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# Visual Anthropology [1]

Visual anthropology is a broad and popular area of study within the greater discipline of anthropology. Visual anthropologists look at the visual aspects of a culture, such as art and media, and are also interested in how anthropological data can be represented visually.

Visual anthropologists are concerned with both the visual aspects of culture and using media to present data visually. These two concepts often go hand in hand—for example, it is much easier to show a photograph of a painting than to describe it in detail through words.

Visual anthropologists study a wide range of cultural aspects, including art, dance, ritual, jewelry, body adornments, and much more. In many respects, visual anthropology often overlaps with the anthropology of art. Visual anthropology also intersects with archaeology in the study of prehistoric art, such as cave paintings.

## Beyond Writing

While most disciplines traditionally communicate through the written word, visual anthropologists are particularly interested in communicating anthropological data in new, visual ways. For example, today anthropologists make use of current technologies and often employ other techniques, such as film and photography, to present data.

Displaying data visually presents unique advantages that aren't always found through writing. For example, something as detailed and visually-focused as a dance is easily conveyed through a video, where the viewer can get a sometimes stronger sense of the experience.

Films presenting anthropological data are often called ethnographic films. Ethnographic film is a widely used method of presenting data, since it allows the anthropologist to present information in a novel and creative way. Anthropologists are continually interested in the different ways that anthropological data can be conveyed, and the ways that different media can help show different perspectives on the same data.

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