

# Film Festivals and Anthropology



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Edited by

Aida Vallejo and María Paz Peirano

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PREFACE

SCREENING ANTHROPOLOGY  
ACROSS THE PLANET

FAYE GINSBURG

It seems fitting to be writing the preface for this rich and timely collection as I prepare for a meeting of the curatorial committee planning the Margaret Mead International Film Festival, scheduled for October 2016 at the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. We are in the midst of organising preliminary lists of possible films to screen, no easy matter as we can show only around 50 films from the 700 submissions we have received from across the globe, an indication of how much the field of ethnographic film has grown over the years, along with the festivals that showcase these works. While most are premieres, we also relish the opportunity to show important paradigm-shifting work from the archive of remarkable films and filmmakers that were first showcased at this festival over the last four decades. Sadly, many of these events have also become memorials for important inaugural figures in the field: Jean Rouch, Dennis O'Rourke, George Stoney, Albert Maysles, and Robert Gardner are among those whose work we have featured over the last few years, reminding audiences of the longevity of this film festival that is heading toward its half century birthday. Since my initiation into the Mead Festival, I have been involved with many others that are included in this volume, each with their own characteristic social location and ambience. These include the RAI Festival in England (see Henley, this volume); France's *Bilan du Film Ethnographique* (now the Festival Jean Rouch) (see Wanono, this volume); *Beeld voor Beeld* (see Appels, this volume); the Taiwan International Ethnographic Film Festival founded by the dedicated anthropologist and filmmaker Hu Tai Li, and the many Indigenous film festivals that I have attended and helped organise—some of the most lively gatherings I have been part of—including First Nations/First Features, held

in 2005 at both the Museum of Modern Art in New York and the Smithsonian's National Museum of the Indian in Washington D.C.<sup>1</sup>

I start with the Margaret Mead Festival not only because it's where I first learned about ethnographic film's expansive range; it also made me aware of the complex role that film festivals play as events, many years before film festival studies officially launched as a field. With the exception of years when I was off doing fieldwork, I have been involved in every one of the four-day Margaret Mead festivals, beginning with the very first, when Margaret Mead presided over the affair and introduced the groundbreaking work of Jean Rouch to the assembled cognoscenti who gathered from New York City and beyond. The Mead is now the longest-running ethnographic film festival in the Anglophone world—the Conference of Visual Anthropology at Temple University preceded it, but that festival has not continued into the present (see Ruby, this volume)—and continues to be one of the most important. Back in 1977, as a student at Barnard College, I worked as a festival intern, handing out brochures and guiding attendees into theatres, while also keeping an eye on the small bubble-backed TV monitors playing the recently completed *In the Land of the War Canoes* (1972), the famous decolonized Kwakwaka'wakw remake of Edward Curtis' 1914 film *In the Land of the Head Hunters*, appropriately situated in the Hall of Northwest Coast Indians, an early version of ethnographic installation (lest readers think installation work is a recent innovation). Many of the people I showed to their seats at that first festival were figures I had only read about in the emerging literature on ethnographic film and Visual Anthropology: David and Judith MacDougall, Tim Asch, John Marshall, Jay Ruby, and of course Rouch himself—with whom I eventually studied—were among them. Eventually, they became valued senior colleagues who treated me with welcoming generosity as I made my way into the field of ethnographic film as an aspiring anthropologist, documentary filmmaker, and curator/programmer and eventually, an anthropologist studying “media worlds” (Ginsburg *et al.* 2002), including film festivals of various kinds, what I have referred to as “fieldwork at the movies” (2002).

The opportunity to be part of the ethnographic film festival universe, especially in those early days, offered the chance then as it does now not just to see films, but also to meet all kinds of people in the “corridor egalitarianism” that still characterizes such events, with conversations continuing beyond the festival on into the night at the nearest bar. As any good ethnographer knows, the formal part of the event is only part of the story of what's happening, as the contributions to this collection that use

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.moma.org/calendar/film/724?locale=en>

the tools of anthropology to analyze various film festivals make clear. Indeed, I met my husband, the anthropologist Fred Myers, when we were the last two people in the theatre after a late night screening of David MacDougall's *Link-Up Diary* (1987). And unlike other sub-specialties of anthropology, this aspect of Visual Anthropology has been (and remains) only marginally part of the academy in a way that I would argue is salutary. Spaces such as ethnographic film festivals offer a location and a frame for what are often wonderfully experimental projects that might not readily find a home in university departments. The whole field of ethnographic film is, to some extent, an effort at "institutionalizing the unruly" in ways that are not necessarily disciplined by the more formal structures of academic life (Ginsburg 1998).

