Introduction

The idea for writing this book came to me in the depths of the Venezuelan jungle in 2006 when making my first ethnographic film.

The aim of the film was to explore the role of religious images, the gaze, and spirit-possession in the cult of María Lionza (Canals 2017), a Venezuelan set of rituals and "sacred practices" belonging to the great family of "Afro-American religions."[1]

That day in 2006, I was surrounded by believers of all ages before a majestic altar covered with small, brightly colored statues representing divinities of very diverse origins. There were images of African slaves, Indigenous chiefs, Vikings, Venezuelan military personnel, Catholic saints, "Gypsies" (*gitanos*), and *malandros*, the name given by Venezuelans to delinquents killed in the street in battles with the police or fights between rival gangs. The altar was adorned with flowers, liquor, and food. Everything had a baroque and festive look.

The cult members gave me permission to film the rite of possession that was being prepared but said they also needed authorization from the divinities. The request had to be made through tobacco. In most Afro-American religions, tobacco is a sacred substance that permits communication with the spirit world. Broadly speaking, the language of tobacco is as follows: If the cigar is easily consumed, leaving white ash, it means that the divinities consent to the petition made by the worshipper; if the ash turns black or the cigar suddenly goes out, it means they deny their consent. I smoked part of the cigar as well as I could (as a nonsmoker), and the spirits "decreed" that I had authorization to film.[2]

Taking center stage in the ritual was a young woman called Bárbara, who took her place before the altar and got ready to go into a trance. In these religious practices, it is considered that the medium is able to expel his or her own spirit and to take in the spirit of a dead person or a deity. The process is called "spiritual possession." The time during which the medium's body is "occupied" by an external entity is known as the "trance." The specific moment of spiritual substitution is the "crisis."

In order to go into a trance, Bárbara started to look *directly into the eyes* of the statue of the cult's main divinity. The aim of this was to establish a relationship of *visual contact* with the great beyond. Meanwhile,

clustered around Bárbara, the members of the cult group were smoking tobacco, intoning prayers, and playing the drum (another strong symbolic element in Afro-American religions). I remained alert, filming Bárbara in medium shot, impatiently waiting for the decisive moment when the spiritual substitution would occur.

Suddenly, however, Bárbara's mother, also a member of the cult group, looked at me and said in a serious tone:[3] "When the spirit is about to arrive, you must stop filming. You can't film the altar or Bárbara when she's possessed, not until *he* or *she* says you can. And you've also got to remember that, during the trance, you can't film my daughter *directly in the eyes* [by which she meant that I did not have permission to do a frontal shot of Bárbara]. If the spirit sees itself reflected in the camera lens it could take fright and run away. That would be fatal for my daughter. You can't turn your back on the figures either because it's through images that the deities have sight, and you always have to look them in the face."[4]

I recorded these words with the camera and told myself that, once back in Barcelona or Paris,[5] I would introduce them into the final film. It was wonderful ethnographic material. I could see clearly that the film needed to show the set of rules and conditions that the cult members (and their spirits) had indicated to me so that the viewer would see *why I had filmed in that way and not another*. I then turned my camera off. After a couple of minutes, Bárbara's mother could see that the spirit that was occupying her daughter's body accepted my presence, and she allowed me to keep filming.

This research episode occupies a special place in my memory. When it happened, I was twenty-four years old, and this was my first fieldwork outside of Barcelona. But besides its personal and biographical interest, I believe that, in theoretical terms, it condenses two important ideas, which I shall explore throughout this book.

First, the ceremony reveals the multiplicity of senses and functions that images and gazes can acquire, depending on each cultural context, as well as the intrinsic relationship between the act of seeing and the act of filming or representing visually. For example, it was while staring into the eyes of the statues of the gods that Bárbara went into a trance. It is also worth recalling that, while the trance lasted, I could not film Bárbara frontally. I had to make sure that the spirit would not see its own reflection. These *visual prohibitions* suggest that, in the cult of María Lionza, the act of looking does not consist only of receiving external impressions but it is an essentially relational and performative activity. The act of looking affects *physically* what is seen. Then again, the prohibition on turning away from the figures during the ritual suggests that the

religious statues not only represent the divinities but are somehow identified with them. In this context, the figures are not representations but, rather, what I would call *dispositives of presence* or, in other words, interfaces whose role is to make possible *immediate* contact with the divinities.

