



The Art of Anthropology

Programme
Anthropological Association of Ireland
2011 Conference
2 & 3 September
School of Art & Design
University of Ulster, York Street, Belfast

the art of anthropology

Information

Conference registration is included with your up-to-date AAI membership.
Current membership rates are listed here:

Waged €30 per year (£20 sterling).

Membership for students/ retired is €15 per year (£10 sterling)

You may renew your membership on-site at the conference. For membership inquires, contact Jaime Rollins McColgan at casamccolgan@gmail.com

AAI would like to acknowledge the assistance of UU Cultural Development in securing the venue for this conference.

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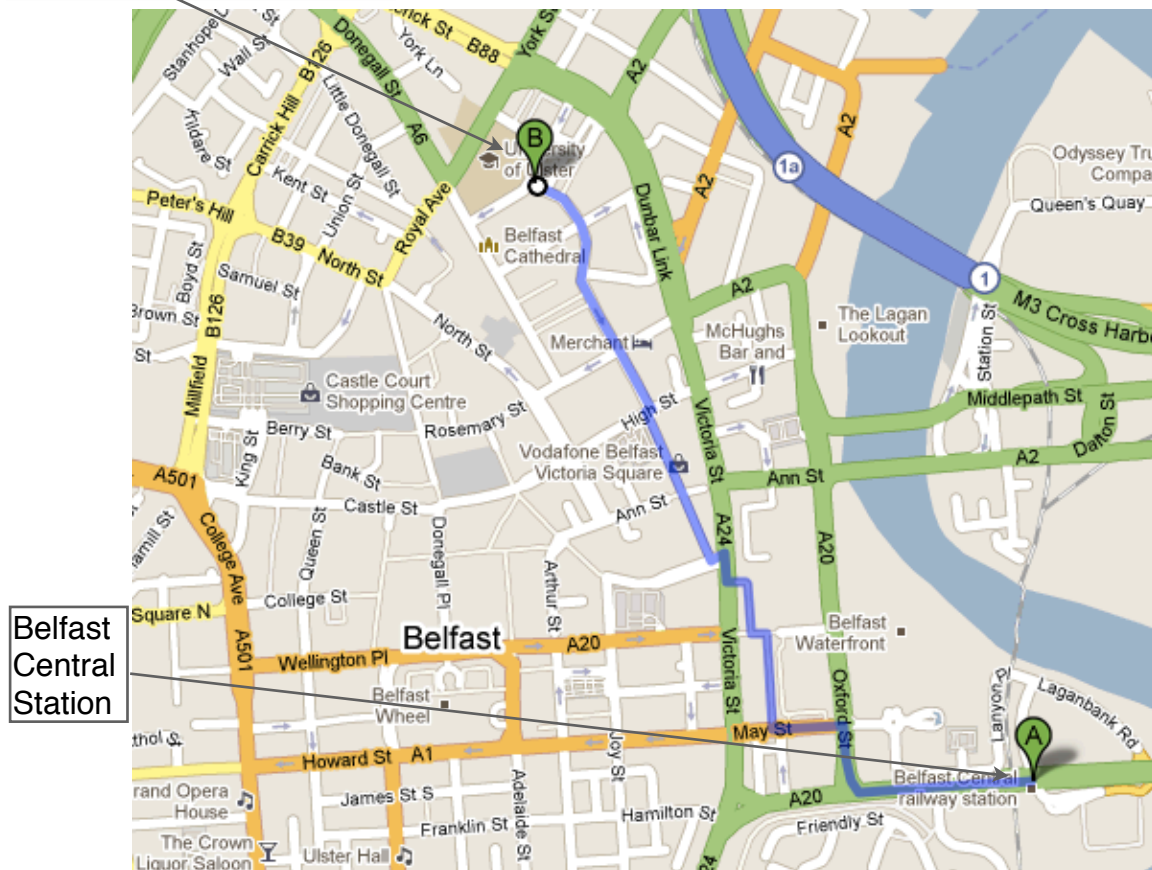
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For further information, please contact the conference host Terence Wright:

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University of Ulster,
School of Art and Design
York Street