Editors Vallejo and Peirano have put together a truly valuable collection, adding an important counter-current to the recent and burgeoning film festival literature, offering an overdue history and mapping of how anthropology has taken shape on screens across the world, while also using the tools of ethnography to help us understand film festivals as social gatherings that constitute particular communities, create regimes of value, and stand in complex relationship to other authoritative representational systems. Overall, to use a cinematic metaphor, the articles in the book move between establishing shots, medium shots, and extreme-close ups.

It is exciting to be reading this in 2016 and to take account of a foundational era that has received all too little attention. What will happen as we move forward into a future as new technologies take root such as Virtual Reality-based media, which raise their own intellectual, ethical and practical challenges, as we are discovering as we programme such work at the Mead festival? What happens to the group experience of viewing and talking together that we so value as part of the distinctive sensibility of film festivals—and the social worlds they create—when viewers are sitting individually immersed in a 3D version of life on another part of the planet, wearing Oculus Rift headsets that isolate each audience member in his or her own experience? But perhaps that is a question for the next volume. As this collection makes clear, there is more than enough to discuss in the present.

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We would like to thank the public institutions and research projects that supported this project (and especially all the people whose taxes help to develop independent research, the output of which will hopefully help to improve the social and cultural awareness of the communities to which they belong). Our thanks go to the following institutions for their support of this project: the Training Programme for Researchers of the Department of Education, Universities and Research of the Government of the Basque Country; the Spanish Ministry of Education and Science; and the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness.<sup>1</sup> Thanks also to the University of the Basque Country UPV/EHU and the Hautaldea research project<sup>2</sup> that organised the 2013 edition of the NAFA film festival,<sup>3</sup> where the idea for this book was born. Thanks to Olatz González-Abrisketa and the festival organisers for bringing us together and extending the Visual Anthropology networks in new directions.

Our sincere gratitude also goes to everyone involved in this project, without whom this book would not have become a reality. We would like to thank the Cambridge Scholars Publishing team, who encouraged this project from its early stages, Faye Ginsburg for her support, and each of the chapters' authors, who contributed their time, hard work and expertise to this book. We also wish to acknowledge the valuable contributions of Caroline Bennett, Emma O'Driscoll and Dominic Topp regarding the improvement of quality, coherence, and content presentation of chapters.

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<sup>1</sup> Grant number CSO2014-52750-P. "Transnational relations in Spanish American digital cinema: the cases of Spain, Mexico, and Argentina".

<sup>2</sup> Grant number EHU11/26.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.ehu.es/ehusfera/hautaldea/nafa-film-festival-2013/>

anthropologists, festival organisers and other scholars and practitioners also helped us document the current state of ethnographic and anthropological film festivals worldwide. We are extremely grateful for the enthusiasm of Elisenda Ardèvol, Sanja Bježančević, Jenny Chio, Michèle Dick, Esther Fernández de Paz, David McDougall, Pedram Khosronejad, Ana Estévez Lavandeira, Stefan Eisenhofer, Luis Pérez Tolón, Helena Patzer, Johannes Rühl, Carmen Sílvia de Moraes, Stephanie Takaragawa, Nguyen Thi Thu Ha, Keyan Tomaselli, and Selda Vale da Costa, and the CLACPI organising team, whose willingness to contribute to this research made this work possible.

