TIR
DOSSIER | INTERVIEW

BETWEEN ART AND ANTHROPOLOGY - AN ENCOUNTER WITH ARND SCHNEIDER[1]

DOI
https://dx.doi.org/10.11606/issn.2525-3123.gis.2019.162378

JASPER CHALCRAFT
ORCID https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3611-3766
Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, Italy, 50014 - sps.headofdept@eui.eu

ROSE SATIKO G. HIKIJI
ORCID https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5038-8435
Universidade de São Paulo, São Paulo, SP, Brazil, 05508-010
fla@usp.br

In his recent book *Alternative Art and Anthropology: Global Encounters* (Bloomsbury 2017), reviewed in this edition of GIS, Arnd Schneider examines the intersections of art and anthropology, a field he has explored for many years, but here through trajectories far from the global North, through conversations with artists in Africa, Bhutan, Chile, China, Ecuador, Indonesia, Japan and the Philippines. His interest in collaborating with artists goes back more than two decades to his fieldwork in Argentina (*Appropriation as Practice: Art and Identity in Argentina*, Palgrave, 2006), to European projects, like the HERA-funded project 'Creativity and Innovation in a World of Movement' (2010 - 2012), and 'TRACES: Transmitting Contentious Cultural Heritages with the Arts' (2016 - 2019), financed by the European Union's Horizon 2020 programme.

In the seminal conference 'Fieldworks: Dialogues between Art and Anthropology', co-organised by Schneider at London's Tate Modern in 2003, and available online (https://www.tate.org.uk/search?q=Fieldworks&type=media), and in the series of books with Christopher Wright, *Contemporary Art and Anthropology* (Berg 2006), *Between Art and Anthropology* (Berg 2010), and *Anthropology and Art Practice* (Bloomsbury 2013), and with Caterina Pasqualino *Experimental Film and Anthropology* (Bloomsbury 2014), it is possible to trace the emergence of this field that intersects contemporary art, film, and anthropology, with its emphasis on practice and collaboration.

1. This research was funded by Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP Grant 2016/05318-7).

This interview was made at Castiglioni del Lago in Italy in October 2018, during the International Seminar of Visual Anthropology co-organized by the University of Siena's Laboratorio Ars Videndi-Dispoc, the University of Perugia's Scuola di Specializzazione in Beni DEA, and by the University of São Paulo's Laboratório de Imagem e Som em Antropologia. Over three days we were amongst anthropologists who in different ways build their research around collaboration and exchanges with artists. We, the authors of this interview, are also experimenting with the connections between anthropology, film and music, and in this conversation with Schneider we talk about a visual anthropology that opens up to other senses beyond vision, to mastering the other's disciplinary language, and to the idea of a school that might train anthropologist-artists. Schneider's work is itself a practice that demonstrates the potential of loosening disciplinary boundaries, and the theoretical and analytical richness that emerges from collaborative working in the inbetween.

JASPER: Can a term define a field of practice? You have suggested that visual anthropology is a bit of a misnomer. Should we be talking about sensory anthropology, or should we be talking about sound and visual anthropology?

ARND: Well, I don't know if I have said that visual anthropology is a misnomer, but certainly it is now a much expanded field, because it has all these elements. It includes, obviously, sensory data. The visual itself is one of our senses: vision. But it goes far beyond that, what is perhaps assumed to be vision, which would mean perception only through our eyes. In fact, speaking about cinema, in the book *The Skin of the Film* (1999) Laura Marks introduced the term *haptic vision*: that is other senses are also involved when we see something. This is very obvious in cinema in the perception of cinematic projections. Just think of *Un Chien Andalou* (1929), the famous film by Luis Buñuel, where a calf's eye is cut with a razor blade. Of course, in that particular story it is meant to be a human eye (shown shortly before the cut with the razor next to it), and the sensation that causes, even when we speak about it now, certainly provokes something like an inner shudder in all of us, if such a thing should happen to a living being. That is an obvious example, but many other haptic sensations can be produced. And then, just thinking about the senses as they are classified (and of course this is historically contingent also in the West), we can add the sense of smell and not only how it is used sometimes in cinema in recent times - that you can evoke smell or directly have smell effects in the theater - but also how smell is *evoked* by particular images. But further than that, in other cultures, but also in our own knowledge of cinesthetic experience, this is where the senses crossover. And this can be induced both by particularly strong images, but also in other cultures with the aid of

hallucinogenic drugs, or through particular rituals, or through practices of trance. So there are many things to consider when we speak of an expanded field of visual anthropology.

