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P15

[In-between fiction and non-fiction: reflections on the poetics of ethnography in film and literature](#)

Convenor:

Michelangelo Paganopoulos (Ton Duc Thang University, Vietnam)

Location:

Arts and Aesthetics Lecture Hall No. 102, SAA-I

Start time:

5 April, 2012 at 8:30 (UTC+0)

Session slots:

3

In-between fiction and non-fiction: reflections on the poetics of ethnography in film and literature. Panel **P15** at conference **ASA12: Arts and aesthetics in a globalising world.**

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Short Abstract:

This panel aims to take on the challenge of expanding the field of anthropology towards fictional novels and films, and the question to be raised is: if we accept ethnography as a semi-fictional genre, the ethnographer as an auteur, and the monograph as a chronotope, what can the anthropological thought gain by a turn towards fiction?

Long Abstract

In the past, the anthropology of art focused almost exclusively on collective works of traditional art, or on individual revisions of similar themes, traced back to the world of mythology and cosmology. In this sense, it distinguished between traditional (i.e. 'indigenous') works of art, from modern art, in terms of non-fiction and fiction respectively. Questions of authorship and modernity in anthropology challenged this distinction, highlighting a general affinity between ethnographic vision and fiction (Needham 1984, Clifford and Marcus 1986, Turner 1987, Clifford 1988, Deveraux and Hillman 1995, Barba

1995, Foster 1996, Sen 1996, Gell 1999, Thomas 2000 and 2003, Grimshaw 2001, Hart 2003, MacClancy 2003, Paganopoulos 2007). This affinal connection was further illustrated by ethnographic film-makers, such as Maya Deren, Jean Rouge, and Robert Gardner, who blurred experiential avant-garde aesthetics with 'scientific' principles of visual anthropology (Eaton 1979, Russell 1999, Barbash and Taylor 2007, Grimshaw and Ravetz 2009, Paganopoulos 2011). In respect to widening the scope of ethnographic theory, the papers proposed for this panel highlight the affinity between ethnography and fiction, in order to articulate an anthropological perspective towards fiction. Instead of avoiding the question of subjectivity, the panel will investigate the charismatic auteur as an ethnographer, a poet, a film-maker, a traveller, or simply a participant observer (a role often avoided to be acknowledged). By comparatively using illustrations taken from monographs and novels, documentaries and films from across the globe, the aim is to highlight some of the challenges raised in the path towards an anthropology of fiction, including questions of personal experience and aesthetics, participation and perception, illusion and disillusionment, as the subjective means for articulating a political vision towards a diverse world society.

Accepted papers:

[Robert Gardner's "Forrest of bliss". Potentials of ethnographic film beyond objectivism and deconstruction](#)

[Reflecting on poetics of ethnography in literature](#)

[Understanding Multinational Corporate Culture in India through Fiction: An Anthropological Study](#)

[The Construction of Disability in Popular Hindi Cinema: An Exploration of Select Films](#)

[Archiving a cultural idiom: film, fiction, biography, art and document](#)

[Tomás Gutiérrez Alea: Mapping the rise of subversive slave consciousnesses in his film *The last Supper* \(1976\)](#)

[The fiction of anthropology: content without audience](#)

[Fiction: a cultural mirror](#)

[The Changing World of Satyajit Ray: Anthropological Reflections on Authorship and History](#)