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# Families Seen Sightseeing



## Performativity of Tourist Photography

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*Ideas of embodiment and performance have been crucial in destabilizing the visual hegemony of images, cameras, and gazes in tourist studies. This article discusses how a practice-inspired performance perspective potentially allows a more satisfying account of tourist photography's "nature" than conventional "representational" ones in which tourist photography is dismissed as "all eyes and no bodies and sometimes no brain." The author writes a new account, seeing tourist photography as performed rather than preformed and tourist photographers as framing as much as being framed. Tourist photography is a choreographed and experimental performance connecting the representational and nonrepresentational. Tourist photography is made less visual and more embodied, less concerned with "consuming" places than with producing social relationships, such as family life. The author examines the performances and performativities, the embodied practices and textual and corporeal choreographies, of tourist photography within a family photography context, the "family gaze." The article draws on ethnographic research of tourist photographic performances at northern Europe's largest medieval ruined castle, Hammershus.*

*Keywords: photography; tourism; performance; performativity; family picturing*

### Introduction: Toward Embodied Photographies

More than 10 years ago, Veijola and Jokinen (1994) sarcastically revealed that most male tourism theorists overlooked the corporeality of tourism practices. Recently, however, male theorists—alongside female writers such as Johnston (2001), Wearing and Wearing (1996), and Veijola and Jokinen (2000)—have turned to ideas of embodiment and performance to destabilize the visual hegemony of images, cameras, and gazes in tourist studies (Bærenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen, & Urry, 2004; Coleman & Crang, 2002b; Edensor, 2000, 2001; Franklin, 2003; Franklin & Crang, 2001; Perkins

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& Thorns, 2001). This article discusses how a *practice*-inspired performance perspective potentially enable one to write a more satisfying account of tourist photography's "nature" than conventional "representational" ones in which tourist photography has been dismissed as "all eyes and no bodies and sometimes no brain." In much literature, the camera work of tourists is too easily and too quickly seen as passive, superficial, and disembodied, a discursively prefigured activity of "quotation." Here, the tourist is framed and moved but seldom framing and moving.

This article suggests that the "nature" of tourist photography is a complex "theatrical" one of corporeal, expressive actors; scripts and choreographies; staged and enacted "imaginative geographies." I write a new account that sees tourist photography as *performed* rather than preformed and tourist photographers as framing as much as being framed. Tourist photography is made less visual and more embodied, less concerned with spectatorship and "consuming places" than with *producing* place myths, social roles, and social relationships, such as family life. It examines the performances and performativities, the embodied practices as well as textual and corporeal choreographies, of tourist photography within a context of family photography, or what I elsewhere termed the "family gaze" (Haldrup & Larsen, 2003; Larsen, 2003). The "family gaze" introduces questions of sociality and social relations into discussions of tourist vision and photography. Thus, rather than making an unproductive dualism between representations and the nonrepresentational, as some performance theorists are prone to, I outline an approach to performance that can accommodate Urry's (1990, 2002) notion of the "tourist gaze," which draws attention to the "choreographed" nature of vision in tourism. Discussions of the "tourist gaze" have not been sufficiently examined in relation to material cultures and concrete bodily performance; it has been caught within a "determining" economy of representations and discourses, even though each gaze depends on practices and physical relations as much as discourses (Urry, 2002, p. 145).

## Methods

This article draws on ethnographic research of tourist photographic performances conducted at northern Europe's largest medieval ruined castle, Hammershus, on the Danish island of Bornholm. Hammershus is surrounded by and has spectacular and extensive views of the sea, cliffs, and dales. The combined cultural and natural grandeur of the place has charmed tourists for some 150 years. It is by far Bornholm's most visited site. Everywhere one looks at this traditional high-cultural sight, there are children and families.

Inspired by Pink's (2001) photo-essays on bullfighting and Parr and Winchester's (1995) captivating photographic work on snapshot tourism's *small world*, my particular way of observing photographic performances is structured around photographing "photographing tourists." Because cameras and photographers were ubiquitous in both places, people seldom noticed that my camera was aimed at them, not at the attraction. I portrayed photographic performers who were unaware of my presence: They did *not* pose for my camera, and I never asked them to do so. I aimed at "documentary" photography. I am certainly not arguing that the photographs I produced are passive mirrors of "reality." I take a reflexive approach to visual ethnography that acknowledges the subjective, constructed, and partial nature of the photographs pre-

sented and the knowledge produced through them (Pink, 2001; Rose, 2001). First, their slices of “reality” are something made, shaped by my particular “way of seeing.” I chose what to photograph and which photographs to include in the text. Second, photographs can only “document” a split second of a performance: The before and after are always missing. In this sense, they are evidently only partial and incomplete “documentation” (Clifford, 1986). They authenticate a moment of a performance, not the performance itself. Furthermore, cameras can only “record” those aspects of performances that are visible or observable. They can reveal the bodily aspects of performances but not the imaginative ones. Third, their meanings are not inherent within them; they need interpretation to become meaningful, and they can be analyzed meaningfully in many ways.

