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Exteriors, Interiors, and Positionality: The Photography of Tina Barney

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Susan A. Van Scoy

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Susan A. Van Scoy

We, the dissertation committee for the above candidate for the

Doctor of Philosophy degree, hereby recommend

acceptance of this dissertation.

Joseph Monteyne – Dissertation Advisor
Associate Professor, Art Department

Andrew V. Uroskie - Chairperson of Defense
Assistant Professor, Art Department

Donald B. Kuspit – Reader
Distinguished Professor, Art Department

Siona Wilson – Outside Reader
Assistant Professor, Performing and Creative Arts
The College of Staten Island, The City University of New York

This dissertation is accepted by the Graduate School

Lawrence Martin
Dean of the Graduate School

Abstract of the Dissertation

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In the late 1970s, a critically celebrated new "art" photography surfaced, characterized by large-scale, directed photographs, or tableaux, and identified in work by Jeff Wall, Thomas Ruff, and Jean-Marc Bustamante. However, for the past 30 years, American photographer Tina Barney has also created large, color tableaux featuring her upper class family and friends using a snapshot aesthetic. While critics and journalists have evaluated Barney's work only in terms of her wealthy background and family portraiture, I believe that her photography is an exemplar of the modern-day hybrid tableau form.

By identifying and analyzing the various art historical sources in Barney's photographs, this dissertation explores the relationship between painting and photography that is particular to the tableau form. Besides comparative analyses with sources such as seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting, feminist Impressionist painting, and European portrait painting as well as other tableau photographers such as Thomas Struth, Jeff Wall, and Rineke Dijkstra, I broaden our perspective of Barney's work by introducing original biographical research including her exposure to a world-famous art collection acquired by her relatives, her rephotography training by landscape photographers, and her experience as a female image-maker in a male-dominated genre. As a result, Barney's photographs forge a combination of representational, intentional artwork, based on the composition of well-known paintings in the art historical canon, with an inherent indexicality of location and culture that hinges on the audience's reaction, creating an intertextual matrix that plots the social relationships, or positionality, of the subject, Barney, and the viewer.

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Brian Katz, for his unwavering love and encouragement, support for research trips and conferences, and editing suggestions over the past six years. I could not have finished without his help.

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I would like to thank Professor Andrew Uroskie for acting as Chair of my dissertation committee and for his clear suggestions dealing with the introduction in the later stages and at the most crucial time before my defense.

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INTRODUCTION

Concerns about the deteriorating condition of her family propelled wealthy housewife Tina Barney (b. 1945) into her career as a photographer. In 1974, after moving with her husband and two young sons to Sun Valley, Idaho, Barney became homesick for her extended family and yearned for the life she led growing up on the East Coast. As a means to forge closer relationships with them during her summer visits to Watch Hill, Rhode Island, Barney started photographing her female family and friends, loosely directing them in the interiors of their summer homes in large (48 x 60-inch), color photographs.

This dissertation examines three distinct bodies of work created by Barney since her journey to Sun Valley—social landscape photographs of her contemporaries in Watch Hill from 1979-1996; interior photographs of her friends and family from 1980-1987; and ethnographic fashion photographs of aristocratic European families comprising her series *The Europeans* created between 1996-2004. In this exploration of Barney's work, a range of issues are addressed including the consistent interaction between photography, painting, and other media, as well as the indelible role of indexical traces such as biography, gender, geographical location, class, and time in her large-scale tableau photographs.

During the same time as Barney's emergence as a photographer, according to art historian and critic Michael Fried in his most recent book, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*, a new "art" photography surfaced, characterized by large-scale,

directed photographs and evinced in works by Jeff Wall, Thomas Ruff, and Jean-Marc

Bustamante, and later carried on by Thomas Struth, Thomas Demand, Candida Höfer,

and Rineke Dijkstra.[1] According to Jean-Francois Chevrier, a curator and theorist Fried

often cites in his book, new art photographers reacted to Conceptualism by returning to

what was traditionally the tableau form, yet infused it with Conceptualism's mixture of

photography, cinema, sculpture, and philosophy, in order to create "photographic

paintings," or photographic tableaux.[2] More importantly, new art photography inspired a

return to objecthood in its ability to be confronted as an object-image due to its large size,

its renewed distance barring any entry by the viewer.

     This theoretical positioning of tableau photography as an object-image echoes

Fried's 1967 essay "Art and Objecthood," in which he praises High Modernist painting,

whose effects were intended by the artist and didn't depend on the beholder, while he

critiques Minimalist, or theatrical, sculpture that was incomplete without the beholder

and whose effects were not determined by the work itself.[3] Fried seizes upon this

opportunity to breathe new life into his theory discussed in "Art and Objecthood" and

then links it to the Diderotian conception of absorption and anti-theatricality in

eighteenth-century French painting he discussed in previous texts —*Absorption and*

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[1] Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 14.

[2] Jean-François Chevrier, "The Adventures of the Picture Form in the History of Photography," in Douglas Fogle, *The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography, 1960-1982* (Minneapolis, MI: Walker Art Center, 2003), 114.

[3] See Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," in *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews*, 148-172 (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot [4] in which he extols the

virtues of painted subjects so absorbed in their activities that they are unaware of being

beheld and pinpoints its reversal in *Manet's Modernism, or, The Face of Painting in the*

1860s, where painting could no longer deny the beholder and instead embraced it through

a "radicalization," i.e., flatness of the surface. [5]

Presently, Fried argues that the new art photographers confront similar crises of

representation as 18th- and 19th-century French painters, yet offer novel solutions in

photography for achieving absorption and objecthood (despite the subject's awareness of

the camera's presence). According to Fried, photography inherited the problem of

beholding from painting and the aforementioned new art photographers practice various

techniques to achieve anti-theatricality despite photography's quality of "to be

seenness." [6] However, following Fried's reasoning, could indexical photography, which

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[4] According to Michael Fried, critics called for a reaction against the Rococo, a period known for its lighthearted, sensuous, and decorative art, in the mid-eighteenth century. Relying heavily on the writings of Denis Diderot, Abbé Du Bos, Friedrich Melchior Grimm, Abbé Laugier, and La Font de Saint-Yenne, Fried argues that these critics campaigned against the Rococo for a return to the seriousness, high-minded, moral, and universal aesthetics of the art of the past. These critics praised artists who showed signs of absorptive states and activities in their work, feeling that this led to painting which showed a maximum of expression in contrast to the surface treatment of emotions in Rococo painting. These ideals were exemplified in works by Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin and Jean-Baptiste Greuze, whose painted subjects were so absorbed in their activities that they contribute to the "fiction of non-existence" of the beholder. See Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 35.

[5] Fried contends that by the 1860s, Diderot's notion of the denial of a painting's beholder could be maintained no longer and this failure was acknowledged in Edouard Manet's radicalized portraits of blatant "facingness." *Manet's Modernism, or, The Face of Painting in the 1860s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 255-256.

[6] Cited by Robin Kelsey, "Eye of the Beholder: Robin Kelsey on Michael Fried's *Why Photography Matters…*," *Artforum*, January 2009, 53.

inherently depends on a viewer's response, and in Fried's terms is theatrical, be considered a worthy form of art?[7]

Unfortunately, this question is answered by the narrow selection of artists' work under Fried's serious consideration in *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*—out of the twenty artists discussed at length, only three are women (Rineke Dijkstra, Hilla Becher, and Candida Höfer), one is an artist of color (Hiroshi Sugimoto), and two are American (James Welling, Philip Lorca diCorcia). The rest are white, male Europeans, with the exception of Jeff Wall, who hails from Canada. In fact, Fried continues his campaign first begun in *Absorption and Theatricality* that "nowhere in the pages that follow is an effort made to connect the art and criticism under discussion with the social, economic, and political reality of the age."[8] While these overtly formalist choices make sense for his overall argument for absorption and anti-theatricality in the tableau form, why does Fried offer such a claustrophobic perspective on tableau photography? Moreover, what are the effects of his limited critical scope?

Although Fried mentions Tina Barney's photography in passing as failing to fully engage with issues of absorption and anti-theatricality (as well as most American and/or female photographers),[9] I believe her work is an exemplar of the photographic tableau form and that Fried's application of absorption to tableau photography forms an

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[7] Robin Kelsey, "Eye of the Beholder: Robin Kelsey on Michael Fried's *Why Photography Matters…*," *Artforum*, January 2009, 58.

[8] Fried cited by Robin Kelsey, "Eye of the Beholder: Robin Kelsey on Michael Fried's *Why Photography Matters…*," *Artforum*, January 2009, 53.

[9] Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 337.

interesting dialogue with her work. Throughout the dissertation, I treat Fried's analysis of these artists' works as a counterpoint to Barney's photography because he is the first to represent these tableau artists as a whole and many of the artists featured in his book—for instance, Thomas Struth, Rineke Dijkstra, and Jeff Wall—grapple with similar subject matter as Barney in the tableau form, including family portraits, individual portraits, interior spaces, and looking at art, be it through photographing viewing spaces such as the museum and the home or by composing the photograph based on a canonical painting. In order to qualify Barney's work as engaging with the tableau form and to establish the main crux behind Fried's argument in *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*, I offer an analysis of her work in relation to Fried's appraisal of Thomas Struth's "classic museum photographs."

Part I. Hybridity and The Tableau Form

Curiously, in Fried's analysis of new art photographer Thomas Struth's "classic museum photographs," a series dedicated to tourists with their backs to the viewer facing well-known art works in such hallowed institutions as the Louvre in Paris, Galleria dell'Accademia in Venice, and the Art Institute of Chicago, Fried adopts the unusual opinion that the various media featured in the photograph and the world outside the art in the photograph occupy separate, non-communicative worlds. For instance, in Struth's *Art*

Institute of Chicago 2 (1990) (Fig. 1)[10], a photograph of a woman with a baby stroller in front of Gustave Caillebotte's *Paris Street; Rainy Day* from 1877, Fried suggests that zthe painting's figures are completely oblivious to the presence of the woman and the stroller, while another viewer outside the painting looks at the wall text, and not the painting, providing a further disconnect between the viewers in the photograph and the painting.

According to Fried, a similar effect occurs with Struth's *Galleria dell'Accademia I, Venice* (1992) (Fig. 2), a scene depicting clusters of tourists in front of Veronese's imposing wall-size painting *Feast in the House of Levi*. Fried maintains that the tourist world is completely detached from the grand canvas, underscored by visitors who walk past it without absorbing it, either their attention drawn to the paintings on the left-hand wall or their bodies blurred by motion. He writes, "Struth's photographs depict not one but two worlds, that of the painting or paintings featured in a given image and that of the museum or church in which it or they hang, and although as viewers of the photographs we tend to assume that the second, public world is ours, we do not in fact inhabit it."[11] In truth, one of Struth's intentions was to remind viewers that many masterpieces have been taken out of context and were not originally created for churches or museums and have ultimately been fetishized, draining all the original meaning out of the work. As a result, the viewer of the photograph is shut off from both the artworks in the photographs (just

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[10] Due to the prohibitive reproduction costs and difficulty obtaining copyright permissions, I was unable to reproduce the images in this dissertation. Please refer to Illustration Sources on p. 232 for a complete list of sources where these illustrations can be located.

[11] Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 122.

like the tourists in the photographs) as well as the museum or church pictured in the photograph.[12]

Instead of making a case for tableau photography, Fried's assertion that Struth's "classic museum photographs" best illustrate the division between the painted world, the photographed world, and the viewing world outside the photograph support his overall thesis on absorption and theatricality. Fried writes, "the depiction in Struth's museum photographs of non-communicating worlds-those of the paintings, that of the museumgoers—harmonizes with crucial aspects of the Diderotian ideal."[13] In other words, the classic museum photographs underscore how the painted figures are absorbed and oblivious to the beholder in the outside world.

While Fried's analysis of the museum photographs support his theories on the anti-theatricality of Struth's works, by analyzing Barney's photographs in relation to Struth's, it becomes apparent that Barney's oeuvre (from the early 1980s Watch Hill images to the later work in *The Europeans*) more accurately stands as a metaphor for the hybrid make-up of the modern-day tableau photograph. Although her style and subject matter has changed over the past thirty years, one element has remained constant in her work—the portrayal of cultivated families among their art collections in the interiors of their homes. Moreover, unlike Struth's classic museum photographs, which depict viewers with their back to the audience or in profile looking at the artworks, Barney's figures most often turn their backs to the works and face the viewers, in effect, creating a

[12]Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 122.

[13] Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 127.

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direct comparison between the frontal surface of the photographed subject and the painted, sculpted, or even drawn one. Thus, the viewer encounters the reality-based photographed figure and a representation from the same perspective.

Often, in her earlier works created in Watch Hill and Manhattan, Barney captures her friends and family subconsciously adopting the poses of a particular artwork and/or their dress. In *The Reception* (1985) (Fig. 3), Barney photographs her sister, Jill, directly in front of Pablo Picasso's blue-period *Portrait of Angel Fernandez de Soto* (1903) with her back to the painting holding her hands loosely clenched together echoing Picasso's unusual depiction of de Soto's hands. In *The Skier* (1986) (Fig. 4), a young boy sits to the left of a large vertical, rectangular painting of a young boy toting cross-country skis under his arms. The boy in Barney's image is wearing a thick, off-white wool sweater over a red-collared shirt while the boy in the painting doffs a cream crewneck sweater over a blue collared-shirt. These images serve as reminders that the families Barney photographs "live" with their art instead of Fried's assumption that Struth's subjects travel to museums and churches as outsiders to view art, contributing to the spectacle of tourism. Instead, Barney's friends and family consider the art as part of their everyday lives or even as a part of the family.

In Barney's series *The Europeans* (1998-2006), her subjects are ensconced among their even grander art collections, and similar to the Watch Hill and Manhattan photographs, they adopt the same poses and costumes as their painted counterparts. In *The Brocade Walls* (2003) (Fig. 5), an older Spanish woman in a dark suit holds her arms out from her sides in the same manner as the decorated military officer portrayed in the

painting directly behind her. In *The Oriental Jacket* (2001) (Fig. 6), a middle-aged man in a silk paisley jacket stands in front of an Asian painted screen with two peacocks and gold detailing that complements the lustrous sheen of the garment.

Barney doesn't limit the interaction of her subjects with only paintings, but also introduces the presence of sculpture into her cache of art objects in her photographs. These pieces introduce a three-dimensional human presence to the work. For instance, in *Standing Man* and its companion piece, *Standing Woman* (2003) (Figs. 7 and 8), Barney positions a man and woman in front and to the right of a carved wooden sculpture of a standing nude female in a stiff *contrapposto* pose in the couple's dining room. Both the man and woman replicate the wooden frontal pose of the sculpture. Barney further elaborates on the interaction between photography and sculpture in the image *The Bust* (2003) (Fig. 9), where she captures an older gentleman in the midst of posing for a sculptor in such a manner that the older man and his sculpted clay face address the viewer. Barney identifies the gentleman as an ancestor of Count Eusebi Güell, architect Antoni Gaudí's greatest patron, for whom Park Güell in Barcelona is named. Unlike Fried, who positions Struth's subjects as strictly viewers or more cynically, the distracted masses disconnected from the works, Barney casts her figures not only as art collectors in their homes, but as muses for artists, patrons, and those who participate in the creative process of the artwork. However, most of Barney's work also bars the viewer's entry through social class.

Furthermore, by comparing Fried's analysis of Struth's classic museum photographs to Barney's oeuvre, it is she who captures the true spirit of the tableau form

while he just uses it as a means to support his primary concern, the continuance of his theory of the Diderotian ideal and absorption in contemporary photography. Her work underlines the hybridity of media present in the tableau form with painting, drawing, photography, and sculpture casually interpenetrating each other. In the tableau form, argues Chevrier, "there is a return to classic compositional forms, along with borrowings from the history of modern and premodern painting, but that movement is mediatized by the use of extra-painterly models, heterogenous with canonical art history-models from sculpture, the cinema, or philosophical analysis."[14] Indeed, Barney's works present us with a mixture of various media-churning combined with an overall knowledge of canonical art history.

Barney's photographs forge a combination of representational, intentional artwork, based on the composition of well-known paintings in the art historical canon, with an inherent indexicality of location and culture that hinges on the audience's reaction, yet also bars their entry into the scene. As a result, I believe Barney's photographic artwork is infused with "a bypassing of the artist's intentionality"[15] in order to achieve an alternative to absorption that addresses the audience at hand—what I call positionality, or an awareness of the artist, the subject, and the audience's social position in the world.

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[14] Jean-François Chevrier, "The Adventures of the Picture Form in the History of Photography (1989)," Michael Gilson, trans. in Douglas Fogle, *The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography, 1960-1982* (Minneapolis, MI: Walker Art Center, 2003), 116.

[15] Walter Benn Michaels, "Photographs and Fossils," in *Photography Theory*, ed. James Elkins (London: Routledge, 2006), 441.

Throughout the dissertation, positionality is a quality I draw upon to explain the various social hierarchies and relationships that occur in most of Barney's work between herself, her subjects, and the viewers based on factors ranging from age, race, nationality, class, and gender as well as the nature of the relationship (family, friends, employer-employee, artist-subject, image-spectator). Indeed, except for the denial of the image-spectator relationship, Fried's formulation of absorption and theatricality doesn't take into account any positionality into his analysis. For instance, in his reading of Rineke Dijkstra's individual portraits of adolescents on the beach, he writes, "The viewer sees the photograph itself, not some implied or imagined personal relationship between sitter and photographers, this is where the large size of the tableau comes into play—viewers can confront the object-image from a distance."[16] Thus, not only does Fried sever the relationship between the object-image of the tableau and spectator with his formulation of absorption and anti-theatricality, but he also blocks any social connection between the artist and subject. Additionally, there is no commentary on the subtle economic indicators at play in Dijkstra's work such as the differing bathing suit styles (some adolescents wear expensive designer suits while others play in their underwear) or location (the wealthy enclave of Hilton Head, South Carolina versus working class bathing spots in Eastern European countries).

Barney's intimate portraits of the upper class in the United States and Europe play a crucial role in what I believe to be the main source of discomfort experienced by critics such as Fried and audiences when confronted with Barney's work. She comments, "I find

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[16] Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 339.

it funny that the people who photograph horror or gore or violence, it doesn't seem like they get as much examination as some of my photographs of the upper class."[17] For instance, when Barney presents her work to groups, during the question/answer periods, she receives harsh criticism, especially when talking to students because most of her work disrupts the notion of a classless society furthered by Fried's treatment of photographers working in the tableau form. As a result, the representation of class acts as a major structuring principle of positionality throughout the dissertation.

Unlike Fried, who in *Why Photography Matters As Art As Never Before* neglects to support his claims about the newfound importance of photography and why issues of theatricality are currently relevant with artists' interviews and literature, instead, relying on texts such as philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein's *Philosophical Remarks* from 1930,[18] this dissertation relies heavily upon words Barney uses to describe her own work as well as texts that speak to today's social and political conditions. It also intends to offer a refreshing alternative to the lack of indexicality in new art photography by examining the importance of location and cultural specificity in understanding Barney's work. In order to achieve this, in the succeeding three chapters, I have formulated various narratives establishing the importance of the indexical in relation to the tableau form including the roles of geographical location, various influences from childhood, and class distinctions, offering an alternative to Fried's binary construction of absorption and theatricality.

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[17] Tina Barney, *Visiting Artists Program*, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago: The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2004).
[18] Robin Kelsey, "Eye of the Beholder: Robin Kelsey on Michael Fried's *Why Photography Matters…*," *Artforum*, January 2009, 53.

Part II. Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation first examines Barney's early photographs of her social contemporaries and family from 1979-1996 separated into two groups based on location—Watch Hill and Manhattan—and later expands the discussion to include her photographs of aristocratic European families from her series *The Europeans* created between 1996-2004. Although the first two groups were created simultaneously, the Watch Hill works more succinctly capture Barney's emergence as a photographer, which reasonably acts as an embarkation point for the dissertation.

Chapter one, *Exteriors,* inserts Barney into the context of American photography of the 1970s and examines the techniques common to landscape photography that she acquired while studying at the Sun Valley Center of the Arts in Sun Valley, Idaho under Mark Klett during his fieldwork on the Rephotographic Survey Project. Following Klett's example, Barney returned to her summer home in Watch Hill from the late seventies to the late nineties to rephotograph her female family members and friends in and around their summer enclaves. This chapter establishes the importance of geographical location in tableau photography and discusses how Barney's "landscape" photographs reveal the isolating effects of a seasonal cottage community on the social behavior of her female subjects over a period of almost twenty years. Following from my interest in feminist art, this chapter also engages in a comparative analysis of paintings by Mary Cassatt as well

as work by a major representative of new art photography and the tableau form, Jeff Wall.

Chapter two, *Decorated Interiors*, moves on from Barney's landscape work in Watch Hill to explore an early installation dealing with interiors and her photographs of interiors completed from 1980-1987. By investigating Barney's cultivated upbringing, the second chapter recognizes the various influences from her childhood and how they informed her photo-making practices in order to establish the influence of an image-maker's biography on the tableau form. The first half of chapter two embarks on a brief history detailing Barney's family's involvement in the art world, especially her great-uncle, Robert Lehman's relationship with the Met and the severe criticism leveled at the installation of his collection in the newly constructed Robert Lehman Collection wing of the museum. This information helps to shed light on the motivating factors behind Barney's early works and provides a connection to her focus on the upper class and art collectors in her photographs.

The second half of chapter two employs a comparative analysis between Barney's photographs of interiors and seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings that were acquired by her family in order to gain favor with elite New York society, both of which similarly engages with issues of the psychology of the home and family, morality, gender, and power. Both Barney's photography and her great uncle's avid art collecting function as ways to create new modes of self-presentation to the world.

The third chapter, *Mapping Positionality: "The Europeans,"* concludes the dissertation by discussing Barney's journey out of the United States to Italy, Austria,

England, France, Spain, and Germany in which she photographed aristocratic European families to create her series *The Europeans* (1996-2004). In addition to examining this series' roots in fashion and ethnographic photography, this investigation intends to prove that Barney was motivated by the emergence of many European new art photographers onto the international art scene who created large, color photographs with themes of family and portraiture such as Thomas Struth and Rineke Dijkstra. It is here that Barney's work most closely mirrors new art photography and the tableau form with the crucial difference of representing a classed society.

Additionally, chapter three also considers *The Europeans* in relation to Thomas Struth's portrait of families in which Fried declared that Struth's sitters achieved absorption and a lack of self-consciousness through the frontal portrait.[19] By exploring Barney's working process, *The Europeans* reveals the extent to which Barney poses her subjects and how she manages to capture them unconscious of their cultural indicators, family resemblances, and interaction with their family's art collection while allowing for various audience interpretations without calling into question photography's status as art. As a result, Barney provides viewers with a social tableau-document that plots the positionality of the subject, Barney, and the viewer.

Barney's blaring absence in Fried's discussion of the tableau form calls attention to the ill effects of the limited vision of his project on the tableau form. By adopting the binary construction of absorption and theatricality as a judgment value against which to gauge the tableau form, Fried leaves out meaningful dimensions such as class, location,

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[19] Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 203-204.

gender, and biographical influences, ignoring accomplished artists such as Barney who explore these themes in their work. By utilizing Barney's oeuvre as a lens through which we can open up the study of the tableau beyond Fried's purely formal concerns, this dissertation reveals some of the several key aspects that Fried neglects and offers a rich, new framework from which to judge other contemporary artists practicing tableau photography in the future. From Barney's landscape photographs to interior genre works to portraiture, this dissertation examines her works in relation to new art photography and the tableau form and how she achieves a more socially conscious alternative to Fried's European, male-dominated brand of absorption.

CHAPTER ONE: Exteriors

Part I: Capturing the Landscape

Similar to Fried's treatment of tableau photography, for many critics, theorists, and curators, the degree to which landscape has referred to the intersection between the represented land and the world outside the artwork is debatable, and has been an especially sensitive topic in landscape photography.[20] However, thanks to critic and photographer Deborah Bright, who in her unapologetically critical 1985 article, "Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men: An Inquiry into the Cultural Meanings of Landscape Photographers," analyzes the history of landscape photography and offers explanations for the lack of women artists represented in the genre, it is possible to see female photographer's works such as Barney's from a new perspective, where biography and location play a crucial role in the meaning of her social landscape work.[21]

After the public unveiling of the daguerreotype in 1839 and the later development of the wet collodion process, photography became a tenable medium to capture the landscape. While eighteenth-century classical European landscape paintings contained pastoral scenes of winding paths, flocks of sheep, and peasants' houses embedded in mountains, a counterpart in the United States did not exist. American painters might be

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[20] For a deeper examination of the relationship between power, gender, and pre-20th-century landscape painting, see W.J.T. Mitchell, *Landscape and Power* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

[21] Deborah Bright, "Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men: An Inquiry Into the Cultural Meanings of Landscape Photography," in *The Contest of Meaning*, edited by Richard Bolton, 125-143 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1989).

able to conjure such scenes in their minds, but photographers hired by the United States

Geological Survey and railroads in order to survey and document the newly acquired

territories in the 1860s and 70s were limited to the wilderness found in front of the

camera—namely, the inhospitable terrain of Idaho, Colorado, Nevada, Wyoming, Utah,

Arizona, New Mexico, and California. Most of the photographers—among them Timothy

O'Sullivan, Carleton Watkins, Eadweard Muybridge, and William Henry Jackson—came

from a scientific background and had little to no artistic training.[22] These factors—all

men, unburdened by art history, braving the wild—gave rise to the figure of the heroic

genius, male landscape photographer that still dominates the treatment of this

photographic genre today.

　　In "Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men: An Inquiry into the Cultural Meanings

of Landscape Photographers," written on the occasion of a new flood of landscape

exhibitions at major museums in the late 1980s, Bright outlines the origins of the male

landscape photographer and how the scholarship on these trailblazing photographers

perpetuated similar treatment of later generations of male photographers. Bright exposes

key museum curators and exhibitions that nurture associations between landscape

photographers and the raw talent of the male outdoorsmen, which would become part of a

larger effort to shape the history of photography's past, present, and future.

　　According to Bright, the greatest offender was John Szarkowski, Director of

Photography at The Museum of Modern Art, New York from 1962 to 1991. In his

writing and exhibitions, Szarkowski created a formal language based on characteristics he

thought unique to photography and reconciled it with working conditions for nascent

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[22] John Szarkowski, "Introduction," *American Landscapes: Photographs from the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1981), 5-7.

photographers such as Timothy O'Sullivan. Szarkowski writes of O'Sullivan, "he was protected from academic theories and artistic postures by his isolation, and by the difficulty of his labors. Simultaneously exploring a new subject and a new medium, he made new pictures, which were objective, non-anecdotal, and radically photographic."[23] However, Bright finds fault with this formulation, seeing that Szarkowski's approach ignores the historical and social contexts in which these photographs were made— obscuring sponsors, audience, means of reproduction and distribution, as well as neglecting to mention the displacement of indigenous people.

The bloodlines of the landscape photography canon extended to the highly influential exhibition *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-altered Landscape* organized by William Jenkins for the George Eastman House in 1975. The exhibition featured the landscape photography of eight virtually unknown men (in addition to husband-and-wife-team Bernd and Hilla Becher) who presented themselves as eschewing any type of artistic style. Their photographs consisted mostly of straightforward views and arbitrary framing of banal architecture such as tract houses and industrial parks without any personal intrusion by the photographer. Bright writes, "they present themselves as self-consciously knowing 'naifs,' artless artists working within the tradition Szarkowski has constructed for those nineteenth-century expeditionary photographers who worked 'without precedent,' *without style*."[24] Exhibitions such as *New Topographics* forge and preserve the link between the late nineteenth-century

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[23] John Szarkowski, "Introduction," *The Photographer and The American Landscape* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1963), 3.

[24] Deborah Bright, "Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men: An Inquiry Into the Cultural Meanings of Landscape Photography," in *The Contest of Meaning*, edited by Richard Bolton, 125-143 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1989), 131.

documentary male landscape photographers and those working in the late twentieth century, and continue the notion of the landscape photograph as a play of neutral formal qualities captured by the camera without any ties to cultural, historical or sociological concerns.

Bright then poses the question, "Where are the women?" and cites scores of landscape photography exhibitions, coffee table books, and academic texts that exclude women photographers, while perpetuating the stereotype of the male, mythic photographer in the West to fuel the idea of photography's "essential" formal nature and play of aesthetic form without specific subject matter. According to Bright, the tendency to show only male landscape photographers is based on the essentialist belief that men are apart from nature, and therefore must conquer it, while women *are* nature. Men make a conscious choice to creatively interact with nature; therefore, their work is more valued overall in society.

To improve the status of women landscape photographers, Bright suggests alternatives to the traditional landscape photography heralded by curators, exhibitions, exhibition catalogues, museum collections, and texts:

> Other sorts of positions that might be articulated in landscape photography include land use, zoning, the workplace, the home. Women, I think, have a special stake in documenting this sort of "social landscape" . . . . Most landscapes that are used primarily by women—the house, shopping centers, beauty parlors, Laundromats, etc.—are designed by men for maximum efficiency and/or to promote consumerism among women. Only recently has the history of architecture been rediscovered and advanced. Such an architecture would fundamentally redesign living spaces and workspaces with women's needs in mind—for example, communal day care, private work areas away from family demands, and easy access to other women through horizontal social networks. Such a sense of order-in-space could be analyzed in a feminist landscape photography. Women

might also recoup landscape photography for themselves in response to its present character as a male preserve in art photography.[25]

Bright calls on women photographers to subvert the notion of the lone male photographer and campaigns for a more analytical, historically informed photography accompanied by text, with special attention to the fields of urban planning and domestic architecture.

As unlikely a candidate as she may seem, Tina Barney, who many have labeled an upper-class portraitist, responds to and supports Bright's call with her large, domestic-centric, color photographs. From the late seventies to the late nineties, Barney returned to Watch Hill, Rhode Island to rephotograph her female family members and friends in and around their summer enclaves. As a result, her landscape photographs reveal the effects of a seasonal cottage community on the social behavior of her female subjects over a period of almost twenty years, and underline the need for redesigned feminine landscapes.

Unbeknownst to most, Barney's photographic education unfolded in the West where landscape photography dominated. She took private lessons from landscape photographers Peter de Lory and Mark Klett and attended workshops at the Sun Valley Center for the Arts in Sun Valley, Idaho (heretofore referred to as "the Center"). However, Barney did not respond to the mountainous terrain of Sun Valley. Instead, she waited until the summers when she would return to her home in Watch Hill and offer a feminine perspective on the social landscape, all the while incorporating techniques common to landscape photographers at the Center such as the use of a view camera, rephotography, color, and enlarged print size. For instance, in *Musical Chairs* (1990)

[25] Deborah Bright, "Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men: An Inquiry Into the Cultural Meanings of Landscape Photography," in *The Contest of Meaning*, edited by Richard Bolton, 125-143 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1989), 137.

(Fig. 10), Barney photographs the end-of-the-season family field day held annually at the Misquamicut Club, a private beach, tennis, and golf club in Watch Hill. She renders a group of children (mostly girls) playing musical chairs on the beach while parents amusedly look on in the background. Is this an accidental moment caught in time that just happened to take place on a beach to be admired for its colors, lines, and geometric shapes? Or do the subjects' use of the land refer to sociological and cultural practices outside the frame?

Unlike the theoretical framing of early landscape photographers such as O'Sullivan, Barney's work does not claim to be isolated, objective plays of form disconnected from the sociological and historical context in which it is produced. While the landscape serves initially as parergon, in reality, it offers a connection between the coastal town of Watch Hill specifically and musical chairs. Barney's photographic oeuvre from the late seventies to the late nineties documents the aftermath of Watch Hill's shift from the structured group atmosphere of hotel resorts for well-to-do families wanting to escape urban blight in the mid-nineteenth century to a cottage colony replete with private clubs and an emphasis on permanence, family life, social exclusivity, and a connection to nature at the dawn of the twentieth century. In fact, material feminists such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman wrote how this type of cottage living arrangement fostered isolation for women and how summer resort towns had the potential to remedy the situation by industrializing housework and freeing women from the home to pursue outside work. Thus, Barney's photographs reveal how nearly 100 years later, social circles had narrowed and women became isolated in the private homes as the men left for work and play. For this reason, Barney limits her settings to home interiors, porches, gardens,

backyards, beaches, and other private landscapes heavily populated by mothers and children.

Due to the close-knit relationships of the female denizens of Watch Hill, Barney had the opportunity to capture and rephotograph the same cast of characters for twenty years. The images are predicated upon the sense of permanence and familiarity that came about as a result of the cottage community, and Barney finds comfort in the immutability of her subjects and their children's inheritance of the same features, mannerisms, and values. The lack of change over time revealed by Barney shows that her female subjects (as well as the artist herself) are not willing to relinquish the status quo as Bright prescribes, and they continue to carry out the lifestyle dictated by Watch Hill's architectural and social landscape and pass it on to future generations.

Upon closer examination, *Musical Chairs* uncovers a deeper narrative than a moment of a children's game on the beach. In musical chairs, once the music stops, a child will be left without a chair and cast out of the circle. After each round, players will be excluded until there is one left, sitting in a chair completely isolated and alone. In this photograph, a seemingly harmless children's game symbolizes the gradual transformation of Watch Hill from a resort destination into a cottage colony and how, year after year, social circles became smaller and more exclusive resulting in isolation, usually for women. With the inclusion of the parents watching their children, Barney captures how this act of exclusion is passed down from generation to generation. This image stands as just one of many pieces of Barney's larger narrative about Watch Hill.

Even though Barney's landscape photography of Watch Hill reveals the failure of social utopias prescribed by material feminists such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman, it

succeeded in contributing to a burgeoning photographic genre, social landscape photography, which combines techniques that more or less developed out of landscape photography with the subject matter and snapshot aesthetic of social documentary. However, as much as Barney succeeds with this feat, in the spirit of Bright's exegesis of landscape photography exhibitions, this chapter will also engage in a more critical look at the presentation of Barney's artwork mired in the traditional commercial gallery setting.

II. Learning to Photograph: The Sun Valley Years 1974-1983

In 1966, Tina Isles married John Joseph Barney, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Harold B. Barney of Watch Hill, Rhode Island. Tina and John lived in Manhattan and summered in Watch Hill, where John grew up. Tina immediately liked Watch Hill because it was a small New England town with a strong sense of tradition where generations of large families maintained summer homes.[26] She wrote, "I first walked into my life when I was nineteen. Everything felt familiar even thought it was new. I was lucky that I loved this place more than the home of my childhood."[27] By the time Barney was 24, she was a wife and a mother to two sons—Tim and Philip.

In her early twenties, Barney's older brother, Philip, inspired her to collect art. Upon seeing some of Barney's pieces on her apartment walls, one of her friends invited

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[26] Tina Barney, Oral History as narrated to Deanne Thompson, 1983, Regional Department Oral History Collection, The Community Library, Ketchum, ID.

[27] Tina Barney, *Tina Barney: Photographs: Theater of Manners* (New York: Scalo, 1997), 12.

her to join the Junior Council, a volunteer group, at The Museum of Modern Art in 1972. Barney was assigned to the Photography Department and worked on an exhibition catalogue for the Seagrams Collection featuring Ansel Adams's prints. She was immediately attracted to photography and frequently visited the few photography galleries that existed in New York in the early seventies such as Light Gallery and Witkin Gallery. Barney first received her education in the history of photography at these galleries as she bought works by Ansel Adams, Imogen Cunningham, and Edward Weston.[28]

At this time, two dominant styles of photography existed—a West Coast landscape school, espousing spiritual photography similar to the nineteenth century classical European landscape paintings, embodied in the work of Edward Weston, Eliot Porter, Ansel Adams and Minor White; and modernist photography championed by MoMA's Director of Photography John Szarkowski. By the early-to-mid-seventies, Szarkowski had already occupied his post for over a decade, and during that period, had crystallized his photographic theories in a series of slim catalogues largely culled from MoMA's permanent collection: *The Photographer's Eye* (1964), *From the Picture Press* (1973), and *Looking at Photographs: 100 Pictures from the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art* (1973).

Szarkowski's project consisted of three basic tenets: the refinement of a formalist vocabulary that could be applied to the structure of any photograph; the isolation of certain qualities considered inherent to the photographic medium; and the revision of the photographic canon away from the Alfred Stieglitz/Edward Weston storyline to include

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[28] Tina Barney, *Visiting Artists Program*, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago: The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2004).

those who were previously marginalized such as Timothy O'Sullivan as well as contemporary photographers with a unique "authorial voice" like Garry Winogrand, Lee Friedlander, and Diane Arbus.[29] Szarkowski achieved his campaign primarily through his publications by featuring key photographic works by artists ranging from the nineteenth century to contemporaries, completely de-contextualized from their origins, and arranged under general headings.

For example, in *The Photographer's Eye*, Szarkowski dissected the photograph's essential formal qualities as "The Thing Itself," "The Detail," "The Frame," "Time," and "Vantage Point," and selected a number of fine art and vernacular photographs to best represent each quality. Of "The Detail," he writes, "The photographer could not assemble these clues into a coherent narrative, he could only isolate the fragment, document it, and by doing so claim for it some special significance . . . . If photographs could not be read as stories, they could be read as symbols."[30] He includes photographs as diverse as Timothy O'Sullivan's photograph of a Spanish inscription on a rock in New Mexico from 1873 and Lee Friedlander's street photograph of a furniture store window in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1962. Thus, Szarkowski created a vocabulary with which to apply to all photographs, regardless of their origin or purpose.

He furthered the fragmentation and de-contextualization of the photograph in *From the Picture Press*, where Szarkowski and a team of assistants selected news photographs from the *Daily News* and presented them without their captions classified under the general headings "Heroes," "Winners," "Losers," and "Ceremonies," etc. in

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[29] Christopher Philips, "The Judgment Seat of Photography," in *The Contest of Meaning*, edited by Richard Bolton, 15-47 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1989), 36.

[30] John Szarkowski, *The Photographer's Eye* (New York, Museum of Modern Art, 1966), 8.

order to prove the shared formal qualities and reduce each set to iconographic symbols.

He writes that "as images, the photographs are shockingly direct, and at the same time

mysterious, elliptical, and fragmentary, reproducing the texture and flavor of experience

without explaining its meaning."[31] Szarkowski claims that this is a quality unique to

photography, and he unites many photographers, past and present, under this rubric.

Hailing from Manhattan and receiving her education in New York photography

galleries, Barney was an adherent of Szarkowski's photographic program. As soon as

Barney was honing her interest in the study of photography, her husband became

convinced that New York was not an ideal place to raise children and they moved to Sun

Valley, Idaho in 1974. Shortly after arriving in Sun Valley, Barney discovered The Sun

Valley Center for the Arts, which was founded by Glen Janss, Annie Janss, Gordon

Webster, Henry Hawkins, and Renee Meyer in 1971. The Center was modeled after the

Anderson Ranch Arts Center in Aspen, Colorado (then known as the Center of the Eye

and Hand) and offered classes in painting, weaving, ceramics, leather work, graphics, and

photography. Despite its small town location, the Center was able to attract well-known

photographers such as Frederick Sommer and Ralph Gibson to teach workshops due to

the picturesque surroundings. Barney was impressed upon walking in the exhibition

gallery and seeing authentic prints by Ansel Adams and Edward Curtis and she

concluded that the Center was a legitimate arts school.

Immediately, Barney requested private lessons with the head of the photography

department, Peter de Lory. De Lory, who received his BFA from the San Francisco Art

Institute and his MFA from University of Colorado, was a landscape photographer who

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[31] Szarkowski cited in Christopher Phillips, "The Judgment Seat of Photography," in *The Contest of Meaning*, edited by Richard Bolton, 15-47 (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1989), 37.

practiced a structured, straightforward style on the landscape with an open-ended, interpretive meaning. De Lory recalls how initial tasks assigned to Barney were designed to get her used to "seeing photographically," or for her to adapt to seeing the world through a camera. He would instruct her to go out and shoot a roll of film. Upon her return, he would teach her darkroom techniques, especially focusing on issues having to do with light, texture, and composition. She started taking mundane pictures of barns and horses or reflections in water with black and white 35 mm film, but she quickly moved on to featuring people in her work. Barney supplemented her lessons with workshops instructed by Frederick Sommer, Joyce Neimanas, Duane Michals, John Pfahl, Harry Bowers, and Ellen Manchester, among others.[32]

Due to the constant influx of well-known photographers invited to the Center to lead workshops, the continually revolving door bred an active social life as most interaction occurred outside the darkroom during parties and outdoor activities such as skiing and sunbathing. Barney gained the reputation of being the wealthy, yet highly motivated, housewife who studied with Peter de Lory. She also had her own darkroom that she let people use for developing their work. Adding to her popularity was the fact that she was a patron of the arts, a photography collector, and a board member of the Center, presiding over programming and fundraising.[33]

Barney's move to Sun Valley, involvement in photography classes, and association with bohemian artists made an indelible impact upon her personality. Since she was notoriously shy growing up, she recalled how moving to the West in the

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[32] Peter de Lory, phone conversation with the author, October 2008.

[33] Mark Klett, phone conversation with the author, August 8, 2008.

seventies was liberating for her. Before, Barney's close circle of friends and family members were less than forthcoming when it came to expressing any feelings or emotions. On the contrary, Barney remembered during her first photography workshop the students went to the hot springs, took all their clothes off and "let everything hang out." The other artists told each other everything about themselves and held nothing back.[34] In effect, the move to Sun Valley caused Barney to move outside of her comfort zone of East Coast society, and examine it from a distance.

