

# Personal Glam Worlds on the Social Web – Photo-documented Facework and Its Performance on Nightlife Platforms

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Make eye contact, pose, and click: Just a few steps are required and the *nightlife portrait* is done. This is followed by a quick examination of the display, a nod of approval from the guest, and the image can appear the next day in one of the photo galleries of the swiss nightlife portals [tilllate.com](http://tilllate.com), [partyguide.ch](http://partyguide.ch), [lautundspitz.ch](http://lautundspitz.ch), or [festzeit.ch](http://festzeit.ch). This is where it can be viewed, commented, and evaluated<sup>40</sup>.

With their appearance on the Internet during the last decade, the nightlife portals entered virgin territory because the business with free pictures on the Internet has existed for just a de-cade and was previously unknown. New social situations demand an adaptation of our own time-tested patterns of thoughts and actions, as well as those of others. Photographing and being photographed is learned from an early age. »Taking pictures« is an everyday action and what people do not know from [their] own experience can be learned through mass media, which also demonstrates how the social elites, media stars, or models perform themselves. The practices of private and public photographs provide orientation through a requisite of patterns for self-presentation.

Against this backdrop, the question must be asked: Which orientation patterns and conventions do the photographers and the photographed use in their mutual staging at parties and on the Internet? Who are the role models that the actors emulate when taking pictures and how is this implemented in concrete actions? Which cultural guidelines are picked up, processed, and communicated by the actors of the nightlife portals?

Those who rely on an implementation of the »me« ideals orient themselves to the models and templates of the star system. The type of photograph that has characterized the star image since the start of modern times is the glamour picture. What makes the portrait special and where it distinguishes itself from other photographs – even within the scope of nightlife photography – are the *codes of glamour*. A glance at the picture charts – the »Hall of Fame« – on the portals is enough to answer this question. The photographs shown there are distinct from the mass of party pictures in that they do not show everyday people; instead, they display those who radiate beauty, vitality, affluence, and sexuality. Beauty ap-

40 The following analysis of nightlife portraits is a part of the exploration of swiss nightlife communities on the web, which was published in Neumann-Braun/Astheimer (eds.) (2010a).

appears here as a nuance closer to perfection, affluence is celebrated as an expression of social distinction, and sexuality is performed within the scope of seduction. Anyone seen here projects a theatrical pose, shows more – but not too much – naked skin and wears exclusive fashions. The more these qualities are united in one picture, the greater the picture's potential will be to excite because more than any other portal type, party portals carry a specific principle to extremes: *Videor ergo sum – I'm seen, therefore I am*.

## 1. *Picture Frames of Nightlife Portraits*

The objects of the investigation are photographic pictures of public events produced and distributed by nightlife portals. This includes public parties in clubs and discotheques, concerts, and open-air events such as the Street Parade in Zurich. The photographs are produced exclusively for the specific occasion and show the actors and the scenes of nightlife. If they are understood as nightlife portraits, then two genre-specific characteristics are implied: First, the term »nightlife« refers to the specific context of its creation because it involves photographs that arise from the occasion of events that are public or at least partially public and not private. Second, the photographs involve portraits. Nightlife portraits have become what they are due to their social use<sup>41</sup>.

### a) *Medium of Visual Perception and Knowledge*

Like every other medium, photography has its own unique presentation form. Photography is illustrative in comparison with linguistic or acoustic media. It allows complex contexts to be transmitted in a simple manner. Looking at a picture possibly conveys more than hearing or reading a thousand words. The photographic apparatus produces a relationship between the picture and the depicted person. Its special characteristics are found in the visual perception since the photograph can generate the impression of immediacy when it is shown. At the same time, the perception has a particular quality: Whatever a person simultaneously understands with one glance through photography is comprehended directly and with the senses. As a medium, photography is visual and sensual and *iconic* as a result.

Nightlife photographs are media of knowledge. Until now, public parties were an area that could be called *terra incognita* in the landscape of public perception.

