Gertrude Kasebier: Her Photographic Career, 1894-1929

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Gertrude Kasebier: Her photographic career, 1894–1929

Michaela, Barbara L., Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1985

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GERTRUDE KASEBIER: HER PHOTOGRAPHIC CAREER 1894-1929

by

BARBARA L. MICHAELS

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Art History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

1985
This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Art History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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FOREWORD & ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As a subject, Gertrude Käsebier has played hide and seek. Some aspects of her life and work are amply documented, others are elusive. Just as Käsebier tried to avoid portraitists, she seems to have wished to evade the historian. Although she and her family saved her most valued photographs and negatives, and placed them in public collections, Käsebier destroyed her studio records and almost all negatives. She kept some mementoes—letters, autographs, and articles about friends and about herself (now in the New York Public Library), but these alone could not tell her story. That comes largely from interviews (especially with her daughter, Hermine Turner, and her granddaughter, Mina Turner), from letters in the Alfred Stieglitz Archive in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, and from letters at the Norwood Historical Society, Norwood, Massachusetts, the former home of her photographic colleague, F. Holland Day, as well as from letters she sent to Laura Gilpin, now in the Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas.

A hunch led me to find the letters and photographs in the Musée Rodin, Paris, in 1978, soon after that important archive had been opened to the public. Much important information also came from contemporary articles, many of which were to be found only by searching through photographic periodicals, because few early twentieth century articles on
I can only regret that Mina Turner did not live to see this study completed. Despite debilitating illnesses, she devoted a great deal of time and effort to interviews, and generously opened her Käsebier memorabilia to me. As a one-time photographer, she recognized her grandmother's accomplishments, without ever indulging in ancestor-worship. Her delicious sense of humor and throaty voice brought descriptions of her grandmother to life. I am grateful, too, that Hermine Turner, in her nineties, could recount vivid recollections of her mother's life, work and friends, from the 1890's onward.

Interviews with Kate Steichen and James S. Morcom, Mina's contemporaries who knew Käsebier well, also helped me to envision the photographer. Other Käsebier descendants—Mason E. Turner, Jr., Patricia Costello and Myke Cannon—have been generous in putting photographs and family records at my disposal.

Of Käsebier's friends and acquaintances who responded to my queries, I am especially grateful to the photographers Imogen Cunningham, Laura Gilpin, Ralph Steiner, Paul Strand and Karl Struss, as well as to Knox Burger, Nina Vitale Cohen, Henry Blanchford, Phyllis Fenner and Wallace Putnam. Other useful information also came from the following people, whose relatives had sat for Käsebier: Sarah Brandegee Brodie, Michael Burlingham, Henry Clifton, Jr., Evan Evans, Barbara
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The assistance of many people at various institutions has been indispensable. I am most indebted to the staff of the Museum of Modern Art's Photography Department: to John Szarkowski for his interest in this project while I was on the Department's staff and since, as well as to Susan Kismaric, John Pultz, Peter Galassi, Catherine Evans and Sarah McNear, who made the Museum's fine, extensive collection of Käsebiers available to me, often on short notice and despite inconveniences during the Museum's renovation. The Museum's Steichen Archive has been a valuable resource, whose helpfulness was enhanced by the assistance of its devoted guardian, Grace M. Mayer.

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Colin Eisler's enthusiasm nudged me into Käsebier re- search. Peter Bunnell generously introduced me to the Turner family, guided me in early research, and read the disserta-
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My sons, Kenneth and Daniel, who, as children, must have felt a certain rivalry with Gertrude Käsebier (who took so much of their mother's time), have, as young men caught typographical errors as well as Xeroxing and delivering drafts of the manuscript. My deepest debt, however, is to my husband, Arthur, who has always found time to offer encouragement, advice, criticism or editorial suggestions, as necessary.
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INTRODUCTION

Gertrude Käsebier's photographic career deserves a place among American success stories. This vibrant woman's achievements around 1900 were unprecedented. She ran a fashionable portrait studio in New York, contributed to illustrated magazines, and exhibited with the Photo-Secession—an exclusive group ardently dedicated to photography as a fine art.

Her accomplishments would have been notable for any photographer. For a middle class, middle-aged mother of three, they were extraordinary. Unlike painting, photography had always been open to women, but none before Käsebier became famous while balancing a commercial career against the demands of family life.

Today, Mrs. Käsebier is best known as a Photo-Secessionist, as a colleague of Alfred Stieglitz, the great photographer and proselytizer for the art of photography. Yet for all that has been written about Stieglitz and the Photo-Secession, much remains to be said about Käsebier. Her relation to Stieglitz and the Photo-Secession has scarcely been explored. Basic questions beg to be answered: for example, why was she the first to quit the organization?

Her work did not begin and end with Stieglitz. Little has been written about her training, her travels, and her
career as a commercial portraitist. Her distinguished portraits of the French sculptor Rodin, her portraits of Sioux Indians and her photographs of mothers and children all want serious consideration.

Mrs. Käsebier's life exemplified what a determined woman could achieve around 1900 if she was imaginative and untrammeled by convention. Seeking respite from an incompatible marriage, she studied portrait painting, then switched to photography. Although she often glamorized her career, the hard but long-forgotten truth is that Mrs. Käsebier became a professional portrait photographer when a doctor warned her (incorrectly) that her husband would die imminently. Her mother, in widowhood, had had little choice but to run a boardinghouse. Käsebier saw broader horizons at a time when professional opportunities were opening to women.¹

After graduating from Pratt Institute, Käsebier spent a year (1894-95) studying painting and photography in Europe. Then, following a brief photographic apprenticeship in Brooklyn, she emerged, in 1898, to great acclaim as a commercial portraitist and exhibitor at photographic salons. Her pictures of mothers and children were widely praised. Stieglitz called her the leading portraitist of the day, and endorsed his belief by having her photograph his mother, his wife and himself.
In 1902, Stieglitz paid Käebier his highest compliment by devoting the first issue of his elegant magazine, *Camera Work* to her. He had already published many of her photographs in its predecessor, *Camera Notes*, and later published a portfolio of her pictures in *Camera Work* 10 (1905). Käebier also exhibited her photographs along with Stieglitz, Edward Steichen, Clarence H. White and other Photo-Secessionists until she resigned from the group in 1912.

After her husband's death in 1909, Mrs. Käebier continued studio portraiture and photographed as well for her own satisfaction. Although 1910-1915 has sometimes been considered a fallow period for her, she actually made some of her strong works then: for example, *The Widow* and *Yoked and Muzzled: Married*, and a fine series of photographs of Newfoundland.

The First World War limited photographic supplies, cut into her business, and seems to have aged her considerably. During the 1920's, her daughter Hermine took over more and more of the business, until Mrs. Käebier, increasingly lame and deaf, ceased to photograph about 1927. She was honored by a retrospective exhibition at the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences in 1929, in which the photographs she considered most significant to her career were shown. She died in 1934.
While it is not true that Käsebier died in great obscurity, (her death was noted with substantial obituaries in the New York Times, the Tribune and elsewhere), to many in the mid-thirties, her work must have seemed outdated. She had lived two decades past her creative prime, and her pictures must have appeared quaint at best, mawkish at worst to those young photographers who were even familiar with them. Her photographs provided no sustenance to the generation that worshipped finely-honed precision in photographs, and that sought objectivity, on the one hand, or abstraction, on the other. As a model to woman photographers, she had become overshadowed by numerous younger women, including Imogen Cunningham and Laura Gilpin whom she had inspired. And, beside the journalistic adventures of Margaret Bourke-White, Käsebier's version of photography seemed tame and parochial.

But today her photographs reverberate anew; they have come in tune with contemporary notions that photography may be used to render a photographer's feelings and that handwork and mixed media are among many legitimate adjuncts to film and printing paper. Käsebier was among the first to articulate the difficult idea that photography could be an "emotional" or expressive art. She often meant her pictures to represent her psychological response to a person, scene or theme. However, her photographs perplex and intrigue,
because they do not always make her viewpoint clear.

Some years ago, my own perplexity set me trying to comprehend her pictures, and to determine her place in history. In the following chapters, I have endeavored to answer many of my own questions, and to offer new information and insights into her accomplishments. To represent her prodigious photographic output, I have selected examples, many of which were praised, exhibited and reproduced in her day, and which best typify Gertrude Käsebier's imagery, professional development and talent.
Footnotes: Introduction


3. In 1929 she "could whisper proudly of having made 100,000 negatives with her own hands during her life." "Threescore Years and Sixteen Is Ardent Exponent of Photography," *New York Sun*, 5 Jan. 1929, p. 21. Although these were destroyed at the closing of her studio, several hundred of her photographs, including variants and reproductions, can be located today. Her remaining negatives are housed at IMP-GEH and LC.
PART ONE

EARLY LIFE AND CAREER 1852-1901
I. BEGINNINGS 1852-1894

Youth and Marriage

Much as she had loved to paint and draw since childhood, Gertrude Käsebier was unable to study art until she was a married woman with three nearly-grown children. Then, she made up for lost time by becoming an eminent portrait photographer less than a decade after beginning to study painting in 1889.

A career in portraiture was an unusual pursuit for a woman in her financially comfortable position, but Mrs. Käsebier was not one to be hampered by convention. Her independent attitude probably owed much to her upbringing.

She was born Gertrude Stanton in Fort Des Moines (now Des Moines), Iowa, in 1852. When she was about eight, she, her mother and her infant brother went west to Colorado territory to join her father, who was involved in silver mining. In the sparsely populated area where they lived, Indian children were among her few playmates, and young Gertrude learned to be self-sufficient.

Her father's death in 1864 brought an end to the Western adventure.¹ Gertrude's mother moved East, opening a boarding house in Brooklyn, New York. Meanwhile, Gertrude spent a few years in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, living

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¹ Some context or explanation is needed here to explain the '¹' mark and the footnote.
with her maternal grandmother and attending the Moravian Seminary for Women. No remaining records or memoirs tell what or when Gertrude studied at the Seminary, though her letter-writing style suggests that she received a good basic education. Her grandmother was an acknowledged influence whom Käsebier called "a splendid, strong pioneer type of woman," and a "model" for her.3

In 1874, when she was 22 and he was 28, Gertrude married Eduard Käsebier, a German immigrant businessman who lived at her mother's boarding house.4 They did not live happily ever after. Evidence, including some of Mrs. Käsebier's acerbic comments, shows that the Käsebiers were poorly matched.

Young Gertrude was attracted to Eduard Käsebier when they met at her mother's boarding house during the early 1870's. And he, newly arrived from Germany, must have been delighted to find her: bright-eyed, spirited and nubile. If Mrs. Käsebier later rued having "admired his stately gait and legs--and got legs," her tradition-minded husband, trained as a businessman, must have been equally dismayed to learn that his wife's artistic impulses could not be quelled by children, housekeeping or fine needlework.5

By tacit agreement, Mrs. Käsebier broke loose from conventional expectations, once their three children were
grown. Their granddaughter, Mina Turner, believed that in today's world the Käsebiers would have divorced. As it was, they maintained almost separate lives together.

He could not have been easy to satisfy. At a moment of financial strain, he did not refrain from urging his undomestic wife to take in boarders, yet he later protested that her photographic career might make others think he could not support her. Some time after her husband's death in 1909, Mrs. Käsebier told a friend: "If my husband has gone to Heaven, I want to go to Hell. He was terrible. I could never cook anything he liked. Nothing was ever good enough for him." Nonetheless, Mrs. Käsebier had earlier described her husband with affection and humor, if rather impersonally. For example, from Newport in 1899, she told Alfred Stieglitz: "Mr. Käsebier is with us at present and is enjoying himself to such an extent that he conducts himself quite like a schoolboy." Describing French railroad attendants' efforts to communicate with her in French, which she did not understand, she wrote: "they would shriek and gesticulate...among themselves. You would think—if you had not lived twenty years with one of those foreigners as I have—they were going to fight." Evidently more than twenty years in the United States did not alter Mr. Käsebier's foreign ways.

Mrs. Käsebier was a different sort of person—original and informal. Her vibrant personality was an asset in
attracting clients when she became a photographer. At once sensitive, hearty and outspoken, she was warm and generous, but could turn tough if necessary. Her engaging manner attracted almost as much attention as her photographs. She was a sophisticated and urbane artist, yet she peppered her talk with homespun, rural expressions, reminding listeners of her Western origin: in 1915 she urged photographic novices in Brooklyn, New York to: "Dream dreams, have ideals...and do not aspire to skim the cream before you have milked the cow."10

As described by her granddaughter, Mrs. Kasebier's strong, well-defined features made her handsome, rather than pretty. She was medium-sized, with chestnut brown hair in her youth, and brown eyes that twinkled all her life—though she sometimes studied people with the "disconcertingly frank stare of a child." Honest to the point of tactlessness, she was saved from making enemies only by the fact that she really liked people.

Although she had been deaf in one ear since the age of three (the result of scarlet fever), her normal voice was clear and vibrant, with a great deal of expression and a wide range of tone; she never spoke in the flat monotonous voice of the deaf. As years went on, her other ear failed, and she was virtually deaf by the age of 70, although an early hearing aid, called an "acoustician," was some help.
Her tendency to see silver linings led her to comment, in later years, that her deafness was a blessing, because it kept her from hearing many trivial things.\(^{11}\)

She was known for her quick repartee, for her fun-loving spirit; like many in her day she was partial to puns. She urged "women of artistic tastes" to become photographers, because the field seemed "especially adapted to them, and ....besides," she said, "consider the advantage of a vocation which necessitates one's being a taking woman." \(^{12}\)

Dressed in street clothes, around 1900, she would have seemed a properly attired middle class matron: corseted, hatted and gloved. In silver-grey silk and lace with diamond ornaments, at her daughter's wedding in 1899, she might even have been described as elegant.\(^{13}\) But her hands told another story. Not her palms (though Käsebier, who was interested in spiritualism, might have like to have had them read), but her fingertips, which bore the marks of her nonconformism: stains from photographic chemicals, and, in later years, tinges of nicotine from the little "Between the Acts" cigars that so embarrassed her pre-adolescent granddaughter.\(^{14}\)

For aesthetic effect and comfort in her studio, she wore loose Chinese or Japanese clothing, but often rendered that frumpy by "a voluminous, badly stained developing apron,\(^{15}\) like that shown in Everett Shinn's drawing of Gertrude
Käsebier Photographing Shinn[Fig. 60].

A motion picture would have provided the best portrait of this enormously energetic woman who carried herself erectly, moved quickly, and frequently brushed a stray strand of hair from her brow. 16 As it is, the Steichen drawing of about 1901 [Fig. 2 ] and his autochrome of 1907 [Fig. 1 ] are probably her best likenesses. They confirm a friend's description of a "keen faced woman whose eyes meet yourssearchingly" giving an impression of "intense vitality...a sense of great kindliness--wisdom--comprehension." 17

Studies at Pratt Institute 1889-1894

That "vitality" and "kindliness" were already evident while Käsebier studied art at Pratt, where she led a project to raise scholarship and travel funds for needy students.18 They also showed when she and her family entertained students --virtually all much younger than she--in their home near Pratt.19

Of her education at Pratt, Käsebier said little. However, information gleaned from the school's publications indicates that, beyond teaching her to paint, Pratt affected her artistic and professional development, because it treated
women as serious students, not diletantes. As a coed school it was unusual; more remarkable still, it encouraged women to train for careers and hired several women artists as faculty members. Mrs. Käebier became friendly with some of them, and kept in touch with them after she left Pratt. A few years after Käebier graduated, one of the instructors, Dora Miriam Norton, wrote a laudatory review of Käebier's photography exhibition at Pratt.

From 1889 to 1893, Käebier was enrolled in Pratt's Regular Art Course, a four year program designed to train artists. Like most art students of the time, Pratt's enrollees were expected to learn to draw from casts before they began to draw and paint from life. However, Pratt promoted students to classes working from head and figure as soon as they showed "sufficient ability," and three years spent in drawing and painting classes was a major part of the program. Käebier's continuing interest in composition was doubtless instilled at Pratt, where sketching and composition were "important features of the course." Lectures on design, perspective, anatomy and the history of art supplemented her studio courses, but photography was not part of the curriculum. Although Käebier asserted that Pratt professors discouraged her efforts at it, she probably learned a good deal about photography by studying Pratt's art reference collection--hundreds of photographs meant to illus-
trate "the historical development of art" as well as landscape composition. This collection was formed by Art Department Director Walter S. Perry, himself something of a photographer.

During the nineteenth century, photographs like those at Pratt were finely printed by specialized firms; Alinari, Brogi, Sommer and Braun were among the most noted experts in photographing art and architecture. Although their photographs were usually studied as reproductions, amateurs and photographers have found such prints technically interesting. Though we know little about Käsebier's earliest photography, it is clear that she began to photograph before entering Pratt. She would therefore have seen Pratt's photographs as one interested in depicting the world with a camera as well as with a brush. Different views of sculpture or architecture would have shown her how greatly photographs can be affected by changing light and vantage point. She must also have been aware of tonal nuances and varied printing quality among photographs.

Pratt's many activities and its broad approach to education surely affected Käsebier's point of view. For instance, Pratt's teacher training school pioneered in teaching Friedrich Froebel's methods. Pratt's public lectures and articles in its magazines would have shown her the role mothers could play by teaching their children and
guiding them to independence. Ideas stemming from Froebel and the kindergarten movement seem evident in Käsebier's mother and child photographs, as shown in Chapter X.

Pratt's publications were also filled with business advice for working women; such articles must have encouraged Käsebier in her eventual decision to go into business for herself.

After graduating in June 1983, Käsebier reenrolled during 1893–94, when Pratt added two new art teachers: Herbert Denman and Frank Vincent DuMond. DuMond perceived Käsebier's merits—her great enthusiasm, her generosity, and, not least, her age—and chose her as chaperone for his summer art school in France during 1894. Käsebier's wish to study art abroad would at last be granted.
First Successes in Photography

Meanwhile, during the spring of 1894, Käsebier suddenly won recognition in two photography contests. Käsebier had begun taking pictures by the late 1880's. Her first aim was mundane: to photograph her growing children. Almost no early work survives except Käsebier's First Photograph, a snapshot which shows her husband and a boy (presumably her son) in a grassy yard. Many an amateur might have made such a pleasant but unremarkable family picture [Fig. 10].

Photography had not come easily to her at first. Her camera was "a clumsy thing with a non-adjustable tripod at least five feet high," she said in typical Käsebier hyperbole. Using it, she "ruined at least thirty" plates before securing a negative. She finally learned the craft when Father Wenzel, an old priest whom she fortuitously met in a photography store, volunteered to give her lessons at home.

She gave Father Wenzel much of the credit when she won a $50. prize from The Quarterly Illustrator in 1894 for "the best photograph of a draped figure in Greek costume" combining "artistic pose, artistic accessories, and general excellence in composition." The two Käsebiers that the magazine
published—profile and head-on views of a chiton-draped young lady holding a flower—were the first of many Käsebiers to be reproduced over the years. Spurred by success, she entered The New York Herald's photography contest for women. (Segregation of women photographers in contests, as well as in camera club darkrooms, was common during the 1880's and 1890's) She was runner-up in this contest; two of her pictures were published, though, strangely, her name was not mentioned. The photographs can now be identified as hers only because she saved a clipping of one and a print of the other.

The two Herald photographs suggest the divergent directions to which Käsebier would veer throughout her career. In Grandpa's Orchard [Fig. 7] is an outdoor snapshot of daily activity, like the pictures she was soon to make of French peasants. Later photos of Newfoundland folk as well as of her grandchildren playing (The Swing, for instance) continue in this vein. Lillies [Fig. 8] is a posed costume piece, with the look of a studio photograph. It points towards her studio portraits as well as to such prepared pictures as The Manger. Its interest in light tonalities will prevail, notably in The Manger, Blessed Art Thou Among Women, and in Rodin portraits.

Oddly, only four years after she received the $50.
prize from the Quarterly Illustrator, Käsebier suggested that it had given her no joy or satisfaction. She said:

I felt awfully small when the thing appeared in print because it was not more meritorious, and because it found itself in such very questionable company.

The masters under whom I was studying, men whose opinion I was bound to respect, opened their vials of wrath, and labored with me as with one fallen from grace. They so convinced me of my error, that the poor camera again went into retirement, and I was so ashamed that I gave away the fifty dollars.

Generously giving away prize money would have been typical of Käsebier, but so was bending truth to suit her imagination or purpose. She was known for making "a wild and wonderful story out of everything." Käsebier's activities during the spring of 1894 call the "retirement" of her camera into question. She learned of her success with the Quarterly Illustrator by early March, and entered the New York Herald contest in mid-March. Then, before April 15, she took her camera to Europe. Any "retirement" of the camera could have lasted only a few weeks.

Recalling the situation in 1898, she implied that packing her camera had taken initiative and independence:

The time came when I was to go abroad to continue my studies, and the same good people persuaded me that it would be a fatal error to take the camera along, but at the last moment there was a space in a trunk, which must needs be filled, and strange to say, it was just the dimensions of my camera case. You can draw your own conclusions.
Conclusions: The legend that Käsebier created about herself demands revision. Taking camera equipment to Europe was not a last-minute whim. No wonder, with two photographic contests behind her, that her baggage happened to have space for her camera. Käsebier must already have sensed that she and photography had a future together.
Study in Europe

Photography was still on Käsebier's mind when she reached her first stop in Europe, her in-law's home in Wiesbaden, Germany. Even while she took a "vacation" in that spa city where life moved at a leisurely pace, she wrote her friends and family:

There is here no end of material for delightful and profitable study. Within easy distances there are many quaint villages with most interesting types of people, children, geese etc., both for brush and Camera. 46

Later, Käsebier claimed that photography was no more than a "pastime" until she discovered indoor portraiture in Crécy-en-Brie, 47 but her reference to "Camera" with a capital "C" suggests that, even before she reached France, photography was more than a mere pastime to her.

Käsebier spent the summer at Crécy-en-Brie, about thirty miles southeast of Paris, studying with Frank DuMond while chaperoning his students from Pratt and the Art Students League. The village had been chosen for its "healthfulness and picturesque surroundings," as well as for its proximity to Paris. 48 DuMond offered students "study from landscape and from figure," followed by four criticisms a week. 49 He was a modest man who loved to teach; his instruction emphasized "the sound construction of a head—how to block it properly and work for form from the very start," 50 as approach which must have been congenial to Käsebier's
interest in portraiture. After only a week in Crécy, she wrote, "I have found my expectations more than realized... I feel that I am going to learn a great deal this summer." She enjoyed her surroundings, too:

We live in the most delightful old French Chateau with an aristocratic aged couple of reduced means.... There is a poetry and a sentiment in the atmosphere in France that America knows not....one is not harrassed with the idea of modern improvements, latest fads and fashions. Why think, I go to bed every night by candle light and I like it: my floor is of red tile and I like that....I am so content I feel like a sinner. I feel as if it were all a dream and wish I might never wake. 51

Undaunted by rain, she turned wet weather to her advantage, and found her calling as a portrait photographer:

Hitherto I had looked upon photography as a pastime only, and had given to in-door portraiture no attention whatever. But one day when it was too rainy to go into the fields to paint, I made a time-exposure in the house, simply as an experiment. The result was so surprising to me that from that moment I knew I had found my vocation. 52

She made her first "portrait study" in a "low-ceiled, dark walled, north room," and said she "knew that if I could get a result under such conditions there was more to be accomplished elsewhere." 53 But Käsebier did not devote herself solely to portrait photography at Crécy, even though her reminiscences imply that she did. The photographs she made and published, along with descriptions of village and peasant life, show that she was also greatly interested in illustrative photography—or what we now call photojournalism.

In two articles, her camera depicts peasant life and fellow students. Her text reports what pictures cannot,
especially the changing reactions of students to peasants.

For example:

We dared once to pity their women, because they were laborers in the field. Today, knowing them better, the simplicity, the honesty, the naturalness of their lives makes us question, and we begin to ask whether they cannot teach us many a lesson in contentment, healthful dress, industry, patience and unaffected manners. 54

Probably owing to their appreciation of Millet's paintings, the students were favorably disposed towards the peasants. Käsebier says: "The farmer-folk made us welcome everywhere...There was a sympathy among them that seemed to us a real, instinctive art-appreciation," unlike "the mere contemptuous curiosity which the sketcher so often encounters." 55

Yet, Käsebier and her friends came to feel that the peasants' aesthetic sensibilities were "often only skin deep," and that "the peasant has no sentiment!" 56

No one could accuse Käsebier herself of lacking sentiment. Not only had she come to France imbued with the idea of peasant as "noble savage," but she perceived the French countryside with nostalgia, repeatedly associating the Brie area with the efforts of Barbizon painters who had worked nearby:

One color, or half-tone, melts into another in the most seductive fashion, whether it be the costumes of the peasants, the stain upon the buildings, or the gray-green of the landscape. It is no wonder that Corot and the followers of his method were captivated by this district. 57

While posing a mower and his wife for a photograph, she found that "the scene made another Angelus in its way, as
Millet must have seen hundreds of times before he painted his immortal picture" [Fig. 11].

The photographic illustrations for Käsebier's two articles show not only her interest in peasant life, but suggest some of her later photographic concerns. All of the pictures show people, and several show mothers and children. She has already begun to experiment with techniques of "art" photography, such as soft focus and silhouettes in The Return of the Sheep and A Silhouette. However, no indoor or close-up portraits are shown with her articles, and her composition is unsophisticated. For instance, she tends to leave an awkwardly large amount of space around her subjects, who often stand stiffly and frontally, in classic snapshot pose.

We know more of Käsebier's summer in Crécy-en-Brie than we know about the rest of her year abroad. She went to Paris during the winter of 1894-95, apparently studying at the Académie Julian. Käsebier said that while in Paris, "many artists" gave "much encouragement" to her photographic efforts. Then she went to Germany to improve her photographic technique:

Being entirely self-taught, I realized how hampered I was by ignorance of technique, and to study the chemistry of photography I desired to go to Germany, being more familiar with German than with French. My friends pleaded with me not to do it, predicting that I would lose the quality of my work and become mechanical or too technical. But, realizing the necessity of being able to control my medium, I carried out my idea. I apprenticed myself to a chemist who knew photography.
Without naming the chemist, Käsebier scorned his pedestrian vision:

The first picture I gave to him for a criticism was that of an old woman, standing in strong sunlight. Pointing to the interesting shadow cast by the figure, he said, "You must remove that by retouching, and then it will be very fine."

"What! remove a shadow, a natural effect, a thing which gives snap to the whole? Never!"

"Ah, but the public do not like shadows!"

That was the key to the artistic atmosphere I encountered in Germany.

The German photographic chemist best known to us today is H. W. Vogel, the inventor of orthochromatic film and Alfred Stieglitz's mentor in Berlin during the 1880's.

Vogel, however, was not like Käsebier's teacher; he did not discourage Stieglitz when Stieglitz did "nothing according to rote, nothing as suggested by professors or anyone else." 63

Käsebier's experience in Germany was the opposite of Stieglitz's in other ways. He absorbed all he could from German culture: operas, concerts, plays, museums, libraries—"Everything available to us was first rate," he recalled. 64

Käsebier spoke of Germany with less enthusiasm: "A year there did me no harm" she said sardonically. "One must know all sides to be able to strike a balance. The coffee and some other developers are very good in Germany." 65

Despite their different reactions to Germany, Käsebier and Stieglitz would, in a few years, find themselves following the same photographic path in New York.
Footnotes: I. Beginnings 1852-1894


In a letter to her niece, Patricia O'Malley Costello, Estes Park, Colo., 5 March 1973 Mina Turner explained that John Stanton was involved in mining silver, not gold (Costello).

2. Little is known of this period. Käsebier said she attended the Moravian Seminary in Bethlehem (now Moravian Academy and Moravian College), but there is no record of her attendance (Joan S. Taylor, Director of Alumni Relations, Moravian College to BLM, 21 Feb. 1979 and Mrs. Paul V.R. Miller, Jr., Alumni Director, Moravian Academy to Anne Tucker, 29 Oct. 1973; I am grateful to Anne Tucker for giving me a copy of this letter).

According to Hermine Turner, "Grandma Stanton used to run a small hotel in Denver. She gave that up and came to New York and ran a boarding house." (Hermine Turner to Charles O'Malley, 15 Feb. 1961, Costello.)


4. Interviews with Mina and Hermine Turner. During 1871-71 Edward Kasesbier (sic) lived at 65 Greene Avenue, according to the Brooklyn directory of that year.

5. Mina Turner, interview. Eduard Kasebier's 1868-70 passport lists his occupation as "kaufmann": merchant (Costello). He is listed as "bookkeeper" in the 1871-72 Brooklyn Directory as well as in the 1880 Brooklyn census.
6. Mina Turner, interview. The Käsebier children were: Frederick William, b. ca. 1875; Gertrude Elizabeth, b. 1878; Hermine Mathilde, b. 1880.

7. Mason Turner papers.

8. GK to Stieglitz, 23 July 1899, Yale.

9. GK to Miss Fletcher, Wiesbaden, 24 May 1894 and Crécy-en-Brie, 23 June 1894 (one letter), NYPL Manuscript Division. Miss Fletcher was apparently a fellow student at Pratt.


16. Ibid.


19. Hermine Turner, in an interview, recalled that her mother often offered their capacious house, with a room fixed up as a cozy rathskeller, for class parties. A Halloween party at the Käsebier house is described and illustrated with sketches in J.S.W., "A Holiday for Art's and Friendship's Sake," Pratt Institute Monthly 1 (Dec. 1892): 73-75.
20. Pratt's efforts "to lead women into varied careers of honorable activity, and to fit them to start others on the same roads" are discussed in Exhibit of Women Graduates and Pupils of Pratt Institute Brooklyn, N. Y. (Chicago: Columbian Exposition, 1893), pp. 2, 11, 13.

21. Käsebier requested that the letter she wrote to Miss Fletcher from Wiesbaden and Crécy-en-Brie in May and June 1894 (NYPL) be forwarded to several women. Research shows that four of these were art instructors at Pratt: Mary A. Hurlburt, Katherine E. Shattuck and Ida Haskell are mentioned in "Personals and Various Topics," Pratt Institute Monthly 1 (July-Aug. 1893): 333. Lucy A. Fitch (already Mrs. Dwight H. Perkins when Käsebier had the letter forwarded to her) is listed in the 1891-92 Pratt Institute Catalogue, p. 7. According to Notable American Women, vol.3, pp.52-53, Lucy Fitch was at Pratt from 1887-1891. After her marriage, she continued to teach and illustrate books; generations of children knew her "Twins" series, which began in 1911 with The Dutch Twins. According to her son, Larry Perkins (phone conversation, January 1985), the two women remained in touch well into the 1920's, when he recalls (without details) visiting Käsebier's studio. The friendship between Käsebier and this noted writer and illustrator of children's books suggests another aspect of Käsebier's interest in the modern education of children (see Chapter X). Unfortunately, no correspondence between the women seems to remain; Mr. Perkins said his mother was an avid letter writer, but discarded each letter as it was answered.


23. Pratt's Registrar records show that GK was enrolled for four years between fall 1889 and June 1893. Her graduation on 22 June 1893, along with six other women and two men in the Regular art course, is mentioned in "The Commencement," Pratt Institute Monthly 1 (July-Aug. 1893): 328, 330. Registrar's records also show that she was enrolled at Pratt during 1893-94 and 1895-96.

24. Pratt Institute, Department of Industrial and Fine Arts (leaflet), 1892, p.2.

25. Ibid.


I have not been able to locate these photographs, if they still exist, because the Pratt archives have been in storage during renovations.

29. Some of Perry's own documentary photos illustrate his book, Egypt, The Land of the Temple Builders (Boston, N.Y., Chicago: Prang, 1898). Unfortunately, the book does not identify which are "the carefully selected photographs" and which the "originals made by the author."

