



SELFIE AND WORLD

On Instagrammable Places and Technologies for Capturing Them

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Article type: Research article

Review Process: Double-blind peer review

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DOI: [10.59490/jhtr.2023.1.7011](https://doi.org/10.59490/jhtr.2023.1.7011)

ISSN: 2773-2266

Submitted: 31 August 2022 Accepted: 24 January 2023 Published: 12 June 2023

How to cite (APA): Lobo, T. (2023). Selfie and world: On Instagrammable places and technologies for capturing them. *Journal of Human Technology Relations*, 1(1), pp.1-11. <https://doi.org/10.59490/jhtr.2023.1.7011>

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Keywords

Everyday aesthetics;
Instagram aesthetics; selfie;
post-phenomenology; travel;
hermeneutics

Abstract

Instagrammable places are designed to be photographed for Instagram. This leads to the homogenization and commodification of the world to suit the app's affordances. It is worth asking why Instagram users are so motivated to play along when only a minuscule fraction of them can monetize their pursuits. I argue that Instagram and its accompanying expressive form, the selfie, touch upon a basic human need for meaning-making: for narratively organizing one's experience of the world, and reversely for performing a narrativized identity in a meaningful world. The app mediates what Don Ihde has called a hermeneutic and an alterity relation to the world, by superficially contributing to an understanding of the world based on one's own co-constitutive agency of framing and selecting features of the world to be photographed and shared, and by performing this agency to an audience.

1 INTRODUCTION: THE INSTAGRAMIZATION OF THE WORLD

When entering the Forever Rose Café in Dubai, you find yourself in a black and white space, where only the food, you (well, you and other guests), and the roses on the tables are in color. A black and white Mona Lisa smirks from a wall, while the Queen of England and various UAE celebrities do the same from other walls. In between you and your seat, selfie sticks battle for dominion as each influencer (or aspiring influencer) struggles to find that perfect angle of themselves minus other guests and to earn likes and followers on Instagram. If you search #foreverrose on said platform, you will find 80,437 posts (with the count steadily rising) and perhaps understand the reason for all the fuss. The photographs look like black and white 2D sketches where only the food, the influencers (or aspiring influencers) and the roses look 3D. There are pictures affording mini-narratives of people daintily sipping coffee (with a rose chocolate powder design), as well as those of guests interacting with the drawings in the café, like holding balloons sketched on the wall or walking a sketched dog on a leash. This place was made for Instagram.

The Forever Rose Café, like other so-called Instagrammable places—which in ordinary language have acquired the meaning of places that look especially good on Instagram—such as the Museum of Ice Cream in New York, is an extreme example of the “Instagramization of the world”. Today, cities commission street artists to create “Insta-worthy” (a synonym of Instagrammable) environments and attract tourists, and museums have lifted their photography bans and are even encouraging social media posts (Matchar, 2017). This marketing strategy exploits people's trust in other travelers' images as more reliable than the official marketing channels' (Iglesias-Sanchez et al., 2020), and the phenomenon of the Circle of Representation: people want to reproduce the images of places they have seen, and so they travel to those places in order to find and take precisely the same photograph of themselves in that place (Jenkins, 2003). Seeing attractive, 'authentic' images by other social media users makes people want to travel there. This is how places become and establish themselves as tourist attractions, and it is why even remote Himalayan villages are promoted as Instagrammable. It is user generated content, such as Instagram pictures, that is now the main source of advertising for venues and tourist destinations.