41 On the theory of the usage of the photographic image, see primarily Mitchell (1987), Scholz (2004) and Böhme (1999)

The nocturnal side of life normally has strong emotional component, which is indicated by the terms »nightlife« or »*vie nocturne*«. However, it remains largely ignored by the coverage of the press or TV. No reporter from an interregional print or TV magazine would seriously report on the happening of a local party. Instead, knowledge about the environment of revelers is conveyed through particular types of publications: City guidebooks and magazines list the most important meeting places and occasions of the metropolises, contemporary (pop) literature indicates the subjective experiences of the actors, and magazine formats on TV and in the print media report on nightlife as a cultural phenomenon. However, the general occurrences – actions and incidents – in clubs, bars, and discotheques have been too trivial to become the hook for a story and awaken public interest. Until now, anyone who wanted to know something about parties had to be physically present to have the immediate experiences or at least hear about them through the verbal accounts of others. Nightlife experts gather their own information and that of others through face-to-face interactions. They know which club and events are hip and are familiar with the Who's Who of the party guests.

The Internet changed this situation from the verbal to the written and pictorial: Pictures on the nightlife portals now communicate knowledge about an (everyday) area, detached and independent of the immediate experiences (see. Sontag 1980: 148f.). The phenomenon of the nightlife portals and their pictures should be classified as the visualization of everyday life and is part of the media's communication of realities that has been accelerated by digital technology and the Internet – primarily through picture portals like FlickrR. Unlike general picture portals, nightlife portals are specialized in one segment of everyday life. People who are not familiar with these areas of everyday life from their own experience or through friends and acquaintances can get an idea of them here, even if this is limited in its scope. Party pictures produce (everyday) knowledge and are an excellent example for the »social construction of reality« (Berger/Luckmann) through pictorial media.

## b) *Portrait Photography*

The festzeit.ch community provides anyone who is interested in the development of nightlife portals and their forms of staging a broad collection of pictorial materials. This site makes it possible to view pictures from the beginning of 2003 to the present. It is worthwhile to look at the start of the very early portals in order to understand the special characteristics of the current pictures. At that time, the founder of Festzeit accompanied his clique to document their participation at public parties. He put the pictures on the Internet. The picture galleries show unknown party guests and friends. The Festzeit photographer does not differentiate between strangers and friends when photographing. His camera shows the party

events as action – young people dancing, drinking, flirting, and kissing. The authenticity of the moment and the depicted actions is the guideline for the approach to the camera. In the early days of the nightlife portals, it appeared obvious that the photography primarily represented an unsparingly open recording of the party events, i.e. recorded scenes of a party. The camera subjectively followed the events. The intrinsic element of early party photography was *snapshots* and *candid pictures*. Events became frozen in time, making things visible that would not have been perceived otherwise. If the photographs were put in a sequence, a story in pictures was created – the visual narration of a long party night.

Almost nothing from the appearance of the early days can be found today at Festzeit, Tilllate, Partyguide, and other portals. The (picture) frenzy of the pioneer phase is over. The party photographs act neither as buddies nor paparazzi; instead, they remain at a distance to the events and ensure that the party guests have some leeway that is not depicted. Organized party photography has become staged photography. Distorted faces, glassy eyes, and awkwardly twisted bodies – the manifestations of »derailed photography« – are part of the past and do not have a place in the picture galleries of the commercialized portals. The standards of the photography are determined by the upper management of the portal operators. According to Tilllates' business rules, too much naked skin and alcohol are taboo. The photographers have already internalized the standards of the nightlife photography. As a result, Tilllate photographer N. behaves with the care of an older brother and deletes the portraits of a photographed person when he becomes aware of his or her drug consumption. Everything that would expose the party guests disappears from the camera's chip.

The photographic genre that ensures this is the *performed portrait*, which has emerged as the central code for the visualization of nightlife. The action in front of the camera, with the actors at a distance to the events and the camera itself, is the *pose*<sup>42</sup>. Self-stylization, which is the act of representing oneself as a particular individual, occurs through the posing. How people stylize themselves is the decision of the person who is portrayed: For example, posed as the buddy, the crazy party animals, or the sexualized party kitten. The self-presentation becomes an intentional representation through the pose, which receives its approval afterward in discussion with the photographer. The appeal of the photograph no longer exists in the obtrusive perception of a participating viewer, but in the distanced perception of idealized self-portrayals.

42 The pose is the dominant self-representation activity in nightlife photography. On the pose, see Goffman (1981: 60ff.), Bourdieu (1981: 92ff.), Barthes (1989: 19) and Holschbach (2006).

### c) *Production Conditions*

Getting started as a party photographer is simple. It is not necessary to be an experienced professional and have had a qualified education in order to photograph on behalf of one of the nightlife portals. The work is carried out by *amateurs*, who perform this (leisure) activity free of charge, educate themselves and refine and improve their photographic technique during the work process. If they succeed at the photography, then they achieve a semi-professional level. However, they generally remain stuck at the amateur level. They act independently and do their own thing. The finished results are published directly on the Internet without any editorial selection by the portal operators. The photographers do not work in studio, but on site in real-life conditions.