At the time, the tight-knit, irreverent atmosphere coupled with the confluence of talented photographers produced a sort of "Golden Age" of photographic experimentation at the Center. The student photographers were greatly influenced by guest photographer Robert Heinecken, who broke away from the idea of the photograph as an autonomous form, and combined found images in collages and shot Polaroids of magazine pages. Visiting photographer Nathan Lyons, who organized the influential 1966 exhibition *Toward a Social Landscape*, called for a reevaluation of landscape photography "from the classical reference point of *natural* environment to include as a referent the interaction of a 'nexus between man and man, and man and nature.'"[35] Directly opposing Szarkowski's theories, Lyons writes, "Not just a play of forms, but the objects contain meaning and the objects may be modified by its environment and they may also modify the environment."[36] While Szarkowski believed in the significance of the single photographic moment, Lyons preached the potential of photographic sequences in

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[34] *Tina Barney: Social Studies*, DVD, directed by Jaci Judelman (France/USA: Yare Films, 2005).

[35] Nathan Lyons, "Introduction, " in *Towards a Social Landscape* (NY: Horizon Press, 1966), 6.

[36] Nathan Lyons, "Introduction, " in *Towards a Social Landscape* (NY: Horizon Press, 1966), 6.

communicating a narrative and "building layers of visual connections" in order to convey a larger meaning.[37] Additionally, photographers Duane Michals and Eileen Cowin were staging their work, dispelling the idea of the photograph as an objective recording of a fragment of the world. Even though Barney was influenced by Szarkowski's beliefs, the Center provided many alternatives to stray from his brand of totalizing photography.

Photographers at the Center also began to play with color and size, trying to find processors and printers that would push the limits of the traditional 8x10 black and white photographic print.[38] While the Center offered traditional workshops such as "Basic Photography" and those that paid tribute to Ansel Adams' methods as in "Three Day Zone System Workshop," novel approaches were also featured such as "The Large Print—Scale and Content," "Subject/Content and Surface Manipulation," and "Photographic Approaches to the New West from H. Jackson (1870) to Contemporary Color."[39] Moreover, women photographers made their presence known at the Center and played an active role in programming and instruction including Joyce Niemanas, Wanda Hammerback, Judy Dater, Betty Hahn, Linda Connor, Ellen Manchester and JoAnn Verburg.

After Peter de Lory left the directorship of the photography department at the Center around 1978, Barney commenced her study of color photography with Mark Klett. Up until this point, color photography had been relegated for use in the commercial or vernacular realms, although a few artists photographed in color. After the landmark

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[37] Anne Wilkes Tucker, "Lyons, Szarkowski, and the Perception of Photography," in *American Art* 21, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 25-29.

[38] Mark Klett, phone conversation with the author, August 8, 2008.

[39] Photography Workshops 1978 Winter-Spring, *Sun Valley Center for the Arts and Humanities*, 1978.

exhibition *William Eggleston's Guide* organized by Szarkowski at The Museum of Modern Art in 1976, featuring a selection of color photographs created by Eggleston in 1971, color photography became more accepted as a fine art, which inspired more photographers to work in color. In his lessons, Klett focused on color theory and the teachings of Josef Albers and the potential for color as an expressive entity.[40] Barney agreed with the emotional significance of color practiced by Klett—however, the earthy corals, browns, and purples native to the Idahoan landscape were lost on her.

Besides his expertise of color photography, Klett was trained as a geologist and came to the Center to teach while conducting fieldwork on his project, co-organized with JoAnn Verburg and Ellen Manchester, The Rephotographic Survey Project (RSP). The RSP set out to create rephotographs or "one or more pictures of the same subject which are made specifically to repeat an existing image," of 122 of the thousands of original sites visited by photographers Timothy O'Sullivan, William Henry Jackson, Andrew J. Russell, Alexander Gardner, and John K. Hillers for various geological surveys sponsored by the United States government in the 1860s and 1870s.[41] Stemming from the rephotographic studies of geologist Harold E. Malde of the United States Geological Survey, Klett and his team devised a scientific methodology to match camera vantage points, perspective, and lighting of the original photographs.

In order to create a rephotograph as close to the original as possible, the RSP photographers employed similar equipment used by the nineteenth-century photographers

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[40] Mark Klett, phone conversation with the author, August 8, 2008.

[41] Mark Klett, "Rephotographing Nineteenth-Century Landscapes," in Mark Klett, Ellen Manchester, and JoAnn Verburg, *Second View: The Rephotographic Survey Project* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 11.

such as a view camera, tripod, and lenses. Timothy O'Sullivan and William Henry

Jackson utilized full plate cameras usually with 10 x 12-inch glass plates, although

Jackson later used 20 x 24-inch plates after 1875 to create "mammoth" prints.[42] The basic

structure of a view camera consists of a lightproof, flexible bellows connecting two

standards mounted on a flatbed or rails. The front standard contains a lens holder that

allows for the attachment of interchangeable lenses while the rear standard holds a light-

tight film holder and the ground glass, which reveals the image upside down and

reversed. In most cameras, both the front and rear standards are able to move

independently of one another allowing for greater flexibility and image control.[43] Despite

the replacement of the plate glass negatives with film holders and the inclusion of an

electronic shutter and focusing devices, the view cameras used for the RSP consisted of

the same basic structure as those used by the survey photographers in the nineteenth

century.[44]

Nonetheless, the RSP team also allowed for contemporary additions such as 4 x 5-

inch color and black and white film, and 4 x 5-inch Polaroid type 55 positive/negative

Land film, as well as an 8 x 10-inch print of the nineteenth century photograph.[45] Once

the location and vantage point were found, the photographers would create an instant

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[42] Robin Kelsey, "Viewing the Archive: Timothy O'Sullivan's Photographs for the Wheeler Survey, 1871-1874 in *The Art Bulletin* 85, no. 4 (December, 2003): 702. William Henry Jackson, *Time Exposure: The Autobiography of William Henry Jackson* (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1940), 236

[43] "Inside a View Camera," *Ansel Adams, A Documentary Film*, PBS http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/ansel/sfeature/sf_camera_flash.html

[44] Steve Simmons, *Using the View Camera* (New York: Amphoto, 1987), 9.

[45] Type 55 film produces an immediate proof print as well as a film-based, high quality negative that can be directly used for duplication and enlargement. Developed in 1961, Ansel Adams often used it for his landscape photographs. See Ansel Adams, *Polaroid Land Photography* (Boston; New York Graphic Society, 1978), 45.

positive image using the Polaroid film in order to line up details in the foreground and background with a print of the nineteenth century photograph. Then an appropriate lens was selected and after various camera position adjustments were made, they would capture ten-to-fifteen negatives in both color and black and white of the site. Finally, one negative would be printed that best exemplified the original shot. Even though Polaroid film was an anachronism, it embodied a link to the wet-plate process used by the first photographers in that both were developed on site and the negative had to be washed, dried, and stored before disembarking.[46]

Surprisingly, the RSP's methodology to match vantage points to the original sites visited by the earlier photographers proved successful. What they found when examining the matched photographs of a particular site side-by-side was that very little of the solid rock formations had changed in the span of about one hundred years. However, limitations to capturing exact rephotographs surfaced, such as time of day, snowfall, weather, wind, clouds, and water levels. These factors caused the RSP to conclude, "No two photographs of a subject made at different time periods, no matter how close the attention to technique, can ever match each other perfectly."[47]

Moreover, the results of the RSP opposed major strongholds in photographic theory concerning the decisive moment of a photograph, the documentary nature of the original photographic surveys, and the naive talent of the nineteenth-century photographers. In 1952, Henri Cartier-Bresson coined the phrase "the decisive moment"

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[46] Mark Klett, "Rephotographing Nineteenth-Century Landscapes," in Mark Klett, Ellen Manchester, and JoAnn Verburg, *Second View: The Rephotographic Survey Project* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 15.

[47] Mark Klett "Rephotographing Nineteenth-Century Landscapes," in Mark Klett, Ellen Manchester, and JoAnn Verburg, *Second View: The Rephotographic Survey Project* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 28.

to explain the singular moment in time when the photographer presses the camera shutter and the resultant image reveals a perfect balance of shape and line.[48] In her essay for the RSP catalogue, JoAnn Verburg discusses how the rephotograph transforms the original photograph from an autonomous moment into a bookend on a time continuum. She writes, "Like an antiphonal choir, where two groups sing in answer to one another, the photographs are read together, back and forth, as the viewer discovers similarities and differences, checking detail against detail."[49] According to Paul Berger, another essayist for the RSP, the triangulation between the viewer, the original photograph, and the rephotograph clearly reveals how "the meaning of the photograph does not reside in its physical structure, but rather in the dynamic and negotiating interaction between ourselves, our culture, and the image in question."[50] This attitude rebels against the theories put forth by Cartier-Bresson, as well as John Szarkowski's emphasis on the distinguishing formal qualities of photography; instead, it reveals the relation of the photograph to the world *outside* the frame.

The documentary ability of the camera to record the surveyed sites objectively was another myth dispelled by the RSP. Verburg points out how little the chosen sites resembled the rephotograph as a result of the highly selective frame of the camera and the mission to recapture the scene of the original photograph. She describes how there was

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[48] Henri Cartier-Bresson, "The Decisive Moment," in *Photography in Print: Writings from 1816 to the Present*, Vicki Goldberg, ed., 384-386 (Albuequerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1981), 385.

[49] JoAnn Verburg, "Between Exposures," in Mark Klett, Ellen Manchester, and JoAnn Verburg, *Second View: The Rephotographic Survey Project* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 8.

[50] Paul Berger, "Doubling: This Then That," in Mark Klett, Ellen Manchester, and JoAnn Verburg, *Second View: The Rephotographic Survey Project* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 52.

music playing, tents pitched, and campers eating junk food that the crew would frame out of the rephotograph so they could replicate the nineteenth century scene exactly. Verburg reveals, "As a 'document' of the place we experienced, the scenic vista we exposed was so selective it felt almost fraudulent."[51]

Of course, the nineteenth century photographers also employed the same selective framing. For instance, while rephotographing Timothy O'Sullivan's photograph *Tertiary Conglomerates, Weber Valley, Utah* (now known as Witches Rocks) (1869), RSP photographer Rick Dingus discovered that O'Sullivan captured the vertical outcrop of rocks from a lower viewpoint and tilted his camera at a 45-degree angle to the right in order to create a more precarious perspective.[52] The willful tilt of the camera invites doubts into O'Sullivan's reputation as a simple naïve unburdened by camerawork and caused stalwarts of photography such as Szarkowski to rescind such opinions. Szarkowski writes, "It has long seemed to this writer that O'Sullivan's genius was necessarily of a purely intuitive order, operating, unknown to O'Sullivan within the outer protective cover of a simple record-maker. This thesis has been badly shaken by an astonishing recent discovery by the …Rephotographic Survey Project. This seems an act of almost willful aggression toward the principles of record-making, and is difficult to explain except on the grounds that O'Sullivan found the picture more satisfactory that

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[51] JoAnn Verburg, "Between Exposures," in Mark Klett, Ellen Manchester, and JoAnn Verburg, *Second View: The Rephotographic Survey Project* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 9.

[52] Mark Klett, "Rephotographing Nineteenth-Century Landscapes," in Mark Klett, Ellen Manchester, and JoAnn Verburg, *Second View: The Rephotographic Survey Project* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 17.

way."[53] The groundbreaking work achieved by the RSP opened up possibilities for theorizing the history of photography in addition to creating new working methods for photography that widened the acceptance for a variety of photographic work as fine art.

In fact, during Klett's tenure at the Center, Barney was fortunate to have the opportunity to accompany the crew to sites near Sun Valley, such as Shoshone Falls Park near Twin Falls, Idaho. According to the Rephotographic Survey Project catalogue, Barney accompanied the excursion team to Snake River Canyon on November 7, 1978 to rephotograph a work originally captured by Timothy O'Sullivan in 1868 (Fig. 11).[54] Differences abound in the 1978 version: part of the canyon dried up and became marshland, the foreground includes a stretch of road that turns into a scenic viewpoint where a car is parked, power lines cross the canyon, a white cross used to reenact Christ's crucifixion every Easter sits atop a point on the right, and the fog in the canyon is less dense. Although the site still exists and the landmasses are the same, minor changes have occurred on the land, predominately caused by human actions.

In 1982, Barney commenced a rephotography project of her own, one featuring her and her close friend Sheila that endured until 1997. Barney rephotographed her and Sheila in the same interior with minor variations in pose and clothing at least five different times over the course of fifteen years. For instance, In *Sheila and I* (1982) (Fig. 12), Sheila (in a collared shirt, seafoam sweater, green velvet pants, and brown boots) and Barney (in a turtleneck, pink sweater, flowered pants, and blue ballet flats) sit

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[53] John Szarkowski, *American Landscapes: Photographs from the Collection of The Museum of Modern Art* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1981).

[54] Mark Klett, Ellen Manchester, and JoAnn Verburg, *Second View: The Rephotographic Survey Project* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 205.

side-by- side in armchairs. The next year, in *Sheila and I* (1983) (Fig. 13), Barney and Sheila switch chairs, but they wear the same clothes.

In 1984, the project underwent a decisive break with *Self-portrait*, (1984) (Fig. 14) featuring only Barney, wearing her rephotograph uniform, seated in an armchair. This photograph was accompanied by a companion piece, *Sheila* (1984) (Fig. 15) with Sheila in an armchair, alone, but sporting different clothes. Barney picked up the series again in 1989 with *Sheila and I* (Fig. 16) featuring both women again with Barney still in the same clothes and Sheila in a different outfit. The last published installment was *Sheila and I* (1997) (Fig. 17) reuniting the women once again with Barney in her pink sweater and flowered pants and Sheila in another outfit. Of the project, Barney explains that she was influenced by Klett, but obviously produced the project without the meticulous scientific methodology guiding the Rephotographic Survey Project. Unlike Klett and his team, who lined up the vantage point of the rephotograph with the original print and tried to duplicate the season and time of day, Barney downplayed her project as less scientific and more "tongue-in-cheek."

However, the photographs of Sheila and Barney offer important insights into her Watch Hill oeuvre. Similar to the landforms captured by the RPS, Barney commented on the lack of major changes over the period of fifteen years between her rephotographs: "…what I observed to this day, is how very little things change—granted trees and children grow drastically, but after a certain age, let's say forty years old, people don't seem to change that much. There's weight gain and loss, hair styles that change— material details like that—but when I observe the houses and their interiors, not much has

been moved. Somehow this comforts me."[55] It is also revealing that even though Sheila changed her hairstyles and clothes often, Barney never changed her clothes and clung to the ability to duplicate moments of the past with vigor.

From the early 1980s to the late 1990s, Barney would continue to rephotograph the same cast of characters—her sons, Tim and Phil; her mother-in-law, Mrs. Barney; her sister Jill and her niece Polly; Sheila's family, especially her daughters Amy and Moya; her friend Susan and her children, George, Lilly, and Charlotte. The comfort found in the lack of change in her and her subjects would continue to dominate her work.

As a result of Klett's influence, Barney switched from a 35 mm handheld to a large format Toyo field camera in 1981. The switch to a field camera dictated many modifications in Barney's working process—she now worked off a tripod and used longer exposure times, which resulted in richer color and crisp details due to the larger negative. It also enabled her to compose an image on the ground glass before she pressed the shutter. The decision to use the large-format camera presaged a more courageous Barney—due to its large size and unwieldiness she could no longer hide behind the camera and take snapshots of strangers but had to slow down to set up. Barney remembers, "When I first used a 4x5, it took every little bit of courage I had in me just to take it out of the box…. The other thing is, I am not a feminist at all, but all of my teachers happened to be men at that time and they all kept telling me that it was too difficult."[56] Even though strong women surrounded Barney at the Center, she still felt weighed down by male dominance in the photographic field.

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[55] Tina Barney, *Tina Barney: Photographs: Theater of Manners* (New York: Scalo, 1997), 11.

[56] Barney in "An Interview with Tina Barney," conducted by Elizabeth A.E. Titone, *N.O.A. Magazine of the Arts* 1, no. 6 (1989): 1.

Another aspect of Barney's style that was influenced by Klett was his Polaroid work that commenced in 1979. In order to alleviate the stiff effect of the view camera, Klett started to experiment with Polaroid type 55 positive/negative Land film, the same used during the RSP, to capture people in the landscape in an offhand manner. He would load a view camera with the Polaroid film, and moving around, capture people sun bathing, playing croquet, and fishing in a more fluid process than a view camera traditionally allowed. For example, in *Grand Opening of the Hailey Rodeo, Hailey, Idaho, July 4, 1979* (Fig. 18), Klett reproduces the opening ceremonies of the rodeo ring from the audience with a mountain centered in the far distance, almost dwarfed by the tall rodeo spotlights. Instead of admiring the view, the photograph offers a narrative as to what actions take place in the mountain's environs. Klett's shooting techniques combined with the Polaroid film results in a more spontaneous scene with movement implied by the circular path of a horse's hoof prints and blurry elements such as a flag waving as well as audience members walking past Klett's view. Moreover, the glued edges resulting from when Klett peeled apart the film are still intact, creating a rough-edged frame where he inscribed the event, location, and date into the picture, information similarly produced by nineteenth century survey photographers. Klett recalled that Barney was intrigued by the Polaroid work largely due to the fact that it felt less posed and introduced a human narrative into the work.[57] The introduction of a more fluid process to view camera work would have a tremendous impact on the way Barney works with her equipment and interacts with her subjects in the coming future.

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[57] Mark Klett, phone conversation with the author, August 8, 2008.

In her earlier photographs, Barney would direct her subjects and have them hold still for 4 to 8 seconds, but the work appeared forced and stiff. Immediately, one of her goals became to make her view camera work more spontaneous. Using the techniques she learned from Mark Klett at the Center, Barney began using the view camera quickly, shooting almost 30-40 sheets of film in under one hour to inject her work with a form of narrative.[58]

Although Barney breaks away from the Szarkowski line with her rephotography, he influenced Barney in some ways, particularly with how she constructs her narratives. For instance, in his book *From the Picture Press* discussed earlier, Szarkowski presents the viewer with photojournalism taken out of its original context, stripped of its captions, and grouped under the headings "Ceremonies,' "Heroes," "Winners," etc. in order to prove that no matter how similar the photographs in these groups appear, the photograph cannot capture the whole story or the interior emotions of the subjects. He writes, "As images, the photographs are shockingly direct, and at the same time mysterious, elliptical, and fragmentary, reproducing the texture and flavor of experience without explaining its meaning."[59] He offers the example of a photograph grouped under the "Losers" category by Tom Cunningham of the New York *Daily News* of a man and a woman, positioned back-to-back, weeping and clutching handkerchiefs in their hands (Fig. 19). A viewer's first impression of the photograph would be that these people have undergone a great tragedy; however, the caption in the back of the book informs us that these are two teachers on strike who have just been informed by their union that they will have to go

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[58] Tina Barney, *Seminar with Artists Series*, Whitney Museum of American Art (New York: Education Department, 1990).

[59] John Szarkowski, ed., *From the Picture Press* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1973), 6.

back to their classrooms. According to Szarkowski, the dramatic display of emotion in the photograph alone does not appropriately convey the real event.[60]

In some of Barney's Watch Hill photographs, a similar ambiguous narrative effect is achieved. In *The Conversation* (1987) (Fig. 20), a teenage girl and her parents are in the middle of an animated conversation—the mother holds her palms up haltingly as she approaches, the father rests his elbows on his knees with his hands clasped and his forehead wrinkled, and the daughter looks down and holds a sweater and a sweatshirt. Although the viewer can surmise that this is a standoff between two parents and their daughter, they are left to wonder about the nature and severity of the exchange—which could range on a topic anywhere from curfew violations to household chores.

However, these isolated instances are a rarity for Barney. Even though her individual photographs show bouts of spontaneity and narrative ambiguity, Barney's use of rephotography on her subjects—influenced by her time studying photography under Mark Klett at the Sun Valley Center of Art—express a strong sense of continuity based on the context provided by the setting of Watch Hill.

Another aspect of cutting-edge photography that Barney learned about at the Center was the increase in the size of photographic prints. Since William Henry Jackson's mammoth prints in 1870, photographers, especially of landscapes, have always desired to print larger in order to compete with painting and to capture the minute details in the views. Initially, Barney was introduced to the large print when she took de Lory's class entitled "The Large Print—Scale and Content" in the winter of 1978. She recalls how de Lory devised a method of developing large prints by agitating the photographic paper in garbage bags because the developing baths were too small. At that time, Barney

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[60] John Szarkowski, ed., *From the Picture Press* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1973), 5.

began printing black and white prints up to 30 x 40 inches. Soon thereafter, large color

photographic paper became available and Barney learned about a lab in California from

fellow photographer Wanda Hammerback that had the resources to print large color

photographs up to 24 x 36 inches. However, it wasn't until Barney saw an enlarged

photograph by Cindy Sherman that she decided to pursue fully large-scale prints:

> I remember I was at the Walker Art Museum, visiting Joann Verburg
> …and I saw my first Cindy Sherman blown up and that's when I said
> "Okay, this is what I want." And she had blown it up pretty big, past 30 x
> 40 inches. Bigger than 30 x 40, that became the first step, that was a big
> deal and then going past that was the next. And Cindy really was the first
> person I saw to make a bigger picture. And then it was the one of her lying
> on the floor of the kitchen [*Untitled #96*, 1981, 24 x 48 inches]. It was just
> seeing that in real life and thinking okay, this is it. The big thing.[61]

Barney's photographs gradually increased to 4 x 5 feet. Her desire to create large-scale

photography was propelled by her interest in high-quality images as well as the ability to

see detail. This may have been brought on by her experience with the RSP since the team

had to compare 8 x 10-inch prints with 4 x 5-inch positive prints in order to determine

vantage points and detect minute changes that had occurred over a period of one hundred

years in the landscape.

In fact, Barney received her first big break based on the enlarged size of her

photographic prints. In 1983, Barney learned that MoMA was organizing an exhibition

called "Big Pictures by Contemporary Photographers." She printed *Sunday New York

Times* at 48 x 60 inches and contacted the curator of the photography department, John

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[61] Tina Barney, in discussion with the author, January 2008.

Pultz, and told him that she had a big picture. Although the exhibition was already full, Pultz asked Barney to send it. Five days before the opening, someone had dropped out of the show and Pultz included Barney's image. Despite unfavorable reviews for the exhibition overall, Barney's image was spotlighted and discussed favorably in most articles—including a review by Andy Grundberg, then photography critic of the *New York Times,* who called her work "the most appealing image" in the show.[62] By 1983, with Barney's career prospects increasing, she and her husband both decided to move back to New York and Watch Hill to be closer to their families. Barney and her husband eventually divorced in the same year but she continued to return to Watch Hill to photograph every summer.

Unbeknownst to most, Barney was first introduced to photography in a setting rooted in traditional landscape photography but was in the midst of great photographic experimentation and innovation. In the 1970s and early 1980s at the Sun Valley Center for the Arts, Barney was educated by the story of the heroic, male landscape photographer but she also knew that fine art photography was undergoing a radical change. Women were making a name for themselves as landscape photographers. View cameras were revisited, but with the addition of new techniques incorporating Polaroid and color film. Photographs were no longer isolated moments in history, but images that could be recreated numerous times and could be employed as a starting point in a conversation with interdisciplinary fields such as geology, urban planning, and architecture. Barney's time at Sun Valley and the artists she encountered would have an immense impact on her photographic work in the years to come. As Barney left Sun

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[62] Andy Grundberg, "Big Pictures That Say Little," *New York Times*, May 8, 1983, H31.

Valley for Manhattan in 1983, the question emerged: how would Barney translate these elements into her own photography?

III. Watch Hill History

Upon marrying John Joseph Barney in 1966, Tina Barney was first introduced to the coastal town of Watch Hill, Rhode Island. She described the place as exuding a strong sense of family and tradition, a place dominated by large, Catholic families, in which her husband's family was there for "only two generations." Unknown to her at the time, Watch Hill would provide the pervasive backdrop of her photography from the late 1970s to the late 1990s featured in her monograph *Theater of Manners* (Scalo, 1997).

Barney's persistent rephotographing of the denizens of Watch Hill produced visual documentation of the town's rituals, customs, and values as it uncovered the effects on its population brought upon by two distinct architectural development stages, the hotel resort era (1840-1890) and the cottage colony (1880-1920).[63] Before delving into Barney's adaptation of various landscape photography skills on her intimate circle of family and friends, it is instructive to sketch a brief history of Watch Hill's architectural development employing Barney's photographs to illustrate the current relationship of Watch Hill's bygone hotel resort era to the present cottage colony.

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[63] Outlined by architectural historian Derryl G. Lang in his enlightening Master's thesis, "The Development of a Summer Resort: Watch Hill, Rhode Island" (Master's thesis, Columbia University, 1988), 3.

Located on the southwestern-most point of the Rhode Island coast in the town of

Westerly, Watch Hill has the advantages of being bordered by the Atlantic Ocean on the

east and the Pawcatuck River on the west, making it a long peninsula almost completely

surrounded by salt water. Given its pleasant location, it is not surprising that a lighthouse

keeper, Jonathan Nash, was the first to establish a seaside resort called the Watch Hill

House in 1833. At this time, city dwellers began seeking respite from the packed urban

centers at seaside resorts in order to enjoy the health benefits of the salt air and the

popularity of the Watch Hill House launched the hotel resort era of Watch Hill.

Within the next 60 years, Watch Hill became inundated with hotels including the

Dickens Hotel (1840), the Narragansett (1845), the Bay View House (1845), the Atlantic

House (1856), the Ocean House (1868), the Larkin House (1869), and the Columbia

House (1890).[64] These simple wooden, yet large, constructions boasted modern amenities

such as steam heat, gas and electric lights, hot and cold running water, and private

bathrooms. As a result of the growth in the resort industry, transportation to the peninsula

was improved with train service established between Boston and Stonington, Connecticut

and New York and Stonington in 1859.[65] Travelers would endure the last leg of the trip

from across the Thames River by steamship, which made it seem as if Watch Hill were

an island, rather than a peninsula. Transportation by land to Watch Hill, besides a horse

and carriage, was made possible by a railroad bridge and trolley service around the

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[64]Joanna Burkhardt, "History," in Ardith M. Schneider, Roberta Burkhardt, and Michael Beddard, *Watch Hill Then & Now* (The Watch Hill Preservation Society, 2005), 9.

[65] Joanna Burkhardt, "History," in Ardith M. Schneider, Roberta Burkhardt, and Michael Beddard, *Watch Hill Then & Now* (The Watch Hill Preservation Society, 2005), 9.

1890s. Although the improved transportation options made Watch Hill more accessible, the resort-goers were still at the whim of train, trolley and steamship schedules.

Initially visited for the health benefits of the salt air and water, these resorts gradually grew into social centers in which to enjoy leisure time as well as locations to explore and renew a bond with the great outdoors. However, the hotels provided the perfect compromise of a rural setting within the parameters of a structured group setting. In other words, "it was a place for people who were not quite ready to face nature one on one or give up the personal comforts which they were used to."[66]

Even though there were outdoor activities such as hiking, swimming, walking, and golfing, the resort hotel remained the central gathering place for its guests around which all social activities revolved, since little else existed in the town. Even though the guests were away from their home cities, they still followed a similar schedule of social activities. For example, a typical day included bathing between 11 and 2'o clock, lunch at the hotel, an outing to East Beach in the afternoon or other outdoor activities such as golf, tennis, or sailing, then late afternoon tea at the hotel, followed by dinner and dancing.[67] In his Master's thesis on the development of Watch Hill as a resort town, Derryl C. Lang compared the resort hotels, the largest being the Larkin House able to accommodate up to 400 people, to "an immense country house" as it "served as a host for all the activities."[68]

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[66] Derryl G. Lang, "The Development of a Summer Resort: Watch Hill, Rhode Island" (Master's thesis, Columbia University, 1988), 14.

[67] Derryl G. Lang, "The Development of a Summer Resort: Watch Hill, Rhode Island" (Master's thesis, Columbia University, 1988), 15.

[68] Derryl G. Lang, "The Development of a Summer Resort: Watch Hill, Rhode Island" (Master's thesis, Columbia University, 1988), 15.

Accordingly, the architecture of the resort houses reflected its rigorous social calendar in addition to the strict gender divisions in society. For instance, the Plimpton House, built in 1865, featured an L-shaped plan in which the first floor consisted of a dining room with assigned chairs, music rooms, ladies' parlor, men's smoking room, and large piazzas facing the sea. Other hotels competed for guests by adding communal spaces such as billiard rooms, ballrooms, tennis courts, and bowling alleys. The only private spaces in the resorts were the bedrooms, which would be used primarily for sleeping.[69]

Although people of all backgrounds visited Watch Hill for short day and weekend trips, the upper classes stayed for weeks at a time and the hotels cultivated exclusive social circles that became identified with particular resorts. Businessmen from eastern cities such as Philadelphia, Boston, and New York in addition to Hartford, New Haven, and Providence spent their summers in Watch Hill. Surprisingly, affluent families from Midwest cities, most notably Cincinnati, flocked to the coastal town to compete with east coast society. Scions of business could leave the chaotic pace of the city to enjoy an active social life with men of similar backgrounds and their families. Lang writes, "the hotel became the stage set for people to display their wealth and have a good time doing it while at the same time socializing with other people of prominence and making important business and social connections."[70]

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[69] Derryl G. Lang, "The Development of a Summer Resort: Watch Hill, Rhode Island" (Master's thesis, Columbia University, 1988), 21.

[70] Derryl G. Lang, "The Development of a Summer Resort: Watch Hill, Rhode Island" (Master's thesis, Columbia University, 1988), 17.

As the hotels attracted visitors to Watch Hill year after year, and people

developed social connections, families became more interested in creating a permanent

dwelling in Watch Hill to visit every summer. At the same time, as urban population in

the United States cities continued to grow, especially in immigrant neighborhoods,

members of the middle and upper classes desired solitude and a chance to escape the

pressures of the city which seemed to follow them to the resorts, despite the change in

scenery.[71] As a result, the concept of leisure time changed from a schedule of activities

experienced in a group setting to more isolated and relaxed activities. These changes in

resort-goers' needs and values contributed to the development of a cottage colony from

1890-1920 and the eventual decline of the hotel resort era.[72]

The first private summer cottage in Watch Hill, Howard Cottage (now *By-the-*
Sea), was built in 1879 for James L. Howard of Hartford, Connecticut. However, Howard

cottage did not stand alone for long. In 1886, the Cincinnati Syndicate, composed of three

businessmen who regularly summered in Watch Hill, bought a 130-acre tract of farmland

and divided it into 101 house sites that were sold to relatives and friends from Cincinnati

made up of the well-heeled who would take good care to preserve the rustic nature of the

town. In order to preserve the exclusivity of the land, a good number of lots were

combined into large plots of land to prevent overcrowding.[73] Other land developments

soon followed with similar goals in mind. Gradually, summer cottages began springing

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[71] Derryl G. Lang, "The Development of a Summer Resort: Watch Hill, Rhode Island" (Master's thesis, Columbia University, 1988), 16.

[72] Derryl G. Lang, "The Development of a Summer Resort: Watch Hill, Rhode Island" (Master's thesis, Columbia University, 1988), 66.

[73] Joanna Burkhardt, "History," in Ardith M. Schneider, Roberta Burkhardt, and Michael Beddard, *Watch Hill Then & Now* (The Watch Hill Preservation Society, 2005). 11.

up such as *Sunnymede, Sea Crest, Surfside, Intermere, The Cedars, Hillside Cottage, Echo Lodge, Breeze Cote, Sea Shell, The Anchorage*, and *The Snuggery*, which were all built in the 1880s.[74]

These private cottages were by no means small houses, but they were characterized by a sense of informality, calm, and openness fitting with the summer atmosphere. Designed as seasonal homes for large families, the cottages featured a plentiful number of bedrooms to accommodate a large number of guests. The private homes were built with comfort in mind without being ostentatious like their counterparts in Newport, Rhode Island or Bar Harbor, Maine.[75] The cottage colony underwent three prime architectural stages each decade: Victorian in the 1880s, shingle style in the 1890s, and European style such as the Tudor and Italianate in the 1900s. The first two styles were more subdued and harkened back to colonial building styles while construction after the 1900s was more flamboyant and grander in scale. However, no matter the style, according to Lang, "the summer cottage expressed the connection and integration with nature and the relaxed life associated with it. Security from the urban world was created in a collective sense by the cottage colony as a whole rather than by each individual house. A summer cottage was then free to expose itself to the outside as its forms suggest."[76]

Barney's photograph, *Ada's Hammock* (1982) (Fig. 21) clearly illustrates Lang's aforementioned quote and embodies the casual, but dominant and tight-knit character of

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[74] Joanna Burkhardt, "History," in Ardith M. Schneider, Roberta Burkhardt, and Michael Beddard, *Watch Hill Then & Now* (The Watch Hill Preservation Society, 2005), 11.

[75] Derryl G. Lang, "The Development of a Summer Resort: Watch Hill, Rhode Island" (Master's thesis, Columbia University, 1988), 56.

[76] Derryl G. Lang, "The Development of a Summer Resort: Watch Hill, Rhode Island" (Master's thesis, Columbia University, 1988), 8.

the cottage colony on the land. The image was taken at Ada Forgan Addington's house *Seaswept* (formerly known as *Ocean Mound*), a Victorian cottage built in 1880 and acquired by the Whitney W. Addington family of Chicago in 1968. Barney photographs three children, presumably members of the Addington clan, casually lingering in the sun on the porch in their bathing suits, attesting to the relaxed concept of leisure time and family time that evolved at the turn of the twentieth century out of the more buttoned-up atmosphere of the resort era. The fact that they are positioned on the porch, a liminal area between the screened-in sun porch and the Atlantic Ocean also highlights the integration of the exterior surroundings with the cottage interior that was often emphasized in Watch Hill's architecture.

However, the most poignant inclusion in the photograph is the cluster of cottages in the background, which refer to Lang's mention of the collective strength of the cottage colony used to protect the area from any urban influences, or for that matter, anyone who did not belong to Watch Hill society. The houses featured in the photograph are particularly compelling because the outcrop of land on which they were erected used to be the site of the Larkin House, which was the largest hotel in Watch Hill for 37 years. However, in 1906, the property was sold to Clement A. Griscom who razed the hotel and proceeded to build a family compound of cottages—including *The Point* on the far left and *Moana* (formerly *Aktaoin*, the architect's house) on the right.[77] Barney's photograph expresses the total domination of the cottage colony over the resorts in Watch Hill and how the architectural make-up of the landscape influenced a certain lifestyle.

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[77] Joanna Burkhardt, "History," in Ardith M. Schneider, Roberta Burkhardt, and Michael Beddard, *Watch Hill Then & Now* (The Watch Hill Preservation Society, 2005), 13.

Due to the growth of private homes, social institutions were formed to provide social outlets for the cottage inhabitants, which gradually replaced the need for resort activities. For instance, the Watch Hill Chapel was built in 1877, supplanting the need for informal services at the hotels. In 1895, The Misquamicut Golf Club was established and later evolved into a golf, beach, and tennis club. The clubhouse was often used as a venue for black-tie dances and private parties, with someone bringing the orchestra to their home for the after-party. The Watch Hill Yacht Club was also formed in 1913, which organized races as well as an arrival and a departure point for families with yachts. Together, the Misquamicut Club and the Yacht Club formed the hub of social events in Watch Hill.[78] One member of the golf club noted of its clubhouse, "in due time it became a popular social center and was one of the principal causes of social exclusiveness at the Hill. Here it was possible to give dances and parties in a different atmosphere from that of the hotels. The latter were the losers."[79]

As soon as the cottages were erected, social life for the summer inhabitants turned inward, away from the structured group atmosphere of the resorts, towards the private homes and clubs. Cottage owners would often entertain guests at home or at a private club. Luncheons, trips to the beach, and dinners were no longer a social obligation but small, family gatherings with an opportunity to socialize at the clubs, if desired. Moreover, the rise of the automobile around the 1890s allowed travelers to come and go as they pleased, even during the off-season or holidays, without having to travel en masse

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[78] Derryl G. Lang, "The Development of a Summer Resort: Watch Hill, Rhode Island" (Master's thesis, Columbia University, 1988), 62.

[79] Cited in Chaplin Bradford Barnes, *Watch Hill Through Time: The Evolution of a New England Shore Community* (Watch Hill, RI: The Watch Hill Conservancy, 2005), 73-74.

via steamship, train, or horse. The tradition of the summer colony was strengthened each year as the same families returned to their abodes, not just in the summer but also for holidays, and family gatherings such as weddings, christenings, and family reunions. Lang writes, "Thus, it is these cottages which the family came to identify as the true family home."[80] The cottage colony was able to provide its owners with an air of exclusivity, security, and family morality—qualities that the great resorts could never offer.

Although the hotels remained a part of Watch Hill's heritage, their numbers were reduced and Watch Hill's identity as a resort town suffered. At first, hotel guests were granted access to the Misquamicut Club and the Yacht Club; however, two major fires, one in 1916 and another in 1938, and also a hurricane in 1938, destroyed all of the remaining hotels except the Narragansett House (later known as the Watch Hill Inn) and the Ocean House, of which the latter was closed in 2003 for renovations.[81] From 1940 to the late twentieth century few new homes were added to the colony and the original cottages, most of them renovated, continued to dominate the landscape, with generations of ancestors reigning over the town.

By 1944, a total of 24 families had been coming to Watch Hill for as many as five or six generations.[82] Newcomers, if granted access, were often seen as a threat and the established members of the community and Watch Hill institutions worked quickly to

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[80] Derryl G. Lang, "The Development of a Summer Resort: Watch Hill, Rhode Island" (Master's thesis, Columbia University, 1988), 63.

[81] Chaplin Bradford Barnes, *Watch Hill Through Time: The Evolution of a New England Shore Community* (Watch Hill, RI: The Watch Hill Conservancy, 2005), 77, 82.

[82] Chaplin Bradford Barnes, *Watch Hill Through Time: The Evolution of a New England Shore Community* (Watch Hill, RI: The Watch Hill Conservancy, 2005), 197-198.

educate them in the accepted behavior of the historical town. The control over Watch Hill

by the more established families is communicated in the companion photograph *Ada's

Interior* (1981). For this original photograph taken one year prior to *Ada's Hammock*,

little is different, except Barney photographs the porch from the interior of the house,

looking out towards the Atlantic Ocean. However, her view also captures two picture

frames mounted on the wall, a silver one displaying an antique photograph of the house,

and a yellow one containing a letter. When the Addingtons first acquired the old

Victorian cottage in 1968, they decided to change the exterior paint from a subdued dark

brown to bright yellow. Some of the Addington's friends decided to play a joke on them

by employing the Watch Hill Improvement Society's letterhead to draft a letter stating

that they felt the color of the house "was slightly out of place in Watch Hill," and "if

there is any possibility of reconsidering the color in the future, we would consider it

would be to the long term benefit of our cherished community."[83] After the Addingtons

learned that the letter was a hoax, they placed the letter in a yellow frame above the desk.

By including the letter in her photograph, Barney affords an insider's perspective of the

idiosyncrasies of residing in a small town.

Although the letter was a hoax, the idea of the Improvement Society dictating the

color of the cottages is not implausible for Watch Hill. One book published by the Watch

Hill Conservancy, established in 1999 to protect Watch Hill's undeveloped land as well

as historic structures, states, "While new blood can be a source of strength to the

community, there is a need to share with new property owners the history and the

traditions that have helped make Watch Hill what it is, and to encourage their

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[83] Chaplin Bradford Barnes, *Watch Hill Through Time: The Evolution of a New England Shore Community* (Watch Hill, RI: The Watch Hill Conservancy, 2005), 131.

participation in the various Watch Hill institutions."[84] In other words, if they allow new

people into the community, they need to follow the long-established guidelines of its

founding families.

Additionally, another way to combat change in Watch Hill is to prevent anyone

new from making a permanent presence in the town. Whenever a large amount of land is

up for sale, various entities band together to purchase it to sell it to individual residents

and save it from corporate developers. Unfortunately, in order to preserve the cohesive

fabric of the town, many town members and organizations have grown increasingly

insular adopting such attitudes as "How Watch Hill manages to accommodate the

consequences of its unwelcome popularity…will determine how well it manages to

survive."[85] What was once a resort town openly courting all types of people in newspaper

and magazine advertisements for their grand resorts has shriveled to a finite number of

established families who prevent press coverage, guard their privacy, and who would

prefer if Watch Hill were taken off the map entirely.

Even though Barney's photography is firmly planted in the age of the post-cottage

colony, she manages to capture some of the vestiges of the resort era of Watch Hill in the

late twentieth century. For instance, in *The Ocean House* (1977) (Fig. 23), Barney

photographs the great piazza of the storied resort in this early black and white image.

With the camera, Barney looks out to the southeastern view from the porch and fixes a

relatively high vantage point on the Watch Hill Chapel and Collins Cottage. The high

vantage point affords a view of the modern-day inclusion of fire sprinklers affixed to the

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[84] Chaplin Bradford Barnes, *Watch Hill Through Time: The Evolution of a New England Shore Community* (Watch Hill, RI: The Watch Hill Conservancy, 2005), 198.

[85] Chaplin Bradford Barnes, *Watch Hill Through Time: The Evolution of a New England Shore Community* (Watch Hill, RI: The Watch Hill Conservancy, 2005), 198.

roof of the piazza, which acts as a reminder for the constant danger of fire for these large, wooden structures in the early twentieth century. Now, the piazza is eerily empty, except for a lone chair on the right, far from the days when the well-heeled resort-goers would stroll the covered walkway to the tune of a string quartet or a jazz band or watch a baseball game in the field below. Instead, Barney shifts the attention to the aftereffects of the resort era, toward the structures added as part of the cottage colony—the chapel, built in 1877, which signaled the maturity of the summer community, and Collins Cottage, built in 1880 as a three-story family dwelling.

