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The phenomenon of charter tourism is a recent and still relatively understudied historical subject related to the post-WWII welfare society, particularly in Northern and Western Europe. In cultural geography and sociology there has been increasing interest in tourism studies, but few studies on ordinary people's vacation photo albums. With such material as an analytical prism, exemplified by close readings of Danish and British private vacation photo albums from the early 1970s, this contribution includes a discussion on methodology: how can one, using tools from the field of aesthetical analysis in combination with a wider range of cultural studies theories, analyze such non-canonized, personal, everyday material in a broader cultural-historical context and make it mean something on its own terms and beyond the personal? The article challenges conventional binaries – tourist/local, home/away, representation/performance – and the author concludes that making vacation photo albums can be considered an aesthetic tool with which to inhabit, familiarize, perform, and experience a place.

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Foreign, but Homely: What Can Be Gained from Studying Family Vacation Albums?

Introduction

Since its invention, photography has been used to see, to experience, to caption, to fathom, to freeze, and not least to conquer the world. Since the technological development of photography made it possible to carry photographic equipment while traveling, photography has indeed been used by travelers to conquer the world. "From 1840 onwards tourism and photography were assembled together and they remake each other in an irreversible and momentous double helix. From then, we can say a 'tourist gaze' enters and makes the mobile, modern world."¹ While a photographic explorer such as the Italian-British Felix Beato carried heavy cameras and wet collodion glass-plate negatives on his travels to East Asia and Egypt in the 1850s and 1860s, tourist photography gradually became a common practice as cameras became affordable for ordinary ² or at least middle-class ² people with the "Kodak revolution" around 1900. Before that, travel photographs were most often professionally produced for consumers; now ordinary people could produce them as well. Whereas traveling abroad was still rare or at least an upper-class luxury in the early 20th century, "going on vacation" gradually became more common with the development of the post-WWII welfare society, at least in Western Europe, which is the subject of this article.³ The first two decades after WWII involved industrial and economic growth as well as increased urbanization, along with an increase in real wages for most people, gradually reduced working hours, and the entitlement to longer holidays. As a result, tourism and cameras both became democratized. At least since the 1950s, a camera has been as important to bring along as sunglasses and bathing

suits when going on vacation ² maybe ever *the* most important object to take. As Susan Sontag observed in the 1970s – the early days of modern mass tourism – “it seems positively unnatural to travel for pleasure without taking a camera along.”⁴

This article is about tourist photo albums from the early 1970s, with some private family photo albums as case examples. The starting point is a Danish family photo album from 1971, made by a working-class family traveling to the Costa del Sol in Spain, found in the archives of the Royal Danish Library. This album will be compared with and put into perspective by seven small charter vacation albums from the early 1970s made by a middle-class British couple and found in an antique shop in England. The aim of the article is to bring forth what can be gained from such material, relatively overlooked in cultural studies, and to suggest a methodological entrance for analyzing such aspects. The discussion of methodology will thus occupy a significant part of what follows.


What can such albums tell us about the phenomenon of early charter tourism that we cannot read from other kinds of sources? Turning this question upside down, I will also ask: what can tourist photography tell us about photography and what it means to “do” photography? Indeed, taking a closer look at these albums makes us aware of the fact that photography is a practice and a doing which helps us grapple with and comprehend the world. Looking at ordinary people’s holiday images, we might get a grip on hitherto lesser-noticed aspects of mass tourism and the role of photography in tourism, and may well nuance our understanding of history and of photography. Tourism is a way to consume the world from within, which the camera feeds into.⁵ At the same time, it is not just a question of “consuming.” Taking a careful look at actual tourist images, as will be done in what follows, challenges conventional binaries such as tourist/local, home/away, and

representation/performance. I intend to show how, on the one hand, tourism – meeting and conquering the new, the foreign, and the exotic – and, on the other hand, the everyday, converge in early charter tourism photography. The guiding thesis is that taking photographs and putting them into albums is not only about looking at foreign surroundings and preserving memories of them; it is also a way to inhabit, familiarize, perform, and experience a place. Making a photo album is a way to perform the social, the being-togetherness that photography supports through “the event” and the world-making of the medium.⁶

The new charter tourism

Tourism as a phenomenon and camera technology are both parts of a larger consumer culture related to the growth of modernity from the second half of the 19th century onward, which in the 1960s and early 1970s reached a peak not hitherto seen. In this period, two aspects collided related to tourism and to camera technology, at least in many Northern and Western European countries: charter tourism and easy-to-access photographic technology.⁷ In this way, making family photo albums developed in tandem with tourism.

Charter tourism, meaning pre-arranged package tours at competitive prices, is particularly popular in Northern Europe, “where individuals seek to avoid the long, cold, and dark winters and visit the friendly ‘South’.”⁸ Its heyday was in the 1960s and following decades (in the 1970s it gradually became a form of travel accessible to working-class families as well), when airborne package tours to sunny coastal destinations in Southern Europe sent millions of Northern Europeans on vacation every year. Although still a big industry, it has been declining since the 2000s in favor of more individualized touristic consumption, but is still an extensively used service in many parts of the world.

In 1962, the Rasmussen family from Copenhagen – consisting of a working-class couple and their grown-up, unmarried son 

went on their first charter vacation to the Spanish island of Mallorca. Over the next fifteen years they made regular trips every summer to Rome, Tenerife, and the Costa del Sol as well. The father was born in 1899 and worked as a metal grinder, while the mother, born in 1901, took care of the home. The son, Hjalmar, who was born in 1923 and who worked as an insurance salesman, most often documented the trips with his camera and produced a photo album of each vacation upon returning. The first albums are in black-and-white, but around 1970 they become color photography. Hjalmar donated the albums to the photography collection of the Royal Library in Copenhagen in 1996, long after the deaths of his parents. As a researcher I have no direct access to the producers/owners of them.

In what follows I intend to focus on how these albums bear historical witness to the early wave of charter tourism that began in Denmark in the 1960s, transporting thousands of middle-class but also—as in this example—working-class Danes to new and exotic places such as Spain, typically for a week's vacation. Here they could experience palm trees and paella for the first time in their lives.