Party photographs act at night, mostly after midnight. The result is many pictures in a short time. They work under time pressure. After only one to two hours, they capture about 100 photographs of revelers, which are published in a picture gallery on the Internet. Speed and practicability are the important issues for making the photographs available on the Internet immediately afterward. Often, less than a minute passes between making contact and the finished photo – not much time for a successful shot. The photographers must have communicative qualities and be able to break the ice with the guests and animate them. They are professionals at this.

For the users, party photography is a picture culture of the *instant image*. In the tradition of the instant camera, it permits correction of the depiction if the shot does not satisfy through the display control and immediate use of the photograph on the following day. For the participants, the photography has the function of a »trophy« (Goffman 1981: 51) as a result. The photographed people can see themselves together with their partner, an old friend, or a new acquaintance. It is an illustrated and permanent representation of relationships.

Party photography is a *contractual activity*, a fact that is normally executed tacitly by the participants. The photographers' potential for decision-making is limited. In fact, they take the shot but do not make the selection. That is left to those who are photographed, who invariably pay attention to how they are represented in the picture. The picture background – setting, supporting cast, and secondary storyline – does not matter in the selection of the photograph. Consequently, the photographs are not a realization of the photographer's planned ideas but compromise solutions in which the client's taste has more weight than that of the photographer.

## 2. *Glamour*

### a) *The Culture of Glamour*

Specific codes of self-staging characterize public photography. In the modern mass media of moving and still pictures, as well as the consumer culture associated with them, particular representative conventions have emerged beyond the limitations of time and space. One of these conventions is glamour.

Magical beauty presented in an enchanting way is called »*glamour*«. The English noun »*allure*« summarizes what glamour represents: seduction, appeal, and fascination. Any material thing can be glamorous. But in a narrow sense, people are presented in a glamorous way. Glamour shows off their physical attractiveness through tantalizing staging. As a result, this is not just a question of content but also of the form (of staging). Simple objects, actions, and persons are exaggerated and beautified through glamour, which enhances their fascination and attraction (Grundle 2008: 6). Glamour is connected with the emergence of the consumer society and arose as the opposing force to the values of 19<sup>th</sup> century bourgeois society. Debauchery and excess in place of traditional bourgeois values like moderation and reserve are what distinguish it. The message of glamour is always conveyed anew by its protagonists: actors, dancers, models, and the like. It is the promise that each person can be transformed into a better, more attractive and more prosperous version of themselves (see *ibid.*: 7ff.). Glamour is among the dreams and fantasies of modern societies and is simultaneously the motor and mainspring of consumer-oriented, individualized lifestyles.

As the phenomenon of glamour is familiar to us from the mass media, it gains its power of attraction through various qualities: Glamour as a lifestyle is based on external beauty that is blended with values of the consumer society like fashion consciousness, costliness, and fame. Since each person can be beautiful, glamour is not reserved for the upper crust of society. Glamour and beauty promise social advancement for the lower social classes. They are expressions of social upward mobility. Glamour does not show off in intimate contexts, but only in public. It is associated with the body, which habitually has social information »ascribed« to it. Physical beauty on its own is not a quality of glamour. Glamorous bodily staging combines consumer goods with eroticism and sexuality. Glamour should be differentiated from fashion, which solely represents an average form of the current taste. In addition, movement and mobility is typical of glamour. In social milieus like the so-called jet-set, movement and mobility correlates with fame, prominence, and the appeal of the new (*ibid.*: 11ff.).

## b) *Glamour Photography as a Photographic Genre*

The mass media made a decisive contribution to the prominence of glamour. They disconnected glamour from its original context of the social elite since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and made it into a general experience parallel to everyday life (ibid.: 13). Photography is the distinguished medium of glamour. Simple reproduction techniques and the opportunity for the idealization of reality allowed the photographic picture to become *the* medium of glamour. Photographs of *Vogue* magazine are typical current examples. However, glamour photography is not a new discovery. As early as the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, professional photographers and their models understood it and allowed their portraits to become glamorous stagings.

