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Editors' Introduction

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This special issue of *Visual Anthropology* is the product of a workshop organized by members of the Visual Anthropology Network of the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA). In September 2005, eight speakers came to Oxford University. The papers had been selected from more than 40 proposals for papers dealing with a hugely diverse range of theoretical and practical applications of visual anthropology that we had received in response to our call.

What follows is a brief outline of the four themes we proposed to our participants, and the questions we considered most important to discuss. Next follows short introductions to the papers themselves, written by the persons responsible for working with the authors to produce the versions that are being published here.

THE AGENDA

As we enter the 21st century, visual anthropology has increasingly expanded from the emphasis on ethnographic filmmaking that dominated in the latter part of the 20th century, and has taken on a more diverse identity, one encompassing uses of documentation and elicitation and other visual research methods. Photographic and filmic research methods as well as the analysis of visual texts have been important in visual anthropological practices, from the work of Bateson and Mead [1942] through to Collier [1967, 1973] and beyond, as has been repeatedly emphasized [Ruby and Chalfen 1974; Morphy and Banks 1997]. However, until the end of the 20th century, visual methods of research and analysis were largely undiscussed or taken for granted in a subdiscipline dominated by and identified with ethnographic film production (at the levels of both university training and practice). Currently visual anthropology is engaged in a series of transformations, which to a large degree involve making links with other disciplines, testing how it might be more closely integrated with mainstream anthropology and examining its applied potential outside academia.

The seminar, *Frontiers of Visual Anthropology*, aimed to draw together anthropologists working across diverse areas to define the contemporary shape of visual anthropology in the 21st century by exploring a number of questions. What questions and issues does visual anthropology face? What wider contribution can it make to the building of theory, empirical evidence, and methodological development in the academy, in both the social sciences and the arts? What is the wider potential for visual-anthropologically informed social intervention? How can it be used outside academic, in applied work supporting the development of policy and in collaborations with industry? We asked our contributors to address a series of questions, organized into four themes.

Challenges from Within

What are the challenges of developments in anthropological theory and practice to the existing principles of visual anthropology? We invited critical discussions of how visual anthropology might be either challenged or enriched by recent developments in the areas of theory and practice. These could include medical anthropology, anthropology of the senses, the work of indigenous anthropological filmmakers, and collaborative methods in research and representation.

Challenges and Innovations at the Edge

How does visual anthropology connect to other disciplines to develop new methodologies and approaches? We were seeking projects that addressed a number of issues: critical comments on interdisciplinary borrowings and appropriations of visual anthropology that challenge its position; discussions of what makes visual anthropology distinctive in a context where it shares interests with other disciplines such as media and cultural studies; and discussions of collaborative work that involves visual anthropologists and others (such as artists or performers) working together at the boundaries of both their disciplines.

External Engagements

How has visual anthropological work informed and been informed by questions from "beyond" academia? We were looking here for applied projects or critical engagements with broader social and political issues. The envisaged fields included applied visual anthropological projects in a range of areas that include public sector, NGOs, or business; social interventions initiated by local communities in connection with anthropological work (such as health research, design anthropology and consumer ethnography, development communications, postconflict work, and migration studies); and work that discusses activist films that render exploitation visible.

The Future Role of Visual Anthropology in a Public Anthropology

How can visual anthropology contribute to public anthropology? To answer this broader question, more specific questions needed to be asked. To what extent does ethnographic documentary film still play a role? What effects will the increasing use of mixed genres in filmmaking have on documentary and on anthropology? Is there a role for visual anthropologists in analyzing and responding to public media texts? What is the role of anthropology in producing public art?

In most cases our contributors have responded to these four themes by synthesizing different elements, rather than addressing a specific theme. The contributors engaged with the questions at different levels of analysis and with varying degrees of elaboration. In the event, as many questions have been raised as have been answered. We consider this special issue to be a starting point for many different discussions, and a catalyst for what we hope will develop into a fruitful diversification, within and beyond, visual anthropology.

THE ARTICLES

The first two articles both discuss issues arising from practical video work, produced in collaboration with what could be characterized as indigenous media and development communications.

Jennifer Deger's article examines different styles of looking and seeing with reference to her video collaboration with a Yolngu filmmaker from Northeast Arnhem Land, in Northern Australia. The challenge was to make a television program about the clan waters known collectively as Gularri, a complex natural symbol that bears knowledge. For the Yolngu filmmaker, video technologies offered him a chance to "produce the effects of ngarra," a regional revelatory ceremony that many young Yolngu have never had a chance to participate in. The problem facing the filmmakers, and in turn the anthropologist, was how to communicate the meaning of the complex revealing and concealing symbolism of Gularri and its waters, as well as how to make manifest the proscribed ritual actions and objects that the public should not see.