To bring out tourists’ own accounts of their photographic performances, I conducted 23 semistructured, qualitative interviews at the exit from Hammershus so that people had their photographic performances fresh in mind. Except for one German couple, the interviews were with Danish tourists, and they were mainly families vacationing with their young children. These interviews lasted from 10 minutes to almost half an hour. To be able to examine tourists’ own photographs, I asked for copies of their Bornholm photos after the interviews. Ten “families” subsequently provided me with these photographs, which “capture” their particular vacations on the island. Elsewhere, I have analyzed these 652 pictures of Bornholm quantitatively through “content analysis” and qualitatively through “semiotic-inspired readings” (see Larsen, 2003). This article uses some of the photographs I made of the “picturing families,” as well as a few collected photographs produced by tourists, with which to make illustrations and arguments (the families secretly photographed were not the same as the families providing pictures).

## Theorizing Performance and Performativity

To speak of tourist photography as a performance can mean many things. The first part of this article is a theoretical discussion of the major performance approaches within social science and how they have influenced performance work within tourist studies. These discussions enable me to bring out more precisely what I intend to mean by understanding tourist photography as a performance.

The major sociological pioneer theorist of performance was Goffman. In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1959) outlined a “dramaturgical” framework to describe everyday social encounters and interaction. Following Park, Goffman noted that the etymology of *person* is *mask* (p. 30). For Goffman, the self is a performed character, a public performer with carefully managed impressions. Being-in-the-world and social life are described as fundamentally performative and put on stage for an audience. People as everyday actors are reflexive and strategic agents moving between different sociospatial stages (or regions) requiring and allowing specific performances. These are front-stage and backstage regions. A public performance is put on show in front-stage regions; in backstage regions, these performances may “knowingly contradict”; “backstage” regions allow masks to be lifted temporally (p. 114). Central to performance is the idea that “a correctly staged and performed scene leads the audience to impute a self to a performed character, but this imputation—the self—is a product of the scene that comes of it” (p. 252). Hence, Goffman claims that

performances are socially negotiated not only between actors but also with a present or imagined audience in mind. Therefore, as Gregson and Rose (2000, p. 433) and Schieffelin (1998, pp. 195, 202) have noted, the self of Goffman's writing is intentional, calculating, and strategic, existing prior to the "show."

Goffman's notions of front-stage and backstage regions were central to MacCannell's (1976/1999) now classic work on the staging of authenticity in modern tourism. MacCannell's argument was that tourists desire authenticity, or backstage realities, but they often encounter only "staged authenticity" put on show in front-stage regions. Phil Crang (1994) has used Goffman's framework to discuss how tourism as a service economy is typified by face-to-face performances. He shows how waiting work in a dinner-style restaurant is a form of conscious acting that is simultaneously scripted and creative, taking place before the dining audience. Edensor (1998, 2000, 2001), who recently has written extensively about tourism and performance, imports much of Goffman's language, speaking of tourists as improvising performers, actors, cast members; sites as stages; guides as directors; and so on (see also Erickson, 2004).

Butler (1993) puts a different approach to performance, or rather *performativity*, forward in her work on the construction of gender and sex. In contrast to Goffman's dramaturgical approach, Butler deploys a linguistic definition of performativity that works not with an agentive and manipulating subject but with a subject that is produced within constantly recycled performances that become so routinized as to appear natural: Identities do not preexist their performance. The performative succeeds only because it is ritualized practice, echoing prior speech actions and therefore "citing" previous authoritative practices. For Butler, performativity resembles Foucault's rethinking of power; it is not "the act by which a subject brings into being what she/he names, but, rather...the reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains" (p. 2). Performances are produced by power's social script rather than by people's performance abilities, as Goffman seems to suggest (Gregson & Rose, 2000, p. 441). Performativity and performance in Butler's work thus signify, first and foremost, the "forced repetition of norms" that reproduce and cement—rather than destabilizes—cultural identities.

It is partly because Butler (1993) is more interested in discourses than practices and because her notion of performativity is lacking a sense of play and creativity that Thrift (2000, p. 414) is critical of her. What Thrift has termed "nonrepresentational geography" takes a modest ontological stance, rooted in everyday *practices*, that sees the "social world" as continually (re)produced through performances of doing and acting. It

emphasises the flow of practice in everyday life as *embodied*, as caught up with and committed to the creation of affect, as contextual, and as *technologised* through language and objects.... Clearly, then, a nonrepresentational outlook depends upon understanding and working with everyday as a set of skills which are highly performative. (Thrift & Dewsbury, 2000, p. 415)

This approach valorizes *all* the senses, embodied skills, and bodily enactments and acknowledges that "the 'material' and the 'social' intertwine and interact in all manner of combinations" (Thrift, 1996, p. 24). Being inspired by "actor-network theory," it sees bodies and technologies as intimately connected. Human performances are never purely "social" or "human" but tied up with tangible nonhumans. They are thus hybrids. "Nonrepresentational" tourist writers such as Franklin (2003), Pons (2003),

and Larsen and Haldrup (in press) have begun to discuss how tourist performances are made possible by objects, machines, and technologies. Material cultures are crucial in tourism performances because they have *use value* that enhances the physicality of the body and enables it to do things and sense realities that would otherwise be beyond its accomplishment (Parrinello, 2001, p. 210). Modern tourism is full of hybrids. The “camera tourist” is one of the significant ones.