Another wistful look at Watch Hill's bygone resort era occurs in Barney's photograph *The Wall* (1984) (Fig. 24), which features a group of teenage boys in the foreground gathering amid what is known as "the wall," or the rubble and existing foundation of the Watch Hill House, which was destroyed in the fire of 1916. A corner of two walls emerges out of the sand and the area is littered with a crushed soda can, matches, and other trash. What was once a site for the wealthy to network and enjoy the salt air has transformed into a teenage hangout for smoking, gearing up for the surf, and lounging. The still extant Ocean House presides over the background with its bright yellow paint; to the right, smaller white cottages dot the horizon line and blend seamlessly with the coastline; to the left, an imposing contemporary house with a glass curtain of windows obscures a full view of the resort and breaks the harmonious horizon line. Barney's photograph serves as a documentary record of the assortment of architectural phases that have been introduced to Watch Hill—some perceived as eyesores while others are regarded as keeping with Watch Hill tradition.

Notably, Barney's summer residence serves as a constant reminder of Watch Hill's past since it is one of the oldest surviving buildings in Watch Hill. Barney's home has experienced many reconfigurations and served an array of functions that reflect the development of Watch Hill from farmland to resort destination to cottage colony. Built in 1778, the white center entrance colonial with a five bay façade located on the shore of Potter's Cove was originally the Potter farmhouse. In 1896, the property changed hands and the owners subdivided the land and remodeled and enlarged the house with the goal of turning it into an inn known as the Watch Hill Inn. The property was acquired by Misses Margaret and Annie Barney in 1917 and was subsequently renamed the Misquamicut Inn.[86]

The Misquamicut Inn offered a more intimate setting than the grand resorts and was known for hosting the same families for the entire summer season year after year. In fact, William E. Fiske, a guest during the 1920s, devotes a portion of his memoir to his childhood summers spent at the inn. He described the inn's interior as containing a screened front porch, a glassed-in porch, a large formal living room and dining room, and huge kitchens with plenty of storage space. The upstairs contained a copious amount of bedrooms without private baths. While the main building of the inn offered a lot of common areas and little privacy, it also contained a closed-off suite and three separate private cottages on the grounds. In addition to the two innkeepers and the handyman, according to Fiske, the inn could count among its returning guests a couple of which the husband was an amateur photographer, an elderly widow and her Hungarian maid, three

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[86] Chaplin Bradford Barnes, *Watch Hill Through Time: The Evolution of a New England Shore Community* (Watch Hill, RI: The Watch Hill Conservancy, 2005), 66, 118-119.

other elderly women, Fiske, his mother, his grandmother, and her maid.[87] The inn united

all these characters, from different backgrounds, hometowns, means, and interests, all

under one roof.

The Barneys continued to operate the inn until Tina and her husband took up

residence in 1967 and the transformation from a multi-family dwelling to a cottage

occurred before Barney's own eyes. Eventually, Barney and her husband added a family

room and combined smaller bedrooms to create larger rooms, rendering the house more

functional for a single family; however, they preserved the integrity of the original

structure. Consequently, as Barney was reminded of Watch Hill's history as a resort

destination on a daily basis, the effects of the cottage colony on the community's

inhabitants would continue to be at the forefront of her work as she created her own style

of landscape photography featuring her family members and friends at Watch Hill.

Part IV. The Effects of the Cottage Colony

At the same time Watch Hill was transforming from a resort town into a cottage

colony, material feminist and writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman was formulating a

domestic revolution for the economic independence of women in her first book, *Women

and Economics*, published in 1898. Gilman argued in favor of industrializing domestic

work and childcare in order to liberate women from the home to participate in the

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[87] William E. Fiske, *A Curious Childhood* (Madison, NJ: Madison Printing Company, 1975), 37-44.

workforce, in whatever occupation befitting to them, thus gaining economic independence.

Gilman's ideas resonate with the conditions foisted upon the women of Watch Hill, largely in part due to the shift to a cottage community, and Barney's photographs reveal how they still hold true today. As a result of the construction of private family cottages, women were displaced from the collective atmospheres of the resorts, isolated in a single-family home, and left with the responsibility of running the household and childcare. Gilman writes, "As a natural consequence of our division of labor on sex-lines, giving to woman the home and to man the world in which to work, we have come to have a dense prejudice in favor of the essential womanliness of the home duties…and we have also assumed these processes must go on in what we call the home, which is the external expression of the family."[88] With the calls for a private home and a stronger emphasis on family life and permanence, the burden was placed on the wives and mothers in the cottages to achieve this security.

Almost 100 years later, Barney would document the modern-day women of the cottages in an ongoing narrative capturing the distinctive atmosphere devoted to permanence, family life, and social exclusivity in the cottage colony of Watch Hill and its effect on the female population that Gilman described in her writing. Barney immediately limits herself to the people and places she comes across in her daily life that reflect the limited demographics of the Watch Hill community. First, she only photographs those who summer in Watch Hill, either owners or serial renters of cottages who return every year. This group of people can generally be described as white, upper class members of

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[88] Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (Los Angeles, Berkeley, and London: University of California Press, 1998), 225.

large, nuclear families. Fathers are usually businessmen who support the family financially while mothers are in charge of the well being of the children, running the household (including the tasks of housekeepers, nannies, cooks, and gardeners), as well as the social activities of the family.

Secondly, Barney restricts herself to the private landscapes of Watch Hill—various rooms in houses, porches, backyards, gardens, and private beaches. Unlike nineteenth-century female artists, most notably Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot, who were barred from creating art in public lest people think they were prostitutes and were forced to work in and around the home, Barney had the freedom to photograph in any location, yet, she intentionally focuses on these settings. That being known, in Barney's photographs, the man of the house is usually absent and the mother is either alone or with her children and/or her female friends and family in these places. Moreover, only a member of this social circle would have access to the private lives of these families. Barney explains, "In most of the houses where I photograph, I know the people well, or their families. Most of these settings, though not all of them, are summer resort houses in which the doors are open and you can walk in anytime you want, go to the cookie jar, go into the icebox and there's also a respect for privacy; as a private person, I know when I can walk in and when I can't."[89] Barney's comment reveals her knowledge of the unwritten social codes followed by Watch Hill insiders as an insider herself. Unlike the male dominated artist circle of Sun Valley, Barney situates herself into a largely upper class female domain of Watch Hill, of which she is already a member, in order to create her work.

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[89] Tina Barney, *Tina Barney: Photographs: Theater of Manners* (New York: Scalo, 1997), 15.

Despite the seemingly positive benefits of the cottage colony upon its inhabitants, Barney captures the negative influences of private domestic living upon women, also outlined by Gilman in *Women and Economics,* such as isolation, the conspicuous consumption of goods, and the economic dependence of women on men. First, Gilman writes constantly on the isolation of women and even goes as far as to label those who support the private home as "isolators."[90] Since cottage living requires at least one woman in each house along with a few subsidiary female cooks and housekeepers, it is often the women who feel the brunt of the isolation because men can meet each other in their work while women work alone in the cottages. As a result, Barney's early photographs often depict her upper class friends and family from a distance alone in a room surrounded by their personal trappings. For instance, in *Mrs. Barney's Porch* (1982) (Fig. 25), Barney photographs her mother-in-law seated while reading a book in pearls and a pink bathrobe from an approximate eight-foot distance. Mrs. Barney, who was once an innkeeper who hosted dozens of guests, now sits alone on her porch and is encircled by a number of empty patio chairs. Moreover, judging from the title, it appears as if Mrs. Barney's body has become one with the interior of her house.

According to Gilman, men are able to freely associate with others through work while women, even during "social calls" with other women, are unable to bond without a common purpose or higher occupation. Gilman writes, "Our present methods of association, especially for women, are most unsatisfactory…. They prepare much food, and invite many people to come and eat it; or some dance, music, or entertainment is made the temporary ground of union. But these people do not really meet one another.

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[90] Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "Why Cooperative Housekeeping Fails," in *Harper's Bazaar* 41, no. 7 (July 1907): 626.

They pass whole lifetimes in going through the steps of these elaborate games and never become acquainted."[91] Barney's photograph *The Children's Party* (1987) (Fig. 26) clearly expresses the lack of interaction between women at a children's birthday party taking place a stately dining room. The women, either mothers, baby-sitters, or *au pairs*, stare blankly and stand on the outskirts as they are left with the charge of caring for the children. The boys and girls are sitting at different tables, as a harbinger of adulthood to come, yet the girls are restless and milling around while the boys sit quietly. According to Gilman, this type of isolation of women led frequently to stints in sanitariums for either rest or relaxation or for more serious mental ailments, or perhaps to interact with others.

Another by-product of cottage women's repression is an obsession with consuming goods to decorate their bodies and their homes. Gilman writes, "To consume food, to consume clothes, to consume houses and furniture and decorations and ornaments and amusements, to take and take and take forever—from one man if they are virtuous, from many if they are vicious, but always to take and never to think of giving anything in return except their womanhood—this is the enforced condition of the mothers of the race."[92] Gilman argues that women's reliance on useless goods supports a market that wastes human energy on its production that could be used for more worthwhile outlets such as industry, art, and science. These personal possessions also make women more dependent on men to present them with these gifts and also enslave either their own selves or hired women to clean these objects in what Gilman termed "the tyranny of bric-

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[91] Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (Los Angeles, Berkeley, and London: University of California Press, 1998), 307.
[92] Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (Los Angeles, Berkeley, and London: University of California Press, 1998), 119.

a-brac."[93] In *Sheila and the Pink Lemonade* (1993) (Fig. 27), Barney's friend Sheila is the picture of the sensuous, upper-class woman. Barefoot, she leans against her couch in a dress with a long strand of pearls around her neck in a relaxed pose holding a glass of pink lemonade. While her stance suggests that she has never participated in production, she stands among functionless objects used for decorations—tiny pillows, small paintings and tiles. Ultimately, Barney situates her as a decided consumer of functionless goods.

Not surprisingly, Gilman cites upper-class women as the most extreme cases of feminine economic dependence: "The daughters and wives of the rich…. are from birth to death absolutely non-productive in goods or labor of economic value, and consumers to such goods and labor to an extent limited only by the purchasing power of their male relatives. The economic advantage of the woman lies in her power to attract and hold the devotion of men…"[94] Barney's image *Marina's Room* (1987) (Fig. 28) illustrates how the economic dependence Gilman described is cultivated during the early stages of development in a girl's life in the cottage colony. Marina, bedecked in a cascading white satin and lace dress reminiscent of a southern belle, sits upright next to her father and watches him expectedly, lying casually on his side on her bed as he moves his hand to dote on her. The father and daughter reside amidst the backdrop of Marina's luxurious bedroom with a four poster bed, two closets stuffed with party dresses and piles of clothes, and shelves lined with toys and stuffed animals while a playmate in the background stares incredulously at Marina's impressive collection of ribbons. Marina's

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[93] Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (Los Angeles, Berkeley, and London: University of California Press, 1998), 257.

[94] Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (Los Angeles, Berkeley, and London: University of California Press, 1998), 171.

father is read as the source of all the luxurious objects in Marina's possession and, in accordance with Gilman's theory, Marina will grow up to believe that if she can preserve her father's favor, and later her husband's, she will be rewarded with more useless frivolities instead of gaining economic independence and producing something from her own effort.

However, Gilman did offer solutions for women's working and living conditions and, ironically, saw potential in resort cottages and summer destinations such as Watch Hill for her ideas' fruition. In her 1907 article published in *Harper's Bazaar* entitled "Why Cooperative Housekeeping Fails," Gilman outlines a staunch business plan in favor of industrializing all domestic duties, especially cooking. She explains that houses would be built without kitchens and families would purchase food cooked-to-order from a centralized kitchen that could be delivered to them or they could eat in a shared eatinghouse. The same could be achieved with laundry service, professional daycare, and housekeeping services. According to Gilman, a summer resort town would be most viable because of the close proximity of all the homes. This way, homes would be cleaner without the grease and grime of the kitchen, money would be saved, and women who chose would be absolved of cooking, cleaning, and childcare and free to pursue other means of paid work outside the home. However, we know that Gilman's ideas did not take hold in the cottage community nor anywhere else.[95] Why would the females such as those living in the cottages of Watch Hill not welcome the idea of relinquishing their

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[95] Many attempts were made to implement Gilman's housing ideas such as the kitchenless housing community at Yelping Hill in West Cornwall, Connecticut; however, most architects and designers, while accepting Gilman's social criticism of the home, did not share her commitment to female economic independence as documented by Dolores Hayden, in *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge: MA, MIT Press, 1981), 264.

economic dependence on men? How did Barney's photography alleviate some aspects of the oppressive conditions of the cottage colony? The answers can be found in examining Barney's relationship to her subjects and how her method of rephotography resonated with the upper class women of the cottage colony.

Part V. The Paradox of Resistance

In the past, the upper class has always been a popular subject for photographers. For example, when Edward Steichen was a commercial photographer in the early 1900s, he became known as a portraitist for wealthy clientele such as J.P. Morgan and Mrs. Philip Lydig. In London in the 1930s, Bill Brandt photographed his wealthy family and juxtaposed them with shots of the working class. Slim Aarons built his reputation on photographing celebrities and socialites for various magazines such as *Life* and *Holiday* during the post-World War II years. More recently, Larry Fink captured elite society at museum galas, debutante balls, and gallery openings in his book *Social Graces*, published in 1984, and in 1986, photographer Barbara Norfleet included pictures of the country club set juxtaposed with anonymous journal entries by members of the upper class as a kind of social anthropology in *All the Right People*. Most of these photographers were either outsiders offering a critical perspective of the rich and famous, or they were from the upper class and included their wealthy friends and families in order to document the wide gap between them and the lower classes. Larry Fink, of the former

movement, writes in *Social Graces*, "I began to photograph society benefits in New York, fueled by curiosity and my rage against the privileged class—its abuses, voluptuous folds, and unfulfilled lives. I wanted to illuminate and lose myself in the dark spectrum of glitter."[96]

By contrast, Barney's photography is neither critical of the upper class nor an attempt to compare them to the common folk as part of a larger sociological study. Not only is she is aware she photographs wealthy people, and she counts herself as one among them, but she also refuses to photograph outside of those boundaries. Witness a conversation between Barney and a reporter at one of her lectures:

"Why did you decide to interest yourself in the upper class?"

"Because I am from the upper class."

"Is that the only answer?"

"Yes."[97]

Barney explains, "*The New York Times Magazine* wanted to do an issue on the poor and they wanted me to go and photograph a poor family somewhere in Connecticut and I said, 'how can you ask me to do that, how can you ask me, someone who is known for photographing the rich to go to try to photograph a poor family?' I think that's the most hypocritical thing I heard. I think there's no way I could do that."[98] Instead, she decided

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[96] Larry Fink, *Social Graces: Photographs* (Millerton, NY: Aperture, 1984), 4.

[97] Tina Barney in *Tina Barney: Social Studies*, DVD, directed by Jaci Judelman (France/USA: Yare Films, 2005).

[98] Tina Barney in *Tina Barney: Social Studies*, DVD, directed by Jaci Judelman (France/USA: Yare Films, 2005).

to use her insider's access to delve into the subject of photographing the wealthy as deeply as possible and has devoted her whole body of work to the idea. Since she is from the upper class and a member of one of the more established families in Watch Hill, she is able to gain the trust needed to access the people of Watch Hill's private homes. As a result, through her photographs, Barney has created an "aesthetic of intimacy" between her and her subjects.[99]

In her PhD dissertation on snapshot photography, Catherine Zuromskis argues against the idea of the camera as a weapon or voyeuristic tool, most popularly decried by cultural theorist Susan Sontag. While Sontag believed that any photograph was a form of voyeuristic intrusion on the part of a photographer upon their subject, Zuromskis supplies an alternative point-of-view that I believe is more accurate when describing Barney's approach to her subjects. Zuromskis sees the benefits of the snapshot genre of photography, writing that, "one of the most crucial elements of a successful snapshot is the full cooperation of its subject, looking at the camera, posing, smiling," resulting ideally in a frontally posed shot rather than a surreptitiously captured image on the street.[100] She reasons that the photographer actually cedes their control to their subject

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[99] Liz Kotz's article "aesthetics of 'intimacy,'" describes a phenomenon characterized by gritty, informal, snapshot photography portraying groups outside the mainstream such as rockers, club kids, gays, and/or drug users from an insider's perspective seen in the work of Nan Goldin, Wolfgang Tillmans, and Larry Clark. However, Kotz places intimacy in quotation marks and argues that through mass dissemination and a formulaic narrative, these voyeuristic works tend to both spectacularize and monumentalize the events and people depicted. By contrast, Barney employs the "aesthetics of intimacy" with true intimacy on a small scale in a quest to preserve the identity characterized as mainstream American, but in reality, does not apply to most of the population. See Liz Kotz, "Aesthetics of 'Intimacy'" in *The Passionate Camera: Photography and Bodies of Desire,* Deborah Bright, ed. (New York: Routledge, 1998).

[100] Catherine Zuromskis, "Intimate Exposures: The Private and Public Lives of Snapshot Photography (Andy Warhol, Nan Goldin)," (Ph.D. Diss., University of Rochester, 2006), 43.

when it comes to capturing them because any wrong move by the subject could ruin the shot.

Of course, Barney's work depends on the full cooperation of her subjects and the club-like community of Watch Hill. She recalls how she would telephone her friends and family to arrange a meeting time when she could visit their homes to photograph. Surprisingly, Barney did not limit her settings to the common areas of the house, of otherwise very private people, but also had access to bedrooms and bathrooms and was invited to family celebrations such as weddings, christenings, holidays, and birthday parties as well as ordinary summer days. Sometimes, the families are in their formalwear; other times, Barney photographs them in their nightgowns and bathrobes. Sometimes their homes are clean and orderly while at times, they show the detritus of the everyday.

In *Charlotte, George and Lilly* (1996) (Fig. 29), Barney presents us with an off-center look at her friend Susan's three children in their kitchen. The counter to the left is littered with dirty dishes, condiments and crumbs on the countertop. Charlotte, Lilly, and George, who have been photographed by Barney for the past ten years, stand together in a pyramidal form to the right and look at the camera in an act of self-presentation. Charlotte stands with her arms by her side and appears slightly out of focus, George grasps a mango with his fingertips, and Lilly wears sunglasses. Barney posits, "A lot of my subjects now feel as if they're collaborating with me, which is more fun than ever. …I still have something to learn from the way I feel about these people and what the results are photographically."[101] The frontal, stand still poses assure the viewer that

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[101] Tina Barney, *Tina Barney: Photographs: Theater of Manners* (New York: Scalo, 1997), 10.

Barney has the three children's full cooperation, as she trusts them to respond individually to the camera.

Moreover, Zuromskis contends that the actual act of photographing is an "affective" and connective" act, which serves to cement and preserve the bonds between photographer and subject. Barney discusses the connective act of photography and echoes Zuromskis claim: "That's really my primary concern –to investigate how one person treats another. Along with that I wish that they would be more affectionate and tell each other they care, clearly and visually. I also want to show them how I feel about them."[102] This closeness is nurtured by Barney's constant return visits to her subjects in order to rephotograph them.

Viewers can witness Barney's use of photography as a vehicle to instill affection in her relationships in a rephotograph of her mother-in-law, Mrs. Barney, in 1990, eight years after their first session (Figs. 30 and 25). Mrs. Barney sits primly in a seersucker dress and pearl necklace, boxed in by white latticework behind her and striped green awning roof above her in some kind of dockside porch of which the water and sailboats are reflected in Mrs. Barney's thick eyeglasses. Although she is still separated from Barney by a table and three chairs, the greatest difference between the two photographs is that Barney captures her mother-in-law more closely—about four feet instead of eight feet—and that feeling of closeness comes across figuratively as well as literally. In fact, upon returning to Watch Hill from Sun Valley, Barney interviewed her mother-in-law about Watch Hill traditions in order to create an oral history. Although Mrs. Barney retains the overly formal nature of the cottage colony with the landscape in her eyes, she appears more open to Barney as a confidante (even though Barney and her son divorced

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[102] Tina Barney, *Tina Barney: Photographs: Theater of Manners* (New York: Scalo, 1997), 10.

in 1983) and Barney's photographic acts contributed to this newly developed sense of fondness and intimacy.

Very similar issues of space concerned art historian Griselda Pollock in her appraisal of two of the four female members of the exhibiting Impressionist circle, Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot. Furthermore, it is instructive to compare the two painters to Barney due to how gender and class positions affect their role as image makers, be it through painting or photography. According to Pollock, the theoretical treatment of the Impressionists in their experience of modernity, such as Charles Baudelaire's writings on the flâneur in *The Painter of Modern Life*, were taken from an unmistakably male perspective, and their depiction of females could be categorized in one of two ways— either as the respectable bourgeois wife, decorporealized, and marked by her dress in the home or accompanied by her husband in public, or women of questionable occupations with their bodies on public display in theatres or cafés.

Significantly, *The Painter of Modern Life* did not appropriately serve the work of the female Impressionists, for the female painters used their own experience to structure the specific location, spatial order of the painting, and viewing space of their work, which greatly differed from their male counterparts. For instance, rather than the cafés or brothels captured by Manet and Degas, and being respectable bourgeois women, Cassatt and Morisot were limited to feminine spaces such as drawing rooms, bedrooms, and gardens. Secondly, Morisot's compositions usually consisted of two spatial systems—one of masculinity, one of femininity—the latter closed off by a device such as a balcony, hedge or balustrade in which the viewers were enveloped in order to experience the same dislocation as Morisot's female subjects. On the other hand, Cassatt's spatial organization

could be characterized by the close proximity of the sitter, accentuated by a compressed

background, which forces the viewer into a confrontation in which the mastering gaze is

denied by the sitter's averted gaze. Finally, and most importantly, Pollock considers these

works from a phenomenological standpoint, arguing that the social spaces from which

these works were made, constructed by ideology and history, affect not only the producer

herself, but also the spectator's viewing position.

For this last point, Pollock provides the example of Cassatt's *Little Girl in a Blue

Armchair* (1878) (Fig. 31), a painting in which Cassatt depicts a young girl in her finery

splayed out in a haughty pose on a large blue armchair. Cassatt paints the girl from a low

perspective with the background tipped up and away, causing the other pieces of furniture

to loom larger as seen from the child's perspective. As image maker, Cassatt is able to

treat the child as equal while shaping the viewing perspective of the spectator. Barney

also accomplished something very similar to this in her photograph, *Sandy, Stacey and

Sophia* (1983) (Fig. 32), where she photographs three sisters—two young girls with one

holding her infant sister—from a low point of view in their bedroom, which draws the

viewer into a world filled with signs of the socialization of femininity such as the

flowered wallpaper, brightly colored voile wrapped around the bedposts, matching

nightgowns, a riding helmet on the dresser, and the brightly patterned Lilly Pulitzer

bathing suits. Sophia, playing the role of the responsible older sister caring for her baby

sister and already being trained in childcare, stares solemnly at Barney while Sandy, the

princess of the two, looks curiously at the camera.

According to Pollock, this phenomenological approach hinges on the women

artists' roles as cultural producers and the inscription of sexual difference on the process

in which they produce their work. Not only does gender and class affect the producer, but also the working process itself becomes a crucial site of culturally determined techniques and subjects. Pollock writes,

> In manufacturing a painting, engaging a model, sitting in a room with someone using a score of known techniques, modifying them, surprising oneself with novel and unexpected effects both technical and in terms of meanings, which result from the way the model is positioned, the size of the room, the nature of the contract, the experience of the scene being painted and so forth—all these actual procedures which make up part of the social process of making a painting, function as the modes by which the social and psychic positionality of Cassatt and Morisot not only structured their pictures, but reciprocally affected the painters themselves as they found, through the making of images, their world represented back to them.[103]

The social and psychic positionality of Barney, an upper class female photographer living in Watch Hill, also informs her photographs and offers her viewers a feminine perspective of a location designated as female. The conditions found in *Sandy, Stacey, and Sophia* is a world in which Barney is all-too familiar.

Additionally, a beneficial by-product of this photographic exchange is that Barney stands as exemplary female cultural producer to the females with whom she interacts. Barney's choice to jettison the role of housewife for photographer is a rare occurrence for a woman in Watch Hill and offers a spark of hope for Gilman's century-old summer resort utopia. Significantly, Barney expresses her sense of independence by inserting herself in several of her images after 1983 such as *Me in My Room* (1989) (Fig. 33), most likely a riff on Virginia Woolf's feminist tome, *A Room of One's Own*. In it, Barney presents herself before the doorjamb of her bedroom at an oblique angle, rubbing her

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[103] Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London, New York: Routledge, 1999), 117.

cheek with her eyes closed in dreamy disbelief. The viewer sees the omnipresent waterfront landscape of Watch Hill reflected in the glass of a picture frame to the right. In another self-portrait, Barney asserts her role as image producer. Although she usually wears hyper feminine Laura Ashley floral dresses, Barney often appears with her photographer's tools—either with a loupe around her neck in *Phil and I* (1989) and *Mom and I in the Living Room* (1995), or with the camera cable release in her hand as in *Sheila and I* (1983) (Fig. 13), *Jill, Celia and I* (1983), *Self-Portrait* (1984) (Fig. 14), and *Sheila and I* (1989) (Fig. 16). In *Tim, Phil and I* (1989) (Fig. 34), Barney stands between her two sons, Tim on the left and Phil on the right, around a charcoal grill in their backyard. Barney nostalgically recalls this image because her sons decided to make dinner and she was touched to see how they had carefully wrapped the food. As the traditional roles have reversed—her sons cook dinner while she works—Barney stands in the middle of the photograph, with one finger pointing to Tim's beer, the other hand wielding the phallic-like cable release near her mid-section.

It is doubtful that the female members of Barney's circle in Watch Hill would be involved in a close personal relationship with a living artist, much less a female photographer. Since Barney photographed these women, they were exposed to someone who was the antithesis of the Watch Hill cottage woman—an artist using a technologically advanced camera, directing a large group of people, displaying her work in exhibitions, and achieving economic independence from men. In Gilman's terms, Barney became a cultural producer instead of a consumer. Gilman writes, "Socially organized human beings tend to produce, as a gland to secrete; it is the essential nature of

the relation. The creative impulse, the desire to make, to express the inner thought in outer form…this is the distinguishing character of humanity."[104]

Nonetheless, as a female artist and cultural producer, Barney resists a hierarchy between herself and her subjects and presents them on equal footing, unlike many male photographers who represent women as objects on display for the mastering male gaze. For example, in a later work entitled *Sheila* (1996) (Fig. 35), Barney creates a three-quarter length photographic portrait of her friend Sheila in the style of Mary Cassatt's painted portraits of her female friends where, instead of the "space of sight for a mastering gaze," the space becomes "the locus of relationships."[105] Barney photographs Sheila in front of some sort of architectural structure before some trees. Like Cassatt, as a result of the highly compressed space and blurred background, the viewer is pushed into an immediate confrontation with Sheila. The lack of the lush background prevents the viewer's eye from moving around the surface of the photograph to become lost in the aura of femininity. Speaking of Cassatt, Pollock writes, "The gaze that is fixed on the represented figure is that of *equal* and *like* and this is inscribed into the painting by that particular proximity…."[106]

Certainly, Barney treats her friend of almost twenty years as equal and like and, in turn, Sheila trusts Barney to capture her from such close proximity. Sheila is no longer a young woman; her hair is graying and her face is lined. Stippled light reminiscent of an

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[104] Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution* (Los Angeles, Berkeley, and London: University of California Press, 1998), 116.

[105] Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London, New York: Routledge, 1999), 124.

[106] Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London, New York: Routledge, 1999), 124. My emphasis added.

Impressionist painting from the left illuminates her knitted eyebrows and restrained expression that reveal the lifetime experiences of a wife and mother who raised her family. Barney depicts Sheila as a contemplative, wise woman—she is one of her closest friends, not a decorative object for the viewer's gaze.

At this point, it is useful to examine Barney's work in relation to contemporary photographer Jeff Wall, who has also been influenced by a study of Impressionist paintings and has commented upon the male gaze in his photography. Wall's *Picture for Women* (1979) (Fig. 36), an enlarged transparency mounted on a light box, is a modern day version of the much-debated painting by Edouard Manet, *Bar at the Folies-Bergère* (1881-1882). Wall's choice of Impressionist painting is apt since it comments upon the intersection of gender, class, and modernity. For my purposes, however, I will be focusing the discussion more on issues dealing with the male gaze and the representation of image making including the interaction between artist and subject.

Manet's *Bar at the Folies-Bergère* presents a petite bourgeois barmaid in the famous Parisian *café-concert* absorbed in her own world looking out from behind the bar. She stands in front of a mirror, which reveals the crowded room and also that the barmaid is actually facing a shadowy male customer. However, the reflections do not entirely match up—the viewer would not be able to see the back of the barmaid so far to the right of the painting if she were standing in front of the mirror, the man does not appear in front of the bar, and some bottles on the bar counter also appear incongruous with their reflection. Thus, the construction of the composition calls into question not only class and gender conditions of modernity, but the viewer's relationship to the barmaid as well as

the viewer's relation to the male patron, which all contribute to an inexplicable narrative and an overall sense of the imperceptibility of vision.[107]

Wall's updated version of *Bar at the Folies-Bergère* presents the photographer in place of the male bar patron and a female model assuming the role of barmaid in his studio before a mirror. However, unlike Manet's *Bar*, Wall and the model occupy the same space before the mirror and he has inserted a camera in the middle of the photograph that captures the act of image making in the mirror's reflection. Theorist Thierry de Duve created a helpful bird's eye view diagram of the scene in the studio and its reflection in the mirror to make sense of this visual conundrum. His diagram reveals that Wall looks at the model's reflection in the mirror while the model looks at the camera's reflection in the mirror and the camera assumes the position of the spectator. De Duve argues that, in addition to visualizing the invisibility of the photographic picture plane, Wall transforms Manet's barmaid from an object of the male gaze into an actual viewer; hence the title *Picture for Women*.[108] Wall explains, "…at the time I made *Picture for Women* these things [the position of male and female figures in a situation of spectacularity] had become openly theoretical, political issues, mainly through the influence of the women's movement in the art world. There were lessons being learned

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[107] Since 1979, new developments in the scholarship of Manet's *Bar* have occurred; however, Peter Galassi in *Jeff Wall* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2007), on page 62 points out that Wall was working off of the most recent and accepted interpretation of this painting at the time, that discussed by T.J. Clark's in his essay, "The Bar at the Folies-Bergère" in Jacques Beuroy, Marc Bertrand, and Edward T. Gargan, eds., *The Wolf and the Lamb: Popular Culture in France, from the Old Regime to the Twentieth Century,* published in 1977.

[108] Thierry de Duve, "The Mainstream and the Crooked Path," in de Duve et al., *Jeff Wall* (London: Phaidon Press, 2002) n.p.

throughout the period, so maybe the classroom setting has something to do with this."[109]

Here, Wall is most likely referring to Laura Mulvey's groundbreaking essay, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," published in 1975, in which she discusses the structure of Hollywood movies wherein a male spectator is always assumed and dominates the passive female subject.[110] Essentially, Wall is turning the tables since the camera is now turned onto the assumed male spectator while the female subject actively looks at the camera and ignores the implied viewer. Wall's work has been universally lauded as exposing a behind-the-scenes look at the dynamic between artist and model and the network of gazes that occur during the creation of a photograph.

However, even though Wall makes these conditions known, he is still imposing them on his female model and during the act of creating the image subjects his model to the oppression of the male gaze. Moreover, if we compare *Picture for Women* with Barney's *Jill and I* (1990) (Fig. 37), Pollock's theories of sexual difference in relation to creating art becomes more apparent. First, the major difference between the two photographers is their approach to the creative process—the selection of figures and location of their work site. While Wall created his work in the more professional, yet impersonal realm of the classroom studio, and hired a model for the shoot, Barney photographs her sister Jill in a domestic setting. The fact that Wall employs a woman as a model, basically a job based on a woman's "to-be looked-at-ness," not to mention that she is young, attractive, and wears formfitting clothing, already assumes that there is a hierarchy between the artist and the model where the artist is to direct the model and she

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[109] "Typology, Luminescence, Freedom: Selections From a Conversation with Jeff Wall," in *Jeff Wall. Selected Essays and Interviews* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2007), 187-188. Accessed at http://www.moma.org/exhibitions/2007/jeffwall/

[110] Peter Galassi in *Jeff Wall*, exhib. cat. (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 2007), 26.

is there for display. Wall's model is similar to the females depicted by the male Impressionists painters in cafés, dance halls, and brothels, which Pollock describes as "spaces marked for visual and notional sexual consumption the bodies are in evidence, laid out, opened up and offered to view while drapery functions to reveal a sexualized anatomy."[111] On the other hand, Barney features herself and her sister, both middle-aged and dressed in modest clothing, who are on equal standing since Jill is basically doing her sister a favor by posing for her photograph.

Secondly, the construction of space in each photograph is markedly different and results in varying experiences for the viewer. By photographing a mirror, de Duve claims that Wall, "made a mirror capable of holding the image, a mirror which is never opaque, but is simultaneously transparent and reflective."[112] In other words, Wall creates a paradox between the flatness of the mirrored surfaced and the depth of the reflected space. However, the viewer does not register the mirrored surface when they look at the picture (like a daguerreotype) and depth is enhanced by the receding rows of ceiling lights, similar to Manet's painting. Adding to the depth of the image is the way in which it is displayed—as a large transparency mounted on a light box in a darkened gallery— which replicates the experience of watching a movie. The spectator's eye is still free to move around the studio and that movement prevents them from entering into an inter-

[111] Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London, New York: Routledge, 1999), 103.

[112] Thierry de Duve, "The Mainstream and the Crooked Path," in de Duve et al., *Jeff Wall* (London: Phaidon Press, 2002).

subjective confrontation with Wall and the model, instead, she becomes an object of the voyeuristic gaze by the presumed male spectator.[113]

On the other hand, Barney's photograph *Jill and I* recalls Mary Cassatt's organization of space in the picture plane. Barney and Jill, off-center and to the right of the frame, lean against a banquette, penned in by pillows on the left side, creating a highly compressed space. Cassatt's detailed brushstrokes are replaced by the high resolution of Barney's view camera; as a result, the viewer is brought immediately in front of Barney and Jill, able to see the details in the sea of pink, green, and purple fabrics and textures of the supposedly flat image—the soft stuffing of the pillows, the rough surface of the upholstery, and the smooth, hard, flowered wallpaper. One can get the full effect of Barney's construction of space by examining the same space from a more frontal perspective in a film still from *Tina Barney: Social Studies*, a documentary of Barney's work (Fig. 38). Even though Barney and Jill, who have switched places, glance through a family photo album in an intra-subjective encounter, yet the compressed sense of space evoked by *Jill and I* hangs in the seating area, a constant reminder of the constraints in their lives.

Third, and most importantly, is the complicated play of gazes in these two images. Influenced by Michael Fried's book *Art and Objecthood*, Wall explains, "…the depiction shows something—say, a person—neither absorbed and oblivious to your presence as a viewer, nor recognising your presence, and doing that whole dance, as in many theatrical Baroque paintings. Again, it's a threshold situation: the thing depicted doesn't choose to acknowledge the viewer, who is none the less made present in the structure of the

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[113] Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London, New York: Routledge, 1999), 124.

depiction."[114] In *Picture for Women*, even though the setup conveys the model as viewer of the camera and she is oblivious to the viewer, in the end, this position still implies her objecthood. In the act of taking the photograph, the artist looks at the model predatorily, clearly illustrating John Berger's statement, "*men act* and *women appear*." As Wall looks at her reflection in the mirror, the model looks at the camera in the mirror, yet due to her open pose she can also sense both Wall looking at her and her own reflection in the mirror. For her, this results in a splitting—since, in the words of John Berger, "a woman must continually watch herself. She is almost continually accompanied by her own image of herself…and so she comes to the surveyor and the surveyed within her as the two constituent yet always distinct elements of her identity as a woman."[115] Simultaneously, the model sees her reflection and she feels her reflection being regarded by Wall and the camera; thus, Wall visualizes the split between surveyor and surveyed. This point is driven home by the title of the image, *Picture for Women*, in that Wall is the Creator of this image and gives it to women, as a gift, as if they could not create their own image.

Nonetheless, Barney aims to create images for women without explicitly stating her intentions. In *Jill and I*, Jill's gaze is locked on Barney (the displaced photographer) while Barney's active look is concerned with something outside the frame. Unlike Wall's model, both Jill and Barney's faces are averted, escaping the mastering gaze of the viewer/camera. Moreover, while the compressed space invites the viewer into the room, Jill's knees are up and bar entry into the image. This organization creates a push/pull for

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[114] Jeff Wall in conversation with Sheena Wagstaff. "Beyond the Threshold," *Tate Etc.*, no. 4 (Summer 2005), http://www.tate.org.uk/tateetc/issue4/inthestudio4.htm

[115] John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London: Penguin, 1972), 46.

the viewer. Thus, while Wall exposes the machinations of the male gaze, Barney subverts the gaze as well as the hierarchical relationship between photographer and model.

Although some of Barney's portraits are frontal and immediately confront the viewer, as I have mentioned before, she does not exert the same superiority over her subjects as she identifies strongly with those she photographs and refuses to photograph anyone outside of her social circle or class. On the same token, the push/pull effect of the viewer unearths the notion of privacy that she and her subjects value. Barney writes, "What bothers me is at that some point they [my photographs] might become too private and the people in the pictures will resent my exploitation of them. My fear is that as I begin showing the work in public someone is going to connect the names (even though I only use first names) and places, and that they will be used in the wrong way."[116] Although Barney subverts the mastering gaze and creates photographs with female spectatorship in mind, she maintains the sense of exclusivity that is tied to upper class bastions such as the community of Watch Hill.

In the history of feminism as well as art history, when dealing with the unification of class and gender, social class usually trumps gender. For instance, in the material feminists' attempts at revolution with kitchenless housing, one such project, Yelping Hill in Cornwall Connecticut, attempted to create a colony of kitchenless houses with a centralized community center that housed the kitchen and dining room. However, the cost per person ($10.25 per person per week in 1923) was more than most American families could afford and it became a playground for the affluent.[117] Most architects and planners

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[116] Tina Barney, *Tina Barney: Photographs: Theater of Manners* (New York: Scalo, 1997), 10.

[117] Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge: MA, MIT Press, 1981), 262.

did not believe that upper class women, once freed from the domestic duties of the home, would want to work. Instead they focused on creating efficiency within the home through technology to lighten the burden, instead of redefining women's roles in the home.

Similarly, Pollock claimed that Cassatt's treatment of women did not extend across class boundaries. For example, Cassatt features women from the lower classes who are employed in her household half-dressed in many of the bathing scenes, which she could not ask of from her friends. Pollock writes, "It is significant to note that the realities of class cannot be wished away by some mythic ideal of sisterhood amongst women."[118] Judging from Barney's statements, after she received some criticism from audience members at lectures for featuring housekeepers, especially women of color, in her work, the artist tends to avoid the subject altogether and limits herself to photographing people from her own class.

In a sociological study of upper class women conducted in 1983, Susan Ostrander argues that through the roles of wife, mother, volunteer, and country club member, upper class women help maintain the economic and social power of the upper class. She maintains that without the help of these women, their husbands would not succeed as much at work, their children would not learn the codes of class, and private organizations would be publicly funded. Through the framework of class and gender, Ostrander examines how upper class women act subordinate to men in exchange for the stability of class. In other words, the benefits of the women's class position outweigh the benefits of gaining gender equality and economic independence.

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[118] Griselda Pollock, "Modernity and the Spaces of Femininity," in *Differencing the Canon: Feminist Desire and the Writing of Art's Histories* (London, New York: Routledge, 1999), 125.

Although Barney's work subverts the male gaze and she provides a strong role model as a female photographer, her method of rephotography and the presentation of her work preserve the oppressive conditions of the women of Watch Hill and fail to instigate change. For instance, Ostrander writes, "The need to uphold class standards from one generation to the next is of such importance that tensions [of gender] do not seem to be a cause for concern or change. The women primarily want their children to repeat the patterns that they themselves experienced growing up."[119] Barney's rephotography serves as visual proof that the high standards experienced by Barney's generation in Watch Hill have been passed on to their children.

Barney's camera followed a number of the same subjects over a long period of time; in this sense, all her photographs can be viewed as part of a larger rephotographic project, even if they do not follow the rules set by the RSP. Returning to the RSP's definition of rephotography—"one or more pictures of the same subject which are made specifically to repeat an existing image"—Barney does not necessarily rephotograph her subjects in order to recreate an identical picture; however, she rephotographs them to maintain the same "image" of Watch Hill identity in terms of its traditions, values, and lifestyle. Barney and her subjects are comforted by the fact that there is little change year to year in the photographs except for a reupholstered armchair, because they are fearful of losing "the good life." Barney writes, "The time it takes to live with quality—in a style of life that has quality—is disappearing."[120] Barney's rephotographs combat her and her subject's fears that the Watch Hill lifestyle will come to an end.

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[119] Susan Ostrander, *Women of the Upper Class* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), 143.

[120] Tina Barney, Tina Barney: Photographs: Theater of Manners (New York: Scalo, 1997), 6.

For example, Barney's photographs of Sheila's daughter, Moya, trace a narrative arc of Moya's life from child to teen to wife, documenting everything from mundane moments to momentous occasions over the course of almost twenty years. Yet, taken as a group, the photographs symbolize the indoctrination and initiation of the next generation of female cottage goers into the society of Watch Hill women as they inherit the same features, mannerisms, values, and lifestyle as their parents.