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# INTRODUCTION

## FILM FESTIVALS AND ANTHROPOLOGY

MARÍA PAZ PEIRANO AND AIDA VALLEJO

On November 13, 2015, the directors of world-acclaimed *Leviathan* (2012), Lucien Castaing-Taylor and Véréna Paravel, were invited by the CPH:DOX International Documentary Film Festival in Copenhagen (Denmark) to take part in the ART:FILM seminar. Launched in 2003, the Copenhagen festival had built a reputation for programming films on the boundaries of the documentary genre, with works navigating between reality, art, experimental film and fictional narratives. The festival's official website promised the opportunity to "meet the brains behind Harvard's revolutionary Sensory Ethnography Lab for an interview about the field between film, art and research".<sup>1</sup> Conducted by film academic Jeppe Carstensen, the seminar, which took advantage of Castaing-Taylor and Paravel's high profile to attract a wider audience, nevertheless felt like a failed attempt to bring together opposed discourses about ethnographic film. The thorough filmic analysis used by Carstensen to guide the interview (based on the classic Film Studies approach that searches for recurrent motifs across the authors' films) did not seem to please the interviewees, who looked bored by the questions, and the conversation did not go much further. The problem lay in the conflict between the opposing discourses developed in film, anthropology and the arts, the latter being the one in which Castaing-Taylor, and especially Paravel, seemed to find themselves more comfortable.

Since the Harvard Sensory Ethnography Lab's (SEL) origin in 2006, ethnographic film has attained an unprecedented visibility, mainly due to its performance at international film festivals. Premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival in 2009, *Sweetgrass* (Ilisa Barbash and Castaing-Taylor) was the first critical success of the SEL that travelled to other major and specialised festivals, including the New York Film Festival and the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (IDFA).

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<sup>1</sup> See: <http://cphdox.dk/en/programme/film/?id=3235>

*Foreign Parts* (Véréna Paravel and J.P. Sniadecki) was presented in Locarno in 2010, and then travelled to the New York Film Festival, *Festival dei Popoli*, *Cinéma du Réel* and the San Francisco International Film Festival. *Leviathan* premiered at the Locarno International Film Festival in 2012, and had an outstanding performance on the festival circuit, being projected at film festivals with different profiles, both general (New York, Berlin, San Francisco, Buenos Aires International Festival of Independent Cinema, Edinburgh, Ann Arbor) and specialising in documentary (IDFA, CPH:DOX). *Manakamana* (Stephanie Spray and Pacho Velez) followed a similar trajectory, starting its tour at Locarno in 2013, and then travelling to the Toronto International Film Festival, New York, AFIDOCs, San Francisco and the Sydney Film Festival.

Although focused on ethnographic film, SEL filmmakers have been trained in film production and experimental film. This influence can be noticed in both their films and their discourses. Their cinematic language differs from classic Visual Anthropology works, and their public discourses about their work tend to prioritise aesthetic, philosophical or technical issues, rather than anthropological knowledge about the realities they portray. Within the anthropological context information tends to be prioritised over aesthetics or art, which can conflict with the decisions of SEL filmmakers. *Sweetgrass* co-director Ilisa Barbash notes that “at the very beginning, we could have explained that this was the last sheep drive, but we decided not to impart information in what felt like an artificial or extraneous way. If we end up showing *Sweetgrass* to anthropologists who are disgruntled that we don’t give them enough information, we’ll have to defend ourselves. But we’re happy with the choices we made” (in MacDonald 2015, 392).<sup>2</sup> Depending on the festival’s profile, the debates and discourses on film can differ widely. Thus, it is not by chance that SEL’s films and filmmakers have been embraced by festivals devoted to independent film and creative documentary, while other visual anthropologists find it difficult to get into their programmes. By travelling the festival circuit, SEL filmmakers have learned to adopt the festival discourse, and to respond to different expectations, be they aesthetic, thematic or even behavioural.

The importance of festival sites as a place for negotiation is one of the driving forces behind this book. Film festivals are certainly major players in the articulation of film canons, spaces for public debate, and places where different discourses about cinema are articulated. With the

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<sup>2</sup> SEL films have nevertheless been widely studied and recently acclaimed by anthropologists. See the special issue of *Visual Anthropology Review* (Volume 31, Issue 1, 2015).

proliferation of specialised film festivals, including those devoted to ethnographic film worldwide and the hybridisation of genres between documentary, fiction and experimental cinema, Visual Anthropology finds itself at the very heart of the debate. We argue that to understand past and recent changes within Visual Anthropology, it is necessary to study the festivals' influence as both film showcases and social encounters. With that purpose, this book explores intersections between film festivals and anthropology. It focuses on those festivals devoted to ethnographic film, and on the analysis of the festival as a social and cultural space within which discourses about film (ethnographic or otherwise) are negotiated. The book is also thought of as a site for the encounter of anthropologists and film scholars, two readerships that have not yet met around this topic.