Second, Bárbara's ritual brings out the interdependence of what we usually call "theory" and "practice" in the field of social research and in visual anthropology in particular. If I had not been holding the camera in my hands, I would not have understood what "to look" meant in the rituals of possession, or the relationship between person and visual representation in the religious images. Paradoxically, the visual prohibitions prescribed by the cult group were what spurred my theoretical imagination. Thanks to this practical experience, I could design research methodologies and filming strategies that fit the cultural context I wished to investigate. For example, I decided that, thenceforth, I would film sacred figures in the ritual setting *as if they were persons*. I started to film the images on the altar in close-ups or detailed shots. At certain points, I situated the camera just behind the "back" of the images to express visually the idea that they "were looking at" the faithful during the ceremony. To sum up, it is working with images and putting into practice visual methods of research when one better understands what an image is, and what it means to look and to be seen. Conversely, one cannot use visual research methods that include cinema, photography, drawing, and other visual techniques without having reflected previously on what it means to look and visually represent *in the specific cultural context where one is engaged in research*. In this regard, the allure and difficulty of ethnographic cinema consist precisely in being able to think of anthropology from filmmaking and of filmmaking from anthropology.

How can this ethnographic experience hold out a better understanding of our own conception of vision and images? What does "looking" mean to us? How can we use visual devices (camera, drawing, artificial intelligence, to name a few) to investigate the role of images and visuality today? What does it mean to "make" an image? How can visual modes of "writing" and dissemination foster critical research? These are some of the questions I shall try to answer in this book, in which I aim to approach the interactions between culture, image, and visuality from an anthropological perspective.

The Image Today

The world has changed greatly since 2006, especially in the domain of image and visuality. In recent years, for example, we have become accus-

tomed to interacting with new kinds of images that did not exist back then, among them deepfakes created by using generative AI, hyperrealist holograms that allow "dead" singers to perform "anew" on the stage, GPS maps, and trending memes that are spreading like wildfire in the social networks. More and more people are following influencers and virtual coaches. We are in the age of TikTok, Instagram, and retouching programs, which have revamped the old debates about "fake" images.

We are also witnessing the development and popularization of new vision tools and devices for visual reproduction of reality. Nowadays, not only mobile phones take photos. So do "intelligent" watches, drones, and the many facial tracking and recognition devices, tucked away in the corners of public space. In the field of medicine, endoscopic cameras can be digested by the body, while satellites bring unprecedented images of galaxies we shall never visit.

How can anthropology contribute toward thinking about all these transformations in the realm of the image and visuality? And, conversely, to what extent do these advances in the world of visual culture redefine the aims and methods of contemporary social anthropology?

I am convinced that anthropology is particularly well placed to respond to these transformations in this domain of image and visuality and have two main reasons for saying so.

First, is its own conceptual tradition. Anthropology has historically been concerned to study "nonhegemonic societies." By this I mean societies that did not belong to the urban euromerican milieu and that, in many respects, challenged the conceptual assumptions of modern rationalism. These human groups had (and, in many cases, still have) their own singular ways of giving sense to the world. In order to refer to these cosmologies that defy beliefs and judgments that they might have regarded as universal and normative, anthropologists have needed to turn to new concepts.