JASPER: Thank you. I'd like to attend to something we spoke of yesterday, but we didn't take it in this direction, which is ontological incommensurabilities. What are the incommensurabilities between art and anthropology as you see them now, quite a few years after you started this line of research?

ARND: The incommensurabilities? Yes, certainly I have used this term to speak of the disciplinary subject, if you like, often called objects, but really they are subjects, because they participate in research, in a way *the other* we are investigating. So in terms of cultural difference obviously the problem of alterity or of incommensurability is posited, which is there where terms cannot be translated, or where we have to stop making an attempt at understanding and just perhaps accept or consider and take into account the position of the other. Marisol de la Cadena in a recent book, *Earth Beings* (2015), but also in other writings, uses the term *the uncommons*. Now, with the commons, and this comes from the political debate, we often associate terms which refer to resources that are finite and limited in the environment: water, and other resources, any natural resources. But *the uncommons* in the ontological sense are also those elements of another 'culture', of a way of thinking, of a cosmology, which *cannot* be translated. In the political discourse this sometimes produces difficulties – this is Marisol de la Cadena`s argument – even when well-intentioned agencies such as NGOs, or other people who in solidarity associate themselves with the struggles of, for example, indigenous people, try to negotiate with other powerful agents of the government or multinationals. Because indigenous people, in her case I think Quechua-speaking people of Peru, bring in completely *other* agents; for example, the mountains, which are then introduced into that debate. And how do we negotiate that? Or as you might know, in New Zealand certain mountains have now for the first time been recognized as legal persons, which means if you do something to them, or if you damage them, it is the same as if you damage a person, a human. And that is of course completely different to just doing something that we would call a destruction or an intervention, or an irreparable intervention into the environment, because there you have the concept of the person.

Now, as far as concerns transfering this thinking to art and anthropology, it would mean that we have to respect each other's differences. And the differences are on the one hand perhaps still methodological in anthropology, but perhaps, and this is quite interesting, also ethical. Anthropology, not because it has the privilege of an ethical position, quite

the contrary, because of our colonial history we have in a way learned, or had to learn, how to deal with ethics because our ethical standards were so compromised. And not only colonial, but also postcolonial, if you think of anthropologists and social scientists who collaborated in the Vietnam War and were embedded in military campaigns by the Americans, but also elsewhere. Therefore, for example, the American Anthropological Association, which has distanced itself from such enterprises, has developed a certain code of ethical practice, like many other anthropological associations. When we deal with people, we are aware of very simple [ethical] things as visual anthropologists: we ask the other person whom we are interviewing, or whom we are photographing, or filming for permission. And also later we make that research material available to them, so that it becomes really a sort of participative shared enterprise.

Now, as concerns art, this ethical discourse is a little bit different, not as I have said, because anthropologists are more ethical people, quite the contrary, but because the ethics are not codified in this way. And sometimes artists deliberately, in order to make visible the historical or particular contingency of the ethics of the moment, or of ethical systems, transgress them. So, artists (I am not saying often or always), do transgress [ethics]. So, you can think of the art of the *Viennese Actionists* of the 1960s who were using blood, naked bodies and violent destruction, or of other artists who have worked, for example, on a particularly thorny issue which is the representation or not of the Holocaust, or of other massacres or atrocities and so forth. And sometimes artists have transgressed the ethical parameters of society precisely to make them visible, which we in anthropology cannot any longer. So, there is also a discussion to be had, and there is perhaps a kind of alterity in this sense.