But what need drives people to go through all this trouble? After all, it is only a small fraction of Instagram users that can monetize their travels as professional influencers, so the financial gain cannot be the sole motive. In this paper I will argue that Instagram and its accompanying expressive form, the selfie, has tapped into a deep human need for meaning-making. The technology offers an easy and quick (yes, *instantaneous*) avenue for situating one's self in the world by performing well-defined identities such as that of 'the authentic traveler' who takes selfies in unique places. In post-phenomenological terms (Rosenberg & Verbeek, 2015), as a technology, the platform is not just another thing in the world, rather it mediates and organizes users' experience of the world. From this mediation of self and world more easily communicable subjectivities and more easily understood worlds emerge. It enacts what Don Ihde would call a hermeneutic relationship to the world, but also an alterity relationship because the meaning-making is performed for an audience (Verbeek 2001, p. 132). Conversely, the perception of the world becomes structured by the agency of Instagramers, but also homogenized to suit the technical affordances of the app. It is ultimately assimilated to the capitalist logic of attracting more and more users to take more and more pictures and advertise the destination further, which as I will argue detracts from its meaning-making potential.

2 CAPTURING PLACES AND FINDING YOURSELF: ON REPRESENTATIONS AND MEANING-MAKING

Rewind about 270 years and direct your attention about 7200 km northwest from Dubai. You will find yourself in the Stourhead estate, in 18th century England. The green gentle hills are pleasant to the eye; the paths lead the traveler visually from one classically inspired monument to another: from a replica of the Pantheon, to the Obelisk and the Temple of Apollo. The monuments are like a collection of souvenirs from an 18th century gentleman's Grand Tour of Europe, the obligatory rite-of-passage journey wealthy upper class men undertook upon turning 21 to see what were deemed as the most important sites of European culture. There is nothing jarring about the panorama. The harmoniousness and familiarity of the landscape to European eyes is due to the fact that it is a landscape design based on landscape paintings by Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin, and Gaspard Dughet—mythologized, pastoral vistas (Impelluso, 2007, p. 95). Like Forever Rose Café, this place is derivative of representations of places and it offers ready-made narratives for travelers. And what better way to experience personal significance than to insert yourself into the context of classical European mythology and, like Aeneas on one of Lorrain's paintings, take a stroll through an idyllically conceived underworld?

Stourhead is a paradigmatic example of an English Landscape Garden, a picturesque garden aesthetic meant to demonstratively and emphatically display nature. A precursor to the Instagrammable aesthetic, the picturesque in its popular form is about displaying landscapes like two-dimensional pictures (Gilpin, 1792; Dönmez, 2016, 156). John Dixon Hunt describes it as follows, "The main concern of the picturesque was how to process the unmediated wild world, how to control it or make it palatable for consumption by sanitizing it with art." (Hunt, 1997, p. 288). Designing picturesque landscapes caters to the human need of meaning-making. Places that are already pre-structured so that they lend themselves to representation are more easily graspable and dovetail neatly into travelers' need to be explorers of exploration-worthy places. Place design, therefore, is a technology that closely mirrors technologies of representation: it is about creating representation-conductive places. Like other technologies, it doubly acts on both the subject and the world. Just like the telescope constructs the viewer as an observer and the stars as observable (Rosenberg & Verbeek, 2015, p. 19), the picturesque garden constructs the visitor as appreciating and the landscape as appreciable.

A century later, the painter and horticulturalist Claude Monet built a water lily pond for the primary purpose of painting it. Out of this endeavor 18 exquisite paintings of the Pond of Water

Lilies emerged. The mirroring of technologies of landscape design and pictorial representation is evident here, as he aspired to create both a landscape worthy of painting and paintings themselves. According to legend, he drew the pond so obsessively in order to comprehend it. He lived by Immanuel Kant's maxim that we only truly understand that which we have made ourselves. In "On Capturing Cities", Nelson Goodman (Goodman, 1991) postulates that representations are made in order to comprehend reality. While playing with the double sense of the verb "to capture", which can mean both to conquer and to represent, he describes various types of representations as cognitive tools that allow us to grasp the world and empower ourselves while doing so.