7PM Conor Lecture Theatre (B level)

Keynote Lecture

Professor Sarah Pink (Loughborough University)

'The visual, the sensory and interdisciplinary anthropology'

9:30 TO 10:40 AM Parallel Sessions

A Conor Lecture Theatre (B level)

Rina Sherman (Independent Scholar, Paris) 'In the Eye of the Beholder: The Dweller's Gaze in Image Representation'

Vera Kaufmann (Institute of Social Anthropology, University of Bern, Switzerland) 'Parallels and triangles resulting in depth – an interactive-reflexive approach in Visual Anthropology'

Alexa Carenati (Independent Scholar, Rome) 'Temporary Collective Conscience: Could BPD Web Communities be Introducing Us to the Next Era?'

B 82D23 (D level)

Alex Paul O'Connell (NUI Maynooth) 'Female Bodies and the Politics of Representation'

Marcel Reyes-Cortez (Independent Scholar, London) 'Visual Research in the Cemeteries of Mexico City'

Rina Schiller (Queen's University, Belfast) 'Sizzling Sausages: Expressive Art and the Interconnection of Sense Perceptions'

Conor McKeown (St. Andrews University) "'The Creative Mechanic": The Japanese Video Game Okami and the Legacy of Print Art'

10:40 AM to 11:20 AM Coffee

11:20 AM TO 12.40 PM Parallel Sessions

C Conor Lecture Theatre (B level)

Sean Shanagher (Dublin City University) 'The art of recreational dance in north Roscommon'

Helena Wulff (Stockholm University) 'Writing the Senses: Style and Stories in Contemporary Irish Fiction'

April Mejia (California State University Northridge) 'The Role of Social Networking in Ethnographic Studies: How Fashion as Art spreads Globally'

Susanne Stich (University of Ulster, Belfast) 'Ethnographic "Exposures" and "Lightning Rods for Thought": Art-based Research into the Theme of Kindness'

D 82D23 (D level)

Amit Desai and Maruska Svasek (Queen's University Belfast) 'Copying in Kumbakonam: Creation, Imitation and Improvisation in a South Indian Context'

Pauline Garvey (NUI Maynooth) 'Per Albin Hanssen (Party Leader of the Social Democrats 1926-45) built Sweden and Ingvar Kamprad (Founder of IKEA) furnished It'

Ian Bamford (University of Ulster, Belfast) 'Distant Sketches of Suffering: The Visual Legacy of the Irish Famine'

1.10 PM TO 2.30 PM
Annual General Meeting, with lunch provided **Conor Lecture Theatre (B level)**

2.45 PM TO 4.30 PM Parallel Sessions

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| E Conor Lecture Theatre (B level) Rebekah McCabe (NUI Maynooth) 'Dangerous and Sensual Realms: Reworking Nature in East Belfast' | F 82D23 (D level) Adam Drazin (University College London) 'Design Artifacts in Digital Anthropology' |
| Jenny Russell (University of Ulster, Belfast) 'A Picture of Belfast: Children's Experience of Iconic Buildings in the City' | Anthony Kelly (NUI Maynooth) 'Paranoid Pedagogue, Demiurge, Demagogue: Visual Rhetorics and the Performance of Evidence in the Works of Glenn Beck' |
| Cahal McLaughlin and Jolene Mairs (University of Ulster, Coleraine) 'Prisons Memory Archive' | Gordon Ramsey (Queen's University Belfast) 'Blood and Thunder: The Aesthetics of Life in the Ethnography of Ulster Marching Bands' |

Poster
Victoria Walters (UWE Bristol) 'Working "in the Opposite Direction": Joseph Beuys in the Field'



Conference Abstracts

Ian Bamford

Distant Sketches of Suffering: The visual legacy of the Irish Famine

Whilst images of suffering have become a staple part of our daily media intake and a subject of much critical debate, little research has been done into the genesis of this imagery. The visual representation produced by the Illustrated London News, at the vanguard of the newly emergent Victorian illustrated mass-media, in response to the Irish Potato Famine (1845-50), the first large-scale humanitarian crisis reported in depth over a lengthy period of time in this period, was instrumental in establishing what media theorists regard as the formulaic representation of distant suffering still used by contemporary news media in the reporting of such events. Particular emphasis will be placed upon the reports and illustrations produced by James Mahony for his series Sketches in the West of Ireland (1847) which, this paper will argue, have helped to establish visual modes of representation that resonate within much of the photographic imagery still used to denote suffering and humanitarian catastrophe to this day.