One of Barney's earlier images featuring Moya is *The Playhouse* (1984) (Fig. 39) in which a teenage Moya and a playmate inhabit an impressive playhouse complete with curtains and carpeting resembling a mini seaside cottage. However, Moya, sporting a new wave haircut and a bikini as she confronts Barney's camera defiantly, appears to have outgrown the need for a playhouse, which now serves as more of a storage area, given the vacuum and bucket on the floor in the foreground. Barney rephotographs Moya in a later image, *Sheila and Moya* (1987) (Fig. 40), offering a closer view of mother and daughter in a bedroom infused with natural light and white curtains, furniture, walls, linens, and the subject's clothing. A standing Sheila approaches Moya sitting on a bed with a book in her lap and appears to be speaking to her daughter while she listens with her mouth partially open. What is notable about this image is how Barney captured the way Sheila's hands touch each other and how Moya replicates the stance, touching her fingers to her silver rings. Barney writes, "Have you ever known someone who does not remember their parent, and yet that person moves, walks, talks, uses their arms and holds their head exactly like that parent they never knew?"[121] Barney delights in capturing such moments

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[121] Tina Barney, *Tina Barney: Photographs: Theater of Manners* (New York: Scalo, 1997), 12.

of inherited mannerisms as they symbolize that the qualities of the older generations will live on in the young.

In *Moya's Wedding Day* (1995) (Fig. 41), Barney captures the bride dressing for the ceremony with her bridesmaids and female family members surrounding her and primping. Moya stands under a tissue paper veil hanging from the ceiling, which has been placed there as part of the superstitious traditions meant to bring good luck to the bride and the marriage. This photograph acts as a testament to Barney's close relationship with her subjects, since she is allowed into the bride's dressing room on what many deem the most important day of a woman's life. It is also significant because it symbolizes the first day of Moya's true initiation into the ranks of Watch Hill wives. By choosing to get married and live a traditional life, Moya, too, will raise a family and hopefully, bring them to Watch Hill to summer and spend holidays at the family cottage. Barney describes her own attraction to Watch Hill: "There were traditions; you'd hear stories. My children's grandmother would talk about a soda fountain where my husband went as a child. Now I was bringing my own little babies to this very same place. Even though I was quite young, I realized there was something about these traditions and rituals that did not exist in the West. The people from Idaho, and the Californians I met, would ask about these traditions because they didn't seem to have them themselves. They were really surprised that I would go back to the same house every summer."[122] Following the aims of the original cottagers, those who spent their childhood summers in Watch Hill often continued to bring their own children to the same places.

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[122] Barney cited in Judith Olch Richards, ed. *Inside the Studio: Two Decades of Talks with Artists in New York* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2004), 127.

However, full acceptance into the exclusive social circle of Watch Hill wives and mothers does not come without repercussions and Barney catches glimpses of the group mentality that affects its members. Clothing, hairstyles, home décor, and hobbies are all prescribed and followed by the elite women. For instance, in *Girls in their Lillys* (1997) (Fig. 42) Moya, surrounded by female friends, holds up a pair of pants for display. "Lillys" refer to the eponymous clothing line, Lilly Pulitzer, known for its brightly patterned, preppy resort wear, which has become a uniform of sorts for women in top sunny destination spots, and was originally popularized by Jacqueline Kennedy in the 1960s. Alas, all of the women featured in the photograph are also in their Lilly-wear, signifying the strong presence of the traditional, preppy style in Watch Hill as well as the conformity of the female population in order to be accepted into the group.

Finally, one of Barney's later dated photographs of Moya, *Moya and the Peach* (1997) (Fig. 43), is an individual portrait in which Moya is seated in a high-backed armchair eating a peach. Barney has become closer to Moya through her rephotography and photographs her at eye-level as she looks quizzically at the camera. Moya's hands are still touching, now bearing a wedding ring, as she becomes caged in by the shallow space created by the high-backed armchair. As a consuming woman fully molded by the rituals of Watch Hill, Moya is now alone and confined in a small area, yet contemplative and considered one of Barney's equals and close friends. Even though Barney rarely presents photographs of a particular subject in a chronological sequence, when viewed together, Barney allows viewers to travel through Moya's childhood and young adulthood to interpret the chain of events in her life with either approval or disappointment. Yet, Barney leaves the viewer no doubt that Moya will follow her mother's precedent and

continue to lead the lifestyle dictated by Watch Hill's social landscape. Barney explains, "It seems that people bring their children up the way they were brought up, without even questioning why and then it's just that kind of procedure or manner is just handed down generation to generation without ever asking why."[123] Barney's rephotography uncovers the cyclicality of life at Watch Hill that characterizes the life of the cottage families.

In *From the Picture Press*, John Szarkowski writes, "Unlike the magazine photographer, who attempted to produce a fabric of pictures that would tell a relatively complex story, the news photographer's technique was directed toward the one climactic shot that would describe with clarity and simplicity the central facts of the situation. Subtle shadings of meaning, naturalness, and continuity of narrative were generally not matters that concerned him. The very best of his works are like short poems: they describe a simple perception out of context."[124] According to Szarkowski's terms, Barney's social landscape rephotography of her friends and family at Watch Hill combines the ambiguous and fragmentary style of the news photographer with the continuous narrative and complex story of the magazine photographer. Similar to a sociological ethnography, Barney's photographs, when viewed together, represent the effects of a geographical location upon its female inhabitants over a twenty-year period.

Nonetheless, if we re-examine Deborah Bright's call for more female landscape photographers discussed in the beginning of this chapter, Barney only partially fulfills the call. While documenting the oppressive conditions of the cottage colony, Barney's work does not advocate for redesigned living spaces for women such as kitchenless houses,

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[123] Tina Barney in *Tina Barney: Social Studies*, DVD, directed by Jaci Judelman (France/USA: Yare Films, 2005).

[124] John Szarkowski, ed., *From the Picture Press* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1973), 5.

communal daycare, or job training for mothers to enter the workforce. In fact, they reveal that the initial effects of the cottage colony described by Gilman over one hundred years ago have been passed down for generations. Furthermore, Barney rarely includes any type of explanatory text in exhibitions of her work. While she is more forthcoming with information during interviews and lectures, her photographs are usually included in group exhibitions dealing with the innocuous themes of family, children, and fashion, which appeared frequently in museums in the 1990s and early 2000s.[125] In solo shows, the only "texts" are the titles, which usually consist of the subjects' first names and do not mention the geographical location in which they were taken. As a result, there is no connection made between the landscape of Watch Hill, its population, and her female subjects' lifestyles and comportment.

Moreover, curators of Barney's work rarely display Barney's rephotographs together or in chronological order but as isolated photographic fragments. This serves to undermine Barney's relationship with her subjects presenting them as mere models when, in fact, they are close family and friends who have collaborated with her for over twenty years. The audience is not given the opportunity to see the repetition of lifestyle choices, inherited traits, and values that are central to the underlying meaning of her work. In Paul Berger's essay on rephotography, he writes, "while we must focus on a single photograph at a time, photographs are themselves seldom solitary or reclusive. Photographs tend to gather in groups…and any understanding of photography must include an understanding

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[125] For instance, *Pleasures and Terrors of Domestic Comfort*, organized by The Museum of Modern Art, The Milwaukee Art Museum's *Blood Relatives: The Family in Contemporary Photography*, and *Imaging the Family* at the Brown University Art Gallery, all of which were held in 1991; *Who's Looking at the Family?* at the Barbican Art Gallery, London, and *Family Lives* at the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington DC both in 1994. This trend continued into the 2000s with *Fashioning Fiction* at The Museum of Modern Art in 2004; *So the Story Goes* organized by the Art Institute of Chicago both in 2006; and *Family Portraits* at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in 2007.

of photographic discourse—the way photographs are put together to convince, convey, document, or persuade."[126] In a public exhibition, the audience is not able to connect the dots of Barney's reality and her works more resemble the Szarkowski style of photojournalism than a feminist landscape photographer.

Finally, Barney's photographs are not available to a wide audience. Like most fine art photographers, she sells her photos through a dealer to upper class collectors and museums for approximately $20,000-30,000 per work. In this narrow audience her work is admired merely for fashion and aesthetics, while it hides its rich material from academic analysis. In the end, Barney sells her work short of the possibility of revolutionary change in Watch Hill, and she and her subjects seem quite content with it.

Part VI. Conclusion

In Szarkowski's quest for the unique formal characteristics of photography, he denied one of its most important elements—the quality of "being there" that photography connotes. Coincidentally, this is also a common characteristic lacking in Fried's assessment of "new art photography." In order to take a photograph, one must occupy some geographical location (unless you are working digitally) and that location has some effect on the image produced, be it through the resultant light conditions, temperature,

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[126] Paul Berger, "Doubling: This Then That," in Mark Klett, Ellen Manchester, and JoAnn Verburg, *Second View: The Rephotographic Survey Project* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984), 52.

weather, people, or the land itself. Barney's social landscape rephotography of Watch Hill not only captures the atmosphere of the coastal landscape of Watch Hill but also the conditions imposed upon the women living in the cottage colony from the early 1980s to the late 1990s.

After moving to Sun Valley, Idaho, Barney transformed herself from a wealthy housewife into a social landscape photographer. In order to create her work, Barney utilized many techniques, such as the use of a view camera and enlarged prints, forging a link back to the celebrated male landscape photographers of the nineteenth century. However, she also integrated new techniques such as rephotography and narrative spontaneity that she acquired from studying at the Sun Valley Center for the Arts culminating in a unique landscape photography of an east coast town with a narrative from a feminine perspective.

Barney documents the aftermath of the shift from the resort era to the cottage colony on the female inhabitants of Watch Hill, who were, as Charlotte Perkins Gilman predicted, isolated consumers in charge of the household and financially dependent on men, and who also happened to be Barney's family and close friends. However, through rephotographing her intimate circle throughout the course of 20 years, Barney used her photography as a vehicle to grow closer to these women, alleviating some of the isolation of their lives while establishing herself as an image producer. Through her construction of space in her work, Barney also manages to communicate the sense of intimacy and respect for her subjects in order to translate her world to the viewer phenomenologically and subvert the male gaze usually witnessed in visual representations of females.

Although Barney grows closer to her subjects and reveals the effects of a geographical location on women's social development, her photographs are not meant to change the conditions in Watch Hill or unite women from all socioeconomic backgrounds; instead, they stand as yet another act of exclusivity that reveal the character of Watch Hill. The presentation of her work to the public reveals the immutability that Barney and her subjects hold most dear, which is largely due to their upper class status. Barney and her subjects want to preserve Watch Hill as an insular community made up of a small number of families and have their children grow up in the same manner and Barney's rephotographs reassure the population that their lifestyle will endure. In the end, Barney's photographs combine the experimentation of Sun Valley with the conservatism of Watch Hill, the layered narrative of rephotography with the fragmentary moments of Szarkowski, and the communal nature of Gilman's utopia with the private cottage colony of Watch Hill; yet the revolutionary quality of Barney's work becomes obscured by the status quo.

As this chapter has examined Barney's photography education and established her role as image maker based on her social landscapes of Watch Hill, the next chapter will move inside to discuss Barney's photographs of interiors. Similar to Barney's application of Mary Cassatt's organization of space discussed here, it will also explore Barney's knowledge of art history and memories of living with art in the home, especially Dutch painting, and how Barney, as well as members of her father's family, the Lehmans, employed art in various ways in order to create "representations" of their family and mold their personal legacies.

CHAPTER TWO Decorated Interiors

Part I. A Room of One's Own

        In *The Trustee and the Curator* (1992) (Fig. 44), Barney captures two men in suits

inspecting a room of Sienese paintings at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (hereafter

"The Met"); one man is pointing to a work beyond the frame while the other man looks

directly at the camera. The walls on which the small icons are hung are covered in deep

red velvet and ornately carved pieces of furniture stand under the paintings. A cherry

picker situated in the center bisects the image into two sections: on the right, the Siennese

room, on the left, a room of French paintings. This composition affords the viewer a

glimpse of the neighboring room's contents devoid of human presence: Ingres' striking

portrait of the Princesse de Broglie, which is hung over a non-functional marble fireplace,

a Monet landscape, and a corner of a thickly woven rug on the floor.

        Part of a series on workplaces, including the New York Stock Exchange and a

real estate office, this photograph taken at the Met appears routine enough to overlook.

However, given Barney's upbringing and the evolution of her work, this image takes on a

special meaning. Not only does it act as an autobiographical link to one of the world's

most prestigious cultural institutions, it also serves as a diagram for key art historical

influences and reveals Barney's long-lived preoccupation with interiors in her

photography.

As an upper class girl living on Fifth Avenue or "Museum Mile" in Manhattan, Barney often found herself surrounded by art. Paintings by Renoir, Matisse, and Toulouse-Lautrec decorated her homes. At the age of eight, Barney and her sister first crossed the Atlantic Ocean for a European tour. Upon arriving in France, she visited the Musée Jeu de Palme and implored her governess to buy her postcards of the Toulouse Lautrec paintings after she saw them in the museum. Yet, her occasional trips to Europe and the paintings adorning her childhood apartment pale in comparison to the world famous art collection her great-grandfather, Philip Lehman amassed—a collection that would later be canonized in the Met by her great-uncle, Robert Lehman.

In order to place Barney's work in its proper context, it is necessary to embark on a brief historical interlude detailing her family's involvement in the art world, especially her great-uncle, Robert Lehman's relationship with the Met. This information will help to shed light on the motivating factors behind Barney's early works and provides a connection to her focus on the upper class and art collectors in her photographs.

Barney's great-grandfather, Philip Lehman, was the son of Emanuel Lehman, a German Jew who immigrated to the United States and joined his brothers, Henry and Mayer Lehman, in the ownership of a small trade store they named Lehman Brothers in Montgomery, Alabama in 1852. In 1858, they opened an office in New York City and focused on building a securities trading business that won them acceptance to the New

York Stock Exchange in 1887.[127] That same year, Philip Lehman became a partner at the firm and played a pivotal role in financing the establishment of Jewish-owned businesses such as Sears Roebuck and Company and R.H. Macy and Company.[128]

In 1900, Philip Lehman hired John H. Duncan, the architect of Grant's tomb, to build his residence. Duncan designed a fifth floor Beaux-Arts mansion at 7 West 54th Street in Manhattan (Fig. 45). Lehman's neighbors on Millionaires' Row (as it was called) were John D. Rockefeller, James Junius Goodwin, banker and cousin of J. Pierpont Morgan, and Moses Allen Starr, a neurologist who worked with Sigmund Freud. Despite the pedigree of Lehman's neighbors, his house was distinct due to its limestone rustication, five ocular windows on the fifth floor, and second floor balcony.[129]

Philip Lehman and his wife, Carrie Lauer Lehman, traveled to Europe at least once a year and often brought back souvenirs in the form of art, tapestries, and furniture to decorate their home. Eventually, the Lehmans assembled a collection of Gothic and French tapestries and Renaissance bronzes as well as Italian, Spanish, Dutch, and Flemish paintings by artists such as Simone Martini, Francisco de Goya, Pieter de Hooch, Hans Memling, and Petrus Christus. Their son, Robert Lehman, often accompanied his parents on these trips to Europe and started collecting art when he was in high school, starting mostly with drawings and illuminated manuscripts. He graduated from Yale University in 1913 and only after building his family's art collection and serving in World War I, did he join the family business as a partner in 1921. Throughout his career,

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[127]"Who We Are," Lehman Brothers, http://www.lehman.com/who/history/

[128] "Philip Lehman, 85, Noted Banker, Dies," *New York Times*, March 22, 1947, 13.

[129] Christopher Gray, "Interior Details Come Home Again to Millionaires' Row," *New York Times*, June 18, 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/18/realestate/18scap.html?_r=1&fta=y&oref=slogin

Robert continued to contribute to the collection, graduating to Old Master drawings and paintings, acquiring a portrait of Gerard de Lairesse by Rembrandt in 1945. When those works became scarce, he turned his attention to French paintings and Impressionist works by Auguste Renoir, Henri Matisse, Edouard Vuillard, Suzanne Valadon, Paul Gauguin, Claude Monet, and Pierre Bonnard. Robert's father died in 1947 and bequeathed the art collection and residence on West 54th Street to him.[130]

Robert joined the board of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1941, the second Jewish member in the board's history, and became vice-president in 1948. During his tenure as vice-president, he loaned 90 works from his collection to the museum from approximately 1954 to 1961.[131] Despite the various time periods, countries of origin, media, and genre, the vast array of works were treated as a group and installed in four galleries adorned with Fortuny silk wall hangings at the Met, which became the precedent for the presentation of the collection.[132]

In May 1957, Robert Lehman was invited by the Director of French Museums to show over 325 pieces from the collection as part of a special exhibition at the l'Orangerie Branch of the Louvre, marking the first occasion of an individual American collection on view at the hallowed French institution. The French exhibition featured works representing a broad cross-section of the Lehman collection, including paintings, drawings, illuminated manuscripts, tapestries, bronzes, jewelry, and furniture. The collection was presented in a series of rooms with red brocades on the walls and soft

[130] "Lehman Collection, " *The New Yorker,* November 24, 1962, #.

[131] During this same time period, he also loaned the works to other institutions such as the Cincinnati Art Museum and the Denver Art Museum.

[132] Calvin Tomkins, *Merchants and Masterpieces: The Story of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: H. Holt, 1989), 356.

lights.[133] The show was wildly popular with over 8,000 visitors and Lehman's taste in art

and friendly gesture to France garnered positive critical attention. One French critic

wrote, "Art collectors over here rarely show their collections this way—your M. Lehman

must be a very generous man and very interested in other people to have done all this."[134]

As a result of Lehman's generosity in lending the works, Senator Lyndon B. Johnson

honored Lehman for "promoting good will" and for fostering friendship between France

and the United States.[135]

The paintings returned to the Met for the next six years until 1961, when Lehman

abruptly elected to remove his collection from the Met and reinstall it in his childhood

home. This decision fueled rumors that Lehman had an increasingly contentious

relationship with the board members of the museum and that the board harbored anti-

Semitic beliefs. This view gained traction three years later when Lehman, who was the

longest-running vice-president, was overlooked as president of the museum and Arthur

Houghton was named instead.[136] In *The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste

in America*, E. Digby Baltzell describes the "gentlemanly Anti-Semitism" espoused by

the WASP, or White Anglo-Saxon Protestant, establishment in the mid-twentieth century.

Baltzell argues that while third generation Jews rose to the upper ranks in terms of wealth

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[133] Frank Kelley, "Lehman Art Scores Hit at Louvre: First European Exhibit Crowded," *New York Herald Tribune*, June 9, 1957.

[134] French critic cited by Lyndon B. Johnson, "Senator Lyndon B. Johnson Commends Robert Lehman for a Generous Act Promoting Good Will" (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1957), 2.

[135] Lyndon B. Johnson, "Senator Lyndon B. Johnson Commends Robert Lehman for a Generous Act Promoting Good Will" (Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1957), 1.

[136] Calvin Tomkins, *Merchants and Masterpieces: The Story of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: H. Holt, 1989), 356. Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 90.

and class, they were not afforded the same level of social status and were considered

marginal members. In other words, they still were discriminated from gentleman's clubs,

country clubs, museum boards, and the like.[137]

Nonetheless, Lehman, embittered by the decision, decided to focus his efforts on

building his own private viewing gallery. The mansion at 7 West 54th Street had been

vacant for years since his father's death, inspiring Lehman to hire Serge Royaux, an

interior designer known for the Musée de l'Orangerie of the Louvre and the Cincinnati

Art Museum (two venues where the collection had already been installed), to redress the

interior. Robert Lehman and his wife continued to reside at their 18-room Park Avenue

apartment but appropriated the West 54th Street mansion as their own private art museum.

The house was opened for occasional dinners, philanthropic events, and for art tours

whereby Robert Lehman immensely enjoyed walking visitors such as friends, journalists,

and art historians around the house, describing the history of the collection and imparting

his art historical knowledge about the origins of the works. The townhouse was

nicknamed "The Private Louvre on 54th Street" and it was showcased in *The New Yorker*,

New York Times, and *Cosmopolitan* magazine, in addition to a television special on NBC

called "The Art of Collecting."

The interior of the mansion was outfitted to resemble a luxurious Renaissance

Palazzo imbued with a sense of warmth and comfort. The main sitting rooms were

adorned with fabric-covered walls, beamed ceilings, and marble fireplaces. Plush sofas

and armchairs were arranged in semi-circular groups. Lehman, advised by a curator on

leave from the Louvre, arranged the paintings, with larger works taking center stage over

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[137] E. Digby Baltzell, *The Protestant Establishment: Aristocracy and Caste in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1964), 75.

fireplaces and couches and smaller paintings stacked in columns. Although it was not a home, Lehman wanted to create an intimate sanctuary for viewing his art works that differed from the cold atmosphere of most museums. After organizing an open house at the Lehman's to benefit New York University's Institute of Fine Arts, Professor Craig Hugh Smyth commented that "you can never have such close touch with as many masterpieces as you do here," adding that seeing the works arranged as part of an individual's daily life added to the enjoyment of viewing.[138]

The front room on the ground floor, also known as the Sienese room, was decorated from floor to ceiling in olive green and contained paintings by Giovanni Di Paolo, Lippo Vanni, Duccio Di Buonisegna, with the large *Adoration of the Magi* by Bartolo Di Fredi placed over the couch (Fig. 46). The collection was so expansive that even the bathroom door was camouflaged with olive green velvet and covered with three small paintings. Pieces of Italian majolica were arranged on the tables underneath the larger paintings, occasionally transformed into lamp bases. The adjoining room contained several paintings by Fra Filippo Lippi, as well as a glass case full of Italian majolica and pieces of carved Renaissance furniture.[139]

On the second floor, the most impressive room was the sitting room, covered in red velvet containing works by Spanish and Dutch Masters. El Greco's *St. Jerome as a Cardinal* presided over a large gold painted fireplace. Large paintings by Rembrandt, Goya, Velasquez, Terborch, and de Hooch were hung on the surrounding walls (Fig. 47). Two couches jutted out perpendicular to the fireplace to provide a contemplative respite

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[138] Arthur Gelb, "54th St. Mansion Houses Famed Private Art Collection," *New York Times*, Oct.15, 1962, 31.

[139] Ted Farah, "The Private Louvre on 54th Street," *Cosmopolitan*, April 1964, 52.

for the overwhelming combination of a selection of the world's greatest painters gathered in one room.

The third floor consisted of a front room of Flemish paintings covered in a sand-colored wallpaper and filled with works by Hans Memling, Lucas Cranach the Elder and Hans Holbein the Younger. Visitors were invited to sink into blue velvet armchairs and couches in front of the fireplace to gaze at the *Legend of Saint Eligius and Godeberta* by Petrus Christus. In the neighboring room, a custom circular banquette upholstered in rose velvet stood in the middle of a room containing paintings by Renoir, Vuillard, Bonnard, and Monet. Pieces of 16th century Italian ceramics were studded throughout the room. On the fourth floor, Lehman displayed over one hundred drawings throughout two rooms, one devoted to Old Masters, the other to more modern sketches.

Journalists reporting on the collection often questioned what would become of it after Lehman's death--to which he responded that he was undecided, leaving many institutions such as the National Gallery of Art, Yale University, and the Met hopeful. Lehman entertained the idea of starting a private museum similar to the Henry Clay Frick Collection on Fifth Avenue. However, according to George Szabo, a former curator of the Lehman Collection, the house on West 54th Street was too narrow and small to accommodate large crowds and the vibrations from the subway station underneath the house were harmful to the fragile works.[140]

Immediately after being named director of the Met, Thomas Hoving made it his top priority to repair the damaged ties between Robert Lehman and the museum in the hopes of acquiring the world famous collection valued at over one hundred million

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[140] Cited in Grace Glueck, "Lehman Collection at Met Opens for Private Viewing," *New York Times*, May 13, 1975.

dollars. Two days after assuming his position, Hoving personally visited Lehman at his downtown office to smooth things over, and shortly thereafter, Lehman was named honorary chairman of the Board of Trustees, a position which was previously nonexistent and whose rank in relation to the president of the board was ambiguous.[141]

Although Lehman's pride was preserved with his new position, he still harbored reservations about awarding the collection he and his father had built to the Met. He had witnessed personally how the museum dispersed J.P. Morgan and Benjamin Altman's collections to the point of oblivion. Thus, Lehman stipulated that his whole collection had to be kept intact and preserved in the way it was installed in his house--among furniture and decorative objects. Apparently, Hoving was willing to concede on these issues for the chance to secure the collection, which would indeed cement his legacy as the Director who secured one of the largest gifts in the museum's history. Ultimately, Lehman and the museum agreed that, after Lehman's death, the three thousand works would be acquired by the Met as a separate curatorial department called the Lehman Collection and would be "forever inviolate from contamination by alien objects."[142] The collection would exist forever as its own microcosm and the collection, as well as the atmosphere in which it was installed, would be fully preserved in a newly-built wing of the museum.

Robert Lehman spent the remaining two years of his life outlining the details of his historic gift to the museum. He died in August 1969. An announcement extolling his munificence was delivered at a benefactor's dinner launching the year-long celebration of the museum's centennial anniversary in September 1969. Plans for the $7.1 million

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[141] Calvin Tompkins, Calvin Tomkins, *Merchants and Masterpieces: The Story of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: H. Holt, 1989), 357.

[142] Calvin Tomkins, *Merchants and Masterpieces: The Story of the Metropolitan Museum of Art* (New York: H. Holt, 1989), 358.

pavilion, which were part of a three-part expansion project, were drawn up by Kevin Roche, John Dinkeloo and Associates but the Lehman wing was immediately met with resistance by the Parks Council, the Municipal Arts Society, the Landmarks Preservation Committee, and various community groups. The complainants griped that the new wing would encroach on the ever-shrinking green space in Central Park, that the new construction would obstruct the view of the original 1880 façade of the Met, and that the art should be redistributed and housed in lower income neighborhoods.

Nonetheless, the Met emerged victorious from legal battles and the Robert Lehman Collection opened without fanfare in May 1975. The wing consisted of a submerged square set at a 45-degree angle to the original structure with an inner 82-ft high courtyard topped with a pyramid of glass that rose slightly up from ground level. Around the square's perimeter were two rows of galleries: the inner galleries were open and hung with paintings and the outer galleries were assigned as "period" rooms decorated in the style of Lehman's mansion. Seven rooms were adorned with fabric wall hangings, area rugs, furniture, and decorative objects among the priceless paintings. Architectural touches such as coffered ceilings, artificial fireplaces, mock staircases, and backlit windows transformed the galleries into home interiors, or what reminded one critic of "model rooms for Bloomingdales."[143] For instance, one gained entrance to the "Red Velvet Room" through a 16th century carved and gilded doorway. This room consisted of red velvet walls and curtains, a chandelier, carved furniture, a woven rug, and bronze and majolica pieces. Another room, the recreated sitting room, contained an El Greco painting over a fireplace, and a couch across from it for visitors to sit (Fig. 48).

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[143] Paul Goldberger, "New Lehman Wing's Architecture and Art: 2 Appraisals," *New York Times*, May 14, 1975, 41.

In strong contrast to the plain galleries usually put forth by museums of the Met's stature, these period rooms befuddled most architecture and art critics.

Most critics felt that the esoteric décor of the period rooms overpowered the artwork. In his scathing review of the newly installed wing, *New York Times* art critic Hilton Kramer wrote, "The collector's taste has been allowed to obtrude upon the painters, and it is the painter's taste and vision and achievement we have come to see."[144] In broader terms, Kramer viewed the "deal" between Lehman and Hoving as setting a dangerous precedent that would start a trend of philanthropists making outrageous demands on institutions desperate to gain private collections and monetary donations.[145] Appearing side-by-side with Kramer's article, architecture critic Ada Louise Huxtable wrote, "This is a trip to nowhere, unless one is curious about the ideas of *richesse* and suitability with which the collection was housed by its owner—hardly a sufficient reason to go to all this trouble." She concludes, "the Lehman wing, for all of its splendor, is a suave and seductive exercise in some of the less admirable aspects of the world of art and museology."[146] Even an unnamed museum trustee said, "The Lehman wing, spectacular as its holding may be, is a monument to human vanity."[147] While the new wing's architecture was praised, the presentation of Lehman's art as well as his character, were

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[144] Hilton Kramer, "Manner of Displaying Works Raises Vital Questions," *New York Times*, May 14, 1975, 94.

[145] Hilton Kramer, "Manner of Displaying Works Raises Vital Questions," *New York Times*, May 14, 1975, 94.

[146] Ada Louise Huxtable, "'Wrong But Impeccable,'" *New York Times*, May 25, 1975, 109.

[147] Grace Glueck, "Lehman Collection at Met Opens for Private Viewing," *New York Times*, May 13, 1975.

met with scathing criticism in dramatic contrast to the reception of the collection's

exhibition at the Louvre 18 years earlier.

Unquestionably, it was the anachronistic nature of the period rooms that invited

the most derision. One critic rightly identified the historical accuracy of the Met's

installation as "the reproduction of a 1959 Paris decorator's version of how to turn 1905

rooms designed by the architect of Grant's Tomb into an 'appropriate' background for

Renaissance art."[148] In her 1995 appraisal of the Lehman Wing, Carol Duncan

humorously identified the period as "late American Robber Baron."[149] Adding to the

confusion was that most of the furniture and decorative objects, a mix of valuable

antiques and reproductions, were unlabeled in the galleries and unidentified in the

museum's records. The Met defended its decision by explaining that the pieces

complemented one another and shed light on the patterns of collecting—especially in the

annals of New York high society. Laurence B. Kanter, Curator-in-Charge of the Robert

Lehman Collection from 1988-2007, explained that some of Lehman's painting

purchases were a ticket into the social circle and that they were chosen not for fondness,

but for dinner invitations.[150]

According to some critics, the fact that the Met wanted to preserve the "Age of

Great Collectors," encouraged the same competitive behavior for the current generation.

In her exploration of museum-going as ritual, Carol Duncan discussed the Lehman wing

as an indication of public institutions' weakening commitment to the public and

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[148] Ada Louise Huxtable, "'Wrong but Impeccable,'" *New York Times*, May 25, 1975, 109.

[149] Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 90.

[150] Laurence Kanter cited in Ariella Budick, "Scenic Overlook: Even with Works by El Greco and Rembrandt, the Lehman Wing is One of the Met's Best-Kept Secrets," *Newsday*, Jan. 19, 2003, D18.

increasing tendency to devote large amounts of public space to personal memorials of the

wealthy. She underlined how "period rooms" magnify the discrepancies between the

wealthy and the museum-going public: "Instead of staging a universe of equals, however,

they cast us as outsiders, removed in both time and space from the perfectly ordered,

socially ranked worlds in which we gaze. Whereas our ritual task as citizens is to possess

in full whatever spiritual goods are laid before us, in these rooms, we are prompted to

admire others--those whose rooms these once were. It is they, not we, who do whatever

possessing there is to be done here."[151] Although Robert Lehman himself was

occasionally barred from the exclusive clubs of New York society, these particular

anecdotes were edited by the Met, who was also a prime offender. Therefore, when

visiting the period rooms, the public assumed that Lehman was fully part of the

establishment.

Part II. Barney's Early Installation Art

        Although Tina Barney had already moved to Sun Valley in 1974, it is unlikely

that she was spared from the harsh criticism leveled at her great-uncle's legacy. The

Barneys returned to the East Coast every summer and Tina maintained close contact with

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[151] Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 68.

her family. During her childhood, she spent time with the paternal side of her family. She recalled, "My father's side of the family were much more obvious. They did things in bigger ways. And that's where we would gather together," saying that she usually would visit her great-uncle's Fifth Avenue apartment for Christmas every year when she was a child.[152] Despite having no direct contact with the art collection when she was younger, Barney had some sort of familiarity with her great-uncle, who most likely enjoyed talking about his collection and love of art during these family gatherings. However, she did have a chance to see the art collection at the house but it was after Lehman's death in 1969, when she would have been at least 24 years old.[153]

As late as 1979, articles were still appearing in the *New York Times* and other print sources decrying the Met's decision to accept Lehman's conditions.[154] Meanwhile, Tina was enrolled in private photography lessons at the Sun Valley Center for the Arts and was entertaining various concepts for her oeuvre, which the center stressed in order for its students to be successful in the art world.

A little over five years after her family's collection premiered at the Met, Barney was asked to participate in a show at Caldwell Gallery in Sun Valley in which she featured photographs of people looking at art in museums and galleries. Through this work, Barney began asking herself a number of important questions including "What is art about?" and "Why do people collect art objects?" She decided that there was

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[152] Tina Barney, Oral History as narrated to Deanne Thompson, 1983, Regional Department Oral History Collection, The Community Library, Ketchum, ID and interview.

[153] Tina Barney, in discussion with the author, January 2008.

[154] John Russell, "Desegregating the Lehman Gift," *New York Times*, April 15, 1979, D25.

"something about a distance between strangers and strange places."[155] One of the photographs included in this exhibition, *Jill at MoMA* (1980) (Fig. 49), features a frontal, slightly off-center shot of Barney's older sister, Jill, in a striped raincoat holding an umbrella and sitting on a bench in the middle of the sculpture court at the Museum of Modern Art, New York. The broad expanse of the courtyard is interrupted by multiple shapes and lines: the t-shaped railing in front of Jill, the vertical poles of a café awning, the diagonal railings of the stairs that descend on the left side of the image, and two rectangular shaped buildings in the background across the street from the courtyard. Surprisingly, the edifice in the center left of the image is none other than the 7 West 54th Street residence of Barney's great-grandfather and great-uncle.

Of all the spaces on the museum's grounds, why did Barney choose this exact vantage point to photograph her sister? Partially, Barney may have wanted to get her family's previous property in the image as an homage to her great-grandfather and her great-uncle and emphasize the connection between her sister and the house. More importantly, this image illustrates that Barney's interest in art and viewing art was inextricably tied to her family's art collection. How would her great uncle's experience with the Met inform Barney's work?

As the tense debate between public and private space taking place in her ancestors' names continued, it is relevant that Barney's next group of works focused on capturing the interior decoration of private homes, most of which featured art objects, and Barney created her own type of interior within a public viewing space. During the summer, Barney started taking photographs of well-appointed home interiors of family

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[155] Tina Barney, interview by Kip Robertson, "Exhibition at Sun Valley Center for the Arts," Sun Valley Channel 13, May-June 1980.

members and friends without their inhabitants. In May 1981, Barney was invited to participate in a group show at the Sun Valley Center for the Arts. Swayed by the success of 70s installation art and Earthworks, she decided to create an installation of an interior showcasing the photographs of interiors. In the gallery, Barney claimed three walls and delineated a room-like space by hiring an interior designer to cover the walls, ceiling, and any open sections with shirred tulle—a white, transparent, netting material usually used for weddings (Fig. 50). On the left wall, Barney hung the interior scenes such as *Jill's Interior* and *Lil's Interior* (1980) (Fig. 51) over the tulle, enlarged and printed to 30 x 40 inches. On the center back wall and right wall, Barney displayed a mélange of frames with various sized photographs of interiors. She explained that she hired different craftsmen from town to create custom-made frames out of leather, wood, and stained glass and matting made from embroidered lace to correspond to the interior that they displayed (Fig. 52). Barney added daguerreotypes and silver frames that she found in antique stores to complete the room.

Because Barney is known strictly as a photographer, the fact that she created this early installation, which is largely unknown to the public, seems uncharacteristic of her working methods. However, Barney was exposed to the art of interior design through her mother, Lil, who ran a successful interior decorating business in Southampton and New York, and her sister, Jill, who also worked as an interior designer. In fact, Barney often attributes her penchant for color and style choices to her mother. Her mother even taught Barney how to shirr fabric, a skill Barney employs in her installation.

Moreover, the well-known interior designer Mrs. Henry "Sis" Parish heavily influenced Barney's mother. The two women also ran in the same social circles. Sister

Parish, who became a household name after she decorated the White House during John F. Kennedy's Presidency, was known for creating comfortable, lived-in, "shabby-chic" rooms through her mix-and-match style of boldly patterned chintz curtains, upholsteries, wallpapers, and hand woven rugs. Her signature look depended on the placement of crafts and antique objects such as wicker furniture, baskets, afghan blankets, needlepoint, and collections of small porcelain figures in order to create different areas of visual excitement and to create pleasure in looking around the rooms.

Sister Parish's style is evident in the photograph *Lil's Interior* (Fig. 51), which featured Lil's living room that she decorated herself. Barney stood on one side of the square room behind a table and, keeping the camera mid-level and horizontal, focused on a bay window on the other side of the room as a vantage point. The photograph captures the brown room with a floral area rug teeming with furniture: a couch, three armchairs with different patterns, five wooden chairs, a wicker chair, a wicker bench, two large tables, two side tables, and an armoire. Dotted throughout the room are afghan blankets and quilted and crocheted pillows, and small porcelain vases and bowls. Aside from the actual photographs of interiors created by her mother, Barney also echoed her mother's design style by approaching the different craftsmen—a leatherworker, glassblower, and woodworker—to create the frames for the exhibition and introduce various textures, materials, and colors into her room. Barney explained, "One of the things that's important to me is that I am also stating that I think that those rooms are a work of art in themselves, I respect them, I think that all the work involved in them is as beautiful as the

photograph makes them to be."[156] By choosing particular interiors to photograph, Barney was also paying homage to the interior designers who worked on the rooms.

Not only did Barney's installation document several interior design styles, but it was also concerned with people viewing art in an interior setting and shared many similarities with the Lehman wing at the Met. For instance, the interior she created in the gallery mixed frames used for contemporary photography as well as daguerreotype frames in which she inserted Polaroid pictures (Fig. 53). In an interview she revealed that, "this is, for instance, a daguerreotype which is the earliest photograph that exists, and this is a SX-70 Polaroid. And I have mixed these two kinds of extreme times together. And that's a lot of what I was thinking about."[157] Moreover, the wood, leather, and glass frames did not correspond to the time period or style of the pictured interior. Rather, Barney put them together based on "a color or feeling that I thought matched."[158] This resulted in a photograph of an interior of a log home with a wood burning stove in Sun Valley matted with an embroidered southwestern motif and framed with brown leather, creating several layers upon a wall of white tulle (Fig. 54). This type of configuration echoed the heterogeneity of one of Lehman's period rooms where he combined a late sixteenth-century carved doorway with eighteenth century French red velvet and late sixteenth-century gold-embroidered curtains to accentuate the colors in the fifteenth-century Italian paintings. Of the Lehman rooms, art critic Ariella Budick

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[156] Tina Barney, interview by Kip Robertson, "Exhibition at Sun Valley Center for the Arts," Sun Valley Channel 13, May-June 1980.

[157] Tina Barney, interview by Kip Robertson, "Exhibition at Sun Valley Center for the Arts," Sun Valley Channel 13, May-June 1980.

[158] Tina Barney, Oral History as narrated to Deanne Thompson, 1983, Regional Department Oral History Collection, The Community Library, Ketchum, ID.

wrote, "It's a lone space within the Met where you can experience firsthand the idiosyncrasies of one person's eye."[159] Barney's choice of materials, textures, and colors that interact with the interiors created the same impression on its viewers.

Each interior photograph allowed viewers to be transported to a number of self-sustaining worlds largely through Barney's positioning of the camera and the enlarged size of the images. In most of the images, Barney held the camera at mid-level just over a threshold formed by a piece of furniture such as a table, coffee table, or side table to situate the viewer in that room, peering over the piece of furniture. The bright colors and the vivid detail also offered viewers an insider's point-of-view. As for the 30 x 40 inch size of the images, Barney revealed, "I wanted to make them big because I wanted the viewer and myself to feel when they were looking at them that they were standing in that room themselves. I wanted to get the feeling of what that room was really like."[160] Barney also chose to display these enlarged interiors without a frame or a matte because she wanted to decrease the distance between the scene and the viewer and she also wanted them to be so close as to touch the image. Her methods proved successful because a video of the installation showed men and women peering intently at the photographs with their noses almost touching the work. In effect, Barney eliminated the distance between the viewers and the photography, enabling them to transcend time and space and share in the personal enjoyment of these interiors, creating a home-like setting for viewing art.

[159] Ariella Budick, "Scenic Overlook: Even with Works by El Greco and Rembrandt, the Lehman Wing is One of the Met's Best-Kept Secrets," *Newsday*, Jan. 19, 2003, D18.

[160] Tina Barney, interview by Kip Robertson, "Exhibition at Sun Valley Center for the Arts," Sun Valley Channel 13, May-June 1980.

Barney's choice to take her friends and family's private interiors and put them on public display, allowing the public to "walk" through them, bears a resemblance to Robert Lehman's stipulation to display the interior of his townhouse at the Met. Barney's installation was also a way to carve out a space for herself apart from the other artists in the exhibition by unifying her territory with the white tulle and displaying her own collection of photographs, much like the choice of Robert Lehman to command his own wing of the Met.

Moreover, according to Barney, the interior photographs acted as a metaphor for her desire to get beyond exteriors and delve deeper into the inner feelings of her family and friends. During this project, she confronted issues including "you can cover yourself or anything with all this decorating and fancy stuff, but … sometimes you can't see to the inside or it's hard to get into the inside."[161] She felt that people, primarily the upper class, were always creating wonderful interiors as a novelty or status symbol instead of enjoying the purpose for which they were intended: gathering with family in the home.

By creating an installation, Barney wanted to experiment with the play between the gallery's appearance and the photographs. She wondered, "Will it be so fancy that you will not be able to see that photograph or that interior?"[162] This too, can be extended and applied toward the debate over the Lehman collection. The luxury of the Lehman wing was what critics claimed overpowered the actual art on view. Taking Barney's question one step further, one can also apply it to Robert Lehman himself in that all the criticism aimed at the bequest overshadowed his generosity and the fact that he wanted to

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[161] Tina Barney, Oral History as narrated to Deanne Thompson, 1983, Regional Department Oral History Collection, The Community Library, Ketchum, ID.

