make an argument against this myopic vision of film, art, and sciences. Instead I wish simply to assert an alternative point of view, one offered with limited success over the past two decades in the writings of Sol Worth (1981) and myself (Ruby 1976). If film is a medium of communication, then it is potentially capable of having many voices and intentions-scientific, artistic, and so on. Each style or genre maintains different codes which, when employed in an expected context, causes people to understand the meaning of the film in a culturally predictable manner. The logical consequence of this assumption is to organize the training of filmmakers so that the study of communication as a way of understanding the consequences of constructing filmic statements precedes and shapes technical instructions.

If film is art, then filmmakers are artists and production training programs should be so structured. While the notion of making anthropological art is not uninteresting, it is not our primary goal (6). The logical conclusion of this perception is to exclude imagemaking from the mainstream of anthropological activity. We can advise film artists. We can become <<amateur>> artists, but we cannot create a viable visual anthropology.

While some films may be intended as art, it is illogical to assume that all can be profitably understood that way. For our purposes, film must be regarded as a medium of communication with the potential for communicating anthropological understanding in a manner parallel to but not necessarily less significant than printed word. To do otherwise is to commit a form of conceptual suicide. Our students need to be trained as analysts of film as a culturally structured communication before they can become imagemakers. Since most film schools assume that film is a visual art, we need to examine our somewhat unreflective acceptance of this model and, in general, our relationship to the world of professional imagemaking.

2. Film is an objective recorder of reality

The assumption that film is a mirror for the world is one aspect of the widely held notion that cameras don't lie. While the idea might appear to be in opposition to the notion that film is art, they are, in actuality, complementary concepts. One motivation for the invention of the motion picture was the need for a device that captured information unavailable to the naked eye. Within a positivist science, the camera is regarded as a device for scientifically recording data about human behavior which is more objective than other types of information because of the mechanical nature of the collection device. Archives have been constructed based upon the impression that motion picture footage can be used by a variety of scholars other than the producer.
From this perspective, it is argued that unedited research footage is scientific data that anthropologists can study because of its "purity". Manipulation of the footage, that is, editing it into a film, destroys its scientific value. Thus the "science" of film is found in the raw footage, while the "art" of film is located in constructing it into a film. In a perfect enactment of this model, collaborative teams go into the field to film material which the scientist studies and the filmmaker transforms into art. In actuality, this fantasy is never realized. Footage shot for study purposes seldom is seen as a film and footage shot to be edited does not generate much enthusiasm from researchers (7).

If film footage is scientifically researchable data and edited films art, it is unlikely that films can be produced that communicate anthropological knowledge in a scientifically acceptable manner. The role of the technology becomes reduced to nothing more than a recording device similar to an audio recorder. Moreover, this point of view takes for granted a privileged position for the camera as data collector which is profoundly naive about the physics of lenses and, indeed, the whole of imagemaking technology. A conception of the camera more in keeping with contemporary thinking is to view it as simply another means to generate, not collect data-no more or less accurate than other recording devices. Whether moving image technologies are useful research devices or not is outside of the purview of this paper. However, the notion that footage is scientifically significant data and edited films are aesthetically constructed interpretations is a profound impediment to the development of our field. A proper training program should demystify the filmmaking process so that students understand film is not an unimpeachable witness but just another narrative device. It should also help researchers develop film techniques which generate researchable footage (Feld and Williams 1974).

3. Film is a form of mass communication

The third widely held folk model is the idea that film is a form of mass communication. If it is, it must be intelligible to a wide audience or it is denying its nature 8. It is believe that because film is so expensive, there is also a moral obligation to use funds apportioned for educational purposes wisely, that is, produce films which benefit the largest number of people. To do

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otherwise is to pervert the medium and to waste the sponsor's funds. In the U.S., for example, the largest single source of funds for anthropological film is the National Endowment for the Humanities Public Media Program- a government agency designed to inform the public about the humanities. Anthropological filmmakers can obtain production money for works designed for Public Television audiences - that is, reasonably well educated but certainly not well informed about anthropological issues.
This presumption about film as a mass medium seems to deny the existence of specialized intent. It is a most curious position since it appears to ignore home movies, technical instruction, World War II combat footage, surgical procedure films, the whole of the avant garde, experimental, and a vast range of other narrowly focused works. Based upon straightforward statistical evidence, one could argue that most films were never intended for general audience consumption.

