



CAMERA AS CULTURAL CRITIQUE

Juxtaposition, Intervention and Co-creation

International Conference
Aarhus University & Moesgaard Museum

25-27 May 2016



AARHUS UNIVERSITY



EYE & MIND
Laboratory for Visual Anthropology

MOMU

MOESGAARD MUSEUM

CAMERA AS CULTURAL CRITIQUE

**International Conference
Aarhus University & Moesgaard Museum, 25-27 May 2016**

In this conference we investigate the potential of visual media to convey and respond to existing as well as emerging social realities. We aim to contribute to an interdisciplinary field of research and practice that includes anthropology, philosophy and visual art. The visual media we wish to discuss range from photography and film to digital media, audio-visual installations and exhibitions.

Building on a tradition of critique in cultural anthropology, we pursue styles of knowing that reach beyond conventional text-based academic knowledge, using practice-led methods that develop their own forms of representation and criteria of validity and open new affinities to the world of art. We claim that concepts of critique are essential in this endeavour, providing the reflective grounding for our experiments and interventions in contexts and questions beyond their immediate sphere of impact and relevance.

We organize the workshop under three sub-headings that suggest key elements in these alternative styles of knowing:

Juxtaposition

What should we understand by cultural critique and what is the potential of visual media for critique? Can we go beyond juxtaposition and epistemological critique to create distance and untimeliness, while fostering (re)engagement and dialogue? How can techniques of recording, montage, feedback, exhibition, etc. create spaces for reflection and critical reevaluation?

Intervention

Every expression of art and every act of knowledge creation can be seen as a form of intervention in social reality. This opens questions regarding intentional authorship and perspective. Foregrounding the act of visual intervention as a privileged, multi-sensorial method of producing, grasping and articulating often non-verbal social relations and situations, we consider the ways in

which such interventions may prompt transformative agency.

Co-creation

In spite of many programmatic statements and acknowledgements of debt to informants, collaborators, and participants, the creation of substantial frameworks and methods for co-creation is still an underdeveloped field within the social sciences. What does co-creation imply and how may we conceptualise the processual and dynamic practice of cross-cultural and multi-disciplinary co-creation?

The conference is organised by the research group Camera as Cultural Critique based at the Eye & Mind Laboratory for Visual Anthropology at Aarhus University and Moesgaard Museum. This four-year research initiative (2013-2016) investigates the potential of using visual technologies and methodologies in social science research in practice. We collaborate with a variety of international researchers and practitioners, with the aim of establishing visual anthropology as a distinct form of critique within anthropology and the social sciences in general.

- All keynotes are free and open to all.
- Participation in the rest of the programme requires prior registration.

Contact info

Line Grüner
Conference Assistant
Department of Anthropology, Aarhus University

Mobile phone: +45 23 90 83 41
E-mail: linegruner@gmail.com
<http://projects.au.dk/camera-as-cultural-critique/>



PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY 25 MAY

Øst for Paradis, Paradisgade 7, 8000 Aarhus C

17:30-17:45 | Welcome by the organizers of CCC

17:45-18:30 | Trinh T. Minh-ha
The Politics of Forms and Forces | **Opening Keynote**

18:30-19:00 | Discussion with Trinh T. Minh-ha

19:00-19:30 | Drinks / reception

19:30-21:00 | Screening of the film *Reassemblage*
(Trinh T. Minh-ha 1982, 40 minutes) followed by
discussion with the director

THURSDAY 26 MAY

CO-CREATION & INTERVENTION

*Moesgaard Museum, Conference Room 4240-301
and Main Auditorium 4240-020*

9:00-9:15 | Brief introduction from CCC group

9:15-10:00 | Andrew Irving | *The Man Who Almost
Killed Himself: Three Modes of Co-creation*

10:00-10:45 | Christian Vium | *Up the Solimões: The
Adventures of a Stupid White Man with a Camera in the
Brazilian Amazon*

10:45-11:00 | Coffee break

11:00-11:45 | Christian Suhr | *Mechanical Ethics:
Collaborative and Non-collaborative Films about Muslims
in Denmark*

11:45-13:00 | Lunch

13:00-13:45 | Jennifer Deger
The Hum of Co-creation: Anthropology Remix
Public Keynote in the Main Auditorium, 4240-020

13:45-14:15 | Discussion with Jennifer Deger

14:15-14:45 | Coffee in conference room 4240-301

14:45-15:30 | Helle Harnisch | *Fighting 'Cen' and
Getting Rid of the Urge to Kill? Reflections on the Potentials
and Performativity in Video-based Intervention Approaches*

15:30-16:15 | Johannes Sjöberg | *An Epistemology of
Play: Provocation, Pleasure, Participation and Performance
in Ethnographic Fieldwork and Film-making*

16:15-16:30 | Tea break

16:30-17:15 | Mark Curran | *Normalising Deviance
and the Construction of the MARKET*

17:15- | Concluding remarks of the day

19:00- | Dinner at *Globen Flakket*, Åboulevarden 18,
8000 Århus C.

