Book Review

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Expanded visions: A new anthropology of the moving image

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In *Expanded visions: A new anthropology of the moving image*, Arnd Schneider draws on a wide range of time-based media commonly used in contemporary art but not often used in anthropology to propose a new anthropology of the moving image. Schneider takes his cue from Gene Youngblood's influential *Expanded cinema* (1970), which opened up new debates in experimental film and the then-emerging moving image media. Schneider argues that, owing to current developments in moving image practices, an expanded anthropology of vision is now required. Therefore, this book is situated in what Schneider refers to as a 'third space' (1), which is opened up by new moving image practices currently used in contemporary art and experimental film. The author argues that by thinking *with* experimental approaches to art and film, visual anthropologists and ethnographers can incorporate innovative techniques to overcome the realist-naturalist paradigm that still tends to dominate anthropological research and representation.

In Chapter 2, Schneider puts anthropology in dialogue with contemporary art and experimental filmmaking. He presents three case studies, namely Juan Downey (who has done groundbreaking work in video art), Sharon Lockhart (a photographer and filmmaker), and Michael Oppitz (an anthropologist and filmmaker). Schneider shows how these artists/filmmakers/anthropologists take anthropology in new directions through collaborative projects in experimental film. He argues that contemporary visual anthropologists could learn from using multiple visual recordings and split

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and multiple screens, installations, and handheld cameras, thereby addressing anthropology's prime tendency toward recording a single perspective at a time.

Chapter 3 delves more explicitly into experimental filmmaking by evaluating its relevance for anthropological research and representation. In this chapter, Schneider examines the techniques used by experimental and structural filmmakers of the 1970s who drew attention to the artificiality and materiality of the cinematic process. In so doing, they emphasised the material devices and processes involved in making movies. These included drawing the viewer's attention to the celluloid strip, sprocket holes, the length and format of the reel, the optical mechanisms of the camera and projector, and the sound of the camera when filming and the projector when projecting. Drawing attention to these cinematic processes, they questioned the presumption that film (and photography) can represent the world realistically and in a purely objective manner. Rather than arguing that such techniques should or could be embraced by anthropologists wholeheartedly, Schneider suggests they pose useful challenges to conventional anthropological research and representation.

While anthropologists regularly use photo-stills and moving images in their ethno-graphic fieldwork, in Chapter 4, Schneider argues that incorporating photofilm could greatly expand anthropological research and representation. This technique involves lining up and then filming still images to produce a rich and lively recreation. The underlying principle of photofilm is to animate or bestow life onto still images. The arrested time of the photographic still is extended through the use of panning, wiping, zooming, and fading in and out. In Schneider's view, photofilm promises several advantages for anthropology. For instance, more time could be given to individual photographs than is possible in a moving-image representation of the same scene/event. Moreover, not only visual, but also sonic elements can be reanimated in photofilm. For example, the recorded soundscape of a photographed scene can be overlaid with the animated photos to describe, analyse and understand a group of people or an event. Photofilm thus reveals more than a single image can and potentially brings the viewer into a deeper engagement with what is depicted.

In Chapter 5, Schneider recounts an instance where he worked as an anthropologist studying not so much a group of indigenous people, but how the director and film crew working on a commercial film depicted them. In other words, he demonstrates how an anthropologist might go about ethnographic research on the processes that filmmakers employ, rather than their subjects. The film in question is *El Camino* (Olivera 2000), which aimed to show a group of contemporary Indigenous people in Argentina differently than they are usually portrayed through the eyes of white, European-descended artists and intellectuals. Schneider exposes how, despite their intentions,

the filmmakers inadvertently staged this group's 'authenticity' in the making of a commercial film.

Chapter 6 examines the techniques and strategies of a small, Argentine filmmaking organisation called Cine con Vicenos – 'Cinema with Neighbours' – commonly called CCV. Originating in the mid-1990s in Saladillo, Argentina, CCV produces participatory cinema in which the making of films is largely democratic, participatory, and low-budget. Whether feature film length, short, or express, the films have short production times ranging between one and a few days. The availability of lightweight handheld video cameras and, more recently, digital technologies have increased the viability of this kind of filmmaking. While CCV do not make documentaries, their stories are based on local, real-life experiences, and lay actors are volunteers from the community. Schneider argues that CCV's filming practices become an ethnographic meta-discourse because the films are embedded in and reflect on the ethnographic reality of the filmmaker's own town. In promoting open access in the production of films, its methods and practices offer a useful guide for participatory cinematic productions in anthropological representation.

In Chapter 7, the author introduces the concept of 'art-ethnography' (129). Art-ethnography combines the training and skills of artists with those of anthropologists to arrive at new knowledge about an ethnographic reality. As a result of the so-called ethnographic turn in the 1970s, artists started dabbling in ethnography, and anthropologists began to collaborate with contemporary artists. According to Schneider, art-ethnography occurs in a 'third space' (144) – or borderland – between art and anthropology. Its principal methods include 'observation, documentation, the archive, time and memory' (144) and also embrace explorations into new sensory approaches both in art and anthropology.

In chapter 8, the value and potential of the book is most fully realised. Schneider reiterates that the book aims not only to investigate and understand how formal means of visual experimentation can expand visual anthropology, but also to argue that such experimentation can and should 'contribute to new and politically relevant engagements with contemporary issues' (166). To make this point, he discusses experimental filmmaking practices that deal specifically with non-western objects in the possession of western museums. Beginning with the anticolonial critique lodged by Chris Maker and Alain Resnais in their film *Statues Also Die* (1953), Schneider explores more recent decolonial agendas in a number of films and practices that intervene in the debates about practices of display, repatriation, and restitution. As discussed in previous chapters, these films mix installation, multi-screens, materiality, and performance to problematise authorship and positionality in these contemporary

political debates. In so doing, they enter into a dialogue with the Other while accounting for differences in an approach that Schneider suggests characterises an 'uneven hermeneutics' (166).

As a researcher of the visual who has dabbled in sensory ethnography, I found Schneider's arguments both intriguing and inspiring. *Expanded visions* is thoroughly researched and well supported by detailed and sensitive descriptions and analyses of the author's own fieldwork. In this way, Schneider demonstrates how his personal engagement with contemporary image-making practices has served to expand the field of visual anthropology. The book will appeal to artists and anthropologists interested in collaborative transdisciplinary research that reflects on and addresses the pressing social and political issues of our time through innovative moving image practices.

References

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