The debates around hybrid discourses developed around SEL's films have served to energise Visual Anthropology, and to rethink the ethics and aesthetics of using a camera for ethnographic and anthropological purposes. Although this can lead to a clash of discourses and practices, the development of this debate at a particular time and in a particular place is in itself an object of study worth critical attention. We argue that festivals are key hubs where this new turn in the history of the discipline can be examined so as to understand its developments, and are productive sites for thinking film as a sociocultural practice, which should be read through the lenses of anthropology.

## **The Rise of Film Festival Studies**

The international film festival circuit plays a fundamental role in the production, circulation and consumption of contemporary peripheral cinema. Film festivals originated in Europe, and have proliferated in the last twenty years, functioning as key hubs in a global film network. Research on film festivals has risen exponentially since the mid-2000s, mainly inspired by the seminal work of Bill Nichols (1994) regarding the importance of the contemporary film festival experience and festivals' role as a place for cultural translation. The increasingly interconnected festival phenomenon has been recognised as an autonomous circuit of film circulation (Elsaesser 2005). As a relatively new stable channel of exhibition, film festivals permit the circulation of certain types of non-mainstream cinema products. Thus, they are seen as a possibility to establish an alternative circuit that allows the recognition of independent "foreign language" films and filmmakers (Turan 2002, 8), especially those from the underrepresented "Third World" (Triana-Toribio 2007; Diawara 1994).

Festivals are the main spaces for encounters between international film agents, and for the establishment of transnational connections that determine the further international circulation of alternative (non-Hollywood) and peripheral film, including documentary or ethnographic film and other forms of non-mainstream cinema. Each festival enables encounters between a more or less stable group of professionalised subjects, such as festival programmers, filmmakers and critics, who gather together, watch and review new films, and decide what will be seen by audiences. Festivals also establish vital links with various other entities, such as states, avant-garde intellectuals and city marketers (De Valck 2007). The “elites” in the film world (Porton 2009) have created nodes where film professionals meet in personal micro-networks, reconstructing a certain “global film culture” in these settings (Wong 2011). Festivals are also involved in the process of value-addition to peripheral cinema. By travelling around the circuit, a film can accumulate symbolic value: the more praise, awards and buzz a film attracts, the more attention it is likely to receive at other festivals. Consequently, filmmakers gain increasing prestige due to the circulation of their products, which in turn become more valuable with the signature of a prestigious “author” of contemporary world cinema (Wong 2011; De Valck 2007; Elsaesser 2005).

The growing importance of film festivals for non-Hollywood cinema has been increasingly recognised by scholars from diverse disciplines, particularly Film Studies. In addition to Skadi Loist and Marijke De Valck’s efforts to promote this research line in a multidisciplinary environment (through the creation of the Film Festival Research Network),<sup>3</sup> Dina Iordanova’s initiatives have been crucial in promoting film festival studies, including the annual publication of the *Film Festival Yearbook* between 2009 and 2014. While previous studies had focused on major film festivals, mostly European pioneers such as Cannes or Venice, the FFY series and other recent studies have focused on more peripheral geographical or linguistic areas, including Africa (Diawara 1994; Dovey 2015), the Middle East (Iordanova and Van de Peer 2014), Asia (Kim 1998; Ahn 2011; Iordanova and Cheung 2011) and Iberoamerica (Triana-Toribio 2007; Lauer 2013; Gutiérrez and Wagenberg 2013). Other scholars have focused on film festivals specialising in documentary cinema (Vallejo and Winton, forthcoming), and also on thematically oriented festivals (on indigenous festivals see, for example, Córdova 2012,

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<sup>3</sup> Their official website offers a comprehensive online bibliography on the topic that is regularly updated: <http://www.filmfestivalresearch.org/index.php/ffrn-bibliography/> (Loist and De Valck 2015).

and Peirano, this volume; on human rights festivals see Iordanova and Torchin 2012 and Tascon 2015).