30. For example, Richard Offner, the Italian art scholar, used to point out subtle differences among such photographs to his student Sam Wagstaff during the 1950's. (Conversation with Sam Wagstaff ca.1977.)


34. See note 18 above and Pratt Institute Monthly 1 (July-Aug. 1893):334.


36. A copy of this photograph in the Metropolitan Museum of Art is inscribed by Stieglitz, "Käsebier's first photograph/given to me by Mrs. Käsebier/1900/Stieglitz Coll." However, its size, 3 3/4" x 4 4/8" is smaller than the 6 1/2" x 8 1/2" plates with which Käsebier says she began to photograph.


She also credited him in an interview, "Threescore Years and Sixteen Is Ardent Exponent of Photography," New York Sun, 5 Jan. 1929, p. 21.
39. P.A. Wenzel to GK, postmarked 6 March 1894, NYPL, "The noblesse of your heart made you lay the laurels to my feet and I send them back." A note on this letter identifies Wenzel as the priest who helped Käsebier.


Pratt Institute Monthly 2 (Mar. 1894):222 describes the terms of the contest.

40. See, for instance, Catherine Weed Barnes, "Photography from a Woman's Standpoint," American Amateur Photographer 2 (Jan. 1890): 10-13. Note, also, the "Women's Dark Room" shown on the plan of the Camera Club of New York, Camera Notes 2 (Oct. 1898): 64.

41. "Finest Photographs from the Herald's Fair Readers," New York Herald, 15 April 1894, n.p. (special insert). There is a clipping of Lillies in the MOMA Photography Dept. Study Collection. The print, In Grandpa's Orchard, is owned by Mason E. Turner, Jr., Wilmington, De. The date of the Herald contest was revealed by a copy of the page in Mr. Turner's possession.


43. Interview: Mina Turner.

44. P.A. Wenzel's letter to Käsebier (postmarked 6 March 1894, NYPL) was a reply to her earlier letter telling him she had won the prize. The Herald contest was announced in the New York Herald, 10 March 1894, p. 9. Käsebier apparently sailed for Europe before the Herald prizewinners were announced on April 15. She wrote Miss Fletcher from Wiesbaden (24 May 1894, NYPL): "I should have acknowledged your kindness in sending me [the] Herald clipping—which by the way was the first intimation that I had come in so close a second..."


46. GK to Miss Fletcher, 24 May 1894, NYPL.


49. Ibid. Also see "Fine Arts--A Summer Art School in France," Pratt Institute Monthly 3 (Dec. 1894): 82, for a description of the summer program.


51. GK to Miss Fletcher, 23 June 1894, NYPL.


53. Ibid., p. 270.

54. Käsebier, "Peasant Life in Normandy," Monthly Illustrator 3 (March 1895): 271. The title of this article is misleading. Crécy-en-Brie is not in Normandy. Perhaps an overzealous editor confused Crécy-en-Brie with Crécy-en-Ponthieu, which is in Normandy. The article, which identifies the town only as "Crécy," places it both on the banks of the Brie River and in Normandy--a physical impossibility.

55. Ibid., p. 272.


57. Ibid., p. 15.


The Käsebier girls, who had been staying with their grandparents in Wiesbaden, joined their mother in Paris for about a month, according to Hermine Turner (interview). No evidence supports Roland Rood's assertion that "as long ago as 1894 [Käsebier] opened a studio in Paris where she 'worked for money.'" ("Photo Craft and Out Prizes: A Retrospect," Burr McIntosh Monthly 18 [Dec. 1908]: n.p.)


61. Ibid.

62. Ibid.

64. Ibid., p. 31.

II. APPRENTICESHIP AND EARLY SUCCESSES 1895-1899

If Gertrude Käsebier had a shy streak, as she said she did, she disguised it well. ¹ Her initiative and enterprise (sometimes veiled as pleas of a damsel in distress) brought her first a useful apprenticeship with Brooklyn portrait photographer S. H. Lifshey, and then the invaluable admiration of Alfred Stieglitz.

She found fame in the three years between her return to the United States in 1895 and the Philadelphia Photographic Salon in the fall of 1898. Not only were Käsebier's innovative portraits the talk of photographic circles, she made news as the lady who audaciously invited Buffalo Bill's Indians to tea at her portrait studio off Fifth Avenue, and photographed them. ²

When Käsebiër returned from Europe, Brooklyn was home base again. Her dedication to photography did not keep her from reenrolling at Pratt for 1895-96. ³ More than simply wanting to continue painting on a regular schedule in an ample studio, she was probably lured by the prospect of studying with Arthur W. Dow and Ernest F. Fenollosa, who brought fresh ideas about the beauties of oriental art and principles of composition to Pratt's art curriculum in the fall of 1895, when Frank DuMond left. ⁴
Apprenticeship

In 1896, a doctor's prediction that her husband had "only a year to live" galvanized her to become a commercial portrait photographer. Although the prediction proved incorrect (Mr. Kasebier survived, though in poor health, until 1909), Mrs. Kasebier, no doubt recalling her widowed mother's boarding house, and perhaps having even been goaded by her husband to take in boarders, sought financial independence through photography. She convinced a neighborhood photographer, Samuel H. Lifshey, to take her as an apprentice. Although Lifshey's work was artistically undistinguished, he was a competent and successful commercial photographer, well qualified to teach her how to run a portrait studio.

Some of the inspiration to get practical business experience must be credited to Kasebier's education at Pratt Institute. Pratt's publications brimmed with advice, information and support for working women. Before going to Europe, for instance, Kasebier could have read "Business Principles for Women," which advised:

"Business is business," and there appears to be no more necessity for distinction of sex in commercial transactions than there is need for consideration of party in municipal affairs. Nevertheless, there is a feeling among many of our business women that to do this or that in a certain manner would have a savoring of masculinity, which of course no refined woman desires to acquire. Such "notions," for they deserve no better appellation, should be banished at once. A
womanly woman is such for all time and all places, and it will not mar her delicacy one jot or tittle that she knows which end of a check to endorse and does it without any preliminary hesitating expressions of "Let me see," and "Oh! yess--this is the right place!"

The article goes on by urging women to speak concisely and without hesitation, to be careful and accurate, and to arrange work systematically. At the time when many women were cast in the coy and helpless mold of the 1890's, Pratt produced independent and forthright students. With Pratt's positive philosophy behind her, Käsebier set out to succeed in the male-dominated business of portrait photography.

Käsebier's characteristic persistence and charm—as well as her photographic portfolio—had overcome Lifshey's initial reluctance to take on this unconventional apprentice. As Käsebier recalled her apprenticeship:

I spent some months of working days...in a photographic establishment in New York, for the sake of knowing the viewpoint of the other fellow. I served in the skylight; I developed; I printed; I toned; I mounted; I retouched. I acquired the knack of handling materials in quantities, and caught the swing of business.

With Lifshey's help, she set up a practical darkroom at her Willoughby Avenue home in Brooklyn, and became a professional photographer.

Käsebier was far from a rebel in choosing photography as a career. In the 1890's, the medium was considered suit-
ble for ladies: it was seen as genteel (smelly chemicals notwithstanding), and seemed to exploit the intuitive and artistic sensibilities that women were supposed to abound in.

Women had been photographers almost since the medium's inception in 1839. No formal academic training was necessary to become a photographer, as it was to become an accepted painter or sculptor. Photography was analogous to writing; some talent, patience and a will to learn were the prime requisites, although photography involved a greater expense for equipment than writing. During the middle years of the 19th century, when photography was still a cumbersome and messy process, the relatively few women photographers tended either to work in family photographic businesses, or to be ladies like Julia Margaret Cameron, who adopted photography as a serious amateur pursuit.

Many women came to photography after 1888, when the invention of the dry plate and of hand cameras had made photography easier and more accessible for all, and when articles in the popular press encouraged women to take up photography. According to census reports, the number of professional women photographers in the United States rose dramatically during the last decades of the century, jumping from 451 in 1880 to 3,580 in 1900; from five percent of all photographers to thirteen percent. And these figures do not even include the growing numbers of women who were amateurs,
many of whom were serious or artist amateurs—accomplished practitioners who exhibited and published their work without being constrained to earn a livelihood from it.

But if her entrance into photography was not in itself remarkable, Käsebier's attitude towards the medium was. The majority of Käsebier's "feminine colleagues" in professional photography were single. Ambition such as hers was virtually unheard of among married women with families. Moreover, she flouted convention by insisting and showing that aesthetic interests, which were generally considered to be the province of amateurs, need not be abandoned in a commercial portrait studio: that portrait photographers, like portrait painters, could compellingly record faces and be well remunerated. Käsebier did not shrink from competing, commercially and aesthetically, with the leading photographers of her time.
First Exhibitions

Between 1896 and 1898, Käsebier's name and work became increasingly familiar in the three major American art and photographic centers, Boston, New York and Philadelphia, until resounding success and critical acclaim at the Philadelphia Photographic Salon in the fall of 1898 called forth international recognition.

She had first exhibited at the Boston Camera Club in November 1896, probably through the influence of Arthur W. Dow, then an instructor at Pratt, who maintained close ties to Boston's world of art and photography. Dow was to champion Käsebier's work in Camera Notes during 1899, the same year that his famous book, Composition, was published. The Boston Camera Club exhibit was described and praised by the Boston Transcript:

Most of the pictures are portraits and character studies, and the best of them are extremely distinguished in style, with a quaintness of character and a gravity of expression which recall the sobriety and genuineness of the work of some of the old masters in painting... To apply such influences to photographic work is not so impossible as might be supposed. There is a forcible expression of the artistic temperament in this work which could not exist in a purely mechanical art; and we cannot recall any collection of photographs in which the personal equation has been more marked and distinct. 13

In February 1897, Art Studies in Photography, Käsebier's ambitious exhibition of 150 portraits, at Pratt Institute, drew New Yorkers' attention. Viewers again noted the sim-
ilarity in style between her photographs and old master paintings, but Käsebier maintained that it was unintentional: "People sometimes say they recognize this or that from the old masters in my work, but I am never conscious of any such imitation. I simply study to bring out what I feel to be a characteristic strong point, and to make an interesting picture." However, considering her penchant at the time for dressing child subjects in Titianesque fur collared velvety gowns and placing them against dark backgrounds, her rebuttal seems disingenuous. (For example, Portrait of a Boy, 1897 [Fig. 12] and Cornelia, 1896, (ill. Caffin, Photography as a Fine Art, p. 73).

Mrs. Käsebier's ability simultaneously to make a recognizable portrait likeness and to evoke the sitter's personality—a quality for which she was to be praised repeatedly—is first mentioned in a review of the Pratt exhibitions:

Among these photographs we find many true portraits. There are pictures like that of one lady, of which those who know her intimately say: "It is the best photograph I ever saw of anybody."

Of all, we feel that Mrs. Käsebier has used her materials as a painter does his—to express a conception she has in her mind of the sitter's real self; and that when she places the individual before the camera, every resource is brought to bear upon the expression of that conception. It is in the evident force and vividness of this psychic impression, and her unswerving endeavor to express it truthfully by her chosen method, that Mrs. Käsebier proves herself unmistakably an artist in possession of the true portrait-maker's rare gift.
Käsebier's work was again well received when shown at the august Photographic Society of Philadelphia early in 1898. Responding to an invitation to criticize the work of some professional Philadelphia photographers and to lecture to the Society, she spoke about her education as an artist and photographer, decried the artlessness of contemporary commercial portrait photography, and set forth her vision of photography's creative potential.

After acknowledging that she felt "diffident in speaking...about photography" because she had not "followed the beaten paths," and because she "had to wade through seas of criticism" on account of her "heretical views," she went on forcefully to recount some of these views, and to spur her listeners to greater independence and originality:

Why should not the camera as a medium for the interpretation of art as understood by painters, sculptors and draughtsmen, command respect? Why should it not be required of the photographer, desiring to be known as an artist, that he serve an apprenticeship in an art school? ...There is more in art...as applied to photography, than startling display lines, on mounts and signs announcing "Artist Photographer," "Artistic Photographic Studio," etc.

...The key to artistic photography is to work out your own thoughts by yourselves. Imitation leads to certain disaster.

New ideas are always antagonized. Do not mind that. If a thing is good it will survive.

At the same time, she urged women to become photographers; her encouraging words travelled far beyond Philadelphia when her speech was published in the widely circulated Photographic Times.
Käsebier opened her first New York studio in late 1897 or 1898. It was a small start, but a canny one: a room in the Woman's Exchange at 12 East 30 Street, off Fifth Avenue. Käsebier showed her business acumen by renting a studio at the hub of the New York photographic world, near the most fashionable, most expensive portrait photographers. She proved herself to be one of them, while remaining manifestly different. No fancy backdrops cluttered her studio, no elaborate furniture designed for posing. And, while she attracted her share of proper New Yorkers as clients, she also asked Sioux Indians from Buffalo Bill's troupe to pose for her when they played New York in April 1898. She did this out of nostalgia for Plains Indians she had known as a child in Colorado. The resulting beautiful portraits, as well as the Indians' evident affection for her (shown by their repeated visits to her that month) elicited useful publicity: a good-natured feature in the *New York Times*.  

Her studio was around the corner from the New York Camera Club, where Alfred Stieglitz's presence as a photographic tastemaker loomed increasingly large. Stieglitz was already internationally famous for his own fine, original photographs, and, as editor of the Camera Club's journal, *Camera Notes*, he set demanding artistic standards of photo-
graphic excellence. Mrs. Käsebier introduced herself to Stieglitz early in June 1898, probably while encountering him near the Camera Club. Later, she explained her forwardness, and cemented their acquaintance with this letter:

12 Thirtieth Street, East

Dear Mr. Stieglitz

I feel it due to myself to explain why I ran you down. I am a photographer in distress. I have some out of door work to do on the eighteenth, which is of serious importance to me. I am not at all familiar with snapshots out-of-doors and I felt sure you could and would give me some valuable suggestions. Of course, I shall be delighted, if you will call upon me at my studio, and have long wished that chance—not my necessity—would enable me to meet you personally. I have known you through your work for a long time.

Very sincerely

June eleventh 19

Gertrude Käsebier

Could Gertrude Käsebier, whose outdoor photographs of Crécy-en-Brie had been published, have so desperately needed advice about outdoor snapshots? Did playing helpless seem, even to this ordinarily forthright woman, the most tactful or promising way to make Stieglitz's acquaintance? Or did she truly feel in need of assistance from Stieglitz, who was already the acknowledged expert on using a hand camera for serious outdoor photography? 20

Whether or not she dissembled at their first encounter, Käsebier and Stieglitz were soon good friends and strong advocates of each other's work. Their mutual feeling that photography could be an art equal to any other united them

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for about ten years, when personal and aesthetic differences drew them apart.

First Philadelphia Photographic Salon, 1898

The major photographic event of 1898—for the world of artistic photography in the United States and for Gertrude Käsebier herself—was the first Philadelphia Photographic Salon, October 24 to November 12, at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. A jury of painters and photographers chose entries according to the most stringent standards, showing "only such pictures produced by photography as may give distinctive evidence of individual artistic feeling and execution," yet eliminating competition among photographers by awarding no prizes. Critics agreed that no photography exhibition in the United States had ever shown such consistently excellent work.

Yet, in the midst of excellence, Gertrude Käsebier's photographs were singled out for special recognition. Ten of her photographs had been accepted; this was the maximum allowed and placed her on a par with Stieglitz. The reaction of Joseph T. Keiley (who was to become more dedicated to his avocation as photographer, critic and close associate of Stieglitz than to his legal career) summarized Käsebier's meteoric rise:

Gertrude Kaesebier! A year ago the name was practically unknown in the photographic world....Today that name stands first and unrivaled in the entire professional world. Of the revelations of the
Photographic Salon her exhibition of portraits was the greatest. Nothing approached it; such work had not even been dreamed of as possible.23

Another critic said hers was "Perhaps the most remarkable exhibit made by any single exhibitor...her pictures displayed considerable versatility, combined with freshness of treatment and rare skill in execution."24 Charles H. Caffin, the English-born art critic who was to champion and later denounce Käsbier's work, found her Philadelphia display "distinguished by a marked and exceedingly captivating individuality," and reproduced The Study [Fig.14] to give an idea of "the force and distinctiveness of her style."25

The Study (at times also called Flora) and Mother and Child [Fig. 13] are the only two of Käsbier's entries in this Salon that can now be surely identified. They show Käsbier's continuing interest in profile views, and her concern with extremes of light and dark. No original print is known for Mother and Child, whose composition is less sophisticated than later versions of the subject. However, the original print of The Study, in the Library of Congress, is velvety, sensual, dense and elegant in its simplicity; the awe of Käsbier's contemporaries is still understandable.

Other Exhibitions, Camera Notes

When fifteen of her portraits were exhibited at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition in Boston (April 4-15, 1899),
Käsebier renewed her friendship with F. Holland Day, the Boston photographer whom she had first met at the Philadelphia Salon. She also saw Francis Watts Lee (a printer in the William Morris tradition, whose amateur photography was also shown at the Arts and Crafts Exhibition), and his wife, Agnes Rand Lee (the poet and author of children's books). While visiting their home, Mrs. Käsebier photographed Mrs. Lee and her daughter, Peggy, making the picture which became Käsebier's best-known photograph: Blessed Art Thou Among Women [Fig. 17, discussed in Chapter X].

Back in New York, Mrs. Käsebier expressed excitement about her success and optimism for the future in letters to F. Holland Day:

I have been desperately busy and am still. Mr. Käsebier says if I do not stop working so hard he will put his foot down. But to work is such a joy. ....I did the five children of Louis C. Tiffany last week. The results as well as orders received are record breakers. I have had a very busy and most encouraging season. The future seems to open up broadly for me.

Käsebier's successes continued with an exhibition at the Camera Club in February and with publication of five of her prints in Camera Notes, April 1899, including a full page plate of Mother and Child [Fig. 21]. Critical acclaim and debate reached a peak in the July Camera Notes. Stieglitz proclaimed Käsebier "beyond dispute the leading
portrait photographer in this country"; Keiley and Arthur W. Dow followed suit. But Sadakichi Hartmann, another leading critic of art and photography, censured Käsebier for imitating, rather than adapting, the old masters.

Without a slouch hat, or a big all-hiding mantle, a peculiar cut and patterned gown, a shawl or a piece of drapery, she is unable to make a satisfactory likeness. She utterly fails to master the modern garb; only in rare cases, as for instance her Twachtman, or the Girl with the Violin, she succeeds, and solely because the sitters have themselves individuality enough.

Only pages later, this criticism was countered by Keiley's laudatory review of Käsebier's Camera Club exhibition:

Of the hundred and some odd pictures shown, over eighty were of men, women and children, attired in the conventional costume of the day, people from the conventional world, such as drift into the professional studio to sit for their portraits.

The manner in which this modern dress was handled, subordinated, and made to play its proper part in the composition of these pictures, evidence great artistic feeling and readiness of device...

Arthur W. Dow also wondered "whether such portraits as Mrs. Käsebier's are likenesses," and answered "unhesitatingly that they are." He finds that her portraits "often reveal traits and expressions that we had not noticed before."

The articles in Camera Notes by Dow, Keiley, Stieglitz and Hartmann represent prevailing judgments of Käsebier in 1899. Her work was widely acclaimed, her sensitivity to personality and composition were generally applauded, but these overwhelmingly positive judgments were tempered by a few who found her work artificial and derivative.
Newport: Summer 1899

Like other commercial portraitists of her day, Gertrude Käsebier left New York during the summer lull, following her wealthy clients—and potential clients—to their summer retreat at fashionable Newport, Rhode Island. By renting a "cottage" at Middletown, which adjoins Newport, Käsebier found work and relaxation during the summer of 1899.

Because she was far from the New York storm center when the aesthetic controversy broke out in Camera Notes, she penned her reactions to Stieglitz:

I have just received a number of Camera Notes and I congratulate you. It is very fine. The photogravures are wonderful. I thank you most sincerely for the very kind words from yourself, about my work, realizing that they carry more weight, than pages from almost anyone else. Hartmann is absurd.34

A month later, she displayed similar respect and admiration for Stieglitz, as she thanked for the American Pictorial Photography portfolio of eighteen photogravures that she had just received.

I am delighted with the Portfolio. What a task it must have been and who but yourself could have executed it so brilliantly. Words simply fail me when I try to express my appreciation and pleasure.35

Along with Käsebier's intense professional admiration for Stieglitz went personal concern for his well-being. She repeatedly invited him to forget his cares in Newport;
an ulterior motive, which she did not press, was to make a new portrait of him. A letter Keiley wrote to Stieglitz best conveys her anxiety:

Mrs. Käsebier is particularly anxious to have you visit Longmeadow.... I mentioned in writing to her that you had been not altogether well and she was greatly concerned...and wrote me a page of two sides of letter sheeting on the subject. In her characteristic whole-souled way she writes—in part—"you greatly alarm me by what you say about our friend S. That noble fellow is being sacrificed. I wish we could get him down here to rest for a week. If you can manage it by coming with him getting his Dr. to order him to the sea, or any kind of way we will make him think he is in heaven. I will do everything for him I can devise. The fishing is so great so also is the air and scenery. He needs absolute change and rest and to live once a week for Stieglitz."

These entreaties did not entice Stieglitz, who was what we would now call a workaholic, but there were visits from Boston friends, including F. Holland Day and Agnes Lee. Mrs. Käsebier's daughters, Gertrude and Hermine, her mother, Mrs. Stanton and her artist friend, Frances Delehanty, came to Newport, too; Mr. Käsebier visited in July. Preparations for daughter Gertrude's October wedding occupied the family.

At Long Meadow, as at Crécy-en-Brie, a period of aesthetic excitement in rural surroundings (and separation from her husband) preceded a period of intense productivity. At each place, she felt life was beautifully unreal, like a fairy tale or dream. Long Meadow seemed "like the palace in the
sleeping-beauty story,” and “a veritable Garden of Eden.” She declared, “I live truly in the spirit. Would that I need never wake,” much as she had written from Crécy, “I am so content I feel like a sinner. I feel as if it were all a dream and wish I might never wake.”

Still, she kept a clear-eyed view of professional possibilities: “If I can get the public, I have in my surroundings the opportunity of my life.”

In order to "get the public," Käsebier placed exemplary photographs in showcases throughout town. In succeeding years, a single such case outside her New York studio would be her sole advertisement, but, during the summer of '99, Käsebier saturated Newport with ten cases. The first three not only "attracted a deal of attention," but, apparently, lured the summer's first sitter, "a young poet who wants his portrait for his first volume of poems." They also provoked a competitor, one Mr. Rogers, who, Keiley reports, visited Käsebier and among other things argued with her on the propriety of showcases saying they were in bad taste and vulgar and that she ought really to take them down. Not very long after that she happened to be passing through the village—and behold the aesthetic R. had erected one or more cases—carefully copying her own in every particular of design etc.

Direct solicitation—writing to such noted social leaders as Mrs. Potter Palmer—worked too. On July 23, Käsebier told Stieglitz, "My season seems to have begun. Three millionaires
have honored me with their patronage this week. I am to do Miss Grant and Mrs. Potter Palmer says she will mention me to her friends etc. etc. etc." 45

Not that all clients were satisfied. "I have my own troubles pleasing them," Käsebier confessed to Stieglitz. "I had a print turned down this week that is one of the best things I ever did. It is a cruel shame that I can not show it." 46

And not that all visitors were refined clients. In what Käsebier called "a very startling experience,... a carriage full of men came to the house" -- at one a.m. of a weekday night. Probably drunk, they made sport at the notion of a woman photographer, saying they had seen Käsebier's advertisement in the Newport Herald and had "come to call." One can only imagine their swift retreat when our heroine, with frontier manners, advised them to "leave if they did not wish to get shot." She later regretted only that they left "before the gun could be aimed," claiming, with bravado, "the young ladies were very much alarmed but I am not at all afraid." 47

A welcome visitor was F. Holland Day, whose summer trips to Newport fanned the professional friendship and mutual admiration between him and Käsebier. Day, at 35, was a slender, dandyish bachelor, whose family wealth had earlier
allowed him not only European travel, but had let him become a noted collector of manuscripts pertaining to his favorite poet, John Keats. Day became a leading figure in Boston publishing; his firm, Copeland and Day, brought out, among other things, the American edition of *The Yellow Book* and Oscar Wilde's *Salomé* illustrated by Aubrey Beardsley. Day's affinity for aestheticism had arisen by the early 1890's, when Day belonged to the Visionists, a coterie of Boston aesthetes—among them Ralph Adams Cram, Bertram Goodhue and Frances Watts Lee, who showed special appreciation for medieval and oriental arts, and admired Oscar Wilde. They later published *The Knight Errant*, a magazine heavily indebted in appearance to the English *Hobby Horse* (which was also released in the United States through Copeland and Day).

Day had taken up the camera in the mid-1880's. His photographic fervor grew until it overwhelmed his concern for publishing: after only six years in business, Copeland and Day was disbanded in 1899. Day's visits to Käsebier that summer betoken his new commitment to photography. At this time, Day's photographs were chiefly studio portraits of friends and acquaintances, including the young Kahlil Gibran, costumed Chinese sitters, and a Black American whom Day posed as *An Ethiopian Chief* (Naef pl. 29, fig 181). However, he had acquired his greatest fame (and notoriety) for his photographic series of *The Crucifixion* and *The Seven*. 

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Last Words of Christ, in which he—long-haired, bearded and half naked—played the part of Christ (Jussim, p. 128 and pls. 16-25).

Day's interest in such religious scenes and in costume pictures may have been behind the staging of The Manger, one of Käsebier's most famous photographs, for which Frances Delehanty posed that summer in a Newport stable. Indeed, the white robe that Miss Delehanty wore may have been the "angel's robe" that Day had a penchant for dressing up in, even when there was no photograph to record the scene. Day travelled with a trunk full of costumes, and one evening, in response to tales that Long Meadow was haunted, "he donned a white affair called an angel's robe and cavorted round the lawn at night to play ghost... Another evening he read poetry till all his listeners [except Mrs. Lee] melted away." 49

Although Käsebier's granddaughter, Mina Turner, remembered being mildly shocked as a child by her grandmother's predilection for beer, cigarettes and little cigars, 50 F. Holland Day and the Lee family, for all their aestheticism, were happy to indulge Käsebier's taste by sending her and her daughters a thank you gift of cigarettes, candies and beer, addressed with the outrageous pun: "One case of beer to another." In return, they got some suitable corny doggerel:
What can we do, what can we say,  
Your spiritual message to repay?  
"One case of beer to another," tho' an atrocious pun,  
Made, from express man down, no end of fun. 51

Back at home that fall, Käsebier reminisced to Day:  
"Dear, dear Long Meadow! I am utterly spoiled." 52 The summer had provided a restorative respite between a hectic spring and the demanding year that was to follow.
Footnotes: II. Apprenticeship and Early Successes

1. For instance, she wrote that Mr. & Mrs. Clarence White "look timid and frightened. I know just how they feel. I've been there." GK to Day, 10 Oct. 1899, Norwood.

Robert Demachy also quoted her as saying, "Jamais je n'entame une séance de pose sans avoir peur de moi-même, la peur de l'entrée en scène qui poursuit quelquefois les acteurs jusqu'à la fin de leur carrière. Ce n'est qu'après deux ou trois poses que je puis me reprendre." "Mme. Käse­bier et son Œuvre," La Revue de Photographie, 15 July 1906, pp. 293-294.


3. Information from Pratt Institute Registrar.


5. Walter Chambers, "Called Greatest Woman Photographer, Gertrude Käsebier Is Now a Cripple," New York Telegram, 25 Jan. 1930, p. 2. (See Appendix for this article which is not on the standard N.Y. Telegram microfilm. The article was found in the Käsebier file of the New York Sun morgue, now at the Annex of NYPL. I am grateful to the ever helpful librarian, Richard Hill, for drawing the clipping file to my attention.)


7. Interview: Mina Turner. Käsebier also refers to her work with Lifshey in "Studies in Photography," Photographic Times 30 (June 1898): 271. Also, "Lifshey had excellent training in good New York studios and had also had the advantage of being Mrs. Käsebier's teacher in the matter of ordinary photographic technique. As a matter of fact, he gained as much from Mrs. Käsebier as she did from him." Unsigned, "Photographers I have Met: S. H. Lifshey," Abel's Photographic Weekly, 18 Feb. 1911, p. 134.


13. *Boston Evening Transcript*, 10 Nov. 1896, p. 5. This unsigned appreciation was probably written by Ralph Adams Cram, later renowned as an architect, but then art critic of the Transcript, and a participant in the Boston aesthetic movement. From a later signed article, "Mrs. Käsebier's Work," *Photo-Era*, May 1900, pp. 131-136, we know that Cram was an admirer of Käsebier's work.


15. Ibid.


17. "at this writing (Apr 8)...Mrs. Käsebier has now a studio at 12 East Thirtieth Street, New York." "Teachers, Students and Things," *Pratt Institute Monthly* 6 (May 1898): 241. Mina Turner mentioned that Käsebier's first studio
was in the Woman's Exchange. Homer, Käsebier, p. 59 says that Käsebier opened her New York studio in 1897.


19. GK to Stieglitz, Yale. The letter, simply dated June 11, must have been written in 1898. Käsebier did not have the studio at 12 East 30 Street in June 1897. By June 1899, when Käsebier was in Newport, R. I., she and Stieglitz were well acquainted.


22. The photographs exhibited were:
   106. Mother and Child
   107. Portrait
   108. A Silhouette
   109. Nude
   110. Portrait
   111. Study
   112. A Brownie
   113. Portrait of a Boy
   114. The Duet
   115. Mother and Child


26. GK to Day, postmarked 16 Oct. 1899, Norwood: "Are you sarcastic about Phil. being a beautiful old town or do you mean it? I ask because last year I distinctly remember that when walking with you and Mr. Keiley, when I took occasion to admire it I was markedly frowned down."
27. GK to Day, 12 Apr. 1899, Norwood. Käsebier portraits of Tiffany's second wife, Louise Wakeman Knox Tiffany (1851-1904) and their daughter, Dorothy Trimble Tiffany (Burlingham) (1891-1979), are now owned by Michael Burlingham, New York. Mr. Burlingham has suggested that Käsebier may have met the Tiffanys through Candace Wheeler, one of Louis Comfort Tiffany's artists, who had a studio at the Woman's Exchange.

28. GK to Day, 29 Apr. 1899, Norwood.


31. Sadakichi Hartmann, "Portrait Painting and Portrait Photography," Camera Notes 3 (July 1899): 16. The Girl with the Violin was Zitkala Sa: see Chapter IX.

See also Hartmann, "Gertrude Käsebier," Photographic Times 32 (May 1900): 195-199 for further exposition of his adverse criticism. However, it is interesting to note that Hartmann's attitude towards Käsebier eventually mellowed. Writing under his pen name, Sidney Allan, he said: "Geniuses of the order of Gertrude Käsebier are extremely rare in the history of pictorial photography..." in "The Light Interpretations of Clara Estella Sipprell," Photo-Era 30 (June 1913): 268.

32. Keiley, 34.


34. GK to Stieglitz, 23 June 1899, Yale.

35. Ibid. 23 July 1899.

36. Keiley to Stieglitz, 13 July 1899, Yale.

37. Ibid.

38. GK to Day, 21 June 1899, Norwood.

39. Ibid., 3 July 1899.

40. GK to Miss Fletcher, 24 May and 23 June 1894, NYPL.
41. GK to Stieglitz, 23 June 1899, Yale.
42. Keiley to Stieglitz, 13 July 1899, Yale.
43. Ibid. The poet remains unidentified.
44. Keiley to Stieglitz, 1-2 Sept. 1899, Yale.
45. GK to Stieglitz, 23 July 1899, Yale.
46. Ibid.
47. GK to Day, 3 July 1899, Norwood.


