

## **The framed world: Tourism, tourists and photography**

The framed world: Tourism, tourists and photography , edited by Mike Robinson and David Picard. Ashgate Publishing, Farnham and Burlington, 2009, x+263pp., figures, bibliography, index. ISBN: 978-0-7546-7368-3 (hardback).

### **Georgette Leah Burns**

Photography has long been an important part of tourism, both in the process of taking pictures in situ and reviewing them at home with friends. For tourists, photographs serve as strong personal reminders of the travel experience, but are also externally symbolic of places visited and social status achieved through travel. For hosts, images created through the act of photographing are used to attract tourists and define a place and destination.

In the new world of digital photography, where increasingly more people are willing to get behind a camera and record their own memories, the importance of photography in travel has increased enormously. It is no wonder then that a book such as this has arrived on our shelves, the only surprise being that it took so long.

The framed world contains 14 chapters, which bring together an international approach to the topic of tourism and photography. The first chapter offers an overview by the editors, designed to 'open further routes for interpretation and interrogation of the tourist, tourism, photography relationship' (p. 24), and is followed by chapters based on fieldwork in New Mexico, Greece, Africa, Indonesia, England, Australia and Israel. Other chapters transcend geographical boundaries and extend to examining advertisements, race, research methodology, and phenomenology. As might be expected in a book on this topic, 10 of the 14 chapters are illustrated with photographs.

Taking the reader first to northern New Mexico, Matthew Martinez and Patricia Albers, in Chapter 2, examine stereotyping of the Pueblo people and their liberating assertion of control over their representation in the tourism realm. This approach blends well with Chapter 3, in which Vassiliki Lalioti analyses how visual representations of 'Greeknness' are used to market Greece as a tourism destination, but are also incorporated within the Greek national identity.

In Chapter 4, Brian Cohen and Ilyssa Manspeizer address the issue of 'othering' through images and argue that visual representations of Africa condemn it to be globally constructed as less-than-human and child-like. This has implications for NGOs working in the arenas of development and relief, which are bound by the resultant, perpetuating, colonial visions of the region. Also interested in otherness, Stan Frankland, in Chapter 5, applies the Lévi-Straussian metaphor of symbolic cannibalism to understanding the circular nature of tourism production and consumption in a case study of Pygmies.

Janet Hoskins (Chapter 8) examines the role of the camera as a 'global vampire' (p. 151) through fieldwork in Indonesia, leading the reader through a retelling of local stories and an examination of historical portraits to view photography ultimately as 'the cutting edge of a postcolonial perspective on modernity' (p. 165). In Chapter 9, Andy Letcher, Jenny Blain and Robert Wallis focus on the iconic site of Stonehenge to reveal how prehistoric stone circles are represented and how the concepts and ideas associated with this presentation then create a perspective of a place that, once established, is not easily altered.

Tourist consumption of Australia's Great Barrier Reef is the focus of Chapter 10 by Celmara Pocock. This World Heritage site has generated many thousands of images, from highly technical satellite pictures to underwater details of its microscopic sea life, and here Pocock examines how such photography both creates the reef and influences tourist experiences of it.

By describing some of the many functions of a camera and the complex cultural reasoning behind the act of photographing, Joyce Yeh's ethnographic study (Chapter 11) explains how Taiwanese tourists use the camera and photography to construct social interactions at home and abroad. Adopting a similar approach in Chapter 13, Rebekah Sobel discovers how images taken during politically instrumentalised tourism to Israel become mediators for social and emotional links to a place and intertwine ideas of identity and community for travelling Jewish students.

Interspersed with the nine geographically, or ethnographically, focused chapters are four that take as their context theoretical topics that are more spatially disconnected. In Chapter 6, Elvi Whittaker

studies how colonial photography functioned as a powerful tool to establish discourse about race and human difference at a time when objectifying images were revered as holders of truth.

Chapter 12 offers a conceptual departure from the others. In an experimental study of tourist experiences, Elisabeth Brandin's interviews with canoeists were based on their own photography. Here she critically examines the practical and theoretical implications of this fieldwork method.

The imagination and reality of tourism is the topic of exploration in Chapter 7 by Teresa Delfin, who discusses how tourism advertisements, specifically those of the Third World, direct the tourist gaze to influence imaginings and construct the reality of tourism experiences. In Chapter 14, Marie-Francoise Lanfant seeks to relocate the well-utilised concept of a 'tourist gaze' (Urry 1990), questioning its meaning and evoking 'the footsteps of phenomenological epistemology' (p. 244) in her analysis of a Raymond Depardon photograph. This final chapter's abrupt ending provides a somewhat unsatisfying conclusion to the book.

A link between photography and the construction of perpetuating colonial images, of peoples and places, is a theme addressed in many of the chapters. Is this perhaps a consequence of the necessarily Western gaze adopted by their authors? Or does it reflect a dominant theoretical lens employed by scholars investigating the relationships between tourism, tourists and photography? Discussion of the link is to be expected in a book of this nature, and the seemingly constant context of colonialism, while at times underwhelming, provides a strong connection between the chapters.

In sum, the editors have successfully brought together a diverse and inspiring range of analyses on the relationships between tourism, tourists and photography. While many of the authors in this edited book have published previously in journals and other books, their expertise in the field being now well established, this compilation of focused work is notable for the timely and coherent picture it provides of a previously neglected topic.

#### **Reference:**

1. Urry, J. 1990. *The tourist gaze*. London: Sage.