As an extension of their book *Performing Tourist Places* from 2004,¹⁰ which was inspired by the so-called “performance turn” in tourism theory and research in the 1990s, Michael Haldrup and Jonas Larsen approach tourist consumption through the lens of performance, hence the title of their *Tourism, Performance and the Everyday: Consuming the Orient* from 2010.¹¹ In the latter book, whose basis is ethnographic fieldwork into tourism in Egypt and Turkey in recent times, they underline that the tourist experience is not only related to the gaze but is multi-sensuous and related to doings and enactments. Tourism is simultaneously consumption and production in the sense that tourists produce themselves and the places they visit: tourists, as the authors argue, “enact and inscribe places with their own stories.”¹² At the same time,

tourism is not just about meeting the foreign and the exotic Other: sociality and everydayness between friends and family are also being performed by the tourist, say Haldrup and Larsen, and these performances are enabled by certain objects (or “affordances,” as they call them, inspired by James Gibson). Photography can be such an object or affordance. By linking to the performance of everyday life, they distance themselves from the notion of inauthenticity often found in tourism research¹³ – and, I will add, in photographic theory. Jakob Lauring (and others investigating tourism more recently) also distances himself from a widespread current in tourism research which regards the tourist experience as the opposite of everyday life – its total inversion, driven by a frivolous normlessness freed of all routines. According to Lauring (referencing J.K.S. Jacobsen), “otherness and sameness” is “a central theme in understanding charter tourism.”¹⁴

This combination of otherness and sameness is what I experienced when studying the Rasmussen family albums. Lauring also distances himself from one of the most seminal studies of tourism, made by John Urry: “Urry [...] places great emphasis on the fact that tourism basically is a matter of inversion of the ordinary – ‘a basic binary division between the ordinary/everyday and the extraordinary’.”¹⁵ As described by Hazel Andrews in her study of British tourists in Palma Nova and Magaluf, Mallorca, “The degree to which these tourists might be argued to be taken out of their everyday world is questionable,” and “tourists also keep the home world in mind.”¹⁶ This dialectic between looking at the foreign with curious interest and at the same time turning parts of it into something “homely” and familiar is what I find in many early charter tourism photo albums, as I will demonstrate in what follows.

Methodological approaches to opening the

material – Tinkler and Gumbrecht

How can one analyze the early Danish welfare society's relationship with charter holidays and the view of the new and foreign through a holiday album from the Spanish Costa del Sol as an example of ordinary people's perspective on history? Photography is a rather precarious source in the sense that it is so context-dependent in terms of the attribution of meaning. How do you avoid the photograph confirming or simply illustrating the context or sending you straight into it? How do you begin using the photograph as a cultural-historical object on its own terms?

Over the last two decades, there has been renewed focus on considering photographs as material objects that not only *mean* something, but that we *do* something with and "perform" our identity through.¹⁷ Integrated with this is the attention paid to emotions and affects, and also to the fact that we share them with others. At the same time, historians, media researchers, sociologists, anthropologists, and even cultural geographers have become increasingly interested in photographs. A new interdisciplinary approach to analyzing everyday photographs through a (cultural-) historical lens has emerged, with a focus on using them as a starting point for writing cultural history in new ways. It involves a wide range of theoretical and conceptual approaches from a wide variety of academic fields. This renewed interest is indeed a positive thing, but at the same time it can seem methodologically confusing.

Traditional analytical approaches from the field of art history sometimes fall short when faced with this type of non-canonized material, which is not or should not be categorized as art. The question here then becomes: how to make the seemingly banal and non-meaningful "mean"? Studying personal family photo albums, I would like to emphasize the strength of the aesthetic disciplines' focus on "close reading": starting from an aesthetic

object in its own right rather than just letting it be the contextual source. A photograph is not just a transparent window on the world; it is also an image. Thus, the aesthetic disciplines' close reading approach to images has something to offer which historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and media researchers do not normally possess to the same extent. This claim is what forms the basis for the following methodological approach.

Particularly with university students, I have found sociologist and historian Penny Tinkler's pedagogical approach to "image work" useful, as presented in her book *Using Photographs in Social and Historical Research*.¹⁸ Although a sociologist and historian herself, Tinkler is aware of the benefits of close reading, and thus her approach is a good place to begin analysis from. In the book, she presents five analytical steps—in practice not entirely separable—under the heading "Image Work: Five Lines of Enquiry": identifying basic details, scrutinizing images, considering material evidence, doing contextual research, and finally reflecting on meanings (from the image itself to its institutional frameworks, viewers' interpretations, the photographer's intended meaning, and the meaning of the subjects depicted in the image). First of all, this method insists on the word "scrutinizing" and the importance of beginning an analysis from a close reading of details, indications of when a photograph was taken, by whom, and why. How do the people pose and how is the image produced technically (camera angle, cropping the subject, lighting conditions, colors, composition)? These issues might seem banal, but they are often overlooked, and such "scrutinizing" is an excellent starting point when working with ordinary family photo albums. Making these interpretive steps may seem a bit of a diversionary move, and Tinkler concludes the section thus: "Interpreting these details involves contextual research such as knowledge of genre and historically specific aesthetic conventions."¹⁹ The important thing here is to "stay" with the image and let it be the starting point

for the analysis. This is, in fact, the strength of aesthetic, visual studies.

Tinkler's next step is to examine and relate to the materiality of the photograph, to the image as an object.²⁰ This applies to everything from the paper to the presentation and to digital photography as well.²¹ The photograph always comes in "a form." Is it in an album, framed, or something else entirely, and what does that mean for its interpretation? Are there signs of use on the image? Has the photograph "traveled" as an object? All of this plays a role in the interpretation of its meaning.

In my example, where the photographs are actually freely available digitally in the Royal Library's "Digital Collections," it is important to take a closer look at the album as a physical object (leather-like plastic cover with a gold pattern, gray cardboard pages where you can freely write text and paste other things, including the physical objects it contains), and also to take a closer look at the other albums from the same family in the archive. Studying and describing all these elements helps to make the Costa del Sol album meaningful.