“Nonrepresentational geography” is concerned with “‘performative presentations,’ ‘showings’ and ‘manifestations’” rather than merely “representation” and “meaning” (Thrift, 1997, p. 127). The latter is seen as a momentary product of the former, not the other way around; it is argued that our grasp of the world is primarily practical. In contrast to Butler’s (1993) performativity theory of coded performances, Thrift (1997) uses the case of dance to make the argument that many social performances are pre-representational and prechoreographed. However, unlike Goffman’s calculating actor, Thrift argues that most embodied thinking and doing are noncognitive, practical, and habitual but nonetheless potentially creative and unpredictable.

Crouch’s (2002) work on embodied tourism that crucially combines “the material and the immaterial and the metaphorical” (p. 210) has transported “nonrepresentational theory” into tourist studies. Crouch’s (2003) practice perspective celebrates the embodied nature of tourism and performativity as containing possibilities of the “unexpected, the different, the risky” (p. 1946). He illuminates that tourism essentially is a bodily practice. Tourists are “surrounded by place” (Crouch, 2002), and their encounters are complexly sensual; they are embodied. Significantly, Crouch argues that embodiment relates not only to physicality but also to imagination, fantasy, context, and “making sense” of “doings.” Tourists perform places sensuously, mentally, and imaginatively; places exist on the ground, in mental landscapes, and in material cultures of images and objects (Crouch, 2002, p. 208). Moreover, Crouch does not oppose non-representational and representational thinking, as Thrift does. He seeks a path that can explore how representations may be negotiated and reconfigured in everyday life and the production of lay geographical knowledge (Crouch, Aronsson, & Wahlström, 2001, p. 258). Crouch’s work echoes in some ways the earlier “feminist” and “interactionist” writing of Wearing and Wearing (1996). Against the “male” idea of the tourist as a *flâneur* and the tourist destination as an “image” for the tourist gaze, they reconceptualize the tourist as an interacting embodied subject and tourist places as interactive *spaces* that are made meaningful and lively by embodied, social practices.

This brief discussion has testified to the “essentially contested nature” of performance with some theorists viewing it as reinforcing cultural givens and others seeing it as at least subversive (Carlson, 1996, p. 24). Like Goffman and Thrift, I take a *practice* approach to performance. What typifies this performance approach is that it deals with actions more than texts, with habits and expressive powers of the body more than structures of symbols, with the social construction of reality rather than its representation (Schieffelin, 1998, p. 194). It is concerned with the art of producing now. However, performances are also about choreographies. Goffman as well as Thrift and even Crouch tend to neglect “social” and “material” choreographies of performances. To speak of performances (or practices) without taking account of their staging and scripting is naive. Performances of tourism are “discursive practices.”

Thrift’s presocial conceptualization of dance is mistaken, as argued by Nash (2000): “Not only is dance always mediated by words as it is taught, scripted, performed and watched but dance is also often highly formalized and stylised; even untrained dance

is culturally located” (p. 658). Dance is also about speech, writing, text, and power relations. In articles that discuss tourism as a “performed art,” Adler (1989a, 1989b) shows how

the traveller’s body, as the literal vehicle of travel art, has been subject to historical construction and stylistic constraint. The very senses through which the traveller receives culturally valued experience have been moulded by differing degrees of cultivation and, indeed, discipline. (Adler, 1989a, p. 8)

The tourist body “is therefore both a physical entity with an immediate geography and culturally defined in terms of a style or body use” (Rodaway, 1994, p. 35). For that reason, a performance perspective must always be connected to performativity. In Gregson and Rose’s (2000) words, “Performance—what individual subjects do, say, ‘act-out’—and performativity—the citational practices which reproduce and/or subvert discourse and which enable and discipline subjects and their performances—are inherently connected, through the saturation of performers with power” (p. 434). Tourist bodies are simultaneously preformed *and* performing.

Such a performance outlook emphasizes human life as embodied, creative, interactive, and tied up with “enabling” discourses and technologies. I follow the anthropologist Schieffelin (1998), who argues that “performance is located at the creative, *improvisatory* edge of practice in the moment it is carried out—through everything that comes across is not necessarily knowingly intended” (p. 199). Tourists occasionally perform tourism reflexively, but much tourism life is conducted habitually. But following Goffman, I argue that performances—unlike practices—require audiences: real or imagined, now or later. We can now define performances as day-to-day cultural improvisations before an audience; performances are about “giving off” impressions. Therefore, because “nonrepresentational geography” never speaks of audiences, it is in fact a theory of (expressive) practice rather than performance.