The article examines how ritual efficacy was created through the medium of a televised video, and contributes to growing anthropological literature on the relationship between media and ritual [Hughes-Freeland 2006]. It argues that the "frontier" of visual anthropology lies in its recognition that visibility extends beyond the manifest visibility or appearance of an image. To the extent that knowledge is understood as being founded in a community, with the imagination based in a communal and clearly bounded social group, this gives the "Yolngu way" a classical Durkheimian sense. But as Deger explains, there are different ways of seeing among the Yolngu. When the film was broadcast, it was recognized as a Yolngu program and viewed differently from the regular way of watching "bitcha" (television). It elicited the understanding that a different way of watching was required, a different way of being. This raises important questions about intercultural perception and the interface between ontology and epistemology in representation, or, as Deger puts it (in this issue), "the technologically mediated relationship between the production, the image, and the viewer as a circuit through which culture is constituted."

Elizabeth Wickett's article examines the application of visual technologies within the development process, and demonstrates how to us anthropologists can mediate between different constituencies in policy-making. Her examples, from the Nile Delta, Upper Egypt, and the Northwest Frontier in Pakistan, are drawn from her extensive practical experience of using video in development communications work with women. For Wickett, this is also frontier work in visual anthropology. She calls for anthropologists with practical expertise in media production "to command a new role in development journalism and advocacy to help bridge the cultural and communication gap between rich and poor worlds" [Wickett, this issue]. Her approach to seeing is more pragmatic than that of Deger. She works from the assumption that the film crew, anthropologist, and women in the various projects see the world in the same way. But seeing and understanding are not treated in a transparently positivist manner in these examples. They are framed according to each specific context and

carefully structured processes of communication exchange.

Wickett's approach provides answers to questions that have been raised about "the politics of perception," particularly criticisms of "disembodied vision" and the exclusion of local ways of seeing and looking in international development agencies and NOOs' use of visual discourses [Shepherd and Scarf 2006]. Her article clearly describes particular development communication projects using the concepts of "document," "testimony," and "process" to explain each project's inception, problems, and strategies in achieving appropriate communicative exchanges. For example, a video project to help establish appropriate sanitation for use in a community in Pakistan first has to tackle the problem of women's visibility, where access to looking and being seen is structured by rules based on gender and kinship. The issue here is a matter of access, not just ethics. Without the appropriate negotiations and solutions, the project cannot proceed. The effects of the work are transformative, both of the way in which local spectators respond to this material (so different from the soap operas and propaganda they are used to) and of the way they see themselves. All the projects asserted the centrality of consultation with women, in their capacities as the "undisputed managers" of agriculture, water, sanitation, and domestic infrastructure and, in so doing, made visible what had hitherto been concealed.

These two articles are situated in contrasting theoretical positions—idealism and materialism respectively—as is evident in their approaches to water. Deger participates in the Yolngu view that water is the source of knowledge and concerns belonging, while for Wickett, water in Pakistan and Egypt is instrumental and concerns survival. Despite this fundamental difference, the articles share common interests. Both describe collaborations that empower subaltern images and voices against hegemonic structures of governmental control and visual practice. Both address the problem of what can be said or shown against the background of these structures. In the case of the Yolngu project, the problem arose because certain key images should not be publicly shown or seen, and the solution was to understand seeing in a Yolngu cultural way. In Wickett's projects, problems are defined by the politics of representation, controlled by government censorship in Egypt and by gender relations in Pakistan. In both discussions culture is at issue, but in one case it is cognitive and in the other institutional and relational. The result is that, whereas the invisible images of the video made with the Yolngu are visible in the mind's eye due to preexistent knowledge, Wickett's videos have represented and generated new and emergent knowledge for which existing cultures of representation and strictures on visibility are no substitute.

Both these articles raise questions about the extent to which "looking relations" [Gaines 2000, cited in Deger, this issue] necessarily determine what is seen, and what conditions

produce changes in ways of seeing. They signal that there is a need to deal with both intercultural and intracultural seeing and communication. "Looking relations" vary within cultures, not just between them, and raise questions about criteria informing the positions taken for making and receiving images and the ways in which the different participants adapt or negotiate a shared ground. These articles then open the way for a more radical ethics of seeing and image production, and an examination of whether being visible can be understood as empowerment in the way that "having a voice" has been construed.'