Take, for example, the concept of "animism." This concept, which has provoked long discussions within the discipline, denotes the assumption that all beings have a "soul", understood as an individualizing life principle which, with more or less intensity, endows them with the category of "person." Concepts like "animism" may seem a long way from our everyday experience. Yet I think they are useful for thinking about our day-to-day life, especially in the areas of technology and image. For example, we only need to look around us to realize how we are increasingly interacting with machines as if they were persons. We speak of the Internet of Things, intelligent cars, and virtual assistants. Experiments are presently being carried out with hominoid robots as carers of the elderly. We are interacting more and more with deep learning

machines that will become personalized through the relationships they establish with us. Their algorithms will influence actions that will anticipate the consequences of what we do or do not do in the future. We are living in a world dominated by a *technological animism*. A clear example of this is the notion of the "Smart City." We have come through the myth of magical forest of fairytales to reach the enchanted city built on an "intelligent" connection between people and things. The vast conceptual heritage of anthropology—which we must address critically—constitutes a robust intellectual tool for thinking *differently* contemporary changes in the domain of images and vision.

Second, the relevance of anthropology when it comes to analyzing the technological visual revolution in which we are immersed resides in the attention it has historically given to specific modes of living and giving sense to the world—that is, to the ethnographic experience. A lot is being written today about images and visual culture but much of the material published on these subjects is from an abstract and generic perspective, referring to "images" in "contemporary society" and to the influence of screens on "individuals." But exactly who and what are we talking about when we use these expressions?

Anthropology starts out from the premise that is no such thing as images "in abstract," or society or individuals in general, but only *concrete* images and particular ways of relating to them. These forms of relationship are at least partially determined by inherited social and cultural patterns—yet constantly updated by acts of personal and collective "visual creativity" (Canals 2017). It is not obvious that an image of artificial intelligence means exactly the same to a farmer working in a rural area as it does to an IT specialist working for a multinational company such as Google, Facebook, or OpenAI. Since its inception, anthropology has aspired to answer questions of a general nature. In the last instance, its aim is to better understand how human beings give sense to their existence, how they relate with other beings, and the world around them. However, in order to answer these questions, it begins by studying specific practices and societies that afterward can be critically related through an analytical exercise of *theoretical imagination*.

For the social sciences and anthropology in particular, the technological advances in the field of images and visuality not only represent a theoretical and conceptual challenge of the highest order but also, from the methodological standpoint, open the way for new research strategies. For example, can an ethnographic film be made with artificial intelligence? Can we use "manipulation," filters, and visual retouching to *think* about the image from anthropology and anthropology from the image? How can ethnographic photography use mobile phones to

design new participative ethnographic research methods? A hitherto unknown and promising range of visual social research methods is opening out before us. We should make the most of them to imagine the anthropology and research of tomorrow.

Anthropology and Visuality

Study of the image and visuality is at the very heart of anthropology. This is not only because anthropologists *look* at the world in a critical (and often comparative) spirit but also because, from the very beginnings of the discipline at the end of the nineteenth century, ethnographic research has used devices to obtain graphic representation (drawings, photography, films) of reality in order to record encounters with "other cultures." It should also be mentioned that, from its earliest days, anthropology has been more or less systematically interested in the meanings and functions of images in the societies being studied, and it has asked questions about the nature of the act of looking and being looked at.

Today, this consubstantially visual nature of the anthropological project is more evident than ever. To a large extent, this is the case because today vision and image technologies occupy a predominant place in almost all societies. Yet the visual is increasingly a transversal element of anthropological research. Scholars working on gender, consumption, or cultural heritage, for instance, cannot neglect the importance of the visual in these domains. It is true that there is an area of specialization within anthropology that, traditionally known as "visual anthropology," focuses on cultural analysis of images and of the gaze, as well as experimenting with visual methodologies and languages in anthropological research. I shall offer a detailed, updated definition of "visual anthropology" throughout this introduction.

But it must also be admitted that all anthropological research is, in one way or another, visual, since images play a key role in the research process—and so *before* the experience of the fieldwork itself.

For example, imagine going to do fieldwork in a place where you have never been: What is the first thing you do before going there? Well, you look for information using online search engines like Google. You find dozens of images posted online that you can use to construct a *mental image* of the place where you have to work, and of its inhabitants. Hence, the first visual contact with the "field" (or the place where the research is to be done) is, paradoxically, made *off field* and it happens *before you go there*. This visual relationship does not involve an act of direct vision but one of *predictive imagination*. To borrow Jorge Luis Mar-

zo's (2018b) words, in anthropological research (as in life in general), the image has an *anticipatory* nature. It is clear that there is nothing new about this phenomenon of visual anticipation of the ethnographic *locus*. Anthropologists have always prepared for their expeditions with the help of the iconographic elements available at each time (maps, engravings, drawings, archive photographs). What has now changed is the quantity, nature, and ubiquity of these images.

