



# Smithsonian

*National Museum of Natural History*

## Guide to the Society for Visual Anthropology records, 1968-2013

The processing of this collection was funded by the Society for Visual Anthropology.

National Anthropological Archives  
Museum Support Center  
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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	National Anthropological Archives
<b>Title:</b>	Society for Visual Anthropology records
<b>Date:</b>	1968-2013
<b>Identifier:</b>	NAA.2010-07
<b>Creator:</b>	Society for Visual Anthropology (U.S.)
<b>Location:</b>	The collection is stored off-site. Advanced notice must be given to view the collection.
<b>Extent:</b>	10 Linear feet
<b>Language:</b>	English .

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## Administrative Information

### Provenance

These records were transferred to the National Anthropological Archives by the Society for Visual Anthropology through various deposits since 1993. Jay Ruby's files comprise the first deposit at the archives. The records of other past presidents were collected by Joanna Scherer, who served as archivist and historian for SVA. These were in turn transferred to the archives.

### Preferred Citation

Society for Visual Anthropology records, National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution

### Restrictions

The Society for Visual Anthropology records is open for research.

Access to the Society for Visual Anthropology records requires an appointment.

### Conditions Governing Use

Contact the repository for terms of use.

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## Historical Note

The Society for Visual Anthropology (SVA) was founded as a section of the American Anthropological Association (AAA) in 1984. It was formed to promote the study and use of visual media in anthropological research. The history of SVA can be traced back to the Program in Ethnographic Film (PIEF), a committee of AAA founded in 1966 by Richard Gardner and Asen Balikci at Harvard University. The mission of PIEF, which was formed through funding from the Wenner-Gren Foundation, was to encourage and support teaching, training, and production with respect to ethnographic films. PIEF moved to Temple University in 1969 when Jay Ruby assumed leadership of the program. A newsletter was established and film screenings became part of AAA's scholarly program at its annual meetings. In response to a growing interest in other forms of visual media, several members of PIEF at the 1971 AAA annual meeting discussed forming a new organization

that would have a broader reach and encompass all who were interested in the cultural dimensions of visual communication and behavior (Ruby, 1974). The following year the formation of this new organization was discussed in further detail at the Summer Institute of Visual Anthropology (SIVA), sponsored by PIEF and funded by the National Science Foundation. As a result, PIEF was dissolved at the 1973 AAA meeting, and the Society for the Anthropology of Visual Communication (SAVICOM) was established in its place. The PIEF newsletter became an official publication of SAVICOM, which also began publishing a new journal called *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication*. In 1984, SAVICOM was dissolved and replaced with SVA as an official section of AAA. SVA established a newsletter and *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication* ceased publication in 1985. In 1990, SVA Newsletter was briefly renamed *SVA Review* before it became the peer-reviewed journal *Visual Anthropology Review* the following year. Since 1985, SVA has sponsored the Visual Research Conference, held annually a few days before the official AAA meeting. The society also holds a film and media festival during the AAA conference, at which the works of students, professional anthropologists, and professional filmmakers are screened. In addition to serving as a forum for members interested in visual anthropology, SVA has advocated the use of visual media for satisfying promotion and tenure requirements. In 2001, AAA formally approved guidelines created by SVA for the professional evaluation of ethnographic visual media.

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## Content Description

These records document the history and activities of the Society for Visual Anthropology. The collection consists of the files of past presidents, most of whom served in various capacities on the organization's board. Consequently, the files of each individual may cover periods outside his or her presidency, and duplication of files may exist across series. Materials in the collection include correspondence, both within SVA and with AAA representatives; by-laws; board meeting agenda, minutes, and reports; election nominations and results; financial statements; programs and materials 5 documenting preparations for the annual Visual Research Conference, the film and media festival, and AAA program sessions; and SVA publications and related correspondence. The collection also contains materials pertaining to the predecessors of SVA: PIEF and SAVICOM. These include Jay Ruby's files documenting the activities of both organizations as well as their publications.

Please note that the contents of the collection and the language and terminology used reflect the context and culture of the time of its creation. As an historical document, its contents may be at odds with contemporary views and terminology and considered offensive today. The information within this collection does not reflect the views of the Smithsonian Institution or National Anthropological Archives, but is available in its original form to facilitate research.

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## Arrangement

Collection is organized into 9 series: 1) Peter Biella, 2003-2005; 2) Richard Chalfen, 1988, 1990-1991; 3) Malcolm Collier, 1993-1995, 1997-1999; 4) Fadwa El Guindi, 1987, 1990-1996, undated; 5) Jay Ruby, 1968-1973; 6) Joanna Scherer, 1985-2013; 7) Anne Zeller, 1988, 1990, 1994-1998, 2000-2009, 2011; 8) Publications, 1970-1989; 9) Posters, 1991, 2000, 2005-2006

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Professional associations  
Visual anthropology

Names:

American Anthropological Association