The brilliance of Edensor’s take on performance is that he portrays performances of tourism as involving ambivalent relationships between home and away, tourists and the industry, possibilities and constraint, creativity and conducting. Thus, against the discussed tendency to highlight performances as preformed or subversive, even free, Edensor (2001) stresses that performance “can be conceived in more ambivalent and contradictory terms...as intentional and unintentional, concerned with both being and becoming, strategically and unreflexively embodied” (p. 78). In Edensor’s conceptualization of performance, “agency, creativity, structure, and constraint become simultaneous,” in Hughes-Freeland’s (1999, p. 8) words. Although inspired by Goffman, Edensor is clearly aware that tourism creativity are framed and learned through structures of “production,” cultural discourses, and everyday dispositions. Many tourist performances are “replete with unconsidered habits” and “fashioned by culturally coded escape attempts” (Edensor, 2001, p. 61). When stepping into particular stages, preexisting discursive, practical, embodied norms and concrete guiding by guides and signs usually choreograph tourists (Edensor, 2001, p. 71). Such “choreographies” are guidelines, blueprints, and nothing more (or less), and they enable as much as they constrain creativity.

Tourists are not just written on; they are also enacting and inscribing places with “stories.” In much tourist writing, places are presumed to be relatively fixed, given, and separate from those touring them. Instead, Edensor (2001) argues that



the nature of the stage is dependent on the kinds of performance enacted upon it. For even carefully stage-managed spaces may be transformed by the presence of tourists who adhere to different norms. Thus stages can continually change, can expand and contract. For most stages are ambiguous, sites for different performances. (p. 64)

Tourist performances are not separate from the places where they happen; they are not taking place in inert and fixed places. Tourist places are produced places, and tourists are coproducers of such places. They are performances *of* place that partly produce and transform places and connect them to other places. Most tourist places are “dead” until actors take the stage and enact them: They become alive and transformed each time that new plays begin and face-to-face proximities are established and new objects are drawn in. Indeed, it can be argued that places emerge as “tourist places,” stages of tourism, only when they are performed (see Bærenholdt et al., 2004; Coleman & Crang, 2002a).

Now we can rescue the performances of tourism from the traditional clear-cut division between active bodies on the stage and passive bodies in the audience. Tourists are not only spectators. They are also actors in shows directed by themselves and/or the tourist industry. In addition to looking at places, tourists enact them corporeally. They step into the landscape picture and engage bodily, sensuously, and expressively with their materiality.

Another problem with a performance metaphor in social theory is that Western assumptions of performance are make-believe and illusion; outside the world of the “theater,” performing is deception, a trickster world of false impressions, of acting. The common ontological distinction so prevalent in Western modernity between an authentic world of natural being and an inauthentic one made up by performers has haunted tourist studies for a long time. For example, in MacCannell’s (1976/1999) writing, it sometimes seems that modern tourism is nothing but performative illusions because it is a mobile world of “staged authenticity”: Modern tourism is therefore permeated with inauthenticity. However, all cultures are constructed and “on the move” and therefore in a sense contrived or inauthentic; they are fabrications in the sense of something made (Duncan & Gregory, 1999, p. 5; Rojek & Urry, 1997). Similarly, families are “fictions” in the sense of being performed. In a performance perspective, “family” becomes something that relational beings *do*, rather than have. For families to exist, they must perform “family life” (Butler, 1993; Chambers, 2001, 2003). Particularly in a detraditionalized modernity of “pure relationships” (Giddens, 1992) and “liquid love” (Bauman, 2003), “families” constantly need to perform acts and narratives to give sense, stability, and love to their family relations. Although “social life” is not reducible to a Goffmanesque drama, we should not therefore make simple contrasts between “physical geographies” and “imaginative geographies” and between “real families” and “imaginary families.” In fact, as Schieffelin (1998) writes, “performativity is not only endemic to human being-in-the-world but fundamental to the process of constructing a human reality” (p. 205).

It is time to analyze how performances such as tourist photography do not so much mirror—good or poor—realities as they create new ones. Photography can be understood as a technology of world making. “Images are not something that appear over or against reality, but parts of practices through which people work to establish realities. Rather than look to mirroring as a root metaphor, technologies of seeing form ways of grasping the world” (M. Crang, 1997, p. 362). Photographing is about producing rather than consuming geographies and identities.



