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## Ways of Sharing a Visual Fiction

For Gary Kildea

La Jolla, California, January 2006. The poetry of waves, every day around me ... brings abundance of ideas and themes to write about. The sweet tears are falling from my eyes ... make me think ... Nearby, dozens of homeless people are pushing their trolleys filled with plastic bags ... On TV endless commercials ... In the second part of his poem *Howl* Allen Ginsberg (1959) wrote about the Moloch eating its own mind ... Old Greeks talked about the myth of ouroboric snake eating its own tail and Jadran Mimica (1988) found this kind of ouroboric cosmology among the Iquaye of New Guinea ... It becomes quite serious when I realize that the cycle in which I live and which inspires me is so much experienced through my own body and my own mind ... It is placed in time and space of my own existence ...

A: It seems that a new kind of time is going on around here ...

B: Time for longing?

A: Maybe ... a new époque ...

B: More horizons?

A: Hm ... machinery of institutionalized production surrounded by poetics of independent revolt ...

### Independence as a set of potentials

It seems that everything in this world belongs to institutions, to the hegemony of institutions. Institutionalized structures and pertaining rules are putting heavy logs under the bare feet of people and are representing significant constraints in contemporary human experiences of creativity and freedom. It is sad and frightening to see that even many of those who once radiated enormous energy and life force suddenly became eaten by the machinery of Moloch. While following the rules of political correctness and fast food ideology they produce trendy works with a short life span. There is no deepness of time anymore and there is no wideness of space. In short, the world became shallow in every sense of the word. Those who think too long or feel too deep are marginalized. It is a global problem how to face this kind of shallowness and how to recognize and support the struggling of talented, unspoiled, not recognized, silent souls.

Living for some months here at the Mission Bay of San Diego and watching unedited footages of well known ethnographers in the archives and the library of the University of California, San Diego, made me think about the huge media 'crocodile' next door. Just a few hours drive from the place I live there is that dominant centre of film production – the famous Hollywood. Is there a paradox in my thinking that I have no wish to see it? Is there a paradox that I enjoy more watching those footages in the archives than going to Blockbuster and rent a DVD with the last Hollywood movie such as, for instance, the new production of King Kong (probably not yet on DVD anyhow)? In his essay *Independent Features: Hopes and Dreams* Chuck Kleinhans provided me with a deeper understanding of my confrontations with the mainstream institutions. He writes that in order to understand them better one has to be aware of the reasons for their dominance. "Hollywood is more than just a place in Southern California where about two hundred feature films are made each year. It is also a financing system and a national and international distribution and exhibition enterprise" (Kleinhans 1998: 308). For many poets, singers, dancers, photographers, filmmakers and painters it is a kind of utopia, where it is necessary but hard to face their own independent ideals in relationship to the values advanced by the dominant institution. The life for this people can be painful and often unsuccessful. An independent soul can become desperate while trying to stick to his or her imagination. One can lose energy to create because of the pressures around him or her. One can fall into populism and commercialism losing in such a way his or her face. The positions, titles, awards, statuses, and so on became more important than the work itself. To obtain them, one is again faced with institutions. One is told that it is necessary to attend education within institutions. Only in such a way one could reach a higher quality of creation. But is this true? Our teachers, who live their own lives under the same pressures of institutional requirements, do not have time for their own work and less so for those of us who are more inquisitive students. In short, creativity is downplayed, covered by promises of secured positions in the same industry; but only if the rules are followed. However, the idols for many young people are those individuals, who became famous without parents' support, money or expensive education; those who with 'low budget' made their dreams come true. Anyhow, one should be aware that behind that achievement there was and always is a kind of institution, which 'discovers' a talented soul and makes from him or her, for its own purpose, the star. Ouroboros is again biting its own tail. Kleinhans mentions Robert Rodriguez's *El Mariachi* as an example of a hero, arguing that "part of Rodriguez's success is due to being in the right spot at the right time, but his ingenious and aggressive improvisation and years of experience were crucial to his film's being catapulted into successful distribution" (1998:

318). The independence, for Kleinmans, is very important due to the fact that the large industries such as Hollywood or Bollywood are not fully rationalized and have serious gaps, which could be filled (ibid.). In this case the independent creativity becomes a tool for the industries. Many of the avant-garde, talented individuals got an opportunity to prove their capabilities in a big industry and succeeded. However, while they were using their skills and knowledge from their years of independence they were at the same time becoming a part of that huge snout of a crocodile (i.e. commercial market). In other words they began to reproduce the Moloch itself and not the independent work from which they have sprung.

