

An Interview with Glenn Bowman from the Visualising Ethnography website (http://www.lboro.ac.uk/departments/ss/visualising_ethnography/)

Interviewer: Stewart Coleman

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How did you first become interested in anthropology and, more specifically, how did you begin employing visual methods?

My undergraduate work was in literature; I did my first degree in English in the United States. I then went on to do a degree in folklore but that meant I was already quite caught up in issues that were anthropological. I think that what that was about was a certain kind of mixing of political radicalism with an interest in a range of literatures; I can remember, for instance, being particularly caught up in Soviet literature and various foreign literatures. I wanted both a larger context for understanding the literature I was reading, a socio-historical framework, but I also was interested in the multiplicity of cultures and the construction of different literatures according to different kinds of concerns. So it pushed me towards anthropology but I didn't feel comfortable going out of the literature degree into an anthropology degree, which was foolish because I could have. So I went into folklore instead and I found folklore both very interesting - because it got me into symbolic anthropology - but also very frustrating because the discipline was so desperate to constrain itself to a particular domain of what we call "folkloric". It had that anxiety of a small science of being very careful about its borders, therefore the kind of interdisciplinarity which precisely made it interesting for me was precisely what it structurally wanted to avoid.

I think that what actually got me particularly interested in issues of the visual was doing fieldwork; I was in Palestine between 1983 and 1985. When I went out to the field I took two cameras with me and I spent two years in the Jerusalem's Old City walking around with a pair of cameras around my neck. I would have black and white film in one and colour film in the other, and would be able to swap lenses between cameras. So I actually got into photography through the practice of catching images, which I enjoyed immensely, and I did come out of the field with some 3,000 plus photographs, most of which have sat uncategorized and uncatalogued in boxes, bleaching out their colours and slowly getting dustier.

Were you taking photos with and of your informants and their environments; were a lot of them tourist-type photographs?

It's difficult to answer that one. One talks about multi-site ethnography: ironically, I was doing single-site ethnography in that Jerusalem is a single site, but it's also a multiple site. I was studying the "construction" of Jerusalem through Christian pilgrimage practices¹. I was concerned with the various ways the different communities which sent pilgrims to the holy land imaged Jerusalem and its surroundings and the ways those images enabled and constrained relations with the sites and the peoples of the land. I was in large part working with Christian pilgrims and the resident members of their sects who dealt with their concerns and needs on the ground; twenty seven different churches send pilgrims to Jerusalem and the city was constantly constructed differently by the communities which moved through it in terms of what they visited, what they did in those places, how they responded to those places, what the liturgies and the sites that they involved themselves with were. At the same time I was in research related and everyday communication with the various indigenous communities, not only members of the numerous Palestinian Christian communities, but also, for instance, Messianic Jewish communities, Muslim and Jewish shopkeepers, etc. All of these groups construct the same place in their imaginations and their actions in very different ways. So ironically what I was doing was single site ethnography with multi-foci.

So this was being reflected in the types of images you were capturing?

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see Glenn Bowman. 1986. Unholy struggle on holy ground: conflict and its interpretation. *Anthropology Today* II: 4-7 and 1991. Christian ideology and the image of a holy land: the place of Jerusalem pilgrimage in the various Christianities. In *Contesting the Sacred: the Anthropology of Christian Pilgrimage*, ed. John Eade and Michael Sallnow, pp. 98-121. London: Routledge

I think so, because what I was trying to do was to put together a series of representations of, for instance, Ethiopian Orthodox pilgrimage, Syrian Orthodox pilgrimage, French Catholic pilgrimage, British Anglican pilgrimage, and so on. What that meant was that as I travelled with groups I would catch images of the trajectories that they marked through that territory, and I suppose that what I have is a series of variously constructed "Jeruselems" and "Holy Lands". I also of course have the whole phenomenon of living with the Palestinian community in the Old City and the way that community not only responded to the sites of its own city but also responded to the other communities - Israeli communities, foreign communities – moving through and impacting upon those places. I think what I didn't do was consciously sit down to think what I might do with the camera as a pragmatic way of collecting empirical data.

I'd like to go on now and discuss how your understanding of the potential of the visual in anthropology has developed since then. But can I begin by asking how much importance would you place on distinguishing between the different visual media, in particular still photography and video?