I could come to the more obvious alterities, but they are the ones which are more on the beaten tracks, and I think they've been superseded somewhat, which would be that the anthropologist is the more systematic person, the more methodological, whereas the artist has a more subjective approach, and comes to a more individualized and poetic vision in his or her research. But I think there actually the difference or the alterity between the two is not as rigid as it is perhaps in the case of ethics, but that is because of a particular history of anthropology. And, of course, it doesn't apply to all art, it is just when you observe the artwork sometimes what seems to be gratuitous to the outsider as an act of ethical transgression, stands for a particular purpose precisely to make the ethics visible. But in anthropology, a kind of risqué anthropology, it wouldn't be supported by the majority of anthropologists. Perhaps, there are people who do that...

JASPER: Artists have more agency than anthropologists?

ARND: Yes, perhaps that's how we could summarize this in a way.

JASPER: More typically, you talk in your books about how anthropology institutionally had a problem with beauty, with the idea that we can't be doing art practices as research method because it is somehow more subjective, we're removing ourselves from what defines our discipline, our field has to be a little bit more structured perhaps. But I'm going to ask [a different question], which is about the global popularity of White Cubes and the bienalization of the art world, and how you think that might have impacted on the way otherness is represented by the cases you know very well from working with anthropologists and artists who work inbetween these spaces. How does it change the dynamics of representational practice?

ARND: Yes, I would certainly agree that it has in a way [changed the dynamics of representational practice], or what we now call the art system, but then again, it is perhaps a historically contingent phenomenon, which has globalized now. That is the way the art work is talking and that's the kind of box or parameters or frame it is using to represent itself. In the terms of the historical encounter between art and anthropology there is the example of 1930s France, when the Surrealists created around a particular journal, *Documents*, a very fertile discourse of collaboration, dialogue and common interventions, also of representations. But, this was not connected to a particular art world, even though certain artists participated in it. Rather at the time it was connected to institutions like the newly founded *Musée de l'Homme* in Paris, the Institute of Sociology and so forth, and to certain people, some of whom gained even more prominence after the Second World War. But of course, this was also still a time when you didn't have one particular figure who has now become very prominent in the global art world of the White Cube, and that is the person of the curator. Curators now are basically the gatekeepers of what is happening in the art world, as I see it. And I don't mean it too negatively, but in a certain way they are almost like anthropologists. They are scouting the art world, or what is out there in terms of production, almost ethnographically, and trying to appropriate that, and then to present it in certain venues. So, the curator permanently employed at the state, institutional, or municipal gallery – the scenario we are familiar with up until the 60s and early 70s – also still exists, but is rather in the minority. Even those institutions now hire outside and freelance curators. Some of them very talented, very interesting, and that also has allowed the inclusion of more global viewpoints, if you think of the prominent role the late Okwui Enwezor has taken, for example as a curator of *Documenta 11*, the *Venice Biennale*

but also of the *Palais de Tokyo* show 'Intense Proximity' (2012), as keynote speaker at the *Dakar Biennale*, and many other things. The White Cube world of the contemporary art scene itself has become the subject of ethnographic research and of the biennials. My colleague Thomas Fillitz, from the University of Vienna, has written about the Dakar biennials and about the position of African artists there, but we now also have many works which investigate art worlds, the world over; this started in Stockholm and other places, but we now have also many studies of 'local' /'global' art worlds, including Brazil. Yes, I think the White Cube system is an important factor to take into consideration.

ROSE: I'd like to ask about the state of the art of these collaborations, dialogues and approaches between anthropologists and artists, and in your own experience how the collaborations, approaches and dialogues between you, as an anthropologist, have been with artists?