Glamour portraits first appeared toward the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century through illustrated magazines and through the *Carte de Visite* (collector's cards) of theater and variety actors. Glamour photography reached its highpoint due to the publicity photographs of Hollywood film stars from the Twenties and Thirties who were captured in enchanting presentations on celluloid. Actresses like Joan Crawford, Marlene Dietrich, or Kay Francis were admired by their fans and considered as style icons based on how they influenced fashion trends. As mass consumerism and the star system emerged, glamour photographs of the leading actors gave a particular face to film productions of the large Hollywood studios.

Envy is a powerful emotion. Photographs do not show the things themselves, but instead create a relationship between the picture and the world, between the picture and the viewer. Appealing to the desires and longing of the public and generating a feeling of envy is typical for glamour photography. »The state of being envied«, Berger wrote (1972: 131), »is what constitutes glamour«. Glamour does not promise pleasure, but happiness and idealized qualities that are envied by others (ibid.). The glamour photography in the illustrated magazines takes advantage of the collective fantasies about a life in affluence and prominence. It stimulates the desires and longings to escape one's own social position (upward mobility) (see Grundle 2008: 5). Consequently, the *Vogue* photographs of Eduard Steichen or Cecil Beaton from the Twenties show portraits of prominent and privileged members of the upper class to the readership situated in the middle class. Their lifestyle is presented in its eccentric and exalted variants, dramatically exaggerating the social inequality in the process. The populace's envy in relation to the life of the upper class is the downside of the fascinating radiance of glamour portraits (see ibid.: 158).

Particular styles have become established for the photographic representation of glamour. The predominant form of glamour portraits are therefore also defined as the »posed and retouched publicity photo« (Kawin 2002: 373). Glamour photography breaks with the tradition of portrait photography, which simultaneously shows the portrayed persons in their particular individuality (»faces«)

and social roles (»masks«), for which the body assumes a pose. Instead, it encounters the photographed person at a distance and creates solely social roles (see Gombrich 1972: 9ff.). These are limited to a small area. Glamour staging contains a repertoire of social types transmitted through posing and artifacts. Body poses and cultural symbols underscore affluence, beauty, and mythological charisma (see Bordwell 1987: 5). It is class staging that transmits the values and ideas of the upper class.

Like other photographic genres, the glamour portrait is distinguished by a specific *image esthetic*. It benefits from photography's general property of conveying a pictorial mode of reality. The discovered reality is not merely reflected. The art of the glamour portrait consists of exaggerating the discovered reality through the use of camera, lighting and editing. The perception of the viewer is addressed through contour, textures, and colors, which gives the picture vitality. Glamour photography intensifies the impression of visualizability through the *visual effects* that are generated by fashion designers, make-up, photographers and photo finishing (re-touching). Above all, the photo studios of Hollywood developed the styles that distinguish the body language and iconography of glamour to the present day. Extreme softening of the facial features and enhancing the surface textures of clothing and jewelry are typical effects (ibid.).

Classic glamour photography does not show stars in photo studios instead of real actions contexts. Just a few stars were selected to lend a face to a film. The depiction conventions have been differentiated and the circle of actors expanded since then. In contrast to the Hollywood star system of the Twenties and Thirties, the modern star system no longer promotes just a small group of superstars. It is capitalized and consists of many different stars (see Neumann-Braun 2010 and Brunazzi/Raab/Willenegger in this volume). New forms of staging for glamour photographs and the corresponding media were introduced. Contemporary glamour staging ranges from studio glamour that can be planned and controlled to the glamour of normal life to onsite glamour from events. The private daily lives of stars became the object of glamour photography with the establishment of the paparazzi. Paparazzi shots and reports on the private lives of stars convey a participation in normal life that is exploited for glamour photography<sup>43</sup>. Event photography also shows stars within the framework of public events (premiere parties, galas, etc.) and in front of the public. Such an on-site glamour presents stars during public exhibition on stages, red carpets, catwalks or in front of photo

43 Glamour photography's penetration into the private lives of celebrities is not without consequences for the private lives of non-celebrities given that it is also increasingly used.



walls. The new concept of glamour leaves the earlier restriction of studio photographs behind and lives from the differentiation of the creation context.

### 3. *Personal Glam Worlds: The Glamour Codes of Nightlife Photography*

#### a) *Nightlife Photography and Personal Glam Worlds*

The nightlife photography of party portals is distinguished by a particular presentation form, which we call »Personal Glam Worlds«. This term represents a mixture of event documentation and exaggeration of the individuals as stars. Personal Glam World portraits document the presence of the actors and supporting cast in the real action context and simultaneously represent the individuals as enviable, beautiful and successful. The criteria of the Personal Glam Worlds are authenticity and documentation as well as performing, enchantment and beauty. The specific interlacing of all that as Personal Glam Worlds represents the typical performing form of nightlife photography.