The question remains: how to make a balance between independence of creation and demands of the market. There is and there will always be a gap, which could only partly be filled by those individuals, who will preserve their deep and endless self examination, who will search and question their own creativity, and will share this kind of approach with others throughout their lives. This kind of creators better understand other similar souls, who are not as lucky as they were, and can find the ways that the gap between existentially fragile independent creation and the potentials of an institution is narrowed. Because “independence is not just a state of mind; it is a set of potentials that can only be realized in a real world situation with real economic institutions and constraints” (Kleinmans 1998:326).

### **Reflexivity<sup>1</sup> and articulation**

Following independent – alternative – individual or avant-garde thinking and the pertaining creation I want to begin with unsolved polemic (i.e. discussion) about the phenomenon of independence, the one that could be successfully reached and maintained. How? The question is hard to answer and the answer even harder to articulate. It is like a nut, which is hard to crack. But is there any other method to find a balance between sharing and the happiness of independent creation?

Film could be seen as a kind of a medium of life that is visually and emotionally catching our minds. It provides us with a possibility for an extraordinary reflexivity upon our creativity. In the postmodern era we are overflowed with a large amount of empty, superfluous, and artificial expressions. Special effects became more important than deep human feelings, banal television dramas more than complex issues of human existence. People are continuously searching for something deeper but at the wrong place. They believe that they

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<sup>1</sup> I am using reflexivity instead of reflection, because “reflexivity asks that we ‘look back’ and thereby let our experiences ‘come back’ to us” (Fabian 1983: 91).

will find the resolution in melodramas or cheap novels, in fitness or beauty centres, or in a one week course on spiritualism that would transform them into a new state of being. It seems that so many people are constantly running after something – they are, of course, not sure what this could be – while the industry provides them only with the running grounds and nothing at the end. The emphasis is on running and not on the pause; because the industry makes money on the runners and not so much on those who stop. Also, those who stop can reflect and articulate better, and they can feel better; but again, the industry does not like too much of reflexivity, too much of articulation, and too much of feeling good. So, let me make my first argument and emphasize the importance of pauses. Pauses and stops should not be equated with not doing anything. On the contrary, they allow us to dig deeper. That is when we can think, feel, write and built on the basis which was given to us by those individuals who questioned, innovated, and explored the reasons of creativity.

Even the promise of education, which is generally also caught into the same industry, can spoil the soul. Education in my view is a kind of playground where I can, of course, broaden my knowledge but where it is hard to express my creativity. Actually, the creativity of individuals is suppressed and often ridiculed. Moreover, it is difficult to be part of it if one does not have a substantial income, scholarship or other financial support.

Let me return to the film. The difference between well known studio films produced with a high budget and those which were made on a shoestring and not for gaining money is clear when one wants to see it. The *Undergrounders*<sup>2</sup> and the Beat generation are two examples, where the people were sharing their humanity and compassion not only through the film but through their lives generally. To make sure, I am not nostalgic, because I was not even born then. It is just an observation about productive relationships of those times that radically differ from those in the present. During the retrospective of Andy Warhol's works<sup>3</sup> I became particularly attentive to the words of Jonas Mekas who said: "Andy was such an open psychiatrist with all those sad, confused, creatures. They used to come and feel at home. There was this person who never disapproved of them – 'Nice, nice, good, oh, beautiful.' They felt very much received, accepted. I have no doubt it helped some not to commit suicide – some committed ... it took Andy – all that Andy had – to collect that group of people

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<sup>2</sup> See Farber's chapter entitled *Experimental Films 1968* in his book *Movies [Negative Space]* (1971: 246-249). At the beginning of this book one can find different opinions about Farber and his work written by reviewers, artists, and writers. Here is one I want to mention: "Manny Farber is cranky and eccentric, razor-sharp in his perceptions, irritable and irritating, never less than brilliant as a writer, and one of the precious few American critics who encourage the making of *movies* as opposed to cinema, and probably the last one who champions a lack of pretense in the art he likes" (Peter Bogdanovich, in Farber 1971: ii).

<sup>3</sup> *Andy Warhol. Filmmaker*. Retrospective under the Vienna International Film Festival – Viennale 2005, 1-31 October, Film Museum, Vienna.

around him and have that intensity; that variety of temperaments to produce that incredible document of a generation ... You don't have to be crazy, but you give credit where it belongs. And one has to give credit to Andy" (Shore 1995; for Andy Warhol's views see Warhol 1997). Nowadays, the intensity of the light that shines on relationships has diminished, while the majority of people stopped searching for deeper understanding and deeper values. They are losing their strength—even when they see themselves in these terms. But due to immense consumerism, empty absorption, digitalization of human lives, and outsourcing, the world in 21<sup>st</sup> century became flat (Friedman 2005). The global market, overwhelming advertising, and the focus on constant production create a blind 'depth of field'. Therefore it is necessary to stop and look from a different angle. It is necessary to ask and analyse, re-think, re-evaluate, and re-create.