## Heterogeneous Choreographies of Family Photography

Echoing many others, Urry (2002, p. 129) uses the metaphor of a *hermeneutic circle* to illustrate the choreographed nature of actual photographic sightseeing (see Albers & James, 1988; Jenkins, 2003; Osborne, 2000):

Much tourism involves a hermeneutic circle. What is sought for in a holiday is a set of photography images, which have already been seen in tour company brochures or on TV programmes. While the tourist is away, this then moves on to a tracking down and capturing of those images for oneself. And it ends up with travellers demonstrating that they really have been there by showing their version of the images that they had seen before they set off. (p. 129)

Thus, effectively, people travel to see and photograph what they have already consumed in image form. For instance, in his study *Tourists at the Taj*, Edensor (1998, p. 130) claims that the photographic desire for many British tourists is photographs of themselves in the seat where Princess Diana sat when the famous picture was taken of this global icon in front of the Taj Mahal (1998). The “hermeneutic circle” essentially portrays professional, or commercial, photography as all-powerful machinery that turns the photographic performances of *tourists* into a ritual of “quotation” in which tourists are framed and fixed rather than framing and exploring (see Osborne, 2000, p. 81). It renders an image of tourist photography as an overdetermined stage that permits no space for creativity, self-expression, and the unexpected.<sup>1</sup> The problem with the hermeneutic model is *not* that it stresses structures of choreographies but that it does so in a *too* reductive and deterministic fashion.

There is more to the choreographing of tourist photography than cultural (images) choreographing. It is a heterogeneous process. “Humans” such as guides, guards, and professional photographers and “nonhumans” such as markers, fences, viewing stations, pamphlets, guidebooks, paintings, and postcards exercise such framing. Although tourist performances transform places, the places at which photography making takes place are always inscribed with cultural scripts, social and material discursive regulations that are crucial in choreographing tourists’ cameras. Edensor’s (1998, pp. 130-131) study at the Taj Mahal brings out how guides choreograph tourists’ camera work by telling them to bring their cameras and plenty of film and by giving advice on good photographic angles and views.

At a place such as Hammershus, where few guided tours are on offer and organized sightseeing parties rarely tour the castle, the responsibility for staging the castle and choreographing bodies is assigned to “nonhumans.” Through texts and rich illustrations, numerous signs guide tourists through the dramatic history of the castle. They provide tourists with a script for visualizing the place as a thrilling and heroic mediaeval castle where “hanging,” “torture,” “prisoner escapes,” “excessive indulgence” (drinking, eating), “bloody battles,” and so on took place. Their work is to stimulate the tourists’ imaginations and make them see what is now invisible. Other signs dictate that crawling, climbing, and playing around on the ruins are prohibited, thus effectively proclaiming that leisurely walking along the clearly demarcated pathways is the only appropriate form of movement. As a towering fortress, Hammershus has had a powerful “military gaze,” looking out for enemies built into it, from the start: Today, it is tourists’ cameras that do the shooting. Viewing stations and benches with views turn it into a wonderful view-producing machine (see Figures 1 to 3). My ethnographic



**Figure 1.** Viewing Station 1

Source: Author.



**Figure 2.** Viewing Station 2

Source: Author.

observations showed that these viewing places are very powerful in attracting and immobilizing tourist flows. Virtually no one misses out on such open views; walking is put on hold, eyes gaze, fingers press shutters, bodies pose, and loud travel talk is heard: “Wow! What a wonderful view!”

Moreover, the “hermeneutic circle” overlooks the embodied “social dramas” of tourist photography. The camera work of tourists is not only concerned with “consuming places” (Urry, 1995). Much family tourism is about being together as *one* social body, to be face-to-face in an era of fragmented and liquid family life (Bærenholdt et al., 2004; Löfgren, 1999). The “family gaze” in tourist photography revolves around the *production* of social relations; it is concerned with performing “familyness.” Places become scenes for acting out and framing active and tender family life for the camera. Family members and their performances make experiences and places extraordinary and full of enjoyable life. This is what Wearing and Wearing (1996) would call a “feminized gaze,” because it stresses interactions, relationships, and the actively embodied use of space.

Tourist photography is intricately bound up with self-presentation and monitoring bodies, with “strategic impression management” (Goffman, 1959). Photography is part of the “theater” that modern people enact to produce their *desired* togetherness, wholeness, and intimacy (Hirsch, 1997, p. 7; Holland, 2001; Kuhn, 1995; Smith, 1998, p. 16). It is one of the modern ways in which families produce life narratives that construct them as families in a mobile world. People live in a frenzy of love, in what has been called the “normal chaos of love” (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). Today’s relationships exist because of love, and if they do not deliver enough emotional satisfaction, they tend to break up. The more family life becomes fluid and based on choices and emotions, the more tourist photography can be expected to produce accounts of a timeless and fixed love: The nuclear family is still a powerful choreographing myth within the public imagination. In this perspective, tourist photography becomes a drama of acting out and capturing “perfect” family life in an era of “family fragments” (Chambers, 2001, 2003; Smart & Neale, 1999).