Then you need context, which is crucial work, writes Tinkler:

Contextual study of photos is key to their identification; reflection on what questions they can address; assessments of authenticity, credibility and representativeness; and analysis of meaning. The aim of contextual research is not simply to provide a backdrop against which to prop and interpret photos; this would be a dry, inanimate and inadequate approach. Instead, contextual research embraces also the historically and culturally specific practices of making, presenting, circulating, viewing and using photos in public and domestic contexts (here it overlaps with research on materiality).²²

Creating context about an image is in principle an endless process and also depends on the research question, but nevertheless contextual research is important: on the

photographer and the subject (in my case, the Rasmussen family), about how the image “ended up” where it was found. What was the technique used at the time the image was taken (my material is from the transitional period of black-and-white to color)? Where was it taken? What was the wider socio-cultural context surrounding the photograph and its subject? In my example, this includes examining the charter holiday as a social phenomenon at that particular time. When did the phenomenon emerge? Who could afford it and where did people go? How were charter holidays presented in advertisements and in the media, perhaps in other contexts such as the fiction of the period?

Tinkler’s last major section concerns creating meaning from the image, interpreting it, because “as she writes “photographs are “polysemic.” I want to emphasize, as Tinkler does not, that this work is governed by one’s overall research question, but that it is also developed and fine-tuned as one works with the photographs.

Adding context to and in the process of interpreting a charter holiday album of this type, it can be useful to do a broader synchronous cross-reading involving a larger body of holiday photographs made by different people. For quite a few years now, I have been collecting private family photo albums and photographs from flea markets and antique shops, from private individuals, and I have investigated public archives. For an interpretation of this rather heterogeneous material, I found inspiration in Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht’s book *In 1926: Living at the Edge of Time*. It is not about photographs as such, but about drawing a synchronized cross-section of one year by looking at the sensory side of historical experience through studying everyday life, lived experience, and public culture. Gumbrecht is explicitly not interested in finding a particular truth about 1926, but rather in looking at the “surface” of time, as he calls it, to bring out “the sensed side of historical experience.”²³ Gumbrecht takes a closer look at all

kinds of lived experiences of everyday phenomena, which he presents in an encyclopedic structure and alphabetical order. In this way, he aims to present history as “a network rather than a totality.”²⁴ He presents everyday objects and phenomena as categories, such as airplanes, telephones, and bullfighting. He then arranges these into a new system he calls “codes” or sometimes “discourses,” which consists of binary feelings or characteristics related to the listed phenomena. These can be, for instance, masculine/feminine, silence/noise, or authenticity/artifice. Finally, in the section “codes collapsed,” he looks at places in the material where the codes do not appear so clear-cut or binary. To give an example, as his book is about the 1920s, there are “collapses” in the gender codes, with new forms of liberated, androgynous, or “boyish” types of women. In this way, through a wide range of phenomena and objects, he is able to trace his way into nuancing the canonized historiography.

In the current context, it is not necessary to elaborate further on Gumbrecht’s book; instead, it will suffice as an inspiration for “organizing” material such as personal family photographs by looking at how the photographs at once represent certain discourses, yet at the same time are personal-aesthetic interpretive “products” that cause the discourses to break down or at least shift the focus slightly.

If I look at my charter albums alongside the broader material of Danish family vacation photos from the 1960s and 1970s, several “arrays” (Gumbrecht’s word) – in other words, observations or recurring themes – appear there. New forms of clothing, patterns, and colors; new bodies such as topless women on the beach, men with long hair, a man with a pram; an interest in the “exotic” associated with travel, such as belly dancing, camel riding, palm trees and mountains; modern technology that had suddenly become affordable in the early welfare society, such as cars, air travel, and new equipment such as cameras. A number of codes (akin to discourses) can be outlined in relation to these

motifs and themes: eternal values versus modernity; non-materiality versus (welfare and consumer) materiality; past versus present; domestication versus highlighting the exotic; authenticity versus artificiality; active women versus posing women; the beautiful versus the insignificant; formality versus informality; children as children versus children as young adults; feminine men versus active, masculine men and vice versa about women.

These contradictions can sometimes be seen in the same image or album, which therefore also points to “codes collapsed” in the period in relation to ideas about gender (male–female), generations (children–teenagers–young adults–older adults), other countries and peoples, and the value of society’s consumer goods, such as cameras, cars, and adverts.

With Tinkler’s instructions for close scrutiny and context research, and inspiration from Gumbrecht’s way of orchestrating discourse and organizing a broader cross-section through historical material, I would argue that you can go far in my case, as well as with other types of everyday photographs and family photo albums.

Deepening our historical understanding of charter vacation

Taking tourist photographs, we have probably all tried deliberately to avoid any sign of other tourists in the picture. We perform a staged version of authenticity, as if we were the only foreigner conquering native lands for the first time, in an attempt to distance ourselves from the category of “tourist.” Alongside this, for some “charter tourism” is a pejorative term. However, in albums from the early days of charter tourism, this is rarely the case. One of my main impressions from scrutinizing the Rasmussen vacation albums and many other tourist albums from the 1960s and 1970s is a feeling of naïve and enthusiastic

willingness to step into the role of tourist among other tourists. Of meeting the “exoticness” that others – the travel agency and the local tourist industry – have prepared and to a certain extent staged, be it via printed postcards, arranged dinners with local entertainment, or bus trips designed to lead the tourist from A to B as easily as possible. In these ways, they appear different from tourist photographs today, soaked in an awareness of one’s own role as a tourist. Nevertheless, it is not a question of authenticity/inauthenticity, instant/staged, and naive/conscious; these dual codes have broken down, as Gumbrecht would say.

To the theoretical vocabulary and methodological concerns, I would add so-called “non-representational” theory, and its focus on the fact that geography and places are not objective entities but relationally “made.” Making an album with photos and other memorabilia from your vacation to Mallorca or Tenerife is about creating an object of memory after you return – an object for life, to be used from time to time to revitalize memories. However, taking photographs and collecting physical objects *during* the actual vacation is also a bodily act of relating to the actual place, *creating* the place. Tourism must therefore be seen as “an embodied practice,” as Haldrup and Larsen and the authors of the anthology *Tourism: Between Place and Performance* do.²⁵ In this anthology, as elsewhere, the authors – mostly anthropologists, sociologists, and geographers – hardly discuss the role of or make close analyses of photographs. Nevertheless, they support my analysis of the vacation albums by arguing that tourist places are not only experienced through the gaze, but are multi-dimensional experiences created with the whole body and all its senses; space is always “embodied.” At the same time, they underline the importance of the social aspects of tourism.

