The new art of ethnographic filmmaking

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Experiments in form and aesthetics are currently enjoying a renaissance in documentary filmmaking and, although "experimental" and "art" are words fraught with anxiety and contention, I want to take them positively as a way of arguing for a new and expanded art of ethnographic filmmaking. In some ways this new art has placed ethnographic filmmaking at the forefront of documentary practice. To situate this, I want to begin with a story from the field that involves Tibetan Buddhist perspectives on the sensory and formal aspects of an experimental surf movie. For me this is a good place to start to consider the art of ethnographic filmmaking as something that emerges from collaborative audiovisual practices, the development of a co-aesthetic. It demonstrates a way of sharing creativity, filmmaking, and research. During a research visit to Ladakh at the western end of the Himalayas in northern India in 2017 I watched a surfing film from the early 1970s with a group of friends, all Tibetan Buddhist monks. I used a tiny pico projector to throw the digital image onto the roughly-plastered wall of a room in one of the monks' houses which clung precariously to the steep slope below the main temple *gompa,* sitting above on the summit of a huge rock outcrop. The sound came from an equally small yet powerful portable speaker, and the acoustic effect of the room created an amazingly immersive auditory experience.

Sitting on the floor we watch as successive walls of water—shot through a fish-eye lens—slowly curl over us in incredible slow motion until we look out through the tube from deep within the wave. We enter an aqueous world of flow. The hypnotic music that accompanies the footage adds to the trance-like experience. At times the camera is actually inside—moving through—the lip

of the wave. The slowing down of time means that each wave can be experienced in exquisite detail, so we watch individual drops of water hit the camera lens and explode. The sun is sometimes visible through the translucent green/blue of the wave's crest as it enfolds us. Occasionally we see the barrel of the wave revolving away from us as we are submerged. The monks—many of whom have not experienced the sea in person—watch with rapt attention. Some take photos or short film clips on their mobile phones to be hashtagged and circulated either instantly or later. At one point, as the tempo of the music builds, one of them jumps up and— with the projected light flickering over them—stands before the image and surfs the wave, provoking much laughter. The ensuing conversations cover many things; from the physical experience of the film and how it made them feel like they were surfing, to Tibetan Buddhist explanations of the relations between humans and the natural world, ideas of time, flow, and beauty, and meditations on being in the moment.

This event demonstrates several important positive reasons for approaching film through— or as—ethnography. Film is something we share with those with whom we work, literally in cases like this, but also in the sense that film is something that is between us, that connects us, that differentiates us, that mediates and remediates us. Film allows us to enter different worlds. It does this experientially in terms of a viewing audience, but also because it allows us as ethnographers and filmmakers to approach and appreciate other creative, conceptual, practical understandings of worlds.

The film I watched with my monk friends was George Greenough's 1972 *Crystal voyager*, a section of which features more than 20 minutes of footage shot with a shoulder-mounted high-speed 35mm camera that shows waves breaking over Greenough as he surfs on a knee board or inflatable surf mat. The specialized camera allows the footage of the waves to be effectively slowed down to ten times their normal speed. At the time of the film's release this slow-motion view from

inside the waves was a new perspective, literally allowing audiences access into a different world. In 1969, Greenough's previous film *The innermost limits of pure fun* had been the first to make this world available to a wide public. The way it positioned viewers was such a corporeal experience that it had cinema audiences shouting and standing on their feet. This positioning of the viewer as participant/protagonist has of course now become the staple of millions of YouTube uploads of extreme sports footage shot using GoPro cameras—quite a significant shift in our vision. Another key element of the experiential tube footage in *Crystal voyager* is the accompanying hypnotic soundtrack from Pink Floyd, taken from their album *Echoes*. The band had seen Greenough's earlier film and been so impressed that they donated their music for *Crystal voyager* and screened sections of the film in some of their live concerts (Edwards et al., 2003)