Although the family in traditional accounts is seen as epitomizing a private sphere, families perform familyness—their “private” family life—in and through cultural, “public” scripts. In this sense, there has to be a continuing dialogue between families themselves and the public representations of them in constructing the meaningfulness of familyness (Chambers, 2001, p. 61). “Personal” photography is acted out, consciously and not least unconsciously (habitually), in response to dominant mythologies,



**Figure 3.** Viewing Station 3

Source: Author.

present and new, circulating in photo albums, television, films and magazines; they are choreographies that enable people to picture tourist places as picturesque and families as loving, intimate, and so on. Family photographic performances and images are thus never simple records of “real” family life but are shot through, consciously and unconsciously, with desires, fantasies, and ideals of family life, of “imaginary families.” When performing tourist photography, families are creating and performing their “familyness” in the ambivalent space between prefixing choreographies and improvisational performances; the roles of family tourist photography are culturally scripted, but they are not predetermined. This is the reason why it is pivotal to study ethnographically *how* embodied families go about making photographs.

## Embodied Performances and Spaces of Photography

In addition to *choreographing* camera work, the humanly performed aspects of photography are visible in relation to practices of *taking* photos and *posing* for cameras. The object of tourist photography is not just “static” scenery but also corporal “actors.” The act of being photographed makes one acutely aware of one’s body and its appearance; cameras make one act. As Barthes (2000) reflects,

I have been photographed and I knew it. Now, once I feel myself observed by the lens, everything changes: I constitute myself in the process of “posing,” I instantly make another body for myself, I transform myself in advance into an image. (p. 10)

In performances of posing, the body is brought into play as a culturally coded sign—of happiness, politeness, attractiveness, intimacy, and so on. Photography is as much a “way of directing” and a “way of acting” as a “way of seeing,” and it often involves *intimate* relations between observers and the observed.

Landscape as a “way of seeing” (Cosgrove, 2003) is not fitting for understanding the “nature” of much tourist photography: It is too tied up with “distanced” spectatorship and not enough with practices and embodiment (see also Creswell, 2003; Hinchliffe, 2003; Larsen & Haldrup, in press; Wearing & Wearing, 1996). In addition to looking at landscapes, tourists enact them corporeally. They step into the “landscape picture” and engage bodily, sensuously, and expressively with their materiality and “affordances.” It must be complemented with an idea of “landscape as stage.” This landscape has a dense materiality of coulisses, set pieces, and so on that crucially not only signify and stir the imagination but *enable* things and enactments to happen. It thus involves a lack of distance between humans, material environments, and objects. It is a practiced landscape. “Landscape as stage” makes people play, act, and pose. The collected photographs from Bornholm indicate that much tourist photography revolves around staging and posing intimate social life and capturing moments of bodily actions taking place in and on various—ordinary as well as extraordinary—material stages. Places are not only or even primarily visited for their immanent attributes but are also, and more centrally,

woven into the webs of stories and narratives people produce when they sustain and construct their social identities.

That cameras are designed for instantaneous picturing and Hammershus is a view-producing machine obscures the fact that much camera work is densely performed bodily and creatively. My ethnographic research at Hammershus showed that making photographs was rarely the outcome of a quick shutter release. "I always spend like 15 minutes waiting so that there are fewer people...so I don't have all these horrible tourists in my pictures" (female tourist at Hammershus). In both words and actions, people express their eagerness and passion in making pictures, making experiments with composition, depth, choice of motif, directing, staging, clicking, moving on. Bodies erecting, kneeling, bending sideways, forward and backward, leaning on ruins, lying on the ground—all of these were registered.

Many tourist photographs are enacted, lengthy, embodied visions involving touch, body language, and talking. Figure 4 (paparazzi-style pictures taken by me) show two women's determined and sustained efforts to stage and capture their children. First, we witness the staging of the event. As if ill clad for camera work, perhaps feeling too hot and stuffy, the camera-wearing woman takes off her jacket. Then, meticulously, one after another, she positions the boys (only the older one is taking his own seat). Next, the actual shooting begins. She squats so that the "camera eye" is more level with the eyes of the children. Direct eye contact is established. Now the other woman joins in the action. Standing just behind the kneeling photographer with her eyes fixed on the boys, she waves vigorously with her arms in the air. Then a small break occurs, and the photographer changes shooting position, straightening up her body slightly. Now events intensify. For the next minute or so, the photographer constantly frames and shoots, while the other woman's arms make all sorts of disco-aerobic moves and shakes—all acted out with a big smile on her face. Although the boys' arms are not "joining in," their faces are probably laughing, and a joyful holiday photo gets produced.

### Performing the "Family Gaze" at a Tourist Site

Most of the interviewees articulate a desire to capture romantic images of the ruins and landscape of Hammershus. The viewing stations prompt and choreograph the cameras of tourists—men, women, and children—to make images that reproduce the enduring place image of Hammershus as a place of picturesque scenery and romantic picturing. Extraordinarily, 9 of 10 families produced "dead ringers" of Figure 5 (compare with Figure 1). This is a telling example of how romantic photographing is materially choreographed at Hammershus.