While dealing with the film I want to emphasise its strength as a medium itself. Like independence it is a way of living. As a creator of a film one puts in it his or her emotions, longings, and personal experiences. One creates that intensity which can and will influence the audience, because "people made Gods, not Gods people" (Godard 1963).<sup>4</sup> Its fragility lies in its individuality, and the strength lies in its precise analysis of human existence. To penetrate deeper into the latter it takes enormous amount of a life time. In today's 'fast life' it is almost impossible to keep one's sober attention. People are rushing over each other's topic, as if they would in the manner of King Kong like to reach 'many at once'. This is all due to the global market, to mention it again, which has spread around the world in large capacity. While communication became faster it has not become deeper. On the contrary, it became shallower. Poetry lost its innocent image and the seriousness and the quality of the messages that films used to convey almost disappeared. In *Independent* magazine Lisa Selin Davis wrote a short article about Nathaniel Dorsky and his poetic cinema. After forty years of being a filmmaker Dorsky wrote his manifesto, *Devotional Cinema*, about his feelings and the 'truth' to which he came during all those years of dealing with mainstream cinema.<sup>5</sup> What made me think in his case is the explanation about cinema that inspires devotion. Davis writes that in Dorsky's perception of film it is necessary to look into and beyond yourself. It can be a kind of evocation of spirit, which does not of course mean that we have to see it in connection with religion. I want to admit that film for me can be timeless, even in its time length, if we are able to transfer its meaning into our reality. Film is able to provide us with a different

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<sup>4</sup> The quote is from the film *Le Mépris*, 1963, Jean-Luc Godard.

<sup>5</sup> *Devotional Cinema* was written by Nathaniel Dorsky in 2004 and published in San Francisco by Tuumba Press. The book originated out of a public lecture about Religion and Cinema, which Dorsky delivered at Princeton University in 1999.

sense of the world, with a different perception of our own lives. “The state of vulnerability it produces in the audience, this heartbreak, this not-knowing, is the catalyst that brings forth our renunciation and connects us to devotion” (Davis 2004: 41). We can talk about the balance, which is reached in any creation, when the vision, concept, performance and the act are in the same contour. Henri Cartier-Bresson wrote about the act of taking photographs, about recognition in its simultaneous-ness within a fraction of a second, when “both the fact itself and the rigorous organization of visually perceived forms ... give it meaning. It is putting one’s head, one’s eye, and one’s heart on the same axis” (1999 [1976]: 27). While earlier in this paper I talked about the importance of a pause, which enables one to dig deeper (which I would call ‘vertical awareness’), I want here to emphasise the importance of being aware of different creative dimensions that lie on the same line and are actually interwoven (which I would call ‘horizontal awareness’). Maybe I am moving away from a rational, intelligible articulation. Maybe my way of explanation has become too abstract. Because of that I would like slowly to move towards the topic of an ethnographic film as a kind of a trans-cultural and visual communication. Together with photography, this kind of a film became in many ways an inseparable part of my own life. It relies very much on creativity and ingenuity of a researcher-filmmaker, long term participant observation, deep analysis, and profound knowledge of community and culture of those that are filmed. Moreover, it often gives voices to those that would otherwise not be heard.

### **Direct film vs. ethnographic film**

In the previous section I tried to take up a ‘close up’ approach to articulate independence. I tried to look at the ways in which the independent creation is articulated in its ‘innocent’ way and practiced while living in a constant struggle and search for existence. Here I want to move towards a different kind of discussion. First of all it is necessary to acknowledge that the permanent technical innovation such as digitalisation of every single information surrounds us. Nobody is immune to it. I question, however, how to deal with it? What is the objective way of analysing it when each and every piece of analysis is subjective?

On the one side we have filmic representation, the medium, which is communicating in a kind of as well as through institutionalization. On the other side we keep independent approach of personal creativity. If we look into the history, when ethnographic film did not exist yet, one has to mention a revolutionary genius from the Soviet Union, Dziga Vertov. Already in 1920s *Kino Pravda* showed the moving images of actual people in their actual

environment in their actual doings. This, in many ways, was the beginning of a documentary. We could say that the cameraman captured the ‘living aspects’ with ‘living camera’. However, “Vertov never held the camera in his hand; this was something he left to his brother, Mikhail Kaufman. He never filmed in a ‘neutral’ way, but always sought the greatest degree of expressiveness by choosing the right angle at which to film his raw material” (Marcorelles 1973: 36). Due to his filmic approach he is mentioned again and again as the pioneer of documentary filmmaking. His innovation and creativity became, in the case of *Three Songs of Lenin*, for example, noticeable through the editing process. That is when his images began to talk to us.