The next "frontier engagement" in this volume, by Richard K. Sherwin, Neal Feigenson, and Christina Spiesel, forges new links between visual anthropology and the emergent interdisciplinary field of cultural legal studies. Although this latter area of academic practice may be unknown to many visual anthropologists, it in fact confronts issues and is informed by theories that resonate with those faced by anthropologists who work with visual media. Like anthropologists, legal scholars have also "been struggling to work through a crisis of sorts regarding the nature and communicability of truth" [Sherwin et al., this issue]. In doing so, they have also begun to explore the relationship between law and visual media. In particular, in a context where digital media can play a key role in courtroom narrative imagery, it has become essential for legal scholars and practitioners alike to understand the communication processes they involve. Indeed, the Sherwin et al. article responds to the agenda of some visual anthropologists who have, since the latter part of the 20th century, called for an anthropology of visual communication. It provides a fascinating introduction to the visual culture of legal contexts. Drawing from a range of interdisciplinary insights, it shows how visual images are appropriated, situated, and interpreted in courtroom narratives and are thus highly effective as complex and powerful persuasive devices. However, as the authors point out, this is not just an academic question, since, "Inside the courtroom, the difference between truth and falsity, fact and fantasy, objectivity and subjectivity, may be a matter of life and death." Like recent studies in applied visual anthropology [e.g., Pink 2005, 2007a], this work illustrates the significance of academic understandings of the potential of visual images to produce interventions that lead to changes in both the understandings and material lives of other people.

Sherwin et al. call for an "instructive exchange between anthropologists and legal scholars regarding the production, dissemination, and interpretation of visual meaning in the digital era." This in fact began with Richard Sherwin's presentation at the Frontiers seminar in Oxford in 2005. There we noted some obvious points of empirical, theoretical, and practical interest between visual legal studies and visual anthropology. It is our hope that the publication of this article in *Visual Anthropology* will promote future links and exchanges between visual anthropology and visual legal studies; and below, by way of introduction, we

comment briefly on some of these.

One of the obvious points of common interest between the Sherwin et al. article and existing social anthropological literature lies in their choice of the video recordings of the infamous U.S. police beatings of Rodney King and the ensuing court case as a case study. This high-profile issue was previously analyzed by the anthropologist Allen Feldman [1994] in an essay which forms a part of Nadia Seremetakis's edited volume about memory and the senses. Seremetakis's volume [1994] itself makes an important contribution toward situating the visual in relation to the other senses. Feldman's chapter is about what he calls "cultural anaesthesia"; "the banishment of disconcerting discordant and anarchic sensory presences and agents that undermine the normalizing and often silent premises of everyday life" [Feldman 1994: 89]. He suggests that in the court case the video was edited in such a way that King's body was "montaged into a purely electronic entity with no inwardness or tangibility" [1994: 98]. Thus "the subjective and sensorial side of violence undergone by King was eviscerated," while those who did participate in the trial were granted "sensory privileges" that he was denied [1994: 99]. Complementing Feldman's analysis, Sherwin et al. situate the courtroom treatment of this video footage, and its use by the defense lawyers for the police, within the wider question of how visual media are used in legal narratives. They show how similar uses of visual images are commonplace in contemporary court cases.

Interestingly, the same court case has received insightful attention by the linguist and anthropologist Charles Goodwin, who uses it as an ethnographic case to demonstrate convincingly how "coding schemes are a systematic practice used to transform the world into the categories and events that are relevant to the work of a profession" [Goodwin 1994: 608]. In other words, "coding," "highlighting," and "producing and demonstrating material representations" of complex phenomenal events are of paramount importance to the construction of a shared "professional vision." This is relevant to a reflection about "frontiers" of visual practice and "ways of knowing" [Grasseni forthcoming], as professional vision shapes events and gives them meaning from a point of view that is internal to a community of specialized practice. In this and some following literature, using both visual and discourse analysis, Goodwin examines similar yet less controversial processes, such as the case of apprentice archaeologists learning to map a dirt patch, or of laboratory novices learning to discern "the blackness of black" [Goodwin 2000]. Yet the case of police officers justifying recourse to violence by way of editing a piece of videoed evidence shows how powerful the strategies of "professional vision" can be when they are at work in literally constructing events, even in a case—such as the infamous Rodney King beating—where one would naively assume that video-recorded data would constitute an unquestionable piece of "objective" evidence.

