

Tourism in London, And Me

I have been documenting the picture-taking, particularly selfie-happy tourists who frequent London. The way I have decided to do this isn't an accurate rendition of the scene as the photographs are no longer indexical to what was in front of the camera. Instead, I have utilised digital technologies to merge parts of multiple images into single composites. One of the conditions of optical perception inherent in photography (Eco In. Burgin, 1982) is reduced (that of juxtapositions within the frame derived from the indexical relationship of the scene and the photograph in traditional photography). However, another is given for these particular scenes. Here at these tourist hotspots I've created a more accurate sense of what it is like to be in these magnets for tourists with selfies being taken left, right and centre. The clutter has been removed allowing the viewer to be more immersed in what has to me become more of a spectacle than the landmarks themselves. That is the spectacle of the spectacle - the unconscious performance by tourists of mass picture-taking from similar viewpoints with myself recording this spectacle in a cohesive manner. 'The spectacle that falsifies reality is nevertheless a real product of that reality' - (Debord, 1967). I would argue this quote could be applied to the composites I've created which have been drawn from reality.

I've taken the images from the perspective of an outsider looking in, even though I would call myself more of an insider as this is my home city. As such I have repeated the images produced for each hotspot with myself imitating the tourists' poses in front of the landmarks. 'real life is materially invaded by the contemplation of the spectacle, and ends up absorbing it and aligning itself with it.' - (Debord, 1967). I wanted to establish my own relationship to the tourists. This was that materially there was no relationship but within the pseudo-world of images I could assert my presence. This represents myself interacting with the tourists retrospectively. I have previously noted that tourists tend to reassure themselves when in unfamiliar places by simply taking pictures. Susan Sontag writes on tourism: 'As photographs give people an imaginary possession of a past that is unreal, they also help people to take possession of a space in which they are insecure.' - (Sontag, 1977). Using this line of thinking, just like the tourists picture-taking at the hotspots were doing as a kind of souvenir of their experience as outsiders looking in, I also used picture-taking as an outsider looking in, except the subject of my pictures were the tourists and their performance in front of the landmarks. My picture-taking too was a kind of reaction towards something I felt slightly unsure about.

Finally for this project, I took selfies and photos similar to what the tourists would have taken from the same position they (and I, retrospectively) had assumed in the composites I'd put together. For me this reaffirmed my experience in relation to the tourists; producing something tangible from a relationship I'd never been able to put my fingers on up until now.

References: Debord, G. (1967). *Society of the Spectacle*. 3rd ed. London: Rebel Press, pp. 7-8.

Sontag, S. (1977). *On Photography*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, pp. 12.





























