

**THE KODAK PICTURE SPOT SIGN:  
AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHIC VIEWING AND TWENTIETH-CENTURY  
CORPORATE VISUAL CULTURE**

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**ABSTRACT**

This dissertation is the first in-depth study focusing solely on Kodak Picture Spots — signs placed into the landscape that highlight particular views and promote specific subjects to photograph. Eastman Kodak Company placed these branded markers along the roadside beginning in the 1920s, in several World's Fairs from mid-century through the 1980s, and at various Disney parks from the late 1950s until Kodak's bankruptcy in 2012. These picture-taking signs encouraged and mediated sightseeing in order to spur photographic activity, sell product, and equate places with pictures.

Using an interdisciplinary approach, the dissertation examines the roles these little-studied photographic objects and their vernacular corporate-controlled views, settings, and activities play in the acquisition and distribution of images, real and ideal. Recommended views have a long history, dating back to eighteenth-century British pre-selected vistas and lasting into twenty-first-century digital culture. Picture Spots promote what Nathan Jurgenson calls “conspicuous photography,” a unique set of expectations and actions tied to corporate culture and technology.

Chapter One explores Picturesque-era precursors related to gardens, tourism, and accoutrements such as maps and optical devices, including the Claude Glass and stereoscope, in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England and America. Chapter Two examines early American tourism and the initial Kodak campaign of an estimated 5,000 metal signs placed along new roads between 1920 and 1925. Chapter Three charts Kodak’s long-standing association with international expositions, concentrating on the 1964-65 New York World’s Fair where Kodak installed nearly 50 signs. Chapter Four considers the partnership of Kodak and Disney, starting with the debut of Picture Spot signs at Disneyland circa 1959 and subsequent incorporation into all U.S. Disney parks.

The dissertation concludes with developments in smaller venues as well as contemporary corporate viewing via social media and camera phones. Selfie sticks and other accessories also aid in reifying conspicuous photography in new and interrelated ways. Due to the ubiquity of photographs today, further aggregated on the internet by enthusiasts using hashtags, picture-taking signs have developed into nostalgic objects and tourist destinations unto themselves.