Alexa Carenati

Temporary collective conscience: could BPD* web communities be introducing us to the next era?

Some say that, with the fall of postmodernism, we have moved from the 'narcissistic' society to a 'borderline' one. Borderlines on the web produce loads of inspiring images, texts and associations every day. Because they fear intimacy, they soon get familiar with all kinds of distance-based communication. Secrecy and anonymity protect them all the time. Misrepresentation is their nightmare. But the way they deal with it collectively on the web throws light on a particular function that human networks may carry out. New media enhance the processing of local information in a 'postmodern' way, but through 'modern' laws. IT principles are the same for everybody and yet they allow diversity management. People can share, people can be different and still coexist. It is called 'collective conscience': do human networks represent themselves (to the anthropologist)? But how can they, if they can't self-represent (yet)? ...

Amit Desai & Maruska Svasek

Copying in Kumbakonam: Creation, Imitation and Improvisation in a South Indian Context

This paper explores discourses, practices and embodied experiences of copying in and around Kumbakonam, a temple town in Tamil Nadu. How

do individual producers of artefacts in the region understand imitation? How do practices of imitation inform notions of subjectivity, and vice versa? To what extent is repetition an attempt to link up with the past? The various approaches to imitation in Kumbakonam will be analysed in conjunction with a consideration of a broader political economy of vision. Unveiling notions of 'creativity as innovation' as a Western modernist ideology and criticising the idea of creative production as the result of single authorship, the analysis zooms in on two main fields of cultural production. In the first, traditional sculptors called sthapatys working near Kumbakonam are engaged in the making of bronze statues for local and global markets of Hindu religious objects. Imitation is not only a method of learning skills and an important trope through which families emphasise their genealogical links to the past; it is also required practice that assures that bronze statues can transform into active mediators of the divine. The second field of cultural production, the world of contemporary art, includes the Art College in Kumbakonam. Students at this Art College learn to produce works for the 'contemporary Indian art' market, a complex and changing network of transit and transition that makes up local, national and global art worlds. Copying is a technique through which the students are expected to become artistically rooted in the environment of Kumbakonam, famous for its many Hindu temples. Reproducing religious scenes from the temple walls stimulates them to see through the eyes of their makers, understand their artistic choices and thus becoming intimately connected with and influenced by their ancient predecessors. The paper considers Vidyashankar Sthapathy, a retired Art College teacher and sculptor, and examines his notions of copying. Born into a family of sthapatys, he rejected what he saw as the lack of creativity in present-day religious icon production. In the late 1950s/early 1960s he received training at the Government Art College in Chennai, reinventing himself as a contemporary sculptor. His professional trajectory sheds a fascinating light on the wider cultural dynamics in art worlds that link Kumbakonam to artists and audiences in other parts of India and the world.

Adam Drazin

Digital Artefacts in Design Anthropology

This paper explores how different areas of design anthropology have deployed changing ideas of 'digital lifestyles' to give direction to design work. It also explores the ways in which design deploys digital things in the process of work, such as digital simulations of design possibilities. The art of the digital here forms a particular bridge to translate between field sites, clients and anthropological communities. The paper reflects on these

instances in particular design projects, specifically deploying flash simulations and video performance in community ethnographies, on projects which envisage social networking technologies as a possible design output. The intersection of digital forms, with a variety of material properties, to evoke other digital forms, offers scope to reflect critically on the audiences, temporalities and relationships involved in the anthropological process, and the 'crises of practice' which pervade design anthropology in particular.