Borrowing terms from Tim Cresswell, one could describe photography as practiced in the Rasmussen family albums as a “place-making activity,” turning in this case the Costa del Sol

into an authentic place and “a meaningful location.”²⁶ In his book *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, Nigel Thrift introduces the “non-representational theory” that he and fellow researchers such as Cresswell, mainly from the fields of social sciences and geography studies, developed in the early 2000s. One aspect of this theory is to supplement traditional geography with ideas of places as not only concrete locations but as “mental spaces” and performed spaces, and at the same time deliver inspiration to the social sciences from the performing arts around the notion of space as something latent and relative.²⁷

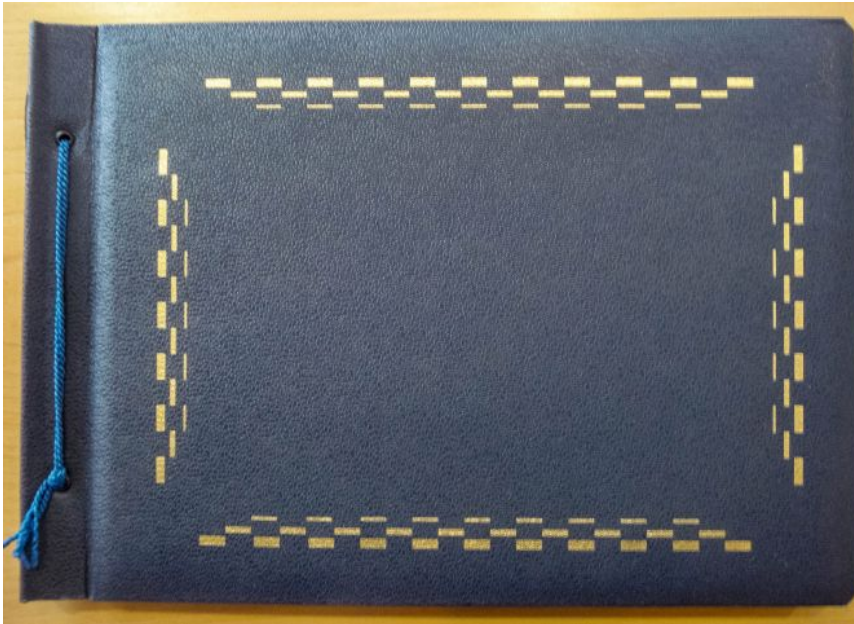
Charter tourism has been seen as inauthentic and related to social control and adaptation to consumer culture, banality, and manipulation – both in research and by the wider public. In fact, views on this subject are not that different from some people’s views on family photography as a practice. However, both categories ask for new and more nuanced analyses. Regarding family photography and photo albums as simultaneously a doing and a place-making activity, a material and aesthetical practice, as well as a way to handle and interpret lived experience, in what follows I will take a closer look at representative examples of the role of photography in early charter tourism.

Case 1: “our home” in the Costa del Sol

In Denmark, the two major charter tourism companies were Tjæreborg, founded in 1950, and Spies, founded in 1956. In 1968, Spies alone sent 180,000 Danes to Southern Europe on charter vacations, mostly to Spain.²⁸ The same year, around five million people from Britain and ten million from Germany/BRD purchased a charter holiday.²⁹ In August 1971, the three members of the Rasmussen family went to the Costa del Sol with Tjæreborg. The album documenting their vacation has a brown leather-like cover with a geometric golden pattern (fig.

1) and the pages inside are made of gray cardboard, separated by semi-transparent parchment paper. On the first page, the vacation bill from Tjæreborg is glued to the cardboard along with an aerial photograph of Denmark, taken from the charter flight, leaving Copenhagen and heading for the south (fig. 2).

INSERT



Figs. 1. The Rasmussen family vacation album from the Costa del Sol, 1971. The Royal Library, Copenhagen



Fig. 2. Page from the Rasmussen family vacation album from the Costa del Sol, 1971. The Royal Library, Copenhagen



Fig. 3. Page from the Rasmussen family vacation album from the Costa del Sol, 1971. The Royal Library, Copenhagen



Fig. 5. Page from the Rasmussen family vacation album from the Costa del Sol, 1971. The Royal Library, Copenhagen



Fig. 6. Page from the Rasmussen family vacation album from the Costa del Sol, 1971. The Royal Library, Copenhagen.

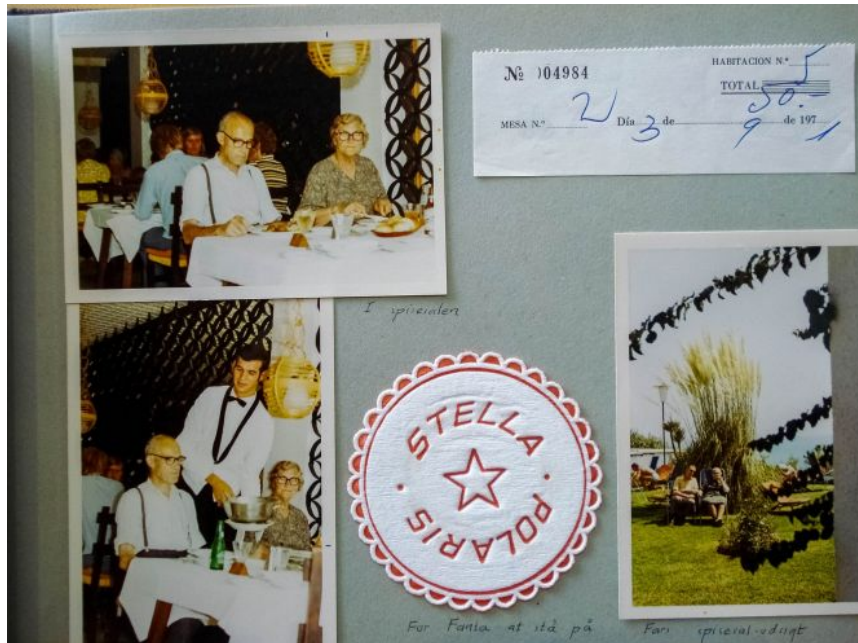


Fig. 7. Page from the Rasmussen family vacation album from the Costa del Sol, 1971. The Royal Library, Copenhagen



