
Captured Lives: The Obsession with Photographing Every Moment

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A trend I have observed for some time now—and which shows no sign of waning—is the obsession with documenting every aspect, every event, whether significant or trivial, in order to post it on social media in a particular way, or at the very least, to save it in one's gallery.

It is, of course, perfectly fine to build memories through photographs; they are what remain with us over the years, and they hold great importance. Yet I refer to that almost compulsive phenomenon that distances us from fully enjoying the moment, as we become too preoccupied with capturing every instant—when, in truth, letting ourselves go is what is truly vital. Perhaps then, only afterward, should one take a photo—without interrupting the magic.

Life seems to have become a stage, and such behavior appears to be a widespread epidemic. It is now common to see groups of people, all with their phones in hand, focusing on an object, barely interacting with each other beyond their screens.

It should be considered a sin to deprive oneself of direct experience when it is replaced by the urgency to freeze the moment for a virtual audience. Where does this behavior come from? Why are so many people tied to “likes”? Could it be that everyone feels the need to display themselves before others, driven by that ancestral psychological mechanism of social validation—now amplified to a massive scale?

Social networks have hypertrophied this impulse, making it measurable, and thus emerged the competition among many and their notions of “acceptance.” Self-esteem has become completely dependent on “views,” “likes,” comments, and shares. This is why so many people upload personal content constantly, even if they have to invent it.

Of course, this is not the case for everyone. Nevertheless, for whatever reason among the many that exist, the fact remains that a great number of people spend considerable time immortalizing moments—and so, life ceases to be lived and instead becomes represented.

This has a profound impact. Experiences may not be as enjoyable when one is focused on the best angle, the lighting, and everything else required to take a photo—which often turns into an endless session to choose only one, the best one—because “*the public image must be perfect.*” Indeed, followers can be cruel and unforgiving of any overlooked detail.

Therefore, an outing, a gathering, any situation under such conditions cannot be spontaneous if the construction of a supposed experience to showcase takes precedence over genuine enjoyment. The mind becomes occupied with the task of representation, fragmenting the moment, and leaving behind what is sensory and emotional.

At times, all of this happens because we believe that if it isn't captured, it doesn't exist. This is what the digital era tells us. Hence the anxiety to post and prove that one leads an interesting life. This creates immense pressure and makes it nearly impossible to disappear from the social radar. However, it fosters a distorted, fabricated, or edited identity—and along that path, one ceases to truly live. What is cultivated instead is a double existence, tinged with depersonalization, fluctuating self-esteem, dependency, dissatisfaction, and, in extreme cases, depression.

Taking photos and sharing them is not wrong. Abstaining from social media is not the cure for all ills. What matters is how we use it—especially when it overshadows our offline experiences. It would be wise to disconnect from these platforms in order to reconnect with our senses—through our surroundings, our friends, our families, and the people near us. It means freeing ourselves from screens and being able to enjoy an exhibition or a countryside walk without the anxiety of having to report it or measure how it is received.

Translated by Sergio A. Paneque / CubaSí Translation Staff