This urge to search for images before any trip or fieldwork is complementary to a process of *iconic verification* that occurs *during and after* the ethnographic experience. The concept of "iconic verification" harks back to procedures employed to assess the reliability or trustworthiness of images. It also signals the role played by images when it comes to validating what we see and what we believe. When we are in a cultural context we have already seen in images, we intuitively contrast direct experience (what we see) with the visual baggage we bring to the experience. We evaluate the reality we observe *in relation to* the images we have seen, either to reaffirm its credibility or to question it. Predictive imagining and iconic verification are two complementary processes that determine the ways in which we anticipate, experience, and value our empirical research. They superimpose past, present, and future and also imagination and knowledge.

Nowadays, most researchers take photographs and make videos during their fieldwork, even if only spontaneously with a mobile phone. The problem is that these images are often produced without previous reflection or planning and without sufficient knowledge of visual technique and language. This means that many of these images end up being wasted because they are not relevant, or the researcher does not know what to do with them. Saved on a mobile phone, or forgotten on a hard drive, at best they can be used to recall moments of the fieldwork or to illustrate some statement made on a PowerPoint presentation for a class or academic congress.

This precarious life of images is not a problem that is unique to anthropology. The existence of digital images is, by nature, ephemeral. Billions of images are produced every single day (4.7 billion, according to a recent count), and many of them will be seen by hardly anyone. The existence of some of them is almost irrelevant, either because of a deliberate decision or for technological reasons. Yet, precisely in contrast with this general tendency toward the immediacy and fitfulness of the image, anthropology and the social sciences should do their best to obtain full, meaningful, and lasting images. In any case, they should aim to experiment with the precariousness of the digital image, to think about it, talk about it, and, if need be, present an alternative. Anthropol-

ogy must question the hegemonic forms of visuality and, in turn, look for different ways of thinking and using images in the social sciences. All visual anthropology must generate *counterimages* that enable the image to be restored as a device and language for doing social research and making it known.

Anthropology, therefore, is intrinsically visual: All anthropologists imagine and think visually and use, in one way or another, visual devices for their research. They all work in places where images play different roles and acquire specific meanings. But it is one thing to refer to what is visual in anthropology and quite another to do this from "visual anthropology" as a specific academic discipline. When I speak of "visual anthropology" I am referring to a particular academic domain, which took off in the 1970s, especially in the Anglo-Saxon and French milieus, and still endures to this day in many universities and research centers everywhere, not only in the disciplines of anthropology and sociology but also in the realms of photography, documentary cinema, design, and the visual arts. I think that visual anthropology that, from its earliest days (and *often at odds* with the academic institution) has been interested in particular ways of understanding images and the facts of looking and being looked at, could hold out an original point of view for thinking about the role of images and of the gaze in today's world. I believe that it contributes a perspective that could be interesting not only for anthropologists and social scientists but also for filmmakers, photographers, and visual artists, among others. So, what is visual anthropology? What are its areas of study, its methods, and formats? How can we *redefine* it so it can help us think about the contemporary world in a creative, critical, and meaningful way?

A Holistic Definition of Visual Anthropology

Even today, one sees that there is some confusion about the idea of "visual anthropology." For example, many people inside and outside of academia identify it simply with documentary photography or ethnographic filmmaking, assimilating these two "genres" into a very particular type of audiovisual productions that aim to represent, supposedly objectively and scientifically, the lives of people of other cultures. This double equation (between visual anthropology and ethnographic filmmaking, and between ethnographic filmmaking and expository documentary making) presents a biased, reductionist view of visual anthropology. Likewise, there are authors who distinguish between visual anthropology and anthropology of images, and others who suggest that

visual anthropology, the anthropology of cinema, and filmic anthropology should be seen as separate. For many others, the extent to which visual anthropology is currently distinguishable from digital anthropology, an anthropology of the media or the so-called visual studies, is not clear. Finally, some scholars propose to simply end with the concept of "visual anthropology" and replace it for other terms—like "multimodal anthropology."