Fig. 8. Page from the Rasmussen family vacation album from the Costa del Sol, 1971. The Royal Library, Copenhagen



Fig. 9. Page from the Rasmussen family vacation album from the Costa del Sol, 1971. The Royal Library, Copenhagen



Fig. 10. Page from the Rasmussen family vacation album from the Costa del Sol, 1971. The Royal Library, Copenhagen

It is important to consider such photo albums as material objects and as scrapbooks, since it is very common that they include objects other than photographs; for instance, in this case, apart from writing one can find the bill, the boarding card, bus tickets, postcards, and restaurant bills, of which there is one for “the cheapest cup of coffee mother enjoyed this summer,” as

the handwritten subtitle reads (fig. 4), while the album also contains a bird's feather (fig. 5). In this way, concrete material objects from the foreign country are brought home. Both the coffee bill and the feather look like things we know from home, but the differences are pointed out as well. The added text does this for the coffee bill, and the bird's feather appears with some photos from a park where far more birds appear than would normally be seen in Danish parks.

One of the first pages begins with a display card from the hotel Stella Polaris, written in Danish and detailing what time meals are to be served (fig. 3). Five color photographs of the interior of a room are glued to the same page. The photographer has zoomed in on the door to the room or rather the small holiday apartment of the three family members, with the key in the keyhole, the master bed, a single bed in another room, and the parents sitting in the living room, almost as if it had been their own living room at home, and where the father is smoking his pipe. Then come color photographs mixed with postcards of "Our hotel Stella Polaris" (fig. 6), and photographs from the restaurant meals, including a round paper coaster on which to place the orange soda "Fanta," as the text under it explains (fig. 7). It also explains that one of the photographs shows "father's viewpoint from the dining hall," with the son and the mother sitting outside. This both underlines a bodily viewpoint: it is not just any view but the view of a specific, gazing and sensing body, and also that the photographer must be a family member other than the son. At the hotel, we see the father shining his shoes before a trip to Grenada (fig. 8), with the text "Dad gets us on our feet." Several very homely situations are documented, where the subjects are not really posing for the camera, but rather seem absorbed in doing ordinary things such as polishing shoes or drinking coffee. There are also many photographs of the hotel taken from outside and described as "our home," a recurrent theme in all the family's vacation albums. "Home again at Stella

Polaris," (fig. 9) says the text under two photographs cut and mounted as a small panorama, showing the rather dull, plain parking lot in front of the hotel. Here, it seems, the intention is not so much to document something spectacular, but simply show "home." On the same page, another building is photographed because it is a "sign of close to home," as the hand-written text says. A page (fig. 10) has a photograph of the parents in a horse-drawn wagon at the top (and reads "We treated ourselves"), and below it a small envelope with hand-written text: "Congratulations from Stella Polaris." In addition to the envelope the album text says: "On August 28 1971, we received a bottle of champagne." This is the birthday of the son Hjalmar (48 years old), and the page underlines how the hotel celebrates with them, as if they were close or familial. In the Mallorca album, there is a whole page with photographs from inside and outside the hotel as well: "Our home for the week," the text here says. On the last page of the Costa del Sol album, we see the parents packing their suitcases, and a photograph of the apartment seen from outside with the text: "Now no longer our room." So here, the act of photographing the foreign place is also a way of taming it, making it accessible, turning it not into something purely strange, new, and exotic, but into something one can call "home." Thereby, to a certain extent, the difference between vacation and homely conditions is being erased.

In most of the photographs, we only meet the parents, named "father" and "mother," since the adult son Hjalmar is the photographer and probably the one who made the album. Father and mother are looking at a park fountain, riding a horse-drawn wagon, eating at a so-called "pig feast" accompanied by a guitar orchestra clad in traditional local costumes, doing all sorts of things related to being a tourist.

We also encounter photographs of cars, supermarkets, and bar facades, all "arrays" in Gumbrecht's term, which point to a fascination with "modern" things that the Rasmussens were

probably not used to seeing in their quiet Copenhagen area of Frederiksberg, outside the city center, where they lived, according to the travel bill on the first page of the album. The page with father shining shoes also includes a photo of a restaurant with cars parked outside, two postcards from Granada, and a cut-out from the travel brochure which describes the trip to Granada. One of the postcards shows a fountain. However, it is not any fountain, it is "the memorial where we were supposed to meet." So again, tourism here is not only about seeing and documenting memorials, statues, and other tourist places; it is about meeting up with and doing things with others. The social aspect is what makes this specific fountain worth including.

Hjalmar Rasmussen donated six vacation albums to The Royal Library in Copenhagen. Two of them, of Poland in 1965 and Russia in 1985,³⁰ are without his parents, but the trips to Mallorca, Tenerife, Rome, and the Costa del Sol are shared by the three family members. All the albums begin with some kind of information about where they are going (the Mallorca album starts with a map of the island, the Costa del Sol album with the travel receipt), they include detailed photos of the transport situation (such as a lunch tray on the airplane and aerial views from it), and detailed registrations of "our" room at the destination. In almost all of them, Hjalmar is the photographer. The album pages can be loosely grouped into four types of images and objects: 1. Tourist places without people, often depicted through pre-produced postcards. 2. Mother and father doing things in the foreign location, such as eating in a restaurant or visiting a park. 3. "Our" hotel and room. 4. Details of modern objects such as supermarkets and cars, a red night lamp, a telephone in the hotel room, or the contemporary bathroom sanitation. Of course, a lot of this has to do with the interests and the personality of this specific family, in particular the son

Hjalmar, but as we shall see in the next, British, example, these themes are recurrent in other vacation albums.