Lightweight camera (16 mm) became an extreme innovation for filmmakers who were suddenly able to move while filming and directing. It enabled filmmakers to give their footage a living dimension. The visualisation was transferred into the direct act; it became a hot topic for discussions about new ways of filming. Documented images became, and in my opinion should be seen as such also today, powerful captures of living reality, without prettifying what had been recorded. In his book *Art and Imagination* Roger Scruton writes about ‘expressiveness’ as an impact, as a complex network of public feelings and thoughts, where the recognition of expressiveness belongs in part to the ‘knowledge by acquaintance’. It cannot, therefore, be fully replaced by any description in a unitary way (Scruton 1974: 213-217). It is my view there were not only technological discoveries, but their implications, in this case the implications of a living-direct camera that became a powerful encouragement for independent minds! What I mean is that the observer and the observed began to communicate with each other. The polemic, however, remains within the *impossibility* of capturing the objectivity of both parties. With the new approach to the filming process, there was a try to film tentatively, to create informal and non-organised scenes. A new question was posed regarding the aesthetic problems. An example of this innovation, discussed in the book *Living Cinema*, is Jean-Luc Godard’s criticism of Richard Leacock’s expressiveness. The danger of Leacock’s attitude, which is in Marcorelles’ words considered as the only real one, “is that when the filmmaker and his audience participate too strongly in what is happening the sense of reality, its deepest significance, is lost” (Marcorelles 1973: 32). In spite of Godard’s argument I have to give credit to Leacock, while seeing the danger of deliberate prettifying and speculations in the name of the market. Many documentaries were and are made by the particular reasoning and calculations. Some expect illogical advantages and have a strong will to gain something: house in Beverly Hills, Ferrari, and silicon face? In *Living Cinema*, there is brilliantly and critically described a whole concept of the ‘spontaneous’ cinema, which was

taken directly from reality. In an interview with Leacock, the particular extracts of which were published in 1964 in London, in the television magazine *Contrast*, he declared that: "... we're building up an image of our society that is a fiction'" (1973:46-47). In my opinion Leacock's observations are true today as well. There were other American filmmakers, followers of Dziga Vertov and companions of Leacock such as D. A. Pennebaker or Albert Maysles, whose works are worth to be seen too.

Another forerunner of direct cinema, in France, was Jean Rouch with his beginnings in 1960s. He practiced so called *Cinéma Vérité* (*Chronique d'un Été*). With his narrative approach he followed Vertov's idea about the truth that in the *cine-eye* appears by itself. He also followed Flaherty's concept of 'participant camera'. Rouch called the final product the phenomena of possession, the *cine-trance*. It is a fascinating combination of a movement of electronic ear and mechanical eye that provide a kind of a 'symphony' between a filmmaker and the filmed people (ibid., Barbash, Taylor 1997: 120-121). Leacock said about Jean Rouch: "I've seen his *Chronique d'un Été* and *Les Maîtres Fous* – it seems to me that, although his films are so interesting, the most important thing that has ever happened to the people he chooses to film is the fact that he has filmed them'" (Marcorelles 1973: 89).<sup>6</sup> Rouch's films were a mixture of truth and fiction in the way of storytelling. He paid attention to a kind of provocation, which necessarily created reaction. In terms of his visual communication a description about the feedback, which is needed for every creator – artist, seems the most important. He articulated feedback as "an extraordinary technique, an 'audiovisual counter-gift', that has certainly not yet revealed all of its possibilities" (Rouch 1995: 98). It is at this point that technique does not refer only to filming itself but becomes a vehicle for a real communication, transmission and sharing of the work we produce. In an essay written in 1973 Rouch went on saying that "tomorrow will be the time of completely portable color video, video editing, and instant replay ('instant feedback'). Which is to say, the time of the joint dream of Vertov and Flaherty, of a mechanical ciné-eye-ear and of a camera that can so totally participate that it will automatically pass into the hands of those who, until now, have always been in front of the lens. At that point, anthropologists will no longer control the monopoly on observation; their culture and they themselves will be observed and recorded. And it is in that way that ethnographic film will help us to 'share' anthropology" (Rouch, in Feld 2003: 46). It is necessary, however, to make a clear difference between *direct cinema* and *cinéma vérité*. In the case of Jean Rouch, and *cinéma vérité*

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<sup>6</sup> *Cahiers du Cinéma*, No. 140, February 1963.

generally, we see the camera as a 'participant', a mediator between cameraman and recorded world, between objectivity (appearance) and interpretation. Rouch saw the camera as a tool that can provide an extraordinary opportunity to communicate with the group under study. On the other hand the direct recording, far from giving a perfect equivalent of reality, showed that "in the real world, we have forgotten how to look and listen. We pass over things, we use people, we look beyond them or we project our own problems and our own desires on to them. It teaches us, once again, the kind of rigorous, open observation which, through its very existence, fights and improves the increasingly poor fiction that the mass media put out daily to build up our personal mythology" (Marcorelles 1973: 95-96).

