



PEABODY MUSEUM
of ARCHAEOLOGY & ETHNOLOGY

PRESS RELEASE

Sensory Ethnography: New Harvard Student Ethnographic Works

MEET THE FILMMAKERS



Still frame from *Songhua* by J.P. Sniadecki, about the Chinese city of Harbin's residents and their river. The film has been screened at the 2007 SIGGRAPH Festival, UC Santa Barbara's Media Fields Conference, and the 2007 Double Hung exhibition. It made its international debut at the Shadow Film Festival in Amsterdam.

Where: Sherman Fairchild Auditorium, Fairchild Bldg., 7 Divinity Ave., Cambridge

When: 5:30 PM, Wednesday, February 11, 2009

Contact: 617-496-1027 (Public Information)

(Cambridge, January 11, 2009) The Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology presents a program exploring the latest innovations in ethnographic film. The event will feature two short video works about experience, culture, and nature by Harvard Visual and Environmental Studies (VES) and Anthropology students. The presentation, *Sensory Ethnography: New Harvard Student Ethnographic Works*, will include an opportunity to meet the filmmakers, with a discussion moderated by Peabody Museum Associate Curator of Visual Anthropology Ilisa Barbash.

As part of a VES/Anthropology course “Sensory Ethnography,” students were challenged to move beyond the traditional form of ethnographic filmmaking, in which anthropologists document unfamiliar cultures. Instead, the students were encouraged to engage both familiar and unfamiliar cultural phenomena with fresh eyes and ears.

The Peabody Museum has long played an important role in the making and teaching of visual anthropology and has provided institutional support to films that are recognized as pivotal documents of ethnographic film history. The Museum continues to support and further innovative visual anthropology with photographic fellowships, research, exhibitions, and screenings.

About the Films and Filmmakers

Songhua, by J.P. Sniadecki, depicts the intimate relationship between Harbin city residents in northeastern China and their mother river. It has been screened at the 2007 SIGGRAPH Festival, UC Santa Barbara's Media Fields Conference, the Harvard Film Archive, and the 2007 Double Hung exhibition. It made its international debut at the Shadow Film Festival in Amsterdam. *Songhua* was produced with support from Harvard's Media Anthropology Lab and the Harvard Asia Center. J.P. Sniadecki is a Social Anthropology doctoral candidate at Harvard University. He studied film and video as an undergraduate in Michigan, where he created his first feature-length film *Working Classics* (2002), a

documentary about his work as a liberal arts instructor at a Michigan prison. Sniadecki spent his junior year in Shanghai learning Mandarin. *Songhua* combines his interests in Chinese society, media anthropology, and filmmaking.

Mud Missive, shot and edited by Fatin Abbas, is an essayistic video focusing on the work of potters located on the banks of the White Nile in Khartoum, Sudan. *Mud Missive* interweaves its contemplation of mud and clay with an exploration of issues of personal and national identity. The filmmaker's visual reflections on the potters' activities and materials become a vehicle for reflections on her own situation as a Sudanese expatriate, as well as the situation of a Sudanese nation in conflict with itself. Fatin Abbas is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Literature and Comparative Literature at Harvard, with an interest in film and visual studies. She was born in Khartoum, Sudan and has worked with international nongovernmental organizations in the country. *Mud Missive* is her first film.

About the Peabody Museum

The Peabody Museum is among the oldest archaeological and ethnographic museums in the world with one of the finest collections of human cultural history found anywhere. It is home to superb materials from Africa, ancient Europe, North America, Mesoamerica, Oceania, and South America in particular. In addition to its archaeological and ethnographic holdings, the Museum's photographic archives, one of the largest of its kind, hold more than 500,000 historical photographs, dating from the mid-19th century to the present and chronicling anthropology, archaeology, and world culture.

Location: *The Peabody Museum is located at 11 Divinity Avenue in Cambridge. The Museum is a short walk from the Harvard Square MBTA station.*

Hours: 9 A.M. to 5 P.M., seven days a week. The Museum is closed on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day. Admission is \$9 for adults, \$7 for students and seniors, \$6 for children, 3–18. Free with Harvard ID or Museum membership. The Museum is free to Massachusetts residents Sundays, 9 A.M. to noon, year round, and Wednesdays from 3 P.M. to 5 P.M. (September to May). Admission includes admission to the Harvard Museum of Natural History. For more information call 617-496-1027 or go online to: www.peabody.harvard.edu.

Media Contact: Faith Sutter, Communications Coordinator
Peabody Museum
11 Divinity Ave.
Cambridge, MA 02138
Tel: (617)495-3397; Fax: (617)495-7535, sutter@fas.harvard.edu