Yet the majority of the tourists state that they take only a few such romantic or "postcard" photos, partly because they are difficult and time-consuming to produce:

Speaking from experience, gazing at a landscape...is a totally overwhelming experience: You want to have a picture of it. But when you come home, it isn't so overwhelming anymore...such photos are often very disappointing....The ruins of Hammershus? Well, I've taken a few, just to have a little reminder. I can't focus it down and capture the whole place properly. (Interview 6)

People struggle to take proper possession of the vast landscapes; they know that the actual views from the viewing platforms are richer and fuller than the pictures they



**Figure 4A.** Choreography  
 Source: Author.

are capable of making (This resonates with Pocock’s [1982] findings from Durham Cathedral). From experience, people have learned that it takes more than just pressing the shutter button to produce enchanting landscape images. This explains why most people, even at the viewing stations, are more eager to praise the scenery with travel talk than to click with the camera’s shutter.

Moreover, making “postcard” images has little appeal, because they do not convey personal experiences and stories. They are far too *impersonal* and dead. Postcard images of landscapes and attractions can be extremely boring, as one mother frankly makes clear:





**Figure 4B.** Choreography

*Source:* Author.

Well, we've learned never to take photographs without people in them because it's bloody boring to see a ruin without any people you know....So we choose some motifs that we think are beautiful or have a nice view, but we make sure that the boys or one of us are in it to make it a little personal, so that it isn't just a postcard, because then we could just have bought it down in the shop, right? (Female tourist at Hammershus traveling with her husband and two children)

Even somewhere such as Hammershus, scripted and staged for “romantic gazing” (see Larsen, 2003, chap. 5), the making of photos is significantly bound up with performing “love” and “familyness.” Despite praising its outstanding beauty, some tourists blatantly denounce Hammershus as a setting worth portraying for its own sake, una-



**Figure 5.** Photographs From Viewing Station,  
Produced by Tourist

Source: Author.

dorned by family faces. On its own, neither the symbolic aura of the castle nor its romantic grandeur gets their cameras trembling with a sense of awe. “Loved ones” have to enter the “picture” to attract and energize camera action. They do not take photographs of the castle as such. Many families bring it into play as a backdrop for family staging. This partly destabilizes its ancient and official “place myth” of romantic gazing. Instead, it induces a new one of cozy and pleasant family life. This illustrates how places are fluid and produced through performances.

The “family gaze” is enacted through the active participation of *all* family members. The family is both the subject and the object of the photographic event, and everyone seems to fulfill both roles: picturing and acting. Children—even very young ones—are also behind the cameras to a great extent. Parents appear much more eager to portray their children than their spouses, and if the children did not reach out for the camera too, holiday memories would be less crowded with adult faces. Children are crucial to the working of the “family gaze.” Collaboration is necessary to portray the desired united family and to create a complete travelogue. As one photographing mother complained to her posing husband, “Can I be part of the holiday as well? Take a picture of me with the kids and the ruins too” (overheard conversation). Often, families ask other tourists to take photographs of them so that their whole families can be portrayed in the same pictures. Although enacted through the active participation of all family members, my research indicates that women are more passionate “family gazers” than men. They invest more energy in “choreographing” nice family photographs, and they are almost always in charge of making holiday albums. In that sense, this vision accords less with the male dominance of the “romantic gaze” and the masculine basis of the “tourist gaze” (Veijola & Jokinen, 1994; Wearing & Wearing, 1996). Bulky, professional-looking cameras remain primarily items of male jewelry. Light and handy, designed for strolling, and extremely user friendly, the automatic “pocket” camera is the emblematic family camera, used by both adults (particularly women) and children.

The “family gaze” picturing produces photographic events typified by dense *corporeal* and *social* performances: acting, posing, directing, and so on. Walking around and observing photo action, I realized that when faced by the “camera eye,” people do indeed make other bodies for themselves. Activities and walking are put on hold, and in posing, people present themselves as desired future memories. People have learned the importance and the pleasure of exhibiting themselves in a world in which the consciousness of one’s constant visibility has never been more intense. Reflecting that photography generally does not so much reflect “geographies” as produce them, *new* bodies and “ways of being together” were constantly produced when camera action began. In accordance with the late modern cultural code that tenderness and intimacy epitomize blissful family life, families act out tenderness and intimacy for the camera and one another. Indeed, where the “family gaze” holds sway, nothing appears more natural than producing moments of tenderness and intimacy. The “loving family” is produced by codified performances of



visual and corporeal proximity: embraces and eye contact.

Touch—body to body—is essential to the “family gaze.” When cameras appear, almost as a reflex, families assume tender, desexualized postures, holding hands, hugging, and embracing. “Arms around shoulders” is *the* common way of bonding family members as *one* social body. Figure 6 (produced by myself) is a telling example of this.