Despite the importance of ethnographic film festivals for Visual Anthropology, there has not yet been a clear systematisation of the development of these events, with the exception of Colette Piauxt's key contribution to a history of ethnographic film festivals in Europe (2007, updated version published in this volume). Looking at anthropological literature, we mostly find some short publications related to ethnographic film festival reports, published in Visual Anthropology journals and newsletters (see Hazen 2014; Zoanni 2013; Yates-Doerr 2005; Lutkehaus 1996b; Balicki 1994; Harvey 1993; Heider *et al.* 1990; Van Brabant 1985; Grove, Tomaselli and Hayman 1981), plus some brief mention of the role of film festivals in the institutionalisation and expansion of Visual Anthropology (Jørgensen and Madsen 2007; El Guindi 2004; Ruby 2001).<sup>4</sup> Only recently do we find some research on the networks of circulation of ethnographic film through specialised, general or documentary film festivals (González-Abrisketa and Vallejo 2014).

Some of this research clearly addresses the particularities and implications of the exhibition of anthropological films in these settings, but the topic has not been developed further. The role of film festivals for Visual Anthropology has been discussed by academics, filmmakers and festival practitioners in the past, even in the early stages of ethnographic film exhibition (Taszman 1967), but it has often been part of more or less informal conversations at meetings and seminars, documentation of which remains scattered.<sup>5</sup> Until now, historical accounts, self-reflective academic pieces and in-depth discussions on the nature and challenges of festival practices within Visual Anthropology have remained unwritten, as part of the oral memory of scholars and practitioners. The first part of this book aims to collect these memories, in many cases written by their own protagonists, and to reconstruct these histories in order to set a common ground for the further development of the field.

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<sup>4</sup> For a full list of reports of ethnographic festivals up to the 1990s, see Husmann *et al.* (1992).

<sup>5</sup> For example, in a meeting taking place in 1994, Anne Connan, David MacDougall, Colette Piauxt, Marc H. Piauxt, Martin Taureg and Hugo Zemp met to discuss the pertinence of appointing juries and issuing awards for anthropological film festivals, considering the particular aims of anthropological films. The text, however, did not lead to a formal academic discussion and it is hardly available to the public readership. For the same reason, we have included an English translation of Colette Piauxt's account of the event, originally published in the CVA Newsletter in 1994, as an appendix to her chapter in the first part of this volume.

## **Anthropology and the Study of Film Festivals**

Although film scholars have relied on anthropological conceptual frameworks to analyse film festivals, they have not yet been studied in much detail within the discipline. Similar to what happens with ethnographic film festivals, anthropological scholarship on non-specialised film festivals is scarce, and often reduced to brief observations of the events, without much ethnographic immersion (see Dirks 1995). Exceptionally, Nancy Lutkehaus' long-term observation of the Sundance Film Festival, which produced several reports (1995, 1996a, 1997), is a more systematic approach that addresses the multicultural dimension of film festivals. Nevertheless, although Lutkehaus claims to make the first ethnographic approach to a film festival and to consider the transnational practices involved, she almost immediately dismisses the analysis of the complex social interactions involved in the event (1995, 121). In order to understand the festival as a "modern-day world fair" (1995, 122), she is more interested in a thorough analysis of what type of film is exhibited, focusing on the representational practices from a cross-cultural perspective, while excluding other festival structures.

The fundamentally social dimension of film festivals was not really discussed within anthropology until the ethnographic account of the 1997 Sundance Film Festival by Daniel Dayan (2000), which is one of the few examples of ethnographic research made by an anthropologist in non-ethnographic festivals until now. Although fairly brief, Dayan's study could be considered a "classic" starting point for scholars working in the field. The author considers film festivals as media events of collective performance, in which norms settle into behavioural sequences about self-definition and identity formation. The film festival is seen as an encounter between the competing definitions of different social parties, such as organisers, jury members, candidates, audiences, buyers, and those who write catalogues and reviews. Dayan is interested in the audience as dispersed media spectators, along with the special rules of a temporary event with a short duration.