ARND: Yes, thanks for that question. And here I would like to introduce this term *uneven hermeneutics* very briefly which I spoke about yesterday. This comes from a thinking which was introduced first as 'speaking terms', which James Clifford used to characterize this historical collaboration of the surrealist anthropologists and artists in the 1930s. Now, I think this term has to be made productive, has to be filled with content in the present, and that is what is happening in collaborations between artists and anthropologists. That is why I'm also, and it comes back to the first question, that's also why I'm reluctant to say how the two are different, because these differences are in a way relational. They have to be established in a dialogue in the present, as soon as there is a common interest or a field of investigation, such as happened between me and Leone Contini in a recent project, the exhibition project coming out of the TRACES Horizon 2020 project from the European Union about contested cultural heritage (www.tracesproject.eu). And together with the artist Leone Contini, we investigated colonial heritage buried in the Pigorini National Ethnographic Museum in Rome. But, how did we collaborate, and how did we collaborate with the curators at the museum, and then later with our interview subjects, elderly Italo-Libyans, Italian settlers, who were expelled from Libya in 1970 by Gaddafi? This is up to negotiation, you cannot set up the terms at issue, you have to find that out in conversation. *Uneven hermeneutics* also means that you have to account for differences. In this case, we were all operating in a first world context. But, of course, the subject also included other parts of the world, so that has to be taken into account. Between these participants there were no essential differences, only a very slight degree of power, status, rank, education, and so forth. But in any case not in such a pronounced way as I have experienced working in Argentina, when I worked with artists in the north-eastern province of Corrientes

bordering Paraguay. It was there with artists from the local art school that I pretty quickly, and through a steep learning curve, found out that they came from a completely different background. Both in their understanding of anthropology, but also in the terms they practiced art, or indeed what I understood. And they had perhaps different expectations of the project, because what counted for them is that the art works would then enter the art world of Argentina and would be visible. Whereas for me, I wanted information from them about their methodology, and how they worked as artists, and how they related – as they were themselves from that part of Argentina – to the local population. And in the interviews which I reproduced first in *Critical Arts*, and now a part in a recent article in the *Field Journal*,(1) it comes out pretty clearly that they actually say to me: "you were using us as translators, you were using us as conduits for your anthropological research". So, there is a direct charge in there that I was using them, also that I had a different background, that this was for the benefit of academia, but what was in it for them? This has to be negotiated and even though in this case we continued, we made a [co]production, it had its contested part. But perhaps, sometimes, such projects have to be abandoned, or cannot be taken further, or can be taken only half way. You cannot know that from the beginning.

JASPER: How do you advise your research students to be able to make that kind of decision?

ARND: Well, this throws us back basically to the ethics I mentioned earlier. I think as an anthropologist in any project you have to learn the language in many senses. That means both the language of the place, but also, if you collaborate with artists, the disciplinary language of the other. You cannot come with presumptions such as that the artist is less informed, perhaps less informed academically, less academically trained, or does not have a knowledge of anthropology, or has a less systematic way of proceeding in his or her artistic research, for example. These have often been the prejudices established or mainstreamed in anthropology. This is indeed very visible in many discussions around classical works of visual anthropology, if we recall the discussion in the 1980s around the film *Forest of Bliss* (1986) by Robert Gardner, on daily life in Benares (India), including funerary rites, as well as his other works. These were very poetic investigations of other worlds and of other cosmologies, but by the specialists of anthropology of these areas of the world this has been very much attacked and visual anthropology taken to charge that it was not analytical, that it was not ethnographically grounded in the same way. But I think before we do that, we have to understand the toolkit and also the thinking of the other. In this case, the disciplinary other. That comes, of course, with the third, and the

third subject here in this case are the people we are working with in the field, if it is this kind of anthropology.

ROSE: In terms of these two ways – artists in relation to anthropology and anthropologists in relation to art – do you think that still we have more interest from artists in anthropology than the opposite?

