



DEPARTMENT OF
ANTHROPOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF DELHI



Ethnographic photography

Speaker: **Juan F. Cuyás**
Departament D'antropologia Social
Universitat De Barcelona

Visual Anthropology Lab successfully organised a session on Ethnographic Photography on 7th February 2023 in the seminar hall. Chaired by Dr. Avitoli G. Zhimo the event was brought to life by budding pioneer in the field Juan de Cuyás and an immensely inquisitive inter disciplinary audience.

The event beautifully captured the trajectory of use of photography in domain of Visual Anthropology and emphasised on use of photographs as :

- to capture intricacies of motion
- political tool during colonial era
- to showcase theory of races
- part of salvage ethnography
- part of romantic ethnography
- archives and evidences
- cultural inventories
- aesthetics

The session advanced further unfolding the limitations of ethnographic photography and critiqued the idea of Commodification of pictures, scripting of frames and mechanical synthesis of reality. It problematised the fact that ethnographic photography may not be necessarily Anthropological as all ethnographies are not reflected by Anthropological reflexivity.

It laid stress on use and importance of photographs as symbols stating that photographic representations matter because they modify the way we perceive our realities and secondly, how photographic language is not universal as it is open to subjective interpretation.

The students got a chance to learn about interesting tools in visual anthropology like :

- Photo essays
- Photo books
- Photo Voice
- Photo elicitation
- Situational photography etc.

which would help them in conceptualising the idea of montage and carving out terrain for art based research and comparative ethnography.

Concluding the event, the speaker spoke about capacity of a mute image to speak louder than any other thing narrated or written.

The audiences were humbled at the references made to reflect upon idea of consumption, contrasts, disparity, ecology through use of photographs in ethnography. The session wrapped up with a queries and discussion round which registered active participation of the audience.

Report written by
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Organised by
Visual Anthropology Lab, Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi