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Polyvocalities

Darcie DeAngelo & Lee Douglas

Multiple voices vie for our attention these days. Holding space for the push and pull of obligations, injustices, and desires, we have ceded part of our editorial platform to multiple contributors whose words and images included in this issue focus on the visualities of time, vocality, and power.

Our colleague and friend, Alonso Gamarra, who has served as VAR's editorial assistant since 2021, is a writer and ethnographer conducting fieldwork in Peru. Given the severity of recent events—including, the rise of an increasingly authoritarian regime, violent repression of collective protests, and collective calls for a plurinational constituent process—we asked our colleague to prepare a guest editorial introduction that would introduce readers to the complexity of these incidents. Writing about local protests from and across geographies of distance, his text asks: “What does it mean to inhabit the time of the now *now*? In what ways can we do that together?” As the protests reach inflection points, he depicts the grief he shares with friends and interlocutors responding to police violence exerted toward protesters. These reflections, paired with Peruvian photographer Luis Javier Maguiña's archival images of the state's extralegal violence, make visible and palpable events that, while contemporary and emergent, are haunted by Peru's long history of violence. Despite the slow temporalities of academic publishing, we sought to give Alonso a space to describe publicly and make evident the timelessness and timeliness of this grief.

In the research article that follows the guest editorial introduction, Chris Pinney attends to archives and their temporalities to discuss “What time is the visual?” in an exploration of the theoretical possibilities of photography, especially family photography. He prophesizes “anterior futures” by drawing from Roland Barthes' ideas regarding how photography (re)presents potentialities. He portrays images from studio photography and photographic paraphernalia in South India and Nepal where wondrous images in collage forms—a trio of men staring from an old-fashioned cartoon plane in sepia tones; a full-color youth captured in various confident poses before a cut-together metropolis and Emirates plane—portray the imaginaries of speculative imagination in a space characterized by harsh realities.

In “Seeing Gaslighting,” Elizabeth Drexler's collaborations with students at a midwestern university also arrive at speculative, polyvocal photography to see and illustrate the systemic racial injustice that has become obscured by feel-good post-George Floyd protests. The research article describes how workshop participants co-produce speculative images that reveal how students of color feel gaslit by the political satisfaction with virtue signaling. They also include images of structural violence that record, as Maguiña's images do in the Peruvian context, how oppression becomes tolerated by the majority through a dehumanization of marginalized groups. Ikaika Ramones appears twice in this issue, first with a research article he developed as a Society of Visual Anthropology essay winner. In “Endurance of Difference,” he writes about time Indigenous understandings of relationality in Hawai'i.” Specifically, Ramones describes counterhegemonic resistance to liberal settler colonial time via what he describes as “*genealogical being*,” a relationality between person and world where space and time resist linearity. Temporal mismatches, like the polyvocal collages from Drexler's research article, open

up spaces for resistance against settler colonialism. Ramones explores that resistance through the work of Native Hawai'ian mediamakers who trace and claim genealogies through their films that document political movements against industries that destroy reef life and the construction of highways over Native burial grounds. Social movements and Hawai'ian New Wave cinema entangle in these descriptions, allowing for filmmakers to portray an ethics of *kuleana*, what they define as rights and responsibilities tying up the self, the so-called environment, and the web of other relations that is genealogical being.

In our Page Feature, “That Interim Period: England's Agricultural Transition,” Jose Luis Fajardo-Escoffie presents a series of images to document a period of strange transition for England's farmers who are also vulnerable to the forces of capitalism and empire. Their identities, they say, are under attack, as English policies alter under the impact of Brexit. Global timelines become part of these changes, integrating and emphasizing urgency, as agricultural policies respond to the catastrophes of climate change. Here, portraits of farmers, their land, and places of work speak to the feelings of uncertainty they profess by allowing them to lead with their gaze, as Fajardo-Escoffie writes, “to generate an uncertain feeling in the viewer who may wonder...” Photographs here do not clarify or document. Like the photographs throughout this issue, they enhance questions, trouble presumed realities, and undermine mainstream narratives.

