



Wondrous Difference

By Alison Griffiths

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The ethical and ideological implications of cross-cultural image-making continue to stir debate among anthropologists, film scholars, and museum professionals. This innovative book focuses on the contested origins of ethnographic film from the late nineteenth century to the 1920s, vividly depicting the dynamic visual culture of the period as it collided with the emerging discipline of anthropology and the new technology of motion pictures. Featuring more than 100 illustrations, the book examines museums of natural history, world's fairs, scientific and popular photography, and the early filmmaking efforts of anthropologists and commercial producers to investigate how cinema came to assume the role of mediator of cultural difference at the beginning of the twentieth century.

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Wondrous Difference By Alison Griffiths Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

A significant contribution to knowledge about methods of recording and presenting visual culture of non-Western peoples in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

(Choice)

With fascinating examples and illustrations culled from a number of international archives, *Wondrous Difference* is an invaluable resource for cinema historians, anthropologists, archivists, and museum professionals.... Griffiths is working within a new tradition of scholars approaching visuality with a historically integrated and culturally critical perspective.... The masterful way in which Griffiths navigates and reveals the complexity of these relationships sets a standard for others to follow.

(Amy J. Staples *Film Quarterly*)

Wondrous Difference will make an excellent... textbook for advanced undergraduate or graduate courses in both visual anthropology and the history of anthropology.

(Deborah Poole *Current Anthropology*)

Review

With originality and depth of research, *Wondrous Difference* supplies the missing prehistory of the ethnographic documentary. The story this book tells is a dynamic one, of interest to anyone involved with cultural history, particularly anthropologists and film historians.

(Tom Gunning, University of Chicago)

This is a fine, fascinating study, a groundbreaking history of the emergence and evolution of the early ethnographic film. Employing a sharp attention to detail and manifesting an impressive grasp of the complexities of meaning in historically and geographically distant cultures, Alison Griffiths contributes in rich and important ways to ongoing thought and research about cinema.

(Dana Polan, professor of critical studies, University of Southern California)

An invaluable addition to our understanding of the history and development of ethnographic film prior to Robert Flaherty's *Nanook of the North*.... offers a new and insightful understanding of the relationship between visual culture, museums, ethnographic film, the popular world of commercial film, and anthropology from the 1890s to the 1920s.

(Jay Ruby, Temple University)

About the Author

Alison Griffiths is assistant professor in the Department of Communication Studies at Baruch College, City University of New York. The work on which this book is based won the Society for Cinema Studies dissertation prize.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Shawn Farr:

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