### **Picturing invisible**

While I was living my particular kind of 'visualisation', photography, travelling and learning new languages brought me into the world of a 'serious' science, into the studies organized and controlled by an institution. More importantly, it brought me to the place I love – Papua New Guinea. I never thought that I would ever be able to exist and create in any kind of institution. However, my attachment to anthropology and especially to that part of it that deals with visualisation slowly became more important than the institution as such. I also became aware that there are different institutions, and as long as I can preserve my independence within and create according to my own impulses, I can comply with certain rules. In other words, I see it more important to focus on creation, visualisation, and communication than on prescribed rules of institutionalized education.

Let me begin this section with the words of Fadwa El Guindi who, in my view, wrote a very good book about methodology in visual anthropology. In a general confusion around this field of studying she offers the following thoughts about its goals: "First, it seeks to transmit knowledge about humankind. Second, it serves as a tool for discovery – data gathering, elicitation and research experimentation, and cross-cultural comparison. And third, it develops visual modes to communicate anthropological analysis of primary cultural, archaeological, and primatological data on human societies and nonhuman primate behaviour and of ethnographic insights from other cultural sources" (Fadwa El Guindi 2004:18). In anthropology generally there are still prejudices when dealing with ethnographic film. It is not regarded as a scholarly tool. It is not perceived as being on the same level as argumentative writing is. It is true that it is difficult to capture human lives in the way written description can. However, it is impossible to capture in a written word those images that are accessible

only to a visual media. First of all, we need to realize that writing and filming are two different mediums of communication. And comparing them on a very basic level would be like comparing apples and pears. What one can achieve the other cannot and vice versa. Ambonwari people from Papua New Guinea say: “Skin has eyes and skin has ears.” For them seeing means believing while words can carry lies and can harm. When asked about other people’s thoughts and feelings, a person usually replies: ‘I do not know. I cannot see into other people’s insideness’ (see Telban 1998).

When we look at its beginnings, we have to admit that film as such transmitted fiction. When the first cinemas were established in North America the audience was mainly composed of poor people and youngsters. There were many restrictions that surrounded the final product which are from today’s perspective quite funny. The first kiss, for example, was made as a long-long-touching of the lips. At that time ethnographic film did not exist yet. Travellers, explorers, missionaries and the like who ventured into far away lands captured on the film ‘strange’ habits of what they called ‘primitive people’. Their footages were perceived from the stereotyped and culturally specific perspective of an evolutionary oriented European. In many cases people were shocked after seeing ‘proofs’ (which, of course, were not the proofs but rather a product of collective imagination) of strange beings that exist on this Earth. A very nice example of this is the movie *The Elephant Man* directed by David Lynch in 1980.

While the above mentioned cases belong to the period of colonialism, post-colonialism together with postmodernism brought for me an unfortunate view of creation summarized under a slogan: “Everything goes.” This kind of view also contributed towards the general flatness of creativity. Though I may be labelled as being old fashioned I do believe that we can learn a lot from the past works. In the case of older ethnographic films, for example, we can learn a lot not only about ‘others’ but also about ourselves. This is even more so, if we recall Jean Rouch who saw his camera as a tool and narration as a medium for both participants: observers and observed. They both create a space for discussion. They provide the basis for a better understanding of transmitted message. In my view, an ethnographic filmmaker has to be well prepared in terms of his or her technical skills, has to know community well or has to be with someone who does so, has to be receptive for specificities of a particular culture, and has to respect people he or she films.<sup>7</sup> To capture the invisible

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<sup>7</sup> In February and March 2005 I accompanied anthropologist Borut Telban to Ambonwari village, East Sepik Province, Papua New Guinea where I filmed and later edited an ethnographic film *Charismata, From Bush Spirit to Holy Spirit*. I perceive this film as a part of my learning process.

aspect of a particular culture and of a particular event it is necessary to see behind the visible. This can only be achieved by a long-term participation, a profound knowledge and a sensitive eye.

In my view an ethnographic film should be practiced as communication between knowledge and living experiences, practices and stories, picturing invisible to make it transparent and understandable. One is not filming disappearing cultures as much as such a claim appeals to the innocent viewers. Ethnographic film is mainly a visual communication, huge in its potentials of transmitting and sharing of understanding between fellow humans living in the ever changing world. Here I would like to refer to Jay Ruby whose work 'came' to my hands with breathtaking 'storm'. His experiences, knowledge and capability to write about 'picturing culture' provided me with many new ideas as well as with energy to continue in my visual research.