Pauline Garvey

'Per Albin Hansson (party leader of the Social Democrats 1926-45) built Sweden and Ingvar Kamrad (founder of IKEA) furnished it'

The blurring of boundaries "between culture and politics and between cultural production and the market" (Klein 2006:74) is well documented. Within museum practice, it is now recognized that strict designation of the binary model between department store and museum is a product of the past (Cummings and Lewandowska 2004). Such encroachments are more typically illustrated as moving from the corporate world into museum practice - with some notable exceptions. In this paper I compare housing and folk exhibits with Ikea showrooms in Stockholm. I trace 'housing theatre' such as home exhibitions and folk-housing shows promoted during the development of the Swedish Model of the Social Democratic state (Habel 2010) and consider how the IKEA tableaux similarly promote a type of housing theatre. The equivalence of the visual and tactile; the creation of 'spatial effigies' (Sandberg 2003); and the animation of objects will be discussed.

Vera Kaufmann

Parallels and triangles resulting in depth – an interactive-reflexive approach in Visual Anthropology

Filming people and asking them questions, a classical way of doing Visual Anthropology, is still valuable but somewhat one-dimensional. In search for more depth and concerned with questions of ethnographic authority, I tried the following setting: After defining pairs of informants, featuring comparable concerns in different circumstances, I established a kind of dialogue within the pairs by showing them the other's portraits and interviews and giving them the occasion for feedback and finally an encounter. While observing this interactive process within the different pairs of informants, a reflexive and quite challenging dimension emerged: the dialogues of the different pairs pointed to diverse and partly unforeseen fields of theory. To some extent, those differences could be explained with the different circumstances

distinguishing the pairs of informants, but nevertheless this method challenges the research design and its underlying presuppositions and therefore gives the chance to get through to unexpected questions and results.

Anthony Kelly

Paranoid, Pedagogue, Demiurge, Demagogue: Blackboard Didactics, Visual Rhetorics, and the Performance of Evidence in the Works of Glenn Beck

Glenn Beck is constituted as the focal figure in an expanding and evolving media production enterprise entailing internet, television, radio, books, magazines, and speaking tours. Self-styled as the fusion of entertainment and enlightenment, Glenn Beck narrates a universe in which apocalypses political, social, and economic are foretold as a matter of course. As the bearer of untold and hidden eschatological truths, the very act of narration is posited as a threat to the speaker. In this revelation lies danger, and in this danger lies parrhesiastic virtue. Beck's fearless speech, i.e. parrhesia, is underscored by pedagogical and didactic metaphors, through these performing evidence of truths revealed, with recourse most notably to his blackboard. This paper seeks to offer an account of the relation between such visual rhetorical strategies and the poeticisation of proof in the works of Glenn Beck, specifically as this pertains to Beck's television show in its various guises.

Rebekah McCabe

Dangerous and Sensual Realms: Reworking Nature in East Belfast

This paper investigates the relationship between the communities of East Belfast and the river system around which their streets are built. The rivers Connswater, Knock and Loop have slipped out of local significance since the first half of the 20th century. They have recently, however, become the subjects of ambitious and extensive plans in the form of the Connswater Community Greenway. It is hoped that through the creation of a linear riverside park, the image of these rivers will be rehabilitated, local communities strengthened, and a positive image of East Belfast extended throughout the city. However, sections of the riverbank are already used as informal walkways. Despite being viewed as dangerous by many who live nearby, and eyed with caution and suspicion as sites of transgressive and inappropriate behaviour, a distinct path remains, cutting through the nettles and brambles, maintained by the peripatetic use of people who enjoy it as a shortcut, a place to bring their dogs, as a quiet and verdant place to walk. By combining techniques of video and audio recording that draw

influence from art practice with methods of enquiry rooted in the ethnographic tradition, this presentation will explore our sensual engagement with space, and the particular complexity of the idea of nature within the context of the urban.