49. Keiley to Stieglitz, 1 Sept. 1899, Yale.

50. Interview: Mina Turner. Also, GK to Day, 3 July 1899, Norwood: "I drink a beer to your health and success every night."

51. GK to Lee Family and Day, 3 July 1899, Norwood.
52. GK to Day, 23 Sept. 1899, Norwood.
III. INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION
FALL 1899 - 1901

Returning to Brooklyn in mid-September, Käsebier was propelled into a whirlwind of professional and family obligations. She was scarcely home before leaving to help judge the second Philadelphia Salon. Less than two weeks later, her older daughter, Gertrude, was married. 1 By December, Käsebier had inaugurated her handsome new studio at 273 Fifth Avenue. 2 Although her younger daughter, Hermine, was "turning into a splendid assistant," Käsebier felt oppressed by the accelerating demands of success. "I seem to have evolved into a machine. I get no time any more for social recreation," 4 she complained to F. Holland Day in mid-December. The pressure of work was exacerbated by Mr. Käsebier's poor health. 5 As others planned to greet the new century with revelry, she wrote to Day: "I am feeling ill. Too much work possibly." 6 Still, she did not slacken; as she told novice photographers in the January 1900 Camera Notes, "If your heart is in your work you cannot stop." 7

Between the fall of 1899 and the end of 1901, the momentum and scope of Käsebier's activities increased: her portrait business grew; she reentered commercial magazine photography;
she became more closely involved with Stieglitz's coterie in the Camera Club, and she participated in many exhibitions in the United States and abroad. She became better known and appreciated internationally: she was considered an established leader in American photography whose specialties were masterful portraits and sensitive renditions of the motherhood theme.

Exhibitions and Critical Reactions,
United States and Europe

Among the many exhibitions that included Käsebier's work during this period, four deserve special study to help us understand her growing reputation. They are the Second and Third Philadelphia Photographic Salons (1899 and 1900), and two exhibitions abroad organized by American photographers: Frances Benjamin Johnston's exhibition of American women photographers and F. Holland Day's New School of American Photography.

Philadelphia Photographic Salons
1899 and 1900

The importance of the Philadelphia Salons cannot be overstated. As critic and photographer Joseph Keiley said, "all leading pictorial workers" regarded the Philadelphia Salon as "the exhibition of the year in the United States," and "conservative estimate" placed it "in the front rank of the few great pictorial photographic exhibitions of the world." Käsebier's repeated successes there accounted for much of her growing fame, abroad
as well as in the United States. 9 As a judge at both these Salons, she was permitted to exhibit ten pictures without jury review; she took advantage of this privilege in both 1899 and 1900. However, each time one picture was singled out for special praise, outshining the other nine.

In 1899, The Manger [Fig. 15] made its debut, and became the star of the Salon, admired by critics and public alike for its beauty, technical perfection and religious aura. It was deemed "the most beautiful piece of work in the whole Salon," 10 and Keiley, who could find fewer than six "great" pictures in the exhibition, ranked it "as a great picture, if not as the masterpiece of the Salon."11

Six months after the Salon, Stieglitz wrote that The Manger was "generally considered the gem of last year's ...Salon."12

The Manger was widely praised for its spiritual or holy qualities, 13 although Käsebier's avowed aim in setting up the photograph had been to study white tones photographically. From a whitewashed stable in Newport, she had eloquently evoked a "nativity" scene. So convincing was the picture (and so great the viewers' need to believe a photograph) that none of the picture's reverent admirers noticed that the infant, "so swathed about that its general outline alone could be distinguished," 14 was indeed only swaddling clothes. There is no child in one of Käsebier's most admired mother and child pictures! 15

At the 1900 Philadelphia Salon, Blessed Art Thou Among
Women drew the spotlight. This elegant photograph [Fig. 17] of a mother gently guiding her lovely, serious-faced daughter across the threshold of a doorway, was well received from the first. Keiley called it "unquestionably one of the most perfect and beautiful pictures of the Salon...charming in rendering and truly beautiful in sentiment." 

A gravure reproduction of this picture had already been published in Camera Notes (July 1900), and another original print of it would soon be shown in Day's exhibition. Although the photograph had apparently been taken several months before she made The Manger, Käsebier did not show Blessed Art Thou... publicly until mid 1900. This delay was doubtless out of sympathy for Agnes Lee, the mother in the photograph, whose daughter, Peggy, died of an acute childhood illness, shortly after the picture was taken. 

This picture had sprung from the same graphic motive as The Manger: the desire to depict white against white. But while the composition, line and tone of Blessed Art Thou... were all admired, interest in its emotional content prevailed. Reviewing the 1900 Philadelphia Salon, Keiley perceived the complex psychology that underlies Blessed Art Thou...:

...the beautiful solicitude of the delicate, charming mother, and the almost indifference of the child, who accepts the maternal devotion as a matter of course, and looks straight ahead, as though forgetful of the mother in the contemplation of what is before it, is a picture that will long remain in the memory of those who have once seen it... It is full of maternal love, and suggestive of the maternal sorrow that in the depth and silence of her own heart every mother feels at the seeming unresponsiveness of the child.
As Chapter X shows, this theme informs the majority of Käsebier's mother-child photographs. The implications of the title, which derives from the Biblical quotation surrounding the posterlike Annunciation behind Mrs. Lee and Peggy, are also discussed in that chapter.

Exhibitions in Europe

Although Käsebier's work was seen and admired in European salons by 1899, Johnston's and Day's exhibitions made Käsebier's accomplishments clearer to Europeans. Whether in context with American women photographers of varying aesthetic persuasions, as Johnston showed her, or among advanced American photographers with great artistic ambitions, as Day exhibited her, Käsebier emerged as outstanding.

Miss Johnston and Mrs. Käsebier had become acquainted as fellow jurors at the 1899 Philadelphia Salon. Like Käsebier, Johnston had set out to be an artist, but found it expedient to turn from drawn to photographic magazine illustration, when halftone reproduction made photography the favored medium; Johnston often wrote articles to accompany her pictures. Theodore Roosevelt and his family, Susan B. Anthony and John Philip Sousa were among her many portrait subjects. She also flirted with pictorial photography, and, from about 1910 on, specialized in photograph-
ing architecture and gardens.

Her 350 photographs of the public schools of Washington, D.C. and 150 of the Hampton Institute in Virginia—exquisite examples of her deliberately composed reportage—won her a gold medal for photography at the 1900 Paris Exposition. However, they were meant to be seen as documents; the Hampton pictures were commissioned to demonstrate "contemporary life of the American Negro."²¹

The exhibition of photographs by American women that Johnston gathered for the 1900 Exposition was another matter. It contained none of her own work, but that of twenty-eight women: serious photographers from California to Rhode Island, including Gertrude Käsebier. Their photographs were shown at the 1900 Exposition in Paris, in conjunction with a lecture by Miss Johnston at the International Photographic Congress. They were so well received that the exhibition was taken to St. Petersburg and Moscow, before returning to the Photo-Club de Paris during January 1901.²²

Johnston has accepted a commission to collect the photographs on short notice, and Käsebier, who was overwhelmed with other commitments, initially wrote Johnston that she had not time to make prints.²³ But Johnston did not take this "no" for an answer, called at Käsebier's studio, and, in a melodramatic scene, "got stuff from Mrs. Käsebier after all.²⁴ Keiley reported the incident:
It was too funny... Miss J resorted to tears and finally actually tried to buy a print from a customer to whom Mrs. K had just delivered it in Miss J's presence—saying that she simply had to have an example of Mrs. Käsebier's work and as Mrs. Käsebier would give her none she would bring that print if possible and its owner had but to name her price. Meeting persistence that more than matched her own, Käsebier acceded. It was a wise decision. The importance of Johnston's show lay beyond individual photographs; it produced a powerful cumulative impression of numerous talent-ed American women photographers, many of them professionals, among whom Käsebier was a leader. No comparable group of women photographers was to be found in Europe.

If some of Käsebier's photographs were not prime examples of her work (the reviewer for the Paris edition of the New York Herald felt that all but Le Collier de Perles were "not up to her usual level"), she was nonetheless widely admired. Robert Demachy, the French photographer and critic, was particularly struck by Käsebier, as he wrote to Stieglitz: "I was quite taken with Mrs. Käsebier's work. It is most original and shows the eye and training of a real artist." In a published review, he elaborated this idea, perceiving that "her compositions reveal an artistic nature, a keen sense of balance of masses and a quite special preoccupation with harmonious and decorative line." Of these, three reproduced in his review, The Pearl Collar, Study, and Portrait of Mrs. Walling can now be positively identified. These are typical of her work at the time;
profile portraits cast against plain backgrounds, although in Mrs. Walling Käsebier vignette her subject's white gown against the light background, and lettered in the title and date to fill an otherwise empty space.

Johnston had to organize her exhibit with haste; Day, on the other hand, had leisure to select deliberately, and to publish a catalogue of titles. Wide publicity greeted his exhibition, the New School of American Photography, when it was shown in London (at the Royal Photographic Society, 10 October-8 November, 1900), and in Paris (at the Photo-Club de Paris, 22 February-10 March 1901).

Day intended his exhibition to demonstrate the accomplishments of American artistic photographers to Europeans by displaying work of such innovators as Clarence White, Edward Steichen, Frank Eugene and Käsebier, to say nothing of his own. Over one hundred Day photographs comprised more than a quarter of the London exhibition. (The Paris version was abbreviated.) There was also a large sampling of interesting, though now less-known, photographers. Stieglitz's work was not included; he had refused to participate.

Day had intended to present the exhibition under the auspices of the Linked Ring, the advanced British photographic society of which he was a member. But the Linked Ring refused, after Stieglitz cabled to say that Day's selec-
tion was second rate. Day, undaunted, offered the show to the Linked Ring's conservative rival, the Royal Photographic Society (from which it had seceded); they gladly presented the show. 33

Stieglitz's scornful judgment of Day's collection (much of which he had not seen, as he refused to visit Day in Boston) was refuted by Steichen and Demachy, as Estelle Jussim has shown. She suggests that Stieglitz, seeing Day threatening his role as American photographic impresario and tastemaker, acted out of jealousy. 34

Käsebier's letters show that she tried to mediate, to mend the widening rift between Stieglitz and Day. When she was unable to prevent a break between the two strong-minded men, her won sense of independence and loyalty led her not to choose sides, but to maintain separate friendships with each. Her defense of Stieglitz to Day bespeaks her affection and respect for both photographers in late 1899:

I am very sorry you did not see Mr. Stieglitz. He would have been only too pleased to have arranged a meeting if he had any intimation you were looking for him. I see very little of him indeed. We are both too busy, but I think he is one of the fairest, broadest, finest men I ever knew. 35

Day represented Käsebier handsomely by thirty prints at the London showing of the New School of American Photography; twenty-nine prints were shown in Paris. 36 Käsebier and Day had prepared the group with the exhibition in mind; she told Frances B. Johnston that one reason she could not
lend her a set of photographs was that she had given Day a
collection for almost the identical purpose. 37

As with most exhibitions of this period, all the
prints exhibited cannot now be identified. However, those
that are known suggest that the exhibit represented Käsebier
fairly: portraits predominated, but there were some land­
scapes. Familiar and little-known photographs were combined.
The pictures dated back to 1897 or before. They included
Head of a Boy [Fig. 12 ], which had appeared in Camera Notes
and would soon be reproduced in Caffin's Photography as a
Fine Art. The photograph titled Study at the 1898 Phila­
delphia Salon [Fig. 14 ] was retitled The Velvet Mantle for
this exhibition. It was joined by an unfamiliar profile
portrait against a plain background: The Pre-Raphaelite. 38
Blessed Art Thou Among Women was shown, but, surprisingly, The
Manger was not. While her portraits of Clarence White and Day
cannot be identified with certainty, her self-portrait can,
and it speaks of her lingering affection for painting and
drawing by joining a vignetted photograph of her head and
hands to a drawing of her kimono-like gown [Fig. 3]. 39

Most British reviewers disliked the soft focus and low
tones of American artistic photography, whether it appeared
in Day's show or at the concurrent Salon and Linked Ring ex­
hibitions. It was praise indeed for a British reviewer to
"perceive much beauty and power in some of the works shown by
Mrs. Käsebier." 40
In France, on the other hand, Day's exhibition was warmly received, and Käsebier's work in particular was appreciated. Demachy said:

The French public, not only the specially educated public composed of artists and people of artistic culture, but the average visitors, have been unanimous on the subject of Mrs. Käsebier's exhibition, though according to the tendencies of different people preferences were shown for different examples. 41 Constant Puyo, another photographer-critic who found the exhibition as a whole "extremely interesting," considered The Velvet Mantle and other Käsebiers "a joy for the eyes," praising their rich facture and pleasing rendition of flesh. He perceived Blessed Art. Thou... as "above all a happy harmony of tones, the sombre spot of a child's black dress in a light gray setting." 42

Although no major exhibition of her work had appeared in Germany, Käsebier's photographs, known through salons and reproductions, were so highly regarded there by 1900 that Ernest Juhl, the editor of Photographische Rundschau, sprang to her defense against Sadakichi Hartmann's contention that she was a second rate American artistic photographer whose photographs resembled reproductions of old masters. Juhl said: "In Germany we count Miss Gertrude Käsebier among the first-rate artistic photographers. Her portraits, especially the group portrait of a mother with two little children, is among the most distinguished of this sort." 43
Käsebier as an Artistic-Commercial Photographer: Attracting Clients to the Studio

Today, reviews of turn-of-the-century salons and exhibitions are interesting for the information they provide about a photographer's development and critical reaction to it. Around 1900, however, these exhibitions and reviews were an important source of publicity for artistic photographers, as Sadakichi Hartmann pointed out. Käsebier understood this, and seldom declined to exhibit; her initial refusal to Johnston was exceptional. Acclaim at exhibitions brought more than personal satisfaction; it attracted clients to her studio. Even such harsh criticism as Hartmann sometimes meted out drew attention to her work.

Käsebier's reputation grew not from any single exhibit or review, but from their cumulative effect, and from public interest in a woman whom they perceived, stereotypically, to be tough enough to run a business and tender enough to be an artist. With the possible exception of her first summer in Newport, she did not pay to advertise in the conventional way, but nevertheless made sure that her name and photographs were always in the public eye.

Like many photographers of her day, she relied on a showcase outside her Fifth Avenue studio to display her work to passers-by. Some strollers mistook her pictures for photographs of old masters. She told Day, "My little showcase and its contents are quite misunderstood. I am taken to
be an art dealer-- who sells and makes reproductions of pictures. Fact. One on me." But, usually, the case was admired, remarked, and considered exemplary.

Mrs. Käsebier's case contains but four prints, and two of these are difficult of access, being in the side of the case facing the rails of the next house. The two visible prints are platinum, toned to one of those deep warm tones in which Mrs. Käsebier excells. Far removed from the "usual thing" as they are from the commonplace, the prints attract the wonder of may and the ridicule of some. The mounts are often brown paper of the wrapping kind, and never a creation of the mountmaker, and the signature to the print is like a parody on a Chinese hieroglyphic. But Mrs. Käsebier's case is the one which could least be spared from the avenue, and the one which is ever worth careful study.

Rather than spending to advertise, Käsebier was paid for celebrity portraits and story illustrations in popular magazines. By 1901, prosepctive clients who had never been to a photographic salon or passed her studio would have recognized her photographs--and her bold, angular monogram--from reproductions in Everybody's Magazine, The World's Work, and The Ladies Home Journal.

Unlike many women of her time, Käsebier was not shy or coy about money, and unlike Stieglitz she did not disdain it. Late in life, she told an interviewer that she had "figured ...that money is a form of exchange and that anything artistic must have a value." Thus, The Manger, a photograph admired by virtually every turn-of-the-century critic, could fetch one hundred dollars in 1900. The fame of the purchaser, the English actress Ellen Terry, added to the photograph's allure--and to Käsebier's own renown.
Rumors flew about the cost of Käsebier's portraits: twenty dollars for a single portrait was not unusual, said an English journal in 1900. Wilson's Photographic Magazine soon corrected that, explaining that Käsebier's fee was "ten dollars for the sitting, which provides two prints from that sitting. All subsequent prints five dollars each."

Reflecting on the economics and popularity of Käsebier's works, Wilson's said:

The wonder is, not that Mrs. Käsebier gets such a price, but that she makes such a price pay, for a print of hers means much careful though, and often much individual work. Mrs. Käsebier is not a "fashion." She owes her position as a professional photographer not to the "multi-millionaire," but to the large number of educated and "refined people" who can in a measure understand and appreciate her work.

Alfred Stieglitz himself was among the "large number of educated and 'refined people'" who paid to have Mrs. Käsebier photograph his family.

The definitive seal of approval for her studio was Charles Caffin's article, "Mrs. Käsebier and the Artistic-Commercial Portrait," published first in the popular Everybody's Magazine (May 1901), and later in Caffin's book, Photography as a Fine Art. Caffin, one of America's leading art critics, had turned his attention to photography out of growing respect for Stieglitz and his protégés. Caffin's thoughtful critique of Käsebier's portraits notes her rare ability to be both artistic and commercial, in a world where
photographers were expected to be either/or. He praises "character and individuality," saying that she does not merely pose her figures, but "makes the whole composition a beautiful pattern of line and form and color, contriving at the same time that this pattern shall help to elucidate the character." He also perceives conflicts between the demands of art and the demands of clients.

...the exigencies of the profession sometimes interfere with the realization of her ideals; not always because time and opportunity are lacking for mature study, but because, occasionally, the sitter is not of one mind with herself as to the ends in view, urging, or at least desiring, some compromise with the commonplace. And you cannot conform to the average and be above the average at the same time, so the unreasonable insistence must involve certain tuggings at the artist's heartstrings, justifying a little cynicism. 52

Caffin does not consider that Käsebier would have faced much the same problem had she been painting portraits around 1900. Under the general spell of the late 19th century notion that an artist should work primarily for art's sake, and influenced by Stieglitz's particular goal of creating photographs for art's sake, this critic seems to have forgotten that great portraitists like Titian, Rembrandt and Goya had also been bound to satisfy patrons.

Still, reading Caffin's overwhelmingly sympathetic appraisal, it is hard to conceive that only six years later, he would maliciously parody Käsebier's artistic approach to commercial portraiture (see Chapter VI), but, for the moment, Käsebier was riding high.
Käsebier and Steichen in Europe, Summer 1901

Of all the colleagues Käsebier met in Europe during the summer of 1901, she hit it off best with Edward Steichen, despite an age difference of more than twenty-five years.

Her meeting with English colleagues in London had been trying. Eager though she had been to meet fellow members of the Linked Ring (in 1900 she had been one of the first two women elected to this exclusive English photographic society), their photographs turned out to disappoint her. American photography was more advanced, she found, but the English did not understand it.53

Moreover, conversation with fellow Links (who included J. Craig Annan, George Davison and Frederick H. Evans, as well as F. Holland Day) concerned photographic politics rather than aesthetics. The issue: the forthcoming Philadelphia Photographic Salon, which Stieglitz and his allies planned to boycott, because admission standards were to be relaxed. Day, already at odds with Stieglitz over the New School of American Photography exhibition, agreed to the new Salon regulations. Typically outspoken, Käsebier defended the Stieglitz point of view; no matter that the occasion was a tea Day gave in her honor. Her host expressed disappointment at her opinion, yet seemed to respect her right
to disagree; their friendship did not flag.  

Tall, handsome, dynamic Edward Steichen, at 22, had already spent a year in Paris studying art. Stopping in New York en route from Milwaukee (where he had grown up and begun his career in painting and photography), Steichen had met and impressed Stieglitz, who bought three of his photographs for the "princely price" of fifteen dollars. Stieglitz feared that, in Paris, Steichen would "forget about photography" and devote himself entirely to painting, but Steichen vowed, "I will always stick to photography." After some vacillating he did just that, in a long career as pictorial photographer, commercial photographer and Director of the Photography Department at the Museum of Modern Art.

Perhaps Steichen and Käsebier met in New York, too, but only in Paris did acquaintance turn to comraderie. Their friendship was to last, with ups and downs, until her death. In Paris, in 1901, they were united by similar interests and buoyant temperaments. Both opposed the coming Philadelphia Salon and strongly supported Stieglitz's standards. He was their hero, and they loyally reported back to him all summer.

Steichen wrote: "I have been having a most delightful time here since Mrs. Käsebier arrived," declaring "she has
been goodness itself to me and pumped much new energy and enthusiasm into me—and had many a fine thing to say about Alfred Stieglitz and I liked her for that too." He saw Käsebier as "one of the best strong steel beams in the ship," meaning she was a central figure among Stieglitz's American allies in photography—the group that within the year would be dubbed the Photo-Secession.

Käsebier told Stieglitz that she and her daughter Hermine had been having a "double superlative time in Paris. We have been with Steichen every day and how I have enjoyed him. He is a corker!" Käsebier's portraits of Steichen made that summer reflect their informal friendship [See Figs. 67-70 and Chapter IX]. So does Steichen's drawing of Käsebier holding a 6½" x 8½" glass plate negative [Fig. 2], which he presumably made while she was photographing him.

Other Americans sometimes joined them. The illustrator Frances (Fanny) Delehanty travelled outside Paris with the trio during an idyllic August week "among the peasants." The artists Charlotte Smith and former Pratt student Willard Paddock (who would later marry) and Charlotte's sister, Clara (later Steichen's first wife) also met them for painting excursions.

One matter on which Steichen and Käsebier did not concur was whether he should continue to paint and photograph. As he reflected to Stieglitz:
I must stop for a while and paint hard again—Mrs. K thinks it should be one or the other—and she hesitates to advise either. —I disagree—Whistler has painted and how many charming etchings has he given us—as well. To me the Camera shall be as the etching—only it has greater possibilities—possibilities—in fact of a nature foreign to any other medium.

Yet Käsebier's urging lay behind his eventual decision to quit painting. And her profitable commercial—yet artistic—portrait practice in New York was unquestionably an example for Steichen's later American portrait business.

Of the photographs that Käsebier made during the summer of 1901, Labor, A Gargoyle in the Latin Quarter, and Serbonne (sometimes called A Day in France or Voulangis) are the strongest. Her interest in peasant life, first shown in her Crécy-en-Brie illustrations of 1894, reappears in the later illustration, Labor [MOMA ], whose weighty, bent figure recalls those of Millet's Cleaners. Käsebier's admiration for Millet accounts for this reference, but apparent allusions to other artists can be found in the two other photographs.

The composition of the picnic scene, Serbonne, [Fig. 26] may have been a playful variation on familiar paintings: Manet's Le déjeuner sur l'herbe and/or the Concert champêtre in the Louvre (now attributed to Titian but then considered a Giorgione). In Serbonne, three young women (Frances Delehanty, Charlotte
Smith and Hermine Käsebier) are seated in a glade, deployed like the three seated figures in the Manet and the Titian. Steichen, standing on the left, replaces the standing figure in the Titian.

True, there are many differences between the photograph and the paintings—the horizontal format of the paintings, their juxtaposition of two nude women with two fully dressed men, and differences in poses chief among them. Still, the reference might have been made by Käsebier, or Käsebier in collaboration with Steichen. Steichen would have seen the Manet at the 1900 Exposition in Paris; Käsebier would have seen reproductions of it. Both would have known the Concert champêtre from the Louvre. Indeed, Steichen had already made oblique reference to a sixteenth century Italian painting when he photographed himself in what he hoped would be "photography's answer to [Titian's] 'Man with a Glove.'"61

Though Serbonne's composition speaks of tradition, its flattened space and impressionistic surface do not. Käsebier has flattened forms, especially trees, so that her friends pose against a hazy screenlike background of undefined space. Printed in gum on grainy paper (in the version at the Museum of Modern Art) the photography recalls Seurat's conté crayon drawings or monotone reproductions of pointillist painting. Both the flattened space and the stippled surface suggest that she was looking at recent French painting, but
her letters of the time unfortunately say nothing about art old or new.

_Gargoyle in the Latin Quarter_ [Fig. 25] again shows Frances Delehanty clad in smock and beret, but this time she leans out of a window over a Parisian boulevard, recalling _La Stryge_, Meryon's then well-known etching of a gargoyle on Notre Dame Cathedral. Käsebier printed her Gargoyle in two versions: platinum (Sam Wagstaff collection) and gum bichromate (at International Museum of Photography/George Eastman House). The gum version seems more abstract, not only because the gum method suppresses detail, but because the ladder-like pattern of dark rectangles, a geometric design which draws attention to the picture plane, has not been cropped as it has in the platinum version.

Käsebier's gum printing matured during her 1901 European visit. She had begun to work in gum by the spring of 1899; by early 1901 her gum prints were considered exemplary by Americans, when a print of a woman playing a piano illustrated the article, "Gum Bichromate Printing," in _Photo-Miniature_ magazine. The article praised gum printing as an expressive photographic medium, "because it gives the special effect, rather than the literal fact." Other advantages of the gum process mentioned by the article would have appealed to Käsebier. The process was "shockingly cheap," and extremely
flexible: a print did not have to be a literal copy of its negative. Gum printing permitted soft and sketchy textural effects with an unlimited range of colors and tones, and latitude in manipulation: the process could simulate painting, pastel, crayon, etc. And gum prints were permanent, not subject to fading. 63

Gum printing had come into vogue in Europe after 1895, when Robert Demachy, in particular, revived the process in France. Publications by the Austrian photographers Hugo Henneberg, Heinrich Kuehn and Hans Watzek, as well as Demachy, popularized the process, which was introduced to American readers by Stieglitz in Camera Notes, October 1898. 64

Käsebier's first forays into the medium show her printing much as she had with platinum; details were not deliberately suppressed. Although she must have seen some European gum prints in New York, her European visit must have expanded her knowledge of Demachy's and Puyo's sketchy and textural gum prints. She would have been impressed by the broad tonal areas in Austrian work; Henneberg, Kuehn and Watzek were members of the Linked Ring whose work she must have seen in London. Perhaps most significantly, Käsebier would have had the opportunity of working side by side with Steichen, who had already absorbed the work of his European colleagues, and was becoming a master of the gum process.

Before the summer of 1901, Käsebier's gum prints seemed to be representative negatives printed in gum. During the
summer, she began to conceive negatives destined for the broadness and texture gum could give. Like Serbonne and Labor, such pictures often employed flattened, silhouetted areas which sacrificed precise detail to painterly effect.

Käsebier's visit to Germany must also have spurred her creativity— not so much Wiesbaden (where she and Hermine visited the elder Käsebiers), as Munich, where the paintings of Franz Stuck and other Munich Secessionists were on display in the International Art Exhibition at the Glaspalast. She saw Steichen when he came to Munich in September to see the Secessionist exhibit; undoubtedly the two artists surveyed the show together. 65

At the Glaspalast, the idea of secession was symbolized in the arrangement of paintings: the Secessionist works hung together in a special group of galleries at one end of the exhibition hall. 66 It was as graphic an introduction to artistic secession as two Photo-Secessionists-to-be could have wished.
Footnotes: III. International Recognition

1. The marriage of Gertrude Emilie Käsebier to Joseph O'Malley on Tues., 17 Oct. 1899, at the Käsebier home, 179 Quincy Street, Brooklyn, was reported in the Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 18 Oct. 1899, p.14. The wedding had apparently been postponed so as not to conflict with Mrs. Käsebier's judging of the Philadelphia Salon; on 23 Sept. Käsebier had written Day:"I have been notified to be in Phil. Oct 5th to which end I shall take the midnight train after the wedding Oct 4th."

2. Käsebier had given up her first studio before the summer; on April 29 she wrote Day that her address until June 1 would be either 179 Quincy Street or c/o The Camera Club. The new studio was open before Dec. 5, 1899, when it served as temporary quarters for an exchange at which students' work was sold. ("Department News," Pratt Institute Monthly 8 (Jan. 1900):69.


4. Ibid.

5. GK to Day, 28 Dec. 1899, Norwood.


9. The Philadelphia Salons were reviewed in foreign magazines. See, for example, the article on the 1900 Salon by Prescott Adamson of Philadelphia, translated with an afterword by Ernest Juhl, Photographische Rundschau (Mar. 1901): 49-55.


15. My observation was confirmed by Mina Turner. The other Kasebier photographs shown at the 1899 Philadelphia Salon were:
   178. Peter (reproduced Harper's Weekly, 4 Nov.1899, p.1120)
   179. A Group
   180. The Manger
   181. Mother & Child
   182. Mother & Children
   183. Portrait: Mrs. H.
   184. Portrait: Miss N. (Probably the portrait illustrated in Naef, Stieglitz, no. 343. However, the subject could not be Evelyn Nesbit, as Naef says. Stanford White did not meet Miss Nesbit until 1901 and brought her to be photographed by Kasebier in 1902.
   185. La Grandmère [Fig.9]
   186. Portrait: Mr. Day

16. Keiley, "The Salon," Camera Notes 4 (Jan.1901):222. The catalogue numbers and titles of all pictures shown by Kasebier at the 1900 Philadelphia Salon are:
   98. Mrs. C.
   99. Mrs. S.
   100. A Boy
   101. A Group
   102. Andante (Keiley describes this as a child playing a violin.
   103. Miss Sears (Probably the photograph reproduced by Caffin, Photography as a Fine Art (New York: Doubleday, Page, 1901), p.68.
   104. A Sunbeam (Described by Keiley as a young mother and her child.
   105. The Young Mother
   106. Portrait of Mrs. L. (Reproduced Harper's Weekly 10' Nov. 1900, p. 1061)

17. Interview: Mina Turner.


24. Keiley to Stieglitz, 24 July 1900, Yale.

25. Ibid.

26. Quitslund, p. 130.


30. Demachy names (but does not illustrate) two other photographs: A la fenêtre and Rameau décoratif ("Artistes américaines," p. 110.) It is probable that two gravures from Camera Notes were also exhibited, as Käsebier wrote Johnston, "you may use the Camera Notes reproductions, as such, if you wish," and a Russian review refers to a picture of the Virgin Mary and Child, which was undoubtedly The Manger. (Quitslund, "Her Feminine Colleagues," p. 130.

E. Wallon, Photo-Gazette, 25 Feb. 1901, pp. 61, 63, mentions a Young Girl with Dog (probably the picture titled Miss Sears in Caffin, Photography as a Fine Art, p. 68), as well as a Panel of mother and child and a Portrait de Mile. Wiggins which await identification.
31. The London catalogue, An Exhibition of Prints by the New School of American Photography Supplemented by an Additional Collection of One Hundred Examples of the Work of F. Holland Day of Boston (London: Royal Photographic Society, 1900) lists 375 works; the Paris Catalogue des Oeuvres de F. Holland Day et de la Nouvelle Ecole Américaine, Exposées au Photo-Club de Paris (Paris: Photo-Club de Paris, 1901) lists 304. Dennis Longwell (Steichen: The Master Prints 1895-1914, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1978, p.22) incorrectly states that the London version of the show was "slightly smaller." The most important difference between the shows was that more of Steichen's and fewer of Day's photographs were shown in Paris. Also, some photographers shown in London were omitted in Paris.


34. Jussim, pp.141, 142, 151, 152.

35. GK to Day, 12 Dec. 1899, Norwood.

36. Jussim is incorrect in saying that "Käsebier showed not one print at the Paris exhibition," (p. 153). The catalogue listings (see note 30 above) show that most, but not all, of her photographs exhibited in the two shows were the same.

37. GK to Johnston, 6 June 1900, LC. Toby Quitslund was kind enough to provide me with a copy of this letter.


39. The Self-Portrait was described in a deprecatory English review: "Alas! The 'Self Portrait' is...is here. In this work the face is very flat, the body is only outlined, perhaps done with watercolour, or else selective development of a platinotype print. In either case it's a thing to avoid." ("The New School of American Photography," Photographic News, 26 Oct. 1900, p. 702.)