[162] Tina Barney, Oral History as narrated to Deanne Thompson, 1983, Regional Department Oral History Collection, The Community Library, Ketchum, ID.

share the personal enjoyment he received from viewing the collection with the public. Alas, Barney claimed that she received disappointing reviews for the installation from artists and critics, but the more naïve viewers unfamiliar with the politics of the art world enjoyed it.

Barney would revisit the Lehman Collection in 1992 for her photograph *The Trustee and the Curator* (Fig. 44). The two men pictured from the left were Barney's older brother, Philip Isles, head of the Lehman Foundation and a former trustee of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Laurence B. Kanter, former curator of the Lehman Collection. Since the opening of the Lehman wing in 1975, changes were gradually introduced into the presentation of the art objects and the museum relaxed its steadfast recreation of Lehman's townhouse interior, which can be witnessed in Barney's photograph. The staircase to nowhere and the artificially illuminated windows were eliminated and the paintings have been rearranged in a pedagogical manner, including Ingres' *Princesse de Broglie* seen in Barney's photograph. However, the red velvet wall coverings, rug, fireplace, door frames, and furniture remain. "Each room preserves the ideas and the ideals of other times and other places. The shifting world of the 20th century does not intrude. For here is permanence."[163] For Barney, the Lehman Collection at the Met serves as an interior from her childhood and young adulthood frozen in time. Barney's photographs of interiors also stop time and communicate a sense of permanence in a world where rooms are constantly redecorated, people relocate, and families are often reconfigured. Barney's installation at the Sun Valley Center for the Arts was an important step for the young artist in establishing her own style, subject matter, and subjectivity for a career that continues to span over thirty years.

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[163] Aline Saarinen, "The Art of Collecting," (New York, NBC News, 1964).

Part III. Keeping up with the Joneses: Representing Dutch Painting

Not only is the location of the *Trustee and the Curator* (Fig. 44) significant in understanding Barney's work but the photograph also acts as testament to art historical influences in her photography ranging from Italian Renaissance and seventeenth century Dutch genre paintings to French Impressionist works. Although during Barney's mature career she downplayed her art historical background, in fact, she was surrounded by many influential figures and celebrated paintings as a child. As a result, critics often comment on her photography's resemblance to European painting; however, afraid of being considered unoriginal, Barney dislikes this comparison and claims that she did not insert references to painting consciously. She remarked, " I don't say 'Gee, I want these to look like paintings,' but painting is so much in my head I don't know when it's there."[164]

How did painting become so entrenched in Barney's mind as to enter into her photography subconsciously? There were many opportunities for Barney as she grew up around art and influential figures in the art world, and often visited museums as a child. She recalled, "I was surrounded by art my whole life. I lived in New York. My parents

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[164] Andy Grundberg, "Tina's World: In Search of the Honest Moment," *New York Times*, April 1, 1990, H39.

were very interested in art . . . . I could identify a Toulouse-Lautrec from a Van Gogh from a Matisse at ten years old."[165]

Barney's interest in art intensified during her tenth grade art history class at Spence School, taught by Margaret Ede Scolari, wife and assistant of Alfred Barr, the founding director of the Museum of Modern Art. Scolari was fluent in French, Italian, Spanish, and German, and played an invaluable role in the museum's early exhibitions, acting as a translator for Barr during their European excursions in search of artists. As a result, Scolari conversed with Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse, and Joan Miró, to name a few. She obtained the teaching job at Spence to contribute a much-needed second income to her family and taught art history there from 1943 to 1980.[166] In the introduction to a tenth grade art history class, Scolari wrote,

> I spend no time defining what is art, you'll soon know. Not all of it is, at first sight, beautiful; little of it is pretty; all of it is interesting. And the more you know about a work of art—what preceded it, what followed it, the reasons why it is the way it is—the more it will come to life for you. The tourist who goes through the museums exclaiming "Beautiful, Beautiful," is something to be deplored. You jolly well must know why. Now plan to enjoy yourselves. As Poussin, the great French painter of the 17th century remarked, "The goal of art is delight."[167]

Scolari's words attest to the idea that her students were expected to visit museums and experience works in person—this was expected, particularly given the school's location,

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[165] Barney in "An Interview with Tina Barney," conducted by Elizabeth A.E. Titone, *N.O.A. Magazine of the Arts* 1, no. 6 (1989): 1.

[166] Michael Brenson, "Margaret Scolari Barr, a Teacher and Art Historian is Dead at 86," New York Times, December 31, 1987.

[167] Scolari cited in Michael Brenson, "Margaret Scolari Barr, a Teacher and Art Historian is Dead at 86," New York Times, December 31, 1987.

blocks from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Whitney Museum of American Art, and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Barney recalled that her class traveled to Greece and they were able to recognize a lot of the art due to Scolari's instruction. However, it wasn't her expertise that impressed Barney, but her voracious energy and devotion to art that struck a chord with the young student. Barney explained, "She had a combination of incredible passion and that's what rubbed off on me with this kind of authoritative manner at the same time. I was not a good student, and believe me, I lapped it up."[168] It wasn't until Barney was exposed to Scolari, perhaps the first person she had known who selflessly devoted herself to art—neither for the accolades and money, nor as wall decoration—but as a passion that caused Barney to pursue art as a serious field of study.

Upon graduating from high school, Barney attended four months of college but abruptly left to study art in Italy and to learn more about her family's collection. However, her studies were derailed by romance and she didn't revisit art history until she was in Sun Valley, surrounded by well-read artists who suggested books for her to explore. While enrolled at the art center in Sun Valley, she read a lot about visual perception, including books such as *Art and Illusion* by E.H. Gombrich and John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*. Barney also read two books concerning Dutch genre painting: *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* by Svetlana Alpers (published in 1983) and Simon Schama's *The Embarrassment of Riches* (published in 1987). While the former made a deep impact on the visual reading and comprehension of Dutch genre painting, the latter contributed to American awareness of Dutch culture and its ensuing widespread popularity.

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[168] Tina Barney, in discussion with the author, January 2008.

Although Barney was surrounded by art historical influences, it is seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting that provides the greatest insight to her work. The relationship between optics and Dutch painting ties Barney's work to the Netherlandish interiors of Pieter de Hooch, Gabriel Metsu, and Jan Vermeer (to name a few), as well as her treatment of interior space, gender and class divisions, and moral ambiguity within her photographs.[169] Barney's initial attraction to this type of work was a result of her preoccupation with interiors, which stemmed from her early experiences in her family's homes.

Barney's first experience with Dutch art particularly could have occurred through exposure to her great-uncle Robert Lehman's art collection. By 1969, the Lehmans owned two paintings by Gerard Terborch, two paintings by Pieter de Hooch, and two paintings by Rembrandt as well as a painting by Johan Barthold Jongkind. Between Philip and Robert Lehman, they also acquired two drawings by Rembrandt as well as a drawing each by William van de velde, Adrian Van Ostad, Albert Cuyp, and Jan Van Goyen.[170]

Information about the Lehmans' collecting habits reveals an agenda behind the collection of Dutch art rather than a mere fondness for it. In the early nineteenth century, there were few examples of Dutch art found in America besides Philadelphian Thomas Jefferson Bryan who willed more than one hundred Netherlandish pictures to the New York Historical Society in 1867. It wasn't until the post-Civil War era that Dutch art

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[169] In 1988, Meyer Raphael Rubinstein pointed out in his brief, yet provocative article, "Life Styles of the Protestant Bourgeoisie: The Photographs of Tina Barney," that Barney's photographs deftly resembled seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings due to their portrayals of everyday life, open narratives, general titles, and ambiguous moral messages.

[170] George Szabo, *Guide to the Lehman Collection* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975).

found favor with more American collectors including Henry G. Marquand, George A. Hearn, Henry Clay Frick, J. Pierpont Morgan, William K. Vanderbilt, due to the desire to emulate the great European collectors and inculcate Protestant values in the United States.[171] It was most likely the surge in popularity of Dutch art in New York that encouraged the Lehmans to collect it. In an article in *The New Yorker*, Robert Lehman described how his father often competed for pieces with Henry Clay Frick and J. Pierpont Morgan.[172] Laurence Kanter, former curator of the Lehman Collection at the Met, emphatically states that Robert Lehman was not particularly attached to his painting *The Card Players* by Pieter de Hooch, alluding that he purchased this type of art to gain favor with the New York elite.[173] Indeed, both Philip and Robert Lehman's favorite paintings were fifteenth century Italian paintings.[174]

The pieces in the Lehman Collection that share the greatest resemblance to Barney's style are two paintings by Pieter de Hooch entitled *Leisure Time in an Elegant Setting* (c. 1663-1665) (Fig. 55), once located in the sitting room on the second floor of the mansion (Fig. 56), and *The Card Players* (1670-75) (Fig. 57), located on the stairway between the second and third floor of the townhouse (Fig. 58). Philip Lehman purchased the former in 1912, and Robert Lehman the latter in 1954.

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[171] Peter C. Sutton, *Dutch Art in America* (Washington DC: The Netherlands-American Amity Trust, inc., 1986), xvi.

[172] "Lehman Collection, " *The New Yorker,* November 24, 1962, #.

[173] Laurence Kanter cited in Ariella Budick, "Scenic Overlook: Even with Works by El Greco and Rembrandt, the Lehman Wing is One of the Met's Best-Kept Secrets," *Newsday*, Jan. 19, 2003: D18. Laurence Kanter, email message to author, March 27, 2008.

[174] Anne M. Preuss, ed. *The Lehman Collection* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1975), 48.

Leisure Time in an Elegant Setting (Fig. 55), a 58.3 x 69.4 cm. oil on canvas, depicts four figures in a foreground room—a man sits in a chair with his back to a window, his arm hanging over the back of a chair with a pipe in his hand; a standing woman interacts with a younger girl sitting down holding a glass flute; and a boy stands between them serving wine. All the figures are large and illuminated by light entering through the window on the left. Both males and females are situated around a table covered in a Persian rug, upon which rests a silver container of salt and a silver plate of bread. Behind them, a large painting with Salmacis and Hermaphodite embracing hangs on a wall covered with striking, gold-patterned leather. Through a doorway on the right, one can see into the adjacent room, where a well-dressed man faces an elderly man who stands outside another doorway. The smoking, drinking, and painting all point to an underlying theme of courtship while the elderly man outside the door calls to minds the biblical story of Lazarus. As usual, de Hooch leaves the painting's meaning open to question. Egbert Haverkamp Begemann writes, "At most, the small subsidiary scene emphasizes the elegance of the home, and it may also allow a moralizing interpretation without forcing it on viewers."[175]

The other Dutch genre painting owned by Robert Lehman, *The Card Players* (Fig. 57), hosts a similar scene in a humbler interior. Three figures are arranged around a table: a man, seen from behind, sits at a table and plays cards with the woman facing him while a standing servant woman pours wine from a carafe into a glass and a small dog looks on. The figures are entrenched in the carefully articulated interior square space with the back

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[175] Egbert Haverkamp Begemann, "European Paintings, " in *The Robert Lehman Collection* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), 162.

wall, tiled floors and beamed ceiling.[176] A patch of light from a set of windows falls on

the seated woman as she shows her hand to her opponent, almost as if de Hooch caught

the moment with a camera.

The subject matter, in part, as well as the formal qualities of genre scenes such as

these owned by the Lehmans shared many commonalities with Barney's early work. Both

depict elegant interiors populated with their upper middle class owners enjoying leisure

time amid their servants, artwork, and other luxurious possessions. The style in which

they are executed, as realistically as possible, with enlarged figures caught in a moment

of interaction, also connects Barney's photographs with the Dutch paintings. The

purchase dates as well as the prominent display of the de Hooch paintings means that it

was quite possible that Barney saw these paintings either when she went to her relatives'

homes or when she visited the Lehman Collection at the Met and was transported back to

her childhood memories of family gatherings. Barney explains that she never sets out to

recreate a specific painting in particular but the influence of Dutch art was subconscious.

She sets up the analogy, "It's sort of like when you get dressed you know you've seen

someone walk down the street in that combination and say 'gee, I'd like to look like that

too."[177] However, there was a major catalyst that could have caused Barney to remember

these particular paintings and invoke Dutch genre painting in her work--her move to Sun

Valley, Idaho in 1974.

Barney's husband chose to move his family from Manhattan to Sun Valley

because it was a small town suitable for young children that hosted a score of outdoor

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[176] Egbert Haverkamp Begemann, "European Paintings, " in *The Robert Lehman Collection* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987), 165.

[177] Tina Barney, in discussion with the author, January 2008.

activities. In fact, Barney visited Sun Valley as a child when her mother took up residence in order to receive a divorce from her father. Initially, Barney treated the decision to move to Sun Valley as if it were an extended vacation and she reluctantly left her family and friends on the East Coast. It wasn't until after arriving that she realized the consequences the move incurred—that she was in a ski town across the country from almost everyone she had ever known.

Throughout Barney's almost ten-year stay in Sun Valley, she never considered it as home. She and her husband and sons lived in a furnished condominium unit and she had no extended family for hundreds of miles. Making new friends was also a tricky situation; the people who were attracted to living in Sun Valley were transient or seasonal visitors. Even after she started to take private photography lessons at the Sun Valley Center for the Arts, where she was one of the few students who stayed year-round, this sense of homelessness came across in her early photography. She describes, "…when I looked at the work I did in Idaho, there was nothing there. Idaho was foreign. The colors were foreign to me. There was no age. There was no quality of texture. I didn't realize this for a long time, but there was nothing there I could relate to."[178] Instead, she waited until she summered in Rhode Island to take the majority of her pictures.

Barney began with a series of snapshot-like photographs of strangers taken in the style of Garry Winogrand or Henri Cartier-Bresson. For example, in *The Pink Towel* (1979) (Fig. 59), Barney captured a family settling down at the beach with their towels and tote bags, at the moment when the young boy gets up to go wander around the beach. Barney describes, "I would struggle to find some kind of narrative that made sense to me.

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[178] Barney cited in Judith Olch Richards, ed. *Inside the Studio: Two Decades of Talks with Artists in New York* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2004), 129.

I think the idea of the home, going back to the home, the nest, was in my mind . . . . I would also watch families come on to the beach with their little baskets and their towels and look around for their spot on the beach. As if they were birds. And I thought this little boy looked like a bird leaving the nest.[179] Unmistakably, Barney chose an outdoor metaphor to describe the act of leaving home. She, too, recently left her "nest," for a place where home was secondary to the outdoors, and all activities took place away from home, be it sports or photography. The members of her family went off in different directions, each making their own friends, whereas the summers spent in Watch Hill would be filled by family barbeques and events centered around her family's and her neighbor's homes.

Barney relished visiting Watch Hill because it was a town filled with generations of families who stayed there and kept their historically protected houses in the family, unlike Sun Valley, where everything was new and people built log cabins because they felt they looked best with the landscape. Barney felt that as long as there was a home to go back to, the family would stay together. She comments, "The house is the heart, the center of ourselves, the nest, the core of the family; the hope, the continuation, the string between the family and its members. Keeping up the house means that you expect to be there. That you want to keep that place up to have it for the future. And maybe your children might want to have it."[180] Most of Barney's remarks from this period reveal her

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[179] Tina Barney, *Visiting Artists Program*, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago: The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2004).

[180] Tina Barney, Oral History as narrated to Deanne Thompson, 1983, Regional Department Oral History Collection, The Community Library, Ketchum, ID.

anxiety resulting from leaving her extended family on the East Coast to live in Sun Valley and also the fear that her own immediate family was falling apart.

The notion of yearning for a home is also illustrated in Barney's *House Painters* (1980) (Fig. 60), which depicts a team of six house painters working on the front of a blue house. The symmetrical house is flanked by black iron streetlights, giving the impression that this is a calm and orderly place to live. This humdrum activity was deemed important enough for Barney to stop and capture with her camera, and the photograph acts as proof that the homeowners cared about their home enough to invest time and money into its upkeep. She ruminates, "I was always amazed that people keep fixing up their houses, and I thought that maybe the upkeep of the house tends to keep the family together. The family may be growing apart, but the wife might say, 'Oh, honey, don't you think we should paint the room?' That activity may keep them together."[181] Barney's tendency to connect the family with home improvement was most likely a result of having two interior decorators in her family. In *House Painters*, Barney captures what, in fact, she was lacking in Sun Valley, which was a sense of family and permanence.

After three months in Sun Valley, a pivotal moment occurred in Barney's life during her first visit back to Manhattan for the holidays. She recounts how she went to a formal party thrown by her aunt before seeing any of her family members and she walked into the room all dressed up and saw her sister, Jill. She describes, "I went over to her in the middle of all these people. And I went up and hugged her and started crying…when I mean crying, I started sobbing. And the funny thing is, is that she didn't think I had lost my mind or anything, but she started crying too. And I remember looking around at the

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[181] Barney cited in Judith Olch Richards, ed. *Inside the Studio: Two Decades of Talks with Artists in New York* (New York: Independent Curators International, 2004), 128.

people saying, 'I don't give a damn what they think!'" Then her mother and brother

started coming over to ask why she was crying and she started crying more. She

continues, "And I couldn't tell them…what it was and that I had missed, you know, them,

or my sister so much."[182] This unusual show of public affection, probably one of the few

times in Barney's life, solidified how much she missed her family and caused Barney to

move towards featuring these people in her work.

　　　Barney started creating photography that would force her family to be together.

She would call family members and arrange times for them to be there all at once and try,

somewhat unsuccessfully, to decrease the physical space between them in the

photographs, which acted as an indication of their emotional detachment. Barney

explains, "when people say there is a distance, a stiffness in my photographs, that the

people look like they do not connect, my answer is, that this is the best that we can do.

This inability to show physical affection is in our heritage."[183] Switching from a handheld

35 mm camera to a Toyo 4x5 Field camera, which required a tripod, long exposure times,

and bright light, Barney had to direct her family members and friends and encourage

them to hold their pose for three to four seconds.

　　　Barney's photographs from 1981-1983 are quite revealing. They are characterized

by a sense of distance and coldness. Through the work, Barney's initial shyness is

palpable as she shot at least ten feet away from her subjects. The long exposure times

also aggravated the formal atmosphere and lack of spontaneity. For instance, in *Mom's

Dinner Party* (1982) (Fig. 61), Barney captures her mother from a considerable distance

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[182] Tina Barney, Oral History as narrated to Deanne Thompson, 1983, Regional Department Oral History Collection, The Community Library, Ketchum, ID.

[183] Tina Barney, *Tina Barney: Photographs: Theater of Manners* (New York: Scalo, 1997), 10.

in the middle of her dining room set for a formal dinner party. Her mother, wears an icy,

blank stare, a floor-length evening dress, and pearls and stands as straight as the

candlesticks in their silver holders. Luxuries such as china, a lace tablecloth, silver

tureen, and crystal stemware are put perfectly in place. Whereas most of Barney's other

photographs are taken from a sideways angle, Barney chose to capture her mother from a

severe frontal position. Barney's photograph reveals her distant relationship with her

mother and her childhood memories when she and her sister were invited to eat dinner

with her parents as a performance.[184] Barney writes, "I was never allowed in my parents'

room or even the kitchen. To go into the living room was almost a daring thing to do, like

I was crossing some kind of 'out-of-limits' border."[185] The idea of maintaining a

boundary line between her and her mother is succinctly expressed in this photograph.

However, from 1982-1983, subtle changes occurred in Barney's imagery.

Although Barney still arranged family members and friends inside their homes, she

started to shoot closer to her subjects, making them larger and more approachable. She

mounted a Norman light on top of her 4x5 camera in order to decrease the exposure time

of a shot. As a result, her subjects became more candid, allowing her to introduce more of

a narrative into the scene. Despite the fact that some changes were produced by technical

changes, the shift in focus to a narrative of everyday life can be attributed to another

source—the influence of seventeenth-century Dutch painting.

At first, Barney struggled with trying to make her photographs visually

stimulating for the viewer and turned to books dealing with visual perception in paintings

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[184] Tina Barney, Oral History as narrated to Deanne Thompson, 1983, Regional Department Oral History Collection, The Community Library, Ketchum, ID.

[185] Tina Barney, *Tina Barney: Photographs: Theater of Manners* (New York: Scalo, 1997), 10.

for inspiration. She remarked, "I was reading Arnheim, Fried, Berger, and learning all about how the eye sees light and how the viewer responds when, for example, paint is raised from the surface of a canvas. It made me realize how difficult it is to turn the viewer's mind on with a photograph because it's just a silly piece of flat paper."[186] She elaborated that she studied Italian Renaissance painters to educate herself on how to organize the composition of her work. However, Dutch genre painting emerged as being the more suitable art historical source for her photographic and psychological desires.

At a point in her early career, Barney read Svetlana Alpers's revolutionary book, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (1983). Alpers argued that rather than consider Dutch art through the framework of the Italian southern mode put forth by Alberti, it should be treated in the context of visual culture. One major reason to treat the two pictorial modes differently was because the Dutch presented their images as descriptions of the world seen by human vision instead of dramatic human actions based on texts, which were characteristic of Italian Renaissance paintings.[187] This resulted in a number of differences in Dutch art from the Italian mode including the lack of a positioned viewer, plays in scale, the absence of a frame, a sense of the picture as surface, emphasis on the craft of realistic representation, and lack of a path of stylistic development, what she calls the "northern descriptive mode."[188] Interestingly, Alpers

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[186] Anne-Celine Jaegar, *Image Makers, Image Takers* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 119-121.

[187] Although Alper's theories caused a rift between Alpers and Eddy de Jongh, who applied Panofsky's Italian model to Dutch painting, Barney does not make a distinction between Dutch art as description or as an allegorical, moralizing message. For Barney, it is both.

[188] Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), xxiii-xxv.

directly addresses the similarities between Dutch genre painting and photography in the book. She writes:

> Many characteristics of photographs—those very characteristics that make them so real—are common also to the northern descriptive mode: fragmentariness; arbitrary frames; the immediacy that the first practitioners expressed by claiming that the photograph gave nature the power to reproduce herself directly unaided by man. If we want historical precedence for the photographic image it is in the rich mixture of seeing, knowing, and picturing that manifested itself in seventeenth-century images.[189]

According to Alpers, both photography and seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting devote themselves to the depiction of reality, which is the same quality Barney strives to create for her audience. Peter Galassi, Curator of Photography at the Museum of Modern Art, preceded Alpers's declaration in his book, *Before Photography*. Galassi compares a perspectival view of an Italian city courtyard by a member of Piero della Francesca's circle with the interior of a Protestant Gothic church by Emanuel de Witte. He writes,

> Both pictures are faithful to the rules of perspective. But the earlier work [della Francesca's] is formed in the service of its subject's absolute order, while the later [de Witte's] submits to the disruptive influence of an ostensibly arbitrary viewpoint and moment in time. We stand outside the Italian view, admirers of the timeless perfection of the imaginary townscape; in de Witte's picture we are participants in the contingent experience of everyday life.[190]

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[189] Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 43.

[190] Peter Galassi, *Before Photography: Painting and the Invention of Photography* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1981), 14.

The latter effect is the one most characterized by photography. Therefore, the style of the "northern descriptive mode" achieves a more seamless translation into the photographic medium and this shift can be witnessed in most of Barney's photographs from the eighties.

Naturally, Barney concentrates more on the Dutch influence rather than the Italian mode due to the number of concerns shared by the aims of Dutch genre painters and those of the contemporary photographer. Barney explains, "I want the viewer to feel as if they could enter that room. The bigger I've made the people, the more prominent I've made them, the more realistic the whole thing has become."[191] The shift in Barney's images from the distant, formal style to the more realistic, narrative, Dutch style can be witnessed in *Amy, Mark, and Tara* (1983) (Fig. 62), where Barney features three of her family friends passing time together in a rented beach house after a swim. Amy, Mark, and Tara are all in their bathing suits with towels wrapped around them. Mark, Amy, and another person, who is cropped at the legs, form a triangle. They both have red striped beach towels and Amy's shirt competes with thinner red stripes. Barney recalled that this photograph had a personal significance for her because she had similar red-striped beach towels when she was younger, most likely at her country house on Long Island. The towels compliment other red elements in the room, which act as proof of Barney's increasing staging of the composition:

> I had a goal, become closer, get in more personal, more intimate. This is darn close-up. You see that red cookie box on top there, I put that there, and that red ball back there. That's all Dutch seventeenth-century painting.

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[191] Barney in "An Interview with Tina Barney," conducted by Elizabeth A.E. Titone, *N.O.A. Magazine of the Arts* 1, no. 6 (1989): 2.

Also my mother telling me when you decorate a room you should have lots of levels because then the eye bounces around the room and excites the eye. And I read this in the visual perception books, too, the more stuff you have going on, the more surfaces, the eye of the viewer gets excited."[192]

In this photograph, Barney merges the photographic with the style of seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting to create a meditation on family gatherings that ultimately provoke memories of Barney's own family gatherings as a child.

Not only does Barney place red objects at different height levels of the image, but by capturing the scene at an oblique angle, the viewer can also see red accents situated throughout the dining room and kitchen through a gallery of doorways. This treatment also echoes the "northern descriptive mode" in that Barney captures an unframed sequence of rooms similar to those created in paintings by Samuel Van Hoogstraten and Pieter Saenredam. Instead of using Alberti's one-point perspective, these northern artists utilized "distant point construction" to create a working surface. The difference being that the eye of the viewer, located outside the picture plane for Alberti's mode, has its counterpart in the picture. The objects have a distant point on each side that determines the location as well as the sight lines of the people in the image. This is exactly what Barney had in mind to make the flat piece of photographic paper interesting for her viewers. In fact, the right side of *Amy, Mark, and Tara* clearly resembles one of the sides of Samuel van Hoogstraten's peep boxes in which he used to experiment with distant point perspective (Fig. 63). Hoogstraten took a rectangular box with one open side and painted the sides, top, and bottom of the box with interior views of a Dutch home. The box had peep holes for the viewers on the shorter sides of the rectangular box, where they

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[192] Tina Barney, *Visiting Artists Program*, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago: The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2004).

could glimpse anamorphically painted interiors and the two dimensional would become three dimensional. On the right side, Hoogstraten painted a series of two rooms through two doorways similar to the two rooms in *Amy, Mark, and Tara*. Both of the neighboring rooms even contain a chair leaning against the wall. However, Barney could achieve these oblique views without hours of painting minute details—only with the twist of her camera and her choice of vantage point could she create the optical illusion that the photograph was a piece of three dimensional reality. In essence, Barney's image functions as a peep box with the fourth wall eliminated and condensed within the surface of the pictorial image.[193]

Dutch optical theorists, such as Jan Vredeman de Vries, often drew diagrams to illustrate the application of distant point perspective; likewise, Barney also created studies of the perspective system. When compared to a diagram of distant point perspective by de Vries in his treatise *Perspective* (Fig. 64)*,* the use of distant point perspective can be witnessed in Barney's photograph *The Checkered Floor* (1986) (Fig. 65). In de Vries's diagram, three figures are positioned in a room with various openings made by windows and doors. The distant points equidistant from the figures creates sight lines, which anchors them in place, and produces a horizon line. As a result, "the many eyes and many things viewed that make up such surfaces produce a syncopated effect. There is no way that we [the viewer] can stand back and take in a homogenous space." [194] In *The Checkered Floor*, Barney's scene of two men talking and a woman holding a baby in a room is laid out according to distant point perspective. Rather than cater to an

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[193] Victor Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting*, Anne-Marie Glasheen, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 44.

[194] Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), 53-62.

assumed exterior viewer, Barney's photograph contains multiple views from the distant points created by the various figures' sight lines in the room. Barney pays homage to painting as she includes two painted portraits of men whose sight lines add more distant points to the room. Additionally, she captures a room that is similar to the one in the diagram with windows and doors left ajar at various degrees away from the wall to reveal openings where both doors to the right bear a remarkable similarity. It also has a black and white checkered floor, which mirrors the grid lines found on the floor in de Vries's illustration, and was often featured in seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings. The distant point perspective of Barney's photograph forces viewers to look up and down, in and out, and side to side due at the multiple distant points throughout the room.

What also attracted Barney to Dutch art was most likely the emphasis placed upon the home, which is an important thrust behind many Dutch genre paintings. According to Simon Schama, in his chronicle of Dutch society's post-Spanish rule, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, which Barney had read, the Dutch home was considered the soul of the commonwealth. Being a homeowner conferred a significant amount of authority—it dictated membership in a guild, affiliation with a religious congregation, and eligibility for the civic militia. Schama explains that the household protected the culture from the ruinous effects of materialism. He writes, "When food, lust, sloth, indolence, and vain luxury were subdued by the domestic virtues—sobriety, frugality, piety, humility, aptitude, and loyalty—they were deprived of their dirt, which is to say, their capacity for inflicting harm or jeopardizing the soul."[195] Where the Dutch home

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[195] Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London: Fontana, 1987), 388.

promised the continuance of ordered society, Barney believed that the home protected the

family unit from demise.

However, as much as Dutch genre painting and Barney's images represent a

"slice of life" and depict everyday activities such as eating a meal or maintaining the

home, Dutch artists such as Pieter de Hooch and Gabriel Metsu cast their reality in an

ideal light. Meyer Raphael Rubinstein explains that the imagery produced under the

realm of the Protestant bourgeoisie caused the religious conscience to emerge in two

forms: first, through the idealization of reality separated from the ravages of war and

finance; secondly, the narratives contained a dash of moralizing.[196] These two qualities

surface in Barney's work as well, whether intentionally or otherwise.

Barney's longing for family while in Sun Valley led her to create an idealized

version of family. She writes,

> I've always insisted on making positive work about positive things—on
> being optimistic. I'm just disgusted with the gloom and doom of what's
> been going on in the art world today. I keep thinking, why are the greatest,
> the most profound, most powerful works of art are about cynicism and
> negativity? I just keep trying to hold true to that belief-that you can say
> something in a positive, optimistic way.[197]

Unfortunately, while Barney tried to create a pleasant portrait of family life, like the

Dutch artists, photography presented limitations that were exclusive to the medium.

German theorist Walter Benjamin describes the ability of the camera to capture what is

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[196] Meyer Raphael Rubinstein, "Life Styles of the Protestant Bourgeoisie: The Photographs of Tina
Barney," *Arts Magazine*, April 1988: #.

[197] Barney in "An Interview with Tina Barney," conducted by Elizabeth A.E. Titone, *N.O.A. Magazine
of the Arts* 1, no. 6 (1989): 3.

unseen by the naked eye, an accidental "spark" that he terms the "optical unconscious."

He writes, "While it is possible to give an account of how people walk, if only in the

most inexact way, all the same we know nothing definite of the positions involved in the

fraction of a second when the step is taken. Photography, however, with its time lapses,

enlargements, etc. makes such knowledge possible." While Benjamin uses the example of

a physical act such as walking, the optical unconscious can also reveal emotions not

detected by the naked eye, for he likens the exposure of the optical unconscious of the

camera to the discovery of the "drives of the unconscious through psychoanalysis."[198]

For example, in *Sunday New York Times* (1982) (Fig. 66), Barney captures the

family ritual of reading the Sunday newspaper together. The camera catches the man's

hollow expression at the head of the table, the frustrated face of the mother holding her

child, and the alienated comportment of each member engrossed in their own world.

When critics commented on the coldness inherent in her family images, Barney replied,

"I've tried not to show negativity or criticism…people think my photographs are lonely

or tense. I don't want them to be but I guess that's there."[199] Although the families are

aware that Barney's camera is present, it still picks up the accidental in her work. This

type of situation reveals the failure of the ideal family life, even for those who seemed to

have perfect lives and also reflects Barney's own reality growing up. While reflecting on

capturing people during family gatherings, Barney explains, "the kind of family scene

that is in this photograph, I don't think happened that often in my family. Or if it did, it

was forced. The people did not connect that well …. basically, no one really knew each

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[198] Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," in *Classic Essays on Photography*, edited by Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven, CT: Leete's Island Books, 1980), 202-203.

[199] Tina Barney cited in Andy Grundberg, "Tina's World," *New York Times*, 41.

other very well…I don't even know if they cared about each other. They knew they were

supposed to, but I don't even know if they actually felt."[200]

From 1983 to 1986, Barney continued to produce work that was heavily

influenced by seventeenth century Dutch genre paintings, especially highly structured

spaces that dictate gender differences and divisions of labor. Barney's preference for

interiors were related to the fact that the spaces had an automatic structure around which

she could organize the figures. Barney claimed, "The interior as a background is so much

more interesting than the landscape outside. There is nothing to make a structure out

of."[201] The construction of her images mirrors the practices of seventeenth century Dutch

genre painters such as Pieter de Hooch who would also use the architectural structures of

paintings to delineate spaces for the different sexes. De Hooch would often paint the

structural elements first and then insert the figures afterward. This rigid mode of

organization established order in regard to masculine and feminine roles as well as power

hierarchies within the household. Such paintings reflected the Calvinist values of the day,

with males associated with politics, commerce, and the establishment of the home while

women were relegated to the domestic roles of caring for the children and overseeing the

servants.[202] As a result, in the interior scenes, men were usually not present, seen in the

background, or their presence was signaled indirectly, for example, through a painted

portrait within the painting. However, although men were not at the forefront of domestic

activity, they still were to "preside over a household as a sovereign presides over a

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[200] Tina Barney, Oral History as narrated to Deanne Thompson, 1983, Regional Department Oral History Collection, The Community Library, Ketchum, ID.

[201] Tina Barney, "So the Story Goes," (exhibition talk, Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL, 2006).

[202] Martha Hollander, *An Entrance for the Eyes: Space and Meaning in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 162.

nation."[203] Moreover, de Hooch often depicted a scene combining interiors with an exterior view of a courtyard or a cityscape to emphasize the permeability of the different realms onto each other.

For instance, in *Woman and Child in a Bleaching Ground* by Pieter de Hooch (c. 1657-1659) (Fig. 67), a woman and child are enclosed within two courtyard walls closing off a cityscape of large homes and a church bell tower. In the foreground, the woman is laying laundry on the ground while the female child looks on. De Hooch affords viewers a glimpse of a couple talking through an open doorway. Through another opening in the courtyard, there is a small figure of a man in a dark cloak and hat approaching the courtyard. The juxtaposition of the walking man and townscape from a distance with the large figure of the mother in the front is clear: men are relegated to the outside world of Church, state, and commerce while women and children's place is in the home.[204]

Like many Dutch interior paintings from the seventeenth century, men rarely make an appearance in Barney's photographs; most of the scenes contain primarily women and children. However, there are a few instances where men take center stage. These rare appearances serve to support traditional gender roles just as in the seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings. Barney's photograph *John's Den* (1985) (Fig. 68) portrays John and his two sons inhabiting his study in a Manhattan apartment—John stands in a business suit on the left side of the room and the two young sons, one sitting, and one standing, both in private school uniforms, on the right side of the room. John is separated from the boys by a couch and the three figures form a triangle in which John is

[203] Martha Hollander, *An Entrance for the Eyes: Space and Meaning in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 165.

[204] Martha Hollander, *An Entrance for the Eyes: Space and Meaning in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 162.

the apex. He stands near a window overlooking other apartment buildings and near a table littered with books, newspapers, Marlboro cigarettes, a lighter, and mail. While reading the business newspaper *Barron's* (he is most likely involved in finance), John throws an admonishing look to the blond son who seems to be apologizing for some type of offense while the other son appears to be amused at the situation.

Although the scene takes place indoors, it emphasizes that a man's role is to leave the home to participate in the events of the exterior world. The paternal figure's placement near the window and the view of the city buildings form a connection to the man's business outside of the home and the couch provides a barrier to the domestic realm. His formal business attire and cigarettes reinforce his masculinity and the newspaper, books, and mail underline the existence of a world outside of the home to which he is connected. His severe stance towards the younger boy also reveals that the threat of paternal authority presiding over the household is still relevant. According to a 1984 study of upper class women, sociologist Susan Ostrander reports little change in traditional gender roles and noted that men dominate the decision-making in upper class households. The traditional framework is kept in tact because "the need to uphold class standards from one generation to the next is of such importance that tensions do not seem to be a cause for concern or change. The women primarily want their children to repeat the patterns that they themselves experienced growing up."[205] In Barney's image, as the father scolds the son, he is, in effect, preparing him for the outside world and passing down accepted manners and educating him about the male's role in the upper class household.

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[205]Susan Ostrander, *Women of the Upper Class* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), 143.

Another example of Barney's placement of men occurs in *Philip and Philip* (1985) (Fig. 69), where Barney's brother and young nephew sit on a step outside a house. The composition of the photograph is dictated by the architecture of the porch—the figures are centrally positioned and enclosed by the exterior wall of the house and bushes on the left side and the columns of the porch gallery on the right. Straight back, the viewer sees the door to the house, emphasizing the males' position outside, yet not entirely disconnected from the domestic realm. The pose of Philip and Philip also serve to reiterate the idea of paternal authority—the younger Philip sits with his arms wrapped around his father's legs as if they were the arms of a throne while the father's torso supports his back and his arms form a protective wall around him with his head towering above. This unusual pose, along with the title bearing their names, Philip and Philip, reveals how paternal authority gets passed down and repeated from generation to generation.

Often, in seventeenth century Dutch imagery, when men do appear in the interior scene, they are often separated from a domestic scene between mothers and children by some sort of an architectural division and are often shown attending to their own work.[206] For example, in Hendrik Sorgh's *The Family of Eewout Prins* (1661) (Fig. 70), a mother and her two children appear enlarged in the foreground as the mother feeds her daughter a biscuit and supports her toddler who plays with a rattle. A begging dog and scattered toys on the floor surround them. The mother is fully engaged and physically connected to her two daughters. Further back, on the right side of the painting, the father appears through a doorway of a back room that is lined with books as he attends to some

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[206] Martha Hollander, *An Entrance for the Eyes: Space and Meaning in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 166.

paperwork and monitors the scene.[207] This commissioned painting provides a clear

visualization of the proper roles of mothers and fathers in the home—the mother takes

care of the children, while the father works to support the household financially.

In *The Red Guitar* (1986) (Fig. 71), Barney uses the Dutch paradigm yet applies

it to situations in the contemporary world, namely, fathers' emotional estrangement from

their families due to long working hours and a general dissolution of family unity. Barney

depicts a mother and her teenage son in a room in the foreground of the image. Through

the open French doors and across the threshold of the room, the father is looking down

and grimacing with his eyes closed. Although only the father is separated by the

architectural division of the rooms, all of the figures are emotionally detached from one

another and in their own worlds—the mother is on the floor playing with two black dogs

and the son is playing his guitar. This is reiterated by the inclusion of two photographs on

a side table in the right corner of the room: one is of the much younger father holding the

son as a toddler and the other depicts the father and mother in an embrace. These

photographs provide visual evidence that there once was a time when the family,

including the father, was affectionate and enjoyed each other's company. By the close of

the 1970s, the American family was an embattled institution--divorce rates hit an all-time

high, climbing from 9% out of 1000 married couples in 1960 to 23% in 1980.[208] Barney's

own marriage also ended in divorce in 1983 and the tension between married couples

often surface in her work. Unlike the Dutch model, Barney chooses to update the portrait

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[207] Martha Hollander, *An Entrance for the Eyes: Space and Meaning in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 166-167.

[208] Sar A Levitan, Richard S. Belous, and Frank Gallo, *What's Happening to the American Family?* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins university Press, 1988), 9.

of the family, not only including the separation of the sexes, but also the lack of emotional connection between all members of the family.

Besides the penchant for separating males from females within the paintings, seventeenth-century Dutch painters also made a distinction between the social classes and Barney echoes this treatment in her photographs.[209] Between ten and twenty percent of Dutch households employed at least one servant in the mid-to-late seventeenth century.[210] Similarly, families in Barney's social circle and her own family often had live-in help. In fact, her great-grandfather Philip Lehman was known to have the highest servant to person ratio on Millionaire's row, with seven live-in servants for three people.[211]

In *Woman and Maid in a Courtyard* by Pieter de Hooch (c. 1660-1663) (Fig. 72), the courtyard is considered as an outside extension of the interior of the home. A woman and her maid occupy the space, which is bisected by a diagonal gutter, enclosing the maid between a fence and a fountain as she squats down to cook a fish in a caldron. The woman, standing on the other side of the gutter, is seen from the back, extending her hand towards the maid. Presumably, the male of the house is located outside of this domestic scene, as he is shown approaching the courtyard through a gate. While the male is associated with duties outside of the domestic realm yet again, the women are also

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[209] Martha Hollander, *An Entrance for the Eyes: Space and Meaning in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 129-130.

[210] Haks cited in Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London: Fontana, 1987), 455.

[211] Christopher Gray, "Interior Details Come Home Again to Millionaires' Row," *New York Times*, June 18, 2006, http://www.nytimes.com/2006/06/18/realestate/18scap.html?_r=1&fta=y&oref=slogin.

fixed in separate areas of the picture, which reveals the domestic hierarchy as they tend to their household duties.[212]

In Barney's earlier photographs, there are two memorable instances where housekeepers make an appearance and they are both isolated from the members of the family in the image. In *Beverly, Jill, and Polly* (1982) (Fig. 73), Barney's sister, Jill, her niece, Polly, and their housekeeper, Beverly, are assembled in a pink bedroom with chintz curtains. Clothes, sheets, pillows, and towels are strewn around the untidy room. On the right side of the image, Jill and Polly are grouped together—Jill, sitting at the vanity table, her back to the viewer, while Polly is leaning on the built-in shelf to Jill's right looking down. As Jill and Polly are getting dressed and made-up for the day, both seem oblivious to Beverly's presence in the room. On the other hand, Beverly, who is black, is outfitted in a pink and white striped uniform on the left side of the room with her back to Jill and Polly. While she is in the process of making the bed, Beverly stares at a white woman's face on the cover of a fashion magazine whose headline reads, "How to look younger everyday." Although there is no architectural division or strong line to separate the women, viewers are aware of the class hierarchy in the room due to the difference in race, attire, position, and activity. The fact that Jill and Beverly have their backs to each other divides the image with an invisible diagonal line and juxtaposes the two women's different conceptions of "work": making the bed or making up the face. The diagonal line also creates a symmetrical mirror effect where Jill looks into her own reflection while Beverly meets the gaze of the white women on the cover of the magazine.