A second key theme here is the increasing use of digital media and multimedia forms to represent other people's experiences and make convincing arguments. This is occurring not only among visual anthropologists and lawyers, but across the academic and applied disciplines. Whereas visual anthropologists have started to use hypermedia to represent their research [e.g., Ruby 2004, Kirkpatrick 2003, Pink 2005, 2007b], lawyers are beginning to use these media to create convincing narratives for the courtroom. Although these uses are, of course, quite different in many respects, in common they mean that both visual anthropologists and visual legal scholars need to understand how these media are implicated in the production of meanings. Sherwin et al. have developed a detailed multidisciplinary analysis of how meanings are constructed in multimedia legal narratives and of how these might be perceived by specific audiences. Visual anthropologists are starting to produce digital hypermedia representations themselves [Pink 2005, chapter 6], but in a context where little research has been carried out about how these texts might be interpreted. The analysis of Sherwin et al. also provides starting points from which visual anthropologists might begin to consider how audiences might appropriate their own multimedia texts. This is particularly the case for visual anthropological texts that are themselves intended to make frontier engagements by communicating to audiences lying beyond academia.

Trudi Smith's engagement with "repeat photography" (the work of locating the original vantage point of a historic photograph and "reproducing" that photograph from that site with analogous equipment) paradoxically—through a practice that at first glance seems to be exemplary of empiricist positivism—forces us to consider the possibilities for producing knowledge through identification with absent others, the permeability of the boundaries between scientific replication and artistic creation, and the possible unreliability of sensual evidence tout court. Thus a paper speaking from the very "traditional" domains of geography, still photography, and the archive provokes inquiries that can only be called postmodern. Inscribing frontiers at what can be seen as the historical nexus of positivist certitude is certainly subversive but it also, perhaps more saliently, suggests the radical questions that the visual can demand of anthropology—and epistemology—more generally.

Repeat photography has traditionally been used by environmentalists and geographers to assess historical changes in landscapes as with, for instance, glacial recession, changes in forest cover, or the encroachment of roads and buildings. Smith, a doctoral candidate in the interdisciplinary program in Visual Art at the University of Victoria, began asking anthropological questions of the practice while working as a repeat photographer on a research project in Canada's Waterton Lakes National Park. In addition to the programmatic question of "What did the original photographer photograph?" Smith

queried, "Why did the producer of the original photographer take this picture (and not others)?" Such questions, particularly asked of a span of photographs clustered around a single locale (such as the national park), effectively began to produce a discourse analysis of a visual field and to draw attention both to discontinuities ("Why did people stop taking photographs from point A?") and to continuities ("Why is there a continued focus on single pine trees in park photography as well as in the more general iconography of the Canadian wilderness?"). Such questions not only placed the repeat photographer in the literal footsteps of the preceding photographer but also impelled her to attempt to identify with the imagination of someone she could only have met through traces in the archive.

Smith took the project further, generating new archives out of the archives from which she had drawn the original photographs. These, presenting a series of transformations of original photographs [Figure 7 in her article], served to body an ethnography of an image (a sort of longitudinal study of a single site). Transformations revealed changing "tastes"-both in photographers and in the public influenced by theft imaging-while also highlighting those images that seemed to struggle to remain "fixed." The archive, in other words, presented an ethnography of taste, one that might be extended by following the lead of Corinne Kratz who, in *The Ones that Are Wanted* [2002], collated both American and Kenyan audience responses to her photographs of the Okiek people so as to chart and display a varied field of culturally inflected responses to a single body of material. In Smith's case, such photo elicitation [Collier and Collier 1986: 99-115] would serve to test her theories about the influence of historic nature photography on contemporary popular Canadian aesthetics.

More subversively, however, Smith "pushed" (in the photographic sense) her efforts to reproduce original images not only by allowing contingency (in the form, for instance, of thunderstorms) to intrude between the lens and its object but also by actually changing the lens by using a pinhole camera instead of the original's "proper" substitute. Here, at the edge of a visual anthropology of the repeat image, she moves into conceptual art, taking that emblem of objectivity, the photographic image, and demonstrating that "pictures of" the same object can objectively be very different things. Repetition here may be a desideratum-of the repeat photographer and of the audience seeking to "see again" in the world the images it has already seen in photographs-but Smith closes by suggesting that it may, in fact, be no more than that.

Felice Tiragallo's article aptly follows Trudi Smith's in as much as it poses a number of reflexive questions about what is entailed by crafting ethnographic knowledge by way of filming. In particular, his interest lies in the analysis of what it takes to observe and

understand the many layers of bodily sedimentation entailed in technical processes. Based on years-long experience of observation and video documentation, Tiragallo draws a self-conscious parallel between the styles of looking and seeing of two expert weavers and his own, a filmmaker using video to document analytically the process of traditional weaving in Sardinia. He aims to define and describe an apt visual approach for the cinematographic description of technical practices, based on the principles of cultural technology.