Conor McKeown

'The Creative Mechanic': The Japanese Video Game Okami and the Legacy of Print Art

This paper presents a detailed analysis of the video game Okami and its spiritual sequel Okami-den, focusing on the aesthetic presence of sumi-e and ukiyo-e (traditional Japanese ink wash painting and block printing). The chosen visual style of these games can be seen as representative of an important Japanese engagement with traditional art. However, the presence of these styles may have more to do with new technology encouraging specific gameplay opportunities. Utilizing Linda Ehrlich's work on the presence of block printing in Japanese cinema, this paper presents Okami as a new incarnation of a traditional style which embraces the new while remembering the old. In contrast to this, by considering Miguel Sicart's work on "gameplay mechanics" (Sicart, 2008) Okami's style is illustrated as a product of the consoles it is played on. The paper concludes that new technology has not only encouraged gameplay innovation, but that the same technology can now also be seen as an integral part of the continuing life of traditional Japanese art.

Cahal McLaughlin & Jolene Mairs Prisons Memory Archive

The Prisons Memory Archive has recorded 175 interviews with ex-users of the political prisons during the Troubles in the North of Ireland. The Troubles is the commonly used name given to 30 years of political violence over the constitutional status of the north of Ireland. The Prisons played an iconic role during this period, influencing and in turn influenced by outside politics. They reached international attention with events such as the 1981 hunger strike in the Maze prison, Strip searching of female prisoners in Armagh Prison and the 1983 escape from the Maze, which was the largest in British penal history. As a result of the Belfast Agreement of 1998, political prisoners were released. The audio visual recordings, made at the site of the now disused prisons, included prison staff, prisoners, teachers, probation officers, and visitors. We will look at three main areas of the research. The first protocol is inclusivity, with as full a range as possible of participants. One of the aims of the project is to make available these memories in a public archive. One way of gauging a society's ability to move out of violence may be to monitor its

ability to listen to 'other' stories, the stories of those you have been 'at war' with. A second protocol is collaboration, where we underpin our commitment by agreeing co-ownership of the material with them. This allows participants to be authors of their own stories, an important part of any healing process for anyone who has undergone a traumatic experience. Having worked for fifteen years in broadcast television, I have experience of the industrial processes of asking people to sign away the rights to their story. Also, given the ongoing political sensitivities from our political conflict – including the contestation over whose stories are privileged - we were informed by several participants that they cooperated only on the basis that it was not intended for television and that they would have control over the materials use. A third protocol is to rely on the materiality of the site to stimulate memory telling. While we engage in conversation with them, it is primarily to seek clarification on something that they are already addressing. There is no list of set questions; instead we have taken the life story approach of oral history which for Lacey 'allows room for contradiction, a holistic richness, and complexity. It gives the opportunity to explore the relations between personal and collective experience, by focussing on remembering and forgetting as cultural processes'

April Mejia

Fashion and social media

Fashion as contemporary art has been, and continues to be, shaped by shifts in the global social economy. As a form of creativity and expression of self; fashion is best represented in new media forms. Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, has caused a change in how anthropologists conduct ethnographic research; bringing new meaning to the expression "a picture is worth a thousand words" in a world limited to 140 characters or less. In the technological world, we must also analyze people's online persona in order to get a full picture. We often say more on social media sites through updates and pictures than one can ever observe simply in person. Fashion expresses social, political, and economic ideas. Countries use fashion to export their distinct ideologies to the rest of the world. Anthropologists can no longer gain a complete picture of a culture through simple observation of practices.

Alex O'Connell

Female Bodies and the Politics of Representation

Attention is increasingly paid to the value of image and iconography in the 'Clash of Civilisations'. In India the Hindutva Movement - a collection of right-

wing nationalist groups with radical and violent tendencies – has become more vocal and belligerent on the issue of artistic representation of national icons such as ‘Mother India’, while in Europe the public display of women is increasingly politicised with increased calls for restrictions on Islamic headwear. While the Hindu-Right criticise and attack those who would expose the female body almost the opposite is seen among the ‘New-Right’ in Europe, who see too much modesty as a sign of refusal to integrate. Both use women’s bodies in a proprietary manner to establish values and sites of exclusion through emphasising the (a) sexual nature of these female bodies.