Like Instagram, where anyone can take a picture of anything, picturesque aesthetics does harbor emancipatory potential. In a time when only kings and nobility could boast with privileged views of their dominions—"prospects"—picturesque aesthetics brought the possibility for everyone and anyone to compose landscapes by simply looking. By contrast to prospects, which signified property, landscapes could be the settings for many a narrative, for the point of the picturesque was to enjoy accidental constellations within one's view (Gassner, 2021, p. 26-30). In the picturesque, as it was originally imagined, "viewpoints were democratized." (Gassner, 2021, p. 64). Similarly, on Instagram, the power to represent a place has shifted away from tourism ministries and travel agents and to travelers themselves. They can relate to what they are seeing in ways that are not institutionally predefined (Lewis, 2017).

Viewing the landscape like a picture leaves room for self-expression: selecting a perspective locates you as the viewer. Grouping various seemingly unrelated elements with your gaze sets you apart from other travelers and makes you the discoverer of the unexpected. As technologies that mediate between the self and the world, representations can establish precisely this relationship and promise to place the viewer in a meaningful, comprehensible world. As Oliver Müller has argued while building on the works of Ernst Cassirer, technologies in general are a means of self-knowledge and self-discovery. We gain self-awareness through our manipulations of the environment (Müller, 2014, p. 104-112). Technologies of representation afford the individuation of places as well as the individuation of perceivers of places—as those who are composing the picture.

For, on its own, the raw, unfiltered world provides no frames to direct one's attention. It is the various technologies of representation like sketching, drawing, painting, modeling or photographing, guided by our imagination, that select features of the landscape worthy of attention, that structure and organize the environment (Goodman, 1991). Technologies of representation include techniques for modifying the environment for the sake of representation, but also being able to perceive the environment in terms of its representability. As George Santayana has observed:

The natural landscape is an indeterminate object; it almost always contains enough diversity to allow the eye a great liberty in selecting, emphasizing, and grouping its elements, and it is furthermore rich in suggestion and in vague emotional stimulus. A landscape to be seen has to be composed ... (Santayana, 1961, p. 99)

In a truly Kantian manner, it can be said that one's own agency of constructing a scene creates a landscape to be seen in the first place. Technologies of representation provide what Ihde (Ihde, 1990) terms a hermeneutic relation to the world, because they afford revealing aspects of the world that would otherwise remain unseen—although they are of course dependent on the biased eye of the artist. They allow us to interpret the world as meaningful, and at the same time as affording narratives that imbue significance to the person situated there as the protagonist of those very same narratives. Instagram, as a technology of representation, is there both to make sense of travel, but also to perform being a certain type of traveler (Garner, 2021). In addition to self-consciousness, technologies of representation contribute towards a

we-consciousness. When something is represented, it can also be communicated and shared with others. Representing a place is an inherently social act because then the place can be transported and shown to absent others.

While “meaning” is mostly conceived as something that is generated within minds, the pragmatist philosopher Mark Johnson has argued that meaning-making is embodied and, crucially, that it proceeds in interaction with the environment (Johnson, 2018). People do not simply invent themselves and their personalities in their heads, but they emerge out of interactions with other people and places. He furthermore argues that architectural structures present us, first, with a way of situating ourselves in, or being ‘at home’ in, and making sense of our world, and second, they provide material and cultural affordances that are meaningful for our survival and flourishing as meaning-seeking creatures. (Johnson, 2015, p. 40).

While Johnson predominantly addresses architectural structures, his point can be extended to include any place structured for or by human use. Frequenting places where we can experience being situated in the world or being ‘at home’ in the world is a way of meaning-making about one’s own place in the world. Places afford personal stories, for instance a café with a 19th century aesthetic can afford the perfect setting to read Baudelaire (Franco 2019, p. 398, p. 403). Being able to share this experience with others, by representing the place, or oneself in the place affords the social recognition of being the kind of person who take time to read poetry and reflect on the beginnings of modern modes of being.