The interaction of primary actors and performing context (supporting cast, settings, lighting conditions, etc.) creates a form of staging that does not merely represent a fictional world. Personal Glam Worlds are committed to a particular measure of reality and shows something that exists not only for the glamour performance, but exhibits a certain reality that is independent of photography. A bond with reality beyond the photograph is maintained since the setting of nightlife photography is not created artificially. The results and actions occur independent of the photograph.

The mixture of documentation and glamour leads to typical performing forms such as the frozen poses of the primary actor in the picture foreground and the motion of the supporting cast's actions and gestures in the picture background<sup>44</sup>. Adolescents and young adults represent their ideal »me« while the flow of the party events can be seen in the picture background. This results in the specific interlacing between the context of the person's own local life and the orientation toward something extrinsic – the poses of professional glamour photography. This occurs in two variants: On the one hand, the portrayed adolescents and young adults orient themselves toward physical beauty. This is expressed in the

44 Personal Glam Worlds are therefore related to that contemporary conception of glamour that is removed from any claim to unblemished beauty. It shows the pure along with the impure. The pose and accessories can be glamorous and also shot in an environment that is dirty or »trashy« (Poschardt 2002: 29). Personal Glam Worlds present a »lascivious hegemony of the glamorous core of the image via the unglamorous that is also shown in the image« (ibid.: 29).

picture by the body (physiognomy), body composition (fashion and styling) and usage (posing). On the other hand, they orient themselves towards social success, which is expressed by accessories (watches, cigars, drinks, etc.) and impressive gestures.

The following typology for the Personal Glam Worlds of nightlife photography raises the questions of which classic types are quoted and which are created new<sup>45</sup>. For example, what distinguishes the classic form of the »playboy« and how is this represented on the Internet? Are the originals of mass media copied or modulated (Goffman)? Does this involve bad copies of the originals or successful exaggerations of them<sup>46</sup>?

## b) *Personal Glam Worlds – A Typology*

Shot 1: Diva – The Tillate user G., in her mid-twenties, leans against the bar of a Zurich pub. The picture commentators lavish the portrayed woman with compliments. She is called »beautiful«, »irresistible«, »hot«, »delicate«, »divine«, »world class«, or »the Beauty«. Anyone viewing the photo perceives the portrayed woman from a close proximity. She occupies the real space and the picture space so that other people and objects in the environment lose their importance. Two additional persons and a bar can barely be recognized in a dim and blurry manner. On the other hand, G. is perceived. Her facial features are relaxed. Even her body does not reveal any signs of tension. She is standing upright, supporting herself with her lower arm on the bar and allows her hand to fall loosely. Her clothing complements the portrayal with an additional facet of meaning. So her dress can be seen as a sign of extravagance. Black, thin material covers her body and reveals the bareness of her shoulders, décolleté und hips.

45 The images were analyzed based on the methods of hermeneutic of the image (see Neumann-Braun/Astheimer 2010b)

46 The results of production and product analyses were methodically correlated. The photographs were selected through a search by key frames in the portal charts and the picture galleries of the events. The analysis was performed according to the procedure of culture- and knowledge-sociological image hermeneutics under the specific evaluation of Goffman's frame analysis (1981).

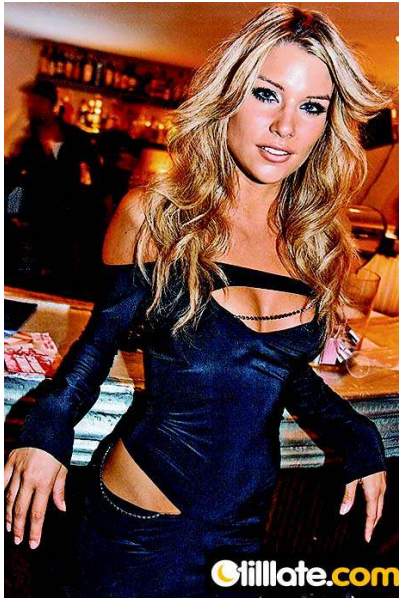


Figure 1: Diva

The sexual dimensions of glamour are represented in this way. The mimicked expression does not allow any closeness but produces a distance to the viewer. Anyone who tries to meet this actor's gaze is disappointed, because her eyes look beyond the viewers and do not notice them, despite their immediate presence. Instead, G. seems engrossed and no longer a part of this world – the party activities of the East2Zürich party series.