The impact of this notion on the training of anthropological imagemakers is significant. If one is supposed to make films intelligible to mass audiences, students should learn what common sense dictates as constituting a <<good>> documentary film, that is, they should unquestioningly emulate aesthetic conventions of documentary realism. Mass audiences want the reassurance of conventional forms and stories which reaffirm the status quo (Gerbner 1988). Those most qualified to instruct, produce, and critique <<good>> documentary films are, of course, documentary filmmakers. From this perspective, our role is again limited to the subject matter—with issues of the <<factual>> accuracy of the ethnographic details, translations of native dialogue, and <<packaging>> the film narration and study guides. While these areas are certainly consequential, if they constitute the whole of our involvement there is little possibility of supporting the idea that Visual Anthropology is a significant enterprise. Since the underlying core of anthropological narratives does not confirm our ethnocentric view of the world, we probably should not be using conventional means to communicate anthropological knowledge. The potential of finding a new voice for anthropology in film becomes lost if we simply train our students to behave like documentary filmmakers.

The purpose of this essay was to discuss certain assumptions which shape the way we teach Visual Anthropology. Its tone was necessarily critical and tended to overlook the positive advances only alluded to in the beginning. For some time we have been grappling with the creation of an anthropology interested in the visual/pictorial world—an anthropology of visual communication. In an institutional sense we have had a number of successes. There is a Commission on Visual Anthropology within the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences. Film reviews appear in many anthropological journals. Screenings are recognized as scholarly sessions in many of our professional meetings. And a growing number of departments offer courses.

However the majority of films recognized as being somehow anthropological are produced by people whose professional identities lie outside our field. It is therefore essential that we design our training programs to instill a professional identity which foregrounds scholarly interests and not imagemaking. To create an anthropological cinema means we must train our students to deal with pictorial media in a uniquely anthropological manner. We should not be in the business of producing filmmakers anymore than we train writers. We are scholars engaged in the study of humanity. The results of our endeavors should be transmitted by whatever medium appropriate—written, verbal, or pictorial. We must
overcome our own cultural predisposition to regard film as art, as mass communication, and footage as scientifically privileged data. We must apply our knowledge about culture as communication to film. Once accomplished, we can teach our students to view film as a narrative device potentially capable of communicating anthropological stories about culture.

NOTES

1 Portions of this essay are taken from RUBY (1986).

2 See Worth and Adair (1972) for a description of the impossibility of teaching the techniques of filmmaking without any ideological overtones.

3 Winston (1985) reveals how even the manufacturing of color film is ideologically constructed.

4 I have attempted several times to articulate the consequences for visual anthropology of regarding film as art - RUBY (1975, 1976, 1980a, and 1982).

5 Worth actualized these ideas in a graduate level course he taught at the Annenberg School of Communications at the University of Pennsylvania. The <<film lab>> is a unique blend of history, theory, and practice. Currently taught by one of his former students, Robert Aibel, it is a model ad visual anthropologists should explore when considering how to teach production.

6 For the sake of brevity I am assuming that social and cultural anthropologists agree that our primary function is to construct knowledge about cultures. I realize that within our field the point is arguable.

7 One exception is Alan Lomax, who claims to be able to use any footage of dance for his research no matter what the original intention might have been.

8 The reconciliation of <<film as art>> with <<film as mass communication>> is complicated and beyond the focus of this paper. At its simplest the explanation lies within the fuzzy notion of a popular vs a fine art.

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