

# Frameplaying: the photographic configurative act in the *Gran Turismo* series photo modes

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## IN-GAME PHOTOGRAPHY PERSPECTIVES

The connection between games and photography has been explored by a few scholars through different perspectives prior to the popularization and insertion of photo modes in digital games. Poremba (2007) proposes a seminal reflection on the cultural and technical aspects of the photographic practices in-game - “content” or “practice-based” - and from the gameplay experience – as a form of validation or a trophy. Giddings (2013) points out another theoretical path to understanding the nature of photography when transposed to digital games. Relying on the etymological meaning of photography, positions that in-game photography cannot be explained through the lenses of remediation, as suggested by Poremba (2007). Instead, material mutations of the medium should be considered since, in games, it is only possible to “draw without light” because the gameworld and the apparatus - the virtual photographic camera - share the same composition: code (Giddings 2013). Anchored on Poremba’s perspective, Bittanti (2015) implements an ethnographic analysis in an online forum dedicated to posting pictures from Forza Horizon 2. The result is the idea of taking pictures to validate an experience, stating in-game photography as “iconographic collecting” and photography as an imperative to which the game is subordinated. Gerling (2018) traces a kind of genealogy of digital photography through screen images, distinguishing “screen photography” (using a real camera) from “screenshot” (an image of an interface captured by a system command). A third kind emerges as an expansion of the latter, “computer game photography”. According to the scholar, this third type emerged initially to finally get to the virtual camera that enables producing images from different perspectives beyond the player’s gaze. Möring and Mutiis (2019, 74) establish a typology of the remediations of photography in digital according to the level of the centrality of photographic action to the gameplay, encompassing four possibilities: “a) simulated photography central to the gameplay condition; b) an additional photo mode; c) artistic screenshotting; and d) creative photographic interventions made possible by photo modifications). Rizov (2021) presents an alternative approach to the scholars, stating that photography in games must be understood as a discourse. He appropriates the “gamic action model” of Galloway

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(2006) and proposes a “photographic gamic action model”, describing, qualifying, and electing some games as “emblematic examples”.

## **PLAYING TO PHOTOGRAPH: FRAMEPLAYING IN GRAN TURISMO SERIES**

This study builds another approach, inspired not just by the previous scholars already presented but by others, which complements and helps to trace an alternative comprehension of in-game photography applied – but not restricted – to a specific game corpus – the *Gran Turismo (GT)* game series. As part of more extensive research, the following proposition results from a methodological path inspired by Grounded Theory (Goulding 1999; Glaser and Holton 2004; Charmaz 2009; Fragoso et al. 2011; Hook 2015). The first step of the research was building a large exploration identifying games with photo mode from 2004 to 2020 and gathering data about their virtual photographic cameras as well as the access to the mode in relation to the main gameplay. The open coding resulted in a large number of terms used as the virtual photographic camera parameters. The established criteria were to choose titles with more parameters on each category that emerged on previous codification. Based on it, and due to relevance, the *Gran Turismo* series is the representative sample. According to the period settled previously (2004 to 2020), this study encompasses just *GT 4, 5, 6* and *Sport*.

*Gran Turismo (GT)*, Polyphony Digital) is a driving simulator game franchise developed by Polyphony Digital and published by Sony Interactive Entertainment and turned consoles into the main platform for Racing games (Ryu 2012, 517). *Gran Turismo 4* (Polyphony Digital 2004) was the first title of the series to present the feature that originated what is called photo mode (Gerling, 2018; Möring; Mutiis, 2019). It offers two possibilities to capture images: “Photo Travel” with 15 different locations and “Replay Photo Mode”, which allows taking pictures from a recorded race. Since then, both possibilities have been available to all later franchise titles. *Gran Turismo 5* (Polyphony Digital 2010) and *Gran Turismo 6* (Polyphony Digital 2013) were released for PS3, presenting enhanced graphics and changes on the game interface, number of virtual camera parameters, and locations available to shoot on Photo Travel. In *Gran Turismo Sport* (Polyphony Digital 2017), “Photo Travel” was replaced by “Scapes”, which blends two universes: photographs of real places as scenes and 3D-modeled cars. According to Polyphony Digital, the game uses a different rendering technique. Each place “contains all the light energy information of that scene as data” that allows “to ‘place’ cars into real-world photographs”<sup>1</sup>.

The investigation focuses on how the presence of the virtual camera and the photographic act integrated into the gameplay dynamics between operator and machine (Galloway 2006) within the action spaces of the game world (Jørgensen 2014; Nitsche 2008) through the *Gran Turismo* game series (*4, 5, 6* and *Sport*, Polyphony Digital). Results lead to the notion of “frameplay”: an appropriation of the idea of gameplay. “Frameplay” represents the act of playing to photograph, or the photography, through photo mode and configuration of virtual photographic camera parameters, as a photographic configurative act, which expands the notion of gameworld into spatialities. In other words, it is possible to access the game software to photograph directly or access the main gameplay (races) to produce material for

replay, to be further converted into static images, thus emerging another gameplay dynamic.

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## **ENDNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> See [Gran Turismo Sport - Products - gran-turismo.com](http://gran-turismo.com).