Places that are conveniently structured with a picturesque aesthetic in mind simplify the process of meaning-making by offering the perfect setting for a picture of someone who wants to be seen in a certain way. Such environments are ultimately dissatisfying because the true agency of structuring and shaping the world is taken away from the viewer and prefabricated by the place design. With mass tourism and, to take an extreme case, the advent of theme parks like Disneyland and later Instagrammable venues, the purpose of organizing the world and one’s place in it has been vastly simplified. The goal now is to provide *instant* means of grasping places through easily recognizable narratives cued by hard-to-miss life-sized protagonists of those very same narratives like Mickey Mouse and co. There is no need to invest time in exploring a place, since the (carefully branded) essence of the place is displayed in visually unambiguous ways, so that you can quickly visit, and just as quickly move on to other places. In Disneyland one takes pictures with Mickey in front of the Disney castle and then others might want to take those same pictures. In Instagrammable venues one takes selfies and thereby draws in more visitors who will do the same in a tirelessly spinning Circle of Representation. The easily communicable self that is performed in such easily graspable places is a self that can be expressed in a simple visual vocabulary native to a global consumer culture.

3 FINDING YOURSELF AND TAKING A SELFIE: MEANING-MAKING IN THE AGE OF INSTAGRAM

The Circle of Representation spins both when people show pictures from Disneyland the old fashioned way—in a family album or as a slide show for their friends and relatives—as well as in the form of destination selfies via Instagram. In both cases, the pictures taken and shown to others lead to some of those other people visiting those places and taking those same pictures, and so on. An important difference are their temporalities: while traditional postcards and photographs seem to say “been there, done that”, thanks to the real-time temporality of social media, selfies proclaim “here I am right now!” (Urry & Larsen 2013). The selfie has become an important technological tool that creatively mediates a hermeneutical relation between the self and the world by constructing one’s online identity in potentially very creative ways, playing with possibilities of “myself-as-selfie” (Lewis, 2017). It can be a play with self-objectification that

photographs in general afford (Barthes, 1981, p. 14), and a way of situating the self in relation with other objects and in places that carry symbolic meaning.

At the same time a selfie constructs the places visited—in a process of co-construction of the self and the world. While the travel destinations of the 20th century were slowly established and promoted by tourism ministries and traveling agencies, in the 21st century the power to define travel destinations has shifted to travelers themselves. Today, user generated content is the main source of advertising for venues and travel destinations, providing seemingly candid impressions of millions of users as opposed to carefully staged pictures from tourism ministries. The hash tag #beautifuldestinations has been recognized to draw flocks of travelers (Hauser et al., 2022).

The Instagram gaze has been characterized as a post-tourist gaze because Instagramers pride themselves in being individuals, in venturing beyond the beaten tourist track, exploring unusual destinations and showing original scenes of everyday life as opposed to iconic sight-seeing images (Cassinger & Thelander, 2021). Instagram seems to establish through selfies both original selves and original destinations. The genre of the destination selfie is a common trope on the platform, usually posted by avid travelers marking that they have themselves set foot somewhere. It potentially serves a hermeneutic relation because the self and the world are made sense of through an implicit travel narrative. However, they are not just understood, but also constituted. “Insta-worthy”, that is, Instagrammable places do most of the work for the viewer in providing backdrops for fun, whimsical or adventurous pictures and therefore positioning those who are taking the selfies as fun, whimsical or adventurous.

As mentioned above, Nelson Goodman has argued that representations do not simply mimic what is already there, but they produce it by framing the world in a certain way (Goodman, 1991). This can be applied very well to the agency of Instagrammers which accelerates the Circle of Representation and makes more obvious the power of representations to function as what Goodman has called “organs of reality” (Goodman, 1991, p. 9). For the case in point, this means that Instagram images do not simply document that a place is worth visiting, but they select and frame a place *as* a travel destination. What might have been an indeterminate stretch of land becomes a sight not to be missed. One case in point is the hiking trail Roy’s Peak in New Zealand, a perfect example of an Instagrammable place, that is, a place that looks beautiful on the platform, which gained enormous popularity because it is the setting of many a pretty Instagram photo (the hashtag #royspeak currently yields 73,575 posts). While there may be numerous gorgeous hiking trails in the world, Roy’s Peak happens to neatly fit Instagram’s square frame, and therefore to look stunning on the platform, inviting other travelers to take selfies there, too. Currently, hikers wait in queues for hours in order to take a selfie alone from a spot yielding the most iconic view on the mountain ridge (Leaver et al., 2020, p. 171).