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41. Demachy, "The New American School of Photography in Paris," Camera Notes 5 (July 1901): 36. While generally praising Käsebier's work, Demachy found two pictures "unworthy of her talent. He felt the Portrait of Clarence White was "dry and hard" and that In Brittany was "faulty in values."

42. Puyo, pp. 119-120.

43. Juhl's comment was a footnote to Sadakichi Hartmann's article, "Ueber die Amerikanische Kunstphotographie," Photographische Rundschau 14 (May 1900):93.


45. GK to Day, 28 Dec. 1899, Norwood.


47. Chambers (see appendix).


Ellen Terry's appreciation of photography doubtless stemmed from her close contact with Julia Margaret Cameron, who photographed Miss Terry in 1864. At that time, Miss Terry was married to the painter, George Frederick Watts, a close friend of Mrs. Cameron's. (Helmut Gernsheim, Julia Margaret Cameron [Millerton, N.Y.:Aperture; 1975], pp. 20, 22, 28, 34, 39, and ill. p. 137.) Her feeling for fine photography was expressed not only in her purchase of The Manger, but in a letter she (Ellen Terry) wrote to John Murray Anderson, 3 Oct. 1903, in answer to his request for an autographed picture postcard: " I sign my name for you with pleasure, but you will excuse my signing it upon a picture post-card. I make it a rule to reject cheap reproductions of good work. My photographs have been very well done, and I am told pho-
tographers are being ruined by these reproductions. I'm sorry for them, and have determined to sign no more postcards. Art is being cheapened the world over now-a-days." (John Murray Anderson, as told to and written by Hugh Abercrombie Anderson, Out Without My Rubbers: The Memoirs of John Murray Anderson [New York: Library Publishers, 1954], p. 10.


51. A bill of 27 Jan. 1900 (Yale) shows that Käsebier charged her regular price for photographs of Mrs. Stieglitz and Katherine:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Price</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2 large prints of mother &amp; baby</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 small print</td>
<td>5.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 prints of Mrs. Stieglitz</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Passe-par-tout</td>
<td>.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to house</td>
<td>10.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frame</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These photographs may include the two of Mrs. Alfred (Emmeline) Stieglitz reproduced by Naef, p.391. Käsebier also made two platinum portraits of Stieglitz's mother, Hedwig, around 1900 (collection of Flora Stieglitz Straus).


53. GK to Stieglitz, 23 July 1901, Yale.


56. Steichen to Stieglitz, [1901], Yale.

57. GK to Stieglitz, 21 Aug. 1901, Yale.

58. Ibid.
59. Hermine Turner and Kate Steichen, interviews. Delehanty and Paddock had been students at Pratt. Serbonne is actually Serbonnes, a village SE of Fontainebleau in the Yonne Dept.

60. Steichen to Stieglitz, [1901], Yale (leaf 16).

61. Steichen, A Life in Photography, Chap. 2.

62. Meryon's La Stryge was called "a picture already a little too well known for description" (Arthur Tomson, "Mr. Joseph Pennell's 'The Devils of Notre Dame,'" Studio 2 [Feb. 1894]: 180).

Also, Frederick H. Evans wrote that his portrait of Aubrey Beardsley (ca. 1894) was inspired by Meryon's La Stryge (reproduced clippings from Photography, Christmas number, 1903, in MOMA Photo. Dept. biographical file for Evans.


64. [Stieglitz], "Notes," Camera Notes 2 (Oct. 1898):53.

65. GK mentions her plan to meet Steichen in Munich to Stieglitz, 21 Aug. 1901, Yale. Steichen mentions seeing the Secession exhibit, A Life in Photography, Chap. 2, n.p. A postcard signed "HK, GK & EJS" to Mrs. Alfred Stieglitz, postmarked 17 Sept. 1901 Munich reads "We wish you were here too." (Elizabeth Pollock says that the postcard was addressed to Alfred Stieglitz and assumes that "HK" was Heinrich Kühn ["Biography of the Photographer Kühn," in An Exhibition of One Hundred Photographs by Heinrich Kühn (Munich: Stefan Lennert and other galleries, 1981-82), p. 9. But HK was certainly Hermine Kasebier. There is no evidence that Steichen or the Kasebiers met Kühn at this time, and since Kühn had not yet met Stieglitz he would not have initialled an informal picture postcard to Mrs. Stieglitz.)

It is also probable that Käsebier, Steichen and Hermine made a side trip to Denmark at this time. A copy photograph in the possession of the Steichen Archive, MOMA, shows them standing on a railroad platform with a Danish train schedule posted.

GK had earlier offered to photograph the King of Denmark; her offer was rejected by the King's representative, 23 July 1901 (NYPL). GK had mentioned "a great scheme...to do some Kings" to Frances Benjamin Johnston (LC, FBJ archive, 6 June 1901), asking Johnston how to get introduced to foreign
ambassadors. Johnston's career had given her many connections in government circles, but if she helped Käsebier nothing came of it. Käsebier would not have let a royal portrait go unnoticed in her oeuvre.

PART TWO
PHOTO-SECESSION YEARS 1902-1912
IV. KASEBIER AND THE PHOTO-SECESSION  1902-1905

Overview

The Photo-Secession was formed in 1902 as an organization of American photographers dedicated to the promotion of photography as a fine art. Alfred Stieglitz was its leader; Gertrude Käsebier, Joseph Keiley, Clarence White and Edward Steichen were among its founding members.

The organization was inspired by European artistic secession movements, like those in Munich and Vienna, whose artists broke from the academic establishment. A photographic precedent was the English Linked Ring, the group of advanced photographers who split from the old-guard Royal Photographic Society. Stieglitz and his corps actually separated themselves from the conservative ranks of the New York Camera Club and from the Philadelphia Photographic Society. However, Stieglitz maintained that his group was simply seceding from "the accepted idea of what constitutes a photograph."  

Stieglitz and the Secessionists sought more than technical excellence in photography; they saw photography as a means of personal expression. Stieglitz felt photography ought to be treated as an art equal to any other. He promoted the work and ideals of the Photo-Secession through the publication of the elegant magazine, Camera Work (1903-1917),

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and through a series of exhibitions.

In its concern with photographic aesthetics rather than technique, *Camera Work* was a radically new journal. Its aesthetic interest extended to perfectionism in reproduction. The magazine's format was quietly stylish, with bold type recalling books and magazines by William Morris and his followers in the Arts and Crafts movement.

The first Photo-Secession exhibition at the National Arts Club was followed by a regular schedule of exhibitions at the Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession (later simply called 291) at 291 Fifth Avenue. Photographs were also loaned to exhibitions in the United States and abroad.

Stieglitz was the group's official and spiritual leader from 1902 until the group disbanded in 1917. However, the purpose of the organization shifted about 1907, when Stieglitz and Steichen (who was then closely associated with him) began to exhibit modern painting instead of photography. The shift away from photography was one of several issues to cause dissension. By 1913, many of the original Photo-Secession members, beginning with Gertrude Käsebier, had resigned.

Although much has been written about *Camera Work* and the Photo-Secession, Käsebier's role in them has scarcely been discussed. A close look at her participation in the Secession is doubly rewarding because it reveals much about Stieglitz as well as about Käsebier.
The first exhibition of the Photo-Secession at the National Arts Club in March 1902 marked a turning point in Käsebier's career as well as in photographic history. Photography as art had numerous nineteenth century proponents, but not until the Photo-Secession did a group of photographers unite, under strong leadership, to promote photography's artistic and expressive potentialities. Stieglitz's leadership made the difference between the diffuse artiness of the English Linked Ring and the taut and ambitious aestheticism of the Photo-Secession.

Although the Photo-Secession was really only an idea when Steiglitz named it about a month before the exhibition opened, it soon became what Stieglitz envisioned: a group of "camera workers" (as he liked to call them), espousing the cause of photography as art. Stieglitz was the group's instigator and spokesman; Käsebier was one of its first members. The offhandedness with which she became one has gone down in photographic history, through Stieglitz's often-cited recollection:

At the opening, when Käsebier appeared--it was a blizzard night--she said to me, "What's this Photo-Secession? Am I a photo-secessionist?"
My answer was, "Do you feel you are?"
"I do."
"Well, that's all there is to it," I said. 4
Käsebier's relation to Stieglitz and the other Photo-Secessionists became less equable during the next ten years, as the following pages will show, but her participation was vital to the group in its early years, and beneficial to her career. At first, her reputation added lustre to the Photo-Secession; then, as the Photo-Secession gained importance, its cachet reflected favorably on her.

Käsebier had found success and fame before Alfred Stieglitz endorsed her work, and she maintained her reputation after her official break with Stieglitz and the Photo-Secession in early 1912. To say that Käsebier would have been a major photographer without Stieglitz's support is not to deny the essential part he played in her career. For, although Käsebier believed that photography could be an expressive art form, it was chiefly through Stieglitz's efforts that her work—and that of her Photo-Secession colleagues—came to be accepted as art.

Membership in the Photo-Secession changed Käsebier's exhibition and publication practices. For several years after joining, she stopped selling photographs to commercial magazines such as World's Work, and quit exhibiting with rival photographic organizations such as the Photographer's Association of America. This was probably done under subtle pressure from Stieglitz. When Stieglitz lent collections of Photo-Secession photographs to exhibitions, he stipulated that the photographs be hung as a unit. He maintained that
members were free to exhibit where they wished—as long as the Secession's "interests" were not "jeopardized." That proviso evidently discouraged members from exhibiting independently of the group. It will be seen that Käsebier's decision, in 1909, to join the Professional Photographers of America was considered an act of disloyalty.

It is worth looking closely at the circumstances surrounding the first exhibition of the Photo-Secession, because accounts of that exhibition have been contradictory and parochial. Let us begin by quoting Stieglitz's recollections, and then place the exhibition in broader context.

Stieglitz said:

A club had been formed called the National Arts Club—Charles de Kay, the art editor and associate editor of the New York Times, brother-in-law of Richard Watson Gilder, the poet, and editor of the Century Magazine...was its founder and director...

One day he appeared at the Camera Club and said, "Stieglitz, why don't you show these American photographs in New York—the photographs that you send abroad to art institutions and that are creating such a stir there? ....Why can't we have those prints that were shown in Glasgow?"

"Well, de Kay," I said, "if your club will give me a room, in your gallery, to show such prints as I see fit, and let me hang them in my own way, not a soul coming into the room before I open the doors, it's a go."....

As soon as de Kay had given me permission to go ahead he said, "Now we've got to have some publicity. What will we call this?"....

I said, "I've got it—it's a good one—call it An Exhibition of American Photography arranged by the Photo-Secession....there've been splits in the art circles and the moderns call themselves Secessionists, so photo-Secession really hitches up with the art world."
What Stieglitz's account leaves untold, however, is that while he was trying to make photography "hitch up with the art world," the art world—exemplified by the National Arts Club—was hitching up with untraditional and "minor" arts. With aims that ultimately derived from William Morris and the Arts and Crafts Movement, the goal of the Club was "to provide proper exhibition facilities for such lines of art, especially applied and industrial art, as shall not be otherwise adequately provided for" in New York City.  

Photography neatly fit this description.

Stieglitz implies that de Kay approached him unexpectedly. In fact, the choice of Stieglitz to organize a photographic exhibition was logical and obvious, not only because he was widely known as a skillful photographer with discerning taste for the work of others, but because he was personally acquainted with many members of the National Arts Club, including Charles de Kay, who had written a long, laudatory article about him for the New York Times in 1899. The critic Charles Caffin and Joseph Obermeyer (Stieglitz's brother-in-law and former college roommate) were also members, as was Arthur W. Dow, who had already written about Käsebier for Camera Notes. F. Holland Day belonged too; however, as an out-of-town member who disliked New York, he must have been seldom seen at the club.

Two other members who would have heard good things of Stieglitz from Käsebier, if they did not actually know him,
were Frank DuMond, the painter, and Walter S. Perry, the head of the art department at Pratt. Stieglitz would thus have had warm endorsement at the National Arts Club in his effort to select an exhibition "representative of all that was best in American photography according to modern ideas," comprising "recognized workers of repute who had proven themselves in thorough sympathy with the spirit of the modern movement...regardless of their photographic affiliations." 

It is essential to emphasize that Stieglitz alone selected the exhibition from photographs sent by invited exhibitors, although Keiley assisted in hanging the pictures. Stieglitz, who detested committees, did not select this exhibition with Club members Charles I. Berg and F. Benedict Herzog, as Weston Naef has contended. The selection of "many names unfamiliar to Stieglitz's roster" cannot be explained away as "the result of committee work," as Naef has done. Stieglitz's plan was deliberate. In addition to large groups of pictures by his favorites: Steichen, Käsebier, White, Keiley, Eugene, Day, William B. Dyer and himself, he included small groups of prints by photographers throughout the country, to suggest the pervasiveness of "the spirit of the modern movement." Geographical representation runs from Maine (William B. Post) to California (Oscar Maurer), with a strong showing from the important photographic center of Philadelphia.
Stieglitz, who had demanded autonomy in the hanging as well as in the selection of the exhibition, arranged the pictures monographically:

all the work of each contributor was grouped together, to enable the visitor to make a comparative study of the individual work and scope of the photographer. Great care had been taken to so place each picture that its tone, color, and line would harmonize with its surroundings, and in consequence many of the pictures which had already been shown at previous exhibitions were imbued with new beauty and their full worth was for the first time displayed. 16

His aim in the first Photo-Secession exhibition, as well as in succeeding exhibitions and publications, was not necessarily to exhibit new material, but to exhibit the best, and to show it to its greatest advantage. Thus, it is not surprising to find Käsebier's tried and proven favorites, The Manger and Blessed Art Thou Among Women at the top of her list in the National Arts Club catalogue. Also included were The Red Man and Serbonne, which Stieglitz would soon publish, along with the first two, in the inaugural issue of Camera Work—showing once again that enduring quality, not novelty, was his concern.

The Red Man, Käsebier's most famous Indian portrait (discussed in Chapter IX), and Mother and Child were lent to the exhibition by Alfred Atmore Pope, steel magnate, member of the National Arts Club, and assiduous collector of Impressionist art. His collection of paintings by Degas, Cassatt, Manet, Monet and Whistler, among others, is still on display at his former home, Hill-Stead, now a museum, in
Farmington, Connecticut. Also at Hill-Stead, though not on display, is a collection of Käsebier prints, including *Mother and Child* or *Adoration* [Fig. 21], doubtless the picture exhibited at the National Arts Club, *Real Motherhood* [Fig. 16], and *Portrait of a Boy* [Fig. 12], as well as a group of thirteen photographs Käsebier made of Mr. and Mrs. Pope and their daughter, the architect Theodate Pope (Riddle). This group includes prints of Theodate Pope posing for a portrait by the painter Robert B. Brandegee. Brandegee, along with his wife and son, are subjects of the curiously evocative Käsebier family portrait, *Harmony* [Fig. 24], which was also shown at the first Photo-Secession exhibition.

We are further reminded of the closeness of the turn-of-the-century American art world when we realize that Stanford White, who was a member of the National Arts Club, and who became a client of Käsebier's around 1902, was also associated with the Pope family. Theodate Pope, who was among the first American women architects, had worked closely with White in designing Hill-Stead. Whether White met Käsebier through the Popes, or vice versa, or whether they each met her independently, is still a matter for speculation. There can be no doubt, however, of the prestige attached to having one's photographs in a collection like Pope's. It must have been gratifying for Käsebier to know that Pope, who had purchased mother and child pictures by Cassatt and Carrière,
also bought hers.

The National Arts Club exhibition was widely publicized and praised, and Stieglitz's advanced colleagues encouraged him to continue Photo-Secession activities. When the rear guard of the Camera Club elected a new slate of officers who criticized Stieglitz's editing of Camera Notes, Stieglitz resigned as its editor. His plans for a new and independent magazine—Camera Work—were soon under way.

Gertrude Käsebier in Camera Work

Camera Work One: Ladies First

Stieglitz devoted the first issue of Camera Work to Gertrude Käsebier, not only because he admired her work, but because he believed in the maxim "ladies first." At least, that is what he told Steichen, according to the Käsebier family story:

In August 1902, Stieglitz got together with Steichen and Käsebier to divulge his plans for Camera Work. Stieglitz intended to devote the first issue to Käsebier, the second to Steichen. Steichen, however, wanted to be first. Knowing that Käsebier was quite deaf, and thinking her out of earshot, he broached the subject to Stieglitz, in her presence, begging Stieglitz to devote the first issue to his photo-
graphs, arguing that he was young and poor, and needed to build his reputation in order to support himself. Käsebier, he said, needed no more publicity or clients.

Stieglitz refused, saying "No, it's ladies first—and besides, I've promised her." At that point, Käsebier (whose deafness seemed to depart at times) interrupted: "I heard every word you said!" Somehow, she was amused, and the incident caused no hard feelings between her and Steichen. 21

That anecdote serves not merely as a vignette of Steichen's unabashed ambition, Stieglitz's idealism and Käsebier's pepperiness; it is a vivid dramatization of other evidence that Stieglitz always intended to devote the first issue of Camera Work to Käsebier. F. Holland Day was never Stieglitz's first choice as Estelle Jussim and Weston Naef have said he was. 22 Jussim and Naef erroneously assume that Stieglitz was requesting photographs for the first issue of Camera Work when he wrote Day on October 6, 1902; Stieglitz was actually asking Day to contribute to the third issue. 23 (Despite their differences over the New School of Photography exhibition and the 1901 Philadelphia Salon, Stieglitz continued to admire Day's work, including it in the National Arts Club exhibition. Day, however, declined Stieglitz's further bids for photographs.) 24

The decision to dedicate much of the first issue of Camera Work to Käsebier had already been made by August.
On August 28, Charles Caffin wrote to Stieglitz, wishing "good luck to 'Camera Work'!" and promising to have "an appreciation on Käsebier ready by October 15." Frances Benjamin Johnston wrote Stieglitz on September 28: "I should certainly like to appear in your first number and could also be sure of finding inspiration in Mrs. Käsebier and her influence..."  

The first issue of *Camera Work*, dated January 1903, actually appeared in late December 1902. The majority of the illustrations were by Käsebier: two articles and an editorial note concerned her, but the issue was not a Käsebier monograph. In addition to two other reproductions (Stieglitz's *The Hand of Man* and A. Radclyffe Dugmore's photograph illustrating his article on bird photography) there were articles on recent exhibitions and on photographic aesthetics, as well as a few brief poems.

Six Käsebier photographs were reproduced, representing "the range and many-sided qualities of (her) work." In both subject and handling, the reproductions showed Käsebier's interests and talents. There were three varied portraits: *Dorothy* (a child), *Miss N.* (the glamorous showgirl, Evelyn Nesbit [Fig.46]), and *The Red Man* [Fig.83], a Sioux Indian. There were her two most famous motherhood photographs: *The Manger* and *Blessed Art Thou Among Women* [Figs.15, 17], and there was one landscape, *Serbonne* [Fig.25], which
also served as an example of Käsebier's growing interest in manipulated gum printing. Ser bonne was reproduced in halftone, which "does not do full justice to the velvety richness of the original, much of whose charm lies in the medium used," the Editors (for which read Stieglitz) explained. 29

However, the other reproductions were photogravures, produced from Käsebier's original negatives. The editorial note assures us that these are "absolutely straight photography, being in no way faked, doctored or retouched." 30

Four of the gravure reproductions were printed on Japanese tissue; the transluscent, fine-grained paper enhanced the delicacy of the motherhood prints and two portraits. By contrast, Stieglitz printed The Red Man on heavy dark tan paper, suggesting the dark tones of the Indian's complexion. The slight roughness of the paper enhanced the wooly texture of his blanket, while its coarseness suited the simple, broad design of the Indian portrait.

Estelle Jussim misunderstands Stieglitz's aims when she complains that "the works in this supposedly revolutionary journal had appeared previously in Camera Notes." 31 Stieglitz felt that excellent pictures deserved repeated reproduction. Just as he reproduced The Manger and Blessed Art Thou Among Women several times, he later reproduced his own favorite photograph, The Steerage, over again. 32 He also believed that
pictures were seen differently in varying surroundings, commenting that at the National Arts Club Photo-Secession exhibition

Great care had been taken to so place each picture that its tone, color, and line would harmonise with its surroundings, and in consequence many of the pictures which had already been shown at previous exhibits were imbued with new beauty, and their full worth was for the first time displayed.

Two essays accompanied the Käsebier reproductions in Camera Work. Stieglitz had wisely and discreetly chosen Charles Caffin and Frances Benjamin Johnston (rather than Sadakichi Hartmann) to write them. Caffin and Johnston had each already published a laudatory piece about Käsebier, and each was eminent in photographic circles. The names of Caffin, a leading critic of American art as well as photography, and of Miss Johnston, the American woman photographer whose renown compared with Käsebier's, lent prestige to the new publication.

In an earlier article in the Ladies Home Journal, Johnston had emphasized the "tender grace" of Käsebier's motherhood photographs, but for Camera Work Johnston stressed the national influence of Käsebier's innovative relaxed portrait style—without props or papier maché accessories—on professional portraitists, "many of whom may not even know her name." In both articles, Johnston described Käsebier's talent for photographing people: her
artistic ability, her sincere feeling, and her patience and sympathy.

Like Johnston, Caffin praised Käsebier's portraits, and mentioned Käsebier's sympathy for her subjects, but he was more interested in aesthetics than Johnston. Although he was less specific and less critical than he had been in his earlier, longer essay, "Mrs. Gertrude Käsebier and the Artistic-Commercial Portrait," Caffin was concerned to explain Käsebier's artistic accomplishment, and he praised her handling of light and shade, tone and textures, to make an artistic ensemble. He specifically praised The Manger (which was reproduced) as a print which proves "how abundantly Mrs. Käsebier possesses the picture-making faculty." Although the Johnston and Caffin essays were considered too laudatory by some— one critic described them as "effusions" --they complemented the photographs in the issue. The photographs and the articles about them formed a coherent whole.

Camera Work Ten

Two years later, in April 1905, Camera Work Number Ten was devoted to Käsebier's photographs, but its structure was different from Number One. Käsebier's work was central to the first Camera Work, but tangential to the tenth, whose text on "Eduard Steichen: Painter and Photographer," and several pieces about artistic and photographic aesthetics had no bear-
ing at all on Käsebier.

No letters, articles or archival material seem to exist to explain how Stieglitz arrived at this motley combination of text and illustration. Stieglitz's correspondence during early 1905 does, however, indicate that he was under a great deal of strain.\(^{39}\) He had also become increasingly close to Steichen, and, in group exhibitions, began to give Steichen's photographs precedence over Käsebier's. The two men were soon to work together enlarging Steichen's former studio and transforming it into the Little Galleries of the Photo-Secession at 291 Fifth Avenue—better known simply as 291. There, from November 24 on, Stieglitz presided over photography exhibitions. From 1907 on, drawings, paintings and other arts were shown.\(^{40}\)

In *Camera Work* Ten, six reproductions at the front of the magazine were accompanied only by a brief editorial note at the end:

> As Mrs. Gertrude Käsebier is one of our most prolific photographers as well as one of the foremost pictorialists, it needs no apology from us to present our readers with a new series of her work. The photogravures were all made directly from the original unretouched negatives, and represent absolutely straight photography, thus proving once more that individuality, strength and feeling are possible without the slightest manipulation other than lens, lighting, developing, and printing.\(^{41}\)

The Käsebier photographs that Stieglitz did not publish in that issue are at least as instructive to consider as those that he did, because Stieglitz edited out all photographs
that Käsebier had reworked—on the negative or in other ways—although she was well known and admired for them. Among these were: The Road to Rome [Fig. 32], Black and White, and, most notably, The Heritage of Motherhood [Fig. 35], which Käsebier had made during the summer of 1904, and which Keiley, in Camera Work Nine (January 1905) had called "in my judgment, one of the strongest things that she has ever done, and one of the saddest and most touching that I have ever seen." In that article, Keiley commented that his taste differed from his associates'; presumably Stieglitz was one with whom he differed. Stieglitz did not (or could not) always reject those photographs that Käsebier manipulated; The Road to Rome, Black and White and the Heritage of Motherhood were shown at several Photo-Secession exhibitions. He even owned a copy of The Bat [Fig. 27], which is now in the Metropolitan Museum. But in Camera Work Ten, he advanced his prevailing values, pointing out that "individuality, strength and feeling are possible without the slightest manipulation other than lens, lighting, developing and printing." (My italics.)

The photographs he chose in the service of his idea comprise an uneven group. Stieglitz's admiration for Käsebier's portraiture is still evident in two rather similar portraits of society women—Miss Minnie Ashley and Mrs. Philip Lydig [Fig. 47]. These, however, seem too studied to lift into the realm of art, remarkable though they are as commer-
cial portraits. Käsebier was just one of many painters and photographers who were magnetized by Rita de Acosta Lydig's Spanish beauty and gorgeous pace-setting clothes. Steichen, for example, was later to emphasize her "romantic eyes and pointed chin" in a seductive close-up: Cyclamen--Mrs. Philip Lydig, around 1905 (Camera Work 42/43, April/July 1913). Käsebier, on the other hand, seems to see her subject as an aloof fashionplate; we view Mrs. Lydig from behind, where her daringly décolleté-backed gown—a style she had initiated and made the rage—is as much the subject as her lovely profile and "frivolous nose."  

At first glance, the whimsically titled picture, My Neighbors [Fig. 34] recalls earlier Barbizon School-like cattle photographs by Stieglitz, Käsebier and others. A sharper look suggests that this close-up view of two cows (?) is not simply a picturesque view of country life. Käsebier confronts us with animals peering over a stone wall, like nosy neighbors. Whether she meant this curious picture as a parody or as an animal portrait is unclear.  

Pastoral, an engaging scene of a young couple in a landscape, suggests Käsebier's ability to master an asymmetrical composition and landscape. (The subjects are actually Hermine Käsebier Turner and her husband Mason Turner. This is the only Käsebier in Camera Work Ten to be printed on heavyweight paper and tipped onto tissue; all others are on Japanese tissue.)
Happy Days and The Picture Book. [Figs. 28, 30] remain the strongest of the group in Camera Work Ten, today still exemplifying the "individuality, strength and feeling" that Stieglitz sought to illustrate. Käsebier was bold in the asymmetrical composition of The Picture Book, but even more unconventional and original in Happy Days, a complex picture which she must have composed in the ground glass view-finder of her camera. Not only is the shallow space unusual, but the cropping of figures is radical for an artistic photograph of this time. With a vision doubtless primed by cut-offs in Degas, Whistler and Japanese prints, Käsebier cut off part of each figure on all four edges of Happy Days. Indeed, the "decapitation" of the center girl was caricatured when the photograph was shown at a French Photo Club Salon [Fig. 29], and a conservative critic was similarly shocked:

She amuses herself by systematically chopping people off; in The Sketch only the tip of the head is missing, but Happy Days is a real massacre; there are some very nice "morsels" in it, but this approach, the advantages of which I don't understand, bothers me.

Had he thought about it, our French critic might have realized that the framing of Happy Days succeeds in emphasizing a feeling of closeness among the children who have been eternally linked in a moment of serene companionship.

Happy Days, The Picture Book, Pastoral and perhaps My Neighbors and Mrs. Lydig were the result of a second
productive summer's work in Newport, 1903. The Sketch (Naef 348), The Road to Rome [Fig. 32] and other pictures of her grandchildren also date from that summer. Colleagues such as F. Holland Day and Adolph de Meyer (whom she had just met) posed for her too (see Chapter V). Photographs are our greatest evidence of this prolific period. Almost no letters remain, and we do not know whether the "cottage at Newport, just out of town" that she rented was again Long Meadow. But clearly, once again, Käsebier had been highly productive during a summer vacation.
Footnotes: IV. Käsebier and the Photo-Secession 1902-1905


7. Stieglitz, "Origin of the Photo-Secession," reprint pp. 120-121. This account is also given in somewhat different form in A.E. Ernst, "New School of the Camera," New York Sun, 26 April 1908. See also: Norman, p. 48 and Stieglitz, "The Photo-Secession at the National Arts Club, New York," Photograms of the Year, New York, 1902, pp. 17-20.

8. National Arts Club Constitution, quoted by Gardner Teall, "The National Arts Club of New York; its Position as a Factor in the Encouragement of the Fine Arts and Why it is


11. Ibid.


13. Ibid., p. 20.

14. Naef, p. 110, gives no source for his assertion. He has evidently misconstrued a letter of 16 Dec. 1902—written months after the Secession exhibition. That letter informs Stieglitz that he has been appointed a member of a special National Arts Club committee to "consider the advisability of having a Photographic Annex to the Club." The other members of the committee were to be Berg and Herzog. (H.M. Stegman, National Arts Club Sec'y. to Stieglitz, Yale.)

15. National Arts Club, American Pictorial Photography arranged by the Photo-Secession, New York, March 5- March 22, 1902. (Homer, Stieglitz, p. 53, points out that the exhibition actually ran through March 24.

Stieglitz, "The Photo-Secession at the National Arts Club," p. 17.

16. Ibid., p. 18.

17. I am grateful to Anita Ventura Mozley for drawing this collection of Kasebiers to my attention. Pope was listed as the lender of nos. 68 and 76 in the National Arts Club Photo-Secession catalogue. He was listed as a Club member in The National Arts Club, p. 56.


18. Robert Brandegee's granddaughter, Sarah Brandegee Brodie, identified the subjects in the photograph when it was displayed at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts in 1974, and explained that Susan Lord Brandegee was a professional musician, the first woman to play in the American String Quartet. (Sarah Brandegee Brodie to Director of American Photography Exhibit, Boston MFA, 10 April 1974.)

20. Sue Davidson Lowe unfortunately does not provide a source for the interesting information that Stieglitz had "sketched out a prototype issue" of Camera Work as early as February 1902. (Stieglitz: A Memoir/Biography [New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1983], p. 115.


Steichen also wrote to Stieglitz in the same vein, around October 1902, requesting publicity in the first issue of Camera Work: "...I'm in such a mess--no money, and a lot in arrears and no clear track ahead....I know perfectly well that if they want is to use me these photographic people--am used to it. --but I was sort of feeling if I might not turn the tables and make the 'use' part mutual. -- you see it will be six months or more before we can get out the second number of Camera Work if your first only comes in December--that will be Jan Feb--March the next quarter. For a few good blocks in a number coming out right after I was settled in New York might go a long way as advertisement." (Yale, n.d.)


Naef is also incorrect in saying Day did not reply to Stieglitz's letter of 6 Oct. 1902. Day replied on 30 Oct: see note 23 below.

23. Stieglitz to Day, 6 Oct. 1902 (Yale): "Am I presuming too much when I request your permission to use a few of your pictures in 'Camera Work'? I guarantee to reproduce them to the best of my ability....The final O.K. will be left in your hands...."

Day to Stieglitz, 30 Oct. 1902 (Yale): I must apologize for overlooking your letter of recent date asking for prints to reproduce in Camera Work. I regret that at the moment I have nothing available, but I expect before many days to be able to send you a couple of prints which will be at your service.

Stieglitz to Day, 15 July 1903 (Yale):"Some time last autumn before No 1 of Camera Work was published, I wrote to you asking whether you would kindly let me have some of your work for No 3 of the publication, which it was my intention to devote to you...."

24. Stieglitz requested exhibition photographs from Day, 14 April 1906 and 20 Nov. 1906 (Yale). Day told Stieglitz his work was unworthy of exhibition, and asked a "postponement." (30 Nov. 1906, Norwood, quoted by Jussim, p. 171)
25. Yale


27. The Camera Work scrapbook (Book 2, Yale) contains many acknowledgments, written in December 1902, for the first issue.


