CAMERA
AS
CULTURAL CRITIQUE

Juxtaposition, Intervention and Co-creation

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 revaluation?

**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**

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# PROGRAMME

## WEDNESDAY 25 MAY

**Ost for Paradis, Paradisgade 7, 8000 Aarhus C.**

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<th>Time</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17:30-17:45</td>
<td>Welcome by the organizers of CCC</td>
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| 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*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>9:00-9:15</td>
<td>Brief introduction from CCC group</td>
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| 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 Salimões: 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* |

## FRIDAY 27 MAY

**JUXTAPOSITION & CRITIQUE**

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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| 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 Høgel  
*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                                        |
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 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. 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 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.

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 ethn-fict and ethno-science fiction (Sjöberg, 2007-2016), this presentation will suggest new perspectives on ethnographic fieldwork and filmmaking, were play (Huizinga, 1938) stands at the centre of the epistemology. Projective improvisation (Loizos, 1993) in ethn-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.

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Catherine Russell
Professor, Concordia University

*Archiveology: Walter Benjamin and Archival Film Practices*

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.

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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.

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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).

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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.

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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.