Case 2: seven small vacation albums from the early 1970s

It is still relatively rare that a museum or public archive holds private family photo albums from the 1970s, as with the Rasmussen albums at the Royal Library. Such albums are either still in people's private homes, or they have been thrown out because of the abundance of photographs in this first wave of cheap mass photography. In all the years I have been researching such material, I have thus scanned flea markets and antique shops as well.

In such an antique shop in Southern England, with material mostly from private estates, I found seven small vacation albums, documenting a variety of vacations by a couple of around fifty years old (fig. 11).³¹ In one of the albums, the photographs are mechanically stamped "SEP 73" (i.e. September 1973); in the rest they are not. But all of them seem either from the same vacation in Spain or from different vacations in the same period of maybe five years, judging from the appearances of these unknown British vacationers. Each album is a small, modest-looking, pre-fabricated white carton album the size of an Instamatic photograph. "Cross and Herbert, Colour Photographs" is printed on the front, referring to the British pharmacy company which probably developed the photographs. "Processed in our own modern laboratory," it says on the back. There is no hand-written information at all, so here I can only depict and conclude some generic aspects which I consider "typical." Each album, except one, consists of eighteen photographs. The odd one out ends with four photographs of a very green garden with a big green lawn and a house in the background. The last five pages are empty, so this looks like a case of coming home to England

and using up the last four images on the film. Most of the photographs are probably taken by the man, since the woman appears in many of them. But in some of them she is probably the photographer, and in a few they appear together.

INSERT



Fig. 11. Anonymous vacation albums, England, early 1970s.



Fig. 12. From anonymous vacation album, England, early 1970s.

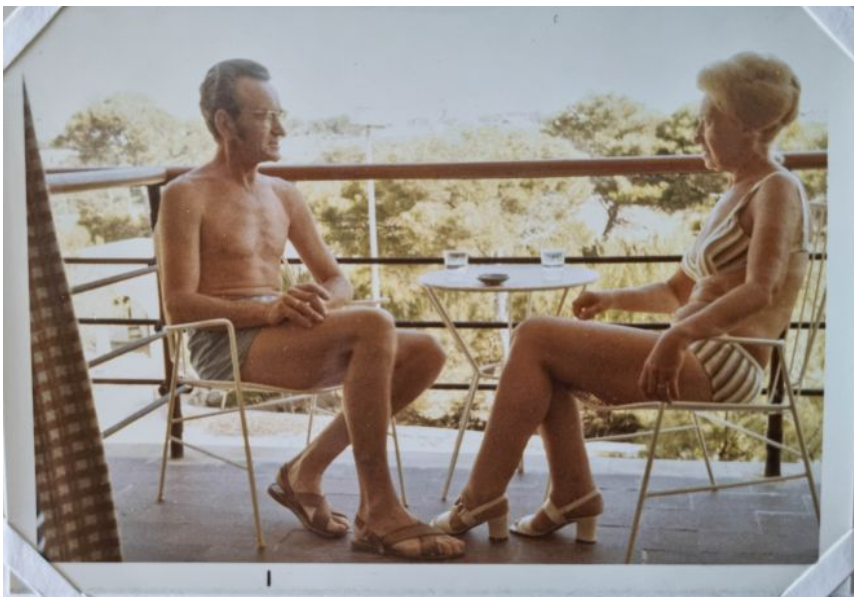


Fig. 13. From anonymous vacation album, England, early 1970s.



Fig. 14. From anonymous vacation album, England, early 1970s.



Fig. 15. From anonymous vacation album, England, early 1970s.



Fig. 16. From anonymous vacation album, England, early 1970s.



Fig. 17. From anonymous vacation album, England, early 1970s.



Fig. 18. From anonymous vacation album, England, early 1970s.

In these albums, as in the previous case, we also see the couple in front of their hotel room several times, sometimes on a balcony, sometimes on a terrace in front of the room or in the hotel garden (fig. 12). In two almost identical photographs, we meet them on their hotel balcony having a cigarette and something to drink (fig. 13). Apart from shoes, they only wear bathing suits. Judging from the slightly "stiff" way they stare into each other's eyes, the two photographs could have been taken with a self-timer. As with the many hotel images in the Rasmussen albums, it seems here that they are making

themselves at home with the help of the camera, and that this aspect is of major importance for them. Looking at these hotel images, and at the many different hotel swimming pools as well, they could be from different vacations. It is difficult to tell (when you do not recognize the exact places), also because there are relatively few photos of recognizable “famous places.” It is clearly a hot and dry location in the south with rocky seashores, cactuses, blooming rhododendrons, and whitewashed houses. We meet the wife in a landscape with many agave cactuses, which clearly implies something simultaneously beautiful and exotic for the couple (fig. 14). Another photograph shows her surrounded by purple flowers (fig. 15). This one differs from most of the others because it is taken from a ground perspective, which gives the flowers prominence in the image and makes her merge with them, becoming part of them as if she herself were a flower in this beautiful flowerbed. Such a photograph is not just about documenting and producing memories; it is a creative act of image production.

One photograph is of a memorial to Christ carrying the inscription “Reinad en España” [Reign in Spain]. There are photographs of meals as there are of sea views, mountains, a few churches, and a harbor. However, the most dominant motif is the couple posing for each other, often dressed only in bathing suits (figs. 16–18) or posing together in an unspecified place (balcony, beach, sun lounger) – 38 out of 103 in total. Over one third of all the images thus consist of the couple posing for each other with almost no context around the person. Most often, the woman is posing for the man, but sometimes it is the other way round (fig. 18). In these three images they seem to take joy in simply playing with the act of posing for each other and for the camera. One album though consists mostly of photographs of a large dinner party at a restaurant in one of the holiday locations, where the couple is cutting a big cake together at the table. In the same album, we see a modern high-rise hotel