These aspects are essential to understanding film festivals as events for social and cultural encounter, and Dayan shows a stimulating anthropological approach to this multifaceted phenomenon, which could be explored by anthropologists in other festival contexts.<sup>6</sup> However,

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<sup>6</sup> Brian Moeran, for example, has suggested understanding festival events and trade fairs as "tournaments of value" (2010) determining the circulation and exchange of "creative" products. This form of analysis is in line with research from organisational sociological perspectives, which deem film festivals as "field



although suggestive, his work does not provide a fully developed analysis of Sundance, the film festival phenomenon, or broader cinema practices, including, of course, those involved specifically in ethnographic filmmaking. His work has not been discussed much within the anthropological discipline either, and for the most part the social life of film festivals has lacked anthropological analysis. Exceptionally, anthropologists looking at broader film worlds and filmmakers' communities have acknowledged the importance of festivals for the construction of the fields of film production, among avant-garde filmmakers in New York (Ramey 2002), Indigenous filmmakers (Dowell 2006), and also for Indian (Ganti 2012), American independent (Ortner 2013), Korean (Park 2014) and Chilean cinema (Peirano 2016a).

Notably, film scholar Marijke de Valck (2007) provides a complex analysis of these events using anthropology's conceptual frameworks. De Valck draws on Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner to explain film festivals as sites of passage and forms of cultural performance, considering each festival as an extended cultural performance during which "other" rules of engagement count and the commercial market rules of the film world outside are suspended (2007, 37). This isolated character of the festival, understood as a site for communal encounter in which critics, filmmakers and programmers share a social space, had already been noted by film critic André Bazin (1955), who highlighted the ritualistic nature of these events (particularly Cannes), which he compares to a "religious order".<sup>7</sup> For De Valck, this ritual conveys the creation of a "film festival zone": a liminal state in Turner's terms, where cinematic products can bask in the attention they receive and acquire symbolic value. From this perspective, festivals mark transitions in the order of film culture and allow for its development. Festivals change external parameters of evaluation from economic to cultural (aesthetic and political), turning these events into the "obligatory points of passage" (2007, 38) for critical praise, and thus into hubs of value-addition for contemporary world cinema.

To explain this role, De Valck refers to the work of both Bruno Latour and Pierre Bourdieu. From an actor-network perspective, she observes the spatial and temporal organisation of film festivals, emphasising the relational interdependence in these sites of participant agents, including

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configuring events" (Mathieu & Bertelsen 2013; Moeran & Strandgaard Pedersen 2012), meaning temporary social organisations that encapsulate and shape the development of professions, market and industries.

<sup>7</sup> More recently, sociologist Emmanuel Ethis has studied the publics of Cannes, based on a fieldwork survey focused on cinephile spectators (2001).

both humans and non-human actors such as funds, legal frameworks and other institutions. She argues that film festivals are obligatory points of passage for the flows in the network, because they are events that have become such important actors that, without them, an entire network of film practices, places and people would fall apart. De Valck combines this Actor-Network Theory approach with Van Gennep's classic concept of "rites of passage" in order to explain the successful maintenance of the film festival circuit thanks to festivals' liminal character, which turns them into "sites of passage" (2007, 38), that is to say, gateways to cultural legitimisation. In addition, using Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, De Valck explains festivals' traditional work as that of gatekeepers for alternative cinema, which offer opportunities for the translation of symbolic value into economic value. This role has extended in recent years in order to exert economic influence over film production, and festivals can also be understood as sites of struggle between autonomous and heteronomous modes of organisation, interested in sustaining their own position in the field, between art and commerce (De Valck 2013 and 2014).

The work of Cindy Wong (2011) on film festivals as a global phenomenon—understood as nodes for global film industries and film culture—also presents an analysis that combines Anthropology and Cultural Studies. She sees festivals as a dynamic system where cinema, understood as a specific cultural artefact, circulates and multiple actors continuously strive to negotiate their meaning and position in the broader film world and socio-economic and political contexts. Wong was trained as an anthropologist, and her detailed analysis of festival spaces is strongly based on ethnographic research among other techniques, but she considers her research overall as an interdisciplinary project more than Anthropology.

More comprehensive ethnographic accounts of film festivals have only recently started to develop, often combining insider/outsider perspectives from professionals involved in festivals' production (see Dickson, this volume). Some film scholars and anthropologists have started to study film festivals using ethnographic methods (Vallejo 2014 and 2015; Peirano 2017; Lee 2016), although this is still an emergent field. The selection of ethnographically based research in the second part of this book, which includes ethnographic accounts of general and specialised film festivals, aims to reflect this approach, and to suggest some lines for further research in the field.