Crystal voyager is a film that both foregrounds the sensory and experiments formally— indeed the two are inextricably linked. Greenough was the first to adapt a 35mm camera to this particular representational task. He built himself underwater housings out of fibreglass, and strange awkward armatures in order to attach the camera to his shoulder. His intention was to recreate for audiences the experience of being in the tube of the wave—not make them watch someone else surfing from a distance—a perspective which had largely been the norm in surfing films up to this point. In the more recognizably documentary sections of the film Greenough talks eloquently, and in an almost religious way, about "connecting" with the wave and wanting to impart that feeling to audiences.[1]

As this story reveals, film is a way of engaging with different worlds and anthropology and other cognate disciplines need to expand the ways in which they approach this quality of film. Social scientists and filmmakers need to do this in terms of how films and other media are made— both the actual processes involved in producing media, and in terms of experimenting with the aesthetics and forms of film. But they also need to do this conceptually. Films are representations

of different worlds but are also ways of entering into dialogues with those worlds. Much of what surfaced in my discussions around *Crystal voyager* formed starting points for ongoing collaborative audiovisual work involving a sense of an emergent co-aesthetic:a hybrid of my aesthetics and theirs. Watching the DVD with friends in Ladakh allowed different and similar ideas about film to emerge between us. Suggestions about the limits of vision, the lack of a unified documentary viewing subject, the relation of vision to the spiritual etc., all remind me of the importance of embracing different, and similar, understandings of film which emerge from interactions with our collaborators.[2] In this chapter I want to consider this kind of openness and engagement in relation to two recent ethnographic films, both of which allow us to explore the possibilities for experimentation and creativity that emerge from ethnographic encounters. But first I want to consider how the politics of this kind of engagement plays out in terms of discussions of the "multimodal." Although film—in combining image and sound—is inherently multimodal, in relation to ethnographic filmmaking the term specifically refers to the use of diverse forms of "new" (usually digital) media as novel ways of engaging with, and representing, others. Discussions within and outside of anthropology about formal experimentation in ethnographic filmmaking have coincided with the increasing use and valorisation of "multimodality," and it is important to think about what it enables and disables.

Multimodal affordances

In 2017 the influential journal *American Anthropologist* rebranded the title of its visual anthropology section as "Multimodal Anthropologies" (Collins et al., 2017), and there is a growing consensus that ethnographic filmmaking needs to actively embrace ways of working across many new digital media platforms. This seems an obvious requirement in terms of how ethnographers engage with people in the context of increasing global digital connectivity. It involves exploring the potentials of different digital media practices for making new kinds of work, shifting how research

is carried out, how new forms of audiovisual work are produced, and how that work is then published or distributed. This discussion covers everything from using the co-production of web-based material as a way of engaging with people, to the ways that "linked" audiovisual content can accompany written academic publications.

There are also concerns amidst the general enthusiasm for the multimodal, however. Access to digital media is not a given, but something that varies widely. In Ladakh, for example, mobile phone connectivity and internet access is incredibly limited, really only available in the main town of Leh. So, although many monks own mobile phones their usage is constrained, and culturally inflected, in various local ways. A consideration of media and their affordances needs to be central to ethnographic creativity in a critical sense, avoiding the presumption of a pre-figured, or necessarily level field of digital understanding, connectivity, and collaboration. Jenny Chio raises a very important point when she asks, what does the multimodal actually help with? (Chio, 2017) Just because an anthropological article can now be published and accessed online and accompanied by a range of audiovisual media, does not in itself make a convincing argument for the multimodal. Chio is right to ask, how can multimedia "make our scholarship (more) intelligible?", and she also suggests that we need to "rethink publication formats but also [to] reimagine anthropological knowledge production" (Chio, 2017, n.p.). We must also ask to whom is our work more intelligible? The multimodal is not just an opportunity for visual ethnographers to expand their range of creative practices, or a publishing innovation, it is a field that is intimately bound up with the forces of global capitalism.