29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Jussim, p. 152. Jussim also says (pp. 295-6, note 44) that Camera Work reproductions of The Manger and Blessed Art Thou Among Women were technologically better than those in Camera Notes; they are, in fact, all excellent photogravures.

She also claims that Red Indian [sic] was printed in both Camera Notes and Camera Work. Some Indian portraits were printed in Camera Notes (April 1899), but The Red Man was reproduced only in Camera Work.

32. The Manger and Blessed Art Thou Among Women were reproduced by Stieglitz in the portfolio American Pictorial Photography, Series II, as well as in Camera Notes 4 (July 1900) and Camera Work no. 1 (Jan. 1903).

The Steerage was reproduced in Camera Work no. 36 (Oct. 1911) and in 291 no. 7-8 (Sept.-Oct. 1913).

Mrs. Jameson by Hill and Adamson was reproduced in Camera Work no. II (July 1905) and no. 37 (Jan. 1912), first from a modern reprint, later from the original negative.


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39. See, for example, Stieglitz's letters to Keiley, 8 Feb. and 15 Feb 1905, Yale.

40. A list of exhibitions held at "291" is given in Norman, pp. 232-235.

41. [Stieglitz], "Our Illustrations," Camera Work no. 10 (April 1905), p. 50.


43. For example, The Road to Rome was shown in the Käsebier-Clarence White exhibition at "291," 5-19 Feb. 1906; Black and White was shown at the same exhibition and at "A Collection of American Pictorial Photographs as arranged by the Photo-Secession," Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, 1904. The Heritage of Motherhood was shown at the "Exhibition of Photographic Art," Cincinnati Museum, 11 Feb.-5 March 1906 and at the "Exhibition of Photographs arranged by the Photo-Secession," Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 30 April-27 May 1906.

44. [Stieglitz], "Our Illustrations," p. 50.


46. "Lady of an Antique World," p. 28. Mrs. Lydig's portrait was painted by Boldini, Madrazo, Sargent and Zuloaga; Paul Helleu sketched her.

47. Ibid.

48. [Stieglitz], "Our Illustrations," p. 50.

"Elle s'amuse à couper systématiquement les gens: dans l'Esquisse (356) il ne manque qu'un bout de tête, mais dans Jours heureux (355) c'est un vrai massacre: il y a de très bons 'morceaux' là dedans, mais ce parti-pris, dont je ne comprends pas les avantages, m'agace."

50. The caption to a photograph of her by Alman, Everybody's 9 (Aug. 1903) noted the presence of Mrs. Lydig as one of the "fashionable set" in Newport. Käsebier kept a page in her scrapbook autographed "With much appreciation, Rita d'Acosta Lydig/ 1903" (NYPL).

The Sketch and The Picture Book are both dated 1903 in the catalogue of the International Exhibition of Pictorial Photography, Albright Art Gallery, Buffalo, 1910.

Hermine Turner, in listing negatives donated to the Library of Congress, wrote that The Sketch, The Story Book [sic], Happy Days, Road to Rome, Pastoral and Black and White were made in Newport, but misdated them all by one year, to 1902. The misdating became clear as it became obvious that Käsebier was in Newport in 1903, but not in 1902. The list also identifies the subjects of most of the photographs: a copy of the list is at MOMA.

51. GK to Frances Benjamin Johnston, 6 July 1903, LC.
Käsebier did little serious photography during the summer of 1905 while vacationing in Europe with Frances Benjamin Johnston. Yet her visits with Baron de Meyer in Venice and with Robert Demachy in France benefited her career, because she found good friends and staunch allies in these photographers.

It had been a tiring spring for Käsebier. The exertion of publishing Camera Work Ten and of moving to Ocean­side, Long Island, left her exhausted. "I can get away none too soon," she wrote Day in July, declining his invitation to Maine. A specialist had just diagnosed her malady as "mental strain, not overwork."

She was distressed at moving to Oceanside, where Mr. Käsebier had bought a house. She found the seaside intolerably dull, and her trip to work oppressively long. In July, she worked only Mondays and Thursdays in the city; other times she stayed at the studio all week. When at Oceanside, she conquered some boredom through photography, making pictures like Bungalows (MOMA) and The Simple Life [Fig. 33]. In showing a duck alone on a field of grass, she created a metaphor for her home situation: isolated and monotonous. (See also Chapter X.)

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However, travelling abroad cheered and salved her spirits. After a month, she seemed to be getting better; indeed, her travelling companion, Frances Benjamin Johnston wrote that Käsebier was having the time of her life. The two women got along "capitally," said Johnston.

Their acquaintance dated to 1899, when they were co-jurors at the Philadelphia Salon. Except for occasional professional encounters, the women had spent little time together and corresponded infrequently. Yet Johnston's article in the first issue of *Camera Work* revealed that by 1902 she knew not only her colleague's work, but her disposition:

> With all the force of her wonderful personality she has struck the keynote of great achievement in photographic portraiture, and that keynote is absolute sincerity.

...to portray with artistic insight "all sorts and conditions of men," the unwearying succession of the tall and the short, the stout and the lean, who fill the hours of the professional photographer, requires not only genius but a rare combination of other qualities—intuition, tact, sympathy and infinite patience. Gifted with such a temperament, this is what Mrs. Käsebier is doing and this is why her influence is extending in ever-widening circles to professionals everywhere, many of whom may not even know her name.

Both women were outgoing, assertive, unconventional, daring and funloving. They shared an interest in photography without being competitors. Their studios were far apart—
Johnston's in Washington, D. C.—and their approaches to photography were different. Johnston's work was generally literal minded, direct and clear, while Käsebier had a tendency to search below the surface. In 1905, they both simply recorded the European travels with hand cameras, except in the Italian town of Bagni di Lucca, where "Mrs. K went in raptures" over a beautiful villa and garden which they hired a large camera to photograph.  

The two companions spent days "wallowing in the charm of Venice." Johnston wrote her mother:

> It is [Mrs. K's] first visit here and you can imagine how she is enjoying the incomparable beauty and picturesqueness of it all. We have done absolutely no sightseeing—simply threading the quaint streets and passages or gliding through the canals and lagoons early and late.  

In Venice, Käsebier had a grand reunion with Baron Adolf de Meyer, whom she had met two summers before in Newport. A decade later he would become America's leading fashion photographer. De Meyer welcomed both women to the Palazzo Balbi Valier, the ample, lavishly appointed palace on the Grand Canal that he and his wife Olga rented for several seasons. Olga was the godchild—and apparently the illegitimate daughter—of Edward, Prince of Wales. De Meyer's title of Baron was reportedly granted to let Adolf and Olga attend Edward's coronation as king.  

Because little has been written about de Meyer's early career, it is revealing to learn that Johnston found him
"a most charming man who is immensely rich and quite well known as an amateur photographer." He was also "an enthusiastic admirer of Mrs. K.," and she of him, purchasing eighteen of his still life photographs. He generously placed all his apparatus and his darkroom at both women's disposal. "You can imagine we are revelling in all this luxury developing and printing as if we were at home," wrote Johnston, delighted that she and Kasebier had a chance to finish and view the satisfactory results of their Bagni di Lucca photographs.

They photographed Venice and each other in informal postcard shots, and made some more formal pictures. Among these is the remarkable profile portrait of Käebier by de Meyer [MOMA]. If this portrait of Käebier were not so firmly identified, we might scarcely associate it with Käebier, so thoroughly has de Meyer etherealized the sturdy photographer, who not long before had written, hyperbolically, "I am getting so fat I expect my legs and arms soon to disappear and to roll like a ball." 

It is not just that this portrait shows de Meyer's incomparable ability for photographic flattery. The picture is not mere flattery in the service of glamour (as some of his later fashion photographs would be), but, rather, a compliment that evokes the subject's fine sensibilities. One feels that de Meyer has seen beyond the practical-looking woman with a camera to picture her, mysteriously shrouded and
removed from the cares of daily life, as mistress of her dreams and fantasies. He has taken her out of time and context. Soft focus deletes wrinkles. A dark semitransparent veil replaces her usual large hat or wispy bangs and chignon. Instead of the firmly set, determined jaw so characteristic of her in most photographs, de Meyer shows her openmouthed, half smiling. This is the embodiment of the woman who, on an earlier vacation, could exclaim, "I wander about and dream and dream and am unconscious of material conditions. I live truly in the spirit. Would that I need never wake." 13

In her turn, Käsebier saw de Meyer as sybaritic and self-dramatizing. In 1903, she photographed him at least eight times in the Newport countryside. 14 In one picture [Fig. 96] he lies on grass, gently touching the low branches of a tree that shades him. In another, he stands at a wall, hand on hip; a flowered field fills most of the foreground [Fig. 94]. These pictures show his flair for posing and his photogenic quality, as well as Käsebier's style and technique. De Meyer's languorous poses are enhanced by Käsebier's sensuous platinum printing.

Käsebier's Venetian pictures show de Meyer among the palazzo's beautiful furnishings, and gazing from a balcony. As usual, she drew attention to his slender elegance and distinctive profile. Käsebier was usually not interested in men's clothing, but she accentuated de Meyer's elegant,
unconventional attire. To her at the palazzo, de Meyer had seemed "a gorgeous vision in rich deep pink silk blouse and linen trousers, against a background of stately marble columns." Yet her photographs also imply that he was effeminate and foppish. When Steichen met de Meyer, his first response was that the Baron was "not as bad as Kaesebier photographed him"; later Steichen came to appreciate de Meyer. 

In September, Käsebier and Johnston visited the De machy estate on the Normandy coast near Trouville, the elegant French resort. Like de Meyer, Demachy was a serious amateur photographer of independent means. Demachy's invitation to the two women whom he knew but slightly (he'd met Johnston in 1900 when she brought the exhibition of women photographers to Paris; he had only corresponded with Käsebier) shows how much he appreciated his English and American colleagues. France had no photographic community comparable to theirs, and Demachy's fluent English made communication easy.

On their visit, a professional friendship developed between Käsebier and Demachy, who had known and admired her photographs since 1900 (see Chapter III). After the visit, he sent her a soft focus lens like his. And his thoughtful appraisal of her work for a leading photography magazine gave her work a further boost in France. His snapshot of
Käsebier accompanying that article is a good unstilted likeness. Although Demachy is best known for painterly photographs printed in gum, this direct instantaneous portrait of Käsebier shows his versatility.

Käsebier's photo of him half reclining captures his classically good looks; with his white hair, beard and regular features he might have modeled as an elder Greek god [Fig. 93]. Her photo album also records light moments at the Demachy's—taking joy rides in his automobile and pantomiming for the camera: Figure 92 shows Demachy, his wife and Mrs. Käsebier mugging with a canine friend.

Between their visits to de Meyer and Demachy, Käsebier and Johnston had travelled separately for a few weeks. While Johnston visited the Lumière family (in part to learn about their new color photography process), 19 Käsebier headed towards Paris, where her acquaintance with the great French sculptor, Auguste Rodin, was about to begin.
Although connoisseurs have long considered Gertrude Käsebier's portraits of Rodin to be among the most sensitive pictures of the great sculptor, documents about the Käsebier-Rodin friendship have only recently become publicly available. Letters, as well as drawings, sculpture and photographs they exchanged, show Rodin's admiration for Käsebier's talent and her reverence for his creative genius. Like Rodin's more celebrated friendship with Edward Steichen, his association with Käsebier illustrates his understanding and appreciation of talented photographers.

Käsebier met Rodin during a trip to Paris in early September 1905; Baron de Meyer, whom Käsebier had just visited in Venice, provided a gracious letter of introduction. Flattering both the sculptor and the photographer, he told Rodin that Mrs. Käsebier has the greatest desire to become acquainted with you and to see your work at Meudon...She is a very artistic woman and appreciates all that is great and beautiful in Art. She is perhaps the greatest photographer in America, certainly in her genre the equal of Mr. Steichen, and I believe that in permitting her to visit you, you are not opening your door to someone unworthy of the honor that you grant.

By the end of the month, Rodin felt keenly enough about Mrs. Käsebier to inscribe a card to her: "Sympathie à la grande artiste en photographie."
During that time, Käsebier photographed Rodin and his Meudon studio. Because she admired Rodin—and because she found him the most restless subject she ever photographed—Käsebier counted the Rodin portraits among her greatest accomplishments. As if to call attention to her achievement, as well as to protect her interests, she copyrighted her Rodin pictures.

Käsebier maintained that Rodin was a terrible man when it came to photographs. When he knew he was going to be photographed, he'd stiffen into the most grotesque and absurd postures... (But) I caught him in one of his moments. He was relaxed and brooding. He didn't know he had been photographed until it was all over. A connoisseur came over to me one day after seeing the picture and said: "Mme. Käsebier, you flatter Rodin. I doubt if there is all the tenderness and gentility about him that is in your portrait." I did not hesitate to answer him. I said, "That is Rodin in the presence of a woman." It was undoubtedly to Käsebier's advantage to be a woman photographer to Rodin, because he believed that, "in general, women understand me better than men. They are more attentive."

Rodin's own attentions to women admirers could be startlingly abrupt, as we know from an anecdote that Mrs. Käsebier frequently told, with great relish, about a soirée she attended at Rodin's Meudon studio. As retold by Kate Steichen, we hear that when Mrs. Käsebier (Granny) arrived at the party:
Rodin scuffled over to get a footstool to put under her feet, and paid court to her, as he did to all the great ladies. This went on for some time, when all of a sudden in the doorway appeared another great lady, a great beauty of the day. Rodin rushed over and escorted the lady to another chair; then he ran back to Granny, snatched the footstool out from Granny's feet, and put it under the feet of the latest lady.

Aesthetic affinity, not romance, was the basis of the Käsebier-Rodin friendship. Albert Elsen has commented that "The bond between Rodin and his photographers was their joy in and love of light as the means by which they could achieve expression." Käsebier was intensely aware of such a bond. From her copy of Lawton's Life of Rodin, she quoted Rodin: "Light and shade are all a sculptor needs, if his structural expression is right." This quotation, she told F. Holland Day, explained "the law and also the reason I have found favor with the great Sculptor quite unconsciously." Like a sculptor, Käsebier dealt not in color but in modulation of light and dark.

Years later, Käsebier described difficulties in photographing Rodin. He had been wearing "an awful business suit" that emphasized his large belly, and he had a way of throwing his head back. Eventually, she got the portraits she wanted, by having Rodin put a smock over his suit, and by waiting until he lowered his head meditatively for two photographs [Figs. 97, 98] and gestured, as in conversation, for another (Rodin Museum ph.247). But first, to disguise
the graceless suit, she photographed Rodin from behind [Fig. 99], making a bust length photograph reminiscent of Rodin's own sculpture busts. Here, Rodin's tendency to tilt his head back is not a flaw; on the contrary, it creates a dramatic pose. The photograph is composed of broad areas of light and shade. Partial backlighting silhouettes the back of Rodin's head and shoulders. The face and beard are clearly lit; a sharp line of light defines the nose contour with great precision. This strongly conceived profile is supported and dramatized by the dark area.

We know that Rodin approved of such backlighting effects in photographs of his sculpture, most notably Druet's 1898 photograph of The Kiss (Elsen, In Rodin's Studio, pl. 109), where a ribbon of light outlines the left side of the sculpture. Whether the portrait's lighting was Käsebier's idea, or whether Rodin collaborated by suggesting it (we know he gave advice and direction to Druet and Steichen34), the picture exemplifies Käsebier's and Rodin's mutual interest in photography's interpretive and expressive capability.

The Rodin portrait that Käsebier printed most often [Fig. 97]--also apparently Rodin's favorite--is one of three she made showing Rodin in his smock, standing in front of his model for The Gates of Hell. In a typical gesture,
he caresses his sculpture bust of Baron Paul d'Estournelles de Constant. Unusual among portraits of Rodin, this picture shows not only the man—his face, his powerful hands and massive body—but part of his studio as well.

It is also atypical, as Rodin portraits go, for its predominantly light tones. Albert Elsen has pointed out that "Rodin worked daily in a sculptural environment that was mostly white. The moment a work was finished in clay, it went into plaster, and even if cast in bronze, it was the plasters that remained in the studio." Yet photographs of Rodin in this white ambience are rare. Only Käsebier, and later Steichen in a 1907 autochrome (reproduced on the cover of the Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin, Spring 1981) pictured him in his pale surroundings.

The light shimmering on The Gates of Hell was, to Käsebier, an appropriate and challenging background. If the idea to pose in front of The Gates of Hell came partly from Rodin (who liked to have his sculptures photographed in front of it, as Elsen has pointed out), it was certainly congenial to Käsebier, whose two previous photographs of white forms against white backgrounds—The Manger and Blessed Art Thou Among Women—were her most notable successes. Indeed, it is worth comparing the Rodin portrait to Blessed Art Thou Among Women [Fig.17], not only for tonal similarities, but for formal analogies.
Both Rodin and Mrs. Lee are draped in light-colored outfits and reach out to caress a dark, rounded form—a sculpted head, a daughter's shoulder—that they have had a part in creating. Each figure faces forward, yet turns to look tenderly down towards the sculpture or child. The artworks behind Rodin and Mrs. Lee are emblematic of their lives. Despite the apparent difference in subject, these two Käsebier photographs have strong tonal, formal and emotional concordances.

The similarities end, however, in Käsebier's approach to printing the two pictures. Blessed Art Thou Among Women was printed in only one way—in platinum—with little variation in tone from one print to another, while the Rodin was made in platinum or gum, with variations in tone, detail and size. For instance, she sent Rodin two different signed prints of his favorite negative. The larger is dark gray-brown platinum on thin, smooth Japanese tissue. White paper backing adds luminosity. The smaller is a sepia gum print on heavy, dull paper, with textured "painterly" effects such as brush strokes in the smock area.

These deliberate variations suggest that, just as Rodin and his contemporaries might produce the same sculpture in plaster, marble or bronze, Käsebier would consider two different versions of a photograph equally valid.
Steichen also created vastly different prints from the same negative of Rodin. Yet, in several ways, Käsebier's portraits of Rodin differ from those of her colleagues Steichen and Coburn. None of their portraits shares the informality of her portrait of Rodin, outdoors, beside his sculpture, Adam [Fig. 100], a picture that Kirk Varnedoe has called "a rare example of the sculptor revealing, tentatively, a more light-hearted side." Käsebier's Rodin always looks down or away from the viewer, whereas Coburn and Steichen often have him cast his intense gaze directly out.

On the other hand, Käsebier never photographed Rodin's sculpture by itself, as Steichen did. She did, however, photograph Rodin's garden and his studio. The Musée Rodin Rodin has a fine print of swans on the grass under a birch tree in his garden [Fig. 101], and another of the duck pond and reflections that she dedicated to Mme. Rodin [Fig. 102]. These large format photographs must have been made with the same borrowed or rented camera that she used to take Rodin's portraits. Käsebier carried only a hand camera on this trip, which she used to make souvenir snapshots.

Käsebier mounted five snapshots of Rodin's studio and garden at Meudon in the photo album of her 1905 European tour. These include one snapshot of the duck pond and one
of the swans [Fig.103,104] that are remarkably similar to her large photographs of them. 45

The Meudon snapshots are of great documentary value and should interest Rodin scholars. According to Hélène Pinet of the Musée Rodin, the snapshot of the swans includes the only known photograph of the Buddha sculpture, now lost, which once adorned Rodin's garden. The photo of Rodin supervising his assistants [Fig. 95] is also unique, according to Mme. Pinet. It is a rare bit of visual evidence suggesting the supporting role that Rodin's practitioners or assistants played in the production of his work, and it complements Judith Cladel's verbal description of Rodin's studio, where one could watch the "dry blows of the practitioners' chisels carving the marble, smoothing the stone, beneath the downfall of white dust that made the room seem like a large hour glass." 46 In this snapshot and in two others, we also get rare glimpses into Rodin's "museum" at Meudon, with antique sculptures standing in front of columns and arches of the building that Rodin had moved to Meudon from Paris, after it had served as his pavilion at the 1900 Paris Exposition. 47

* * * *

Through a cordial exchange of letters and gifts, Käsebier and Rodin kept in touch until 1915, two years before his death. The continuing mutual admiration of
the artists, whose only common language was art, permeates their letters. These excerpts are typical:

Gertrude Käsebier to Rodin, 1 January 1906:

There is much I should like to tell you of my reverence for your art, but in its presence I am without words. 48

Rodin to Käsebier, thanking for a group of photographs, 6 April 1906:

Your royal gift gave me extraordinary pleasure... I have never seen such a delightful gift. My portrait gives me great pleasure, but I see that you have spent a great deal of time and study in making it. With all my heart from one artist to another artist 49

Käsebier to Rodin, thanking for his gift of four drawings, late December 1906:

The precious drawings are in my keeping. Words cannot express my delight. They will inspire me as long as I live... Thank you, thank you, thank you. 50

By lending these drawings to the Armory show in 1913, Mrs. Käsebier permitted thousands of visitors to share her pleasure in Rodin's drawings. Today, thanks to her descendants, the drawings as well as the sculpture Rodin gave her in 1912 are permanently in the public domain. 51
Footnotes: V. European Travels, 1905

1. GK to Day, 6 July 1905, Norwood.

2. Mina Turner, interview.

3. GK to Day, 6 July 1905, Norwood. Mina Turner recalled "Granny stayed in the city during the week, came out weekends—and read funny papers to the kids," Mason Turner papers.


5. Johnston to her mother, Frances A. Johnston, 24 Aug. 1905, LC.

6. Johnston, "Gertrude Käsebier, Professional Photographer," Camera Work no. 1 (Jan. 1903), p. 20. Among the vast number of papers in the Johnston archive (approximately 19,000 items in the Manuscript Division at the Library of Congress), there are only a few Käsebier letters.

7. Johnston to her mother, 16 Aug. 1905, LC.

8. Ibid., 24 Aug. 1905, L.C.


10. Johnston to her mother, 24 Aug. 1905, LC. DeMeyer wrote Stieglitz that Käsebier owned eighteen of his still life photographs on 9 Nov. 1906, Yale.

11. Johnston to her mother, 24 Aug. 1905, LC.


13. GK (in Newport) to Day, postmarked 3 July 1899, Norwood. Also see Chapter I for a similar exclamation written from Crécy-en-Brie.

14. Seven of these photographs are reproduced in The Collection of Baron DeMeyer, Sotheby Parke Bernet, N.Y. (catalogue for auction 4437M, 20 Oct. 1980), nos. 54-60. The eighth is at the International Museum of Photography, George Eastman House, Rochester, N.Y. [Fig. 96].


17. Johnston wrote that her mother would remember meeting Demachy in Paris (Johnston to her mother, 26 Sept. 1905, on letter begun 22 Sept. 1905, LC). Käsebier wrote Stieglitz (21 Aug. 1901) that she had "been unable to meet Demachy...but...had a very cordial letter from him" (Yale). Concerning Demachy, see Bill Jay, Robert Demachy (London & New York: Academy Editions & St. Martin's Press, 1974), pp 7, 14.


19. Johnston to her mother, 24 Aug. and 29 Aug. 1905, LC.

20. The six Käsebier letters and twelve photographs in the archives of the Musée Rodin, Paris, were inaccessible for many years. Snapshots of Rodin's Meudon studio in Käsebier's album of her 1905 European trip (now in MOMA Photography Department Study Collection) and notes from Rodin to Käsebier (now in the Manuscript Division of the New York Public Library) were formerly in the hands of Käsebier's daughter and granddaughter.


22. DeMeyer to Rodin, n.d., Musée Rodin, "Madame Gertrude Käsebier...a le plus grand désir de vous connaître et de voir votre oeuvre à Meudon... Elle est une femme très artiste et appréciant tout ce qui est grand et beau dans l'Art. Elle est peut-être la plus grande photographe de l'Amerique, certainement dans son genre l'égale de Mr Steichen, et je crois qu'en lui permettant de Vous rendre visite, vous n'ouvrez votre porte a une personne indigne de l'honneur que Vous (lui?) faites " [sic].
Letters from Frances Benjamin Johnston to her mother during August 1905 (LC) describe Käsebier's and Johnston's visit with de Meyer in Venice.

This evidence that Käsebier and Rodin were introduced in 1905 supercedes my earlier supposition that Steichen introduced Käsebier to Rodin in 1901, published in "Rediscovering Gertrude Käsebier," Image, June 1976, p. 31.

23. NYPL Manuscript Division. The card, dated "25 septembre 1905" by Rodin, was formerly mounted on the first page of an elegant parchment-covered scrapbook in which Käsebier kept letters from Rodin, as well as other letters and mementoes, all of which are now in the NYPL Manuscript Division, removed from the scrapbook.

24. "She said the sculptor was the most restless 'sitter' she ever had, and couldn't keep still for more than a few minutes at a time," John Murray Anderson, as told to and written by Hugh Abercrombie Anderson, Out Without My Rubbers—The Memoirs of John Murray Anderson (New York: Library Publishers, 1954), p. 52.

25. Käsebier was granted copyrights for five Rodin portraits on 19 Jan. 1906. However, only three original prints from her copyright deposit can now be found by the Library of Congress. The Musée Rodin owns the largest group of her portraits of the sculptor—seven prints from six different negatives.


28. Interview: Kate Steichen. Kate Steichen (Edward Steichen's daughter) spent a great deal of time with Gertrude Käsebier and her family as a child and a young woman. She was a lifelong friend of Gertrude Käsebier's granddaughter, Mina Turner. Edward Steichen's affection for Rodin led him to coin Kate's middle name—Rodina—in honor of the sculptor.


31. GK to Day, 7 May 1907, Norwood.


33. Ibid.


35. Rodin "showed his work with the simplicity of the very great...He ran his hands over them and caressed them." Isadora Duncan, *My Life* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1927), p. 90.

I am grateful to Hélène Pinet of the Musée Rodin for identifying the bust of Baron Paul d'Estournelles de Constant.


37. Ibid., p. 29.

38. For a discussion of the significance of Selwyn Image's print, *Blessed Art Thou Among Women* to Mrs. Lee, see Chapter X.

39. These prints are in the Musée Rodin archives. An unusual variant of this negative, printed on silk, is now at the IMP-GEH.


41. For example, compare the detailed platinum version of Rodin in 1902 (Steichen, *A Life in Photography*, pl. 15) with the broad planes of the gum version (*Rodin Rediscovered*, fig. 9.80), or the light-toned platinum version of Rodin in 1907 (*Rodin Rediscovered* fig. 9.82) with the dark one (Steichen, pl. 50), also 1907 but incorrectly labelled 1910.

42. Varnedoe, p. 245. The only copy of this photograph known to me is in the archives of the Musée Rodin.


44. Johnston to her mother, 16 Aug. 1905, from Bagni di Lucca (LC) about "renting a big camera and getting some plates." She mentioned the camera rental again on 24 Aug.
According to "Studio Stories," The Photographer, 21 Nov. 1905, p. 53, Käsebier did "little in the way of new work, not even taking a camera with her" on the trip. However, her snapshots belie this.

The print of the duck pond appears to be unique; IMP-GEH owns a print of the swans in Rodin's garden.

45. Some of the photographs in this album (of Mrs. Käsebier, for example), were made by her traveling companion Frances Benjamin Johnston, or by other acquaintances. However, the Rodin snapshots are clearly by Käsebier, who was alone in Paris for more than two weeks in September. Johnston's letter to her mother (dated 22 Sept and 26 Sept. 1905, LC) recounting in detail her week in Paris, makes no mention of Rodin.


47. Rodin Rediscovered, p. 225 and p. 150, note 5.

48. Musée Rodin archives.

49. NYPL.

"Votre cadeau royal m'a fait un plaisir extraordinaire. ...Je n'ai jamais vue de cadeau si delicieux pour moi. Mon portrait me fait grand plaisir, mais je voir que vous y avez passé beaucoup de temps et d'étude à la faire... De tout mon coeur d'artiste à un autre artiste."

In addition to the portraits and garden pictures, Käsebier gave three other prints, now in the Musée Rodin, to Rodin: Portrait of de Meyer in a field at Newport [Fig. 94 from IMP/GEH is a variant], The Bat, and When the Sands are Running Low.

In 1915, she sent Rodin a photograph by an unidentified photographer; she thought he would enjoy the sculptural bronze-like quality of the Hawaiian native riding a wave on his surfboard. However, this photograph cannot be found in the Musée Rodin, according to Mme. Pinet. (The photo is described, GK to Rodin, 11 Feb. 1915, Musée Rodin Archives.)

50. Musée Rodin Archives.

51. The drawings and sculpture were donated to the Museum of Modern Art, N. Y. Rodin wrote GK, 30 Dec. 1912, saying that he was sending her "un petit bronze."
VI. CONFLICT AND BREAK WITH THE PHOTO-SECESSION

Early Warnings

Käsebier's and Stieglitz's intense mutual admiration did not survive the early years of the century. Differences arose in 1904; after 1906 their friendship disintegrated until Käsebier resigned from the Photo-Secession in early 1912. Personality clashes as well as a conflict between Käsebier's commercial attitude to photography and Stieglitz's idealistic, anti-materialistic stance caused the rupture.

Not only did Stieglitz spurn moneymaking, but he was a poor manager. Käsebier, Day, Eva Watson-Schütze and Clarence White each complained that Stieglitz failed to return borrowed prints or neglected to pay for ones that had been sold. Stieglitz, so demanding in his aesthetic standards, could be exasperatingly heedless of others' property. For a man of great sensibility, he was also careless of people's feelings. As this chapter will show, by 1907, Käsebier resented his unkindnesses to her, both in ignoring her and in permitting an article about her to be parodied in Camera Work.

On the other hand, Käsebier herself could be difficult. She is known to have antagonized Photo-Secession colleagues by boasting about her work and by telling exaggerated tales.
of her woes to evoke sympathy.  

Käsebier's commercial approach to photography ran counter to her fellow Secessionists' ideals. During the summer of 1904, Käsebier had an opportunity to sell hundreds of photogravures from the first Camera Work, and felt no qualms about asking Stieglitz (who was in Europe) and his New York associates to make extra offprints for her. They refused. Even Steichen, who was usually not averse to commercial work, was upset. He wrote Stieglitz: "Mrs Kaesebier had the cheek to ring up Schubart and order some prints from the photogravure plates... She seems to want them for some one that's going out on the road for her--to sell them."  

There is virtually no record of transactions between Käsebier and Stieglitz in compiling Camera Work Ten or in organizing the exhibition of Käsebier and White photographs at 291 in February 1906. However, Stieglitz's tone in saying he had "quite a session at Käsebier's studio" suggests that tension was growing between them in 1905.  

As much as Käsebier was accepted as one of the best photographers of her day, she was always considered a "woman photographer." For his time, Stieglitz was exceptional in giving opportunities to women photographers and artists. Women were full-fledged voting members of the Photo-Secession, not secondary citizens, like the women of the English Linked Ring. Stieglitz understood the importance of women photo-
graphers as well as anyone of his day. As he wrote to Francis Benjamin Johnston, "The women in this country are certainly doing great photographic work and deserve much commendation for their efforts." But at the same time, Stieglitz saw women as emotionally different from men. In praising Käsebier's portraits he wrote: "Their strength never betrays the woman," and when Keiley was perplexed by Käsebier's behavior late in 1901, Stieglitz wrote him that "Käsebier is a queer creature; she's touchy like all women."
In 1907, a serious rift developed between Käsebier and Steiglitz. Its first sign appeared in January, when she told Day of her growing alienation from Photo-Secession colleagues. She had been friendly with Clarence White for years, and had visited his family in Newark, Ohio in 1902. Yet, when the Whites moved to New York, Käsebier felt that "a number of friendly advances" she made to them were not "warmly received." She wrote Day:

It was so stimulating to see you and have a free exchange of ideas about our work. I so hunger for just that interchange. I do not know why it is denied me here, but it is.