Instagram also mediates an alterity relationship, affording the social dimension of meaning-making through sharing pictures to an unprecedented degree. As Galit Wellner has argued while building on the work of Emmanuel Levinas, the cell phone itself suggests a quasi-sociality because its screen functions as a quasi-face, and therefore as a quasi-other that can be related to (Wellner, 2016, p. 115ff). Instagram capitalizes on the inherent link between representations and sociality and embodies an avenue for instant photo sharing. Every selfie taken for Instagram is a photo staged for global audiences of Instagram users¹, but also implicitly for the quasi-face of the cell-phone. This exemplifies Ihde’s notion of the alterity relation, because the device and the platform themselves are the object of attention, like a quasi-other. The alterity relation encouraged by the platform is co-constitutive of the user’s self, just like social relationships in

¹ The hashtag function allows the users to share their images not only with their followers, but with potentially any other Instagram user around the world who is using that search phrase.

general are constitutive of who we are (Wellner, 2016. P. 115). Therefore, Instagram also generates ecologies of specialized communities interested in travel, but also other hobbies.

The notion that Instagramers are more 'authentic' than old-school travel agencies does need to be challenged. Some of the more edgy 21st century travel influencers tend to define new travel destinations off the beaten tourist track while 20th century travel agencies tend to offer pre-packaged tourist trips. But firstly, focus on this circumstance neglects the fact that even 20th century tourists were in search of 'the authentic' local experience, albeit in a different way. Secondly, influencers' "techniques of relatability" (Leaver et al., 2020, p. 132) are highly staged and scripted. This twofold challenge raises questions about the ontological status of what we mean by the authentic in the first place.

Even the most garishly orchestrated 20th century tourist package deal, for example a Balinese dance at a tourist resort, can be seen as serving a need for an 'authentic experience'. The modern phenomenon of tourism can be interpreted as a modification of pilgrimage (MacCannell, 1999). While pilgrims search for the sacred in transcendent terms (God, Nirvana), modern tourists seek out places rendered quasi-sacred by the Circle of Representation, places that are no mere places but *sights* to be seen. They seek out iconic buildings that through manifold representations function like signs referring to the country as a whole, or the act of traveling in general, such as the Eiffel Tower or the Mona Lisa (Culler, 1981, p. 127). Or they let their gaze be directed towards carefully selected and edited 'local culture' that they seek as somehow more authentic than their own office life (Urry, 2002). Travel agents function like surrogate parents that insulate the tourists from the harsh reality of the tourist destination, and that direct their attention towards pre-selected sights deemed worthy of seeing (Turner & Ash, 1975).

The Balinese dance in a tourist resort is a vastly simplified and shortened version of actual traditional dances, but the tourists are given the version that can be grasped during their short visit (Turner & Ash, 1975, p. 159). Even though of course the dances are staged and far removed from their original (often sacred) settings, the photographs the tourists take are intended to operate evidentially, as supposed proofs of insight into local culture. To the inexperienced travelers, directed by travel agencies, the mere exoticism of the dance is taken to be a sign of its authenticity.