ARND: That's difficult to say, this harks back to a debate, to an article of Foster, which became very influential: "The artist as ethnographer". It's often cited, and quite correctly, from one of the anthologies of Hal Foster's writings (*The Return of the Real* 1996). However, it was first published as an article in an important collection by two anthropologists, George Marcus and Fred Myers, *The Traffic in Culture* (1995). And basically Foster establishes an argument – he was quite right I think – that in what has been called the ethnographic turn in the arts, in the 1990s, sometimes, the incursions of artists into the ethnographic field was just for greater exposure in the art world and furtherance of their own careers. And vice-versa, of course. So, it's both from anthropology, then there's also what has been called an "artist envy" or an "anthropologist envy" towards the arts. That we, perhaps, would like to be as good, that we see the shortcomings if we are not trained in this field of only having writing skills and analytical skills, and would quite like at least to also draw well, and perhaps even to paint or to do sculpture, just to think of some very classic forms of visual art (not yet superceded, thought we cannot just think in this compartmentalization). And beyond that, of course, the moving image of filmmaking or photography, just to mention some genres. We would like to be very good at that once we open ourselves or expand into these fields. And we're envious of practitioners who have learned that and who also have a talent, have done this for a very long time, and are mastering these techniques and have these abilities. But for me personally it has always been a question of collaboration, where I think one works across these boundaries. There are of course others, very importantly Tim Ingold, who have argued that certain forms of practice, such as drawing, have a value in itself also for anthropologists. Even if they don't perhaps reach the level of virtuosity, of mastery, of mastering, like an artist would do, they have other intrinsic qualities and characteristics, which make them useful for anthropologists. So, yes, ideally I would also dream of a school (perhaps your Brazilian department is one of them, certainly in terms of the camera, both stills and moving camera), a department or an interdisciplinary place where people are trained in different fields and abilities, and then become artists-anthropologists.

TRANSLATION
Anna Beatriz
Geronimi Benine

(1) Schneider, Arnd "Contested Grounds:

Reflecting on Collaborations with Artists in Corrientes, Argentina", *Critical Arts*, 2013, 27 (5), 511 – 530;

Schneider, Arnd "Between Uneven Hermeneutics and Alterity: The Dialogical Principle in the Art-Anthropology Encounter", *FIELD: A Journal of Socially Engaged Art Criticism,* http://field-journal.com/issue-11/between-uneven-hermeneutics-and-alterity-the-dialogical-principle-in-the-art-anthropology-encounter

ABSTRACT

In this interview the anthropologist Arnd Schneider addresses questions about the relations between contemporary art, film and anthropology, a field explored in several books and events that he has organised since the early 2000s. He emphasises collaborative practices between artists and anthropologists, and the widening of disciplinary boundaries.

JASPER CHALCRAFT is a Jean Monnet Fellow in the Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies at the European University Institute (Florence, Italy). His current work covers two projects: one focuses on how to work with 'difficult heritage' in Europe, the second on the cultural activism of new African migrants to São Paulo, Brazil. Working closely with practitioners as a member of the Creative Europe funded project 'Heritage Contact Zone', he is exploring practical ways to work with contested heritage, from the cultural inclusion of minorities in Europe, to the new cultural diplomacy surrounding heritage at risk. E-mail: jasper.chalcraft@eui.eu

ROSE SATIKO GITIRANA HIKIJI is Professor at the Department of Anthropology of University of São Paulo. Vice-coordinator of the Laboratory of Image and Sound in Anthropology, coordinator of PAM (Research in Musical Anthropology). Author of the books "Imagem-violência", "A música e o risco", "Lá do Leste", co-editor of "A experiência da imagem na etnografia", "Antropologia e Performance", "Escrituras da Imagem" e "Imagem-Conhecimento". Co-director of "Woya Hayi Mawe", "Tabuluja", "Violão-Canção", "Fabrik Funk", "Art and the Street", among other ethnographic films. She is a CNPq productivity fellow 309705/2016-9 and conducts researches with Jasper Chalcraft funded by Fundação de Apoio à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo (FAPESP grants 2016/05318-7 and 2019/09397-7). E-mail: satiko@usp.br

Author Contribution. Jasper Chalcraft and Rose Satiko G. Hikiji: conception, manuscript elaboration, writing, discussion of results.

Received: 04/02/2019
Accepted: 04/18/2019