Jay Ruby writes: "I have argued that ethnographic film is most productively regarded as filmed ethnography, distinct from other filmic attempts to represent culture. It is to be critiqued in terms of how well it pictorially satisfies the requirements of ethnography. If anthropologists wish to move ethnographic film into the critical discourses within anthropology, they will have to gain control of its production and dissemination. None of these conditions currently exists. The future of ethnographic film as a significant contributor to anthropological discourse about the human condition lies in the development of critical expectations about how ethnographic knowledge can be transmitted pictorially. To explore this possibility, anthropologists must understand current thinking about the visible and pictorial world – both inside and outside of anthropology – and examine, critique, and borrow elements deemed usable in the creation of a theory and practice of film as ethnography" (Ruby 2000:37).

### **Transmitted message**

Those anthropologists who were able to use film as a part of their studies were mostly independent from the institutions involved in the film industry. Many of them were accompanied by the ethnographic filmmakers who were interested in the topic of their research. They were and still are dealing with enormous financial problems to cover not only their travel expenses but also the necessary equipment. Additional funds are required for the payment of fees that individual countries, regions and communities request for filming in their area.

In the following section I want to present some examples of three different ways of filming all of which are at least partly related to what we call ethnographic film. As the first example I would like to mention documentarist Kevin Peer (*Way of the Wodaabe, Whalerider*). As a filmmaker working not only for National Geographic, which gave him a certain status and enabled him to break through institutions, he found his philosophy of filming in his work with various cultures. He founded the Institute for Sacred Cinema ([www.sacredcinema.org](http://www.sacredcinema.org)). By sacredness he meant that “which we hold dear and precious”. His views expressed for the magazine *Independent* sound very clear and although he is not an anthropologist, he made some extraordinary movies about the sacred life of different communities: “Images sound, and story bypass the conscious mind and go directly to work in the unconscious. Indigenous cultures know this and use it to create culture stories that become forces of life” (Stockdale 2004: 45).

The second example comes from an interesting essay, written by Catherine Russell (1998) about *Culture as Fiction* and the ethnographic impulses in the film. She mentions three experimental filmmakers, Leslie Thornton, Su Friedrich and Peggy Ahwesh, who moved closer to documentary and used ethnographic elements in their creative work. They advertised the necessity for rethinking of the concepts, which had already been made, theorized and moralised. They were especially forceful in arguing for different ways of seeing and – in a postmodern manner – for getting beyond the phrase “other cultures”. Russell writes that “in the work of these filmmakers, otherness is a necessary fiction, produced within the fissures of American culture, as a means of making it strange, in order to see it differently” (1998: 361-362). Su Friedrich’s film *First Comes Love* made in 1991 showed the church weddings of four different couples. She dealt with the same sex marriages that were at that time not recognized in USA. She ended her film by acknowledgement that homosexual marriage had been recently legalized in Denmark. The interesting point in the filming of that time – among all three filmmakers – was that they shot the material silently and edited it with popular soundtracks, voice-overs and many other sound effects. They also used found-footages, industrial films and TV imagery. Though I praise the innovation and experimental approach to ethnographic filming, I also think that this kind of approach creates serious questions about the relationship between fiction and reality. In the concluding remarks of her article Russell writes: “Piecemeal narrative structures enable these filmmakers to hold ‘objective realism’ at bay, even while they engage with other documentary codes” (1998: 372). In opposition to *cinéma vérité* discussed above, this kind of avant-garde work is totally fragmented, almost nothing is natural, and everything is fictional. Russell nevertheless argued that “the lack of

narrative closure of any of these films leaves them open to history, and as ethnographies open to cultural change and transformation” (ibid.).

The third example of transmission of messages in the ethnographic film comes from the independent filmmaker Gary Kildea. He is really that unconventional filmmaker with whom I had the pleasure to discuss the intricacies of ethnographic filmmaking before I departed for Papua New Guinea and was about to record my first ethnographic footage. He provided me with extremely sensitive microphones for my sound recorder, other equipment necessary for filming, and numerous advices. At the Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies at The Australian National University he – together with Patsy Asch and her late husband Timothy – created a brilliant audio visual studio. This studio provides graduate students with the ability to edit the material they recorded during their fieldwork. Gary seems as being a kind of a silent angel, who helps and advises young filmmakers. Because of all this I decided to dedicate this paper to him.