Most travelers today starting with the generation of the millennials and onwards (at least those that I know) would not be caught dead in such all-inclusive prepackaged tourist deals. In fact they would recoil at the thought of being considered tourists at all. They are not as gullible as to believe that a Balinese dance at a tourist resort is an authentic representation of Balinese culture. They know of the elaborate stagings of local cultures for the sake of tourists in search for the exotic, and they avoid any explicitly touristy attractions. They look to fellow travelers for insight on where to go and what to see. And Instagram travel influencers are aware that their credibility comes from the impression of authenticity and relatability, which is why they actively cultivate this appearance (Leaver et al., 2020, p. 132). For their pictures are carefully curated, professionally shot and staged, scenes deliberately arranged. But they talk and write as if they are keeping their friends up to date with their travel adventures.

One relatability technique they use is to reveal signs of production: to co-conspiratorially let the audience a little bit into the extent to which their photos are indeed staged (Leaver et al 2021, 197, p. 211). The hashtag "#instagramvsreality" is very popular (currently 334,163 posts). It shows a typical idyllic Instagram image and then "the reality" behind it. For example, the first shot shows pristine blue waters and imposing rocks in the sea; the second image shows a bit of the beach, overcrowded with people and spoiling the former carefully framed impression of a remote paradise. Or, on the Instagram reels (short video) function, we would see someone sipping high tea in an Edwardian dress; in the second half of the video she would let us in on

how she first had to clear the 21st century mess from the table, arrange the cups and the cutlery, find the perfect angle for the umbrella, and place herself and her dress in a photogenic manner. It is such techniques that cultivate the impression that the influencer is one of us and, although of course she or he has to tweak reality a tiny bit to create appealing images, it is not to fool us but to provide appealing content. Like in Disneyland, the idea is that if parts of it are demonstratively fake, then the rest must be real (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 25). But of course, the content creators have complete control in what they present as 'fake' and 'real'.

As Michael Fried has argued, hiding signs of production creates a theatrical effect that absorbs audiences in the scene (Fried, 1980). But when marks of production are glimpsed, for example when a movie actor glances at the camera, the spell is broken and the audience gains a higher-order experience of both the content and the content *as* produced by someone to create an effect. Instagram audiences, many of them digital natives, are well-versed with media and virtual content, which is why such ostentatious behind-the-scenes sneak-peaks are satisfactory because they show what the audience implicitly already knows and do not treat them like gullible children (as 20th-century travel agents might, by contrast).

But if the audience already knows that Instagram content is elaboratively produced and staged, then the sense in which popular influencers are considered authentic cannot be understood in an ontological sense: that they are especially good at rendering their adventures in a documentary way and exhaustingly showing "the reality" of the place in every last detail. That would indeed be very boring. As Ryan Wittginslow has argued, authenticity does not lay down an ontological claim that the authentic person or place is more 'real' or 'natural', rather it is a normative claim in an *aesthetic* sense. (Wittginslow, 2021, p. 259, 261-3). Something is deemed authentic if it grants a specific aesthetic experience. Fatigued by an increasingly virtual life, we want to experience things in a rustic, sensual, earthy, nitty-gritty way. We made our own sour-dough bread during the COVID-19 pandemic; we want a coffee grinder as opposed to instant coffee; organic imperfectly shaped carrots with dirt still on them that we need to take the trouble to scrub off, and milk from the regional farmer instead of from the 24h shop down the road make our life seem more 'real'. Correspondingly, this leads to the homogenization of the world in which hipster, expensive, artisanal venues keep popping up in order to attract customers in search of the authentic.

As Wittginslow has expressed it, we want things that *seem* "difficult, slow, unsafe, local and intuitable", and "We must encounter them as if they offer up their gifts begrudgingly." (Wittginslow, 2021, 263) We want that which bears the signs of its own production. Today's travelers do not want surrogate parenting from travel agents who will take them by the hand and show them the 'authentic' local sights. They want the agency of discovering these themselves, or at the very least of following in the footsteps of authentic influencers who discovered these places themselves. They want to harvest rice with local farmers and to hike to a remote deserted bay.