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[212] Martha Hollander, *An Entrance for the Eyes: Space and Meaning in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 171-173.

The division of race and class in this particular image proved to be problematic for Barney when she discussed it during public lectures. The audience mostly reacted to the fact that it featured a black woman as a servant to which Barney responded, "I was not thinking about race at all, I was thinking about the harmony, the things that match in the palette. I thought that these three people were equal. There is space between them though. I think that it is a very relaxed photograph."[213] Although Barney acknowledges the space between the women, it is unrealistic for her to believe that they would be viewed as equals, given that the relationship between employer and employee is never equal for any type of job, especially in the domestic realm given the historical/racial connotations of a black maid working in a white family's home.

Seventeenth century Dutch genre paintings of families featuring servants also revealed if and to what degree they were integrated into the family unit. For instance, in Pieter de Hooch's *Portrait of a Family Making Music* (1663), a family holding their musical instruments is positioned in the foreground of the painting while the maid is banished to the back room with two small children. The decision to remove the maid from the foreground scene and place her in the back indicates that she, along with the younger children, was not considered a full-fledged family member and therefore did not contribute to the family harmony.[214] Likewise, in Tina Barney's photograph *The Portrait* (1984) (Fig. 74), a mother reading on a bed hands her toddler off to her standing teenage son. The three figures are shown embracing as the mother smiles at her children. Across the room, a maid dressed in a uniform and pink apron stands to the side with her hand to

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[213] Tina Barney, *Seminar with Artists Series*, Whitney Museum of American Art (New York: Education Department, 1990).

[214] Martha Hollander, *An Entrance for the Eyes: Space and Meaning in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 130.

her chin and watches the interaction between the mother and children with a wistful expression. Although she may be regarded as a "member of the family," the mother chooses to pass her daughter to her son in a close family moment that cannot be penetrated by the housekeeper.

Barney continued to create images that contained moral undertones based on tactics used by seventeenth-century Dutch artists who drew inspiration from texts such as domestic conduct books, especially by Jacob Cats, biblical texts, history, and mythology. In *Jill and Polly in the Bathroom* (1987) (Fig. 75), Barney creates a subtle reminder of the brevity of life in a vanity scene once again featuring her sister, Jill, and her niece, Polly. Barney huddled with them in a small pink bathroom and captured Jill looking directly at the camera with an anxious stare and her eyebrows raised while pulling back curtains to reveal a distant view of a small white doghouse and a picket fence. Polly, to the right, self-reflectively looks down, as she reaches for the handle of a hairbrush resting on the bathroom sink. Painted scenes of a young girl at her toilette were commonly depicted by seventeenth-century Dutch genre artists such as Gerard ter Borch, Gabriel Metsu, or the Utrecht School. However, instead of the aims of the latter that featured a chamber pot in the foreground to poke fun at women's vanity, Barney covers up the bidet in the corner with a cloth to indicate a more serious tone.

The photograph of the tiny room presents a number of radically different surfaces—mirror, flowered chintz curtains, and window—which serve to open up the space and invite the viewers into the image. Barney describes, "I specifically placed the hairbrush at an angle so that it tweaks your brain into paying attention to the things that are the most important. It's a Dutch seventeenth-century gimmick. The viewer doesn't

know it, but it works. I've always believed in the power of the centre. Seeing the radiator, the window and the picket fence draws the viewer into the space, which is also a Dutch seventeenth-century thing."[215]

In the same vein, the origin of Jill's pose, pulling the curtain back to reveal the doghouse, can be traced to an earlier work, *Woman Reading a Letter* (1663)(Fig. 76) by Gabriel Metsu. In Metsu's work, a woman reads a letter by the light of a window while her maid pulls back a curtain covering a painting of a ship at sea. Although many explanations have been offered, the most accepted is that the maid's gesture shows a connection between the contents of the letter and the rocky path of the boat. The figure of the maid also echoes a common characteristic featured in Netherlandish dramas, an actor who served as an interlocutor between the audience and the play's narrative.[216] In Barney's case, Jill acts as the narrator to the viewer as she pulls back the curtain to reveal the doghouse, which the viewer can comprehend that someone in the image perhaps "is in the doghouse" or has fallen out of favor.

For Dutch painting, the window functioned as a boundary between the interior and exterior. Art historian and theorist Victor Stoichita asserts that if it weren't for the window, there wouldn't be a distance from which to consider the landscape, *i.e.,* nature. He writes, "This whole tradition of the image of nature assumes the existence of a 'cultural' indeed 'civilized' space *from* which an *outside* is contemplated.[217] In Barney's case, nature is the aging process that is considered from a distant cultural standpoint.

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[215] Anne-Celine Jaegar, *Image Makers, Image Takers* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 121.

[216] Martha Hollander, *An Entrance for the Eyes: Space and Meaning in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), 75-76.

[217] Victor Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting*, Anne-Marie Glasheen, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 34.

A mirrored wall dominates the left third of the photograph where viewers see the scene reversed in Jill's reflection. In order for Jill's image to be reflected back, she needs to be present in front of the mirror. The same holds true for photography—in order for Barney to take an image of Jill and Polly, they need to be present in front of the camera lens as referents. Barney realizes the ephemerality inherent in the mirror and feels the impulse to stop time with her camera.[218]

Another link between this photograph and Dutch genre painting is Barney's heavy reliance on symbolism. Besides the doghouse, a broken porcelain soap dish is located to the right of the bathroom sink. Barney explains why the dish is broken: "See that dish, well I broke that in the bathtub and I felt badly that I broke my sister's dish. Somehow my self-conscious says 'This is important.' The dish split in half. I decided to leave that dish broken in half there. So that was a conscious decision." Barney's act of placing the broken dish on the sink reveals the underlying meaning of the photograph: the broken dish, much as the same way the blown bubble functions in Dutch paintings, represents the brevity and ephemerality of life. Coupled with the juxtaposition of Jill, a middle-aged woman, and Polly, an adolescent girl, the photograph is translated into a representation of the life cycle of women.

Dutch painters often depicted young women on the verge of marrying age in their paintings. It was a crucial time in order to ensure the preservation of a woman's purity before she was promised to a male partner. As a result, Dutch artists would paint scenes of young girls to warn against choosing a mate based on passion, not enduring values,

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[218] Victor Stoichita, *The Self-Aware Image: An Insight into Early Modern Meta-Painting*, Anne-Marie Glasheen, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 184-185.

and also to beware of fleeting beauty. Dutch poet Jacob Cats captures this notion in one of his poems:

> Blond turns to gray
> Light-hearted becomes grave
> Red lips will turn blue
> Beauteous cheeks will be dull
> Agile legs become stiff
> And nimble feet halt
> Plump bodies lean
> Fine skin wrinkled[219]

As the viewer's glance moves from Polly's round, dewy, carefree complexion next to angular, wrinkled, and bespectacled Jill, Barney's photograph serves as a reminder that Polly's beauty will inevitably begin to fade, as did Jill's. Barney comments, "I always feel that there is a warning. A be careful. This could fall apart, this could change, be careful."[220]

The underlying fear of loss is constantly present in Barney's photography and accounts for much of her moralizing—the loss of family, her marriage, her children, beauty and youth, money, or life itself. Dutch society in the seventeenth century also shared the sense that if the citizens enjoyed the hard-won freedom from Spain and prosperity too much, they would be punished by having it taken away. In the *Embarrassment of Riches*, Simon Schama asserts, "It was an axiom of Dutch culture that what the flood gave, the flood could take away."[221] This fear became embedded in the

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[219] Jacob Cats cited in Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London: Fontana, 1987), 437.

[220] Tina Barney in *Tina Barney: Social Studies*, DVD, directed by Jaci Judelman (France/USA: Yare Films, 2005).

[221] Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London: Fontana, 1987), 47.

republic's identity. Barney repeats this sentiment in her work, which is largely due to her father's unexpected death when she was just 12 years old. "The idea of the father dying was kind of terrifying. And I think from then on, I prepared myself for something bad happening to anybody to I knew or cared about…or I always, you know, think about the worst first, because then if it happens then you are okay."[222] The tendency to fear having something suddenly taken away comes across in Barney's images from this period.

According to Schama, in order to allay the threat to the well being of the Dutch Republic, many Calvinist ministers preached temperance in regard to spending, diet, drink, dress, and sexual relations. The effects of these constant warnings came out consciously or subconsciously in the work of Dutch artists. On Jan Steen's disorderly households, Schama wrote, "the action (or inaction) functions as an exemplary charade, acting out the anthology of proverbs and epigrams to which the Dutch were so devoted."[223] Barney's photographs also presage the destruction of a family's moral make-up and well-being.

In *Graham Cracker Box* (1983)(Fig. 77), Barney portrays a mother and her teenage son and three young children in the kitchen. Barney lowered the camera to take the image from the corner of the table at a slightly upturned angle to catch the three young children in the foreground sitting restlessly at the table after a meal. A large graham cracker box is turned on its side and the open end sits precariously on the edge of the table. In the background, the mother stands in her tennis whites drinking a glass of

[222] Tina Barney, Oral History as narrated to Deanne Thompson, 1983, Regional Department Oral History Collection, The Community Library, Ketchum, ID.

[223] Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London: Fontana, 1987), 391.

white wine as the light filters in through the door. The teenager anchors the left side of the image as he sits in a chair talking on the phone. Barney describes her choice of vantage point: "The slanting of the table … is kind of typical of my structures. Falling off the picture, this fear that it's all going to fall down and just go away. That kind of fear that I walk around with everyday."[224] The lack of the father, the mother's imbibing in the middle of the afternoon, the despondency of the children, and the position of the graham cracker box on the table all point to a future dissolution of the happy family caused by excesses--drinking, material possessions, and lack of appreciation for fellow family members.

Part IV. Conclusion

By 1989, Barney had grown disillusioned with featuring her family and friends in their impressive surroundings. She disliked how critics would focus primarily on the "richy-rich" interiors of her subjects and ignore her goal of getting closer and staging a narrative. Critics labeled Barney's family members and friends WASPs; however, Barney disagreed with their assessment and explained that the people in her book, *Theater of Manners*, were not WASP at all. Barney clarifies,

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[224] Tina Barney, *Seminar with Artists Series*, Whitney Museum of American Art (New York: Education Department, 1990).

After Ralph Lauren you got a whole group of people that wanted to look like the real McCoy, that were in my book, the true preppy. Not WASP, because that word is absolutely stupid because half the people in my book are not WASP at all. I think it's very interesting how people want to imitate something that is real. It is something that they look up to and it's a symbol of something that they want to be or work for. In that they'll wear the uniform or even decorate their houses to look like the real McCoy.[225]

Indeed, Barney's own ancestors tried to downplay their Jewish background in order to be accepted by the WASP establishment of old New York, for instance, her father changed his last name from Ickelheimer to Isles and her great-uncle collected European paintings, especially Dutch, to gain entrance to the Met Board of Trustees as well as social invitations.

Barney's choice to model her photographs as an updated version of Dutch painting in order to capture the American family parallels the actions of those who try to attain an ideal world disparate from their own. Photography critic Andy Grundberg writes,

…the "secret" of Barney's work, if indeed there is a fixed one, is not that of Jews masquerading as WASPs; rather, it is the revelation that "WASPness" is a social construction, a convention, an artifice that can be called into play by anyone who cares to learn its codes. . . . In short, what we see in Barney's pictures is not WASPness, but its representation.[226]

Barney's photography also functions as a representation by invoking the codes of Dutch genre painting—realism, distant point perspective, narrative, morality—to transform a

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[225]Tina Barney in *Tina Barney: Social Studies*, DVD, directed by Jaci Judelman (France/USA: Yare Films, 2005).

[226] Andy Grundberg, "Tina Barney: An Afterword," *Tina Barney: Photographs: Theater of Manners* (New York: Scalo, 1997), 253-254.

flat piece of paper into a rich, intertextual surface. Ultimately, Barney's work reveals that everyone learns behavior codes in order to ascend to a more flattering representation—be it social status, in her great-uncle's case, or a happy family, in Barney's case.

Once again, I revisit *The Trustee and the Curator* (1995) (Fig. 44) that was introduced in the beginning of this chapter. Besides linking Barney to the Lehman Collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, it also reveals how Barney looked to painting for her subject matter in her early career. Although other art historical influences can be traced in Barney's work, it was Dutch genre painting that dominated her work from 1983 to the late eighties. When asked what was the best way to learn about photography, Barney responds, "It all comes down to looking at a piece of art and dissecting it and understanding how it's put together."[227] In order to find subject matter she advises, "Look at your own life. Read about art, go and see art."[228] These words perfectly sum up how Barney first ignited her career as a photographer, by looking at her life as a depressed, young mother away from her extended family in Sun Valley, Idaho; by reading visual perception books for ideas; and finally, by finding inspiration in paintings she had seen throughout her life.

For her next series, *The Europeans*, which will be explored in the next chapter, Barney continues to pre-visualize based on painting compositions; however, for the first time, she ventures out of her family circle to photograph European families as an outsider, yet works to maintain a connection with her subjects in order to capture their interfamilial relationships. As a result of her new position, Barney will attain the closest

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[227] Anne-Celine Jaegar, *Image Makers, Image Takers* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 124.

[228] Anne-Celine Jaegar, *Image Makers, Image Takers* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 2007), 124.

approximation to "new art photography" and the tableau form as she acts as an

intermediary between her subjects and the audience and achieves positionality.

Following Robert Lehman's death in 1969, Lehman Brothers gradually passed out of the hands of the family to become a massive multinational corporation. Due to the subprime mortgage crisis, on September 15, 2008, Lehman Brothers filed for bankruptcy with over $600 billion of debt, the largest to date in United States history. Although most of the family was not tied to the firm, some family members were still sad "to see the family name go down the drain."[229] Yet, the Robert Lehman Collection and the Lehman name continue to live on at The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

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[229] Wendy Lehman Lash cited in Marissa Brostoff, "The Lehmans? They've Moved On. Sad? A Little," *Forward*, September 26, 2008. See http://www.forward.com/articles/14237/

CHAPTER THREE *The Europeans*: Mapping Positionality

Part I: Ethnographic Fashion Photography

In the 2005 film *Tina Barney: Social Studies*, Barney is in the living room of Frédéric Malle, French perfumer, founder of *Editions de Parfum*, and nephew of film director Louis Malle, gently directing his family in French and photographing them among their eclectic mix of antiques, mid-century modern furniture, and contemporary art to create the photograph *The Red Sneakers* (2002) (Fig. 78). She speaks French to the decorous children, trying to make them comfortable and instructs Malle's wife to stand behind her daughter. In the film, Barney describes finding herself in this situation, thinking under her black cloth, 'How the hell did I get here?'[230]

By "here," Barney refers to the numerous homes of aristocratic and upper-class families in Europe that she visited in order to create her series *The Europeans*. In the late 1990s, Barney grew emotionally exhausted from photographing her family and friends, and, at the suggestion of fellow artists Chuck Close and Dorothea Rockburne, applied for a visiting artist position at the American Academy in Rome, which she received. After being introduced to a well-known Italian family through a close friend, the wheels of her project were soon set in motion, which led to meetings with other families from similarly

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[230] *Tina Barney: Social Studies*, DVD, directed by Jaci Judelman (France/USA: Yare Films, 2005).

impressive backgrounds. Her project soon expanded to include families from Austria, England, France, Spain, and Germany over the course of eight years, from 1996 to 2004.

However, given Barney's social origins, the trajectory from her previous work to "here" is not as surprising as one would first consider. Sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, in his study of the diversity of the photography profession (ranging from darkroom workers to fine art photographers), argues that regardless of training, talent, or ability, social origins determine differences in professional status among photographers. Moreover, social origin not only determines the photographer's perception of the profession but also directly determines their field of specialization. In other words, a photographer's specialization, and therefore status, is determined by the importance of the object photographed. Barney's access to the crème de la crème of European society clearly supports Bourdieu's findings while providing yet another layer of meaning to her work vis à vis the positioning of herself in relation to her subjects.

Bourdieu offers several explanations why social origin influences a photographer's subject matter and status. For instance, a photographer from an established family automatically gains their family's connections to other wealthy families as potential subjects or collectors of their work, which in turn, improves their own status. He writes,

> The family fortune is not restricted to the communication of capital. One also inherits one's family connections and its reputation, which in turn creates connections. The extent of this network of family connections and the distinction of those connections acts as a protective milieu, first because it enables one to find work more easily and, from the moment of entry into the profession, to practice the most prestigious specializations, but even more so because the acquaintances communicated by one's

family or acquired though one's family function acts as a springboard into high society and into high society photography.[231]

This phenomenon can be witnessed in the discussion of Barney's earlier work in the two previous chapters. With little training and exhibition history, Barney still gained access to "the most prestigious specialization"—photographing the highest social class, based on her family origins and connections.

This access continued and flourished as she started to work in Europe. Barney explains how she was introduced to subjects for *The Europeans*: "I have a friend from Idaho who knew a member of an Italian family, a very well-known Italian family. And she said to me, 'Call my friend. She'll help you find people to photograph.' And then through an Austrian connection I met an Austrian woman married to an Italian. So I went knowing two people. And those two people helped me find other families. They knew nothing about my work."[232] Barney would show the families a small catalogue of her work but it was the social connection, the fact that they were asked by a friend to do them a favor that persuaded them to acquiesce and grant the request.

As a result of having access to these European families, Barney's status as a portrait photographer for the wealthy was further cemented. Bourdieu writes, "…the portrait, of all photographic genres, is the one which most easily allows one to be compared with the social milieu for which one is working: here it occurs directly via the

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[231] Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 166.

[232] Tina Barney, "Inside People: an Interview with Tina Barney" by Faye Hirsch, *Art on Paper*, May-June, 1999: 50.

person belonging to the prestigious milieu."[233] Throughout the working process, Barney's comments and behavior allude to the idea that she wanted to express her familiarity with those she encountered in Europe. For instance, while she was photographing a princess in Spain with Bulgarian ties in the film *Social Studies*, Barney noticed that she displayed a portrait of formerly exiled Bulgarian King Simeon II in her powder room. Barney asks the princess if she knows King Simeon and then informs her that her Bulgarian stepfather, Stephane Groueff, wrote the definitive biography of King Simeon. Afterwards, Barney exclaims, "What I can't believe is how everybody knows everybody else. Someone was telling me this quote—when you're at the top everybody knows each other. But it's true."[234]

Bourdieu observes that the photographer displays a "hypertrophy of social signs" in their cars, clothing, language, and way of life in order to fit in with their subjects, which has a more influential impact than photographic training. He reports, "The photographer should have a 'good general culture,' be a 'versatile character,' 'be able to do everything,' formulas which cover a whole host of vague qualities, all summed up in the expressions: 'having taste' and 'having class.'"[235] Since Barney's style of portraiture requires that her subjects feel at ease, she also would display signs of social class and have to "perform" in ways such as conversing with them in their language, especially in French and Italian. Barney explains, "It's such an effort and I am trying to work so hard to take a picture that I don't really want to talk to anybody…. Basically I wish I could not

[233] Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 164.

[234] *Tina Barney: Social Studies*, DVD, directed by Jaci Judelman (France/USA: Yare Films, 2005).

[235] Pierre Bourdieu, *Photography: A Middle-brow Art*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), 165.

say one word and think very hard on what I want to do but communicating has a lot to do with what I want to get."[236]

Moreover, in *Social Studies*, Barney's work in Europe is juxtaposed with stories from her own childhood growing up as the daughter of an investment banker and descendent of the Lehman family, and the voiceover mentions names of fashion designers she wore, exotic locations she traveled, and how her mother was a fashion model. Presumably, her privileged lifestyle continues into adulthood when Barney jokes that the black cloth she hides under while taking photographs should be designed by haute couturier Christian Lacroix. According to Bourdieu, Barney and most photographers who have prestigious specializations hope that their attention to fashion and the finer things in life will translate to "taste" in photographing their subjects.

Therefore, by beginning her artistic career with photographing her family and friends in the Northeast region of the United States, Barney succeeds in establishing her status as a portraitist of the wealthy, the most prestigious specialization in photography. Moreover, by shifting to European aristocrats, Barney allows herself to be associated with the upper-most echelon of people. In order to achieve this success, Barney relied on her social connections, rather than her previous photographic work and training, to gain access to the European families. Throughout *The Europeans'* creation, Barney displays the signs of her privileged upbringing and social origins to earn the trust of her European subjects, which ensures that her "taste" will translate to her depictions of them.

Nonetheless, as much as Barney improves her status as photographer and compares her upbringing to her subjects, one fact remains in the way of being fully accepted into their world: her American-ness. Barney comes from the very culture that

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[236] Tina Barney, in discussion with the author, January 2008.

rejected aristocracy in its bid for independence. Additionally, no matter how successful a

businessman is in the United States, in the minds of the aristocracy, it is in no way equal

to an aristocratic title. Barney's awareness of this impenetrable difference reveals itself in

her work in the form of ethnographic record. From *The Europeans'* exhibition and

catalogue organization to the persistence of distinguishable cultural signs found in her

work, Barney's series acts as an outsider's study of the aristocracy in seven European

countries. It is also a reification of the importance of belonging and location in Barney's

work, which began with her Watch Hill photographs discussed in chapter one.

   Barney's "Americanness" in relation to *The Europeans* is significant because at

the time she decided to travel to Europe in 1996, a number of European photographers

were breaking into the international arts scene and garnering favorable critical attention

with portraiture including Dutch photographer Rineke Dijkstra as well as German

photographers from the Düsseldorf Academy, Thomas Ruff and Thomas Struth.[237] At the

same time, according to Marxist theorist and contemporary art critic Julian Stallabrass in

his article, "What's in a Face? Blankness and Significance in Contemporary Art

Photography," a trend emerged in photography characterized by series of straightforward,

single-person portraits in standardized settings. The portraits disproportionately feature

young people and are most often accompanied by single-line captions stating the

subjects' first names and geographical locations. Stallabrass explains, "This strand of

images is visually akin to ethnographic photography of colonized peoples in controlled

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[237] Dijkstra's works first appeared in an exhibition in a major United States museum in 1997 with The Museum of Modern Art's inaugural series showcasing emerging photographers, "New Photography 13." http://www.rinekedijkstra.net/ Although Barney's single-person portraits created before 1997 from *Theatre of Manners* were inspired by Thomas Ruff, Barney has claimed that Dijkstra's works have been very important to her own body of work. Interview with the artist, January 29, 2008.

situations, and of that photography closest to the most objectifying type—that made with a measuring stick or standard grid."[238] Among the photographers whose work closely mirrored this trend, he counted Rineke Dijkstra and Thomas Ruff, and listed Tina Barney's work in passing as a variation on the theme in the company of Joel Sternfeld, Hellen van Meene, and Oliver Chanarin.

Stallabrass attempts to classify this new type of photography that seems to defy clear-cut categorization, being that it opposes the mannered portraiture of celebrated individuals, and defies the quasi-anthropological in which the photographer is intimately connected to the subjects, finally settling on "quasi-ethnographic," that is, ethnographic with elements of fashion photography due to the beauty of the subjects and settings. For Stallabrass, this strain forces the viewer to place the individual within a stereotype, yet also to question the stereotype through the unique beauty of the individual—a departure from fashion photography, which usually emphasizes individual expression, yet entices the consumer to identify with the model.[239]

Indeed, Barney's series *The Europeans* shares similarities with both the fashion and ethnographic modes of photography; however, Barney employs these elements to produce drastically different results from her counterparts' (especially Rineke Dijkstra's) high-resolution portraits of adolescents in a standardized frame. First, Barney has always expressed an affinity for fashion photography—her mother, Lillian Fox-Groueff, was a fashion model (a fact Barney is proud to point out in many interviews) and posed for

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[238] Julian Stallabrass, "What's in a Face?: Blankness and Significance in Contemporary Art Photography," *October* 122 (Fall 2007): 71.

[239] Julian Stallabrass, "What's in a Face?: Blankness and Significance in Contemporary Art Photography," *October* 122 (Fall 2007): 73.

legendary fashion photographers Horst P. Horst, Louise Dahl-Wolfe, and George

Hoyningen-Huene. Horst captured Barney's mother as a "Gibson Girl" for a fundraising

ball feature that appeared in American *Vogue* in 1941.[240] As a result, Barney produced a

documentary on Horst in 1988.[241]

Besides her family ties to fashion photography, Barney also crosses over into the

commercial realm occasionally and has produced editorial work for a number of

magazines including the London *Daily Telegraph*, *New York Times Magazine,* and *W*

magazine. These editorial assignments often resemble fashion and ethnographic

photography in appearance and subject matter. For instance, one of Barney's most

memorable assignments was for the *Daily Telegraph* to photograph The Scarlett Society.

Taking their name from the legendary film *Gone With The Wind*, this pseudo-sorority

comprised of career women in Atlanta, Georgia organizes match-making events where

the Scarletts invite a variety of Rhetts in the hopes that they will meet a mate. In line with

the quasi-ethnographic label her work earned, Barney's editor suggested at her

apprehension before the assignment, "Pretend you're going to Papua New Guinea."[242]

Barney chose to shoot the women in much the same way as she conducted herself with

her family and friends in Watch Hill and Manhattan—with a partly posed, partly

spontaneous style documenting well-dressed, attractive people in lavish interiors (Fig.

79).

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[240] Terence Pepper, *Horst Portraits: 60 Years of Style* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2001), #.

[241] *Horst*, directed by Mark Trottenberg, produced by Tina Barney (New York: Checkerboard Foundation, 1988).

[242] Tina Barney, "Inside People: an Interview with Tina Barney" by Faye Hirsch, *Art on Paper*, May-June, 1999, 50.

While Stallabrass describes Dijkstra's photography as a descendant of fashion photographers Irving Penn and Richard Avedon's pared-down backgrounds, Barney's commercial work often resembles snapshots found in family albums. According to Susan Kismaric, Curator in the Department of Photography at the Museum of Modern Art, this type of narrative style heavily influenced fashion photography in the 1990s and she included Barney's editorial work in her 2004 exhibition of commercial fashion work, "Fashioning Fiction in Photography Since 1990." Kismaric writes, "the use of commercial photographic techniques by art photographers and the influence of art photography on fashion photography reflect a somewhat fraught exchange of sensibilities between the contemporary art world and consumer culture."[243] Barney's work illustrates this open interchange between the fashion and art worlds, so much so that it is difficult to know which came first.

Barney's photographs in the exhibition were taken from an assignment she did for *W Magazine,* "New York Stories," in which she photographed major New York cultural players such as writer Joan Didion, then-unknown actress Julianne Moore with her son (Fig. 80), the family of gallery owner Angela Westwater, and the family of painter Brice Marden in their New York residences. Kismaric analyzes, "in [Barney's] photographs, fashion is an accessory, just like the sofas, art, and lamps that decorate the environments, a prop to further illustrate the stories."[244] In Barney's case, the fashion becomes subordinate to the ambiguous narrative action and has become a signature style associated with her work. As a result, Barney has also parlayed the similarities between

[243] Susan Kismaric, *Fashioning Fiction in Photography since 1990* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004) n.p.

[244] Susan Kismaric, *Fashioning Fiction in Photography since 1990* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2004) n.p.

her fine art work and commercial work into advertising campaigns, for instance, for the clothing line Theory and luxury leather goods line Bottega Veneta. Similarly, Barney's editorial and commercial fashion skills achieve a seamless transition in *The Europeans*. For instance, one can imagine Barney's *The Brocade Walls* (2003) (Fig. 81) employed as an advertisement for luxury accessories line Hermès with the focus of the photograph on the fulfillment of the lifestyle that it represents as more important than the actual accessory, a belt with a small gold "H" buckle.

Stallabrass claims that the attraction of fashion photography is the ability, through its mass distribution, to enable the viewer to identify with the subject portrayed. However, the effect of an aristocratic ethnography on Barney's *The Europeans* prevents the viewer from imagining themselves as European aristocracy. To my knowledge, only two photographers have attempted to conduct an ethnographic/documentary record of Europe—German photographer August Sander with his group of portfolios *Face of Our Time* from 1929, which was later confiscated by the Nazis, and *People of the Twentieth Century* featuring photographs dating from 1892-1952, which was realized after his death; and Frenchman Henri Cartier-Bresson with his book, *The Europeans*, published in 1955. By analyzing Barney's European project against these forebears, the ethnographic inheritance in style and execution of *The Europeans* becomes more apparent.

August Sander envisioned a photographic record of Germans living in Germany and eventually captured over 40,000 negatives over the course of more than forty years. Out of this body of work, he devised seven "archetypes,"—including the most relevant to Barney's work, "Classes and Professions." In terms of class, Sander photographed the poor, the working class, the middle class, the wealthy, and the aristocrat. He paid great

attention to the presentation of his images—from the act of photographing, to selection, and how to organize them, hoping that their order would reveal the tension between the individual and the "type." Moreover, Sander was an avid reader of physiognomy studies. He believed that "every person's story is written plainly on his face, though not everyone can read it."[245] He believed that photography of a type could record, "the expression of the time and the sentiments of their group."[246]Although less scientific, Barney echoes Sander's notions: "What interests me in something that happens, the way a human being looks,… in the eyes, in the entire muscles of the face, what happens with the mouth …how the head rests with the neck, how that person holds themselves that defines their entire being from their day of birth, what has happened to them. If you can get that, that just fascinates me."[247] Obviously, Barney, too, pays attention to the physiognomy of her subjects and believes that their physical features divulge information about their experience in the world.

Around 1914, Sander shifted from the posed studio shot to a more spontaneous capture, and the subject became more actively involved in the making of the image such as *Three Farmers* (1914) (Fig. 82). The three young boys' self-assured, quick recognition of the camera is eerily close to how many of the subjects are depicted in Barney's photographs. Sander was also committed to capturing vestiges of ways of life that were

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[245] Cited in Edward A. Aiken, "Some Reflections on August Sander and His Physiognomic Portraits," in *Physiognomy in Profile*, ed. Melissa Percival and Graeme Tytler (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 19.

[246] Cited in Edward A. Aiken, "Some Reflections on August Sander and His Physiognomic Portraits," in *Physiognomy in Profile*, ed. Melissa Percival and Graeme Tytler (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2005), 200.

[247] *Tina Barney: Social Studies*, DVD, directed by Jaci Judelman (France/USA: Yare Films, 2005).

rapidly disappearing in Germany before World War II, another similarity shared with Barney's project that will be discussed at a further point in this chapter.

A broader and less well-known ethnological study of Europe, *The Europeans*, by Henri Cartier-Bresson is a compendium of 114 street photographs documenting war-torn Europe and beyond after World War II. Cartier-Bresson photographed Europeans of all ages and all classes in the public spaces of Greece, Spain, Germany, England, Austria, Switzerland, Ireland, Russia, Italy, and France. However, the book's format is arranged curiously; after a brief introduction by the artist, the photographs are organized by country but they run into each other without any notification or separation of entering a new country. Only when one turns to the captions section in the back of the book, is it revealed where photographs from Greece end and those from Spain begin.

However, with his camera, Cartier-Bresson records quintessential, stereotypical scenes from each country highlighting regional differences—for instance, matadors, bullfights, and mantillas in Spain; Bastille Day celebrations in France; grape harvesters in Italy; cricket players and pub scenes in England; and The Hermitage Museum and factory workers sorting tea leaves in Russia. Cartier-Bresson comments, "Nowhere are so many differences crammed into so little space as in Europe."[248] For the viewer, the process of flipping through the book mirrors the experience of a Grand Tour, where the countries melt into each other except for a few blaring indicators that you have crossed boundaries.

Nonetheless, the greatest differences are seen not in the subjects' nationalities, but in their economic situations. The most dynamic juxtapositions of photographs in Cartier-Bresson's *The Europeans* occur between wealthy men in tuxedos and women in gowns

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[248] Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Europeans: Photographs* (New York: Simon + Schuster, 1955).

attending various celebrations next to photographs of beggars or the war-injured sitting

on the street near a bombed-out building. The descriptive captions in the back of the book

provide facts and statistics relevant to the images. For instance, for a photograph of a

young man on the street with a sign stating, "I am looking for work of any kind," a part

of its caption reads, "In 1953, there were about 9 million refugees and 1.5 million

unemployed in Western Germany."[249] Therefore, Cartier-Bresson's seemingly objective

ethnography of the Europeans appears to be a political statement on the widening gap

between rich and poor as a result of World War II, as well as a look at areas annihilated

by the war versus those cities that were spared from destruction.

Barney's series *The Europeans* also relates to issues of nationality and class, but

with dramatically different results. Unlike Cartier-Bresson, Barney emphasizes the

differences among the European countries where she photographed in the presentation of

her pictures. First, the format of her book sharply divides the photographs by country,

perhaps due to the fact that Barney, for the most part, completed the photographs for each

country during one trip per year. A page with the name of the country and the year, or

years, which Barney visited, separates each group of photographs. Despite these pages,

however, readers would most likely sense the change in location because Barney's

camera, like Cartier-Bressons', deliberately focused on qualities that were unique to each

country such as clothing, architecture, art, interiors, cultural celebrations, and lifestyles.

Yet another crossover between ethnographic and fashion photography, the most

obvious indication of a country in Barney's photographs is usually relayed through

clothing, and often indicates the subjects' participation in a cultural pastime. For instance,

in *The Dirndls* (Fig. 83), Barney captures two German women and a young girl donning

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[249] Henri Cartier-Bresson, *The Europeans: Photographs* (New York: Simon + Schuster, 1955).

the traditional folk costume consisting of a blouse, bodice, apron, and a long skirt. Although dirndls are derived from peasant clothing, today, they are worn to formal events or during certain traditional festivals such as Oktoberfest in Munich and southern Germany. Barney's photograph reveals small touches on the girls such as their hairstyles, diamond jewelry, a wristwatch, and a hot pink rubber, charity-promoting bracelet that initiate a clash between traditional and contemporary and place them out of the peasant class; but the dirndls serve to pay homage to their heritage and stand as proof that these women are of German or Austrian descent. In *The Bavarian Couple*, Barney also captures a Bavarian couple wearing lederhosen and marvels how some Austrians and Germans wear the short pants on a daily basis.

Similarly, in Spain, Barney chose to photograph two quintessential icons of Spain— a flamenco dancer and a matador. In *The Flamenco Dancer* (2003), Barney shoots a flamenco dancer in the midst of an impromptu performance in her apartment of clashing reds and blues decorated with flowers, fans, and fringed shawls. In *The Dresser* (2003) (Fig. 84)*,* Barney again melds elements of fashion and ethnography as the blonde matador looks coolly into her camera as his dresser ties up his costume before battle.

In England, Barney had the opportunity to photograph around the most famous public boy's preparatory school, Eton College, which was founded by King Henry VI in 1440. In *The Two Students* (2001) (Fig. 85), the location of her photograph is determined again by fashion since the two male youths are dressed in the distinctive Eton College uniform consisting of a black tailcoat, detachable white collars, and pinstriped pants. The two students stand in front of a yellow stone wall laden with the names of "Old Etonians" carved on it.

Barney even goes as far as to say how interior design styles in her photographs play a culturally identifiable role in her images. Barney photographs some interiors that stand as exemplars of "British interiors," which are characterized by knick-knacks and love of clutter, a style carried over from the Victorian Era.[250] In *The British Cousins* (2001) (Fig. 86), Barney finds the perfect specimen of British interior—two middle-aged cousins stand in a bright yellow room cluttered with antique furniture and a fireplace mantle lined with a porcelain dog statue, a porcelain zebra, and a large gold clock. Barney explains, "The other thing is that you know that you're in England when you see these pictures because I know that there are a lot of European houses or apartments that look fairly modern and you might as well be in California or New York City. The fact that there is something very English about those interiors is important to me."[251] Throughout *The Europeans*, Barney focused on locations that would be easily identifiable and synonymous with the home country.

By focusing only on the aristocracy and upper classes, Barney's *The Europeans* create an opposing relationship to Rineke Dijkstra's work as analyzed by Julian Stallabrass, which was exhibited around the same time that Barney was working in Europe. Instead of ignoring class issues in the tableau form altogether, like Fried, Stallabrass's analysis is fueled by a belief in a society without distinguishable social classes.[252] According to Stallabrass, Dijkstra's portraits of adolescents in ideal outdoor

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[250] See Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods: The British and their Possessions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

[251] Tina Barney, lecture for "Stepping In and Out" Contemporary Documentary Exhibition, Victoria and Albert Museum, http://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/photography/past_exhns/stepping/barney1/index.html .

[252] Although, as I mentioned earlier in the introduction, I believe Dijkstra's photographs contain subtle signs of class distinctions such as clothing, jewelry, and location that Stallabrass fails to recognize. This is yet another instance where my approach to Barney's work, through a framework largely supported by

settings such as the beach or parks illustrate conditions of neoliberalism upon

civilization.[253] Dijkstra's format (using a view camera for a single anonymous figure

against a pared down background) results in a blankness and objectivity common to

ethnographic photography; however, a glaring difference is that the anonymous, everyday

subject occupies the same status as the audience instead of as inferior "other." Stallabrass

maintains that the copious amounts of data in the enlarged, high-resolution photographs

displays the photographed figure as a passive, non-interactive social agent and produces a

spectral image that viewers recognize instinctively as a person but a being they are

distanced from, producing a push/pull towards an overwhelmingly silent and still

image.[254]

    Stallabrass adds that Dijkstra preys on those teetering on the brink of adulthood

because viewers can actually witness their process of socialization into the commercial

image world in the photograph. For example, in Dijkstra's photograph, *Hilton Head*

Island, S.C., USA, June 24, 1992 (1992) (Fig. 87), the artist represents a teenage girl in an

apricot bikini posing on the beach. The girl replicates the pose of fashion models and

celebrities, while trying to deflate her stomach. The young girl already exhibits signs of

victimization of the fashion and consumer world—her designer bathing suit, heavily

social class and positionality, could be applied to an analysis of other tableau photographer's work such as
Dijkstra's that would produce thrilling results.

[253] According to geographer and social theorist David Harvey in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*,
neoliberalism, in theory, is characterized by "strong individual property rights, the rule of law, and the
institutions of freely functioning markets and free trade" (64). However, in practice, neoliberalism nurtures
monopolies as a result of ruthless competition, encourages nationalistic behavior in government, and
supports authoritarianism such as corporations determining individual's freedoms. Neoliberalism's
emphasis on the individualism of operators within the financial system breeds corruption, financial
instability, and "speculative volatility." Moreover, neoliberalism encourages the commodification of
everything and leaves a gaping hole in the social order, making society vulnerable to anti-social behavior or
extremist religious or political solidarity groups (80-81). In David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*
(New York: Oxford University Press, 2005

[254] Julian Stallabrass, "What's in a Face?: Blankness and Significance in Contemporary Art
Photography," *October* 122 (Fall 2007): 82-85.

made-up face, blonde highlights, and jewelry worn to the beach. Stallabrass argues that the self-recognition of the flaws in the figure by the viewer implicates everyone as part of the consumer and image world and causes the instability of identity to be fixed upon.

Stallabrass then identifies this experience as an effect of the current global neoliberal society. He writes,

> This extension of those subjects who have become passive reflectors of spectacle is linked to the difficulty of knowing in neoliberal society who is really the other—due to social hybridity and fluidity, immigration, emigration, miscegenation, and continual social upheaval. The effect is exacerbated by the generalized exoticization of a multitude of fleeting micro-identities brought about by spectacular commerce. Such photography brings about a largely postclass, postsocial movement's sublime enjoyment of the mundane mass as exotica.[255]

By objectively photographing ordinary people she encounters on a beach, Dijkstra creates a mutated form of ethnographic photography—one that examines everyday people under a high-resolution microscope. According to Stallabrass, the audience's self-recognition of the passive figure as spectral image and not "other" is symptomatic of the conditions of neoliberal society and consumerism—where the photograph stands as a metaphor for isolated citizens with decreased political agency who trade their status as citizen in favor of consumer. However, what if a photographer, such as Barney, attempted to restore the conditions of the pre-neoliberal, aristocratic state through their work?

As previously stated, Barney's positioning of her subjects in *The Europeans* also blends elements of ethnographic and fashion photography, but they produce results that

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[255] Julian Stallabrass, "What's in a Face?: Blankness and Significance in Contemporary Art Photography," *October* 122 (Fall 2007): 89.

are diametrically opposed to the "largely postclass, postsocial movement's sublime enjoyment of the mundane mass as exotica."[256] Barney's work harbors a return to photography of the social interactions of a stratified society and the audience's enjoyment of the extraordinary few as exotica, in a position that they can never attain; therefore resulting in an "othering" of the audience and a rejection of the idea of a classless society. Her works focus on the importance and unique character of the European aristocracy despite their loss of power in the current neoliberal climate.

