

Visual Research Conference Presentation Abstracts-2023

9:45–10:25 **Rosemary Georgeson** (Coast-Salish / Sahtu Dene), **Jessica Hallenbeck** (Queen's U), and **Kate Hennessy** (Simon Fraser U)

Project Title: The Water We Call Home: Indigenous women's connections to fish, water, and family around the Salish Sea.

Abstract: Between 2020-2022, an advisory circle of six Indigenous matriarchs gathered on Galiano Island in British Columbia to re-presence connections to fish, water, and family around the Salish Sea. This work was witnessed by an extended group of family, friends, and people living and working on Galiano and documented in video, sound, and photography. This ongoing collaborative multimodal exhibition project shares these personal stories of loss, resistance, and reconnection, and the importance of holding onto those stories in the face of colonial fishing policies that continue to separate Indigenous peoples from fish and fishing.

The project and exhibition are the continuation of a lifetime of research by Coast Salish / Sahtu Dene artist Rosemary Carland emerges from her decade-long collaboration with Dr. Jessica Hallenbeck. This work has led to the recovery of the identities of Rosemary Georgeson's ancestral grandmothers and reconnection with their descendants around Galiano and across the Salish Sea. This project was further developed and co-curated for exhibitions in collaboration with Dr. Kate Hennessy, who grew up on Galiano Island.

In this presentation we (Georgeson, Hallenbeck, and Hennessy) discuss how collaborative media production was used as a method for decolonial curation. We present a series of works in sound, video, and photography, and documentation of two exhibitions that honour the stories of connection through water, fish, and family. We consider how multimodal and decolonial documentary and exhibition practices can support dynamics of re-presencing in relation to broader politics and critiques of reconciliation in Canada.

Link to project: <https://www.thewaterwecallhome.com/>

10:30-11:10 **Camilo Leon-Quijano** (Aix-Marseille U (IDEAS/ANFAA)).

Project title: *La Cité*.

Sarcelles is a city located 15km to the north of Paris. Symbol of French banlieues, Sarcelles is a heterotopia of modern French society. Laboratory of "vivre ensemble" (living together), Sarcelles represents both hope and despair of the urbanistic utopia of a post-war society. From 2015 to 2018, as part of my doctoral research (EHESS, 2020), I explored the social life in this marginalized city following a photo ethnography of ordinary experiences. I studied how the people of Sarcelles live and to which extent their everyday interactions socially define the image of the city. Based on a creative and multimodal photographic activity, I explored a variety of discourses and representations in this complex social space. Photographing was a way to capture the sensitive experiences of daily life through a poetic approach. This work examines how city

dwellers see, perceive themselves, and embody the city through an anthropology of and with pictures. Supported by Wenner Gren Foundation, I made an exhibition and a photobook. These objects encourage new creative photographic practices based on multimodal experimentations mixing sounds, videos, archives, and texts. La Cité shows to which extent photographic storytelling might expand anthropological knowledge and engage with new publics through sensorial and multimodal practices.

11:25-12:05 **Brandon Perdomo** (Columbia U) –

Project title: *testimonyofthebody*

Abstract: This work in Public & Oral History interviewing as a social practice provokes a reexamination and reclamation of narrative power, as well as interrogation of systems of assimilation.

This series focuses on interviews of three artists, their creative practices as informed by their lived experiences, and their time during the pandemic.

I will discuss the origins of this work, struggles along the way concerning the limitations of remote-based visual collaboration, the highlighted interviews, and development over the last few years.

This project was meant to be a salon-style exhibition, highlighting works discussed in their interviews. This was demanded a reimagining as a digital-style salon: as a website, and accompanying magazines in print, which by QR codes, link to the websites where each interview can be listened to.

To improvise a visual-anchor, I created images digitally composited by portraits of the narrators on the transcripts from our conversations. I led the narrators in an activity to shape their face or obscuring with an object, and make a selfie to engage in this process.