Travel influencers are not in any ontological sense more 'real' than others, but they are capable of expressing the aesthetics of authenticity. This is not only true of the places they present but of their very selves they depict on selfies: by showing the marks of production of their very selves with public engagements or break-ups or tearful confessions, they display the performance of their own identity as a work-in-progress, and, more worryingly, the production of themselves as commercial brands. Also, not only are the influencers turned into a product on the platform, but so are their followers whose engagement data is the real *raison d' être* of such platforms in the first place. It is this commercial aspect that most contributes towards a perceived falsity of Instagrammers' self-presentation. Taken on its own, it is not categorically different from showing vacation slides to friends and family that display a kind of a hero narrative arc, or decorating one's work or school locker with pictures that are supposed to show or accentuate the kind of person one is. However, the platform's profit-orientation commodifies

both the people and the places instead of simply communicating meaning. As Richard Lewis argues in postphenomenological terms, technologies tend to both enable and constrain (Lewis, 2017, p. 97). In the case of travel or destination selfies, they unleash great potential for self-expression and meaning-making in the construction of one's online presence, but they are also designed to create pressure towards commodification and creating a brand. As critical theorists of social media have pointed out, they tend to transform the whole of life into a shopping mall, and to commodify spaces of friendship, humanity and democratic values (Fuchs, 2021, p. 290).

The logic of Instagram is primarily geared towards profit, and not towards understanding, or self-knowledge of its users. Rather, the deeply seated need for interpreting the world and self-expression within a cohesive and narratively structured reality is exploited to the end of competing for attention, and it is the attention of other users that is the resource of prime interest for tech giants, because it can be directed towards advertisements and sales. While there is vast potential for self-expression and social sharing on the platform, this potential is stunted by the assimilation into the logic of the market. Both the self and the place become brands and any sort of expression that deviates from the established commercial brand is discouraged by the algorithm—and such messy deviations are necessary for genuine self-expression and exploration of possibilities of what it is to be a meaning-making animal and to create a meaningful world. The “Instagramization of the world” is a set of calculated efforts to create conducive conditions for looking good on the platform—such as whitish as opposed to yellowish lighting—for this highly channeled and limited form of self-expression that primarily serves profit. It ultimately leads to an aesthetic homogenization of the world and its reduction to photogenic scenery that conforms to the affordances of the app, and therefore to commodification.

5 CONCLUSION: YOUR FAIRY TALE STARTS HERE

The official Instagram page of the Forever Rose Café in Dubai proclaims, “Your fairy tale starts here”. It aptly summarizes the need that Instagram and corresponding “Insta-worthy” places exploit: the need to be a protagonist in a meaningful, narrativized world. Taking a selfie in a place that appears like an artist's drawing frames the self as special, as worthy of commemoration by art. The sketches of Mona Lisa and the Queen of England act like tokenistic signifiers of travel and culture itself, situating the Instagrammer in a globally instantly graspable visual narrative. The place is conceived for a clientele well-versed in the dynamic of the app, and it affords both the staging and the demonstrative glimpses behind the scenes of staging a selfie (as for instance when shifting between the 2D and 3D appearances of the furniture in photos, thereby revealing how the illusion of a 2D sketch is produced). By allowing glimpses into the process of selfie productions, it affords the aesthetic of authenticity that Instagrammers are after.

But the original need for understanding and self-understanding is frustrated since the venue is organized around the requirements of profit. Both the venue and the app require a quick turnover of guests/users, and not lengthy investigations of self-conscious world-appropriations like those that, for instance, Monet was likely after when obsessively painting his lily ponds. Pre-interpreted places and pre-packaged narratives preclude the sustained technological agency of structuring and interpreting the world that can lead to a more nuanced understanding of one's place in the world. The too-simple fairy tale is already told, and it is only awaiting the next Instagrammer to insert themselves into the picture.

Data Access Statement

No new data generated or analyzed.

Contributor Statement

The author is the single author of the manuscript.

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