This issue's Dialogue between Indigenous filmmaker-anthropologists Teresa Montoya (Diné), Angelo Baca (Diné/Hopi), Ikaika Ramones (Kanaka 'Ōiwi), and Teresa Martínez-Chavez (Zapotec) also unpacks how visual media can be site for speaking resistance to power. It does so by plotting a variety of ethical protocols and modes of decision-making that emerge through the production of documentary films made with and within Indigenous communities. Drawing on a conversation held during the 2021 RAI Film Festival and Conference, the Dialogue explores a politics of refusal, where the rejection of certain media conventions such as digital distribution, can situate Indigenous media practices in relationship to broader anticolonial frameworks and forms of knowledge production. Similarly, Michelle Hurtubise's Critique tracks the participation of the 4th World Media Lab fellows in the 2021 Camden International Film Festival and the Points North Forum. Describing the “need for diverse self-determination in the predominantly settler-governed film industry,” Hurtubise observes how the coming together of Indigenous filmmakers creates space for “trans-Indigenous awakenings,” where articulating “narrative sovereignty” as an “explicit priority” makes it possible to imagine and bring into being other futures.

The remaining Critiques, each unique in their own right, explore how particular modes of image-making and sensory ethnography are deployed to communicate the particularities of social worlds, their relationship to time, and their interrogation of power. Vedant Srinivas reviews Prantik Basu's film *Bela*, a sensory exploration of a village in the Purulia region of Bengal. Paying close attention to Basu's attention to everyday ritual, gender, and visual residues, Vedant argues that “Sensoriality, rather than treated as an end in itself, here sheds light on the complex life-world that gives rise to it.” Daniela Vávrová also touches upon the sensuousness of film in her review of the edited volume *Looking with Robert Gardner*. Tracing how different authors have engaged with Gardner's work, Vávrová describes how this filmmaker's oeuvre has engaged with the poetics of sensoriality, but also the politics of representation. Ethiraj Gabriel Dattatreyan turns his attention to theater as an inventive and ethnographic practice, in his artful review of Dorinne Kondo's book *Worldmaking: Race, Performance, and the Work of Creativity*.

Accentuating Kondo's development of a rigorous, rich theoretical and methodological language, Dattatreyan unpacks how she situates “theater as ethnography and ethnography as a creative and unfinished performance.” Finally, Catherine Bublitzky analyzes Richard Chalfen's most recent book *Snapping and Wrapping: Personal Photography in Japan*, in which the acclaimed anthropologist of “Kodak cultures” describes the “different facets of producing, collecting, and maintaining family pictures” as they relate to the themes of “memory, presence, human connectivity, and communication.” Noting Chalfen's deep knowledge of and focus on analog and predigital photographic forms, Bublitzky suggests that the book's focus on wrapping and, thus, unwrapping, situate the text as a valuable introduction into the history of amateur photographic practices in Japan while also providing important insights regarding the relationship between photography, disaster, and recovery.

The Special Section, curated by guest editors, Natasha Raheja, Karen Strassler, and Zeynep Devrim Gürsel, addresses how bureaucracy, or “rule by the desk,” reshifts when it comes to circulating photographs. What does it mean, these special section authors ask, to be photographically or visually produced by the state? What does an anthropology of bureaucracy look like as a visual anthropology? The special section guest editors write a compelling call for the need to reframe anthropologies of the state to include visual methods, and their authors collectively open up that reframing. Benjamin Hegarty shows how images underpin realities of gendered identities with *warias* in Indonesia. Zeynep Devrim Gürsel portrays how a visual anthropological method can work when collaborating with her interlocutors and analyzing their ancestors' Ottoman Armenian expatriation photographs together [Correction added 6 July 2023, after first online publication: In the previous sentence, “ancestors” was added.]. Ethiraj Gabriel Dattatreyan depicts how a staged “impossible portrait” of a Somali refugees in India produces a “networked image-event” that circulates a parody of bureaucracy, as he says “a counter bureaucracy” that continues to be entangled with bureaucratic references. Similar to the “enacted citizenship” of migrants in Romm Lewkowicz's article, where the bureaucracy of the image grants an authority or legitimacy to the state's relationship to photographed subjects, or Natasha Raheja's essay where Pakistani-Hindu men use “bureaucratic framing” to grant authority to narratives about forcefully converted women, these authors successfully argue for bureaucracy's dependence on images while never losing sight of how such images can be (re)activated and deployed. [Correction added 6 July 2023, after first online publication: In the previous sentence, “...Hindu women in Romm Lewkowicz's article...” was changed to “...migrants in Romm Lewkowicz's article...”.]

In this issue, the power of images asks us to push back against, mimic, and affirm the power of states. Our multiple contributors weave a tapestry of voices that speak up and speak back not just in words, but also in images.