Well, I think there's a big divide between those who work with still photographs or those who work with moving images. I am dedicated to -- and sometimes I suspect incapable of extending beyond -- still photography. Although I've moved around with video cameras and have worked with people who use video I, in my own work, am very uncomfortable pointing a video camera at people and disappearing behind the machinery; I've found using a still camera to be much less intrusive in my fieldwork. I also find video almost gratuitous in the promiscuity of the way it collects images. Maybe it's simply the meanness or the anality of the still photographer in using that Brassai-like concept of catching the moment. To me it seems that with the video you're grabbing at everything that goes by. With the still camera it takes some work to ascertain what you want to photograph, but it also focuses your attention. I'm sure however that somebody working with video would reverse that argument and talk of the necessity of catching the continuity of processes. If you think, for instance, of the work of Gregory Bateson, Margaret Mead and others in Bali using still cameras, it is clear from the amount of film they shot that they felt the necessity of catching more almost than the cameras would allow them to grab. Nonetheless, their modes of presenting that work, and the elaborate processes of selection that Worth, for instance, describes Mead as having subsequently afflicted on that mass of images² suggests that 'catching the moment' also informed both their thinking and their editing. It's curious, thinking of the way captioning works in both the photographs in Bateson's *Naven* and Loring Danforth's *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece*³, to see that captions attempt - through the medium of text - to locate photographs within processes extending beyond the moment they freeze. I'd also draw attention to the way Timothy Asch's work – his move from the still photos of the Cape Breton project⁴ through the Yanamomo films to the play of motion and fixing in the multimedia version of the latter – suggests a curious dialectic of the still and moving image. Asch breaks up the continuity of the video into a series of frames by using digitisation, thereby 'stilling' the process of the video so he can go back and look at and dissect each moment in a way that I would suggest is effectively photographic. The way here and in other visual anthropological usage the still image strains towards the contextualisation of the moving image while the moving image attempts to bracket its significant moments with a stilling attention is significant of an inadequacy – a sensed incompleteness – in both modes of representation.

That said, I think there may be differences in how one sees; how one choses to collect things and images. I find

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Worth, Sol. 1981. "Margaret Mead and the Shift from 'Visual Anthropology' to the 'Anthropology of Visual Communication'" in *Studying Visual Communication*. (ed.) Larry Gross. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. pp. 185-199. p. 199.

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Bateson, Gregory. 1958. *Naven: A Survey of the Problems Suggested by a Composite Picture of the Culture of a New Guinea Tribe Drawn from Three Points of View*. Stanford: Stanford University Press and Danforth, Loring. 1982. *The Death Rituals of Rural Greece*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

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see Harper, Douglas (ed.) 1994. *Cape Breton 1952: The Photographic Vision of Timothy Asch*. Los Angeles: International Visual Sociology Association. This, published out of UCLA's visual anthropology programme, includes Asch's reflections on his photographic training and the first fieldwork he carried out in the early '50s. Asch of course goes on to be a major video maker, but trained with classical photographers such as Minor White and did all sorts of 8" x 10" large format camera work. *Cape Breton 1952* is an excellent book, fascinating for its account of engaging the field through the camera.

myself a still image person; others will differ.

From what you were saying, do I take it that you're the kind of photographer who tends to select your shots quite carefully rather than shooting off half a dozen frames at a time?

It is true that if you can get a bit more casual with how you're shooting you very often will not be so trapped in catching what you think you're looking for. You might catch what almost catches your attention, which might be something that turns out to be very useful, very important. The only time I shoot film really fast is when, for instance, I'm trying to stop soldiers from beating somebody up - I just stand there and make them know I'm taking a lot of photographs - or when I'm watching demonstrations or rituals where something is happening too fast for me to feel confident I can choose everything I need to record. When there's a process going on, I will shoot relatively profligately, and maybe that is the kind of situation when one wants a video camera. Most of the time, however, you're probably right; I tend not to shoot film very fast.

However, for the sake of argument, one could say that when you come back from the field with video footage you've got a lot more material there to work with, whereas with still photography you may have missed "the moment". What would you say are the advantages of still photography at the moment of analysis of the data collected?