These narrators were chosen largely based on the social movements that were ongoing in the US, and considering my own identity as a Latino, with European, Sephardic, and Indigenous Mayan heritage - all which helped angle my positionality. I had turned to Latino, Middle-Eastern/West Asian, and African and Indigenous communities.

3-3:40 **Maria Fernanda Carrillo** (Universidad Autonoma de Mexico UNAM) -

Project Title: Reparation documentary as a process: archives and collaborative documentary at Bojaya, Colombia

Abstract: This research and film proposal, in stage of development, create a process that involve the reparation of the victims at Bojaya, Colombia. In 2002 a massacre occurred here, with the responsibility of legal and illegal arm actors. In this proposal I reflect on research, preservation and creation process with audiovisual archives, in order to build and activate memories in the context of transitional justice, through archival-scholarly collaboration.

Through a collaborative process from three years ago, I have been working with the “Committee

for the Rights of Bojayá Victims”. In this process I have recorded the institutional act or reparation at 2019, with the local and communitarian ritual of reparation for the direct victims of the massacre, following the afro-colombian funeral rites. Recently, I have been worked in a collaborative way with the communication committee of the organization. We have proposed a project about the audiovisual archives of the community, we had found exceptional memories and we are reflecting about them, in order to create one or some films for the "Memory Place" that the community asked to the State as a way of reparation. I would like to share some of these pieces in the conference.

All this happens, in the context where documentary has become a juridical way of reparation in Colombia, there are different films made by the State because sentences that demand to repair the victims through documentary. However, these productions seem assignment jobs very similar among them, they are made for a very small group of researches and filmmakers, with lack of participation from the communities. Therefore, I would like to propose a methodology to understand the reparation documentary as a process, focusing in audiovisual sovereignty, where the archives and the collaborative work are the keys to reach memories in order to establish cinematographic reparation strategies.

3:45-4:25 **Jennifer Su** (U of Toronto) -

Project Title: “Paid per view”: YouTube monetization as digital piecework in Vietnam and the Vietnamese diaspora

Abstract: The rise of the Internet and its subsequent transformations by social media and platform-based websites, and most recently the COVID-19 pandemic, have challenged anthropologists to broaden the scope of ethnography, unsettling previously fixed notions of field and method. While earlier digital ethnographies explored the virtualization of the self and their formation in online communities (Boellstorf 2008; Coleman 2014), more recent ethnographies of the digital concern the affective and economic lives of influencers, content creators, and livestreamers (Abidin 2018; Momin 2021). Less focus has been given to the role of viewers, whose mass consumption makes video creation profitable in the context of the “attention economy”. As Pedersen et al. (2021) have argued, an anthropological study of “attention” should consider it not as a measurable resource, but as both a “socially and materially mediated phenomenon”. Online videos are thus not only cultural artefacts that can be read as forms of cultural expression, but are products of the financialization of “attention”.

My presentation will consider this relationship between video and viewer, online and offline, through an essay film/web-based project currently in progress. “Paid per view” juxtaposes the YouTube videos my mom watches while working as a seamstress with footage of the stitch counter on her sewing machine, in order to draw parallels between piecework labour and YouTube vlogging. This project was developed through research-based artist residencies centred on the topics of digital media and platforms. The presentation will invite feedback and welcome a discussion on how anthropologists may think about the circulation of videos in everyday life, and the wider economic structures they are a part of in a rapidly changing technological landscape.

10:30-11:10 **Reese Muntean** (Simon Fraser U) -

Project Title: Photographic Explorations of the Multimodal

Abstract: The move towards multimodal anthropology is an evolution that came about due to the integration of media production and practices, collaborative research, and the dynamic role of anthropologists in both academia and in the communities with which they work. Yet multimodal anthropology inherits issues from the discipline of anthropology as a whole as well as from its connection to new technologies and the global capitalist system in which those technologies are produced. There are growing calls for a critical, self-reflective engagement with the practices and tools of anthropology today, and this project highlights a series of photographic explorations using research-creation as a method to advance an anthropology of the multimodal.

