Balikci (1975) Reconstructing Cultures on Film.

This article details the various means and pitfalls of creating a recreating a culture in film. The article asserts that any time a real setting is established and a true historical background is created that the film is reconstructing culture. Balikci states that within visual anthropology (which includes ethnographic film) "the general aim is to partially reconstruct sequences of traditional behavior as part of the routinized social process." (Balikci 1975: 191) This means that in this field, the visual anthropologists attempts to reflect the social constructs of the subject by focusing on aspects or, more regularly, an aspect of the traditional culture. An example would be showing the masculine dominated society of the culture exhibited through The Guardians of the Flute through the viewing of the specific cultural sequence of coming of age rituals within the film. good example

Balikci breaks visual anthropologists into three categories; those who create a mystic quality around their subjects, those who are attempting to solely capture the rituals and pasts of a culture in order to "supplement, partially at least, the monographs of early anthropologists" (Balikci 1975:192) and those who recreate traditions in order to supplement a larger course curriculum in an educational environment. So, the first sort of film-maker can be seen as the Hollywood-type, who makes their work for the purpose of enjoyable viewing (a film like Grass), the second can be seen as those who make the film in order to simply add to cultural knowledge (something like Dani Sweet Potatoes), and the last is that which shows both the culture as it was, and culture how it is now (Nanook: Revisited) good assessment

Balikci goes on to explain that recreations can take three forms, reconstructing the whole culture, reconstructing a large group, but not the entire culture, or reconstructing one specific subject. These three methods each present their own challenges, but the most difficult, according to Balikci is reconstructing a whole culture. This is because the scope is simply massive, and with no longer existent culture, like native Australians, it can be near impossible.

Film makers can choses how to represent themselves within the films. Since no film making is completely objective, the film maker must choses how to address this lack of objectivity. They can face it head on, and call attention to it, or as with more traditional ethnographies, the choice can be made to hide the objectivity, and limit it's power within the film.

Balikci shows that in reconstructing a culture the visual anthropologist is confronted with a number of choices on not only how to reconstruct the culture, but also how to represent the film maker itself. These choices can be made based on budget, ambition, and artistic merit, but all have a massive impact on the result of the final product. Good job, and you write well. At about 460 words it's quite a bit longer than the 300 word limit—please pay attention to word counts.