I think we're thrown to some degree back to that debate between Mead and Hastrup⁵. I probably am somebody who gives a greater degree of precedence to the linguistic rendition of what's going on than I do the visual. I don't think the visual particularly speaks for itself; the visual speaks within a context. I do to a degree see - at least at the moment of presenting what I've done afterwards - the photograph as very much an illustrative aspect of a textual argument. One goes through a process of interpretation, of analysis, one presents that in a largely linguistic discourse and then, in a sense, one "staples" that with images that pin it down. You may, in other words, have 'missed the moment' with the camera, but that doesn't mean you can't indicate what was important, and might have called for a photograph, in a textual description. An image does not replace or substitute for the kind of analytical fieldwork which makes you recognise why it might be important.

To return to the question of text and image, I have trouble with the argument that one can simply watch a documentary film without any kind of explanation and get very much from it. I've been showing Rouché's *Sigui* films to students - they are long hand-held videos of ritual - and many students just get up after five minutes and leave. They are bored to tears. They're not getting anything from it; there isn't a text that gives a meaning to it and it therefore ends up being no more than a series of images. Once you get bored with the variation of images, you leave. I'm not in any sense denying that Rouché's straight ethnographic films aren't fascinating and invaluable, but they work through supporting a knowledge of what is going on. Without the scaffolding of such a knowledge, without an argument or analysis that knits together the skein of images, they tend to collapse into pure impression.

But - this is something that has come up subsequent to my initial fieldwork in my thinking about photographs - actually the way in which the photograph is very useful is in reflexive fieldwork, wherein one uses the photograph in returning to the people one has been photographing - the situations one has been photographing - and engaging a previous time with the present by using the images as prompts provoking discussion and debate and soliciting elaborations of what had been going on then and what is going on now. Possibly video might be useful also, except video is likely to catch people in a series of images and they are less likely to be able to break out and give a set of comments on it. My sense is more and more that the significant use of photography in ethnographic work is for eliciting information in the field rather than for subsequently illustrating textual renditions of the information gathered.

So you're talking there about going back with your photographs and speaking with your informants about the photographs and the events that they portray?

Yes, one can do it these days with digital cameras quite quickly. One can simply say, "I was at this demonstration or this incident yesterday (or even twenty minutes ago). What's going on here? Who's this? What's his or her relationship with these people?"

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See Mead, Margaret, 'Visual anthropology in a discipline of words' In Paul Hockings (ed) *Principles of visual anthropology*, Mouton, 1975. pp 3-12 and Hastrup, Kirsten, 'Anthropological visions: some notes on visual and textual authority' In Peter Crawford & David Turton (eds) *Film as Ethnography*, Manchester UP, 1992, pp 8-25

I've seen web sites – some of which were set up by David Zeitlyn and Michael Fisher on the ERA projects⁶ - where a photograph which has been digitalised and 'processed' enables you to pick out persons or objects or actions which interest you and to click on them so that commentaries or a set of further photographs with commentaries come up indicating who that person was, what his or her relationship is to others within and beyond the photograph, what that activity was, what's going on there. You look at the photograph as a whole and you think "who's that?" and click on the figure and the information gathered by the person who had taken (or researched) the photograph and contextualized it through field or library work would pop up, enabling you to query the scene, moving progressively into the photograph and the field of which it is a part. But that's simply an illustration which reflects, in reverse as it were, the process one could follow as a fieldworker oneself. Take a photograph, show it to somebody asking "who's this? tell me about this person? who's this person related to? what's the history here?" and so on. This unpacking process can be extremely useful in fieldwork, in part because it allows something we advocate strongly in our work – the insertion of the voice of the other into our studies of that other. I remember something I saw twenty-odd years ago about a film-maker in China who would make a film, bring the film back to people it represented and then film and record the process of showing it to the people. He would debate with the community what was going on in the film, and his miscomprehensions or disputes with the people would be laid out through the process of him doing this. It's a very nice way of engaging the image as an object. The photograph or film wouldn't be there as a metaphor for the social - which is what it tends to be when it is presented as an illustration in a book – but would instead be an object within the field which would be used to provoke further commentary.

Years ago I read Collier's first visual anthropology book; he subsequently did a rewriting of it with his son which brought video into it although I still think the first one is perfectly adequate⁷. It's a book I recommend students read because although you may end up rejecting a lot of what he says you also learn an awful lot about what ways a camera can be used in the field. And he demonstrates there quite convincingly that cameras used in the field can act as an eliciting tool, rather than being used representatively.