“Photographic Explorations of the Multimodal” examines how faculty members at Simon Fraser University decide on their technology purchases, what considerations are made for the end of life of the technology, and what technology remains when it is no longer in use. Institutional procurement processes and waste planning can encourage the shift towards sustainable practices by encouraging socially responsible and environmentally friendly technology options as well as supporting the proper disposal of digital devices. Yet digital technology purchased for research purposes often fall outside of traditional procurement processes, and researchers are left to their own devices in considering the extractive, imperialist, and neo-colonial practices of the life cycles of technology.

12-12:40 **Anuja Mukherjee** (CUNY Graduate Center) –

Project title: *Ghosts of the Future's Past : Documenting Photo Studios in Kolkata*

Abstract: This presentation will attempt to visually and theoretically map Photo Studio spaces in Kolkata, India. Photo Studio spaces have served as the location for bureaucratic and non-bureaucratic image-making for nearly 170 years. Before personal cameras, biometric imaging, and phone photography became accessible, Photo Studios were essential sites for creating any photographic document. There are layers of specters that embody the Photo Studio’s imminent obsolescence intertwined with its obviation of the same, in the rooms that are separated by function, equipment, the utility of the furniture, the photographs that adorn the walls, the commodities that the studio offers and, the rituals of exchange embedded in the space. Photo Studios embody and display the spirit of those photographed at the location and those at any moment about to be. It is an unexpectedly intimate space where the spirit of the past, present and future appear in the form of older photographic documents. Discussions around the studio always seem to circle back to the relative age of technology implemented and why its collage makes sense/ does not make sense. Photo Studios in India are increasingly merged into ‘xerox’ shops / ‘printing’ shops/stationery shops/cyber cafes to sustain their business in photography, one half of the shop remains dedicated as a demarcated ‘studio’. The front of the shop gets narrower or is rearranged by replacing older photo frames with printed t-shirts, and knickknacks. Large copy machines and small printers are planted tactically to have access from the computer. The ghosts in the Photo Studio space thrive on its duality of old and new. This presentation will work to illustrate that through photographs of the space while theoretically engaging with scholars that have written on the subject matter.

12:45-1:25 **Vineet Gairola** (Indian Institute of Technology, Hyderabad) –

Project title: *Worship in Transition: An Encounter with the Rājrajeshwarī Devī of the Garhwal Himalaya*

Abstract: The state of Uttarakhand in India is referred to as Dev Bhūmi (Land of the Gods) as it is home to several devī-devtās (local deities), sages, and rishis. During the times of Navrātri, the nine forms of the goddess Durgā are worshipped. It is also one of the times when various religious practices in conjunction with worship take place in the Garhwal Himalayan region. An older idol of the devī was replaced by a newer one during this time in the Rājrajeshwarī devī temple of Kandara village situated in the Rudraprayag district of the Garhwal Himalayas. The research question is to understand the dynamics of changing the idol marked by both-Vedic fire worship and possession. This study documents the visual forms of representation through the use of photographs and film that captures the essence of the worship of the Rājrajeshwarī devī. The findings in this research are based on ethnographic fieldwork in this region, which included participant observation, semi-structured interviews, extensive video recording, and photography. Rājrajeshwarī devī, through possessing her naur (representative/medium), engages with her devotees and 'remembers' their problems and conflicts, which she attempts to resolve if asked. Through these transactions, a strong intimate bond in everyday living is formed with a deity. This paper aims to provide a closer peek into the realm of lived practices and traditions from the Central Himalayas and to document such experiences, which often lie in the zone of orality. It is as much about contributing to the existing works on spiritual and cultural practices of the Himalayas as it is about visually catching a glimpse of the 'extraordinary' in between ordinary moments. This paper captures the essence of the worship of the Rājrajeshwarī devī which included the following elements: rhythmic music, establishing a new idol, doing a havan (fire worship), sacrifice, and possession.