When compared with the performance of the role models, common elements with stars such as the actress Farrah Fawcett («Charlie's Angels») or musician Britney Spears can be found. Like many other female stars, the latter maintains changing identities to remain popular. Her many roles include the diva, which we see in the picture. Feminine glamour that is unapproachable, removed and distanced is performed in the picture. Up to this point of the analysis, the performance corresponds with professional glamour photography. The clichés and stereotypes of the role models, the (Hollywood) diva, are copied. The codes of glamour are imitated in the portrayal of the person. And the (re-)staging of the role of the diva is successful. However, should the overall photograph be considered just as successful? The performance of the person seems masked and – in view of the action – excessive and overly stylized. There is a discrepancy between the body staging (styled and posed as a diva) and picture environment. In no way does the setting look like international or luxurious scene because it is

just a simple, local pub. The nightlife portal's amateur photographer remains bound by the conditions of the location. The tension between the glamour ideal of the portrayed pose and the simple, local setting identifies the picture. The glamour pattern of a luxurious interior is not realized; instead, it shows a simple setting in the night world of young adults.

Shot 2: Flapper – The photographer M., who visited the Bypass discotheque in Geneva on behalf of Tilllate in July of 2009, shows the likenesses of teens and twens in a well-attended discotheque in his pictures. The bodies of the photographed stand out significantly from the other party activities, which are bathed in a diffused blue and violet light in all of the portraits. This allows the two women to appear like they are among the party guests, yet simultaneously separate from them. They assume a vis-à-vis pose that represents a frequent performance of female party participants.



Figure 2: Flapper

The two protagonists stand »breast to breast«. Frequent variants of this are »back to back« or »cheek to cheek«, the latter is very familiar from Hollywood photography. As seen from the perspective of the viewer, the actress on the left is bending forward and the one on the right backward as they play with each other. The play between the two continues in the performed »flirting« with the camera through their gaze and facial expression. They are not kissing each other, but orient their head and eyes toward the camera and intimate a kiss addressed to the viewer. These puckered lips are a typical gesture (of seduction) performed by those who are photographed. Similar to the previous figures the women are shown in poses with bare shoulders. Fancy necklaces and sequins decorate the protagonists' upper bodies. In the language of early Hollywood glamour photography of the Twenties, two flappers (perky girls) are represented here. Fun and pleasure characterize the message of the picture. The distance to the viewer is dissolved and the puckered lips become a demand. The picture is distinguished

by motion and dynamic. Clothing, hair style and lighting allow the glamour of the disco era, such as the nightlife of Studio 54 in New York, to be recognized. The singers of the Monrose, a German pop group, can be understood as typical role models.

Shot 3: It Girl – B. is someone who can be called a star of the Swiss Tillate community. Her pictures are the center of attention and are found – as with the preceding first example – in the Swiss »All-Time Charts« of the portal. She is the community member who is most frequently represented in there. It Girls<sup>47</sup> such as Paris Hilton can be seen as role models.



Figure 3: It Girl

The photographs show the actress either alone or together with a Swiss DJ. A customary characteristic is her stereotypical way of posing for the camera: B. stands in »supporting leg/free-leg poses«, tilts her head to the left, smiles, and directs her gaze upward to the camera, which photographs her from above. The intensive smile, the direct gaze into the camera, and the wide-open eyes are

47 A female celebrity who attracts attention through sex appeal and permanent media presence that is in no way related to her personal achievements is identified as an It-girl. The term was first applied to Clara Bow, who starred in the film »It« (USA, 1927).

noteworthy about her facial features. Body composition and facial features give the performance demand character – an invitation to the viewer. Compared with the Diva (Fig. 1), the actor is not a seductress but someone who is being seduced. Touching herself is also part of her pose. B. grips her belt with her left hand and holds it, which should be interpreted as a gesture of fumbling with it, and contributes to the sexual appeal of the performance. Furthermore, when this representation is considered from the interactive perspective, it can be evaluated as ritualized staging of subordination (see Goffman 1981: 165). The actor subordinates herself to the viewer(s) and offers herself instead of being enchanting or beguiling (see Fig. 2). The pose is also lacking the moment of envy (see Fig. 1).