One of the extraordinary stories that he filmed and edited carries the name *Celso and Cora: A Manila Story* (1983). It is a sensitive account about the hard life on the streets of the Philippines’ capital of Manila. The film captures everyday reality of a young couple with two children living in an extremely poor part of the city. They are surviving by selling loose cigarettes at street corners. For the most part of the film – a period over six months – he lived there and worked totally alone with camera, microphone and tone equipment. Towards the end of his filming he received some help by a Philippine assistant, Rowena Katalingasan. Later on, in Australia, he edited the film by himself. In this work, he uses long shots as a means for preserving the stability of the story, little zooming and focuses on many important details, which are in the films of many other filmmakers simply not present. The discussions between Celso and Cora, while facing their existential problems, engage one in a serious participation and reflection upon one’s own life. In an essay published in the book *Die Fremden sehen* (To See The Strangers), David MacDougall (1984: 81-82) praises Celso and Cora and its author. MacDougall sees Gary Kildea as being a unique observer who gives us a real insight into his method. I think that to capture in a minute detail and then preserve ‘dailiness’ throughout the editing process in the way that it will transmit the precious message of living is probably the hardest thing to do. The things which are happening every day have ‘the truest duration’ (see Ruby 2000:248-249, Zavantini 1953). When I was at The Australian National University in February 2005, Kildea made a private screening of the movie he was working on: *Koriam’s Law and the Dead who Govern*. The film was still without subtitles so Gary simultaneously translated peoples’ talk from Tok Pisin to English. For me it was a

beautiful visual experience: Gary was sitting in front of the screen, with closed eyes, almost whispering the text. The small audience, including David MacDougall, Borut Telban, three Ph.D. students, and myself, was watching and listening in silence to the story from New Ireland of New Guinea. Some months later the message appeared in every anthropological newspaper: at the 9<sup>th</sup> Royal Anthropological Institute's International Festival of Ethnographic Film that took place from 18 till 21 September 2005 at Oxford, Gary Kildea was awarded the first prize for his film *Koriam's Law*.

## **Conclusion**

Anthropologists, who want to capture on film different ways of being, under diverse circumstances, who deal with different myths, rituals, languages and stories, have a very special tool in their hands. It provides them with opportunity to “visualize culture and to see behaviour as an embodiment of culture so that it can be filmed, and to create film styles that transmit anthropological knowledge to a desired audience while at the same time making the theoretical position of the maker clear and the methods employed explicit” (Ruby 2000:240). The importance of this method, in the history of filmmaking, has regrettably not found its honouring place yet. It is necessary to acknowledge that the ways of being that we the anthropologists study should not be judged from the perspective of a common sense, because cultures and societies are complex entities, into which we as fieldworkers become adopted. We develop intimate relationships with the people among whom we do our research. Our main purpose should be to listen to these people, to talk with them about the precious stories of their life. We are usually accepted as a part of a family or a particular group. We are asked to participate in solving people's problems. Of course, this kind of life carries with it many difficulties because whatever we do, at the end we depart and then we return back. We share our products – writings and films – with people we write about or film them. In some communities people feel that we take their secrets away. They think that we are making an enormous profit on them. All this becomes an additional issue that all ethnographic filmmakers have to deal with. It becomes an ethical issue. Anthropologists often live two lives, one is ‘there’ and another is ‘here’. Each of them requires commitment. The films, which the ethnographic filmmakers make, come out of such a commitment and are very different from other kinds of documentary films. Because of a long-term involvement of a filmmaker, they are too dense and culturally specific for an ordinary audience to watch. A small market, of course, does not provide that kind of a global attraction that would justify a

substantial financial support. Ethnographic film, with all its richness and honesty, remains at the margins.

After some time that I have spent here in San Diego, I feel that my mind has begun to change. Sometimes I feel that “I’m a kind of a tourist on a permanent vacation” (Jarmusch 1980). But no, I can see the Moloch quite clearly; I became closer to the understanding of that huge ‘snout of a crocodile’, of the powerful institutions that rule the media. When I watch David Letterman’s show on CBS, I cannot resist thinking about innovation named television or TV as the irony of everyday cinema. I rather switch to KPBS channel<sup>8</sup> where the NOVA and scientific researchers will tell me something new to think about. It is strange to see Robert Redford, in a commercial for the same programme, talking to me: “Be more devoted, this is the planet we share” (11.1.2006, 10 pm). However, contemporary speed of innovation is something that takes us away from many precious details we are surrounded by. I do believe that many innovations were made for a good purpose. However, I will always claim that “making documentaries is a constant process of self-examination and reevaluation” (Barbash and Taylor 1997:35). All of above mentioned ‘creators’ were and some of them still are searching for a clear message about ‘reality’. It becomes a question of their perception. “Imagine an eye that doesn’t obey the rules of perspective as man has fashioned them, an eye free of all prejudice of compositional logic, an eye that doesn’t answer to the name of each object but has to know whatever he meets in life through an adventure of perception” (Stan Brakhage, in Marcorelles 1973:142).

B: Oh! That’s very nice A. But I still have questions for you. How does one come to an idea of writing, painting, performing, creating of something? Because it is human? Because it is something, which we cannot earn, pay or substitute?