FRIDAY 27 MAY

JUXTAPOSITION & CRITIQUE

*Moesgaard Museum, Conference Room 4240-301 and
Main Auditorium 4240-020*

8:45-9:00 Good morning from the organizers
Main Auditorium 4240-020

9:00-9:45 | Catherine Russell | *Archiveology: Walter
Benjamin and Archival Film Practices*
Public Keynote in the Main Auditorium, 4240-020

9:45-10:15 | Discussion with Catherine Russell

10:15-10:45 | Coffee in conference room 4240-301

10:45-11:30 | Jane Jin Kaisen | *The Woman, The
Orphan, and The Tiger*

11:30-12:15 | Arine Högel | *Haptic Explorations of the
Archive*

12:15-13:15 | Lunch | *Deadline for handing in proposals
for the manifesto*

13:15-14:00 | Ton Otto | *Shifting Perspectives: Film,
Audience and Culture Critique*

14:00-14:45 | Karen Waltorp | *Smartphones and the
Imaginal Realm: Call and Response across Registers*

14:45-15:15 | Tea break

15:15-16:00 | Peter Crawford | *The Individual and the
Self in Anthropology and Ethnographic Film: A Cultural
Critique of the Camera*

16:00-17:00 | Plenary discussion
Producing the Manifesto

17:00-17:15 | Thank you from the organisers

ABSTRACTS

Trinh T. Minh-ha
Professor, University of California, Berkeley

The Politics of Forms and Forces | Opening Keynote

Power relations lay at the core of normative representations. In the tuning in with the forces of a life event, one can say that form is attained only to address the formless. Reality in its social and historical dimension is not a material for artistic reflection or political commitment; it is what powerfully draws one to cinema and yet cannot be captured without dissolving itself in its fragile essence when one approaches it without subtlety and vulnerability.

Andrew Irving
Director, Granada Centre of Visual Anthropology,
University of Manchester

*The Man Who Almost Killed Himself:
Three Modes of Co-creation*

One of the most fundamental issues a person, group or society can face is suicide: a subject that raises critical questions about human nature, society and people's most basic relationships with others and the world. However ethnographic accounts of suicide are rare and what might constitute an ethnography of suicide or how anthropology might research or represent suicide is fraught with ethical and practical pitfalls. In response, this presentation uses three distinct but related modes of co-creation in order to try to understand of the mind of a man someone about to attempt suicide, including the personal motivations, religious doubts and existential dilemmas someone undergoes. The first mode concerns a notion of collaborative fieldwork that is carried out alongside informants in the field and involves identifying and defining a set of mutually negotiated research aims and objectives. The second mode of co-creation is that of ethnographic writing, which can be understood as a collaborative endeavour with actual and imagined persons, whereby the text's structure, content and argument is directed towards and actively shaped by a broad imagined audience, including reviewers, past and future anthropologists, institutional expectations and general readers. The third mode of

co-creation is that of artistic re-enactment and adaption in the form of a theatre piece that I developed with theatre director Josh Azouz and producer Don Boyd and a cast of African actors based on the above ethnographic work. The resulting play *The Man Who Almost Killed Himself* was premiered at the Edinburgh Festival (Aug 7th-11th 2014), shown on BBC Arts (Aug 10th 2014), and screened nationwide at Odeon Cinemas (Aug 11th 2014). In engaging with actors and directors, alongside theatre, broadcast and cinema audiences, I argue that new forms of anthropological knowledge, understanding and imagining emerge that otherwise would not be realised.

Christian Vium
Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Aarhus University

*Up the Solimões: The Adventures of a Stupid White Man
with a Camera in the Brazilian Amazon*

In this presentation I show and discuss material from my archive-based photographic interventions among Ticuna, Miranha and Caixana along the upper Solimões River and its tributaries, deep in the Brazilian Amazon. Carrying a selection of some of the first photographs made in the Amazon some 150 years ago by the German biologist and photographer Albert Frisch, I retraced his 1867 journey, with the aim of repatriating the photographs to descendants of those depicted in Frisch's photographs, inviting them to dramatize and re-enact these original photographs with me as part of a visual culture critique across time.