Gordon Ramsey

Blood and Thunder: The Aesthetics of Life in the Ethnography of Ulster Marching Bands

‘Art’ is a concept rooted in a particular (bourgeois) class in a particular (western) society, and as such, it carries a particular exclusivist ideological load. According to the composer Schoenberg, “if it is for all, it is not art, and if it is art, it is not for all”. This dominant conception of art poses particular problems for anthropologists studying the cultural creations of subordinated classes within western societies. The loyalist ‘blood & thunder’ flute bands of Northern Ireland embody a working-class tradition of participatory musicking which is frequently derided as being both disreputable and unmusical. An ethnographic account of such traditions requires a more perspicacious account of aesthetics than the fundamentally Kantian conception which dominates both academic and journalistic discourse in contemporary western societies. This paper will draw on theorists from anthropology, ethnomusicology, cognitive science and philosophy who suggest that emotions are embodied aesthetic judgements which are essential to all human understanding and action, and that aesthetics should therefore be conceptualised, not just as ‘art theory’, but ‘as the study of how humans make and experience meaning (Johnson 2007)’. Such a broader conception of aesthetics enables an understanding of subordinated cultural forms such as blood and thunder bands which avoids the ethnocentric judgements of Kantian aesthetics.

Marcel Reyes-Cortez

Visual research in the cemeteries of Mexico City

My practice based visual research project explores how through daily and yearly cycles, mourners and workers develop and maintain intricate rituals involving the dead buried in the cemeteries of Mexico City. The conjoined landscapes of the living and the dead are spaces of personal and collective grief, charged with emotions, loaded with ethical

and moral obstacles and obligations. In my project I set out to document meticulously through photographs as well as text the numerous ways in which the living and the dead remain connected over generations. Additionally, I explore the range of activities, labor and kills developed and performed by its gravediggers serving these intense, long-term relationships.

Jenny Russell

A Picture of Belfast: Children’s experience of iconic buildings in the city

To experience architecture and space by visual means is, in a sense, experiencing it in the third person; watching it on a screen. The experience of being within a space demands much more than a response to that which can be seen. Children in particular, learn by means of active participation and within that, the experiences offered by exploration and discovery of their built environment are important for them to obtain knowledge and understanding of it. (Sanoff, 2000, Brown and Campione, 1996) By the time they become adults, they have learnt to rely predominantly on their sense of sight. (Pallasmaa, 1996) Using drawing, observation and conversation techniques, this study investigated how children perceived and actively experienced five different public buildings and this paper aims to present their complete sensory experiences in concurrence with a visual journey through each. The use of buildings iconic to Belfast only heightens the distinction between sensory experience and visual meaning.

Rina Schiller

Sizzling Sausages: Expressive Art and the Interconnection of Sense Perceptions

In recent times – and not just within anthropological contexts – the argument has often been raised that in western societies ‘the visual’ is more and more dominating our perceptions. Certainly ample evidence can be found for increasing power of visual images on our perceptions, but this does not necessarily imply diminishing influences of other sense perceptions. The theme of the conference – and of this paper – directs attention to artistic expressions and our sense perceptions of these. My argument will be that the study of ‘art’ cannot meaningfully be restricted to one area of sense perceptions in isolation, that stimulation of our senses depends on intricate interrelations in different areas, that many artistic meanings could indeed not emerge without such interrelations, and that their potential to complement each other plays an essential role in creating culture-specific – as well as individual – meanings.

Sean Shanagher

The art of recreational dance in north Roscommon

This paper will explore the art of recreational dance as practiced by those attending events in north Roscommon during the 1940s and 1950s. Often represented as a period of austerity and insularity, it would seem that important shifts were nevertheless taking place in the lives of rural people at this time. House dances, hall dances, maypole dances and carnivals can be seen as sites for an embodied working through of gender, generational, national and class identities, as well as important loci for the pursuit of pleasure and the construction of style. The popularity of these kinesthetic arts are informed in complex ways by cinema, radio and newspaper reception of the time. Based on an ongoing ethnography involving interviews, newspaper analysis and census records, the paper will explore the structure of feeling of small farmers and related groups in mid-twentieth century rural Ireland, consider art/life distinctions and open up questions around the relations between kinesthetic and visual sensoria.