The portrayed person can be seen in the same posture in each photograph. Looking at other actors of the All-Time Charts (Switzerland), her pose is typical and not just an individual case. Many other examples of female actors viewed from above can be found there. It is the dominant form of sexualized self-presentation on Tilllate. The proliferation of extreme views from above is a phenomenon of amateur and hobby photography, which was increased by the introduction of cell-phone camera technology. This example shows a typical glamour performance, which has moved away from the classic studio glamour. A pose specific to the situation of nightlife is shown, which emulates the act of »being observed« from a private proximity.

Shot 4: New Rich – Two young men enjoy drawing on cigars together. This picture from the Lautundspitz portal was taken during the after-show party for the 2008 Mister Switzerland Election and shows Raphael Stocker (left), one the candidates for the national beauty competition. He and the second protagonist are standing close together, tilting their heads toward each other and gazing directly at the viewers from a heightened position. This positioning allows the actors to appear enviable. Their clothing indicates elegance and points to the particular framework of the event.

The active pose is typical for male self-presentation in nightlife photography. The action in the picture shows them drawing on cigars as an emblematic gesture that emulates the classic glamorous subject of Hollywood glamour photography. The clothing and the gesture are symbols of a luxurious lifestyle. The British heir to the throne, Prince Harry, can be distinguished as possible model.



Figure 4: New Rich

However, if the overall picture composition is considered, the performed glamour symbolism is unsuccessful since the picture elements do not unite into a coherent impression of the image. The actors are holding simple party drinks – a bottle of beer and a can of energy drink – in their hands. The glamorous gesture of smoking is undermined because the bands have not been removed from the cigars. Seen from the perspective of the viewer, the actor on the right is in the act of smoking and this gives his facial features a distorted expression. The picture shows an act of self-presentation at the edge of a party. The space is brightly lit and the right side of the picture is also bathed in red disco lighting. A shadow in the picture indicates a stage pole. The glamorous pose of the actors is undermined by the weak lighting. The lighting design makes the parts of the body like nature instead of idealized: We see the actors as they are. Based on the breaks between the individual semantic elements of the picture, it can be rated as a flat variant of the more glamorous role models.

Shot 5: Young Rebels – The Base Club in Basel is the scene of the action in this photograph of March 2005. The photographer of the nightlife portal *Festzeit*, which is located in Basel, took the picture of two young men. Here as well, the pose is noteworthy: The actors each put an arm around each other's shoulders, place their heads together, and simultaneously look outward. The free hand is synchronously held upward and stretched out toward the viewers.



Figure 5: Young Rebels

The actor on the left from the viewers' perspective uses the gesture communicatively and shows a so-called »devil's sign« (typical for young people) as a greeting. The actor on the right is holding a cigarette for show, which can be seen in the glamour photographs of James Dean in the Fifties, for example. Both actors are hiding their eyes behind sunglasses and turning their faces in two different directions. The actors perform themselves as objects of observation through the various directions of their gaze. Similar to the setting of official photo shoots of pop culture – such as those at premiere parties – the actors look in every direction for potential photographers and viewers, making a spectacle of themselves in the process. The actors' bodies are styled: In addition to the sunglasses, both of them wear silver jewelry; their hair has been shaped with gel and their hands are adorned with bicycle gloves and sweat bands. Stitched logos decorate the jacket of the actor on the right and additional lettering emerges under the open jacket. The style elements of the staging can be seen as bricolage from the youthful rebellion typical of America and current fashion styles.

The posing and body composition in no way involves the staging of glamour as the classic affluence symbolism. Instead, it portrays another aspect of glamour that is sometimes represented by male music, film or sports stars. Men use this pose to act sexy, desirable, and prominent. They present themselves as best buddies, such as the staging by the professional German soccer players Schweinsteiger and Podolski during the Soccer World Cup of 2006. In the background, the wall's colored paint provides garish illumination; a wood frame and an advertising picture suggest the atmosphere of a local youth club. Nothing here indicates an elegant setting. The significant contrast between serious self-expression and a simple picture environment makes the glamour poses appear exaggerated. Overall, the success semantics of glamour do not work. Neither the type of the rebel



nor the envy staging live up to the expectations, which is why the picture remains inconsistent.