Christian Suhr
Assistant Professor, Aarhus University

*Mechanical Ethics: Collaborative and Non-collaborative
Films about Muslims in Denmark*

In this presentation I compare a TV documentary applying candid cameras to expose apparently outrageous religious statements of Danish imams (TV2 2016) and another documentary using collaborative methods to explore how the same imams perform Islamic exorcisms and relate to Danish psychiatry (Suhr 2013). In conclusion I argue for the ethics of the mechanical camera, which often leaves audio-visual scars of pro-filmic encounters that transcend and resist our various artistic, scientific, political or ideological efforts to frame and edit film footage.

Jennifer Deger
Associate Professor, James Cook University

The Hum of Co-creation: Anthropology Remix
Public Keynote

The Aboriginal people I make films, exhibitions, and books with in Australia's northeast Arnhem Land have a sophisticated—and realistic—appreciation of collaboration as a potentially fraught process. Whether such relationships are played out between families and clans in local rituals, or between institutions and individuals in international art projects, they know from experience how an idealising discourse of shared purpose and unity works to conceal the often-bruising push-and-pull of lived relationships shaped by uneven access to power, resources, and knowledge. And yet, over and over, they insist on the value of doing things together as a collective unified in creative purpose and social intent—and on incorporating my research projects into such configurations. Why? How?

This presentation explores collaboration as an affective and multisensory process: an art of activating a particular quality of relationship between people, places, images, and what I gloss here as *the forces of creation*. Drawing examples from projects by our collective, Miyarrka Media, I will share my friend and collaborator Paul Gurrumuruwuy's vision for a *new anthropology* in which Yolngu and non-Aboriginal people work together to tap the pulsating hum of creation as a force infused with moral, political and social transformative potentiality. His children, marking their generational status and their own particular concerns about the viability of a shared, intercultural future, simply call such work *remix*.

Helle Harnisch
PhD Fellow, Danish Institute Against Torture and Aarhus University, Department of Education.

Fighting 'Cen' and getting rid of the urge to kill? Reflections on the Potentials and Performativity in Video-based Intervention Approaches.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork among former mobilized from the Lord's Resistance Army in Northern Uganda, and informed by psychological approaches to intervention, this presentation reflects on the potential and performativity of the use of video in interventions targeting rehabilitation and reconciliation among war-affected youth and

their home communities. The presentation explores the following questions: When video is used as means of intervention, how do notions of performativity and audiences engage in and with the physically present persons in the therapy room? How does this room expand? And (how) can audio-visual ethnographic methods and psychological approaches complement each other?

Johannes Sjöberg
Lecturer, University of Manchester

An Epistemology of Play: Provocation, Pleasure, Participation and Performance in Ethnographic Fieldwork and Filmmaking

Drawing on previous and on-going research on ethno-fiction and ethno-science fiction (Sjöberg, 2007-2016), this presentation will suggest new perspectives on ethnographic fieldwork and filmmaking, where play (Huizinga, 1938) stands at the centre of the epistemology. Projective improvisation (Loizos, 1993) in ethno-fiction shares common denominators with play-making, in which provocation and pleasure (Rouch, 2003), flow (Csikszentmihályi, 1990) and risk of failure generate the performance. The creative process happens in a liminal (Turner, 1967) space and is driven by uncanny (Freud, 1919) associations, similar to surrealist art practice sharing the plasticity of dreams (Boal, 1995). The entire fieldwork could indeed be considered to have a ritual (Van Gennep, 1909) and narrative structure, where the inter-subjective fieldwork relations develop in line with philosophical and psychological theories on play.

Mark Curran
Artist Researcher and Lecturer, Institute of Art, Design & Technology, Dublin / Freie Universität Berlin

Normalising Deviance and the Construction of the MARKET

In the continuing evolutionary aftermath of the global economic collapse and absence of sustained critical audio-visual engagement with the central locus of this catastrophic event, THE MARKET, critically addresses the functioning and condition of the global markets. Continuing a cycle of long-term research projects, beginning in 1998, on the predatory context resulting from migrations and flows of global capital, this presentation will outline

the theoretical and ethnographically-informed methodological framework of this multi-sited, transnational, audio-visual research project and the resulting formulation of its installation. Having undertaken an extensive process of negotiation, averaging 1.5-2 years, to access strategic sites and individuals – through Studying Up, the project excavates, focusing upon operating function, materially and increasingly cyber-based, and individuals within these globalised spheres. Thus, the tension between human experience and algorithmic systems, innovated by and which govern the markets provides a sense of urgency. Incorporating photography, digital video, verbal testimony, soundscape, data visualisation and artifactual material, a reading is proffered that takes it out of abstraction and positions it as a real and pervasive force central to our lives.