The greatest difference between Dijkstra and Barney's photography lies in their choice and presentation of subject. While Dijkstra stopped random people in public places to photograph them, Barney used her social connections to photograph the wealthiest and titled in Europe. Moreover, although the degree of posing ranges throughout the series, Barney's subjects have the appearance of being less posed and more spontaneous than in Dijkstra's portraits. Barney also mixes photographs of groups of people interacting with single-person portraits. According to Stallabrass, while Dijkstra removes class from her photographs with her natural settings, making it more difficult to place the socioeconomic class of her subjects, the class of Barney's subject is a given and evidenced by their luxurious interiors. It is interesting to note here that ancestors of Barney's subjects were the ones who originally introduced the notion of a class to society. In *The Politics of Aristocratic Empires*, John H. Kautsky writes, "aristocratic empires, by subjecting numerous village societies to a single aristocratic society, brought to humanity for the first time rigid class divisions and large settled

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[256] Julian Stallabrass, "What's in a Face?: Blankness and Significance in Contemporary Art Photography," *October* 122 (Fall 2007): 89.

territories under one government, however rudimentary."[257]

Moreover, due to the upheaval and fluid movement of people wrought by neoliberalism, Stallabrass's reading of Dijkstra's subjects lack a concrete identity. Barney's subjects, in contrast, belong to a class known for its attention to breeding and pure bloodlines and, according to Barney, seem to reflect their historical ties to a location through their shared, inherited features. European royal houses still require members to marry aristocrats lest they cede their right to the throne. According to Kautsky, "while good character or even mental or physical competence are generally not required of a ruler, in the aristocrat's mind, the ability to rule does depend on pure blood, that is, on the maintenance of a sharp separation from the lower classes."[258] Moreover, in the "Afterword" to *The Europeans*, Barney writes, "We can locate a place and its uniqueness in the bodies and faces of its people—how they stand, lean, look, and listen. The character of a country can be told through its families and the stories in their eyes."[259] As a result of Barney's subject's controlled breeding, family resemblances and facial features are inextricably tied to their country of origin. Barney's statement positions the present European aristocracy as untouched by globalization and inserts them into, say, the Germany of Sander's time.

Throughout *The Politics of Aristocratic Empires*, Kautsky argues that aristocrats still heavily influence modern post-industrial life and aristocratic ideological and institutional remnants still remain. Similarly, Barney's photographs illustrate the unique

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[257] John H. Kautsky, *The Politics of Aristocratic Empires* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 374.

[258] John H. Kautsky, *The Politics of Aristocratic Empires* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 373.

[259] Tina Barney, "An Afterword," *The Europeans* (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 2005), 190.

qualities that are still alive in the aristocracy. Kautsky describes such ideological traces as the aristocrats' commitment to duty and service and how aristocrats' occupational choices are limited to ruler, military officer, judge, bureaucrat, and priest. Other ways for the aristocracy to thrive were linked to ownership of land and control of peasants. He points out that in Western European countries, some aristocrats still maintain control over their large family estates, which is persistently passed down along hereditary lines. Many such family estates are captured in Barney's *The Europeans*.

For instance, in Barney's photograph *The Antlers* (1996-2001) (Fig. 88), Barney creates a snapshot of an Austrian family gathered in the entrance hall of their country home with the top halves of the walls almost completely lined with hunting trophies, perhaps alluding to the "head" of the family. The older man in the center is dressed in traditional Austrian garb including a vest and wool lederhosen. In a discussion of this image, Barney describes how she became involved in a discussion with this family on the subject of real estate and expressed concerns about her house in the coastal resort town of Watch Hill, Rhode Island, where Barney resides in the summer. According to Barney, "What I talked about with this man here, the fact I feared that the houses that were in this wonderful Rhode Island town that I live in were not able to be kept in the family, that eventually the houses would fall apart and no one would be able to keep them up, and this young man tells me that the older son inherits the house. There is no jealousy, no discussion. So this young man moved from the city of Vienna to take care of the house and this will be his life house."[260] Barney seems to approve of the Austrian aristocratic tradition of preserving family ownership by passing property down through hereditary

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[260] Tina Barney, *Visiting Artists Program*, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago: The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2004).

lines automatically.

Aristocratic control over the land is especially pervasive in England, where nobles still serve in the upper house of the British Parliament, the House of Lords, a governing body whose seats are still determined by bloodlines. Barney captures the British aristocratic relationship to the land in her photograph, *The Ancestor* (2001) (Fig. 89), which portrays a nobleman, at a dining table set for guests. The man stands in front of painted portraits of his ancestors on the walls with one of his servants behind him and to his left. This image was taken at Petworth House, a mansion situated on a deer park with an impressive art collection located in West Sussex. The nobleman Barney depicts is most likely John Max Henry Scawen Wyndham, 7th Baron Leconfield and 2nd Baron Egremont, also known as Max Egremont, who is a direct descendant of Sir John Wyndham.[261] The facial features of the ancestor—eyebrows, eyes, and nose— in the portrait painted by Sir Francis Grant on the left, bear an uncanny resemblance to Lord Egremont, forging a strong link between past and present.

However, although Barney doesn't reveal it in her photograph, glimmers of the declining power of the aristocratic class surface in Barney's discussion of this image, for she mentions that in order to keep the house, the family transferred their ownership to the government to ensure its maintenance and preservation. Lord Egremont and his family now live in the south wing of the castle while the National Trust operates tours for the public in other areas of the estate. According to Guy Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle*, it appears that Petworth house has been drained of its quality of place and has been spectacularized into another tourist stop. "Human circulation as something to be

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[261] The National Trust, "A Brief History," http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-vh/w-visits/w-findaplace/w-petworthhouse/w-petworthhouse-history.htm.

consumed—tourism—is a by-product of the circulation of commodities; basically

tourism is a chance to see what has been made trite," resulting in an interchangeability of

space.[262] Petworth house is now a place of spectacle, designed for the spectator to take

note of it. Even though the aristocrats are not immune to the effects of neoliberalism, it is

important to note that the tourist aspect is not apparent in the photograph on its own.

Barney intentionally chose to photograph the south wing of the estate, the private area

that is lived space, rather than the public areas, in a conscious effort to showcase the

staying power of the class.

The aristocratic connection to the land extends to their long-established duty to

fight for its control against enemy invaders. It was with the aristocracy that the

justification of war as a game to preserve one's honor began. Present aristocrats continue

to train for many war-related activities such as fencing or dueling, which was "the

aristocrat's response to a challenge to his honor."[263] The continuance of this war-related

training can be witnessed in Barney's photograph *The Fencing Lesson* (1996-1998) (Fig.

90) where she depicts a scene from an Italian fencing academy, the *Accademia d'Armi*

Aurelio Greco, one of the oldest fencings schools in the world, located in Rome. On the

right, an adult instructor in complete uniform and black mask jabs at a young student with

a metal foil while, on the left, another young boy waits for his turn. The boy, who

couldn't be older than eight years old, holds his mask and a flexible plastic foil as he

stands lost in a daydream with his feet crossed. Barney provides a strong contrast

between the menacing instructor and the little boy who, by the looks of his Velcro shoes,

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[262] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books, 1995), 120.

[263] John H. Kautsky, *The Politics of Aristocratic Empires* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 371.

is not old enough to tie his own shoes, yet is being trained in a traditional form of warfare if the opportunity to defend his honor arises.

Additionally, the aristocrat's preferred branch of the army was the cavalry, and to this day, horseback riding and hunting are activities mastered by the aristocracy. Not surprisingly, many of Barney's photographs feature subjects' horses and those who participate in hunts. For instance, in *The Gentlemen* (2002) (Fig. 91), four men of varying ages are dressed in their best for the hunt, which they will be following in horse-drawn carriages. In this image, Barney's camera focuses on the capture of the various textures and patterns—the tweed jackets, the stiff wool hats, silk ties and pocket squares, and leather gloves of the men's attire with their plaid wool blankets on their laps; the horses' spotted coats and rich brown harnesses; and the polished brass, wood and leather of the carriages. She delights in all the finery and accessories employed for the age-old, bloodthirsty sport.

Although a few aristocrats have migrated to business occupations, most members of the aristocracy consider moneymaking ventures to be an unrespectable occupation and associate it with Americans, whom they view as materialistic, rude, and crass. Author Harold Laski writes, "a gentleman is rather than does…he is interested in nothing in a professional way. He is allowed to cultivate hobbies, even eccentricities, but he must not practice a vocation."[264] Barney's background as a descendant of the founders of an investment bank may be impressive in American society but can never surpass an aristocratic title in Europe. Moreover, although they own a lot of objects, Barney's exclusive look at these European aristocrats fails to signal a penchant for consumerism of

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[264] Cited by John H. Kautsky, *The Politics of Aristocratic Empires* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 366.

mass-produced goods, which in some way, contributed to the "othering" of those outside the noble class.

According to Peter N. Stearns in *Consumerism in World History: The Global Transformation of Desire*, in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Western Europe, aristocrats unquestionably displayed consumer interests, for instance, in the court at Versailles, in order to jockey for position through dress, carriages, and furniture. However, Stearns explains that there exists a common misconception among historians that one of the major causes of mass consumerism was that ordinary people were compelled to emulate the aristocrats. In fact, Stearns explains that most commoners had little contact with the aristocrats and were not aware of aristocratic tastes in consumer objects. Also, due to their low earnings, there was no way for them to compete or realistically try to attain aristocratic status. To become an aristocrat, one had to purchase a country estate, a noble title, or positions in the state and church, not clothing or mass-produced objects. Instead, Stearns maintains, "they sought alternative means of expression, through consumerism, not to pretend to be aristocrats but to demonstrate their worth, and that of their class, in a separate manner."[265] Ultimately, the feeling of "otherness" and futility associated with the lack of access to the aristocracy propelled a surge in consumerism in large groups of people. Thus, Barney recaptures a similar lack of entry for her viewers and the sentiment that they will never attain the status of her photographed subjects, no matter how much money they acquire. This phenomenon is quite similar to the viewing effect of Barney's great-uncle Robert Lehman's period rooms in The Met discussed in chapter two: "Instead of staging a universe of equals, however,

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[265] Peter N. Stearns, *Consumerism in World History: The Global Transformation of Desire* (London and New York: Routledge, year), 28.

they cast us as outsiders, removed in both time and space from the perfectly ordered, socially ranked worlds in which we gaze. Whereas our ritual task as citizens is to possess in full whatever spiritual goods are laid before us, in these rooms, we are prompted to admire others--those whose rooms these once were. It is they, not we, who do whatever possessing there is to be done here."[266]

Both Dijkstra and Barney build on the ethnographic fashion mode of photography to produce drastically different results. Under Stallabrass's interpretation, Dijkstra's photographs view the general population through an ethnographic lens where no one is "other." On the other hand, by focusing on the aristocracy in her ethnographic fashion photography, Barney creates a reverse ethnography of the people who were first responsible for the colonization of the "other," and, in turn, transforms both herself and the audience into "other," despite her upper-class status. By doing so, Barney creates an outsider's look at the social interactions of a classed, purebred, and once politically active people. Both photographers show the effects of the neoliberal climate—Dijkstra through the loss of her subjects' agency, and Barney through her subjects' decline of political power. However, instead of spectral images, Barney depicts her aristocrats as concerned with their identity as aristocrats, in other words, the cultivation of tastes in which their appearance, manners, interiors, and leisure activities play a crucial role. In *The Europeans*, Barney magnifies their unique qualities with the hopes of bringing their relevance back to contemporary life.

Barney's attempts to resurrect the importance, and idiosyncrasies of the aristocrats in *The Europeans* may have proven successful. Her photography echoes a

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[266] Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (London; New York: Routledge, 1995), 68.

larger trend that calls for the nostalgia of the aristocracy and a resurgence of interest in their lives. Shortly after Barney's completion of *The Europeans*, in a 2006 trend report in *The London Sunday Times*, journalist Matthew Campbell describes a new flood of books and films that take a sympathetic look at aristocrats, for instance, the successful films *Les Aristos*, *Palais Royale,* and *Marie Antoinette*. Charlotte de Terkheim, Director of *Les Aristos,* commented, "In the messed-up world we live in, people are in search of fine values…Today, aristocrats are seen as guardians of these fine values. What people want is a sort of King Arthur figure to guarantee the nobility and morality of our souls."[267] In response to the dominant neoliberal influence in economics, politics and now, contemporary photography, Barney's photographs capture this yearning for people who thrived without the mechanics of capitalism and showcases how the aristocracy continues to cultivate the values, education, interests, and ancestry that sets them apart from the commoners.

Part II: Portrait of a Lady

In the introduction to *The Europeans,* "To sit, to stand," curator Merry A. Foresta engages a comparison between Tina Barney and Isabel Archer, the bold female

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[267] Matthew Campbell, "France Loses Its Head Over the Aristocracy," *The London Sunday Times*, September 24, 2006, 25.

protagonist in the American expatriate Henry James's novel *Portrait of a Lady*. Like Barney, Isabel Archer is an American who travels to London and absorbs the intricacies of a foreign culture from an outsider's perspective. Foresta writes, "In choosing to interpret a culture of which she is not a part, [Barney], like her Jamesian prototype, has been not only courageous but also innovative. The design of these photographs is so wonderfully off that the candid rhetoric for which Barney is known takes an eccentric leap, with color and space itself added to the cast of characters."[268] I agree with Foresta's statement; however, I think that a more appropriate comparison could be made between Barney and another person linked to Henry James—painter John Singer Sargent, who was born of American parents but lived abroad most of his life and painted innovative and lively portraits of European aristocracy and bourgeoisie. Both Henry James and John Singer Sargent traveled in the same social circles comprised of avant-garde literary figures, painters, poets, and aristocratic art collectors who spent their days puttering to and from Paris and London. James first met Sargent in Nice in 1884 and was an avid follower of his career from that day forward. James introduced Sargent to some patrons including Boston collector Isabella Stewart Gardner and even used Sargent as a character in several of his stories including "The Pupil" (1891) and "The Real Thing" (1892).[269]

That Sargent's life story inspired great fiction comes as no surprise; his unusual upbringing was enough to captivate any reader's attention. Sargent was born in Florence in 1856 to two American parents. His father was a surgeon and his mother was the

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[268] Merry A. Foresta, "To sit, to stand," *The Europeans* (London: Barbican Art Gallery, 2005), l9.

[269] Albert Boime, "Sargent in Paris and London: A Portrait of the Artist as Dorian Gray," in *John Singer Sargent*, ed. Patricia Hills (New York: Harry N. Abrams in assoc. with The Whitney Museum of American Art, 1986), 81.

beneficiary of a sizable inheritance that allowed the family to become itinerant travelers to pleasant locales due to Mrs. Sargent's constant battle with respiratory illnesses. As a result, Sargent spent his childhood winters in Nice or Rome or Florence; the fall and spring seasons traveling around Europe; and the summer months in the Alps. Despite his nomadic upbringing, Sargent still considered himself an American and would correct those who thought otherwise—thus, similar to Barney during the creation of *The Europeans*, he often found himself a cultural outsider.[270] In 1874, Sargent studied painting in the atelier of the hip and youthful painter Carolus-Duran who encouraged him to immerse himself in works by old masters such as Rembrandt van Rijn, Diego Velázquez, and Frans Hals, who would continually influence his own work.[271]

From an early age, Sargent excelled at portraiture, creating sketches and painted likenesses of his family members. At this point, the academies considered portraiture to be an inferior genre of painting. However, with the rapid growth of the bourgeoisie who wanted their portraits painted to secure their social aspirations, portraits became more prevalent in the Salons as an indication of the growing commercial interest between artists and patrons. Yet, portraiture was hindered by a conservative, old-fashioned treatment by academic painters such as Alexandre Cabanel and followers of Ingres who favored a devotion to line over color such as Hippolyte Flandrin. Flandrin's portrait of *Madame Louis Antoine de Cambourg* (1846) (Fig. 92) exemplifies this style with its fine attention to line and muddied color. Madame de Cambourg is shown in a ¾ length view

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[270] Stanley Olson, "On the Question of Sargent's Nationality," *John Singer Sargent*, ed. Patricia Hills (New York: Harry N. Abrams in assoc. with The Whitney Museum of American Art, 1986), 23.

[271] Barbara H. Weinberg, "John Singer Sargent (1856–1925)," in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/sarg/hd_sarg.htm.

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in a black off-the-shoulder gown sitting in a velvet-upholstered chair with a hand-painted

Japanese scarf laid over the chair's arm. A family coat of arms is painted into the upper

right hand corner of the canvas against a plain ochre background. Although Flandrin and

Sargent would emphasize similar elements in their portraits—heredity, class, likeness, a

touch of *Japonisme*—they did so with wildly different results. Madame de Cambourg's

deadened expression more closely resembles the blank, joyless pose evident in

photographic portraits of the time. Through his efforts, Flandrin has only captured the

surface of Madame de Cambourg without the stirrings of her private, inner world.

On the other hand, Sargent strived to inject portraiture with a more modern,

experimental style and was fortunate to be commissioned by his circle of liberal, avant-

garde friends and relatives such as the Pailleron family, related to the critic, poet, and

playwright Edouard Pailleron; Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson; amateur artist

Edward Darley Boit; Dr. Samuel Jean Pozzi, and the Burckhardt family, all of whom

supported the young artist and favored experimentation over clinging to past traditions.[272]

Like Barney, John Singer Sargent was granted access to these international jetsetters

through social connections and his reputation prospered because of it. Due to the creative

freedom afforded him by his clientele, Sargent pushed the conventions of portrait

painting with dynamic contrasts of light and darkness, unorthodox groupings of figures,

psychologically-intense poses, and foreshortened perspectives in his portraits. Like

Barney's ties to her family's art collection, Sargent built on his knowledge of old master

painting and reconfigured it with a modern take on the subject. Erica E. Hirschler writes,

"It was a perfect fit for the aspiring sitters of his day, who likewise sought to ally

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[272] Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray, *John Singer Sargent: The Early Portraits*, vol. 1 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 17.

themselves with the great leaders of history and also to proclaim their station in contemporary society."[273] By looking to the past for inspiration, both Sargent and Barney created a style distinctively their own that could properly serve their demanding subjects.

Another element that links Barney to Sargent is his exposure to photography, which was an inchoate medium during his formative years as an artist. Many photographs exist of Sargent and his family because his father often sent photographs of the growing family to American relatives overseas as a means to stay in touch. Interestingly, the photographs reveal that even as a child, Sargent understood the act of self-presentation in posing. At the time, the golden age of aura in portrait photography had already expired, famously lamented by Walter Benjamin in his "A Short History of Photography," and had been spoiled by the industrialization of the portrait studio with its flatly painted backgrounds, tacky props, and rented costumes.[274] For example, Sargent himself posed for this type of studio portrait complete with an elaborate side table and a plaster balustrade in 1860 (Fig. 93). Sargent wears lace bloomer knickers, coat, and feather hat while holding a wooden hoop and stick toy.[275] His expression is blank and his pose is stiff hiding his true personality among the array of sentimental props. On a similar childhood photograph of the author Franz Kafka, Benjamin writes, "He would surely vanish into the arrangement were not the boundlessly sad eyes trying so hard to master

[273] Erica E. Hirschler, "A Prince in a Royal Line of Painters," in *Great Expectations: John Singer Sargent Painting Children*, ed. Barbara Dayer Gallati (New York: Brooklyn Museum in assoc. with Bulfinch Press, 2004), 154.

[274] Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," in *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980), 206.

[275] Barbara Dayer Gallati, "Posing Problems: Sargent's Model Children," in *Great Expectations: John Singer Sargent Painting Children*, ed. Barbara Dayer Gallati (New York: Brooklyn Museum in assoc. with Bulfinch Press, 2004), 183.

this predetermined landscape."[276]Perhaps this explains why Sargent often painted people in their own homes, in their own element.

The only instance where Sargent commented directly on a photograph in relation to his own work occurs in his discussion sparked by his viewing of a photograph of Helen Sears, daughter of Boston artist Helen Choate Sears (Fig. 95). Sargent had recently completed a portrait of the girl (Fig. 94) and soon thereafter, received a portrait photograph, which bore a strong resemblance to his painting, taken by her mother. Upon receiving the photograph, Sargent replied, "But how can an unfortunate painter hope to rival a photograph by a mother? Absolute truth combined with absolute feeling."[277] However, Barbara Dyer Gallati reads between the lines of his statement and interprets his words as highlighting the paradox of truth and subjectivity in the photographic medium, ultimately concluding that the photograph was less the result of "truth" and more of a mother's love, an end product that Sargent could never offer in his paintings.

On the other hand, his portrait portrays Helen Sears as a small girl in a world of large objects, awkwardly standing with her weight on one foot with the other resting on top. Gallati writes, "If Sarah Sears's photograph records a child self-consciously posing (and consciously pleasing), then Sargent's painting seems to represent a child so used to posing that she has forgotten her part in the role-playing and suddenly become

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[276] Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," in *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980), 206.

[277] Barbara Dayer Gallati, "Posing Problems: Sargent's Model Children," in *Great Expectations: John Singer Sargent Painting Children*, ed. Barbara Dayer Gallati (New York: Brooklyn Museum in assoc. with Bulfinch Press, 2004), 204.

herself."[278] Contrary to accepted beliefs about photography, Gallati considers Sargent's

portrait to be the less posed, more natural and objective of the two representations of the

girl. Although there has been little scholarship on the subject,[279] Sargent's painting style

was influenced by photography and in many ways, it acted against the perceived effects

of portrait photography. In opposition to the deadening effects of the camera, Sargent

strived to add sparks of life that could not be recorded by the camera due to its slower

exposure time.

Even though Sargent recognized the mortifying effects of the camera, he did look

to some compositional aspects afforded by the camera's view and, spurred by

Impressionism and *Japonisme*, incorporated them into the structure of his canvases.[280]

Curiously, what Sargent captured in his painting that he could not attain with

photography from the 1870s to the 1920s—the accidental mixed with the intentional—

Barney would strive for with her camera in *The Europeans*. Following along this line, a

number of Barney's eye-catching photographs from her series share a number of

calculated compositional structures with Sargent's daring portraits of his European

subjects.

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[278] Barbara Dayer Gallati, "Posing Problems: Sargent's Model Children," in *Great Expectations: John Singer Sargent Painting Children*, ed. Barbara Dayer Gallati (New York: Brooklyn Museum in assoc. with Bulfinch Press, 2004), 204.

[279] To my knowledge, Sargent's relationship to photography has not been investigated in an academic setting, and hopefully, I will undertake this project and conduct further research on the topic at a later time.

[280] However, Sargent did not consider himself part of the Impressionist movement by any means. Like his contemporaries, he referred to himself as an "impressionist," a widely-used term indicating that he created progressive, non-academic art. In note 20 of Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray's "Introduction," *John Singer Sargent: The Early Portraits* vol. 1 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 16. Moreover, the simultaneous convergence of Impressionism, photography, and Japanese woodblock prints in Paris in the 1860s led to a still unresolved debate over which influenced Impressionism first—photography or Japanese art—and out of all three, which influenced Sargent's compositions. See Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography* (Baltimore: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1968), 153.

For instance, in *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit,* (1882) (Fig. 96), Sargent portrays the four young girls in a room of the family's Paris apartment. Similar to Sargent's upbringing, the girls' parents were American, yet they lived a worldly existence in Boston, Paris, and Rome, as evidenced by the large Oriental vases featured in the portrait that crossed the Atlantic Ocean sixteen times with them on their journeys. The two older girls, Florence and Jane, stand in the background, Florence leaning up against a towering vase with her profile barely in view, Jane shrouded in near darkness and staring straight out at the viewer. Mary Louisa, stands to the far left, in a stream of sunlight coming through the unseen window. The youngest daughter, Julia, sits on the carpet with a doll in her lap. The composition is divided into blocks of geometric shapes formed by the corner of the foreshortened rectangular carpet and the areas of light and dark. Critics regarded the portrait as unconventional and eccentric due to the fact that the sisters are depicted with so much space in between them—coupled with their serious faces and the very large objects in the room, they seem to inhabit their own private, isolated world.[281] Overall, Sargent's interpretation of their psychology and their small size among the large objects seems like an attempt to communicate a child's world according to an adult's modern eye.

Another element of this canvas that was informed by modernist practices is the way in which Sargent cropped the vase on the right side of the painting. The practice of cropping in painting is related to the influence of *Japonisme* in addition to the vision

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[281] Florence and Jane would struggle with mental and emotional instability in their adult lives. Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray, *John Singer Sargent: The Early Portraits*, vol. 1 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 66.

enabled by a camera's lens.[282] Even though Sargent may not have used photographs as a study aid for his paintings, he often used the camera as a tool to document the various stages of progress for his portraits in his Paris studio. For instance, in a c. 1883 photograph (Fig. 97), a straight-on view captures Sargent from a distance, lounging on a banquette in the corner of his studio surrounded by draperies and rugs employed in his portraits as well as copies of work by his artistic predecessors, Diego Velasquez and Frans Hals. The distance from which the photographer stands enacts Sargent as a small presence in the grand room with high ceilings; likewise, the camera view cuts off half of two paintings and a piano and chair on the left side in a matter similar to the way Sargent crops the Oriental vase in the Boit painting.

In *The Doll* (2001) (Fig. 98), Barney exhibits similar composition, cropping, and sense of scale in this portrait of a British family. Judging by the collection of antique objects in their residence, the family appears to be as equally sophisticated as Sargent's patrons. The most striking similarity between the two works occurs with Barney's use of a rectangular upholstered ottoman with a tipped-up perspective that anchors the foreground. Coincidentally, Barney's image also situates a young toddler on the ottoman with a doll; however, due to the camera's increased speed, Barney freezes the child in the midst of writhing, echoing her doll's bent legs and arms. Additionally, Barney also produces an unconventional portrait since the presumable father and sister are shown

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[282] Aaron Scharf investigated the relationship between Edgar Degas' practice of cropping in his work with photography and Japanese woodblock prints. He reported that contemporary color prints with cut-off figures, looming foregrounds, and steep perspectives by Japanese artists were shown at the International Exhibition in London in 1862 and at the Paris Exposition Universelle in 1867 while stereographic snapshot views of Paris streetscapes with buildings and figures cut off were widely sold in Paris from 1861-1865. He concludes that it was likely that Degas saw both and the two influences were not mutually exclusive but "mutually reinforcing." I believe the same is probably true for Sargent, who exhibited his work in exhibitions with Degas, traveled in the same social circles, and portrayed some of the same people. In *Art and Photography* (Baltimore: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1968), 153.

standing at a distance in an embrace, she half-cropped by the left side of the picture. On

the right side, the cropped legs of another girl add to the fragmentary nature of the scene.

The cropped figures on each side of the painting cause the room to open up around the

baby. Additionally, the father's downcast glance and the tipped-up perspective of the

ottoman caused by Barney's vantage point emphasize the toddler's isolated experience of

existing in an adult-sized world, much like the view of the Boit daughters.

Sargent also composes an unorthodox portrait of his friend, Robert Louis

Stevenson, Scottish author of *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Treasure*

Island, and his first wife, Fanny Osbourne (1885) (Fig. 99) in their home in

Bournemouth, England. Sargent achieves the look of a photographic snapshot as

Stevenson is caught in mid-step as he paces on the Turkish rug and looks out at Sargent

with his right index finger stroking his moustache—a pose he was known for when he

wanted to express himself. A friend of Stevenson's who viewed the painting wrote, "It's

him to the life on gesture and expression—living life, with a touch of *charge*; but

somehow small and perky and peaky a little too…"[283] His wife sits on the opposite side

in a Victorian bergère chair at the edge of the painting, a portion of her cut off along with

two watercolors overhead, as she is shrouded in iridescent Indian robes and looks in the

direction away from her husband. Sargent may have been commenting on the relationship

between Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson, the portrait an embodiment of the tension between

nervous twitching and still contemplation. Sargent includes a nod to Dutch painting with

the door ajar in the back wall leading one's eye to the staircase and doorway of the main

entrance. In her correspondence, Osbourne said the painting had a "rather insane

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[283] Cited in Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray, *John Singer Sargent: The Early Portraits*, vol. 1 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 168.

appearance," which made them even fonder of it, and it hung in the drawing room of their home.

Barney also achieves a similarly eccentric portrait of two people in Italy with her photograph, *The Screen* (1996-1998) (Fig. 100). Barney focuses the camera on a sitting figure, unaware of her taking the photograph, an older gentleman in a tuxedo who occupies a space between a screen and a standing figure. Another figure stands behind the chair and his face is completely cropped from the picture, an unidentified man in a suit, which causes the viewer to wonder if there is a party or small gathering going on outside the frame. There are also touches of *Japonisme* in this picture, with a gold painted fabric screen on the right, which takes on the title of the work. This gold screen along with the blue silk wallpaper and frescoed walls lend a lustrous sheen to the photograph's surface. Like Sargent, Barney presents a snapshot moment of the tension between movement and stillness, and how two people can inhabit a room together but are also utterly alone. However, in Sargent's time, photography wasn't able to capture the snapshot moment and he was forced to master it in paint. Barney updates his work by capturing the same instantaneous quality with the camera.

Sargent achieves a similar snapshot effect with his portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Vickers, or *A Dinner Table at Night* (1884) (Fig. 101), part of a group of impressionistic experiments Sargent conducted in interiors aglow with artificial light. Red walls hung with art works and three lamps covered with red shades produce the glowing atmosphere. Sargent captures the couple seated at their table in an apparent snapshot, with Mr. Vickers cut off on the right side, and Mrs. Vickers seated at the head of the table in an elegant black dress with a dramatic décolleté in the center of the composition. Sargent

offers a perspective of the table tipped up in the left corner of the foreground revealing

after-dinner remnants—the silver table lamp stands, bowl, goblet and a glass port

decanter, and a bowl of red flowers. The soft atmosphere combined with the finery of its

inhabitants produce a world of luxury and refinement.[284] Likewise, Barney's portrait *The

Luncheon* (2001) (Fig. 102) depicts a British man and his servant in an orange dining

room with paintings on the walls dimly lit by a small lamp in the right corner. Like

Sargent, Barney captures the white rectangle of the luncheon table tipped up in the

foreground to reveal wine glasses and crystal drinking glasses, placemats, and used cloth

napkins strewn across the table. The older English gentleman, with a gold lobster belt

buckle, stands on one side of the table and seems lost in thought while the good-natured

servant clears the salt and pepper shakers and silver coasters dutifully from the table and

looks directly at the camera, his large shadow looming behind him. Both Sargent and

Barney record the aftermath of an indulgent meal by the upper classes in a remarkably

similar style and composition—a snapshot with the foreground dominated by the

geometric shape of the table, which serves to flatten the space of the room depicted. They

also both portray the postprandial languor of the upper class after a large meal, although

Barney includes the servant who has to return the room to its rightful order.

Both Sargent and Barney excel at rendering the distinct personalities of each

sitter, especially in group portraits. Of these, family portraits seem to be the most

difficult, with all types of competing personalities and rivalries at play. However, both

artists take particular care to reveal their sitters' personalities in the works. For instance,

in Sargent's portrait, *The Misses Vickers* (1884) (Fig. 103), in addition to their likenesses,

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[284] Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray, *John Singer Sargent: The Early Portraits*, vol. 1 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 135.

he paints the psychologies and relationships between the three daughters of Colonel T. E. (Tom) Vickers, brother of Albert Vickers. Of course, rather than depict them on the same couch or in a straight line, Sargent creates a complex formal design in which he fixes the girls from an oblique view over two pieces of furniture—in one group, Evelyn and Mabel Frances sit on a basket-backed settee facing forward to the left while on the right, Mildred sits in a low English chair facing the rear and turns to look at us over the back of the chair. Although there is a strict division between Evelyn and Mabel Frances on the settee and Mildred, Sargent paints all three girls with different points of focus, expression, and dress. Evelyn, blonde, pale and in an angelic white and blue frock with her arm around Mabel Frances, stares dreamily out while Mabel Frances, in a black dress with dark hair, concentrates on her book. The picture of independence, Mildred, in a brown dress with lace edging, clasps her hands and looks confidently out at the viewer. One critic writes, "These three figures are treated with a remarkable freedom and personality. Mr. Sargent seems here to be the favorite painter of elegant attenuation and of those exquisite and gifted creatures who are bundles of nerves."[285] Like *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit*, Sargent depicts the three siblings together, yet occupying drastically disparate psychological states reiterated by the darkened background. The portrait provides an intimate look at the intricate dynamics involved in the coming-of-age of three sisters.

Barney also chose to portray sibling groups in *The Europeans* by employing unusual arrangements of figures in her compositions that reveal the elusive relations and personalities of her sitters. In *The Three Brothers* (2001) (Fig. 104), the men, seemingly

[285] Cited in Richard Ormond and Elaine Kilmurray, *John Singer Sargent: The Early Portraits*, vol. 1 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 132.

all around the same age, occupy a typical English study or sitting room. Barney captured two brothers standing to the left looking out at the viewer and the other brother sitting in a profile view in an armchair. Not only are they separated by space and pose, but the two standing brothers are united by their red shirts and shorter hairstyles while the sitting brother wears a black shirt and longer hair. In another portrait of three brothers, *The Brothers in the Kitchen* (2004) (Fig. 105), Barney photographs the brothers in the informal setting of the kitchen arranged in a triangle between the kitchen table and the cabinets. The resemblance between the brothers is striking, for they could almost pass for triplets and wear similar outfits of jeans and button-down shirts, yet they each exert their personalities through small details in pose and accessories that only the camera can record, which become highly evident in the scene. The brother to the right wears hip, youthful sneakers, the one in the back sports eyeglasses and black business shoes, and the one sitting at the table wears his shirt untucked and brown ankle boots. These small touches hint at their underlying identities. The differences in accessories standing out from their similar clothing act as a metaphor for their family positions, signaling although they come from the same circumstances, slight details can influence their identity, how people perceive them, and how their lives might ultimately unfold.

Furthering Bourdieu's theory of the relationship of a photographer's social class to their subjects, Sargent's and Barney's portraits transform into a map of positionality, or relationships, between ancestors, parents, children, *and* artist. Their portraits communicate sentiments relating to the extension of dynasty and parents' favoritism toward their children without betraying any form of emotional attachment. In Sargent's *The Family of the 9th Duke of Marlborough* (1905) (Fig. 106), at a time when ruling

power was still handed down to the next male heir, the Duke is pushed to the left side while his heir, his son John, Marquess of Blandford, assumes the center of the composition dressed in a sumptuous gold costume with a halo of yellow light surrounding him. John stands confidently in the space directly underneath a portrait bust of the first Duke and between his mother and father. He is connected to his father through a sword that they both grasp symbolizing the ruling power that will be passed down to John after the Duke's death. His mother hovers over him with her arms around his shoulders pledging her allegiance to him.[286] He also steadfastly holds the leash of the Blenheim spaniel indicating that he will be a benevolent yet effective leader. The other son, Ivor Spender Churchill, stands to the right as the alternative heir, his freedom from responsibility underlined by his playful expression and accessibility.[287]

In Barney's photograph *The Daughters* (2002) (Fig. 107), the dynastic portrait has been updated for a twenty-first century blended French aristocratic family with no male heirs. Instead, parental loyalty is split between daughters and the division is made apparent by Barney's arrangement of her subjects that form a diagonal line from the center foreground to the back left corner of the work. Two parents with their three daughters are captured in a stately high-ceilinged room with French blue tufted sofas and a wall-size antique tapestry. The mother and the youngest daughter occupy the front of the line, the mother wearing a brightly colored dress dotes on the young girl, and they assume importance as the focal point of the photograph. Then, following the diagonal

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[286] Erica E. Hirschler, "A Prince in a Royal Line of Painters," in *Great Expectations: John Singer Sargent Painting Children*, ed. Barbara Dayer Gallati (New York: Brooklyn Museum in assoc. with Bulfinch Press, 2004), 175.

[287] Barbara Dayer Gallati, "Posing Problems: Sargent's Model Children," in *Great Expectations: John Singer Sargent Painting Children*, ed. Barbara Dayer Gallati (New York: Brooklyn Museum in assoc. with Bulfinch Press, 2004), 215.

line back, a middle child, wearing a variation of the youngest daughter's dress, is united

with the first two figures by facial features, coloring, and dress. Finally, the father stands

to the back left at the end of the line with his arm around the eldest daughter, who wears a

white dress that does not relate to the other daughters' clothes and who bears no

resemblance to the other daughters. This positioning leads the viewers to believe that the

eldest daughter belongs to the father from a previous marriage while the younger two

daughters are a product of the current union between the mother and the father or from

the mother's previous marriage. Either way, Barney reveals the underlying preferences

and emotional connections of two parents to their three daughters and offers proof that

even though dynasty and the passing of power is no longer dependent on heirs, favoritism

still exists in most families.

Likewise, in their portraits featuring multiple generations of a family, Sargent and

Barney's portraits often produce a contradiction—they reiterate the importance of

continuity, yet, at the same time, often feature the sitters' individuality and discordant

personalities, which represents a stark departure for Barney from her Watch Hill

photographs. This contradiction can be witnessed in Sargent's painting *Mrs. Fiske*

Warren and Her Daughter Rachel (1903) (Fig. 108). The mother and child theme of this

work is pronounced by the inclusion of a sculpture bust of the Madonna and Child on a

mantle in the upper left corner of the painting. However, Mrs. Fiske Warren and her

daughter exhibit emotions opposed to the embracing figures in the background. Although

they are pictured with Rachel's head cradled on her mother's shoulder, with their arms

intertwined, and dressed in complimentary colors, mother and daughter's facial

expressions and poses belie an emotional detachment. Mrs. Fiske Warren sits stiffly with

her left hand tense. Her face reads inexpressively and her eyes stare dreamily out. On the other hand, Rachel seems to be looking down in the opposite direction and oblivious to her mother's presence.

Although Barney's subjects also share family resemblances and are captured near each other, her subjects rarely express emotion or affection for each other. In *Three Generations* (1996-2001) (Fig. 109), the scene features, from left to right, a grandmother seated, her granddaughter and the mother standing. They seem to be occupying the room to unwrap furniture while the girl plays with the bubble wrap and packing materials. Each figure displays some touch of red—scarf, hair bows, or tartan skirt— that acts to unify them, pulled together by the bright red wall in the background. Despite their similar facial structures, the three generations of females do not interact with each other; instead the grandmother and granddaughter look at the camera while the mother focuses to the right. There is no question that these three subjects are related; however Barney also highlights the divergence of their life stages and the cyclicality of life, from childhood to motherhood to old age. Other examples of Barney's work to feature multi-generations include a series of photographs from 2004 featuring German grandparents with their grandchildren, *The Grandson* (Fig. 110) and *The Granddaughter* (Fig. 111). In *The Granddaughter*, the grandparents are relegated to the dimly lit back corner of the picture while the granddaughter is a large figure in the bright light of the foreground. Both portraits present the notions of the continuity of the family line and a careful positionality of the children in relation to their grandparents; yet the poses of the figures are formal, facial expressions are blank, and there is a lack of emotion and affection between them.

These portraits of ancestry not only detail the positionality of its subjects in terms of family, class, and society, but they also reveal that of the artists themselves. Erica Hirschler lists how Sargent's portrait of parents with their children embody the future for all involved in its creation: "They radiate hope on the part of three constituencies-their own, their parents', and the painter's. The child's aspiration to play a unique role in the world, their parents' need to leave something of themselves behind them, and Sargent's goal to create a tangible legacy of talent are inextricably linked in these canvases."[288] According to Hirschler, Sargent's portraits not only connected his subjects to ancestral lines but also connected Sargent to a long line of celebrated painters by adding his name to the long list of artists who painted the particular family like Reynolds, Van Dyck, or Copley or by virtue of the act of hanging his works in the home next to their art collections of old masters like Rembrandt or Raphael.

Likewise, Barney's access to portray these families also connected her to artists of the past who created portraits of them. Tellingly, when describing the experience of creating *The Ancestor* (2001) (Fig. 89) at the historic Petworth House, Barney explains to a group of students that, "[J.M.W.] Turner did two portraits of Petworth House."[289] Additionally, in the photograph itself, Barney includes a view of an ancestral portrait in the background, possibly of John Wyndham, by Sir Francis Grant, once a president of the Royal Academy. By sharing this knowledge, Barney becomes implicated with the artists who have created their artwork at the fabled estate or commissioned by the aristocratic

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[288] Erica E. Hirschler, "A Prince in a Royal Line of Painters," in *Great Expectations: John Singer Sargent Painting Children*, ed. Barbara Dayer Gallati (New York: Brooklyn Museum in assoc. with Bulfinch Press, 2004), 154.

[289] Tina Barney, *Visiting Artists Program*, The School of the Art Institute of Chicago (Chicago: The School of the Art Institute of Chicago, 2004).

family. This type of respect by association earned by artists underlines the basis of Bourdieu's remarks on photographers and their patrons in addition to revealing the layers of art history characteristic of the tableau form.

Remarkably, Barney's presence also marked a new era for the family in that it was one of the first times they were subject to a photographic portrait executed by a fine arts photographer. However, as discussed in the previous paragraphs, Barney's photographic portraits appear remarkably similar to John Singer Sargent's painting in terms of subject matter, composition, and the psychological bearing of the subjects even though nearly one hundred years and diverse artistic media separate them. What does this reveal about the relationship between painting and the technical development of photography?

Part III: The Optical Unconscious

Walter Benjamin first spoke of the camera's ability to record the accidental over seventy-five years ago in his essay "A Short History of Photography" with his discussion of the "optical unconscious." Benjamin claims that the technical advancement of photography, such as speed and enlargements, makes visible what is invisible to the naked eye, similar to how psychoanalysis makes us aware of the drives of the unconscious. Benjamin writes, "It is a different nature which speaks to the camera than speaks to the eye: so different that in place of a space consciously woven together by a man on the spot there enters a place held together unconsciously…. Photography opens up in this material the physiognomic aspects of the world of images, which reside in the smallest details, clear and yet hidden enough to have found shelter in daydreams."[290]Benjamin's notion of the optical unconscious forms the basis of realizing the network of underlying tensions, hierarchies, and affiliations in Barney's family portraits.