By May, in an apparent effort to gain such a "free exchange of ideas" about photography, Käsebier joined the Professional Photographers of New York. On the face of it, this was appropriate: Käsebier was a professional. But to Stieglitz, her decision must have seemed an act of infidelity, because the commercial goals of the professional photographers' organization were at odds with the Photo-Secession's aesthetic aims.

The October 1907 Camera Work (Number 20) contained two articles about Käsebier, but, curiously, no illustrations of her work. The first piece Joseph Keiley's "Gertrude Käsebier," was highly flattering and informative; it was
the most complete biography of Käebier to appear during her lifetime. However, the article was already old; it had first appeared in the British magazine, Photography, March 19, 1904. Why Stieglitz suddenly chose to reprint it in 1907 (and why he hadn't used it in April 1905 to accompany the Käebier photographs in Camera Work 10) is a puzzle. And was it crassness, misplaced humor or insensitivity that let Stieglitz publish Charles Caffin's parody of a recent article about Käebier? She was infuriated by Caffin's piece, taking it as a personal affront. She felt all her friends were deserting her—not only Stieglitz and White, but Caffin, who had been among her most ardent supporters.

Caffin's article, "Emotional Art (After Reading the 'Craftsman,' April 1907)," was a takeoff on Giles Edgerton's "Photography as an Emotional Art: A Study of the Work of Gertrude Käebier," in The Craftsman. Scholars in recent years have not mentioned this parallel, but to Käebier the connection was blatantly clear and Caffin's article "vulgar." 11

The lampoon works on two levels: in general it pokes fun at the vogue for expressive handworked gum printing and at Giles Edgerton's vivid writing style. More specifically, it mocks Käebier, who has been transformed into a Mr. Theodosius Binny. Where Edgerton writes:

\[
\text{to be an artist is to suffer through nature, and to think suffering a little price for great emotional}\]

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opportunity.... (Käsebier said) "my development came slowly through much suffering, much disappointment and much renunciation. I have learned to know the world because of what the world has exacted of me." 12

Caffin has Mr. Binny "burst out in a kind of prolonged sob:

But it is out of the suffering of the body that the artist reaches up to the emotionalism of his soul. It is only, when the whole fabric of his flesh collapses into a palpitating confusion of pain, that his spirit is disengaged and rises to sublimity. That is why we artist glory in our missions, cherish our weaknesses, and are in love with pain. 13

Caffin also derides Käsebier's account of photographing the famous American architect, Stanford White. Edgerton wrote:

The photograph of Stanford White [Fig. 49]...was laboriously achieved by printing and reprinting during a period of two years. "I could not seem to get into the print," Mrs. Käsebier explained, "what I had seen through the camera. ...and then...at a last trial, I realized that the real person, the man of fundamental kindness, of great achievement, had found his way into the picture. For a long time Stanford White would not come and see the photograph. He said it would be too ugly, and that he did not like looking at pictures of himself, but at last he came over one day, and then begged for it, but I had worked so long over it that I could not sell it, or give it up, so I used to loan it to him at intervals.... He once said to a friend that he thought it was the greatest portrait through any medium that he had ever seen. 14

Ridiculing Käsebier's inability to relinquish the photograph as well as her lack of humility, Caffin has Mr. Binny say:

"Were it not that, like all artists, I shun recognition and abhor self-praise, I would tell you of the solemn, almost saintly observations of one of my clients. It was Mr. -- no, I won't mention his name, but he was one of the magnates of Standard Oil. 'I myself,' he said 'have made some trifling success in oils, as Titian did; but you, Mr. Binny, have harnessed to your tripod nature's own illuminant, eternal, inexhaustible sunshine. Only the photographer, who has risen to the supreme
heights of emotional expression, as you have Mr. Binny, is the real master-magician of the universe..."  

Mr. Binny continued:

"this beautiful enthusiasm had been aroused by the sight of my emotionalized gum portrait of himself. At first he could not be induced to look at it. He was appalled by the anticipation of its beauty.... So we arranged a compromise, and my client, for a consideration, gives himself the occasional rapture of borrowing the print. He hangs it in his bathroom, that his excess of admiration and the worship it inspires may not cause his trousers to bulge at the knees.  

Käsebier was further angered by other articles that criticized her, or omitted her entirely from discussions of the Photo-Secession.  

Concerning one of these, she wrote Day:

Stieglitz has certainly loosed all his dogs of war on me and why I do not know. It is a poor return for my years of loyalty. Neither he nor White have been near me, or showed any sign of feeling in all the great strain I have been passing through. 

The strain was personal, financial and professional: "Grave trouble came to one of my children," she wrote Day (without further explication). Also, some of her funds had been in the Knickerbocker Bank, which failed. Then, suddenly, she was dispossessed from her studio at 273 Fifth Avenue, because the man from whom she sublet had not paid the landlord. While relocating nearby at 315 Fifth Avenue, she lost most of her Christmas-season business.
When word of Käsebier's woes and Photo-Secession disputes reached de Meyer in London, he wrote Stieglitz a reflective and understanding letter, trying to patch things up. His perceptions cast some light on the squabbles of this period:

I am sorry you should have fallen out with poor old Mother Käsebier, she is getting very old, and is failing in health. I can quite realize she may have been irritating and trying, but that is often caused by ill health. What she suffers most of is age and fading energy in creating new work, it is sad, I am sorry for the old lady, who has done much for photography and much for me... Can't more friendly relationship be taken up again, I know how she would feel, as she is depressed and sad at heart, she has had much trouble of late, poor old thing.

...Not at all wanting to interfere, just showing you how I feel about the old lady. Käsebier was 55—by no means "very old," but she had surely had some difficult times. De Meyer's letter, however, could not restore Käsebier to a central place in the Seccession. Differences between her and Stieglitz had become too great.

During 1908 and 1909, Käsebier increasingly cast her lot with professional photographers. In this, she must have been motivated by more than anger at Stieglitz. As her husband grew sicker (he was to die in late 1909), Käsebier's interest in financial success grew stronger. But, in a vicious cycle, Stieglitz deplored Käsebier's commercialism (as he would later denounce Steichen's and Max Weber's desire to earn money). Stieglitz "believed passionately that
an artist could fulfill his promise only if his goals
excluded all thought of monetary reward." 22 Thus, when
the Secession was reorganized in 1909, Käsebier did not
become a top-ranking "Fellow of the Directorate." 23 This
was a deliberate and obvious slight.

Perhaps in retribution, Käsebier decided to contribute
to the Professional Section—rather than the Artistic Pho-
tography Section—of the Dresden International Photography
Exhibition. Stieglitz, who had been gathering photographs on
behalf of Heinrich Kühn, the Austrian photographer and Eu-
ropean director of the art photography section at Dresden,
could not contain his rage:

For ten days [White] has been to her each day and each
day she promised definitely to be ready by [today].
Her excuse is that she is not satisfied with her work.
She is afraid that her prints might injure her fame.
Actually she rarely makes good prints now—she has
become the business woman through and through. But
just imagine; she sent five prints to the professional
section in Dresden, so she told White. Now she must
leave the Secession. Rarely have I heard of anything so
low. I'd rather give up the whole thing than have any-
thing further to do with such rabble. 24

Steichen's response was similar: I'm going to write
Kaesebier--and ask her to resign," he told Stieglitz.
"I'll give this letter a chance to reach you and if I don't
get a cable saying 'don't' I'll write to her. I don't want
to write now as you may be doing something and she may have
changed her mind..." 25
In time, each man cooled down, and Camera Work even acknowledged Käsebier's award for professional photography at Dresden. Similarly, Keiley admitted that Käsebier's lecture to the Photographers' Association of America annual convention had not harmed the Secession. He was pleased to realize that even among professionals, "the secession is recognized as a distinct force." That Käsebier's apparently anti-Secession move had boomeranged this way struck Keiley as ironic. He wrote Stieglitz that it was "a good one on Käsebier if rough on us." Keiley's antipathy to Käsebier had grown since 1904, and no shred of their friendship remained after Keiley defended Caffin's "Mr. Binney" article.

During 1909, Käsebier continued to dissociate herself from her former colleagues by refusing to resign from the Linked Ring in May, when they did. However, in October, the declining standards of the group led her, too, to quit. For the first time in years, she entered and won a photographic contest—$250. for third prize in a Kodak advertising contest. Then, during the winter of 1909-1910, she taught free classes in composition to women photographers. The course was given under the auspices of the Women's Federation.
(of the Photographers' Association of America) that she had been instrumental in forming. 32

While increased participation in professional organizations marked a beginning for her, more than her affiliation with the Secession was ending during 1909 and 1910. Mr. Käsebier died on December 17, 1909. There is no record of Mrs. Käsebier's reaction to her husband's death, nor to that of her elderly mother at about the same time. 33

The Albright Exhibition

Nineteen ten also brought Käsebier's last participation in what was to become the final Photo-Secession photography exhibition, "the summing up," as Stieglitz called it, at the Albright Art Gallery (now the Albright-Knox Gallery) in Buffalo, N. Y. 34 This mammoth exhibition of 560 photographs was organized in two sections; open and by invitation. The invited photographers, selected by Stieglitz, were to be "thoroughly representative of the best that has so far been accomplished in pictorial photography." 35

Many of the individual exhibitions, like Käsebier's, were retrospective. Of Käsebier's 22 prints, 14 were based on negatives made before 1908; the balance were eight photographs, chiefly portraits, made during 1910. Most of the old
favorites were there; Käsebier printed copies of *Blessed Art Thou among Women, The Manger, The Red Man, The Bat,* and a Rodin portrait especially for the exhibition. She made these prints to fulfill her promise to Stieglitz:

"I will support you in the Buffalo show and do anything else I can to help you, that comes within my physical (sic) limitations." 36

Much of the criticism of the exhibition was political. Many people in the photographic world were angered that the exhibition included only Stieglitz's choices, and the rival organization, the Photo-Pictorialists of Buffalo, shunned the exhibition entirely. 37

In general, praise outweighed criticism, and Stieglitz was highly gratified with the exhibition's success. Most writers took the exhibition as an opportunity to review Stieglitz's accomplishments, and to discuss the Photo-Secession as a group. However, there is one notable piece of criticism leveled directly at Käsebier, a vitriolic, personal attack by Keiley, who praised deMeyer at Käsebier's expense:

How marked the contrast between this and the exhibition of Gertrude Käsebier, with its artistic irresponsibility and indifference to mere technique; its curious impulsiveness; its inner blind groping to express the protean self within—that finer bigger self that cannot always find a voice and that resents any seeming lack of appreciation on the part of others; of the respect that she feels is the due of the muse she worships. 38

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These comments seem particularly nasty since Keiley had, before, admired many of the photographs that he now condemned outright. He appears to repudiate his former admiration for The Manger, Blessed Art Thou among Women and The Heritage of Motherhood. Käsebier's technique was surely not above reproach, but another writer's criticism of her prints was mild and constructive: "the yellow tint covering many of her pictures...does not add to the effect; the tint is slightly raw and perhaps could be improved upon, if not entirely eliminated." 39

This exhibition was notable because the Gallery bought photographs for their permanent collection: an unprecedented recognition of photography in an American art museum. However, in order to obtain as many pictures as possible for the Albright's allotment of $300., Stieglitz exacted sacrificial prices from his colleagues. In December, Käsebier acceded to selling a copy of her famous hundred dollar print, The Manger, to the Albright Gallery for only $35. 40 When, by February 3, she had not been paid for this and for four other prints that had been sold to collectors, she lost patience and wrote curtly:

My dear Mr. Stieglitz:
When do I get my money for prints sold in Buffalo?
Yours sincerely,
Gertrude Käsebier 41
Stieglitz's defensive, unapologetic reply suggests the edgy relations between the two photographers:

...There has been a great deal of delay, excusable if one knows conditions as I do, on part of collecting moneys and the return of prints on part of the Buffalo people.

Of course I am undoubtedly considered the culprit by those photographers whose prints have not yet been returned, or who have not received the moneys due them for prints sold.

I can assure you that the moment I receive the cash belonging to you I shall forward it to you without delay.

Stieglitz evidently considered it naive, if not crass, to expect to be paid on time; Kăsebier considered it good business.

The differences between the two imaginative idealistic photographers now far outweighed past sympathies. While Kăsebier's interest remained rooted in photography, Stieglitz's shifted towards modern art. Both Camera Work and exhibitions at 291 illustrate his new preferences: Rodin, Matisse, Cézanne and Picasso among them.

Stieglitz sought advanced art not only because he felt photographers like Kăsebier and White were stagnating, but because he had become intolerant of conventionalism. As he told his sister:

I hate tradition for tradition's sake;--I hate the half-alive; I hate anything that isn't real. I never knew I had the ability to hate in me but I find that as I grow older a hatred not against individuals but against customs, traditions, superstitions, etc. is growing fast and strong & I am not trying to throttle it.
Käsebier's Resignation

Käsebier's concern with the Photo-Secession had declined since 1907; she drew away entirely in 1911. Clarence White's allegiance to Stieglitz had slackened, too. But Stieglitz was unwilling to let disciples lapse. On March 1, 1911, Stieglitz sent members an ultimatum which, in effect, demanded either faith in the Secession or excommunication from it—a Photo-Secession dues bill declaring:

Those who are not in full sympathy with the present activities of the "Photo-Secession" are in honor bound to return this bill unpaid and have their names stricken from the list of members.

Reactions to this note are unrecorded. However, later that year, Stieglitz softened unexpectedly. As White wrote Day,

Mrs. K showed me a very friendly note from the Boss of 291 - 5th Ave. and it now seems as if he was trying to win back some of those that they branded as "no good." At any event, there seems to K at least a very changed attitude that "photography was not making good and will have no shows until some work is produced worthy of being shown at 291." But it was too late, and too little. On January 2, 1912, Käsebier made a definitive break. (Was it the result of a New Year's resolution?) Her terse note read:

I present to you my resignation from the Photo-Secession.

Stieglitz did not accept it. He replied:
Through Mrs. Stieglitz I had heard of your troubles and the load you were carrying. When you cancelled your subscription for Camera Work I interpreted it as meaning that you were forced to economize. When now I also receive your resignation from the Photo-Secession without any explanation I assume that it is for the reason you wish your name dropped. Inasmuch as membership to the Secession is not dependent upon payment of dues,—you being one of the very few who paid them regularly, I cannot accept your resignation without knowing that you are no longer in sympathy with the Secession's work, nor believe in its aims and activities. (my italics)

Diplomatically, Käsebier refused to satisfy Stieglitz with an expression of rancor. She had the last word on January 6:

I thank you for your generous offer which I cannot accept. I have contemplated the step which I have now taken for a long time. Please let my resignation go through with dignity and without bitterness. It is final.
Footnotes: VI. Conflict and Break with the Photo-Secession

1. Day to Stieglitz, 4 April 1902; Watson Schütze to Stieglitz, 12 Dec. 1904; GK to Stieglitz, 3 Feb. 1911; White to Stieglitz, 15 May 1912. Yale.

2. Keiley to Stieglitz, 22 June 1904; Steichen to Stieglitz, ca. Nov 1906 (leaf 197) and 1908 (leaf 135); de Meyer to Stieglitz, 10 Nov. 1908. Yale.


4. Steichen to Stieglitz, n.d., Yale

5. Stieglitz to Keiley, 8 Feb. 1905, Yale

6. Stieglitz to Johnston, 6 Aug. 1900, L.C.


8. Stieglitz to Keiley, 14 Nov. 1901, Yale.


11. GK to Day [7 Dec. 1907], Norwood: "Camera Work came out with that vulgar Mr. Binney article. I am 'Mr. Binney.'" [sic].


16. Ibid., p. 34.

18. GK to Day, 28 Dec. 1907, Norwood, concerning the Century article in note 14 above.


21. DeMeyer to Stieglitz, 10 Nov. 1908, Yale.

22. Lowe, pp. 132-133.


25. Steichen to Stieglitz, n.d., leaf 111, Yale. (Although Yale has dated this letter 1908, its references to Seeley and Käsebier, both of whom had defaulted on their pledges to contribute to the Dresden artistic photography exhibition, indicates that it was written in 1909.)


   It is amusing to note that Käsebier exhibited "a striking likeness" of Stieglitz in the Dresden exhibition ("At the Dresden Exposition," Abel's Photographic Weekly, 19 June 1909, p. 270.


30. Harker, The Linked Ring, pp. 122, 184, 188. Coburn, Frank Eugene, Keiley, Kühn, deMeyer and Stieglitz were among those who quit the Linked Ring in the spring of 1909.


Kähsebier also exhibited at the convention of Professional Photographers in Rochester, N. Y., July 1909 (Studio Light and the Aristo Eagle, July 1909, pp. 10-12).

33. Kähsebier's mother had been living with Hermine Turner and her family in Waban, Mass. at the time of her death (Mina Turner, interview). Also, Mina Turner to her niece, Patricia O'Malley Costello, 5 March 1973, "Grandma Stanton...lived with my family in Waban, Mass. her last years and died there in 1910 or 1911."

Edward Kähsebier's obituary appeared in the New York Times, 18 Dec. 1909, p. 13, where his death date was incorrectly printed as 7 December. According to Nassau County records, Mr. Kähsebier died 17 December.


36. GK to Stieglitz, 28 May 1910, Yale.


40. Stieglitz to GK, 19 Dec. 1910 and her undated reply on the same sheet, Yale. See Chapter III above concerning sale of The Manger for $100. Although $35. was a low price for The Manger, it was on a par with A Venetian, also sold at the Albright for $35. The Picture Book, Heritage of Motherhood and Blessed Art Thou... were sold for $25. each (Stieglitz to Cornelia Sage at Albright Art Gallery, leaf 34, Yale).
41. GK to Stieglitz, 3 Feb. 1911, Yale.

42. Stieglitz to GK, 7 Feb. 1911, Yale.

43. Stieglitz to Selma Stieglitz Schubart, 4 Oct. 1909, Yale. This letter, written on shipboard returning to New York from Europe, was sparked by Stieglitz's excitement at the "Autumn Salon."

44. Typed bills like these sent to Coburn and his mother were undoubtedly sent to all Secession members as annual dues bills. (Stieglitz to Alvin Langdon Coburn and Mrs. F. Coburn, leaf 217, 218, Yale.)


46. GK to Stieglitz, 2 Jan 1912, Yale.

47. Stieglitz to GK, 4 Jan. 1912, Yale.

Among Käsebier's troubles at this time was the destruction of her Fifth Avenue showcase: "The city government of New York recently took a fancy to make Fifth Avenue broader, so, of course, all the show cases that projected from the buildings had to go. ...Mrs. Käsebier had the worst luck of all because she did not immediately obey instructions to remove her small and inoffensive stand. Tammany henchmen came and knocked it down after first being as rude to her as that ilk can be to a woman alone. When I saw her studio last, there was no show case at all, and I scarcely could find her building. I believe she has one now against the wall." Abel's Photographic Weekly, 30 Dec. 1911, p. 414.

She also had a severe eye infection about this time; Imogen Cunningham recalled that Käsebier wore a "big blinder" when they met in 1910. The infection was apparently the result of touching the eye after handling platinum paper. Imogen Cunningham, interview with BLM, 10 June 1976.

48. GK to Stieglitz, 6 Jan. 1912, Yale.

Stieglitz, however, could not contain his bitterness or criticism. For example, to Kühn he complained of "the chicanery of former friends and colleagues," (22 May 1912, Yale), and told R. Child Bayley, editor of Photography, that "...although '291' has been one continuous series of triumphs, the experiences connected therewith due to jealousy etc. on the part of some of my 'closest friends' have robbed me of much merited satisfaction....[Mrs. Käsebier] has degenerated into a regular commercial factory..." (29 April 1912, Yale).
PART THREE
AFTER THE SECESSION 1912-1934
Käsebier's career was little changed by her resignation from the Photo-Secession. From about 1912 through at least 1915, her portrait business thrived, and she continued to publish in commercial magazines, including *Vanity Fair*. She also lectured and travelled, making pictures for her own pleasure during the summers. At the same time, she exhibited with such like-minded photographers as Clarence White and Alvin Langdon Coburn, who had quit the Secession soon after she did.

By 1917 Käsebier's pace slowed. In 1920 she closed the West 71 Street apartment-studio that she had rented since 1914; she complained that "the war and war strain just about wiped me off the map." ¹

From 1912 until his death in 1925, Käsebier allied herself with Clarence White, who, for many, supplanted Stieglitz as leader of the pictorial movement. (White's aloofness, of which she had complained in 1907, had been a temporary matter, probably owing to his difficulties in adjusting to New York.) With the founding of the Clarence White School of Photography in New York (1914) and with White's election as president of the newly formed Pictorial Photographers of America (1916), his quiet undogmatic guidance became apparent. Like the painter Gustave Moreau,
White's renown as a teacher is based on his ability to have permitted students to develop original styles remarkably unlike his own. From 1914 through the 1920's Käsebier taught informally at White's school; she had already taught at White's summer school in Georgetown, Maine during 1913. That summer, she made several photographs, including *The Widow* and *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* at F. Holland Day's newly built "Chateau"—his chalet-like summer home. (Käsebier, like White's students, lived down the road in the turreted, gray-shingled Seguinland Hotel.)

Also teaching at White's school was Max Weber, the most advanced American painter at the time, who had gained a firm understanding of European modernism while studying abroad. Weber, who taught Art History to White's students, had parted company with Stieglitz because of several disagreements, including Weber's aversion to Steichen and to his highly manipulated photographs.

Weber advocated straight photography. He continued to praise Stieglitz's pictures, even after their split, and he admired the work of White and Alvin Langdon Coburn, who, in photographs like *The Octopus, New York* (1912) had begun to experiment with abstraction. Coburn, in his turn, helped to support Weber by purchasing his work, and by promoting it in England, after he moved to London in 1912. Weber is not known to have taken a stand on Käsebier, although she felt warmly enough about him to provide him with a
calling card, "introducing Mr. Max Weber" to an unnamed friend, perhaps Arthur B. Davies, who purchased some of Weber's paintings.

Weber had a gift for arranging pictures. After he had hung the last Photo-Secession exhibition at the Albright Art Gallery in 1910, he continued to hang shows for photographers who had left the Stieglitz camp. In October 1912, Weber hung and decorated "An Exhibit Illustrating the Progress of the Art of Photography in America" at the Montross Gallery, New York. He was probably also involved in selecting prints, because nearly all the photographs in the exhibition were to his taste: straight, unmanipulated prints. None of Käsebier's painterly photographs were included among the eight she had in this show.

Käsebier's work was shown in two other exhibitions of pictorial photography held at the Print Galleries of the Ehrich Galleries during January 1914 and December 1915. These exhibitions, about which little information can be found, provided continuity between the Montross exhibition and the founding of the Pictorial Photographers of America in 1916. Max Weber was involved in hanging at least one of the exhibitions at the Print Galleries, which may again account for their preponderance of unmanipulated photographs. It is often said that photography divided into two camps around 1912: Stieglitz's which encouraged straight "modern"
photography, and White's which continued the old pictorialism. The Montross and Ehrich shows give the lie to such a strict division.8

"In recognition of her contribution to the art of photography," Gertrude Käsebier was named Honorary Vice President of the Pictorial Photographers of America.9 The position was purely honorary, however, and her actual involvement with the group was occasional and limited. For example, in 1916 she contributed to the exhibition at the National Arts Club that led to the formation of the PPA.10 She also had a small solo exhibition in the PPA's room at the Art Center in 1922 (discussed in Chapter VIII), and her photographs were reproduced occasionally in PPA annuals.

Käsebier's post-Secession work has not been easy to study; there is no central source like Camera Notes or Camera Work. Correspondence is scant. Exhibition reviews are sparse in this period, and where they exist, Käsebier's work is often simply mentioned, not discussed. However, as I have been able to date some previously undated photographs, the compositional and emotional strength of her late work has become evident. Indeed, quite a few Käsebiers that have attracted critical and curatorial attention during the past decade turn out to have been made after 1911.
On the one hand, these include posed thematic photographs such as *The (War) Widow* [1913], *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle* [1913] and *Yoked and Muzzled: Married*, ca. 1915—pictures that represent a greater outspokenness about the condition of women. (These photographs are discussed in Chapter X.) On the other hand, there is a series of naturalistic snapshotlike photographs made during a summer sojourn to Newfoundland in 1912.

The Newfoundland trip was the idea of John Murray Anderson, later famous as a theatrical producer, who had met Käsebier around 1910 when he came to New York from his home in St. Johns, Newfoundland. He ran an antique shop not far from her studio until he succeeded in show business during the late teens. Käsebier took up Anderson's invitation to visit his family while he scouted for antiques to sell in New York. The trip triggered a productive streak for her; she compiled a photo-journal of snapshots with handwritten—and frequently ironic—commentary, and made about thirty 8"x10" photographs.

These pictures are notable for their simplicity, boldness and angular structure. Some of them show an interest in repetition of geometrical forms that is unprecedented in her work—and that one would not be surprised to find in a more progressive photographer of the time, like Coburn. Figures are not the main concern of these photographs, but adjuncts to compositions of complex and untraditional design,
such as Figures 108 and 109.

Käsebier's style may have changed partly in response to the dimness of Newfoundland's light, which she said challenged her:

I began to get my bearings and tried photographing without sunlight. The weirdness of it all seemed like a stage setting. The quality of the light and the coloring of the landscape in consequence was different from anything which I had ever seen in nature. It was like viewing it through a smoked glass. The heavens were always gray with beautiful cloud effects; the scrubby pine trees were black against the mountains of dark gray; the many lakes reflected in turn the gray of the sky.... I saw that it would require years of effort, rather than one brief vacation to tell its story in pictures. It gets into your blood and you always want to go back. An unworked field for the artist. A paradise for the painter, the etcher. A great despair to the photographer, because of the darkness.

From early in her career, Käsebier had thought of photography as a medium of light. Her pictures were often composed by tones of light, whether heavily contrasted, as in La Grand-Mère or subtly juxtaposed, as in Blessed Art Thou Among Women and Rodin [Figs. 9, 17, 97, 98]. When Newfoundland's "weird" light did not conform to her tonal approach, she adopted a more linear, architectonic style. It is hard to say whether she may also have been affected by seeing Cubist paintings at 291, or whether Coburn's increasingly geometric style influenced her.

Whatever their source, the merits of her Newfoundland photographs were immediately recognized by her colleagues and by critics. Two harbor scenes (Petty Harbor, Newfoundland,
and Wharf Rats) were among eight of her photographs at the Montross Galleries, October 1912. Reviewing the exhibition, the New York Times praised Käebier's work for being "free from incoherency," and said:

Her fine little harbor scenes, with their distant horizons and their subtly graduated planes are landscapes of a quality that might be envied by many a modern painter attempting to lure from nature the secret of her charm.

The chic fashion magazine, Vanity Fair, also found Käebier's work up-to-date. "If there is a new photographic field, trust Mrs. Käebier to find it," Vanity Fair said, apropos of a page featuring Käebier's silhouette portraits. In making silhouettes, Käebier was actually returning to a mode she had used on and off for more than twenty years. Three Vanity Fair silhouettes of Mr. and Mrs. John Murray Anderson were new, two others of young women had been made in Europe years before. One of these was a reprise of a picture reproduced in the Monthly Illustrator in March 1895. However, the popularity of silhouette designs in commercial art during the teens made Käebier's silhouettes, old and new, seem fashionable. And Käebier's work was in good company in Vanity Fair, which was publishing photos by deMeyer, Steichen, Clarence White and many other serious photographers.

Yet Käebier was not truly modern, and her portrait of Mabel Dodge in Vanity Fair serves to remind us just how peripheral Käebier's relation to the modern art world was during
the teens. At that time, Mrs. Dodge, who had been the subject of Gertrude Stein's written "Portrait of Mabel Dodge at the Villa Curonia" (published in Camera Work), was heartily involved in the New York artistic and literary scene; her salon of artists, writers and intellectuals was well known. She was a generous donor and a participant in the organization of the Armory Show, whereas Mrs. Käsebier had been involved only tangentially by lending her Rodin drawings.

At the turn of the century, Käsebier's taste had been rather advanced. She admired—and bought—Arthur B. Davies' paintings as early as the 1890's. Her admiration for traditional American Indian art—blankets, baskets, moccasins—as well as for the childlike drawings of her Indian friends around 1900 made her an early admirer of culturally primitive art. However, around 1910, she was not involved with the art world at large. She was apparently not intrigued by Mrs. Dodge and her circle. Although Käsebier saved many portraits of her favorite sitters, no print of Mrs. Dodge's portrait [Fig. 110] seems to exist.

And, while some of Käsebier's photographs seem coolly modern in form and handling, others of these years seem wholly pictorial in imitating paintings and employing painterly techniques. Curiously enough, Käsebier's acquaintance with John Murray Anderson led not only to some of her most "modern" straight photographs in Newfoundland, but also to
some of her most peculiar studio photographs.

During the early teens, John Murray Anderson began his theatrical career, specializing in 17th century French court dancing, which he had learned in Europe. Among his earliest successes were performances for the socialite Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish, who deplored the sexiness of the stylish tango and advocated minuet-like dances with little physical contact. In *The Rehearsal* [Fig.106], Käsebier shows Anderson and his troupe dressed in 17th century costume, rehearsing for one of Mrs. Fish's after-dinner entertainments or a similar performance. Although this picture seems at first glance to be a costume piece, staged for the camera like the tableaux vivants that Käsebier and her fellow students enjoyed at Pratt, or like the photographs that F. Holland Day costumed and directed, it is, in fact, a record of staged entertainment, like a movie still (although there is no evidence that this picture or a variant was actually used for publicity).

The most blatantly pictorial photograph of this period, because it imitates a painting and employs painterly technique, was a heavily reworked full-length portrait of Anderson in 17th century costume [Fig.107]. Sadakichi Hartmann described it as a "Van Dyck stunt, a costumed figure of a cavalier with a background of unusual animation painted in with the dash and bravura of an inspired black and white artist."
"It may be art," said Hartmann, "but surely is not photography."25 Indeed, even to a Käsebier sympathiser today, the picture seems silly. Handwork on a negative or intermediate print works successfully in some Käsebiers (for example by emotionally intensifying Yoked and Muzzled: Married, Figs. 40, 41), but it just makes the Anderson portrait look like a fake painting, a "Van Dyck stunt."

However, the photographs that Käsebier made with John Murray Anderson—the Newfoundland photographs and the pictures of him in costume—remind us that, throughout her career, she had used photography in contrasting ways, oscillating between expressive pictures (which might be embellished by handwork) and conservatively printed snapshot-like photographs. In her last active years, she swung in an even greater arc, from extremes of emotional expressiveness to calculated geometric patterning.
Footnotes: VII. On Her Own 1912-1920


2. White mentions Käsebier's presence to Coburn (20 July 1913, IMP-GEH). The register of the Seguinland Hotel (now Greyhavens), Georgetown, shows that Käsebier arrived 18 July 1913; no departure date is given. Clara Estella Sipprell had arrived 6 July 1913; her portrait of Käsebier undoubtedly dates to this summer. The Hand that Rocks the Cradle was published, American Photography 8 (June 1914): 327.

   According to Mrs. Clarence H. White, Jr., Day's "Chalet;" which replaced a more modest house, was opened in 1913. Mrs. White also said that students and teachers lived at the hotel. (Interview, Aug. 1978.)


4. The card, imprinted "Gertrude Käsebier/315 Fifth Avenue" and inscribed "Introducing Mr. Max Weber," is microfilmed between letters from Coburn to Weber, including letters which detail Coburn's purchase and his efforts on behalf of Weber. (Reel 69-85, Max Weber Archive, Archives of American Art.)


