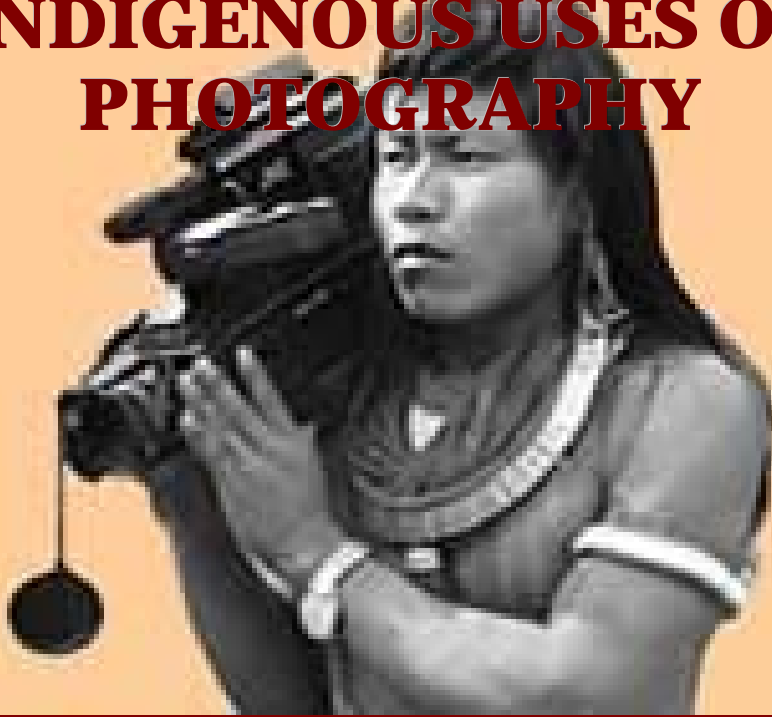


**Session 6**

**INDIGENOUS USES OF  
PHOTOGRAPHY**



Edmund Carpenter, *Oh! What a Blow that Phantom Gave Me: "Love Thy Label as Thyself"* <http://mediatedcultures.net/phantom/ltlat.html>

(Full transcript of the film, *Oh! What a Blow that Phantom Gave Me: http://users.design.ucla.edu/%7Ejbishop/articles/owb.pdf*)

(Peruse: VIRTUAL SNOW  
<http://mediatedcultures.net/phantom/index.htm>)

## **A Debate: Visual Imperialism versus Indigenous Adaptations**

- (1) Western, rationalist, individualist, and linear-minded--subordinating or erasing other ways of seeing the world--Carpenter
- (2) integrated, reworked and shaped according to local indigenous cultural patterns--Sprague, Buckley and MacDougall

## **Edmund Carpenter: "The Tribal Terror of Self-Awareness"**

- Edmund Carpenter, *Oh! What a Blow that Phantom Gave Me*, 1972
- corrosive power of Western media
- technological determinism
- "medium is the message," Marshall McLuhan
- dissociation, detachment
- we wear our media, and assume the role of our costume
- we become our media, enveloped by them
- self-recognition leads to dissociation, alienation
- Universality? Cultural evolutionism?

## **Indigenous Codings**

- MacDougall, Indian photo portraits follow set formulas, popular Indian iconography
- “adding something, or at least revealing the person in a further aspect”
- “positively life-enhancing, realizing for people the possible dimensions of themselves”
  
- Yoruba of Nigeria, Sprague: photography integrated into both traditional and contemporary aspects of Yoruba culture
  
- photography allows one to double one’s self: Buckley, Gambian case study
- “There's nothing magical about it. It's simply shadows and light... That's the point. It it's not magic”

“the sound of a camera shutter making its slice sounds more like the snip of scissors, cutting out people, clarifying their edges, and making them cutting edge. Cameras, in The Gambia, are scissors for seeing”