A: This is an old question B, not answered and not fully understood ... only feelings explain the honesty of thoughts.

B: However, public illusions of masses seek the first place in a symphony of the market. Any individual and unusual act is eaten by these masses ... so that the ingenious impulse, the necessary creative explosion disappears in a single moment ...

A: Yes, maybe you are right ...the utopia of art ... the utopia about us ... we divide the world into many different paths.

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<sup>8</sup> “One mandate of KPBS is to provide the community with access to innovative independent films and to provide artists and documentarians with a platform to showcase their work.” ([www.kpbs.org](http://www.kpbs.org), 14.1.2006, 8:05 pm)

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**Film-program:** (more detailed filmography on: <http://rachel.reflectangulo.net>)

*Day 1 >>*

*Nanook of the North*

Robert Flaherty

Revillon Frères, 1920-21/1922, 75 minutes > first 35 minutes

*Atanarjuat – The Fast Runner*

Zacharias Kunuk

2001, 168 minutes

**Break – discussion** > focus on Papua New Guinea:

*Dead Birds*

Robert Gardner

Peabody Museum (Harvard University) and Niederländische Regierung, 1961-63/1965, 83 minutes

*The Red Bowman*

Chris Owen and anthropologist Alfred Gell

1981, 50 minutes

*Abelam ceremony*

Anthony Forge's Film Collection from Mandeville Special Collections Library, Geisel Library, University of California, San Diego, La Jolla:

Videocassette No. 4: Includes ceremony with large painted standards carried by individual men, decorated yams, processions with yams, and distribution of yams. No sound. 1 hr, 9 min > first 25 minutes + Videocassette No. 9: Includes procession of men and the painting of facades. 12 min, 15 sec.

*Trobriand Cricket: An Ingenious Response to Colonialism*

Gary Kildea, Dennis O'Rourke and anthropologist Jerry Leach

1973-74/1976, 50 minutes

**Day 2 >>***Bathing Babies in Three Cultures*

Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, 1951, 9 minutes

*The Elephant Man*

David Lynch

A Brooks Films Production, 1980, 123 minutes

**Break***An Election in Papua New Guinea*

Pascale and Pierre Lemonnier, presented at 6<sup>th</sup> conference of European Society for Oceanists in Marseille, 6-8 July 2005. Footage was recorded 17 and 18 June 1997 (ca 17 hours) > first 35 minutes

*PNG Anthropology on Trial*

Barbara Gullahorn-Holecek

WGBH Educational Foundation, 1983

*Tidikawa: At The Edge Of Heaven*

Susan Cornwell

Look Film Production NY, 1991(?), 50 minutes

**Break***The Sky Above, the Mud Below*

Arthur Cohn with French expedition

1961, 88 minutes

**Day 3 >>***Three Songs of Lenin*

Dziga Vertov 1934, 62 minutes > first 35 minutes

*Jazz Dance*

Richard Leacock with Roger Tilton, 1954, 20 minutes

*Chronique d'un Été*

Jean Rouch with Edgar Morin

Argos Films (Paris), 1960/61, 90 minutes

**Break – discussion***A Wife Among Wives (under Turkana Conversations: A trilogy)*

David and Judith MacDougall

1973/4-1981, 72 minutes

*The Ax Fight (under The Yanomamo – 37 films together, not all possible to see)*

Timothy Asch and anthropologist Napoleon Chagnon

1975, 30 minutes

**Break - discussion***Celso and Cora: A Manila Story*

Gary Kildea

Ronin Films Production (Australia), 1983, 109 minutes

**Day 4 >>***Wanda*

Directed and Script: Barbara Loden

1970, 102 minutes

*Variations*

Nathaniel Dorsky, 1992-1998, silent, 24 minutes

**Break***Keva et Delphine*

Lorenzo Brutti, presented at 6<sup>th</sup> conference of European Society for Oceanists in Marseille, 6-8 July 2005

*Charismata, From Bush Spirit to Holy Spirit*

Borut Telban and Daniela Vavrova

2005, 28 minutes

**Discussion ...****Worth to check:***Heimat bist du ... kurzer Filme*

Under this title were running all night the Austrian short films on the November 3, 2005. Exhibitor of Independent Cinema: [www.independentcinema.at](http://www.independentcinema.at) – check for following projections as well as [www.viennashorts.com](http://www.viennashorts.com) for possibility to submit into the International Short Film Festival: Vienna Independent Shorts 2006.

**Invitation:**

World Film: 3. Tartu Festival of Visual Culture 2006

Estonian National Museum, Tartu, Estonia

March 13 – 19, 2006 >> [www.worldfilm.ee](http://www.worldfilm.ee)