

# **Visual Anthropology**

## **Session 1: Introduction**

### **Preamble: Interest in Visual Anthropology**

→ anthropology, cultural difference, exoticism, negative reinforcements

### **What Is Visual Anthropology? What Has It Been?**

- (1) **visuality of anthropology: body painting, dress, gestures, photographic records, paintings, sketches, wood cuts, even post cards.**
- (2) **late 1960s—1970s, “visual anthropology”:  
Program in Ethnographic Film, Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communication (SAVICOM), Society for Visual Anthropology (USA).  
Manchester, Granada (UK)**
- (3) **problems of self-definition; origins and developments with people, institutions and developments outside of anthropology**
  - “seeing culture”
  - privileging the visual
  - visuality in Western speech practices
- (4) **Science & Fiction**

Positivism: actually observed facts, physical and objective records.

Challenging the neutral authority of the image:  
*authored creations*, necessarily incomplete, selective and partial → fiction

## What are the “Contents” of Visual Anthropology?

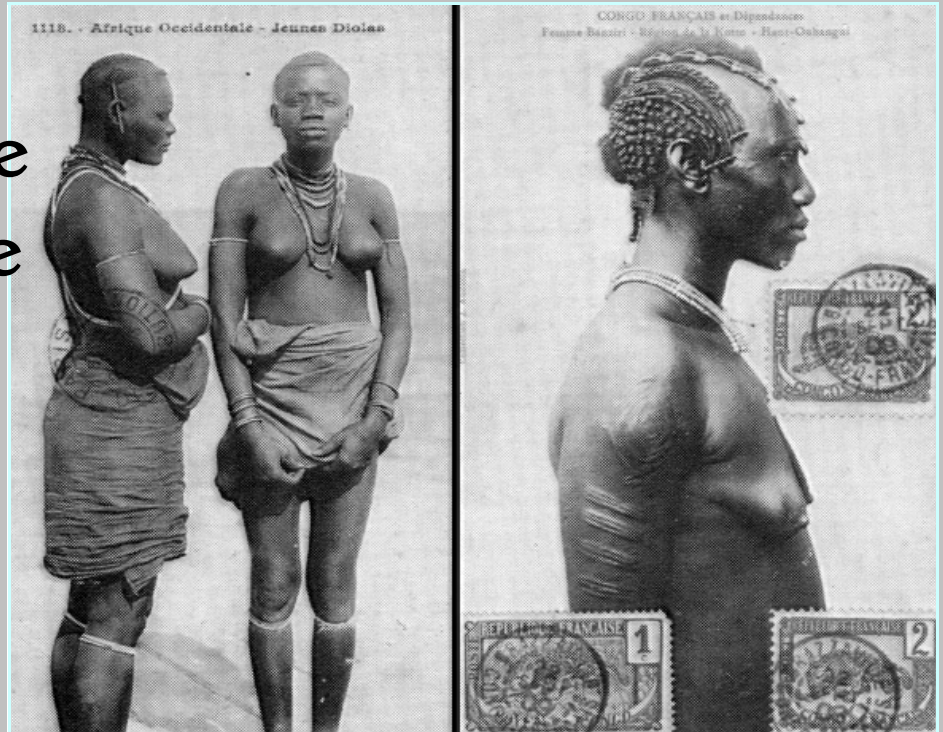
- dominance of ethnographic photography and film
- ethnographic photography since the 1890s, role in fieldwork
- ethnographic films—problem: which ones are the ethnographic ones?