In a certain way, visual anthropology is as old as anthropology itself. The first ethnographic expeditions used filmic and photographic documents to capture and reproduce the many ways of living in the world. Moreover, after the end of the nineteenth century, anthropologists began to take note of the visual aspects of culture ("non-western art," dances and rituals, body ornamentation). This said, most specialists situate the development of visual anthropology after the Second World War. One of the foundational moments of visual anthropology *as an academic discipline* was the publication of the book *Principles of Visual Anthropology* (1975).[6] Edited by Paul Hockings, this is a collection of articles basically focused on photography and ethnographic filmmaking. The book suggests that visual anthropology is essentially anthropology done through visual research techniques (cinema and photography), analysis of "non-western art," and study of photographs as archive material.

Notable in this volume is the widely cited contribution by Margaret Mead called "Visual Anthropology in a Discipline of Words," a programmatic text in which Mead champions the potential of images in ethnographic research, especially with regard to the ability of photography and film to record and store nonverbal aspects of everyday life that can later be analyzed again and again by different researchers. She provocatively calls anthropology a "discipline of words," which means at least two things. First, it is a discipline that has overlooked the potential of images in ethnographic research (photography, filmmaking, drawing) and, second, that anthropology has mostly concerned itself with studying aspects of culture (like mythology and kinship) that are especially prone to be analyzed through texts, while ignoring other aspects (like the body, emotions, and play) with which the image has shown a special affinity. This latter aspect, which Mead only mentions in passing, is unquestionably the more interesting because it paves the way for understanding that the specificity of visual anthropology resides not only in the way "culture" is studied but also in the themes of culture where attention is focused. David MacDougall (1998) has aptly insisted on this point: Visual anthropology is not about doing the same (written) anthropology through visual means, but rather about exploring new ways of doing anthropology, turning our interest toward aspects of hu-

man experience for whose study cinema, photography or drawing have showed a special affinity—like the senses and the corporeal.

Since the publication of *Principles of Visual Anthropology*, many books have offered definitions of visual anthropology, especially in the Anglo-Saxon domain but also France, Spain, Latin America, and Asia. Visual anthropology has engaged with other branches of anthropology (anthropology of the media, anthropology of the senses, anthropology of design, digital anthropology and, recently, multimodal anthropology) as well as with art, photography, cinema, and social work, thus becoming essentially eclectic. As Jean-Paul Colleyn argues (2012), more than a discipline, it has been constituted as a *carrefour* through which anthropologists, filmmakers, art historians, semiologists, and artists, among others, have passed. Accordingly, visual anthropology has not been endowed with a closed and commonly accepted definition. There is no need for this to be cause for concern or criticism. On the contrary, it shows that this is a discipline that is open, heterogeneous, and changing as are, indeed, social and cultural anthropology. The point on which all authors agree is the fact that visual anthropology considers both the visual aspects of a culture (especially studying images) and the use of audiovisual techniques for ethnographic research.

In this book, I suggest that visual anthropology could be defined as a branch of social and cultural anthropology that brings together four domains that are different even if *intrinsically* intermeshed. I refer to the (1) relational study of images, (2) cultural analysis of the gaze, (3) use of audiovisual methods for social research, and (4) experimentation with images as a *form of writing* or "representation" of knowledge. Each of the chapters of this book is devoted to one of these areas, which I shall describe briefly here.

Visual anthropology is primarily concerned with the interactions that individuals establish with and through images, understood not only as visual signs that convey meanings but mainly as entities endowed, at least potentially, with strong subjectivity with which we are constantly weaving affective relationships. Anthropology of the image adopts a relational perspective. It does not aim to analyze the image "in the abstract" but, *through fieldwork*, to inquire into the meanings and functions certain images acquire in different social and cultural contexts and always in the framework of *specific* social interactions. Here, the image is considered not only as a mere representation possessing a symbolic value but, rather, as a social actor that is able to produce actions and give new meaning to the relations that a particular community preserves within itself and in relation to the outside world. Anthropology of images engages with iconology, history of art, and semiology among other disciplines.