The multimodal does, however, potentially allow for an expanded range of representational strategies, appropriations, and remixes and this can function as a field for formal experimentation and a counterpoint to the single-filmmaker-authored ethnographic film. It can also allow new forms of creativity to emerge from within ethnographic encounters. But the politics

of these processes need to be kept clearly in view at a time when ideas of "digital democracy" are so heavily contested. Technology, and the novelty of its affordances, should not obscure wider imbalances of power, access, and representation. As Isaac Marrero-Guillamón and Gabriel Dattatreyan argue, "the multimodal signals not just an expansion of the forms which visual anthropology takes—embracing different media and media platforms—but an important shift in how it is carried out. What is required are 'inventive engagements' rather than a reliance on pre-existing forms of representation" (Marrero-Guillamón and Dattatreyan, 2019, p. 4).

Arguments like this are a call to experimentation and creativity, and the multimodal offers many ways of sharing the processes of research and the creativity involved in filmmaking and other kinds of media production more broadly than was previously possible. Rather than an ethnographic filmmaker allowing the film's subjects to see the footage once the film had been developed (in the case of analogue film), or assist in the editing, it is perhaps now a matter of jointly remixing digital media elements that are already, and increasingly, a feature of all our lives. In this focus on joint authorship, multiple platforms and outcomes, and a co-aesthetic, the multimodal is something that in some ways supersedes ethnographic film as a category, both practically and conceptually. The previous model of a single–or several–filmmaker(s) from "outside" making a single stand-alone film is something that might now need to embrace many new forms of engagement, authorship, and forms of output.

Although definitions of filmmaker, documentary, artist, anthropologist, etc. still count in many ways, the multimodal also signals the increasing acceptance of an emergent nexus of anthropology, media, and art practices, and the valorization of both formal experimentation and methodological innovation as new kinds of ethnographic film art. In discussing the current state of the relationship between anthropology and contemporary art practices, Tarek Elhaik argues that "experiments in aesthetic form have continued to thrive but conceptual experimentation remains

to be desired" (Elhaik, 2013, p. 787). Although there are of course ways in which aesthetic form can be synonymous with conceptual experimentation—indeed the latter often drives the former—there continue to be divisions like this that can fuel some of the residual anthropological discomfort with art and formal experiments in filmmaking. What is at stake here is the relationship of formal difference—films and other media that look and feel unlike more traditional documentary styles—to new ways of making media through different kinds of engagements with people. Formal experimentation can be driven solely by the filmmaker without any consideration of how it relates to engaging with people. Equally, films that do not experiment formally can be the result of radically new forms of engagement. But formal experimentation can also be an emergent property of relations, encounters, and collaborations with others.

Faye Ginsburg suggests that ethnographic filmmaking is currently moving in two directions. Firstly, there are the kinds of formal experiments pursued by filmmakers often concerned with the sensory aspects of film, exemplified by the work of those associated with the Sensory Ethnography Lab run at Harvard University. And secondly, there are filmmakers who seem more concerned with what she calls "relational documentary" (Ginsburg, 2018, p. 39), a style encompassing various kinds of Indigenous media production and co-production or re-mixed work.[3] Ginsburg also finds that there is a certain "decolonization of documentary" underway, characterized by a decentering of the relationships and processes normally associated with an older kind of filmmaking, and a replacement of them with forms of engaged media-making that involve an "aesthetics of accountability" (Ginsburg, 2018, p. 39). Both the directions identified by Ginsburg—the formal and the relational—can of course embrace creativity and experiment, but the ease with which certain kinds of formal difference are readily labelled as "art" can still be a kind of internal limiting factor for ethnographic filmmakers both practically and conceptually. In relation to ethnographic film the term "art" has traditionally designated works that look different to, or are presented differently

from, traditional documentary forms. Ethnographic film has long defined itself as something it is not—it is *not* commercial made-for-television documentary, it is *not* art, it is *not* experimental filmmaking—and yet it is becoming clear that arguably it is all of those. The advent of the multimodal presents a chance to move beyond many earlier definitions of ethnographic film and their various territorial strategies, even if there is still a polarized field out there in terms of naming, funding, sites of exhibition, and disciplinary identification.