with a pool, shown from high above. In another album there are also some photographs of a younger couple with a toddler by the same swimming pool, and one of the child alone, so maybe at least two albums are from a vacation with several family members to celebrate what could be the couple's silver wedding anniversary (here I am guessing). Apart from a few views from above of either a rocky landscape or the village with the high-rise hotel, and some of a local port with small sailing boats or a beach, all the photographs are of "social" situations, mostly between the couple, as if cementing – and performing – both that "we were there" and "we are having a good time together," almost as teamwork. This seems to be the dominant message in these seven small albums seen together, not the tourist sites. "I am proud of my wife's body," also seems to be an aspect of the many photographs of her, where she deliberately poses for the camera in order to be photographed and at the same time look her best. Here, it seems like the camera draws them together and helps them produce a certain kind of (desexualized) staged intimacy that they would probably not perform in the same way at home on an everyday basis. As such, the photographs seem to play the role of reinforcing the being-togetherness of the couple. Of course, the rocky surroundings and the hint of a small white house in the background indicate that we are not at home in England, but still the portraits of the couple seem very "homely," not unlike the homely feeling in many of the Rasmussens' images. At the same time, it is also remarkable how little dressed they are, walking around or having a coffee at a hotel bar, most often him in his bathing shorts, her in a bikini. No one poses like that in the Rasmussen albums, but there the main motif, the parents, are a generation older than the couple in the British albums. This stands out today, where partial nudity is seen less in public space than in the 1970s, particularly if you are around fifty years old, as this couple seems to be.

The seven British albums contain no written text or any other

kind of scrapbook object. This is probably primarily due to the quality of the simple booklet form, of the kind mass-produced by photographic labs in order to store images in a simple way. This is different from the slightly older form of the Rasmussen albums, where the pages are made of gray cardboard, and you had to glue the images onto them. The format indicates that in the 1970s, charter vacations and vacation photography had become more widespread and cheaper practices, where the individual album was not as creatively made as the Rasmussen albums from the late 1960s and early 1970s. However, these simpler, smaller albums appear as invested with feeling and care as the Rasmussens' ones do.

The Rasmussen albums include postcards of noteworthy tourist places. But when I exclude the postcards and look at the photographs taken by them and by the traveling middle-aged couple from England (as well as those in other vacation albums from this period), it is remarkable how few of them document typical tourist sites with people posing in front of them. The largest share of photographs shows some kind of more or less personal and rather "homely" or "daily" activity performed by the subjects: sitting in the hotel room or on a sun lounger, strolling around or being transported by bus or airplane, having a cup of coffee... activities of "being there." The images are at the same time presentational: related to posing and self-presentation in the act of discovering the new and foreign surroundings seen through the lenses of their individual subjectivities, and also non-representational: related to making the hotel and the near surroundings one's own place and related to interacting (probably more than at home) with the person(s) you are vacationing with and engaging with concrete objects at the site. From a feather and a restaurant bill to the bathroom sanitation or sometimes even locals such as guards, chefs, drivers, and waiters. The sociality, the "being-together," seems to be the most

important undercurrent in these albums. In my reading of them above, an important insight, challenging conventional interpretations within the social sciences of the phenomenon of “charter tourism,” is thus that they bridge or rather delete conventional binaries such as tourist/local, home/away, and representation/performance.

“A certain historical interest”

Why should we write about such everyday objects at all? The main answer is that family photographs and family photo albums are extremely widespread and, perhaps paradoxically, this is why they have historically been attributed a certain banality and/or privacy and therefore overlooked in research. Family photo albums can nuance the “big story,” can tell “other” – sometimes critical – stories “from below.” Focusing on the photographs of ordinary people can make us see something different in history, ask polemical questions, contribute overlooked angles, and challenge stereotypes. Another (and equally important) argument for family photo albums is that everyday photographs are relational; they are social objects that often act as a form of “glue” between people. We photograph holidays, dinners, or sunsets to document and remember them and to share those impressions with others – once through the family album, today often on Instagram. Finally – and this aspect is under-theorized in visual studies as well as in cultural history (and not included in tourism research at all for that matter) – such objects represent ordinary people’s own *aesthetic practice* of experiencing, shaping, and recognizing the world. This is an important but overlooked aspect that research fields such as visual studies and art history’s aesthetic approach can highlight by simply *looking at the image and describing it*. I argue that this is a fruitful but to some extent overlooked methodological starting point. In much research, family photographs are treated as generic images and less as individual

aesthetic interpretations of the world. Family photography finds itself in a crucial, key place: between big and small history, between the collective and the individual, the conventional and the creative, the public and the private, between norms/habitus and rupture/specificity, and between cultural history and aesthetic practices.

In Hjalmar Rasmussen's letter to the Royal Library in Copenhagen, dated February 27, 1996, where he asks if they want to receive his small suitcase full of vacation albums, he writes: "I feel I am getting old. I would appreciate it if what I consider of some kind of importance is not discarded when I die [...] In the post-war years when charter vacations by flight began and when, for the first time in this country's history, it became possible for ordinary working-class families to go South and experience the foreign cultures and landscapes, I traveled with my father and mother every summer [...] I think that these photo documentations from a transitional period must have a certain historical interest for future researchers and I don't think that very many from that population group have done the same." Half a year earlier, he had sent the same material to the National Museum, which apparently did not want to receive it. In that letter, dated September 29, 1995, he writes: "In the summers from 1962 and onward my parents and I went on charter flights South and, as part of the first wave of working-class families, experienced a little of what the wealthy in earlier periods were sent on as educational trips." He now hands them over "for use in later historical research," as he ends the letter.

For many years, no historians or historians of culture, aesthetics, and photography took an interest in this material. However, with renewed interest in material culture studies and photography as a performative doing, and reading the two letters of acquisition, which I feel are addressing me directly, I now thank Hjalmar Rasmussen for having been so progressive when he handed over his old vacation albums to the national

collection of images in Denmark.³² There is, of course, a lot of material like this around, at least in Northern Europe. However, most has not yet entered official archives and museums, and maybe never will, due to the abundance and generic quality of such tourist photographs. These albums nevertheless reveal slightly alternative visual stories regarding a specific – and under-studied – phenomenon related to the post-WWII welfare society – namely the birth of charter tourism. Interest in tourism studies has been increasing in cultural geography and sociology, but few studies, if any, regard such ordinary people’s vacation photographs as aesthetic interpretations, and that is a shortcoming. The albums presented here give insight into how people dressed, what they were particularly interested in, how they related to the locals, what it meant to travel abroad as something new and affordable in the early 1970s. At the same time, they point to the act of taking your own photographs and mounting them in albums as simultaneously an aesthetic act, an act of sociality, and a way to sense, inhabit, familiarize, perform, and experience a place.

