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## Introduction

Felicia Hughes-Freeland

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# Introduction

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- 1 The articles in this second issue of *Anthrovision* range from well-established “modern classical” visual anthropology, such as participatory cinema in the tradition of Jean Rouch and David MacDougall, to art history and iconographic analysis, and to performance and the sensorium.
- 2 Katia Ballacchino presents a methodological case for using video in ethnographic research. In her longitudinal study of Gigli, the patronal feast of St Paulinus in Nola, southern Italy, the camera documents the performances of men who “dance” tall obelisks through the streets, and also participates in the feast through elicitation of recordings (by the author and others). These are viewed and discussed by the local participants in Italy and migrants in the USA. This is perhaps less a starting point than a reaffirmation of the anthropological camera as interactive and mediatory, practices both of which are central to the anthropological project and its process of knowledge construction.
- 3 The fundamental role of filming as a form of meditation in research is also central to Fidel Devkota’s discussion of the cultural impact of climate change in Lo-pa in north-western Nepal. Anthropological collaborations with scientists in regions most severely affected by climate change have increased in the past decade, but Devkota situates his project in relation to anthropology’s long-established study of threats to social and cultural survival. His film is about the experiences of the inhabitants of Dhe village, and he plans to film in other areas also. The camera is constitutive of anthropological knowledge, not supplementary to it, and its potential to bear on policy-making should be recognised.
- 4 A second theme in this issue is the analysis of images. Dimitri Karadimas continues his discussion of sexual imagery in representations of the angel Gabriel’s visitation to the Virgin Mary in Italian Renaissance paintings of the Annunciation. Forms such as columns, spirals (represented by the snail), birds, and rose buds that are usually taken to be expressions of religious devotion, are surprising representations of a complex relation between sexual and spiritual passion, sustained in the twentieth century by the artist Dali. Here anthropology meets art history to reveal cultural complexity and

the need for interpretation and hermeneutics in understanding representations across time as well as space.

- 5 The visual analysis of images and objects is also the subject of Anna Laine's article and film about kolam patterns in Tamilnadu, southern India. Making kolams produces auspiciousness which, driven by planets and gods, defines time. Using Lefebvre's theory of rhythm and embodiment, she argues that kolams embody relationships between energy, time and space and that the particular intersection of rhythms or "polyrhythmia" makes each woman's kolam unique. Her wider argument is for the importance of sensuousness in the analysis of material culture and the anthropology of everyday life.
- 6 A second contrasting article where visual anthropology meets material culture is Barbara Plankensteiner's historical account of Nigerian lace-making. This industrially produced fabric is analysed in relation to its antecedents in nineteenth century embroidery in Austria. Colonialism, trade, changing tastes, as well as specific importers, saleswomen, and production companies, have shaped its development and the process of "Nigerianisation", evident in changes in designs and innovations such as the incorporation of Swarovski crystals. The article shows how authenticity emerges from interaction, and, as one might expect in West Africa, the lace trade is nowadays mostly run by women.
- 7 We move back to embodied performance in Olivier Schetrit's article about deafness and sign language. Deaf from birth, he offers a reflexive account of International Visual Theatre's use of the choreographic practices such as mudras and facial expressions in *Bharata Natyam* to create a theatre of and for the deaf. IVT has developed the concept of "chansigne" choreography or a visual melody which is sung and signed - as elucidated in a discussion of its production *Miracle par Hasard* (Miracle by Chance). "Dancing without music" is not only a theatrical practice. It has also changed the nature of the identity of deafness.
- 8 The range of these articles is a salutary reminder that Visual Anthropology is not a specialist subdiscipline but a fundamental approach for *all* areas of anthropological research.

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## AUTHOR

### FELICIA HUGHES-FREELAND

Independent Scholar and Research Associate, Centre of Southeast Asian Studies, SOAS, London University.