What is required to expand ethnographic filmmaking is the combination of relational inventiveness—which is to some degree reliant on the affordances of the technology involved—with an openness to formal experimentation. Importantly, it is also about allowing the latter to emerge from the former. Elhaik's statement that as an anthropologist "I study Y not to enact a cultural critique of X where I am from, but to do something with Y, yet to be formulated, that will be named Z" (Elhaik, 2013, p. 792) can be seen as a challenge to ethnographic filmmakers to pursue formal innovation not for its own sake, but as one element of new forms of joint endeavour with those with whom they work. I want to argue for the productive conjunction of formal creativity and relational strategies as a new expanded art of ethnographic filmmaking. Recognizing the relationships that are possible between the two suggests ways of working that pursue many kinds of creative and inventive formal aesthetics, but that are equally attentive to the dynamics, politics, and positionality of engagements, and the collaborative evocation of different, yet shared and connected, mediated and remediated worlds.

Ethnographic film art

The practical affordances of different media are not only central to the filmmaking process itself, but also organizing principles in a conceptual sense. This relationship is one way to think about ethnographic film art, and a revealing recent example of this is J.P.Sniadecki and Joshua Bonnetta's 2017 film *El mar ma mar*. Described as an "avant-garde anthropological film," *El mar*

la mar combines images of the Sonoran Desert near the US/Mexico border with voiceover stories from those living there and passing through (Cronk, 2017). Visually it weaves together landscape, flora and fauna, bushfires, bats, close-ups of objects left behind by migrants, frequent sections of almost entirely black screen, and so on, over all of which the narrated stories continue. Much of the film takes places in darkened landscapes, illuminated by torchlight or car headlights, and we come to inhabit the landscape as we listen intently to the qualities of the voices we hear. The addition of an eerie soundtrack of amplified ambient sounds made by putting microphones inside cacti, attaching them to barbed wire fences, and other innovative recording practices, also does much to make the film a certain kind of heightened sensory experience.

Jordan Cronk, in *Sight and Sound* magazine, describes the film as "more like a horror film than an exercise in journalistic nonfiction" (Cronk, 2017, n.p.), and Erika Balsom in *Artforum* calls it a film in which "cinema and landscape come together as sites of inscription marked by an encounter between the human and non-human" (Balsom, 2017, p.41). Objects, human and non-human, are explored in detail by the camera, and the overall sense of time feels stretched out.

Fig. 2: Still from *El mar la mar*

    El mar la mar was shot on 16mm film before being scanned to digital for editing, and Bonnetta argues that the analogue format was chosen precisely for the way it imposes certain ways of working and for its slowness as a medium (Bonnetta, Sniadecki and Erickson, 2018). The film was shot over a period of three years with repeated visits to the border locations involved, followed by lengthy breaks in which the resulting footage was processed and watched/edited, alongside the audio-recorded stories and soundscapes. This extended timescale feels like it runs contrary to the kind of speed and instantaneity-the instant playback-that is often associated with the digital and by extension, the multimodal.[4] Bonnetta points out that: "16mm is a way of working that's slower and more analytical. We were editing as we were working. We could work in dialogue. For filmmakers who had never worked together, it was important for us to have a dialogue. Working in 16mm helped slow things down and created that space" (Bonnetta, Sniadecki and Erickson, 2018, n.p.). By choosing to use 16mm film Bonnetta and Sniadecki created an intentionally extended filmmaking process that allowed the shape of the film to gradually emerge in an initially open-ended way from the material gathered and the discussions generated by it. This slow gradual process is mirrored by the equally slow cinematography of the film, lingering over objects and landscapes. The use of 16mm with its compressed mono sound strip required the filmmakers to record the soundtrack separately, and this perhaps encourages a different kind of attention to the relation between sound and image. Of course, this kind of slowness and attention to sound are also possible with digital media, but here the use of 16mm and the recording of separate sound are affordances of the technology and conceptual frameworks that creatively prefigure the final film. The filmmakers had originally intended to produce a multi-channel installation across several screens which would have required a gallery viewing space but ended up with a single-channel film

in three discrete parts. With its formal experimentation it is easy to see *El mar la mar* as a kind of ethnographic film art.