## Debates within Visual Anthropology

- **Overview**
- **Realism, Positivism**—to what extent is a film’s depiction of another culture accurate? How has the filmmaker altered or edited the content and sequencing of the footage?
- **Indigenous meanings**
- **Science or Art?** – images are “data,” anthropology is (was) a word-driven discipline that sees (saw) itself as a science
- **Still versus Moving Images**
- **Words versus Images**
- **Visuality and its virtues** – getting to know one’s culture, or another culture, is a multi-sensory experience

# Colonialism and Exhibited Others:

## Difference as Spectacle and Science

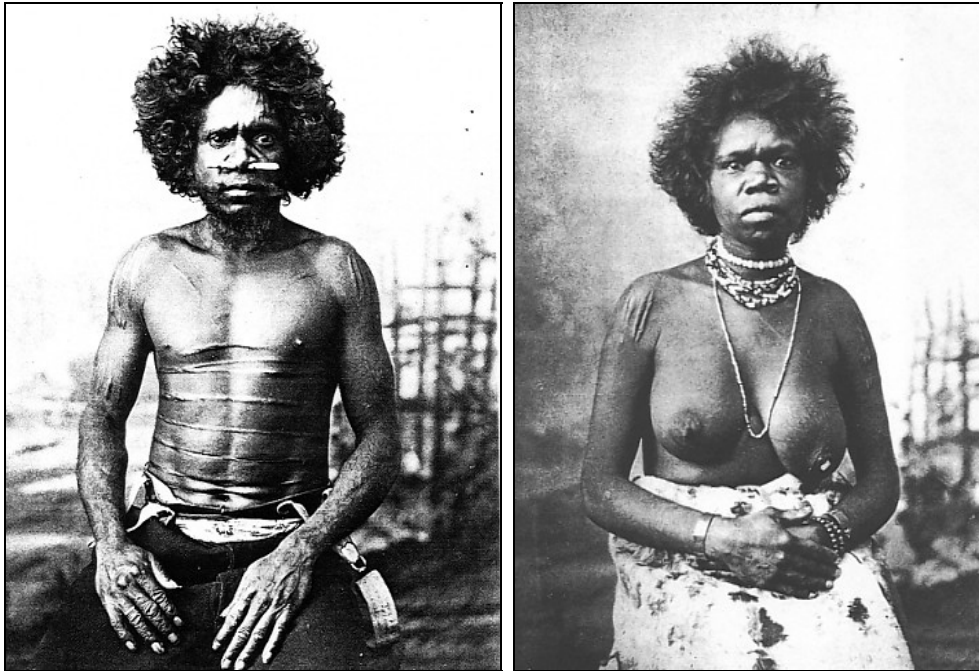


### Overview

- transition from bringing “natives” from colonies to Europe and North America, exhibited at world fairs, to...
- imaginatively bringing Europeans and North Americans to the colonies via photography...
- anthropologist acting as an *intermediary*

- (a) the interrelationships between colonialism and exhibitionism
- (b) how ethnographic exhibits were designed, orchestrated and narrated by ideas of **exoticism**, **scientific racism**, and **social Darwinism**
- (c) the relationships between exhibitionism, the roots of early anthropology, and the emergence of ethnographic photography

## Colonialism and Voyeurism



An 1884 exhibit of Australian Aboriginals in England

- production of images of the exotic
- justice of the imperial division of the world
- those who organized, rationalized and surveyed vs. those who were the subjects of this surveillance, those who were surveyed and mapped out
- Voyeurism

FIRST INTRODUCTION IN ENGLAND OF THE BAND OF  
SEVEN AUSTRALIAN  
**BOOMERANG THROWERS.**

CONSISTING OF MALE AND FEMALE

QUEENSLAND BLACK TRACKERS  
AND  
**RANTING MAN EATERS!**

THE  
**CELEBRATED BUSHMEN**

*From the Continent on the other side.*

The only captive band of these ferocious, treacherous, uncivilized savages, with deep scars and seams in the red flesh, and bones and huge rings thrust through nose and ears as ornaments.

**VERITABLE BLOOD-THIRSTY BEASTS**

IN DISTORTED HUMAN FORM.

WITH BUT A GLIMMERING OF REASON & GIFT OF SPEECH.

They will be introduced in their

**PEACE, WAR, KANGAROO, EMU, & COCKATOO DANCES,**

**THEIR MIDNIGHT CORROBERIES,**

**CASTING OF THE SPEAR,**

AND

**WHIRLING OF THE BOOMERANG**

Worth journeying a hundred miles to see these specimens of the

**LOWEST ORDER OF MAN.**



# Sara Baartman: Extreme Spectating of the Colonial Era