Anthropology of the gaze studies from a comparative standpoint the cultural significance of the act of looking and being looked at. Once again, when analyzing the gaze its perspective is relational, emphasizing how we learn to look and give meaning to what we see, and how the act of looking constructs our everyday relationships with other beings. Anthropology of the gaze also ventures into the relationship between looking and imagining, as well as the visual regulations that all social groups impose on themselves (what may and may not be seen). One of its areas of research is also devices for seeing (cameras, telescopes, "intelligent" glasses) with a focus on how these instruments modulate our perception of the world and our relationships with others. This domain of study fits, for example, with studies on cognition, optics, ecological anthropology, anthropology of the senses, and visual studies, to name a few.

Another one of the fields of visual anthropology is what might be called "visual ethnographies." Ethnography is usually understood as fieldwork in which the anthropologist, immersed in a particular social group, establishes close ties with its members and learns about its way of life and how it understands the world. From this standpoint, visual anthropology can be defined as the use of visual images and methods as strategies of social research for fieldwork. It should be emphasized that visual ethnography is not about putting earlier research "into images" but knowing how to use visual devices and strategies creatively in order to discover something new about the cultural and social world that otherwise might not have been known (or not in the same way). In other words, what is of interest here is to determine the uniqueness of the visual as a method of research. Traditionally, visual ethnography has advanced in close relationship with documentary cinema and photography. Today, it also presents affinities in the spheres of artistic practice and social education, inter alia.

Finally, visual anthropology also sets out to experiment with the possibilities of the image as a form of writing or "representation." Historically speaking, anthropologists have written texts and, to be more specific, books and academic articles. But it is also possible to "write" or communicate anthropological knowledge through images. It happens more and more often that ethnographic research results in a film, a photo-essay, a graphic novel, or a project taking the form of an exhibition. The following questions then arise: What are the epistemological and aesthetic differences that distinguish the written text from the audiovisual work in the case of anthropology? And what can be said with images that cannot be said with words? For many years, this debate has caused a kind of schism in the discipline of anthropology with defend-

ers and detractors clashing over the image as a legitimate form of anthropological discourse. This debate is now totally outdated. The point is not about choosing between text and image but exploring how both forms of thinking and representing knowledge can be brought together critically and creatively to study human (and nonhuman) experience. The "multimodal turn" (Collins et al., 2017), which I shall discuss in this book, is moving precisely in the direction of promoting new plural and hybrid forms of writing in anthropology—something that, in a way, visual anthropology has always done since visual anthropologists have also written articles and books and have often participated in exhibitions or artistic projects involving images, words and, eventually, sound.

Along these lines, I shall uphold throughout this book anthropology's interest in producing a multiplicity of different results (articles, photographs, exhibitions, and so on), involving texts, images, and other forms of representation, thus producing what I call an *eclectic assemblage*. Studies on "visual writing" also raise the question of audience and reception of studies produced by anthropologists. For whom do we anthropologists make films? What role should anthropology play in public debates about the image and visuality in tomorrow's society? The domain of visual writing engages with film and photography studies (especially with theories of montage), with art, with journalism, and with theories of visual communication.

It is important to note that, except for some relevant exceptions, these four main areas of visual anthropology have developed relatively independently. Hence, for example, many researchers who have analyzed images from an anthropological perspective have done so without having the practical visual knowledge that would allow them systematic experience of what producing images entails and what it means, from the technical and conceptual point of view, to face the challenge of "visual writing." This separation may have made some sense or been justifiable a few decades ago when visual devices were not easily obtainable. But is it still possible, today, to study "theoretically" the role of images in society without using some kind of visual method of research? And without including images when constructing the anthropological discourse? Can we use visual research methodologies without wondering about how we look at visual signs, and how we interpret them? I think not.