But alongside various kinds of formal visual, aural, and editing experimentation, *El mar la mar* also features the voices of migrants who have crossed this border desert and others who live and work there, including patrolmen. Interestingly, Bonnetta and Sniadecki made a decision not to show any of the people's faces:

> There are some specific reasons why we left people's images out, especially in the post-Trump era. It was a wise move not to connect people indexically to their voices, images and stories. We also felt that listening to a voice in a darkened space, leads to a different intimacy. A lot of audience members have said they feel more attuned to these voices because they're not standard talking heads over images acting as B-roll (Bonnetta, Sniadecki and Erickson, 2018, n.p.)

The access the filmmakers had to individuals with relevant experiences and stories was partly facilitated by the anthropologist Jason De León (2015), whose book *Land of open graves* documents the experiences of migrants crossing the Sonoran Desert. Cath Clarke, writing in the UK's Guardian newspaper had this to say about how *El mar la mar* treats migrants and their stories:

> Initially I had misgivings about its approach: the desperate plight of undocumented immigrants getting the experimental arthouse treatment struck me as unfeeling and irrelevant. But the film's narcotic strangeness forces you to look again at a familiar headline story, treated unsensationally and sensitively – though at a patience-testing slow pace. El Mar La Mar is closer to a gallery installation than a night out at the cinema" (Clarke, 2018, n.p.).

Here the claim is that the Trump "wall" and the ongoing news media coverage around that and other issues of migration, provides a wider context for the film. We see it set against that backdrop, especially in terms of how its formal qualities are *not* those we experience through other media representations of the subject. But there is also the view that the "experimental arthouse treatment" is not appropriate to traditional documentary or ethnographic-subject matter. Bonnetta says "we don't see our film as a documentary per se. There's elements of documentary in it, but there's also elements of experimental film. There's elements of narrative cinema. Mixing documentary and fiction, challenging representation..." (Bonnetta, Sniadecki and Erickson, 2018, n.p.).

The reviews of *El mar la mar* reveal a residual discomfort with formal experimentation in relation to the subject matter it deals with. One could argue that the creative use of time and formal experimentation in the film emerge from an engagement with landscape or place, flora and fauna, objects etc.-a kind of filmic "aesthetics of accountability" to the non-human. And of course *El mar la mar* is multimodal in many senses, even if it uses analogue media as a practical and conceptual affordance. But I want now to turn to a film which exemplifies the possibilities for formal experimentation and art to be an emergent property of the relationships involved in filmmaking itself, which is the subject of the next section.

Relational aesthetics

In some respects, discussion of the multimodal resembles that around "transmedia;" relating a story across multiple digital media platforms. But with the multimodal there is a strong emphasis on using digital media as new ways of engaging collaboratively with others to *make* audiovisual work. Although they share a focus on the use of multiple media platforms, transmedia mostly concerns the commercial use of a range of digital media to permeate the lives of audiences, for example the simultaneous release of an online game, a TV show, and a mobile app, all based on

the same content. Central to the multimodal from an ethnographic filmmaking perspective is its ability to open up not just the range of media involved, but the actual processes of media production themselves. It is this potential for combining formal experimentation across different media with a sense of relational accountability that makes the multimodal a way of expanding ethnographic filmmaking.

