T he workshop was structured around four sessions: “Interplays, initiatives and directions in ethnographic film”; “The challenges of teaching visual media”; “Documenting social issues”; and “New directions for digital media in Southeast Asia”. First to speak was Paul Henley, Director of the Granada Centre for Visual Anthropology, Manchester University. In his historical overview of ethnographic film, Henley discussed how the presentation of central characters had moved from romantic archetypes to increasingly more individualized characterizations. He showed the range of fabrications involved in the making of these films, which led to a discussion of what constitutes documentary truth, an issue with obvious parallels to the writing of ethnographic texts. Arguably, the reflexive turn in anthropology since the 1980s has enabled a fuller appreciation of film within the discipline. Picking up on the interrelationships between technology and ethnographic film, Ms Judith MacDougall from the Centre for Cross-Cultural Research, ANU, Canberra, argued that digital technologies will bring new ways of thinking about film, a more sophisticated understanding of the techniques involved and a deeper appreciation of the filmic image. MacDougall argued that film has remained an understudied medium in the social sciences. For this to change, film-making would have to be acknowledged as an act of research equivalent in value to other forms of fieldwork. The power to depict experiential knowledge and to represent social phenomena as complex wholes embedded in other events should be recognized. Referring to her latest film, Diya (2001), she commented on the advantages that digital technologies offered in terms of subtitles while still in the field, and the possibilities of editing versions for different audiences.

Mr Kailand Tahmin, Artistic Director of Sunflower Coop- erative, makes films that are at once highly personal and deeply political, concerning issues arising from the long his- tory of colonization in the Philippines. Notable among these are Perfomal Nightmare (1978) and Turunba (1984). Kailand’s current projects include a collaborative project with Ifugao villagers that encourages interested individuals to use digital cameras as a means of preserving and documenting their own culture. Such footage will become part of their living legacy and can be integrated into the local school curriculum.

The third session, “Documenting social issues”, aimed to position ethnographic film as a genre within the wider realm of documentary film. Mr Alan Rosenthal, visiting film-maker with Ngee Ann Polytechnic’s Film and Media Studies Pro- gramme, and Professor of Communications at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem (1971-2000), has directed over fifty TV documentaries and docu-dramas. Since docu-drama is, in effect, an extension of investigative journalism, its credibil- ity depends on a commitment to accurate research. As an illustration, Rosenthal screened The Holocaust on Trial (2000), which recreates the libel case brought by historian David Irving against Deborah Lipstadt, author of Denying the Holocaust (New York: Free Press, 1993). Using courtroom transcripts as the trial proceeded and released within a short time, this film was able to make its impact while the issue was still topical.

Mr Sittipong Kalayanee is Manager and co-founder of Images Asia, an alternative media organization in Chiang Mai, Thailand, that provides video training to local media practitioners from within and beyond the region, and around fifty participants, for discussion and screenings of recent works by the speakers. The intention was to generate an exchange of ideas on the potentials of new digital media technologies and how these will transform ethnographic film-making.

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References

Filmography
- Tahmin, Kailand. Turunba El Cerrito, California: Flowers Films, 1994. 54 mins. Winner of the Top Cash Award at the Mannheim Film Festival, Germany.

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