To give another example, many researchers who have used visual techniques in their studies when making ethnographic films or photographs have done so without sufficient consideration of the theoretical issue of the ontology of images, and the questions of sign, mimesis, and representation, among others. Incorporating audiovisual methods into the fieldwork without asking "what is an image?" or wondering what the

act of "looking" and "being looked at" means and implies in each particular cultural and social context can lead to a certain epistemological superficiality or, worse, to ethically complex and compromised situations (imagine, for example, what might have happened if, ignoring the warnings of Bárbara's mother, I had frontally filmed the possessed medium when she was in a trance). The design of visual ethnography depends on the status that the image and seeing are given in the context where one wishes to carry out the research. One cannot just throw oneself into producing images without first thinking about what it means to represent the world by means of visual signs or, in other words, without giving due attention to the visual ontology pertaining to the context of the study.

In academic terms, this breaking up of visual anthropology into four spheres has been profoundly counterproductive since it has contributed toward hardening the division—so highly criticized today—between "theory" and "practice" or, in other words, between those who think about the image and those who produce it. In many of the subjects taught in "visual anthropology," one of the effects of this disunion has been an ignoring of studies on iconology, semiology, and visuality, thus reducing visual anthropology to the limited field of visual ethnography and, in particular, "ethnographic cinema" and "documentary photography."

In order to overcome these epistemological and academic divisions, in this book I call for a *holistic approach* to the study of the intersections between anthropology, image, and visual culture, which would come together in a double orientation that is both theoretical and practical. Visual anthropology must be able to critically construct an anthropology of images, with images and through images, which also includes comparative reflection on the act of looking and the fact of being seen, as well as engaging in a lively exchange with cinema, photography, and artistic practices, among other disciplines, thus designing strategies to intervene in the world along the lines of public anthropology. As I see it, the specificity of visual anthropology resides in its ability to bring about a creative interrelationship between the four spheres I have described, while linking them at the same time with the general debates of social and cultural anthropology and with other disciplines.

In recent years, I have found that more and more social researchers want to include a visual aspect in their research, whether it is by studying iconographic elements present in today's society (advertising, tattoos, social networks, gender representations) or engaging in some kind of visual production during fieldwork (filming, photography, drawing), which will later allow them to think about the ethnography and dissem-

inate the results of their research by means of strategies that are not exclusively textual (documentary, installation, photo-essay). Moreover, I have come to realize that many photographers, documentary filmmakers, and artists (as well as architects, urban planners, and social workers) have chosen to move closer to anthropology—and visual anthropology in particular—when designing and developing their projects.

With this book, I have hoped to provide answers to this growing interest by contributing a conceptually original and methodologically useful and original text that could be inspiring for anthropologists who are interested in the domain of the image and of visual culture, and also for photographers, filmmakers, and artists who want to include an anthropological perspective in their work.

Notes

1. The term "Afro-American religions" denotes a set of ceremonies and beliefs that arose in Latin America and the Caribbean as a result of the "encounter" of Amerindian cultures, the sacred practices of enslaved Africans brought to the American colonies, Catholicism, and other currents like spiritism, occultism, and orientalism, among others.
2. A similar sequence can be seen in the film *A Goddess in Motion: María Lionza in Barcelona* (2016, Roger Canals, Wenner-Gren Foundation). This film can be watched here: www.va-marialionza.com.
3. See *The Many Faces of a Venezuelan Goddess* (2007, Roger Canals, CNRS-Images/EHESS). This film can be watched here: www.va-marialionza.com.
4. For a further analysis of this scene, see Canals (2018).
5. At that time, I was working on my PhD at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales in Paris under cotutelle with the University of Barcelona. My supervisors were Jean-Paul Colleyn (EHESS) and Joan Bestard (UB). I would like to thank them for their continuous support.
6. Nevertheless, there were other publications before this book appeared. The journal *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication* had appeared in 1974, and in 1967 John Collier and Malcolm Collier had published the important work *Visual Anthropology: Photography as a Research Method.*