A recent ethnographic film which exemplifies these kinds of creative potentials in embracing the multimodal is Miyarrka Media's 2014 film, *Ringtone*. One of the advantages of multimodal transmedia work is that it can be far more dynamic, multiple, and ongoing than single films. *Ringtone* is an example of a project whose central concern was not necessarily to produce a film, but to work collaboratively across an extended range of media to produce multiple and ongoing outcomes. *Ringtone* has had at least two media forms, initially as one visual element in a larger multimedia exhibition, *Gapuwiyak Calling*—where it sat alongside other works in a range of analogue and digital media, before its life as a stand-alone film.[5]

Ringtone was produced by Miyarrka Media, a collective co-founded in 2009 by the anthropologist Jennifer Deger and the Yolgnu leader Paul Gurrumuruwuy from Arnhem land in northeast Australia. The collective's actual constitution and membership though, is far more varied and context dependent, with different individuals coming together for specific projects. *Ringtone* is about the ways in which mobile phones have brought a range of connections, intrusions, possibilities, and demands to the Yolgnu community of Gapuwiyak. It involves and activates different kinds of collaboration but is also importantly a kind of outgrowth or extension of the kinds of media activity that Yolgnu themselves already engage in with their mobile phones and other technologies. Yolgnu make mobile media products such as small films of themselves dancing, photographic collages made up of images taken from the internet combined with those of

family etc., and they also employ the ringtones of phones in creative and locally meaningful ways. *Ringtone* is an extension of those media activities. As Gurrumuruwuy puts it:

> One way or another, everybody's using their phone to connect. It's new. But then again, it's not. Even your ringtone can call you back to country, back to family, back to where you belong. Yolngu record clan songs from funerals with their phones and set them up as their ringtone. Whenever someone phones you hear that *manikay* (public clan song) and boom ... you're there. Just like sitting on the ground." (Gurumuruwuy, 2016, p. 86)

Fig. 3: still from *Ringtone*

One of the other media works in the *Gapuwiyak Calling* exhibition was a large touchscreen work called *Warwuyun (worry)* made up of 50 digital collages made by Yolgnu on their mobile phones. The individual collages can be accessed through the touchscreen and transformed or remixed into an ever-changing series of patterns and grids.
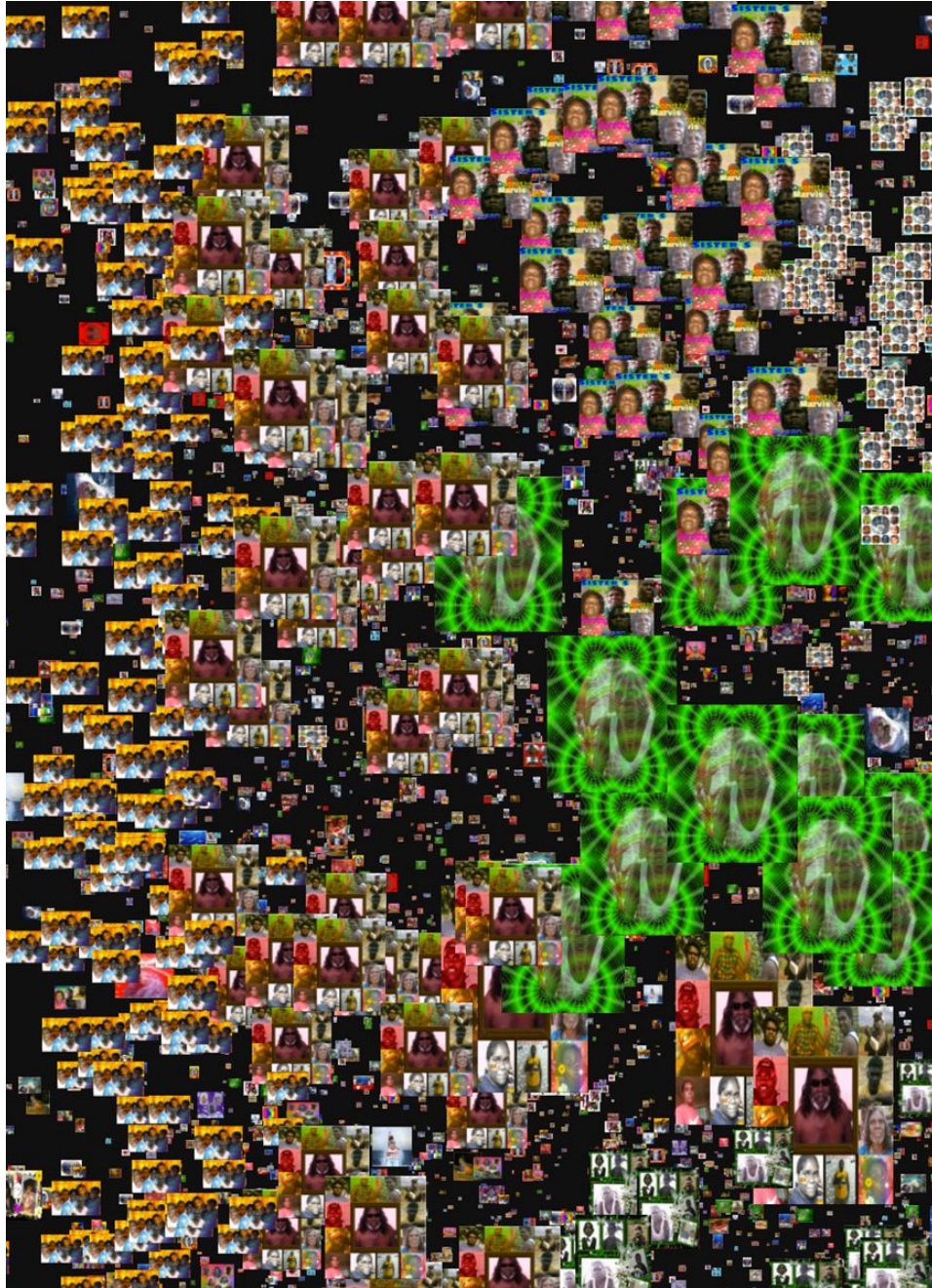
Fig. 4: *Warwuyun (worry).* Miyarrka Media