What is implicit in Collier's work but not drawn out deals with the potential reflexivity of still camera work; there's suggestions of how camera use can enable you not only to elicit information from informants but also from yourself. The actual temporality of the fieldworker's experience is a fascinating aspect of anthropological knowledge making which we can render through photography and note-taking. I advocate that a fieldworker - whether he or she is working at home or in a distant field – should keep compulsive photographic notes about the place that they are in. Take photographs, 'paste' them into a diary, write in your interpretations of what you think it is you are photographing, as fully as you can; What's this scene? What's going on? Who's involved in this? How does this make sense? Again, here the digital format would really help because the time lag between when you photograph something and when you interpret what it is you've photographed is radically reduced. To engage in that kind of surveying of the field and to keep track of it through maintaining both a visual record and a running commentary of your interpretations of the significance of those images enables you to record the process of 'coming into' the field. When you return to those notes at later stages in the fieldwork, and begin to add your observations of how your growing knowledge makes you see those images differently, you become conscious of the way in which your earlier interpretations break loose from the photographs, and other interpretations begin to replace them. The process of coming to know a place ethnographically – whether that place be 'at home' or in a distant field – is a process of defamiliarisation, of 'making strange'. What you think you know at first turns out (most of the time) to be wrong, but as your knowledge grows so too you tend to forget those earlier misperceptions. What this mode of recording enables access to is a series of - not just moments of **the** past but moments of **your** past as a fieldworker which, normally forgotten as you pass through things, here are recalled by the photographs themselves and the notes that remind you of what you thought they were of, of why you thought they were important to take. What this system of recall would give you is a sense the process of learning to be at home in the field which is itself not unlike the process of enculturation through which persons learn to be at home in a culture.

What I'm suggesting is that if you not only take photographs but also note what's in the photographs, what you will begin to realise is what you didn't see or what you missed in earlier stages of your work. I'm setting this up as a hypothetical thing; it's not something I've particularly done in my past work although, yes, my field dairies do have photographs built into them. I would think, however, that a much greater consciousness of the process of acculturation into the place where you're doing fieldwork is something that photography might help with. Go

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For more information about the ERA (Experience Rich Anthropology)Project, visit the ERA website at <http://www.era.anthropology.ac.uk/index.html>

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Collier, John. 1967. *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*. (Studies in Anthropological Method). New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston and Collier, John & Malcolm Collier. 1986. *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method*. Revised and Expanded. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.

back and look at, in a sense, your baby pictures of your early days in the field.

Can you see any pitfalls in such a methodology, particularly in the sense of depending too much on the visual? In what ways can you see that the process could become unravelled?

I'm not sure that the pitfall I would see here has to do with the visual *per se*; the pitfall I would envisage has to do with the narcissism that kind of reflexivity risks. There's a cartoon I've seen somewhere which shows an anthropologist talking to an informant in the field and saying, 'Well, that's enough about you, now let's talk about me'; this is so-called post-modern anthropology. I think the pitfall of that kind of reflexivity might be that one ends up writing a bad version of, say, Rabinow's *Reflections on Fieldwork in Morocco*⁸ (which I actually think is a good book), in which what one talks about - much more than of the people one is working with and the structures of the *habitus* through which they move and which moves them - is the self gazing at another lifeworld. I think the self moving into the world of his or her informants is an incredibly important process to record but I think the most important thing is the process of taking up agency within that other social structure. One has to deep-focus on the larger structure that one's moving into, rather than the narcissism of 'look at me - the anthropologist as hero'. I would contend that what good fieldwork does is dissolve and reconstitute subjectivity; it is that process of transformation we are hopefully looking at and recording, not that of the transcendent individual in his or her immutability gazing down on others.

I suppose another shortfall when working with the photographic is thinking that the photograph says more than it does. One of the points with Collier is that he was dyslexic and he contends that he was drawn to the visual because he had a hard time expressing himself through the textual. His books give the impression that the visual speaks for itself. I think the danger is that if you begin to foreground the photograph or the video too strongly, it begins to replace that density of experience that normally is related not simply through the spoken word or the image but through a combination of hearing, of speaking, of smelling which constitutes a much deeper experiential kind of space which the visual does not carry, but simply refers to. We sometimes tend to forget that the visual is just one of several senses that misses out, for instance, on the whole space of intuition and cognitive associations that our larger *sensorium* can work with.