Shot 6: Playboy – A man and two women pose as a group in August of 2009 at Club Q in Zurich. The image background is black and just a few party guests and lights can be seen. The relationship between the performance of the people and the background is coherent and confirms with the compositions of glamorous models. The positioning of the man in the middle as he embraces the two women at his side indicate the motif of the Playboy. Hugh Hefner – the founder of Playboy magazine who is always surrounded by so-called Bunnies – popularized the motif, which is now copied on the nightlife portals. However, the illustrated example significantly distances itself from the ease and offhandedness that distinguished the original. The Tillate photograph shows a serious protagonist with a creased forehead who looks directly at the viewer. He is surrounded by two supporting actresses with expressionless facial features. The pose of the embrace becomes a cramped act of determination, which causes the protagonist to ball his right hand into a fist. His rigid gaze into the camera seems scary and intimidating. The supporting actresses look at the camera with reserve and skepticism or sadly past it. The staging, which appears glamorous at first glance, loses its glamour through the actual performance of the pose. The picture is a prime example of photographs in which particular poses that rely on glamour role models are assumed by the guests but do not succeed.



Figure 6: Playboy

#### 4. Summary and Discussion

Every context offers different possibilities for people to express themselves through their own (individual) views or those of others (standardized views). This also applies to the self-expression of young people on the Internet – night-

life communities in this case. At first glance, the photographs provide the nightlife portals with the opportunity of creating their own self-image. Unlike the publicity photos of the advertising and entertainment industries, they are not subject to any planning, control, or exploitation interests. Unconventional portraits are actually possible at any time, even within the context of nightlife. This has been demonstrated by other portals. However, another conclusion can be drawn from the portals that we investigated: The portal photographs are similar to the well-known motifs from magazines and illustrated magazine. Through the interplay of posing and photographing, the actors orient themselves toward the self-images of the market (pictures of others) that are embodied by the role models (stars/models) and assume these as their own self-images (pictures of oneself). The result is pictures of others instead of self-images. The photographs of young people are adapted to industrially launched media pictures that reflect the standards and values of society. The cultural guideline is that of glamour. It characterizes the actions of the actors, which are oriented toward the code of professional glamour photography. People imitate the action patterns – the poses – of the media stars and make themselves into a spectacle of collective observation, just like role models such as Paris Hilton or Claudia Schiffer.

The originals of the mass media and the copies of the nightlife portals correspond to the same symbolic order of glamour. They are similar in their implementation, but not the same. The copies seldom compare the original in every facet. The explanation for this is obvious: The production conditions of the film or advertising industries are very different from those of the nightlife portals. Based on the fact that professional conditions are not available to actors on the Internet, it is very difficult to achieve the glamour of the role models.

Many facets of nightlife portraits are not exactly the same as the originals of the mass media; instead, they *modulate* them in a typical way that we call *Personal Glam Worlds*. While professional glamour photography designs the physical esthetics, settings, and relationships between light and shadow, as well as retouching the pictures to perfection, only simple techniques are available to amateurs on the Internet. In contrast with professional photography, the following modulation is characteristic: An amateur picture esthetic is created in everyday contexts. The causes are the conditions for the creation of the photographs. Party photography is inexpensive contract work that is created quickly in a context that just does not provide the same glamorous setting as the world of stars and models. Instead of star photographs, these are taken of everyday people and by amateur photographers. The poses of the primary actors in the picture foreground are performed, but the overall photography, including the settings and the supporting cast, are not. The picture esthetic and composition are too controlled by the moment of chance since the light relationships, settings, and supporting cast at parties can only be controlled to a minor degree.

Successful copies have the following characteristics: The poses – the body composition, gestures, and facial expressions – of the portrayed people are *identical* with the models. The positioning of the camera that creates a particular view of things – the pose in this case – is also identical. An imaginary relationship between the actors and the viewers is produced from both facets. Each pose approximates a particular form of being observed. Both are necessary conditions for the realization of glamour.

The situation is different for photographs in which the glamour ideal is *not realized*. This is the case when breaks between the individual semantic elements of the pictures can be determined. For example, this occurs when poses and settings deviate too much from each other and the pose appears exaggerated or when the facial features and gestures of the pose do not harmonize with each other.

The Internet and photography have developed into *the* medium of youthful self-expression within the briefest amount of time. Despite the situation that is still new, the patterns of order that refer back to existing symbolic orders – glamour in this case – can be detected. However, the analysis of youthful self-images on the Internet is still in the beginning stages. It is apparent that the picture production framework (of the party evening) and distribution (of the night-life portals) characterize the visual culture. Picture portals and social network sites have contributed to a significant transformation: The public picture (image) of young people will not only be characterized by professional actors of the advertising and entertainment industries in the future, but also by the pictures of young people on the Internet that emulate the photos of the professionals and modulate them according to their own options. Although the circle of actors and the contexts has become larger due to the social network sites, the ideas have remained the same.

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