Deciding to display multiple copies of what are otherwise small digital images on individual

mobile phones had unintended aesthetic consequences. Taken *en masse* the small collages visually

resembled the effects—light, shade, colour, grids—of Yolgnu bark paintings. Gurrurmuruwuy describes it like this:

> This is a new kind of art. It might look different to a bark painting to you, but we see them the same way. Because first we added in light and colour and make those separate, separate *bitja* [pictures] really deep, really rich and full of energy. Then we made this touchscreen to make these patterns stronger. To connect wider and deeper. At the same time, we want to draw you close, ... Maybe, as you look, you'll think about your own loved ones. Maybe you will cry with us" (Gurrumuruwuy, in Deger 2017, p. 54).

This is art that emerges from a shared endeavour and, like the aesthetics of *Ringtone*, it grows directly from the collaborative engagements involved in its making. Even the straight-to-camera framing of *Ringtone* grows out of this engagement, as Deger describes:

> From the first video project I did with Yolngu in 1995, I had been struck by the ways that people would talk straight to camera, energetically and authoritatively telling their story, and explaining things that they were uniquely positioned to speak about. They knew they were speaking to future audiences, they expected to find themselves face-to-face with others in the future, understanding the camera as generating a reciprocal field of visuality. A time delayed machine for face-to-face encounter and explanation. This way of talking to camera translated (mostly) comfortably to this intercultural context and for me is the key to the ethical-aesthetic of a film about Yolngu ways of communicating and connecting (Deger, personal communication, 2019).

In *Ringtone* Yolgnu sit facing the camera directly, with their full body visible, and often with family and kin in the background-a subtle difference to the usual talking heads of much

documentary filmmaking.[7] Deger and her co-directors worked with a cinematographer and, having set the camera up on a tripod, adjusted the framing and balance via a monitor:

> [We] set up the frame and then other people would check the monitor and go and put themselves in frame, to intensify the relationships within the frame—and reaching out from it. Although they didn't say so, I think people wanted the frame to feel full of life and family connections—especially as one person in frame could look so lonely. Or someone else would come in and just take up a position. Or Gurrumuruwuy, or his daughter, our producer, Guruŋilmiwuy, would direct people to sit down within the shot (Deger, personal communication, 2019).[6]