I'd like to ask you now about the new MA programme in Visual Anthropology that is starting at the University of Kent. How do you expect the new MA programme to differ from others on offer in the UK?

In two ways: one, in attempting to widen the field of the visual; two in attempting to bring new technologies of visualisation into play. There are two things we are trying to do. One is to deal with issues about perception, epistemology, discourses of knowledge of the world and the relation of images to those and as part of them. I'm interested in a whole series of questions about how the visual functions as part of the social field, not simply as part of the processes of collecting information *about* the field. For example, the fieldwork that I'm working on at the moment has to do with the production and circulation of contemporary art in Yugoslavia, particularly in Belgrade. The teaching we do tries to make students aware of the various places of images in the social worlds we study and engage. We want not only to bring in the question of the place and working of the image in society but as well to develop theories of the visual's relation to knowledge. That, it seems, provides a counterpoint of sorts to the work that going on in Manchester where there's a very strong dedication to the production of discourse in visual media.

The other thing I think is very important in what we are doing at Kent is focussing quite strongly on a range of technologies of visual representation; one of these of course is video, and another photographic, but we want to integrate this work through examining the role that the digital can play in this. This entails not only working with digital cameras and digital video in the field, but perhaps more centrally examining the use of the digital as a means of rethinking the collection and presentation of anthropological material. In our undergraduate courses we've had students put together their visual projects on compact discs, so what they are doing is not only taking and developing photographs, shooting and editing videos, but also downloading those materials onto computers and integrating photographic information, video information, sound clips and the like into hypertext documents which draw together and amplify the potential of expression of all these media. In our postgraduate teaching we carry this further, attempting to articulate and elaborate new modes of gathering and showing anthropological knowledge using the potentials of the new technologies. We're using the experience that David Zeitlyn and Mike Fischer brought to the ERA project - which dealt with among other things training anthropologists how to keep their field notes on sites, how to use digital media to elicit further information, and how to set up hypertexts which enable increasingly deeper engagement with the ethnographic material - to train a new generation of anthropologists to think the visual as an anthropological project.

So we're looking more at a multi-media anthropology rather than just a visual anthropology?

Yes, if we expand the sense of multi-media to include the entire spectrum of means of linking the visual with the social in collecting, interpreting and presenting ethnographic knowledge.

Are the applications for the MA generally coming from people with a background in anthropology or with a visual background?

We're encouraging people to have a background in anthropology. The degree builds the visual anthropology units into a larger social anthropological framework, so we have four hours a week of dedicated work around visual anthropology linked to simultaneous coursework around contemporary issues in anthropology (two hours) and methodology (two hours). So students are building knowledge of visual anthropology but also further developing their knowledge of social anthropology more generally. This contact with the wider domain of anthropology is, however, on an advanced level, and would not, I suspect, serve someone coming in with no knowledge of anthropology as an introduction to the field and to the issues of the field picked up and developed in the visual anthropology degree. I think they might find it difficult but I also think we might find it difficult to be trying to teach them the A-B-Cs of anthropology at the same time as we are trying to teach them more advanced aspects of the discipline.

How do you rate digital technologies and how do you think they are going to affect the way visual ethnographers work, or are doing already?

There are real problems with analogue film, particularly if you begin to talk about using the camera very actively in the field as a mode of gathering information. Generally if you shoot a roll of film in the field you have to find somewhere to get it developed and printed. I don't think anybody develops their stuff in the field anymore; you could do it, you could develop black and white film in the field but it's, I suspect, more trouble than it's worth. In all the places I've worked, and I suspect in most of the sites anthropologists work today, there's always a photo-developing shop close to hand. However, there's always a delay, and there's always the problem of film being mishandled or lost in processing.

The one big advantage of digital work is that you can get your images back immediately, and, as I've indicated above, begin collecting responses – others' and your own – to those images while the incidents portrayed are still vividly in mind.

As long, of course, as you have your laptop and enough disc space to keep downloading your images; I don't think that there are many cameras at the moment that can store more than about 30 images at a half-decent resolution.