Barney's work's success often depends on her capture of the optical unconscious. For instance, in *The Butterfly* (Fig. 112) a German family consisting of a mother, father, their two children, and two older women (presumably the grandmothers) are gathered around a living room to watch the older child unwrap her birthday gifts that are spread out on the coffee table. Obviously, all the people in the room are aware of Barney's presence and the purpose of her visit. Additionally, each adult member is aware of their role in the family and position themselves accordingly—the mother assumes the role of caretaker and assists her daughter with opening her presents; the father assumes the role

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[290] Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography," in *Classic Essays on Photography*, ed. Alan Trachtenberg (New Haven: Leete's Island Books, 1980), 203.

of protector and holds the infant in his lap while seated; the grandmothers are off to the side, one sitting with her hands clasped, the other presiding over the scene and staring directly at the camera. They settle into these frontal poses for Barney's shot and know full well that they will appear in a family photograph taken at a birthday celebration.

However, the final image does not chronicle a happy family occasion but instead focuses on the effects of the optical unconscious. Even though Barney's subjects are arranged in a narrative fashion, the swift lens of Barney's camera catches the hierarchies, tensions, and cultural indicators of the family network to which the sitters have become oblivious to in their posing. For instance, the camera captured the grandmother on the left staring disapprovingly with her eyebrows raised at the mother opening presents for the child. Also, the father looks in their direction with a jealous glance. Perhaps the mother has been suspected of overindulging the little girl with too many presents and attention? Either way, the grandmother and father are unaware of their facial expressions.

Another instance of the optical unconscious at work occurs in Barney's photograph *The Little Sister* (2002) (Fig. 113) where she captures two French sisters posed in front of a fireplace with a mirror over it. The older girl adopts the position of the older sister and poses standing a bit back and to the left with one thumb on the fireplace mantle with a watchful eye over her younger sister. The other girl assumes her role as the attention-loving younger sister and stands on an embroidered footstool wearing pink slippers and poses with her hands on her hips and a winsome smile. However, in the course of adopting their poses, tensions surface and the older sister's hardened face is captured—her mouth a straight line and her eyes narrowed slits staring at her younger sister. It becomes apparent to the viewer that although the sisters look alike, it is the

younger sister who is the cutest and most photogenic and her self-aware pose (where she is literally placed on a pedestal) suggests that she knows this is the case. The older sister, who is featured in a photograph on the mantle in a loving embrace with her father, unknowingly reveals her jealousy that her sister is the darling of the family, which becomes apparent to the viewer.

Returning to John Singer Sargent, at the time when he was an active artist, photography had not yet gained the ability to record the optical unconscious in a family portrait. It wasn't until 1872 when landscape photographer Eadweard Muybridge, in his motion studies of horses, started to devise a system of instantaneous photography in order to settle a bet over whether or not a horse ran with all four of his feet off the ground (a fact that could not be determined by the unaided human eye). By 1878, by rigging a lateral row of 24 cameras to capture a shot at 1/1000th of a second, Muybridge was able to capture a clear, detailed image of a horse with all four feet off the ground.[291] During the same year, thanks to the publication of Muybridge's experiment on the cover of *Scientific American* and in other periodicals, his findings became well known to the art world and many painters' renderings of horses, like the Frenchman Meissonier, were pronounced inaccurate. These events may have inspired Sargent to heavily pursue rendering the accidental sparks unnoticed by the naked eye in his portraits.

However, Muybridge's lateral cameras were never applied to capture the fleeting emotions in the human face. In Muybridge's portfolio of 781 photographic motion studies, *Animal Locomotion: An Electro-Photographic Investigation of Consecutive Phases of Animal Movements,* published by University of Pennsylvania in 1887,

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[291] Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography* (Baltimore: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1968), 163.

Muybridge includes everything *but* facial expressions or close-up photographs of the human face. Although some of his motions involve activities usually associated with emotion such as a woman spanking a small child or two women kissing, Muybridge was concerned with intentional, prescribed, and rehearsed movements and not with capturing his subjects' unconscious expressions.[292]

In photographs of his sitters during Sargent's time, photographers were not able to capture the accidental; everything was posed and deliberate resulting in those deadening poses that Sargent despised. For instance, Fantin-Latour, who was known for creating paintings from photographs, painted a portrait of a group of men around a piano, *Autour de Piano* (1884). One critic described the scene as a "very powerful interpretation of nature. But one flaw: they all appear fixed in that pose caused by the 'hold it a second' command of the photographer."[293] Despite Muybridge's innovations, the camera was unable to capture subjects' lively facial expressions.

As a result, Sargent worked to overcome the void in his painting and, using similar methods to Barney, let his sitters become comfortable with posing so that the accidental could be recorded in paint. Scharf reiterates this notion when he writes, "The obvious way to circumvent this difficulty, for painters who were compelled to honour the ordained proportions of the human form and yet wanted to convey its spiritual and symbolic character, was to increase the subjectivity of colour and handling, even while using certain salient features of photographic form, and only with the greatest care

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[292] Eadweard Muybridge, *Animal Locomotion: An Electro-Photographic Investigation of Consecutive Phases of Animal Movements* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1887), http://ia360943.us.archive.org/1/items/animallocomotion00univ/animallocomotion00univ.pdf

[293] Cited in Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography* (Baltimore: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1968), 38.

modify the natural physiognomic dimensions."[294] For instance, returning to Sargent's ambivalent mother-daughter portrait *Mrs. Fiske Warren and Her Daughter Rachel* (1903) (Fig. 108), a photograph exists documenting one of their posing sessions with the painter at what is now the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum (Fig. 114). The photograph shows Mrs. Warren and Rachel looking directly at the camera while Sargent paints the portrait with his back to us and allows for a direct comparison between the portrait and a photograph of the girls. The ladies' painted counterparts appear more strong jawed, attractive, calm, and "mentally abstracted" than their photographic selves.[295] What happened in the transference from reality to the canvas? Judging from his inclusion of the embracing Madonna and child sculpture in the background, Sargent intuitively sensed their unconscious ambivalence towards one another and made visible in paint what the cameras at that time were unable to fully capture.

More than one hundred years later, advancements in photographic speed and resolution have transformed the medium into a scientific tool used to record millions of combinations of facial expressions. Since the late 1960s, in a project similar to Muybridge's motion studies of animal locomotion, psychologist Paul Ekman helped formulate the Facial Action Coding System, which breaks down universal emotions into combinations of coded facial expressions. Using photographs of his teenage daughter's face, Ekman detects the occurrence of "microexpressions"—emotions humans try to conceal that last less than one-fifth of a second, in other words, Benjamin's optical

[294] Aaron Scharf, *Art and Photography* (Baltimore: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 1968), 51.

[295] Barbara Dayer Gallati, "Posing Problems: Sargent's Model Children," in *Great Expectations: John Singer Sargent Painting Children*, ed. Barbara Dayer Gallati (New York: Brooklyn Museum in assoc. with Bulfinch Press, 2004), 233.

unconscious, and trains people in emotional face reading with the hopes that they will apply this knowledge to better approach and relate to others.[296] These scientific experiments carry over to the contemporary art world, and Barney picks up where Sargent left off; however, this time capturing the accidental or "optical unconscious" through photography in works such as *The Butterfly* and *The Little Sister*.

Both Sargent and Barney were ethnographers of a special kind—as cultural outsiders they studied the behavior of European aristocratic families in order to produce portraits of them. However, rather than capture the aristocratic, friendly, and familial connections in a conventional matter, they looked to old master painters as well as to modern inventions such as photography, to dictate their structured compositions. The aristocrats and upper class featured in these compositions are treated individually in order to capture their inner worlds and personal psychologies. Even though over one hundred years separate Barney's work from Sargent's (and the aristocracy's power has declined precipitously), she still strives for the same qualities to be communicated in her portraits—likeness, ancestry, upper-class status, psychology, and equally important, her social position in relation to the aristocrats and her career in relation to the other artists to whom they are connected. Overall, Sargent and Barney's portraits stand as a proof of social interaction, a contract between the artist and the family that maps social relationships both in and out of the frame.

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[296] Paul Ekman, *Emotions Revealed: Recognizing Faces and Feelings to Improve Communication and Emotional Life* (New York: Times Books, 2003), 75, 15.

Part IV. Acceptance/Denial of the Viewer

In his 2008 book, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before*, critic and theorist Michael Fried pauses to consider family portraits created by German photographer Thomas Struth in order to bolster his argument for full-frontal photography that achieves anti-theatricality or pure objectivity. Despite Struth and Barney's similar working styles, subject matter, and psychologically powerful results, Fried declares that Struth's works are superior to others due to his ability to capture the full frontal portrait without theatricality through the subjects' self-aware poses. This way, both the artist and Fried monopolize control of the photographs' meanings, which are deceptively blind to hierarchical and gender issues within the family, and deny the audience's varying interpretations of the work. Barney, on the other hand, tends to focus on strong matriarchal figures and delights in the camera's capture of the optical unconscious, or accidental, allowing her work to be freely interpreted and liberating it from the constraints of anti-theatricality and absorption.

From the late 1980s to 2005, Thomas Struth set about capturing yet another quasi-ethnography of large and highly cultivated families in their domestic settings while simultaneously traveling for other projects in the United States, Europe, China, England, Germany, Italy, Japan, Peru, and Scotland that culminated in a 2008 exhibition and book entitled *Family Life*. Like Barney, and as with most ethnographies discussed in this chapter, Struth is positioned as an outsider to the group, and the sustaining interest of these works lies in the vacillation between the viewer's interpretation of the subject as an individual or their place within the family group.

According to Fried, this type of posed portrait, where the sitters are intensely aware of the photographer's presence, usually produces a theatrical, and therefore inferior, work. He writes, "those [works] of the portrait call for exhibiting a subject, the sitter, to the public gaze; put another way, the basic action depicted in a portrait is the sitter's presentation of himself or herself to be beheld. It follows that the portrait as a genre was singularly ill-equipped to comply with the demand that a painting negate or neutralize the presence of the beholder…"[297] If the inherent nature of portraiture was the act of self-presentation, how is a photographer to avoid theatricality in family portraits?

Fried posits that it is Struth's singular working style when creating his family portraits that prevents theatricality in his photographs. First, Struth maintained close relationships with his subjects, not for the intention of creating their portrait, but for cultivating a close friendship. Only after they become friends does the topic of creating their portrait get broached. Thus, after deciding to photograph a family, Struth begins a long series of meetings and discussions in order for the family members to participate in the creation and to make them feel at ease. Moreover, all parties involved choose the site for the photograph in the house and when it comes time to take the photograph, Struth reveals the boundaries of the camera lens and allows them to install themselves in the room and pose as they see fit. While his subjects pose, Struth stands to the side of the camera and directs them to look at the lens, not at him, to avoid the interaction between photographer and subject and seamlessly promote the subjects' surveillance of their own self-image. He then extends the exposure time of the camera to a full second, which enables the sitter to settle into their pose. Finally, Struth snaps forty to fifty shots per

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[297] Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 192.

sitting, and after presenting them all to the family, they usually come to a consensus regarding the best one or two of the group. As a result, Fried maintains, the agency of photo making is shared between Struth and his families and the photographer avoids charges of exploiting his sitters, a major tenet of theatricalization.[298]

Notably, Barney's working process for *The Europeans* followed a similar path to Struth's, which also produced a collaborative spirit between the artist and her subjects. Indeed, the film *Social Studies*, directed by Jaci Judelman, chronicled Barney's stay in Paris and recorded the steps involved in creating the image *The Two Friends* (2004) (Fig. 115). Barney was first introduced to the woman, Adele, through her childhood nanny and met her for a preliminary meeting in her home. During the meeting, the two women discussed which room they would use, degree of lighting, and decided upon a meeting time for the photo shoot. Then Adele suggested that she has this male friend, a young boy who looked like a figure out of a Caravaggio painting, and that he would be perfect to include in the photograph, and Barney consented to the idea. Upon her return for the shoot, Barney and Adele came to an agreement on which dress she should wear (a black and yellow Pucci dress) and Barney captured her and the younger man in a variety of poses around the room while hiding underneath a dark cloth. Adele commented, "I didn't feel staged, feel posed. We could have been dressed in the same way and been in the same situation in this apartment without her. In fact, we did not clean up the apartment, we just dressed the spur of the moment the way she wanted."[299] After Barney received the developed photos, she returned to Adele's home and the three decided on the best

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[298] Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 198.
[299] *Tina Barney: Social Studies*, DVD, directed by Jaci Judelman (France/USA: Yare Films, 2005).

photos and, rewarding their contribution to the project, Barney allowed them to choose a

print to keep. Like Struth, Barney did not dominate the photo sessions but ceded a lot of

the creative control to her sitters. Thus, Struth's method of interacting with his subjects is

not as unique as Fried considers it to be.

In his discussion of Struth's family portraits, Fried cites an essay written by the

chief curator of Struth's 2002 retrospective, Charles Wylie, on the delicate and complex

nature of the family dynamic in the work. Wylie writes,

> The idea of families, of how one's place in the world is determined by
> one's place in the architecture of family, prompted Struth's [family
> portraits]. . . . The groups must be read in its entirety, and each family
> member placed by position, posture, gesture, and facial expression in the
> complex interweaving of emotion, gesture, and facial expression we all
> encounter in relation to our own families. . . . Regardless of their relations
> with the artist, awareness is the hallmark of all these figures—awareness
> of the artist taking the portrait, of the fact that they are a subject to be
> looked at, and, by extension, of their place in the world once the shutter
> has fallen.[300]

In his remarks, Wylie insists on the importance of place in Struth's family portraits—

how place determined in the photograph reflects the importance of place in family and

extends to place in the world. Furthermore, his comments underline the hubs of

interpretation to which the family portrait gives life—from the place of the sitters in the

portrait to the audience's reception and recognition of their place within their *own*

families. This individualized response that cannot be controlled by the photographer or

the subjects is an aspect of Struth's work that Fried overlooks.

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[300] Cited in Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 198.

In fact, when discussing Struth's image, *The Hirose Family, Hiroshima* (1987) (Fig. 116), a portrait featuring three generations of a Japanese family whereby all the females (grandmother, mother, and young daughters) are tightly packed across a sofa and flanked by the father and grandfather sitting higher on the sofa's arms, Fried writes that "no viewer could successfully do what Wylie demands." Fried explains that this is due to a lack of biographical information as well as an "unresolvable conflict between the viewer's engagements with individuals on the one hand and his larger response to and interpretation of the family group as a whole on the other," a common characteristic in ethnographic photography.[301]Needless to say, there is also no mention of the relationship viewers may make between the descent of the Hirose family, the African art collection, and the primitivist European painting on view.

Conversely, Barney focuses on the placement of the matriarch in relation to the family groups in order to fuel the narrative of her work. In *The Angel* (1996-1998) (Fig. 117), the mother is placed in the center of the image in close proximity to her four young children while the father is placed off to the right side leaning against a doorjamb. Additionally, many of Barney's photographs depict older wives and mothers as the voice of authority, illustrated by their placement within the image in relation to the other family members, facial expression, and their strong pose, as in the woman with her hands on her hips, echoing an equal, yet mightier stance than her husband in *The Japanese Panels* (1996-2001) (Fig. 118) and the matriarch with a stern glance and her arms folded in front of her intimidated son in *Mother and Son* (2003) (Fig. 119). Ultimately, through such

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[301] Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 200.

visual hints, viewers of Barney's work are able to place the individuals within the larger family unit, which usually results in a narrative involving a dominant mother figure.

In order to justify the indisputable state of the sitter's awareness in Struth's photography, Fried devises coordinates to uncover the presence of two correlative axes at work. The first axis runs laterally and represents the sitters' family relationships, both physically and culturally determined, and their ranking within the family unit. The other axis runs perpendicularly and symbolizes the frontal gaze and presentation of self-assigned roles in the family. According to Fried, the lateral axis is marked by a sense of unawareness while the vertical axis is characterized by an awareness of being photographed. Therefore, Struth's working style of allowing the family to pose themselves produces an intense awareness of the vertical axis. The more they are lost in their pose and their frontal address to the audience, the more they will become unaware of the overall family network of relationships, or lateral axis. Fried writes, "The more intense the sitter's commitment to the process [of posing themselves], the more oblivious they necessarily are to the entire all-embracing network of family relationships—to their family resemblance, to the hierarchies, affiliations and tensions, to the cultural style characteristic."[302] As a result, these axes work together to produce the seemingly contradictory result of an anti-theatrical full frontal portrait. Nonetheless, Fried implies that the audience, too, should become oblivious to the all-embracing network of family relationships, such as gender hierarchies within the family as seen in *The Hirose Family*.

For example, in Struth's image *The Martin-Mason Family, Düsseldorf* (2001) (Fig. 120), the five figures concentrate on their deep frontal poses illustrating that they

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[302] Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 203.

are aware of Struth's presence. Thus, the lateral axis brings forth the underlying loyalties, tensions, and closeness of its members—the fact that the daughter from the present marriage is posed to the right of the parents while the two daughters from the mother and father's previous marriages are on the side to the left. The daughter who is second from the left places her arms on the lap of her half-sister and her stepfather, which serves to bridge the gap between the two clusters of family members. In his explanation of this image, Fried claims that the blended quality of the family makes the photograph's lateral axis difficult to read because the lateral qualities and hierarchies are more complex than the others presented by Struth. When Struth heard Fried's interpretation of the work, he was delighted, because the mixed family's inscrutableness as well as *his personal understanding* of the family had been communicated in the photograph.[303]

Yet Journalist Eric Konigsberg's account of Struth's photograph, *Laurence & Charles, Charlotte, Louis & Arthur* (2001) (Fig. 121), offers a highly personalized viewpoint:

> Among Thomas Struth's family portraits, perhaps my favorite shows a father—self-possessed, self-satisfied, possibly self-made—commanding his fair share of a couch alongside his wife, twos sons, and a daughter. I don't know for sure, but I imagine the man is a collector and that the family is Jewish.
>
> They might not be Jews…But to me, there are familiar signifiers in the bourgeois tableau, evidence of accomplishment and accumulation—brocaded upholstery beneath the principals, tall French windows behind them, a Caillebotte above them—and, even more so, in the postures and physical expression: All of them, but particularly father and sons, appear

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[303] My emphasis. Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 206.

warm to each other but cold to the rest of the world, an embattled bunch in a private moment. To be Jewish is to be perpetually bracing for a fight.[304]

Konigsberg proceeds to discuss how unusual it is that a German photographer created this work and how he had never counted a German among his friends or houseguests before his encounter with Struth. This extremely personal and highly individualized reaction fueled by the author's experience as a Jewish male growing up in the American Midwest reveals how it is almost impossible for a family portrait to be read as objective or neutral and how a viewer can successfully integrate individuals into the larger family unit based on their own observations.

These competing interpretations of Struth's works are just a few examples of how an audience's reaction to these family photographs can differ due to the fact that, returning to Wylie's comment, "The group must be read in its entirety, and each family member placed by position, posture, gesture, and facial expression in the complex interweaving of emotion, gesture, and facial expression we all encounter in relation to our own families . . ."[305] In his campaign for anti-theatricality in Struth's family photographs, Fried neglects to take into consideration the viewer's own familial experiences that may or may not shape their reaction to the work. As such, can we not ask whether this personal response to the highly sensitive work of family portraiture is similar to Roland Barthes' concept of the *punctum*?

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[304] Eric Konigsberg, "Akin: On the Family Portraits of Thomas Struth," *Thomas Struth: Family Life* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 2008), 77.

[305] Cited in Michael Fried, *Why Photography Matters as Art as Never Before* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2008), 198.

Theorist Walter Benn Michaels raises this point in his essay, *Photographs and Fossils*, where he maintains that the *punctum* is not necessarily private, but defined as an effect that has not been intended by the photographer but nonetheless affects its viewers.[306] In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes famously defined the photographer's *punctum* as "that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)." According to Barthes, to give examples of one's *punctum* would be to give oneself up, which is illustrated with Konigsberg's interpretation.[307] Michaels feels that Fried misses the point because it is not the representation that makes photography theatrical, it is its inherent indexicality, or *punctum,* or whatever bypasses the intentionality of the artist that affects the audience and is out of the photographer's realm of control. He continues, "The real point of the *punctum* is thus that it turns the photograph from a representation—something made by someone to produce a certain effect—into an object—something that may well produce any number of effects, or none at all, depending on the beholder."[308] For example, when discussing her photograph *The Skier* (1986) (Fig. 4), Barney described how she almost didn't print it, yet Szarkowski purchased it for The Museum of Modern Art because he thought the bottle of Elmer's glue on the table resembled a candle that lit up the image like one of Georges de la Tour's paintings.[309]

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[306] Walter Benn Michaels, "Photographs and Fossils," in *Photography Theory*, ed. James Elkins (Routledge, 2006), 440.

[307] Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida,* trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1980), 27.

[308] Walter Benn Michaels, "Photographs and Fossils," in *Photography Theory*, ed. James Elkins (Routledge, 2006), 440.

[309] Tina Barney, *Seminar with Artists Series*, Whitney Museum of American Art (New York: Education Department, 1990).

According to Fried, however, art that depends on the beholder is, by definition, theatrical, and is thus a degraded form of art or not art at all. In other words, Michaels writes, "As long as we are concerned about the *punctum*, the question about any photograph must be not whether it is good art or bad but whether it can be art at all."[310] Following Fried's logic, a *punctum* present in the work calls into question the work's status as art so he never considers the audience's reaction to Struth's work. Alternatively, Michaels poses whether or not photography can be an artwork that has a meaning one can argue about based on the intentions of the photographer or if it is a mere object based on the fluid meanings held by the audience. What if the photographer were to combine both the intentional and the accidental without trying to achieve anti-theatricality?

Barney's tableau photography provides a solution to the dilemma facing photography's status as art raised in the debate between Fried and Michaels. Due to the comparable working styles of Struth and Barney, Barney's camera detects the same hierarchies and tensions present in familial relations as Struth, without being defined in terms of anti-theatricality or solely by the intentionality of the photographer. For instance, responding to criticism about *Beverly, Jill, and Polly* (1982) (Fig. 73), a photograph featuring her sister, niece, and their Black housekeeper, Beverly, Barney states, "obviously if you get someone who has grown up in a ghetto, and they look at this photograph, of course they're going to have a different attitude….I shouldn't assume that

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[310] Walter Benn Michaels, "Photographs and Fossils," in *Photography Theory*, ed. James Elkins (Routledge, 2006), 442.

you're from the same background as the people in this photograph. You could see how someone else thinks differently."[311]

By utilizing the compositions of paintings in the art historical canon (such as works by John Singer Sargent), as well as having artwork physically present in most of her work, Barney injects art into photography. Her photography acts as both representation that can be argued about as well as an object where beholders encounter their personalized *punctums*. Ironically, because there is less composition and narrative involved, Struth's family portraits are actually more open to the *punctum* and Fried therefore overcompensates for it with his theories of anti-theatricality and absorption. Indeed, it is Barney's work that ultimately positions the subjects within the architecture of their families while dictating the place of the audience through their status as "other." As a result, the vacillation between the individual and their place within the social group characterizing the varying degrees of ethnographies visited in this chapter, from Sander's photographic profile of the Germans to Dijkstra's photographs of teenagers on a beach and Struth's family portraits, becomes partially resolved in Barney's work. The conclusion to this dissertation will examine a selection of her images that combine art, or intentionality, both physically present and dictating the compositions, with indexicality, culminating not only in the positionality of the audience, but also with the artist and her subjects.

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[311] Tina Barney, *Seminar with Artists Series*, Whitney Museum of American Art (New York: Education Department, 1990).

Conclusion

From the exteriors captured in Watch Hill to the interiors of Manhattan apartments and those of aristocratic family members in Europe, Barney's career has evolved over the past thirty years into a unique brand of tableau photography. From what was a casual means to get her crumbling family to interact has now transformed into a serious investigation of the photographic medium and the tableau form. Barney stages the composition and the subject matter, captures the accidental interactions of her subjects, investigates the relationship between painting and photography and the effects of architecture, sculpture, and drawing in photography, as well as provides what I term positionality, or an intertextual matrix of social relations between her subjects, herself, her audience, and society.

As this dissertation has examined, Barney's work developed into three distinct stages over the course of her continuing thirty-year career. It began with her rephotographing her friends and family in Watch Hill, a practice that evolved out of her training at the Sun Valley Center for the Arts, and established geographical location as an important factor in her work. Next, she focused on her friends and family in their interiors, composing the images based on paintings she had witnessed growing up as a relative of a world-famous art collector and organizing her compositions according to gender and class distinctions experienced in Barney's circle and recorded in Dutch seventeenth-century genre painting. The first two stages dealt heavily with Barney's

personal life by creating representations that countered the effect of her divorce, fear of losing her family, and role as a female image-maker. The third, and what I believe to be the stage that most accurately embodies the tableau form, was Barney's shift away from her family to the European aristocracy and upper class, as solely a photographer recording quasi-ethnographic narratives in *The Europeans*. Similar to the painter John Singer Sargent, Barney's work act as proof of a social contract between Barney, her subjects and her audience in which she is connected to the European upper classes while her audience is cast as outsiders. In turn, her audience is afforded the opportunity to make their own judgments regarding the work based on their personal experiences.

This dissertation started and ended with two male influential tastemakers in the art world who subscribed to a photography that denied reference to the outside world and accepted a lack of information for the cultural and historical contexts in which they were created—John Szarkowski, with his organization of landscape photography at The Museum of Modern Art, and Michael Fried, with his campaign of absorption and anti-theatricality in new art photography. By photographing people and locales with which she is familiar, Barney's work intends to offer an alternative to the lack of indexicality by examining the importance of biography, location, gender, and cultural specificity in the meaning of her work.

Contrary to Fried's opinion that it is impossible to place each individual into a larger group, then each group into society as a whole, I hope that by providing new information on a little-researched artist such as Barney, my work has helped to facilitate the positionality even more between Barney, her subjects, and her audience that could be utilized as a model to investigate other tableau photographer's work in the future. By

examining a selection of Barney's various works, both successes and failures, in what I call positionality test cases, one can detect the necessary elements that go into making a photograph that combines art with indexicality, concluding with the positionality of all the players involved.

According to theorist Jean-François Chevrier in the 2006 essay "The Tableau and the Document of Experience," the tendency for photographers to produce works combining the intentional and the accidental signals a recent trend in the medium, which I believe is exemplified through Barney's work.[312] On the one hand, the intentional tableau form is characterized by a frontal plane with distinct boundaries that, due to its large size, confronts the viewer who contemplates it. On the other hand, the photograph can approach the status of a document of culture without being constituted as raw fact, which is where the accidental element surfaces.

Part I. Positionality Test Cases

For the first positionality test case, I return to a much-discussed image by Barney, *The Ancestor* (2001) (Fig. 89). First, the work is ripe with the intentional. Elements in Barney's control include the placement of the subjects—Baron Max Egremont with his servant behind him—and the place, the private dining room of Petworth House, a nationally protected estate in West Sussex, England. The high-ceilinged room features

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[312] Jean-François Chevrier, "The Tableau and the Document of Experience," in *Click Doubleclick: The Documentary Factor*, Thomas Weski, ed. (Köln: König, 2006).

three paintings, two of which are in view: a large rectangular portrait of a male ancestor by former President of the Royal Academy Sir Francis Grant and a small oval portrait of a female figure. The table consists of an elaborate silver tea service, butter, and biscuits signaling a proper British tea.

Barney's carefully pre-formed composition reveals how she borrowed from perception books such as E.H. Gombrich's *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* and art history including seventeenth-century Dutch painting, Modern and Impressionist works, and relies on her multisensory experience of being surrounded by art from an early age. According to Chevrier, tableau photography falls into the reproductive model, "a model of mastery, or more exactly, of aesthetic appropriation as the exercise of a visual mastery."[313] In this image, Barney places Max Egremont front and center at the head of the table, the largest figure in the work. His servant is stationed behind him and appears shorter and smaller and therefore, less important. Furthermore, this particular tableau combines photography and painting, with Max Egremont and the servant standing with their backs to the paintings to allow for a direct comparison between the painted and the photographed figures.

Besides the model of reproduction, Barney also utilizes the model of recording, that which is uncontrollable, such as the resemblance between Max Egremont and the male figure in the full-length portrait behind him, the distinguished squint and straight posture of the aristocrat, and the stiff countenance of the weary servant. From the time Barney presses the shutter to the instance of recording, there is that moment when the

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[313] Jean-François Chevrier, "The Tableau and the Document of Experience," in *Click Doubleclick: The Documentary Factor*, Thomas Weski, ed. (Köln: König, 2006), 58.

camera captures that which is accidental and can be interpreted in various ways by the audience.

Therefore, the social networks that run throughout the web cast by the occasion for the tableau and the document occur between the subjects themselves, Barney and her subjects, and the subjects and the viewer. For instance, in *The Ancestor*, spectators recognize that due to the positioning of the figures, the large male in the center foreground is the ancestor, the superior heir to the family name, while the shorter figure near the back is the inferior servant. The photograph also reveals Barney's relationship to her subjects. Even though she is not related to these aristocrats by blood, as in her earlier works, Barney still manages to connect socially with them in order to gain access to experiencing their private lives. Chevrier argues that, "experience cannot be excluded from questions of content" and an artist such as Barney can say, "'I am restoring that which I have seen, the event or the phenomenon in which I have participated.'"[314] However, the artist's view is far from raw fact.

The large size of the tableau photograph also serves a useful social function—to address the viewer in a confrontational manner that separates the subjects from the viewers. Chevrier argues, "The viewer is thereby ushered into a double experience of recognition and of strangeness: the tableau offers him a familiar recognition of himself, of his belonging to the human species, by proposing another view which removes him from his natural sphere."[315] In the case of Barney's work, the audience recognizes the social and cultural symbols in the photographs, but also the strangeness and unfamiliarity

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[314] Jean-François Chevrier, "The Tableau and the Document of Experience," in *Click Doubleclick: The Documentary Factor*, Thomas Weski, ed. (Köln: König, 2006), 56.

[315] Jean-François Chevrier, "The Tableau and the Document of Experience," in *Click Doubleclick: The Documentary Factor*, Thomas Weski, ed. (Köln: König, 2006), 52.

of this world that they would not normally be able to access. Thus, the viewers are not permitted entry due to the elevated social positions of her subjects, which is exaggerated by their frontal confrontations towards the picture plane that mirrors the confrontation of the tableau.

The interface between a reproduction and a recording with social networks established by the tableau form is also successful in Barney's tableau photograph *The Hands* (2001) (Fig. 122). *The Hands* once again features Frédéric Malle and his son standing in back of a table in their dining room, both with their arms folded and their backs to a large painting of a male figure grabbing a female goddess's exposed breast with his clenched hand. They also stand to the right of a wooden sculpture of a standing female figure with her arm across her waist. Hence, based on her pre-visualization, Barney arranges the young son and father side-by-side and facing the viewer in a corner heavily populated with art.

However, we must remember that this image is one of approximately fifty taken by Barney in a single session and the resulting image of the four figures' hands came to fruition in the moments between Barney's arrangement and her pressing the shutter. The documentary film *Social Studies* chronicling the creation of *The Europeans* follows how Barney positions the figures but doesn't go as far as posing them. It isn't until after she receives her contact sheets back, a few days later (also shown in the film) when she discovers in delight with a loupe in hand that the father and son are holding the same pose, with their wristwatches exposed out of their shirt cuffs, echoing the pose of the sculpture and the painted man's tensed hand, thus the after-the-fact entitled, *The Hands*.

The Hands is the epitome of a tableau photograph in that Barney reproduces and records the appearance of photography, painting, and sculpture in one confrontational object. Again, I return to Chevrier describing the tableau: "there is a return to classic compositional forms, along with borrowings from the history of modern and premodern painting, but that movement is mediatized by the use of extra-painterly models, heterogenous with canonical art history-models from sculpture, the cinema, or philosophical analysis."[316] Due to the frontal positions of all artworks and figures, and the high-resolution details of the tableau form, viewers are able to discern between the rough-hewn wood of the three-dimensional sculpture, the iridescent surface in the upper left corner of the oil painting, and the smooth verism of the photographed father and son. All media—photography, painting, and sculpture are interpenetrating and acting upon each other, especially with their synchronous poses.

Additional interaction between foreign bodies also occurs outside the frame. Malle is considered modern-day French royalty—his uncle is the film director Louis Malle and his grandfather founded Christian Dior perfumes. By allowing Barney into his home to photograph his family's portrait, she is now connected to him. In fact, in *Social Studies*, the son explains how his father told him that Barney is a famous photographer and that he should be on his best behavior for her. That being said, Barney acts as an intermediary between the subjects and the audience. However, the viewer confronts the tableau photograph and interprets what they wish; yet, they are not welcomed into this world, they are seen from the other side in a face-to-face confrontation. Barney positions the viewer as "other"—most of their homes are not filled with art, they are not personal

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[316] Jean-François Chevrier, "The Adventures of the Picture Form in the History of Photography (1989)," Michael Gilson, trans. in Douglas Fogle, *The Last Picture Show: Artists Using Photography, 1960-1982* (Minneapolis, MI: Walker Art Center, 2003), 116.

friends with Brigitte Bardot, they can only address the fictitious space of the tableau from a distance and interpret the scene according to their own cultural beliefs.

This triangular relationship between the subjects, Barney, and the audience in establishing positionality is crucial to the work's success. If it weren't for Barney's role as intermediary produced by the combination of the intentional and the accidental, the audience would encounter the fictional strangeness of the tableau without being able to establish their relationship to it. Indeed, there are two series where Barney failed to establish positionality in her works—with her "Nude" series from 1996, and the photographs featured in the exhibition "China Visit" at her gallery, Janet Borden, Inc, in 2007.

First, with the "Nude" series of 1996 Barney wanted to distance herself from photographing her friends and family so she hired models from the New York Studio School. This was one of the only instances where Barney employed models for her work. Art critic Martha Schwendener claimed that Barney intentionally selected a range of Bohemian "types" to pose for her.[317] Initially, Barney directed the models in well-appointed living spaces as in *Untitled* (1996) (Fig. 123) but she soon switched to photographing the models in their own environments. The resulting small-format photographs feature young nude male and female models of varying skin color and body type arranged in loose narrative groups in banal student apartments.[318]

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[317] Martha Schwendener, "Tina Barney: Janet Borden, Inc., through May 10," *Time Out New York*, Issue 84, May 1-8, 1997, 38.

[318] These photographs were originally printed 14 5/16 x 18 1/8 inches but Barney expressed an interest in increasing the size to the usual 60 x 48 inches.

A number of interesting problems arise, however, due to the lack of art or architectural structure in these lower income spaces, and Barney is not able compose the photograph in her normally efficient style. For example, in *Nude No. 1044* (1996) (Fig. 124), it is evident that Barney struggled with producing some structure out of the kitchen by including the white pole to bisect the image as well as leaving the oven door open. Yet, the resulting image is incongruous with a nude model leaning against the wall in a kitchen with an open oven door. Barney also tries to inject the scene with an intentional narrative tension but, because she is not well acquainted with the models nor their lifestyle, it appears that she just gave them directions fit for an improvisational acting class (she had recently taken a film directing class), for instance, the female on the left wringing her hands in *Nude No. 1050* (1996) (Fig. 125). Thus all accidental is wrung out of the work and the resulting intentional elements are uninteresting, if not awkward.

Schwendener writes, "She [Barney] probably doesn't know them [the models] from a hole in the wall, and it shows. Thus the sense of familiarity that made "Friends and Relations" so compelling is totally absent here, although Barney tries to force a connection anyway."[319] Given that the models are employees of Barney, the artist is unable to define herself in relation to them without appearing superior. In the past, Barney has stated how she only feels comfortable photographing subjects who are equal or greater in social status than herself. Thus, the triangular link between the subjects, Barney, and the audience is broken and any chance of achieving positionality with the tableau form, even if she were to increase the size to five feet (as were her intentions), fails.

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[319] Martha Schwendener, "Tina Barney: Janet Borden, Inc., through May 10," *Time Out New York*, Issue 84, May 1-8, 1997, 38.

For the next test case, Barney traveled to Shanghai and Beijing in 2006 to complete "China Visit"—a series dedicated to capturing the cultural figures that exist between ancient China and the new China that blossomed in the 1990s after the Communist regime. Barney features dancers at rehearsal (Fig. 126), opera singers, actors getting ready backstage, a painter at home as well as a hostess at a dancehall, a jingle writer, and golf caddies on a golf course. Barney had only visited China once before, in 1983, and she expressed great disappointment that everything traditional had been destroyed after her return visit. For instance, when showing the photograph of a grandmother with her two granddaughters in a traditional Chinese rock garden, Barney declares that it's "very hard to find this kind of scene. Everything has been destroyed…everything is new. There is nothing left, *nothing*, *nothing*, *nothing* so to find this is rare."[320]

In *The Caddies* (2006) (Fig. 127), Barney offers a glimpse of the new China showcasing two female caddies patiently waiting on a golf course. Since the 1990s, golf has become the leisure sport of choice in China, and as a result, luxury golf courses have begun to dominate the landscape. Interestingly, 70 to 80% of caddies in China are female based on the male golfers' desire to feel masterful and have a passive female companion with a soft voice and superior listening skills.[321] In the photograph, the caddies are positioned in front of a water hazard with a background view of the construction of high-rise condominiums that takes on the appearance of an artificial backdrop, which adds to the character of new China that Barney dislikes.

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[320] Tina Barney, Parsons Lecture Series at Aperture Foundation (New York: Aperture Education, December 2008).

[321] Qiu Yijiao, "Golf's Bag Ladies," *China Daily*, September 10, 2009 http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/life/2009-09/10/content_8676886.htm

On the other hand, Barney also records some vestiges of old China including opera performers at an ancient opera house and male actors getting ready backstage in *The Dressing Room* (2006) (Fig. 128). While Barney is able to record the unguarded moments of an actor before the show, the photograph does not achieve the same reproductive effects as her earlier work. This is due to a number of reasons—first, Barney is schooled in Western art history and she fails to apply her knack for composition in these works, perhaps because it would seem incongruent when dealing with eastern culture. Unlike *The Europeans* where Barney was able to communicate with her subjects in Italian, French, and English, Barney does not know Chinese or its dialects and her subjects speak little English so she is unable to communicate with them in order to capture their inner psychological lives and convey a narrative between the figures. Furthermore, Barney spent almost eight years traveling to six countries in Europe while developing *The Europeans*, yet for *China Visit* she only visited two cities over a short period of time and failed to devote more than a year to researching the series. Therefore, the intentionality in the work is muddled.

Unfortunately, the lack of familiarity with her subjects and the culture is revealed in the work through Barney's timidity with the camera. Hence, the subjects are seen as "other," measured against the ideal of the western universal. One way to rectify this, Chevrier suggests, is through the more modest form of the portrait that would permit a collaboration between the photographer and the subjects. However, in Barney's case, the language and cultural barriers presented during *China Visit* prevent the co-authorship of the photograph from occurring; and likewise, the comfort that produces the accidental,

unlike the scenario discussed in chapter three dealing with the creation of Barney's work,

The Two Friends (2004) (Fig. 115).

Although Barney's work has not been critically well received since her earliest

photographs of friends and family in Watch Hill and Manhattan (reviews for *The*

Europeans were mixed), her most recent work promises to offer a fresh perspective to

critics and viewers alike. Nonetheless, it is still a work-in-progress and has only been

shown during public speaking engagements in slide format.

After promising that she would never photograph the lower classes, Barney has

made a slight amendment to her claim. For the past three years, Barney has photographed

the year-round, mostly Italian, residents of small towns neighboring Watch Hill in Rhode

Island and Connecticut, visiting private homes as well as, in a return to street

photography, public sites and events such as factories, dance schools, parades, arcades,

and discount furniture stores. Her new subjects consist of welders, ironworkers,

teenagers, ballerinas, tap dancers, and members of marching bands. In Untitled (n.d.)

(Fig. 129), Barney captures a male stoneworker in front of a wall of tools set behind

religious garden statuary looking steadily at her camera. Barney's quest to photograph

craftspeople at work is an update of Sander's project, *People of the Twentieth Century*.

Even though Barney is exploring the working and middle classes, she displays a

fondness, familiarity, and even nostalgia for their customs and lifestyles due to the fact

that she has summered in this region for her whole adult life. In a photograph of three

teenage girls clad in costumes at the local dancing school (Fig. 130), Barney reminisces

how she used to take tap dance classes at this same school run by Italians when she was

in her 20s, and marvels at how the girls transform out of their street clothing into toe

shoes and tutus. These images mark a return to the underlining meaning of Barney's more successful Watch Hill works—the reluctance towards change and the comfort found in the permanence and familiarity of these rituals. Barney understands the behavior of the typical American teenage girl, thus the insecurities of being left out of a conversation and the competitiveness of the in-crowd surface in this work. While the world famous art has been traded in for quotidian posters of ballet shoes, the pre-visualized, intentional narrative as well as the unintentional are once again present.

Will the public receive this latest series more favorably because it is not of the upper classes? Although Barney began this project almost three years ago, her new works capture a sort of *zeitgeist* for post-recession America in 2010 that shifts away from the glamorous interiors shown in works featuring her friends and family in the 1980s to a "simpler" way of life featuring American customs such as parades, dance recitals, and the good-old-fashioned work ethic of skilled craftsmen. Even Barney was not untouched by the latest turn of events—the Lehman name of her ancestors is now synonymous with economic collapse in the United States. It seems as if Barney has shed the trappings of the wealthy and her familial connections that Bourdieu said was necessary for being allowed to photograph the most desired subjects as she yearns to define herself in relation to these small-town, white American subjects, perhaps making her more relatable to the general public. With Barney acting as intermediary, the audience will be confronted with a large object-image that transports them to a fictitious space, both strange and familiar, of the American mainstream that they could apply to their own upbringing.

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