Catherine Russell
Professor, Concordia University

Archiveology: Walter Benjamin and Archival Film Practices
Public Keynote

In contemporary media culture, fragments of filmed history are constantly being reassembled into new films and videos to create new audio-visual constructions of historical memory. Building on traditions of found footage and compilation films, digital media has made this practice proliferate. As the status of the archive has been transformed from the closed institution to open access, so too have its aesthetics and politics. Archiveology is a critical method derived from Walter Benjamin's cultural theory, which, I will argue, provides valuable tools for grasping the implications of the practice of remixing, recycling, and reconfiguring the image bank. At the same time, contemporary archival film practices arguably make Benjamin's legacy more legible.

Jane Jin Kaisen
Visual Artist & PhD Fellow, Royal Danish
Academy of Arts

The Woman, The Orphan, and The Tiger

Jane Jin Kaisen will present her film "The Woman, The Orphan, and The Tiger" (2010) made in collaboration with Guston Sondin-Kung) and talk about how she uses juxtaposition, intervention and co-creation as part of her filmmaking practice to

destabilize official histories, address collective traumas, and contour alternative genealogies.

Arine Høgel
Post Doctoral Research Fellow, Aarhus University

Haptic Explorations of the Archive

In this presentation I will look into ways of recreating archival audio-visual material in order to produce cultural critique. Going beyond uses of images for their informational content or as illustrations I will take my point of departure in Jacques Ranciere's notion of "The Pensive Image" pointing to a 'zone of indeterminacy between art and non-art' (Ranciere 2009). I will present examples from work that use haptic interventions such as re-framings, repetitions and added sound-design in order to investigate how photographic "documents" shape our consciousness and thus represents tools of power (Enwezor 2012, Kirstein-Høgel 2015).

Ton Otto
Professor, Aarhus University, Moesgaard Museum
and James Cook University

Shifting Perspectives: Film, Audience, and Culture Critique

In this paper I explore how film can contribute to a form of culture critique by analysing the film *Ngat is Dead*, of which I am one of the directors (Suhr, Otto and Dalsgaard). In particular I wish to show how film may facilitate a particular technique of defamiliarization (Marcus and Fisher 1986), namely the creation of a second and different audience perspective for participants through the use of feedback and screening, which create spaces for reflection and self-distancing.

Karen Waltorp
PhD Fellow, Aarhus University

Smartphones and the Imaginal Realm: Call and Response across Registers

Juxtaposing different forms of ethnographic material and experiences pertaining to the field (here film and text excerpts) can unfix our own 'gatekeeping concepts', 'clichés', and 'scripts already in place'. My point of departure is my doctoral research, focused on the affordances of

smartphones for young Muslim women, second-generation immigrants with transnational networks living in Copenhagen. In a response to- and replication of the field, the affordances of the visual and digital as fieldwork device is applied. This discussion is informed by the concept of Alam al-Mithâl – the imaginal realm, and the potential of camera as cultural critique. I touch on ‘representation’, experimenting and evoking; speaking ‘nearby’ and crafting partial, situated (visual) anthropological knowledge – and ask whether doing so might be a critique in its own right.

Peter I. Crawford
Professor, Aarhus University

The Individual and the Self in Anthropology and Ethnographic Film: A Cultural Critique of the Camera

This presentation is based on the development of the second paper in a two-paper exploration of tensions, or at least possible tensions, between the anthropological endeavour and cinema. The first paper, entitled *The character, the plot and the spectacle. Anthropological challenges and narrativity in ethnographic and observational cinema*, as indicated by the title, focused on the use of narrative film in the service of anthropology. The second paper reflects on recent trends in anthropology concerning the status of the ‘individual’, as opposed to the ‘collective’, in a day and age when super-individualism seems to permeate not only (post) modern society but also academia in general and perhaps anthropology in particular. An analytical distinction between the individual and the self, in this context, is used to analyse older ethnographic and documentary films, such as Preloran’s *Zulay facing the 21st Century* (1989), as well as recent examples, from e.g. student work in visual anthropology programmes.



The Wake, photographer: Christian Vium