9. Pictorial Photographers of America (Yearbook) (New York, 1917), pp. 8, 10. Käsebier was listed as Honorary Vice-President in Pictorial Photography in America 1-5 (1920, 1921, 1922, 1926 and 1929, when the publication ceased).


12. "Newfoundland Trip 1912," collection Mason Turner. IMP-GEH owns the most complete collection of Käsebier's 8"x10" Newfoundland photographs.


17. Arnold Hughes, "Portrait of Mabel Dodge," Vanity Fair, May 1915, p. 50, with photograph of Mrs. Dodge by Käsebier. Käsebier was probably recommended to Mrs. Dodge by Rose Clark, the painter/photographer who had restored the Dodge's Florentine villa during the 1890's and who admired Käsebier (see Conclusion).


23. Interview: Mina Turner.


VIII. THE DECLINING YEARS 1920-1934

After retiring from active portrait work in 1920, Gertrude Käsebier spent about a year at her daughter Hermine's house in New Jersey, and then returned to independent life in a Greenwich Village apartment with a small studio, where she could print her old negatives and make occasional portraits.

For many years she had been deaf; during the twenties she became increasingly lame and was often housebound. After being "knocked senseless by a taxicab" in 1923, she stayed with Hermine again for a few months. When, in 1924, Hermine's marriage to Mason Turner ended in divorce, Hermine returned to New York to care for her mother and to support herself by carrying on the portrait business. ¹

During the twenties, Käsebier retained her celebrity status. Young photographers continued to seek her counsel. Throughout the decade, Clarence White's students visited, to study her photographs and to seek advice on theirs, as Paul Strand and Imogen Cunningham had done around 1910. ² Edward Weston made a pilgrimage to her apartment-studio during his visit to New York in 1922. His diary entry provides a clear portrait of Käsebier at the time:
She is a very remarkable old woman... A pioneer in photography and one of the Photo Secession along with Stieglitz and Clarence White—her work and personality brought her in close contact with many of the great men of the day. Now she is a great grandmother, but her mind is evidently as keen as ever, her conversation brilliant, her sense of humor delicious, and her bearing noble. I asked her if I might bring my camera along. She answered, "yes, there's a fine landscape out the window!" She finally consented to sit to me, adding, "but I make a miserable subject. -- I have never had a good portrait." I chided her—a photographer—for making the usual platitudinous remark, and we parted with a fine understanding of personalities.

Later that same year, Käsebier gave a "little talk" to the Pictorial Photographers, while 28 of her photographs were on view at their room in the Art Center, in New York. "It is so long since I have exhibited that my pictures are new to most people," Käsebier remarked in a letter.

Käsebier took pleasure in such letter-writing, and her notes to the young Western photographer, Laura Gilpin, as well as to her old friend, F. Holland Day, are now the chief sources of information about her during the 1920's. From her letters to Laura Gilpin, we know that the older woman was absorbed by the challenge of making her own version of an old photograph of Abraham Lincoln.

In Brooklyn, about twenty years before, her son had uncovered a carte-de-visite photograph of Lincoln in an abandoned trunk in an about-to-be-demolished hotel. She cherished the photograph—whose back was inscribed, apparently by a Civil War soldier whose sentiment outran his liter-
acy, "linclin the Presadent he giebt to me"—and decided to revive and enlarge it. Käsebier was untroubled by the anachronism of printing photographs of a man who had died when she was a child, and felt that her reworking of the old photograph was sufficiently original to copyright it. She had enlarged the photograph to 11" x 14", retouched it in several places, and printed it in platinum. The photograph shows a great deal of handwork, especially in the beard. One would think to credit this to Käsebier, but the curious history of the photograph shows otherwise. The carte-de-visite that Käsebier owned was a variant of a still earlier photograph, taken in 1858, before Lincoln grew his beard. In 1861, that picture was cropped and reissued—with Lincoln sporting a rather crudely drawn-in beard. Käsebier did improve on the beard, adding some highlights. She also shaded in the light background, and lightened Lincoln's jacket, so that his face, especially his eyes, draws our attention first [Fig. 111].

A characteristic Käsebier print of Lincoln is done in brown toned platinum, on matte paper; the picture does not have the luminiscence typical of her other prints, and it is unusually blurry—a result of overenlargement. Although the image carries at a distance, it seems less successful to viewers today than it did to Käsebier and her contemporaries. However, she felt the Lincoln portrait was "received very
favorably." A copy was purchased by the Library of Congress, then the picture was published in a Lincoln's birthday issue of the Outlook as well as on the cover of the New York Times Magazine Section.  

It should be understood that the photographer's interest lay in Lincoln himself, not in the mere idea of reworking an old photograph. She was intrigued by Lincoln's face, which she found beautiful. And she was partial to photographing great and accomplished men. Käsebier's Lincoln portrait must be considered not as an aberration, but as a sequel to her portraits of Rodin, Stieglitz and other eminent men.

Käsebier's sight began to fail in 1926, but her work was not forgotten. That year, the Library of Congress bought fifteen of her photographs for $400. In 1929, the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Science honored her with a retrospective exhibition of 35 photographs which illustrate the range of her work in subject and medium (see appendix). She appears to have considered these pictures the most important of her entire career, and many of them are discussed individually in other chapters.

She was not wrong in calling the retrospective her "swan song"; it was the last exhibition of her photographs during her lifetime. Regrettably, there was virtually no critical reaction to it. Yet Käsebier remained a New York "personal-
"ity," a subject of interest to the press until shortly before her death in 1934. Despite her physical disabilities, her wit did not desert her. An interview in the New York Telegram and a series of articles about her in Abel's Photographic Weekly are among the best sources of information about her life and work. 13

Two reunions during her last years measure the devotion of old friends and her own affection for them. They also bring the beginnings of her career full circle with its close.

A visit from Samuel Lifshey—her teacher in Brooklyn so many years before—shows that age did not quiet her quick tongue or dim her powers of observation. Lifshey, who had not seen Mrs. Käsebier in some while, brought flowers when he paid a sick call after her taxi accident. While they talked of old times, she looked at him so intently that he became uncomfortable, wondering if something was wrong with his appearance.

"Got a wife, Sam?" asked Mrs. K. (He was recently widowed.)

"No."

More conversation.

"Got a girl?"

"No."

"Is that a new suit you have on?"

"Yes it is."
"Did you buy it to come to see me?"

"Well--yes I did."

"Well! Ever since you came in I've been trying to find the woman who was behind the crease in your trousers. At last I've found her. It's me!" 14

More sentimental was the pilgrimage that Steichen--at his peak as a photographer for Condé Nast publications--made to Granny Käsebier at her Greenwich Village apartment some time after 1926. His daughter, Kate, then in her twenties, accompanied him. "We were late--'cause Daddy was always late," she remembered about fifty years afterwards. But when Steichen spied a little flower store around the corner from the Käsebier-Turner apartment on Twelfth Street, he said "Wait a minute," rushing into the shop that had a huge array of deep dark red roses. "Daddy bought two or three dozen roses," Kate Steichen recalled, and the florist started to put them in a box.

Steichen: "No--no box."

Florist: "Put 'em in paper?"

Steichen: "No, no paper."

He just paid the man, picked up the armload of red roses, and we went around the corner... And there was Granny, very old then, very old, sitting in her great chair in her Chinese robe. He walked over to that old lady (he was still very much in his prime then), and he just simply laid those roses in her lap, and they clung together, and they wept together, because she was his "Granny."
Momma [Hermine] and Mina and I simply retired, and those two talked and talked and talked and talked. I don't think he saw her again, 'cause he got so involved in everything. It was a great day for Granny and it was a great day for Steichen. It really was.

But I'll never forget those red roses. Just out there, bare and beautiful and gorgeous in the lap of her blue Chinese robe. 15

Gertrude Käsebier, one of the finest photographic portraitists of her day, hated to have her own picture taken. It is fitting that our last great color picture of her is not a photograph at all, but Kate Steichen's vivid memory of the old lady with her coronet of gray braids, ensconced in her big upholstered chair, and resplendently blanketed with roses.
Footnotes: VIII. The Declining Years 1920-1934


2. Cunningham, phone interview, June 1976. On her way back to Seattle from Europe in 1910, Cunningham called on Käsebier, because years before a reproduction of Käsebier's Blessed Art Thou Among Women had inspired Cunningham to take up photography. (See: Imogen Cunningham: Photographs, Introduction by Margery Mann [Seattle & London, University of Washington Press: 1970] n.p.) Cunningham recalled that at their only meeting, Käsebier's eye was patched, as a result of an infection from touching her eye after handling platinum paper. Cunningham remembered Käsebier as "a nice little old lady" who nonetheless bossed her daughter "tremendously."

Paul Strand, phone interview, June 1973. Strand brought his photographs to Käsebier about 1912-1913. Although she did not give him a "critical analysis of shortcomings" as Stieglitz did, Strand remembered her as a "very nice, very warm" elderly woman who later sent him a small platinum print of Newfoundland as a Christmas card. See also: Naomi Rosenblum, Paul Strand: The Early Years, 1910-1932, Ph.D. Diss., City University of New York, 1978 (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms, 1979), p. 32, and Bulletin of the Art Center 2 (April 1924): 260.

3. Edward Weston, Fragment of Daybook sent to Johann Hagemeyer, typescript from Beaumont Newhall in MOMA Photography Department Weston biographical file. No Weston portrait of Käsebier now exists, according to Cole Weston. (Conversation with Peter Bunnell, who had askedCole Weston about portrait.)


6. Two Käsebier negatives of Lincoln are extant: an 8" x 10" intermediary negative (GEH-IMP 72-019-34) and a 12" x 14" (LC).

Mina Turner wrote: "The print was old and faded, but Granny took it and set to work with a will. She enlarged it, intensified and reduced, sharpened and softened, lopped off a shoulder, brought up a highlight, threw an ear into deeper shadow. She loved this picture and experimented with it for years, finally coaxing out of the little old worn print one of the finest Lincoln portraits in existence. (Mason Turner collection)

8. GK to Day, 22 Dec. 1921, Norwood.


15. Kate Steichen, Interview.
PART FOUR

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF KASEBIER’S PHOTOGRAPHS
IX. KASEBIER AS A PORTRAITIST

Although Gertrude Käsebier is now best known for her participation in the Photo-Secession, she was most famous in her day as a studio photographer who revolutionized commercial portraiture by encouraging natural poses and by avoiding elaborate props and backdrops. She was the first artistic photographer of her period to regard portraiture as a challenging full-time pursuit. Like Coburn, Steichen and deMeyer after her, she believed that art and commerce were reconcilable.

For many years, commercial portraiture had been degraded by the plethora of studios turning out undistinguished portraits. During the early 1890's, European and American photographers with artistic pretentions looked to picturesque subjects (like country scenes, peasants or lovely women in pretty settings) for raw material. The idea that a portrait might be an excellent, personalized picture had flourished in the 1860's, with Nadar and Carjat in France, and with Julia Margaret Cameron in England, but it is doubtful that Käsebier knew their work when she became interested in portrait photography. And few of Stieglitz's remarkable early portraits had been published when Käsebier began her work.

So, rather than seeking precedents in photography,
Käsebier rebelled against its status quo. She drew on her knowledge of painting when she set two goals for her portraits:

1. To show personality: "to make likenesses that are biographies, to bring out in each photograph the essential personality..."

2. To compose pictures clearly and simply: "One of the most difficult things to learn in painting is what to leave out. How to keep things simple enough. The same applies to photography. The value of composition cannot be over-estimated: upon it depends the harmony and the sentiment."  

Mrs. Käsebier's scorn for contemporary overstuffed studio portraiture is evident in her description of a portrait by W. J. Root of Chicago, which had been reproduced in Photo Mosaics, an annual of 1898: [Fig. 45]

We have here a painted, scenic background, a palm, a gilt chair, and something which looks like a leopard-skin, though why it is introduced I cannot imagine, as summer seems to be indicated; perhaps it is used to cover the legs of the chair, perhaps it is used because "fur takes well." I presume if an elephant had been handy the "artist" would have tried to work it in. Something should always be left to the imagination. We do not always see people under a search light. There is also a girl in the picture. She cuts the space in two. There is no center of interest; the eye wanders about from one thing to another, the fur rug seeming to be most important because it is out of place and superfluous.  

The Portrait of Miss N. seems to be Käsebier's rejoinder to the Root portrait. Miss N. was Evelyn Nesbit, well-known as a model and showgirl before Mrs. Käsebier made her
portrait for Miss Nesbit's lover, the noted architect Stanford White. Among the many drawings and photographs of Miss Nesbit (including Rudolph Eickemeyer's photographs of her) none so fully suggests the ripe, youthful, seductive beauty which enchanted Stanford White and which later caused Harry Thaw—Miss Nesbit's rich but crazed husband—to murder White in a fit of retrospective jealousy. ³

Both portraits begin with a young brunette in a white décolleté gown. But Miss N. tempers the excesses of Root's portrait: there is no scenic background; there are no distractions; there are only the dark curves of the sofa behind Miss Nesbit, and these draw our eyes back to Miss Nesbit's dark curly hair and to her face. There is mistaking that she is the center of interest in this picture.

Several creative years lay between Mrs. Käsebier's statement of what not to do in portraiture and her portrait of Miss N. In her earliest efforts to simplify portraiture, Käsebier had transferred her knowledge of painting to photography. Most of her portraits of the 1890's have the deep tones of 17th century painting under aged varnish. Her young models wear clothes suggestive of paintings from earlier centuries: there are fur collars, square necklines, dreamy poses. ⁴ In Flora [Fig. 14, ca. 1898], the profile view offers little opportunity to show emotion or personality; the picture is vaguely reminiscent, however, of
Renaissance portraits. The beauty of the original platinum print depends upon the glow of light on the hair and the sheen of the velvet gown. In a printed reproduction, much of the original print's luminous texture and tone are lost.

In 1900, Mrs. Käsebier began photographing well-known men for The World's Work, a new serious illustrated monthly, broadly concerned with art, social problems, history and contemporary life. The portraits Mrs. Käsebier made for The World's Work and those she later made for the art magazine The Craftsman, deserve study because they comprise datable groups of portraits in which we can find changes in her style. Most of Käsebier's portraits before 1900 were neck or bust length, but her portraits for The World's Work are all three-quarter length, doubtless because she wanted to show personality through stance and gesture, as well as through facial expression.

However, her earliest portrait for The Word's Work,[Fig.50] Mark Twain (December 1900) still alludes to painting. Twain stands against a dark ground; the face and hands get greatest emphasis. Only the slight turn of Twain's head and the projection of his hand and pipe indicate depth; the background is murky, undefined. Within this simple format, Twain holds our attention as though he were in a spotlight, about to spin
one of his fantastic tales.

In her perceptive study of Jacob A. Riis, the muckraker-photographer [Fig. 51, from World's Work March 1901], Käsebier depicts a tense man too busy to sit down, too preoccupied to have had his suit pressed. Although his portrait, like Twain's, is centered, we feel none of Twain's ease. Tension has been heightened by compression of space, space defined only by the angle of Riis's stance and by his shadow, so that he seems squeezed between backdrop and picture plane. In this taut portrait, Käsebier achieved an early success in portrayal through pose, composition and gesture. 5

Käsebier soon arrived at a recognizable portrait style which is distinguishable by asymmetrical placement of a seated figure and by graded areas of tone. Her geometric, orientalized monogram—an abstracted GK and umlaut—is often a prominent hallmark. 6

In The World's Work, the Käsebier photographs separate themselves from "mug shots" by other photographers. Käsebier introduces each subject as though we had been granted a private interview in his office. The portrait of Booker T. Washington [Fig. 52, from World's Work Jan. 1901] shows the pose in which she typically placed her subject: seated to one side with an arm (or back) parallel to the vertical edge of the picture, forearm parallel to the bottom edge, so that the
figure fills a lower corner of the plate. She retains a neutral background (usually dark, as here; sometimes middle-toned). The figure seems to come forward from the undefined back plane. Our understanding of space comes from the angle of the figure in his chair.

The pose becomes almost a formula in Käsebier's portraits of this period. Having resolved the problem of placing the figure within the frame, she could devote greater perception to her subject, always emphasizing the character of face and hands. In her portrait of Booker T. Washington, Käsebier has caught the sober expression and powerful hands of the man who recalled in his autobiography, *Up From Slavery*, "There was no period of my life that was devoted to play."

Käsebier used the seated format frequently, but not exclusively. In her portrait of New York Governor Benjamin B. Odell [Fig. 53, from *World's Work* July 1901], frontal pose and direct gaze made a formal, dignified portrait. Strong vertical lines—the side of his chair, the front edge of his jacket, part of his left arm and the outline of the painting behind him—repeat his pose, reminding us that the governor is, indeed, an upstanding public official.

The pictures analyzed show the deliberate composition we would expect from a trained painter, and they demonstrate Käsebier's principle that "the value of composition cannot be overestimated." These portraits also illustrate her
statement that:

If you look at one object the surrounding ones are mere impressions. You know what stopping down does. Only as much detail should be permitted as is necessary to support the composition.

But Käsebier wished to make "likenesses that are biographies"; therefore she kept backgrounds in focus when they added meaning to her subject. She experimented in environmental portraiture, in using a person's surroundings or activity to enhance our understanding of him. She shows physics professor Michael I. Pupin [Fig. 54, from World's Work March 1901] in a Columbia University classroom, his backdrop a blackboard full of equations—a typical situation, a former Pupin student recalled.

By 1905, Käsebier photographs were widely known through publication, not only in The World's Work, but in Everybody's Magazine, McClure's Magazine and popular photographic periodicals such as Photo-Era and The Photographic Times, as well as through Stieglitz's efforts in Camera Notes, Camera Work and through his Photo-Secession exhibitions.

The photographs she made in 1906-1907 of the "Ashcan" painters—properly called "The Eight"—were published in The Craftsman in 1908. These portraits show how Käsebier matured as a portraitist by using more varied poses and more complex compositions than in her earlier work. Although I do not know the precise order in which she made them, I have
organized them to indicate increasing complexity and sophistication in Käsebier's vision.

William Glackens [Fig. 55] was surely one of Käsebier's least relaxed subjects. With gloves and walking stick, he appears ready to bolt. Glackens was, in fact, not happy about the pictures. He wrote to his wife:

The Craftsman has come out with all of us à la Käsebier [sic]. They evidently got proofs from her. They are awfully silly.

Such negative reactions to Käsebier's portraits were unusual at the time, but this comment is noteworthy even more because Glackens was one of several contemporaries who remarked on Käsebier's identifiable style. "A la Käsebier" does not define her work—but notice that Glackens sits in that typical Käsebier pose, asymmetrically placed on one side of the picture, his shoulders slightly angled away. Käsebier has made a decorative motif of Glackens' upright walking stick; it is one of several vertical lines which echo Glackens' stiff-backed position.

In both the Glackens portrait and that of Arthur B. Davies, there is a departure: a divided background suggests space behind the subjects. For Davies, as for earlier portraits, Käsebier poses the figure in profile, the back parallel to the picture edge, face turned toward us [Fig. 56]. When she made this portrait, Käsebier was no stranger to Davies.
and his idyllic landscapes. She later recalled seeing his first one-man exhibition at the Macbeth Gallery in 1896. She said, "I worshiped his work and bought some of his pictures at a time when he was very poor. He often came to see me. He never cared about photography but always discussed his paintings." Nonetheless, his recommendation may have brought her this photographic commission. In 1913, Davies was one of the chief organizers of the Armory Show. Knowing of the friendship and artistic admiration between Käsebier and Auguste Rodin, Davies borrowed seven Rodin drawings from her, to exhibit at the Armory Show.

In Ernest Lawson's portrait the space is shallow, but defined by the angled chair whose post marks the front plane and whose rails diagonally recede in space. The background here, in focus, is a leafy patterned fabric. Lawson's relaxed pose suggests a momentary position and expression. [Fig. 57]

Even more complex is the portrait of John Sloan [Fig. 58]. He sits sideways on a chair set at an angle, with its back toward us. Space is far deeper than in any of the early pictures. Sloan sits in the middle ground; the foreground is defined by a small table on which his hat and some photographs rest. Käsebier would surely have removed that hat had she not felt it added interest to the picture. Note the division of background into three stripes: the medium-tone patterned drape behind him recedes to a light wall, then to a dark area.
This picture is broken into many shapes and tonal areas, whereas the earliest pictures (Mark Twain, Jacob Riis) could be read as just a few areas of pattern and tone.

Although Sloan, who sometimes photographed his own paintings, did not think much of soft focus photography (he called it "art 'phuzzygraphy'"), he liked Käsebier's work. In his diaries he described her as "a very pleasant, middle aged lady, who is doing some fine things in photography. An Indian head she showed me was fine. Henri's proofs are very good, best photographs of him yet.... She knows her profession, sure gets you at your ease." 

In her photograph of Everett Shinn [Fig. 59], Käsebier has come full circle to tackle and redefine the problem posed in Root's photograph: to photograph a full-length figure in a furnished studio. But her studio has not the pretentious trappings she condemned in the Photo-Mosaics portrait; it is bare except for objects of her own taste and making. There is the striped Indian rug, which defines the space Shinn stands in, and her own portrait of Rodin, whose pose repeats Shinn's stance.

Shinn seems unposed; he takes a casual momentary position one might assume for a snapshot. Käsebier seems here to have abandoned the assumption, traditional in painting, that a portrait ought to be a formal eternal symbol of its subject; Shinn is shown as he stood at a photographic "point
in time." We sense he will shift weight soon again, and take another drag on his cigarette. (Shinn's caricature-like sketch of posing for Käsebier [Fig. 60], reminds us that he made several poses— that the final nonchalant attitude was not spontaneous.)

Käsebier had begun by rebelling against the status quo, by radically simplifying portraiture. Then she learned to make portraits that were more and more complex, that showed deep space, but were always carefully composed of interesting shapes and of light and dark areas. Her earliest portraits took their cue from painting, her later ones, especially of Lawson, Sloan and Shinn, seem conceived in the ground glass.

I believe that Käsebier deliberately used a different mode for magazine reproduction than she did for exhibition. She carefully chose and clearly printed portraits for publication. She seldom used manipulated negatives or hand-worked gum prints for published portraits.

Three portraits she made of Robert Henri show how she selected photographs for their appropriate use. In the portrait reproduced by the Craftsman [Fig. 61], we sense the presence of the dynamic organizer and spiritual leader of "The Eight," the author of The Art. Spirit who for many years was the leading painting teacher in the United States. This portrait is forceful, despite printing blemishes (such as the black spot on his hand) because it depends not on tonal or
textural subtleties, but on Henri's direct gaze and a variety of shapes such as the outline of his body, the splayed fingers of his right hand, his umbrella, his hat.

Käsebier must have liked the platinum print [Fig. 62] or she would not have signed it. But it is not as graphic as the one reproduced in the Craftsman; it lacks a sense of presence, of confrontation. The background detracts from the subject; the hat and right hand are not part of a unified pattern. As far as I now know, it was not published or exhibited.

The gum print of Henri which Käsebier chose to exhibit in her retrospective at the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences in 1929 [Fig. 63], suggests the thoughtful artistic side of Henri's personality. His gaze is averted; head and relaxed long-fingered hands are emphasized as if to symbolize thought and dextrous creativity. The outline of brushstrokes is perhaps, in part, a tribute to Henri's own painting. The attraction of this print depends largely on the rich blacks (doubtless achieved with multiple printing) and the palpable texture of the paper, qualities which may be appreciated in exhibition but are lost in reproduction.

Käsebier's three portraits of Henri do not imply sequence; they suggest instead an understanding that each portrait might show a different aspect of his personality. But, so far as I know, these variants were not exhibited.
together. Implicit in Käsebier's work, however, is the concept of multiple portraiture. Years later, Stieglitz in his Georgia O'Keeffe portraits, articulated the idea, full grown.

It was often said in Käsebier's time that she set the example for commercial photographers to discard their props and backdrops. We now know that the channels through which her work became pervasive were the widely circulated popular magazines as well as photographic journals. It is easy to understand that through mass circulation, she created a new portrait fashion.

Her effect on her Photo-Secession colleagues is more subtle, and harder to define. Even before 1900, Käsebier provided an example to the Stieglitz group of new approaches to portraiture. By 1900, she had shown that portraiture could unite commerce and art. This example would have been meaningful to Steichen; for him Käsebier was a model, showing that art, photography, and a means of making a livelihood could be compatible in commercial photography.

Alvin Langdon Coburn worked with Käsebier for about a year around 1902-1903; he surely knew her portrait methods. (Käsebier's portraits of Coburn, apparently made during these years, are in the collections of IMP-GEH and of the Museum of Modern Art). Coburn's approach to portraiture, as he tells it in his autobiography, recalls Käsebier's:
A photographic portrait needs more collaboration between sitter and artist than a painted portrait. A painter can get acquainted with his subject in the course of several sittings, but usually the photographer does not have this advantage. You can get to know an artist or an author to a certain extent from his pictures or books before meeting him in the flesh, and I always tried to acquire as much of this previous information as possible before venturing in quest of great men, in order to gain an idea of the mind and character of the person I was to portray.

Coburn's statement was made late in his life, and we cannot surely say his ideas were derived solely from Käsebier. Yet she must at least have nurtured their shared idea that a photographic portrait must show not just a facade but must evoke an entire person.

Stieglitz, in 1899, proclaimed Käsebier "beyond dispute, the leading portrait photographer in the country." It seems probable that he later picked up and perfected a photographic idea which she initiated: photographing hands alone as a representative portrait of a person. We know that Käsebier made photographs of hands before 1903 when R. Child Bayley, editor of the British magazine Photography, reported his visit to her studio:

A casual remark of ours about hands brought out half a dozen big sheets of paper on which were mounted in succession, hands and nothing but hands—the hands of a poet, a coquette, Mark Twain, a laborer, a plutocrat, a civilized Indian, a musician, a political economist, a playwright, an actor. "There is far more to be seen in hands than many people think. Look at Mark Twain's hands," said Mrs. Käsebier, "one can see in them alone the enervating effect of European luxury upon the once energetic nervous American. You Europeans have quite spoiled him."
Käsebier's daughter said that her mother made photographs—portraits—not only of hands alone, but also of feet. She said these pictures were probably enlarged excerpts from portraits such as those illustrated here, but were experimental works which, so far as she recalled, were not exhibited, sold or published. 22

Auguste Rodin liked to sculpt hands alone as an expressive artistic device, as a study in which a part of the body stands for the whole; his fragmentary sculptures could be seen in his studio at the turn of the century. 23 Several years ago, I believed that Käsebier first visited Rodin's studio in 1901 and was then inspired by his sculptures of hands.24 Evidence showing that they did not meet until 1905 puts her work in a new light.25 Depicting hands and feet was her own idea. However, interest in the expressive possibilities of hands (and feet) would have been an artistic bond between Käsebier and Rodin—an affinity in addition to those already mentioned in Chapter V.

Käsebier's notion to photograph hands must not have been lost on Stieglitz, who later perfected her idea in his portraits of Georgia O'Keeffe's hands. Although it is possible that Stieglitz saw Rodin's fragmentary sculpture when he met Rodin in 1911, 26 he surely knew the idea first from Käsebier. Stieglitz and Käsebier were on close terms during
1902 when the first issue of Camera Work was being published. Stieglitz visited her studio and undoubtedly knew of her experiments at this time. Among the scant fragmentary records of her photographic career that she passed on to her family are two autographs from a guest book:

"Alfred Stieglitz Oct. 30/02"
"R. Child Bayley November 3 -- 1902" 27

The photographs of hands which she showed Bayley had, in all probability, been seen by Stieglitz just four days before.

I believe Käsebier's close colleagues understood the formal and expressive potential she found in portraiture. One would not expect innovative photographers such as Coburn, Steichen and Stieglitz to copy Käsebier's overt mannerisms, but, rather to expand imaginatively upon what she had created—or implied. While pursuing her interest in personality and in composition, Käsebier provided her colleagues with new outlooks and fresh starting points for their own portrait work.
Käsebier's Studio

Käsebier's originality showed not only in her photographs, but in her uncluttered studio. From 1899 to 1907, she disregarded "conventional studio requirements" by renting space on the top floor of a converted house at 273 Fifth Avenue, rather than taking space in a commercial building. Most turn of the century portrait studios were tricked out with several drop-curtain backgrounds, a buxomly upholstered chair with a thicket of fringe all round, or else the high-backed and elaborately carved article upon and against which damsels wonderfully gowned and ungowned may pose and show their curves most conspicuously, several marvelous creations in tables, a rustic seat, some shaggy rugs and a number of living-picture skull-grippers to insure an impossible pose for the cranium.

Käsebier's place was so simple that one critic remarked:

There was really nothing to see. A chair or two, a few screens, patternless and of a quiet greenish shade, on the walls some framed photographs were all that could be seen. There was a skylight, it is true, but it looked as if it were there to light the room in the ordinary course...

In Mrs. Käsebier's studio, the "usual paraphernalia which one associates only with the photographer, the Inquisition and the dentist, were not to be seen." Her interest in photographic equipment was slight; her camera was not "very much in evidence," and even her darkroom was small. As Mary Fanton Roberts noted: "Her real work is done with the sitter--not in the darkroom."
If her taste was unusual for a photographer's studio, it was nonetheless closely allied to the aesthetics of the contemporary Arts and Crafts movement. A rectangular table and two settles (shown in photographs of the studio like Figure ) are clearly in the Craftsman style—an American offshoot of the Arts and Crafts movement. The burlap screen and dark green burlap-covered walls of her studio also reflect Arts and Crafts taste for a coarse-grained, handcrafted look. Burlap in muted tones graced the walls of the Photo-Secession gallery a few years later, but Käsebier's studio was more eclectic and less austere than the 291 galleries. She occasionally used a "rare tapestry" as well as her burlap backdrop, and in addition to the Craftsman furniture she had some "old fashioned" items—a Hitchcock chair, a pedestal table and a horse-hair sofa (used in the portrait, Miss N.).

Even when Käsebier moved to a studio on the top floor of a ten story office building at 315 Fifth Avenue (1907-1914), her place seemed homey. The studio "was like somebody's living room," the photographer Imogen Cunningham recalled. Lighter tones prevailed in the new studio. Silver-gray Japanese wood veneer was on the reception room walls; the ceiling was dull gold, and the carpet was specially designed and woven to harmonize. An observer noted: "Queer sketches and quaint pieces of pottery and embroidery catch
All her aesthetic touches, including the silk Japanese kimono she often wore, reminded clients that Mrs. Käsebier was an "artistic" photographer. Her portraits were mounted—not on stock cardboard—but on textured, dun-colored paper, and signed distinctively or monogrammed with an oriental flair.

Her parlor-like studios relaxed clients and helped to avoid rigid and formal poses. She took more time with subjects than most commercial photographers. It was not uncommon for her to make six exposures, varying lighting and pose until "the sitter began to lose self-consciousness and his temperament began to reveal itself." She also kept her subjects at ease by looking away while finally exposing the plate [Fig. 4].

Käsebier believed she could read minds and could understand her sitters on short acquaintance. She claimed one lawyer bolted from a sitting in fear that her psychic abilities would reveal his secrets. However, her "sixth sense" was not infallible. It certainly did not help the day that

a lady of much prominence and high social standing, a daughter of a prominent pork packer, brought her baby daughter to the studio. Attempting to amuse the baby, Mrs. Käsebier, stooping down to the little one and taking its toes in her hand, unthinkingly recited the
old nursery rhyme, "This little pig went to market," etc., when suddenly the lady haughtily swept toward the door, and beckoning the nurse to follow with the child, left...and it was a long time before the artist learned that she had unintentionally insulted her by the mention of a pig. 41

Such gaffes could not have occurred often. Ordinarily, one satisfied sitter recommended another, and her subjects often knew each other, as did Stanford White and his client A. A. Pope.