## Structure and Contents

This collection explores the intersections between film festivals and anthropology from two different angles. Firstly, it looks at ethnographic film festivals worldwide, aiming to chart these events. Through a historical reconstruction of the festivals' development, contributors reflect on the parallel evolution of programming and organisational practices, and the implications for Visual Anthropology and ethnographic filmmaking. Secondly, the book focuses on ethnographic methods for the study of film festivals, underlining the social aspect of these events. In doing so, film and anthropology scholars examine the limitations and possibilities of ethnographic research tools, which have proved of great value for this interdisciplinary field.

Part I, "Mapping Ethnographic Film Festivals", addresses ethnographic film festivals from a historical perspective, and aims to delineate a preliminary cartography of this specialised festival network, which has developed parallel to the evolution of Visual Anthropology as an academic field. This section is prefaced by a short introduction by María Paz Peirano, who offers an overview of ethnographic film festivals worldwide, accompanied by a comprehensive listing of current events. Peirano focuses on the historical development of these events and their international connections, reflecting on their cultural dynamics, and paying special attention to those peripheral events that, because of their short trajectory, are underrepresented in this volume. This part is divided into two main subsections. The first, "Curating Anthropology", focuses on specific geopolitical areas and academic traditions. Essays in this section reflect on diverse ways in which festivals in Europe, Russia and Latin America understand ethnographic film. The second subsection, "Case Studies", includes analyses of some of the oldest festivals specialising in ethnographic film, mostly taking place in Europe and the US. Contributors, including some of the founders of these events (who are also pioneers of contemporary Visual Anthropology), look at the past and future of ethnographic film exhibition.

The first subsection, "Curating Anthropology", opens with an updated version of Colette Piant's seminal work published in 2007. This piece can be considered as the first attempt to go beyond the classic festival review to a more inclusive overview of festivals and conferences of Visual Anthropology in Europe. This chapter evidences the academic nature of ethnographic film festivals, corroborated by the other contributions in this section. The chapter includes as an annex a record of a meeting between scholars and practitioners discussing the pertinence of awarding films and

appointing juries at ethnographic film festivals. The text, edited by Piault, was originally published in the CVA Newsletter in 1994. The original goal of vindicating Visual Anthropology as a subfield also explains the different traditions developed by these festivals in different geographical regions. The next chapter, by María Paz Peirano, looks at ethnographic and indigenous film festivals in Latin America, raising questions at the very heart of postcolonial debates in Visual Anthropology, particularly about the exhibition of films made by and about indigenous communities. Chapter 3, by Victoria Vasileva (Chistyakova) and Ekaterina Trushkina, looks at the Russian context, where folklore and musical traditions have shaped the understanding of ethnographic film. Carlo A. Cubero's chapter closes this section, opening up wider debates about film festivals' contribution to the definition of ethnographic film. Seen from the Baltic tradition of Northern European festivals, this chapter works as a bridge between this subsection and the next one. Cubero's piece deconstructs the process behind festival programming, and reflects on the active role of curators in the continuous (re)definition of Visual Anthropology.

The following subsection, devoted to case studies, looks at the history of some of the oldest leading ethnographic film festivals worldwide. In each case, the authors study the festival's origins, and outline and scrutinise shifts in its practices. From Italy to the US, from France to the Netherlands, festival founders and anthropologists look at films and filmmakers attending year after year, and reflect on how festival programming and organisation has contributed to defining festival identities. Following a chronological order, this section starts with a piece on the *Festival dei Popoli* in Florence (Italy) by festival programmer Vittorio Iervese. Using the map and the territory as metaphors, he analyses the role of the festival, created in 1959, as a mediator between documentary films and ethnography. The next chapter focuses on COVA, the Visual Anthropology conferences held at Temple University in Philadelphia (US) since 1968. Conference founder Jay Ruby recounts classic films and filmmakers attending this pioneering event. The Margaret Mead Film Festival, which has taken place in New York (US) since 1977, is the subject of the next chapter. Neta Alexander looks at past and future tendencies of the festival, from classic ethnographic works to contemporary video installations. This is followed by a chapter on the Nordic Anthropological Film Association (NAFA) film festival by Peter I. Crawford, longstanding member of the NAFA Board. The festival has taken place in different (mostly) Northern European countries since 1979, and Crawford focuses on its international networks of collaboration with other festivals and schools of Visual Anthropology. The next chapter, by