Among the questions posed by our workshop, Tiragallo chooses to pursue that of analyzing the "frontiers" arising between the "gazes" of the social agents and those of the observer. By no means does he consider such gazes to be disembodied or abstracted: by gaze the author means an intent and skillful capacity for looking, which has been elsewhere named "skilled vision" [Grasseni 2006]. Skilled visions combine aspects of embodiment, of an educated capacity for selective perception, and of apprenticeship. In particular, here one attends to "the reciprocity of this vision, and the opportunity of interpreting it as a competitive and redistributive game, in its emotional and fictitious aspects" [Tiragallo, this issue].

According to Tiragallo, the skillful gaze of the weaver is the very "site of formation and origin of her expert gestures, of her planned intentions, and of their implementation." By comparison, the skillful gaze of the ethnographic filmmaker qualifies analogously as "a corporeal fact." In particular, both are defined by the capacity of knowing how to observe. Following the French school of Leroi-Gourhan [1964] on the evolution of aesthetic behavior, and of J.-P. Warnier [1999] on the embodiment of technical knowledge, the author stresses how both types of vision are analogous to the visual skills that are typical of preindustrial technical processes.

Mariagiulia Grassilli's final article is in many ways relevant to all of our four questions, concerning how visual anthropology might be challenged or enriched by other areas of theory and practice, and focusing specifically on how visual anthropology may learn from other disciplines and practices, or share importantly with them political objectives and methodological approaches. The work of Lionel Rogosin stands as a good example of how anthropologists can learn from the history of cinema—and not necessarily from novel or immediately contemporary works—to widen the scope of what we could consider as militant, indigenous, or collaborative filmmaking.

In fact, Grassilli's article is entirely devoted to reevaluating the anthropological importance of the work of Lionel Rogosin, whose films—like those of Jean Rouch and Robert Flaherty before him—reflect a contamination between cinema and visual research. Focused on apartheid, civil rights, and displacement, Rogosin's filmmaking activity included titles such

as *Come Back Africa*, on the apartheid in South Africa during the 1950s, and *On the Bowery*. Located in inner-city New York, the latter work shows in naturalistic and sometimes crude ways the everyday life of the working-class, unemployed, and impoverished African Americans in the ghettos of the 1960s. Grassilli claims that Rogosin's work should be positioned within both anthropology and cinema, and that his approach of a "participant camera" can be analyzed in anthropological terms as a way of participant observation.

Grassilli refers to a wider project aiming at using filmic material (both fiction and documentary) as cultural sources that can be addressed and appropriated by visual-anthropological reflection on a number of issues—namely, the visual representations of human rights, displacement, and resistance. Within this project, then, what is at stake is precisely the challenge that visual anthropology may well not be treated as distinctive when it shares political motivations and working methodologies with different disciplines such as media and filmic production. Grassilli's example aims precisely at highlighting the "anthropological" interest of both contents—Rogosin's works fully qualifying as activist films that render exploitation visible—and methods of production. The latter are particularly interesting, as they involve working together with non-professional performers, with a sympathetic attitude and with great flexibility, to discuss and change the script according to their input.

In some ways it is odd to talk of the frontiers of visual anthropology when the visual has always—both in the content and in method—resided comfortably if quietly within anthropology itself [Edwards 1992, Grimshaw 2001: 15-43, Haddon 1903-1935]. Thus inevitably some of the border crossings we discuss are those encountered by anthropology, and the visual here serves as a means of illuminating and (dare we say?) illustrating the movements of the discipline more generally. This is particularly true where visual anthropology takes on epistemological issues, involves the objects of inquiry in the production of knowledge, and engages with development and empowerment. In other instances, however—particularly those dealing with visual methods and the palpability of the image—a focus on the visual in and beyond anthropology forces us to attend more closely to how the visual can help us to encounter the world differently, attending, for instance, more closely to the sensory and the embodied. Here, certainly, we are introduced to new ways of doing anthropology and seeing the anthropological. Perhaps, however, what an attention to the visual in anthropology can make us do is to recognize that there is no frontier between anthropology and visual anthropology. Just as all of the visual is grist to the anthropological imagination, so too is anthropology deeply and inextricably linked to the visual. Dissolving that artificial border is one, perhaps unintentional, aspect of the current collection; it is also a vital phase in the quest for new frontiers to encounter and cross.

NOTES

1. These points were raised by Richard Sherwin and Zemirah Moffat in the discussion of the presentations by Deger and Wickett at the Frontiers of Visual Anthropology workshop in Oxford on September 18, 2005.

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