This is a filmmaking process that is happy to embrace formal experimentation and difference, but one that locates that creativity and inventiveness as something that emerges at the intersection of local concerns and media affordances, rather than as an advance and/or sole decision of the filmmakers. As Deger argues, *Ringtone* involves a "relational aesthetics that is not only embedded (as in the formative relations between the crew and the subjects, and the forms of accountability and kin-based casting and story telling that is involved in producing something shaped by kinship structures, authorities and obligations), but enacted and indeed activated within a shared audiovisual field of intercultural connection and social potential. In other words, although *Ringtone* was made for non-Yolngu audiences, it refracts a Yolngu appreciation of the power of the senses to constitute social relations in its choice of both form and content." (Deger, personal communication, 2019).

In the Yolgnu context asking questions and recording answers is not an appropriate form for extracting information. Instead people need to be given opportunities to offer stories that they have the right to know and tell, and the film creatively applies this narrative convention in its structure, framing, and editing. In this sense *Ringtone* is exemplary of the potential for formal

experimentation and aesthetic creativity to *emerge* from collaborative engagements: a fusion of aesthetic differences through the joint representation of worlds.

Expanded ethnographic film

Both *El mar la mar* and *Ringtone* experiment formally, although in very different ways, and both are suggestive of new directions for an expanded art of ethnographic filmmaking. The kinds of formal difference and aesthetic experimentation that they pursue are now far more acceptable and widespread than was previously the case in ethnographic filmmaking, and that is a very positive development. Formal experimentation is something to be actively and positively embraced. But what is currently at stake is where that experimentation comes from. What drives it? I would argue that a new art of ethnographic filmmaking should involve the exploration of new forms of engagement with collaborators that are made possible by the affordances of media as a route to creative formal experimentation. There needs to be a willingness to experiment with the social relations involved in producing films or other media—part of a necessary decolonization of documentary—accompanied by an equally open approach to the emergence of aesthetics, or co-aesthetics, directly from those processes of engagement and collaboration.

What is important about the current concern with the multimodal is the insistence on creative potentials of the relationship between the relational and the formal. Film allows us to enter different worlds in many ways. The finished film allows us some kind of glimpse of other experiences, but the making of films also involve us directly in collaborations and relationships with different worlds. These differences should be embraced and explored, but they are always commensurate to the task of imagining and creating new possible worlds through the shared processes of research and worldmaking through film.

Notes

1. It would be interesting to pursue this aspect of the film-and Tibetan Buddhist understandings of it-in terms of Nathaniel Dorsky's ideas of "devotional cinema" (Dorsky, 2003).

2. See also Rutherford (2006).

3. See for example Geronimo Inutiq's amazing multi-screen installation *Arcticnoise* – Hennessey et al (2018), and Hogue (2015).

4. See for example Paolo Favero's smartphone mapping project - http://www.americananthropologist.org/2018/02/21/with-the-smartphone-as-field-assistant-designing-making-and-testing-ethnoally-a-multimodal-tool-for-conducting-serendipitous-ethnography-in-a-multisensory-world/

5. *Ringtone* was released as a stand-alone film in 2016 and was part of the *Gapuwiyak Calling* exhibition installed at the University of Queensland Anthropology Museum, and also at the Margaret Mead Film Festival in the Museum of Natural History in New York in 2014. See also the websites associated with the media collective and the exhibition - www.miyarrkamedia.com and www.gapuwiyakcalling.com

6. It is worthwhile considering this filmmaking process in relation to Rolf De Heer's discussion of making work around the *Ten Canoes* project - *Personal Reflections on Whiteness and Three Film Projects.* http://australianhumanitiesreview.org/2007/08/01/personal-reflections-on-whiteness-and-three-film-projects/ See also Patrick Sutherland and Tashi Tsering's discussion of a similar preference for whole bodies in still photography in Spiti in the western Himalayas – Sutherland and Tsering (2011).

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