That's right, so you need to carry not only a computer but also a renewable power supply, etcetera... maybe even a printer so you can give friends and informants their own copies of images. That's a lot of gear. On the other hand the work of imaging has always been difficult for ethnographers and travellers. Think of the mid to late nineteenth century photographers travelling out to the Holy Land, for instance, with mules loaded with gear for developing their photographs on site. There's subsequent record in ethnographies of the travails of developing 35 mm film in the field. I suppose we have to recognize that hauling stuff around has always been and will always be a pain, but we also have to see the advantages of what we gain from the pain, and keep in mind how much better the images and informations we now collect through those efforts are than what people were able to glean in the past.

Presumably though you would advise students to be familiar with both analogue and digital technologies.

What we're doing in both the undergraduate and postgraduate visual anthropology courses is taking students through the whole range of image production technology. I deal with the photographic side of this and I want students to be able to expose, develop, and print their own film. Now in part that's because I want them to know the materiality of the film process; I want them to think about what it means to use the camera. In both courses students have training on manual 35 mm. cameras (although on the post-graduate course they also are given digital cameras to work with) and learn about f-stops, film speed, lenses etc. This is invaluable in that it lets students know that images are constructions – are made, not born. If you know how to use and think depth of field you know that it's possible to foreground certain elements of a photograph and mute others; if you don't know these sorts of techniques you are stuck with what the presets of a camera give you. The darkroom work is perhaps harder to justify. It does perhaps seem gratuitous to give students training in a technology which is increasingly falling out of popular use and becoming the domain of the fine artist. I've certainly had people – oddly enough not my students - query me on my commitment to teaching it. I'm not sure how strongly I can make the argument for it, except to say that students who do do darkroom work absolutely fall in love with it;

they really enjoy it and really get caught in that magic, that frisson, of watching an image floating up out of the water. The other virtue of it of course is that almost all of the digital manipulation systems that are of any value, particularly Adobe Photoshop, are totally based on photographic darkroom techniques. So in a sense if you know the photographic darkroom techniques you know better what you are doing when you are mimicking them in terms of the front of the Adobe Photoshop system. Students are of course also taught Adobe and other digital processes, so when they finish they know a range of ways of producing the artefacts they want to end up with. Showing students that there are a number of ways of getting to where they want to be gives them, I think, the confidence to set out on their own.

What is the future of visual anthropology?

One of the things I've been doing of late is going back and reading people like Marcel Mauss and Michel Leiris and realising the radicalness of some early visions. I'm saying this as a prologue to a statement that sounds conservative, but which I think is actually fairly radical. I think the future of anthropology is in increasingly detailed empirical fieldwork. By that I mean a closer and closer engagement with precise aspects of my encounter as a fieldworker with the people with whom I speak and engage in the field. I not only want to try to get as much of the voice and presence of the "other" into my notes and analysis, but also want to recover as much as possible of my own experience of identifying with and engaging in the persons and events encountered in the field. I wrote an article a few years ago called "Radical Empiricism" - the term is taken from Henry James - in which I argued that we have to move beyond the kind of fieldwork in which we assume that the fieldworker is an eye that floats separate from the peoples and objects that he or she observes towards an awareness of ourselves as constituting the field through our observations and interpretations of it at the same time as we as subjects are ourselves reconstituted through the process of engaging in and with the field⁹. Fieldwork involves our engagement as adults with what Mauss, observing the enculturation of children, termed 'prestigious imitation'¹⁰. It is our taking the other into ourselves through such imitation which characterizes our engagement with the field and with the others in the field, and what I suggested above in talking of using photographs as means of tracing the ways we change in the course of doing fieldwork is the kind of study of ourselves becoming other which I think offers us a real access to the *habitus* we hope to relay in our subsequent representations. If ethnography is anything then it's our attention to our close and transformative interactions with people in social contexts. Visual anthropology can contribute to that in precisely the way it enables more of an exchange, more of a dialogue, between the anthropologist and the people he or she engages and contributes to sharpening the anthropologist's self-awareness as he or she engages with the field and engages with his or her expectations and frustrations in the field. So yes, I think that the camera and the other visual techniques we have for expanding our awareness of the complexities we encounter will allow us to know more about the field and ourselves in the field. This is not to say that we will gather the truth about the others or about ourselves, but the complexities of events will become more and more visible to us - and I think the metaphor 'visible' suggests that I think that visual anthropology has something very strong to do with that.