- 1 John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, third edition (London: Sage, 2011), 165.
- 2 Following Kodak’s launch of the cheaper, easy-to-handle Brownie box camera in 1900.
- 3 Societal development was very different in Eastern Europe, on the other side of the political “Iron Curtain,” and thus were the patterns of vacation. This subject and a comparison with “the West” are beyond the scope of this article.
- 4 Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (London: Penguin, 1979), 9.
- 5 Michael Haldrup and Jonas Larsen, *Tourism, Performance and the Everyday: Consuming the Orient* (London–New York: Routledge, 2010), 2.
- 6 For “the event of photography,” see the writings of Ariella Azoulay, for instance *Civil Imagination: A Political Ontology of Photography* (New York–London: Verso, 2012).
- 7 If the new camera technology around 1900 supported a first wave of amateur and

- personal photography, the 1960s and 1970s represent another major leap, when Kodak in 1963 launched its series of inexpensive, easy-to-load Instamatic cameras. The Instamatic was an instant success; more than fifty million were produced between 1963 and 1970. This meant an explosion of personal and family photographs in the period in the US and many European countries – such as Denmark. See, for instance: Douglas Collins, *The Story of Kodak* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, 1980); *The Kodak Museum: Story of Popular Photography*, ed. Colin Ford (Bradford: National Museum of Photography, Film and Television / Century Hutchinson Ltd., 1989); Kamal A. Munir and Nelson Phillips, "The Birth of the 'Kodak Moment': Institutional Entrepreneurship and the Adoption of New Technologies," *Organization Studies* vol. 26, no. 11 (2005): 1665–1687; Gil Pasternak, "Taking Snapshots, Living the Picture: The Kodak Company's Making of Photographic Biography," *Life Writing* vol. 12, no. 4 (2015): 431–446.
- 8 Jakob Lauring, "Creating the Tourist Product in the Opposition Between Self-Actualization and Collective Consumption: The Case of Charter Tourism," *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research* vol. 37, no. 2 (May 2013): 217.
- 9 The Royal Library in Copenhagen owns six albums in total from the Rasmussen family. The earliest is from 1962 (Mallorca), including only b/w photos and postcards in color. The latest is from a roundtrip to Eastern Europe and Russia in 1985, after the parents' deaths in 1972 and 1974 respectively, including only the photographer, the son Hjalmar. There are two letters of acquisition in the library archive written by Hjalmar Rasmussen, one dated 09.29.1995 and sent to the National Museum, and one dated 02.27.1996 and sent to the Royal Library, when, at the age of 72, he donated his collection of private vacation albums to the institution. Apparently, the National Museum declined and encouraged sending the material to the image collection of the Royal Library, which agreed to receive it. In another context and in a broader discussion on family photography, I have previously introduced the Rasmussens' Costa del Sol album: Mette Sandbye, "Looking at the family photo album: a resumed theoretical discussion of why and how," *Journal of Aesthetics & Culture* vol. 6, no. 1 (2014), DOI: 10.3402/jac.v6.25419. I have translated the album texts and the acquisition letters from the original Danish.
- 10 Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt, Michael Haldrup, Jonas Larsen, and John Urry, *Performing Tourist Places* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

- 11 Haldrup and Larsen, *Tourism, Performance and the Everyday*, 2. See also: Hazel Andrews, *The British on Holiday: Charter Tourism, Identity and Consumption* (Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit: Channel View Publications, 2011); Luring, "Creating the Tourist Product," 217–236.
- 12 Haldrup and Larsen, *Tourism, Performance and the Everyday*, 5.
- 13 This is of course not *that* new. As Andrews states in her 2011 book on British charter tourism: "Ideas of tourism and performance have now become mainstream in the tourism studies literature." Andrews, *The British on Holiday*, 20.
- 14 Luring, "Creating the Tourist Product," 219.
- 15 Luring, 220.
- 16 Andrews, *The British on Holiday*, 12.
- 17 By authors such as Tina Campt, Richard Chalfen, Elizabeth Edwards, Martha Langford, Gilian Rose, and Bernd Stiegler, to mention a few. See also: Maria Gourieva and Friedrich Tietjen, "Repetitive Representations. The Case of Private Photographs," in: *The Routledge Companion to Photography, Representation and Social Justice*, ed. Moritz Neumüller (London: Routledge, 2023).
- 18 Penny Tinkler, *Using Photographs in Social and Historical Research* (London: Sage, 2014).
- 19 Tinkler, *Using Photographs*, 26.
- 20 Here Tinkler is inspired by: *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images*, eds. Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart (London–New York: Routledge, 2004), among others.
- 21 These methodological steps can be used in studying digital photography as well. However, suggesting an analysis of contemporary tourist images, often shared on social media, is beyond the scope of this article.
- 22 Tinkler, *Using Photographs*, 28.
- 23 Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, *In 1926: Living at the Edge of Time* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), 419.
- 24 *Ibidem*, 435.

- 25 *Tourism: Between Place and Performance*, eds. Simon Coleman and Mike Crang (New York–Oxford: Berghahn, 2002), 212.
- 26 Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (London: Blackwell, 2014), 5, 7.
- 27 Nigel Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (London: Routledge, 2008).
- 28 <https://www.spies.dk/om-spies/rejsebureauet-spies> (accessed January 28, 2025).
- 29 <https://denstoredanske.lex.dk/charterferie> (accessed January 28, 2025).
- 30 These two albums are not depicting “charter vacations” but rather what could be called “cultural group trips” to another kind of “exoticness” – namely city life on the other side of the “Iron Curtain.”
- 31 I thank my British colleague Annebella Pollen for detecting these albums for me and sending them in my direction. Although Kodak was the biggest global player in this period, there was a huge British industry of both camera production and printing. See for instance: Annebella Pollen, *More Than a Snapshot: A Visual History of Photo Wallets* (London: Four Corners Books, 2023).
- 32 After I found them and starting “scrutinizing” them, the library decided to scan some of the family’s album, so they are now accessible on their website.

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