Nadine Wanono, recounts Jean Rouch's initiatives to exhibit and discuss ethnographic film in France. Through a review of the history of *Les Regards Comparés* (started in 1978) and *Le Bilan du Film Ethnographique* (1982), Wanono recalls the atmosphere of exchange and debate created at these Parisian encounters, in which she participated. Paul Henley writes the next chapter, about the Royal Anthropological Institute Film Festival, created in 1985. Including his personal memories as organiser and former director of the event, he retraces the origins of the festival and its relationship with institutions in the UK, and reflects on the challenges of using a definition of ethnographic film that can open the festival to a wide range of competing films. The next chapter offers a close look at the *Beeld voor Beeld* Festival, which has taken place in the Netherlands since 1990. The current festival director Eddy Appels analyses the festival's programming trends in the shadow of the Leiden and Amsterdam schools of Visual Anthropology, which present opposing ways of understanding the discipline. Finally, Beate Engelbrecht, the director of Göttingen International Ethnographic Film Festival, gives a general overview of the festival's operation. She reflects on how the German festival has had to adapt to various organisational changes since its inception in 1993, having to continuously negotiate its identity and purpose.

Part II, "Ethnographies of Film Festivals," takes the festival as the central object of anthropological analysis. Authors in this section adopt ethnography as a methodology that allows for unfolding social and cultural dynamics developed within film festivals. This section is prefaced by Aida Vallejo's brief introduction to anthropological concepts and ethnographic methods, mostly aimed at film festival scholars who are new to this discipline.

Chapter 13, by Lesley-Ann Dickson, reflects on some of the challenges and opportunities involved in collaborative research with film festivals. Through a study of the Glasgow International Film Festival, Dickson calls for a flexible position for ethnographers, who must shift between insider and outsider positions depending on the aspects of these events that they aim to analyse. In chapter 14, Aida Vallejo offers a multi-sited ethnography of the documentary film festival circuit in Europe, focusing on the social relationships established among professional filmmakers, programmers and industry representatives. While tracing these networks, Vallejo underlines the importance of reciprocity practices for film festival operation. Chapter 15, by Flora Lichaa, focuses on the Chinese independent film festival sphere. After identifying the main institutions and festivals that sustain this community, Lichaa reflects on the

relationships between the social ties that unite film practitioners and the political context that constrains—or even threatens—their practices. Finally, SED Mitchell looks at the internationally renowned Toronto International Film Festival. Focusing on the rather complex organisational structure of this large event, she studies the information management strategies developed by festival staff in order to control and improve channels of communication.

### **Conclusions: The Coming Together of Film Festivals and Anthropology**

Although trained in ethnographic methods to look at “other” cultural practices, anthropologists have rarely relied on their own research tools to look at their own practices of film exhibition. Similarly, film scholars have found difficulties in addressing contemporary social practices. Coming from a discipline where archival and textual analysis predominates, Film Studies is starting to discover the possibilities of ethnography to research contemporary film communities.<sup>8</sup> It is interesting to see how, in this book, many anthropologists focus on the past, adopting the position of film historians, while film scholars focus on the present, relying on fieldwork and participatory observation. We consider that this exchange helps to illuminate both Anthropology and Film Studies, and can offer an initial approach to the study of ethnographic film exhibition within its cultural and social contexts.

Taking into account the fundamental role of film festivals for contemporary cinema and “global” film cultures, we strongly believe that they would benefit from much more attention from anthropology, especially considering how much they resemble “classic” ethnographic sites: small and formed of an overlapping set of economic, social, political and symbolic elements. Each individual festival would be suitable for an ethnographic work in itself, given that each of them is to an extent a unique world with a specific history and challenges. An ethnographic approach is particularly suitable to observe the connections between the elements coming together in these spaces, and the complex interactions between different agents in the field. Moreover, further studies of festivals’ transnational connections and geopolitical implications would help us to understand not only their impact on peripheral cinemas but also the social

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<sup>8</sup> Seminal works, such as Powdermaker’s study of Hollywood society (1950), have for a long time been overlooked by film festival studies.