And perhaps we could just finish with a few practical tips for somebody who might be about to set up a visual project?

You can take a fancy multiple-everything-type camera, possibly a digital, to the field, but you should also go out

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Bowman, Glenn. 1998. "Radical Empiricism: Anthropological Fieldwork after Psychoanalysis and the *Année Sociologique*", *Anthropological Journal on European Cultures* (special issue: Reflecting Cultural Practice: The Challenge of Fieldwork). VI: 2. pp. 79-107. This article can be found at the following URL: <http://www.ukc.ac.uk/anthropology/staff/glenn/Radical.html>.

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"What takes place is a prestigious imitation. The child, the adult, imitates actions which have succeeded and which he has seen successfully performed by people in whom he has confidence and who have authority over him. The action is imposed from without, from above, even if it is an exclusively biological action involving his body. The individual borrows the series of movements which constitute it from the action executed in front of him or with him by others. It is precisely this notion of the prestige of the person who performs the ordered, authorized, tested action vis-à-vis the imitating individual that contains all the social element" (Mauss, Marcel. 1979. "Body Techniques" in *Sociology and Psychology: Essays*. (trans.) Ben Brewster. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. pp. 95-123. p. 100-101).

and spend fifty quid to pick up a nice old Pentax or any of a range of other manual cameras with a built in light meter, a minimum of moving parts, and a 50mm lens. You need – whether as a backup or a primary camera – something that's going to be reliable. This is why so many in the past used Leicas; you could drop them from aeroplanes and they would still work. Learn how to use the camera; familiarize yourself with apertures and speeds, learn to manipulate depth of field, shoot several rolls of film before going out to make sure it works and you know how to work it. That's practical stuff.

Carry your camera with you a lot. In other words, get people used to thinking you're the geek who has the camera. You want people to see you as somebody who is always taking photographs; you don't want people suddenly freezing up because you show up with a camera one day. The nice thing about a stills camera is that you can throw it up in front of your face, take a picture quickly and take it down again (in fact, if you're good you can take a photo without even having to look at your light meter). I'm not talking about taking sneaky photographs but about not paralysing a series of social interactions by suddenly and unexpectedly being there with a lens in front of your face. The problem with using a video camera is that once you're behind a camera you're in one sense no longer there and in another sense all too much present and intimidating.

Keep a good diary of what you're doing, what kind of photographs you're taking, why you think the photographs you took were worth taking, what you think is going on in them. You can take that kind of note without necessarily having a photograph in front of you to refer to; keep a pocket-notebook of what you're shooting, where you're shooting, who's in it, etcetera. Refer back to and assess those photographs, and your notes on them, frequently, supplementing what you wrote down in the first place with subsequent, oftentimes corrective, commentary.

I'll talk a bit about categorisation, about what you do with storing photos. The nice thing about being able to digitalise photographs is that instead of having to cut up your negatives or making multiple prints, you can scan your photographs – or simply download them from the digital camera – and store them – or the primary digital files – in a sequence indicating when they were shot (bracketed by the other images which were taken before and after them), while at the same time keeping copies (or thumbnails) of each of those photographs in various places according to other classifications. This way you've got images cited in sequences organized in a multitude of different ways – who is in them, what sort of event is occurring, where the photograph was taken, etc. – but you can always find your way back to the originals.

Think about how you want to use the visual; that's probably the main thing. When last year's undergraduate visual anthropology students 'wrote up' their final projects, I insisted that a substantial part of their presentations had to deal with the following: how had the visual character of the assignment contributed to their decisions about what of field to choose to study and what kind of information they set out to find in it? how did the images they took change and direct the way they thought about the topics they were examining in the course of the field research? how did the images they gathered contribute to the conclusions to which they eventually came about what they'd examined? Similarly I'd advise a person planning field research to think about the role to be played by collecting images in getting to know the field: what are you doing with the camera? why are you using a camera? is it just there for snapshots? is there something more you can do with it? Realise that it's not just a simple recording device but is something that affects the kind of knowledge you can gain. Think about that methodologically, plan around using it. It can give you a lot, but you have to think about it.

I think – to go back to what we said at the beginning of this interview – that a lot of what I know now about how I use the camera is based on things I didn't do when I was using the camera in the field. Not that I'm unhappy about what I did; if nothing else I fell in love with taking photographs and that was and remains a great pleasure.