Standing just behind his son and wife, a father *connects* the three family members by moving his head a little forward and putting his arms around their upper bodies. This masks his physical supremacy, and he is not “overshadowing” the wife and son. The tender and unified family ideal is produced by exhibiting the family on an “unequal footing” (literally, we have a family body with three heads and four legs). When adults are taking photographs of or posing with children, they compensate for disparities by kneeling down, typically to the level at which their heads meet those of their children. The desired model is the emotionally unified family, and for that ideal to come into being, signs of physical and symbolic inequality must be obliterated. *Body-to-body* experiences cause, and indeed are a *sign* of, unprecedented moments of intimacy and love. “Touch is above all the most intimate sense, limited by the reach of the body, and it is the most reciprocal of the senses, for to touch is to be touched” (Rodaway, 1994, p. 41). Touch acts directly on the body. Therefore, being touched can also be an embarrassing experience, repulsive even. Glimpses of fathers and especially teenagers who appear slightly uneasy and even resist embraces and choreographing attempts were also observed on several occasions.

The “family gaze” produces images that are arranged around responding eyes. Human eyes and the camera eye act in responsive reciprocity. The ideal seems to be direct eye contact, if not a view from slightly below. This creates a viewing position in which the viewer of the image “looks up” at the exhibited family. The future spectator is face-to-face with those pictured, and this produces nearness, commitment, and involvement.

Family frictions are almost automatically put on hold when the camera appears. Tourist photography produces unusual moments of intimate copresence rare outside the limelight of the camera eye. Tourist photography simultaneously produces and displays the family’s closeness. The proximity comes into existence because the camera event draws people together. In this sense, it is cameras, public places, and cultural scripts that make *proper* family life possible: relaxed and intimate. However, to produce signs of loving and intimate family life, families need to enact it physically, to touch one another. To produce signs of affections, they need to be affective. Signs of affections equal affections (signifieds) in family hugs. The desired family is the product of the photographic event that each family stages and performs actively and bodily. It is the enactment that produces “familyness.” In other words, photographic performances produce rather than reflect family life. Image is realism.

The “family gaze” blurs Goffman’s (1959) distinction between “front stage” and “backstage” to the unrecognizable. It is not because Hammershus is a crowded public



**Figure 6.** Connecting

Source: Author.

place that photography here is performed through conventional posing. Even when picturing in the backstage regions of the secluded beach and private holiday house, body management and social disciplining takes place: Public masks are put on rather than lifted. Virtually all family picturing amounts to a “front stage” of encoded and enacted “impression management.” The space of “ordinary” tourist photography is an omnipresent “privatized front stage,” a hybrid of the “private-in-public” of “front stage-in-backstage.” Careful “impression management” ensures returning home with “lovely” photographic memories of apparently “loving” family life (on “family secrets” in photo albums, see Kuhn, 1995). Tourist photography, the “family gaze,” and family photography are not separate worlds but bridges constantly traversed by families “on the move.” The symbiosis between tourist photography and family photography reflects also that in a modern world of widespread mobility, tourism is connected to everyday life rather than an “exotic island.”

### Concluding Remarks: Nonperformances

In most writing, tourist photography comprises a “hermeneutic circle” of artful photographers, touring images, and preprogrammed tourists. Being too automatic and instantaneous, it is hardly regarded a performance like dance, walking, painting, and so on; it is preformed rather than performed. Writings on tourist photography have produced “lifeless tourists,” “eventless events,” and “dead geographies.” In contrast, I have developed the idea of tourist photography as a choreographed *and* experimental performance connecting the representational and nonrepresentational. Its “dramaturgical landscapes” bridge physical spaces, fantasylands, and mediaworlds. Performances of tourist photography are a fusion of presence and absence, actuality and imaginations, the dreamed-of and lived-in orders of reality. This is a world where embodied, expressive subjects enact, reenact, and transgress cultural scripts of connoisseurship, aesthetics of the body, “impression management,” family life, friendship, love and so on. Although it appears to picture “private” worlds, “personal” photography takes place in “front stages” of codified poses and postures before scrutinizing audiences such as other family members, friends, colleagues, and, not least, *oneself*.

But there is also something nonpreformed—private, sincere, emotional, pure—about photography. As Barthes (2000) has shown so poignantly, personal photography works via sentimentality, through love and death: It is an “order of loving.” In all their funereal immobility, photographs are “full of life”; they keep alive. They not only fix but also produce “nearness.” People do not see photographs of “loved ones”; they see only the people. This explains why there appears to be an almost insuperable desire to touch, even stroke, images (Edwards, 1999). People engage with their photographs and photographic memories through the “feeling body.” Such knowledge is “meaning embodied—feel, touch, fluid—and possible not speak-able” (Game, 1991, p. 57). The space of photographs is inherently ambivalent because people respond to them emotionally. Even while a joyful and sparkling life is celebrated, “death” is always present, haunting family albums: people look right into the eyes of dead relatives, and they gaze up on their own once youthful bodies. A lovely family photograph changes meaning when life turns into death and love transforms into hate; backstage, alone, a photograph can make one cry.

## Note

1. This model explains the many empirical studies of commercial images and the few of tourists' camera work and images (but see Jenkins, 2003; Markwell, 1997).

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