Rina Sherman

The Eye of the Beholder: The Dweller's Gaze in Image Representation

Old African Proverb: "Whites only see what they know. Those people came but they did not see us."

What is the discourse of the Dweller? What does he/she think? What is conveyed as he/she offers his/her gaze to the Eye of the Beholder? In this graphic composition, I will use photography, video and drawings to evoke the discourse of the gaze of the Ovahimba people with whom I lived for seven years, and whose cultural heritage I studied in photographs, film, video, drawings and text. I will explore how the Dweller's Gaze offered to or depicted by the Beholder has contributed to - and questioned the shaping of - my interpretation of Ovahimba culture. Notions of the Self in the construction of the Other will be examined in image (and sound) through the gaze of the Dwellers and their appropriation of my field research methods that lead them to participate to a degree at least in the construction of my point of view.

Through images, moving and still, showing the Dweller's gaze offered to or solicited by the professional visitor, I will show how the Dweller's gaze becomes an intrinsic component of the account and style of the Beholder's observation of difference.

In "Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object" (1983, pp.111-12), Johannes Fabian

writes: "When modern anthropology began to construct its Other...its intent was above all, but at least also, to construct ordered Space and Time - a cosmos - for Western society to inhabit, rather than 'understanding other cultures,' its ostensible vocation."

Columbus's brother burnt the Indians who had buried Christian effigies in their gardens to make them fertile. If the Indians understood the sacred status of these foreign objects, such could not be said of Columbus's brother. From a blank page of humanity until the 19th Century, Africa has since been inscribed by our borders and structures to a point where today it is possible to know almost instantaneously what is happening in the remotest corners of the Continent. One could argue that Modern Western identity was at least in part formed by its relation to the Dweller from Elsewhere, and today is still to a degree informed by its definition of this Other, albeit that the Other is now virtually and materially omnipresent and no longer a distant abstraction implying travel, adventure and passion to be observed in real time.

The photographic medium is not only about interpreting the otherness of the Dweller, it is also about an encounter and in certain cases a confrontation with the Beholder, which includes instances of self-othering, of becoming strange in one's own domain. Focus on the Other and or the Self as foreigner, reminds us that such discourse is often created by excluding the Dweller and by homogenising their differences. Taking into consideration the recent history of the Ovahimba and other Otjiherero Language Speaking Groups, and the post-Apartheid (Namibia) and post-conflict (Angola) context of their region, I will show how Dweller and Beholder participate and collaborate to create the "image" of the Other.

Susanne Stich

"Ethnographic 'Exposures'" & "Lightening Rods for Thought" –

Art-based Research into the Theme of Kindness

The paper discusses video and photographic art practice in progress dealing with the theme of kindness and its role in contemporary Western societies. Questioning the idea that "[k]indness – that is, the ability to bear the vulnerability of others, and therefore of oneself – has become a sign of weakness" (Adam Phillips), the project is inspired by perspectives from anthropology, cultural geography and psychoanalysis. It combines documentary footage of conversations with children and adults with other footage, for example of landscape and wildlife. Drawing on the methodologies of non-representational theory, e.g. the idea of "observant participation" as opposed to

“participant observation”, video and photography are used as tools for compiling “a portfolio of ethnographic ‘exposures’ that can act as lightening rods for thought” (J.D. Dewsbury). In the process, the theme of kindness is examined from multiple angles, highlighting both its ambiguity and importance by considering its visibilities.

Helena Wulff

Writing the senses: Style and Stories in Contemporary Irish Fiction

“Use your senses!” is a common call to students of creative writing. This is why an understanding of writing as process and form does benefit from attention to textual representation of the senses. Drawing on an anthropological study of contemporary Irish fiction writers as cultural translators and public intellectuals, this paper explores cases of the senses in recent novels and short stories by these writers. An Irish writing style could be identified in terms of rhythm and certain recurrent topics. By combining anthropologies of the senses and literature, the aim is to capture how the senses - sight, hearing, taste, smell, touch – have been used in Irish fiction, as a way to convey stories. Does the visual dominate over the other senses in textual representations as it tends to do elsewhere? And are the senses made to relate to each other?