While Käsebier often photographed well-to-do and socially prominent people, she did not compete with society photographers like Aimé Dupont, Davis and Sanford, Sarony, and others whose prosaically lit straightforward poses suited coarsely screened reproductions on the society pages of New York newspapers. When Käsebier's pictures appeared in the papers, they tended to be published as art, in a weekly rotogravure section (like, for example, "Studies in Artistic Photography by Mrs. Gertrude Käsebier"—six pictures which occupied a full page of the New York Times Pictorial Supplement on May 21, 1905), or as art news (for example, "The Eight: Photographs of the American Painters Who Have Formed a New Group and Whose Recent Exhibition of Paintings Attracted Much Attention in the Art World," in the New York Times Pictorial Section, February 16, 1908).
Focusing on Colleagues

Although Käsebier made her name in commercial portraiture, she took most of her favorite portraits for the sheer love of it—portraits like those of Rodin, of American Indians, and of her photographic colleagues. No doubt she could be perspicacious. No less a critic than George Bernard Shaw praised one of her photographs of the English photographer, Frederick H. Evans, a colleague she knew only slightly, saying:

Evans, lurking in the darkest corner at the back [of his bookshop] acquired the habits and aspect of an aziola; the enlargement of his eyes is clearly visible in Mrs. Käsebier's fine portrait of him. Everybody who knows Evans sees in those eyes the outward and visible sign of his restless imagination, and says, "You have that in the portraits of William Blake, too"; but I am convinced that he got them by watching for his prey in the darkness of that busy shop.

Käsebier's close-in portrait of Evans shows his large irises; his interests are also implicit in her picture of Evans crouching by his book and photograph case. Alfred Stieglitz, Edward Steichen and Clarence White were associates she knew even better than Evans. If she could make "likenesses that are biographies" and bring out "the essential personality" of anyone, she could do it for them. How did she go about differentiating among them?
Clarence H. White

Käsebier indicated that Clarence White was a family man by posing him with his wife and children, but she suggested his interest in photography more subtly: by adopting his style of back-lighting for her portraits of him. Although Käsebier used subdued back-lighting around 1900, she seldom photographed directly against a window as White did; her portrait of the White family at their home in Newark, Ohio, 1902 [Fig. 64] is among her few early pictures to use this format. Back-lighting seldom occurs again in her photographs until she joins White in Maine in 1913; then, perhaps under his influence, not only her portraits of the White family, but other photographs like The Widow and The Hand that Rocks the Cradle are back-lit.

Of the leading American pictorialists, only White's family was close-knit. Stieglitz's marriage was a failure almost before it began; Frank Eugene caught the almost palpable alienation between Alfred and his wife, Emmeline, in a 1907 photograph of the two sitting at opposite ends of a garden bench, barely touching (Naef, fig. 288). Steichen's elegant but psychologically cool double portrait shows Stieglitz's ambivalence about fatherhood: Stieglitz seems to turn his back on his daughter, even while linking his arm in hers (Naef, plate 59). The picture's rhythmic composition—the oval mirror echoing his daughter's curved hat brim—and the deep tonalities which encompass and unify the pair do not
entirely mask the subjects' aloofness and disunity. Stei-
chen's own first marriage ended in divorce, Käsebier's
was flawed, Keiley and Day remained single, and Coburn
lived abroad after he married.

By contrast, Clarence White's marriage was in every
sense a partnership. Jane White was the model for many of
her husband's most famous early photographs (for example,
Fig. 66); the children were frequent subjects, too. Later,
when Mrs. White ran the business end of the Clarence White
School, she "held everything together by sheer hard work,
sacrifice and the force of her character."46 Käsebier's
photographs suggest the Whites' "togetherness."

Although Käsebier photographed White alone in 1898 or
1899 (Naef 351), she did not again picture him by himself
until 1913 (IMP-GEH); she either showed White with his mother
(Anne Tucker, The Woman's Eye, p. 18) or with his wife and
children. She considered the family portraits the most im-
portant and successful; two were shown at her 1929 retrospec-
tive [Figs. 64, 65]. The earlier and more formal of these
made in White's Newark, Ohio home in 1902 grouped the family
in a triangular pattern—seated and standing—and further uni-
fied them by compressing them in a shallow space. Typically
for Käsebier, the children are close by their parents, but
look towards the camera. Later, after Käsebier had become
interested in placing portrait subjects in deeper space, she
twice caught the Whites—who had by 1913 become a family of
five—in a sunstreaked room at Day's Maine "chateau" [Fig. 65 and Image 15 (Dec. 1972) back cover)]. The grouping here seems more casual, but Käsebier must have been aware of the psychological effectiveness of separating the grown sons from their parents and younger brother by a slash of sunshine on the floor. The heightened interest in geometric, particularly diagonal, forms that characterized Käsebier's Newfoundland pictures can be seen in these compositions.

Edward Steichen

At its best, the Käsebier-White friendship was warm, yet it never matched the multi-layered, reciprocal bond between Käsebier and Steichen. Despite her seniority, Käsebier and Steichen were colleagues and confidants around 1901. Their friendship went beyond professional matters: they considered each other family. Steichen was not the only colleague to call Käsebier "Granny," but she seems to have discovered in him the liveliness and imagination she would have liked to have found in her own son. 47 Like family, Edward and Clara Steichen were married at the Käsebier's Brooklyn home in October 1903, and their children, especially Kate, remained close to "Granny," as well as to her daughter, Hermine and her granddaughter, Mina, until their deaths. 48
Käsebier and Steichen were a case of "likes" attracting; each had a penchant for self-dramatization. She was a person to whom Steichen could write from Rome, exulting:

There are trees in the Villa de Medicis that are so full of sap and growth that they have put great iron bands around them to keep them from bursting. I feel that way myself. To go high up into the mountains again and shout it to the universe—the glory the sublimity of Rome. 49

Her pictures of him capture his tenderness as well as his exuberance. Käsebier and Steichen photographed each other during leisurely days in France that favored portraiture—a situation that was unparalleled in Käsebier's relation to Stieglitz or White.

The lighthearted times that Käsebier, Steichen and friends shared during 1901 are recalled by a scrapbook—mostly of Käsebier portraits of Steichen—that was apparently compiled by both of them. 50 Although many of these portraits uphold Steichen's self-image as an artist, by showing him in a smock or holding a paintbrush, Käsebier's portraits seem tame by comparison to Steichen's self-conscious Whistlerian and Titianesque visions of himself (A Life in Photography, plates 3 & 18). Yet her photographs doubtless offer truer likenesses of him, seen informally reclining on a bed [Fig. 67] or perching on a wall with knees tucked up towards his body.

Perhaps the most beautiful of the lot shows Steichen caressing his cat, nestling his mouth in the fur of its neck. Steichen's face and hand, as well as the cat, emerge from
the intensely dark platinum print's background, whose evenness has been enlivened by arcs and lines of black crayon. 

Another print, captioned Serbonne, is not the pointillist-like print reproduced in Camera Work One [Fig. 25], but a glorified snapshot— an instantaneous picture of Steichen eating at a picnic, while three young ladies look on, laughing. (Another print of this, in the MOMA Käebier study collection, is titled Pumpkin Pie.) The elegant platinum print, the hand-drawn charcoal border, title and sketch of a snail, probably done by Käebier, all enhance the light-dappled scene.

An indoor picture of Steichen, initialled "GK" and titled "Blessed Art Thou Among Women" at the bottom of the print, shows him seated in front of Käebier's famous photo of the same name, contemplating the paintbrush in his hand. The picture, which seems infused with an air of mock solemnity, reminds us that Steichen was indeed "blessed... among women" on jaunts to the French countryside that summer; we see him in both versions of Serbonne accompanied by Beatrice Baxter, Clara Smith, and Hermine Käebier, and know that Gertrude Käebier cannot be far away.

The Steichen–Käebier friendship was marked by joshing, teasing and competition that resembled sibling rivalry more than mentor–student collaboration. Steichen was not above asking Stieglitz to devote the first issue of Camera Work to him, rather than to Käebier, as shown in Chapter IV. Five years later, in Paris, Käebier told Steichen she'd learned
that Autochrome plates—the first commercial color photography process—were finally on the market, and suggested they try the process by sitting for one another the next day. Steichen, seemingly delighted, agreed. But, just before parting, he said: "Wait—I'd like to show you the portraits I took of you the other day." One can only imagine Käsebier's amazement to see autochromes he'd made of her several days before—while she had assumed ordinary black and white plates were in his camera [Fig. 1 and Naef fig. 517A]. If she later experimented with autochromes, the results have not come to light.

Alfred Stieglitz

Gertrude Käsebier seems to have printed only two negatives of Stieglitz, and original prints seem to remain for only one of these. I know Käsebier's early portrait of Stieglitz only as it is reproduced in *Photographic Times*, February 1900 [Fig. 71]. Conforming to Käsebier's early portrait style, this picture shows Stieglitz in profile, studying an unidentifiable photograph.

In the later and better-known portrait, she shows less of Stieglitz's body, yet succeeds in revealing more of his personality [Fig. 72]. Characteristically, she has turned her sitter's jacket into a dark triangular form, which, arrow-like, forces the viewer towards the sitter's face and eyes. Atypically, she has omitted her subject's hands, evidently
in order to direct full attention to his head: the source of Stieglitz's perceptive and intellectual powers.

Stieglitz's "attributes," a portfolio and a porkpie hat of the sort he perenially favored, are barely discernable. As if to emphasize her subject's importance, she has embellished the blank upper right corner of the photograph with the name Alfred Stieglitz and the date of the photograph. While such decorative lettering, reminiscent of Art Nouveau posters on the one hand and Holbein's inscriptions on the other, are not unusual among turn-of-the-century photographers, the are infrequent for Käsebier. Her squarish lettering, mindful of inscriptions in stone, heroicizes and monumentalizes her subject.

There is no doubt that Stieglitz appreciated this portrait, which flattered more than his looks. A copy, dated 1902, is in the Metropolitan Museum's Stieglitz Collection; another print, dated 1906, is in the Stieglitz Collection at the Art Institute of Chicago. A light, almost ethereal version is at IMP-GEH, and two versions are at MOMA: one full plate with a light brown watery background, and a smaller oval variation, showing just head and shoulders (no inscription) against a deep charcoaly black background.

It would seem that for Stieglitz, whose interest in the expressive possibilities of photography equalled her own, Käsebier made a special effort to explore the diverse effects that one negative could yield. Her methods were not all
Stieglitz's; he would not have brushed in painterly backgrounds as she did. However, her choice to print on different weight papers is analogous to Stieglitz's proclivity for repeating an image on different papers, in gravure or on glass lantern slides. Thus, in many ways, Käsebier's portrait embodies her early devotion to Stieglitz. If she did indeed write "the only man I ever loved ... on the back of his photo," as she later said she had, it must have been a copy of this picture. 54

Around 1910, Stieglitz's appearance and personality became the subject not merely of literal portraits, but of caricatures and abstract portraits; the best known of these are by Marius de Zayas, Francis Picabia and Arthur Dove. 55 I would like to add Käsebier's name to that list by proposing that The Bogey Man [Fig. 73] was intended as a caricature or symbolic portrait of Stieglitz.

In this photograph, Käsebier has transformed what must have been a decorative garden sculpture of a squat, cloaked Oriental figure 56 into a dark, evil-eyed creature, a menacing "Bogey Man" who might "get you if you don't watch out." The picture is unsettling partly because Käsebier gives no clue to the creature's size. No written references help us to date or understand this picture, which seems to have been exhibited only at Käsebier's 1929 exhibition. However, these very lack of references imply that the picture was made...
after Käsebier left the Secession. An odd picture like this would have been unlikely to have gone unremarked by those colleagues.

The longer I have studied Käsebier, the more eccentric this picture seemed. Was it simply an embodiment of Käsebier's interest in children and childhood—a materialization of a child's night terrors (as I first surmised)—and if so, why was the picture so rare? Why could I locate only one copy (at MOMA), and no obvious variants?

I had almost despaired of finding contemporaneous references to a "bogey man," when I stumbled across a startling one in a 1912 essay about Stieglitz printed in The Black Mirror, an obscure, literally "little" magazine (about 4" x 5") that Stieglitz had pasted in one of his scrapbooks. The untitled, uncredited, incomprehensibly written essay begins: "The biggest, blackest hoofs and horns grown are according to artists critics and public alike, decorating the head and limbs of Mr. Alfred Stieglitz," and concludes, "'The Bogey Man will git you if you don't watch out.'" The intervening paragraphs are difficult to follow: it takes several readings to decide that the "Bogey Man" is the Modern Art that Stieglitz espoused, and not Stieglitz himself.

It seems probable that Käsebier's attention would have been drawn to this article, which was issued within the year that she left the Photo-Secession. A cursory reading of the article could have left her (as it left me) with the impres-
sion that Stieglitz was not only devilish, but was the Bogey (or Bogie.) Man himself (dictionaries give various spellings). To children, to the naive, a Bogey Man seems omnipotent, but age and sophistication reveal his insubstantiality. Käsebier had admitted just such a switch in her attitude toward Stieglitz: she once "thought he was grand," but later felt he lacked substance: "When I saw he was only hot air, I quit," she said. 58

The greatest evidence for the Stieglitz-Bogey Man analogy is visual. In Käsebier's Bogey Man, as in her formidable Stieglitz portrait, the dark eyes, idiosyncratically looking upward from a crescent of white eyeballs, are the focus of the picture. The sculpture is enshrouded in a cloak; Stieglitz's affectation of a cape was as well known as his preference for porkpie hats. 59 It would have been easy for her colleagues, especially Stieglitz circle expatriates, to see this as another Stieglitz caricature, a private joke. If it was, Käsebier would have kept it under wraps until it lost its sting—as it would have by 1929.

Caricature aside, how well did Käsebier succeed in her portrayals? While Käsebier's portraits alone would not convince us of Stieglitz's perceptiveness or of Steichen's buoyancy, and while we must be familiar with White's life and photographs to grasp Käsebier's allusions to them, if we know a bit about these men, we can feel that Käsebier has indeed recorded remarkable, individual likenesses. Not
"biographies," as she would have liked us to believe—no portrait could really be that—but telling and memorable reflections of her colleagues' looks and personalities.
The Indian Portraits

Her first encounter with Indians sounds like a scene from a Western. Others less bold and more conventional would have been scared off forever if they had been in a coach attacked by Indians, as young Gertrude was, when her family crossed the plains from Des Moines to Colorado territory in 1860. But Gertrude Käsebier's memories of gentle Indian friends during her Colorado childhood tempered any thought of the ferocious attackers her family encountered on the way there. "Granny loved the Indians," her granddaughter Mina Turner recalled. "She felt they were the only truly honest people she knew." After years in the East, Indians still intrigued her, so she made friends with Sioux Indians visiting New York. Their drawings and letters to her, and dozens of photographs she made of them, testify to an exceptional acquaintance. The Indian photographs—which are among Käsebier's most remarkable—fall into two groups. Over forty show Sioux members of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show; these are mostly studio portraits of Indian braves, but include some portraits of their wives and families, and of life in Buffalo Bill's temporary Indian village in Brooklyn. The other group consists of at least nine photographs of the beautiful, accomplished young Sioux, Zitkala-Sa, a teacher,
writer, violinist and (later) a crusader for Indian rights, who was also known as Gertrude Simmons Bonnin. (She was not a member of Buffalo Bill's entourage, as some have mistakenly assumed, probably because her photograph appeared alongside members of the Wild West Show in Everybody's Magazine, January 1901.)

**Indians from the Buffalo Bill Show**

During the 1890's, Buffalo Bill's Wild West troupe publicized its arrival in New York by marching up Fifth Avenue. In 1898, Käsebier saw their parade from her studio (on 30th Street, just off Fifth Avenue), and wrote Buffalo Bill, asking his Indians to sit for her. Friends warned against it; they said that Indians, once invited, would return again and again, unbidden. "Let them come," was her hospitable reply, "I shall be glad to see them." From 1898 until about 1912, she played hostess to them, at home as well as at her studio—startled neighbors notwithstanding.

Käsebier seems to have had two concurrent aims in photographing the Indians from Buffalo Bill's troupe. On the one hand, she wanted to suggest an archetypal Indian—an embodiment of her recollection of Indians she knew as a child, and on the other, she wanted to portray the personalities of individual Indians.
The Red Man [Fig. 83], her most famous single Indian photograph, was the distillation of her vision of Indians. As she told it, the photograph "was the last of a hundred." The Indians had visited her studio many times, yet, she said, "I never could get what I wanted. Finally, one of them, petulant, raised his blanket about his shoulders and stood before the camera. I snapped and had it." She was so satisfied that she apparently took no more Indian photographs after 1901, when she made The Red Man.

Unlike Edward Curtis, whose multi-volume study of American Indian culture made him the most famous photographer of Indians, Käsebier was more interested in physiognomy and expression than costumes and props. Curtis deleted evidence of White culture and outfitted his subjects to make them look more "Indian"—sometimes even putting them in an alien tribe's garb. Käsebier did the opposite, removing genuine ceremonial accessories to reach her idea of Indian authenticity.

"I want a real raw Indian for a change ... The kind I used to see when I was a child," she said at the end of one long photographic session, described by an observer:

Quite at random she selected Iron Tail, and proceeded to divest him of his finery. Feathers and trinkets were removed, and amid a dead silence she placed him before the camera and secured the most remarkable portrait of the whole collection. He never said a word, but obeyed instructions like an automaton. In the wonderful face...[Fig.74] it is perhaps not fanciful to read something of the misery which he was really undergoing. For the truth was that every feather represented some act of bravery either on his own
part or that of his ancestors ... When the portrait was handed to him some days later, he tore it in two and flung it from him. Luckily, however, an explanation and a second sitting in full regalia entirely restored his peace of mind. 68

Could Käsebier's choice of Chief Iron Tail have been as haphazard as the article suggests? He was the oldest and most famous of the Indians to visit her. He was reputed to have participated in the Custer massacre. Of the Indians who visited her, he best represented the "old Indian" who was almost untouched by White civilization. Everybody's called him "typical of the wild Indians...still part of the wild life, undegenerate, tall and straight like pine trees." 69 In saying this, the article expressed a not uncommon nineteenth century notion that Indians were somehow an integral part of the American landscape.

Käsebier's depiction of Iron Tail without his headdress shows her atypical attitude to Indians and to Iron Tail in particular. Writers liked to portray him in "full regalia." The New York Times, for example, mentioned "his superb raiment of beads, feathers and paint." 70 A more complete description comes from the Carlisle Indian Industrial School weekly newsletter:

The chief's hair was long
On the crown of his head was a braided scalp-lock, six or eight inches in length.
In it stuck an Eagle Feather, straight up ....
Iron Tail was dressed in all sorts of toggery, from beaded necklace to blanket, leggings and mocca-
sins. He had a beaver skin across one shoulder.
... across his left shoulder he wore a narrow sash containing twenty or thirty small, round brass-rimmed looking glasses, which glittered in the sunlight.

... he was in wild dress because he was paid to dress that way.

The Carlisle School taught English and other skills to young Indians, and encouraged them to adapt to American society. Towards that end, the newsletter bemoaned the plight of vanquished chiefs like Iron Tail. It claimed that Iron Tail (who visited his son at the Carlisle School when the Buffalo Bill show played nearby) "would in a minute adopt the civilized dress in its entirety if it paid him better to do so, than it does to wear the clothes in which he now adorns himself." The writer believed that Iron Tail could learn to speak, read and write some English and "become a useful citizen" if he were "properly encouraged."

But,

Buffalo Bill pays him 20, 30 or possibly 50 dollars a month for several summer months, and all expenses, to remain Indian, to wear the scalp-lock, blanket, and all the glittering toggery in which it is possible for an Indian to bedeck himself.

He pays him to dance the wildest, most blood-thirsty savage dance known.

He pays him and sixty others to rob stage coaches and to race on horseback around the track shouting the war-whoop and yelling till the peoples' hair stands on end.

Such savagery, the Indian schools of the country are trying to kill in the Indian, giving instead, cultivation, and the manly arts.

What a pity that the good Government which spends millions annually to educate the Indian in books and in civilized pursuits, should at the same time permit
Oddly, the newsletter does not mention the psychological toll on show Indians, of constantly replaying the conquest of their people.

Like the newsletter writer, but for different reasons, Käsebier wanted to see Iron Tail out of his "glittering toggery." By removing the distraction of accessories—which to her were marks of a show Indian—she directs the viewer to the "raw" Indian's lank hair, glistening lined face, prominent bony structure and almost quizzical expression. This individuality is lost in her otherwise magnificent iconic profile of him [Fig. 75].

Although Käsebier was proud of typifying Indians in *The Red Man*, most of her other photographs show her interest in them as individuals. This distinguished her from photographers of her time and before it. She treated Indians as friends, and their repeated visits bred a familiarity totally unlike conventional cursory meetings between Indian subjects and their photographers.

Contemporary Western photographers of Indians, such as F. S. Rinehart, Karl Moon and Edward Curtis, as well as W. H. Jackson before them, prepared their photographs for commercial distribution. Käsebier's photographs of Indians were done for pleasure, not for financial gain. Except
for The Red Man, Käsebier seldom sold prints of Indian photographs. Although their publication as a group in Everybody's Magazine, 1901, as well as occasionally in Camera Notes, Photographic Times and elsewhere attracted attention, she had no need to cater to popular taste or preconceptions about Indians, as her Western contemporaries did. Nonetheless, she clearly valued her Indian pictures highly, mounting them carefully on colored paper and lovingly titling and signing the mounts.

She photographed her favorite Indians repeatedly, in different costumes and poses. A comparison of her pictures of Samuel Lone Bear [Figs. 76-78] with those of Joseph Black Fox [Figs. 80, 82] shows how she captured distinct personalities among the Indians. She made at least three portraits of Joe Black Fox and at least five of Samuel Lone Bear. Neither is a "typical" Indian; they are neither stolid nor fierce and warlike.

A New York Times reporter visiting Käsebier's studio saw Sammy Lone Bear as a costumed figure:

No one knows what a picturesque figure an Indian is until he is seen against a dark green studio wall, arrayed in his best clothes ...

Sammy-Lone-Bear, however, probably outshone any of his copeers, for Sammy was beautiful to behold in a jacket of old rose velvet, a jacket set at intervals on the back with boars' teeth, with a breastplate of more teeth arranged in horizontal rows, a feather with tips matching the old rose and the bright purple and yellow, with a strip of porcupine quills hanging from the back of his head. This was in addition to broad armlets of metal, beaded blanket, and moccasins. 77
Käsebier saw beyond the outfit and the show Indian to depict the plight of young Indians adrift in a limbo between cultures.

After acquiring a rudimentary education in English and in the ways of White society at Carlisle (or a similar institution), many of these young men were sent to support themselves by playing "savages" in Buffalo Bill's Wild West during several months of the year, while during the rest they were expected to remain peaceful and content on a barren reservation. 78

At twenty, when he met Käsebier in 1898, Sammy Lone Bear was among the most educated and "Americanized" of Buffalo Bill's troupe, and had visited Europe with them. 79 In Käsebier's photographs, Sammy Lone Bear's demeanor--his thoughtful melancholy gaze and downcast head--engages our attention, because he is so unlike stereotypical Indians. He is passive, quiet--not an active or alert Indian scout. In one photograph [Fig. 76], we see him relaxed, reclining. Compare the upright posture of Sammy's father, Chief Lone Bear [L.C., Pratt] whom Käsebier depicted in a full headdress, holding a bow and arrow: a profile of an old-time Indian.

The reclining pose is one that Käsebier otherwise reserved for friendly creative colleagues like Steichen, de Meyer and Demachy, and perhaps she thought of Sammy in the same vein. Evidence shows him to be something of an artist and dreamer; his drawings indicate more of an interest in
"catching girls" [Fig. 79] than in fighting or hunting buffalo (futile interests for a 20th century Indian), though one drawing shows a feathered Sioux hopping about in "A War Dance."

In Käsebier's photographs, Sammy Lone Bear's attire is surely Indian, yet she was not concerned to emphasize details as such anthropologically minded photographers as Curtis and Vroman were, and as the *Times* reporter was. However, observers can see emblems of Sammy Lone Bear's cross-cultural conflict in the American flag motifs on his beaded blanket [Fig. 78]. His letters to Käsebier, sometimes in broken English and sometimes in Sioux, also reveal his cultural ambivalence. Today, his comment "I have good time when fourth of July" seems ironic and poignant. 80

Chief Joe Black Fox was another Käsebier favorite about whom little can now be learned. 81 Apparently young and educated enough to sign his name in script [Fig. 81], he, too, is shown pivoting between cultures, smoking a cigarette, and, uncharacteristically for a Sioux, almost smiling [Figs 80, 82, 84]. Unlike Sammy Lone Bear, he never lets his guard down. His mischievous, canny expression, which Käsebier caught several times, must have charmed her, and she saved several of his drawings. He is probably the subject of *The Red Man* [Fig. 83]. (The resemblance is easiest to see in a modern print made directly from Käsebier's negative at George Eastman House/International Museum of Photography than in her own print.
Käsebier photographed Indian children, but only after several years' acquaintance with the Sioux, whose superstitions held that making a portrait of a child would kill it. She got three memorable portraits: one of Willie Spotted Horse almost dwarfed by a feather headdress, and two of Mary Lone Bear, Sammy's sister (Smithsonian). Then bad luck struck: Mary Lone Bear suddenly died six weeks after her photograph was made. Describing the incident, Käsebier, herself not immune to superstition, mused: "What killed her?" 82

Although Käsebier's colleague, Joseph Keiley, photographed some of the same Indians as she did, their results were different. Both Käsebier and Keiley were interested in Indian culture, but Keiley's photographs bespeak a generalized, distant point of view towards the people. His attitude shows in titles as well as photographs. Keiley did not identify his Indians as she did; his were not specific Indians but representative ones: A Sioux Chief, Indian Head, or Indian Chief. His photographs are softer in focus and more painterly than Käsebier's. They are taken closer to the subject than most of hers, and show less interest in Indian costume—but at the same time they are not psychologically individualized portraits. For example, Keiley's portrait of Has-no-Horses (which he titled A Sioux Chief) is taken from a low point of view in very soft focus (Naef,
plate 34). The man seems a different person from the one we see in Käsebier's head-on photograph.

Although Käsebier had been the instigator in photographing Buffalo Bill's Indians, she seldom showed or published her pictures of them until 1900. Keiley's were exhibited from 1898 on, so that when Käsebier's big Indian head, The Red Man, was shown at Day's "New School of American Photography" exhibition in Europe in 1900, Steichen feared it would be considered an imitation of Keiley. He ought not have worried. Today, at least, we can see The Red Man as a tougher, more formal image than any of Keiley's Indian heads.
Zitkala-Sa

To those who know her lovely face only from Käsebier's and Keiley's familiar portraits, Zitkala-Sa would seem to have been an obscure young Sioux, immortalized by photography. But Zitkala-Sa was, in fact, a celebrity in her own right, known first for musical and literary accomplishments and later as a crusader for Indian rights. In 1900, Harper's Bazaar described and pictured her along with other "Persons Who Interest Us"—persons who included the German composer, Siegfried Wagner, and Chicago's social and cultural leader, Mrs. Potter Palmer.  

Although she was unknown when she sat for Käsebier and Keiley in 1898, Zitkala-Sa became one of Käsebier's most famous subjects (one who, like Käsebier herself, is now listed in Notable American Women). How they met is undocumented. Presumably, Zitkala-Sa came to New York (from the Carlisle Indian School where she taught) to see Indian friends or pupils in Buffalo Bill's Wild West show.

Zitkala-Sa, who spent her early years on an Indian reservation, had distinguished herself by 1898: while a student at Earlham College in Indiana, she won a statewide intercollegiate oratorical contest. A talented pianist and violinist as well, she was in charge of the Carlisle School Indian Band.
During 1899 and 1900, she studied violin in Boston, where (probably thanks to an introduction from Käsebier) F. Holland Day and his acquaintances befriended her. Perhaps her acquaintance with Boston literary folk spurred her to write her memoirs, which the Atlantic Monthly published in installments during 1900 and 1902.

Though generally acclaimed, those memoirs were strongly criticized by Indian school publications, because she challenged the Government program of educating Indians in White civilization. Concluding her last heart-rending article, she deplored the self-congratulatory attitude of White visitors to the Carlisle School, who were "astounded at seeing the children of savage warriors so docile and industrious," but were unaware that the Indians had lost all consciousness of the nature world (sic)" around them.

As answers to their shallow inquiries they received the students' sample work to look upon. Examining the neatly figured pages, and gazing upon the Indian girls and boys bending over their books, the white visitors walked out of the schoolhouse well satisfied: they were educating the children of the red man! ... In this fashion many have passed idly through the Indian schools during the past decade, afterward to boast of their charity to the North American Indian. But few there are who have paused to question whether real life or long-lasting death lies beneath this semblance of civilization.

During 1900, Zitkala-Sa was also lauded for concert appearances and for a recitation of Longfellow's Hiawatha, while she was raising money for the Carlisle Band's projected trip to the Paris World's Fair—a trip which was eventually
canceled for lack of funds. Zitkala-Sa, who had always felt a strong clash between her Eastern education and her Indian heritage, returned to South Dakota in mid-1900 with hopes of teaching near her elderly, ailing mother. Her contact with Käsebier and her colleagues appears to have ended at this time.

Gertrude Käsebier's portraits reflect the cultural duality that Zitkala-Sa reveals in her articles and letters. This duality is symbolized even by her two names: Zitkala-Sa (or Red Bird) as a Sioux; Gertrude E. Simmons (and later, married, Gertrude Simmons Bonnin) in official or legal matters. As Zitkala-Sa, she performed, she published, and she signed letters to F. Holland Day. To the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and sometimes even to friends, she was Miss Simmons.

Just as she had two ethnically different names, Käsebier's photographs portray her two ways: as an Indian and as a serious young Americanized woman. Two profile photographs show her adorned with beads, in Sioux costume. One, [Fig. 87] a simple profile which once belonged to Joseph Keiley, is distinguished by glowing printing and affectionate presentation: the mounted platinum print fits in a yellow paper folder autographed by Käsebier and Gertrude E. Simmons, as well as Keiley, Fanny Delehanty and others. The folder is fastened by a narrow blue ribbon, adorned by small black feathers.
In the second [Fig. 89], Zitkala-Sa shades her eyes, as if shielding off glare on the open plains she loved. Western childhoods were a bond between Käsebier and Zitkala-Sa. Just as Käsebier recalled her youth in Colorado, where "the vast altitudes and spaces...appealed to me in an unforgettable way," Zitkala-Sa wrote, in Boston: "Oh—for space enough for a good breath of pure inspiration! ...I love to see the banks of snow. It recalls days of my childhood which were spent in the Dakota prairie." In light of this, Zitkala-Sa's gesture seems not a mere pose, but an expression of a yearning for the West with which Käsebier empathized.

In seven other pictures, Zitkala-Sa is not recognizably Indian; she wears a pale dress and holds a violin or a book. Without knowing anything about Zitkala-Sa, one might want to categorize these photographs along with Clarence White's white-gowned ladies—or Abbott Thayer's or Thomas Dewing's. But the props here should not be understood as generic symbols of art and culture; they are personal references to Zitkala-Sa's career as a violinist and to her literary leanings [Figs. 85, 86].

Only one of Käsebier's photographs [Fig. 88] refers to the psychological and cultural conflict between Zitkala-Sa's refined East-coast life and the harsh poverty she left behind in South Dakota where her mother and brother lived at the
Pine Ridge Agency—an Indian reservation. That picture—a profile like the two in Indian costume—shows her in contemporary dress. But she clutches an Indian basket to her breast, suggesting that despite the veneer of modern clothing, she cherishes her Indian heritage. If Käsebier's studio portraits of Zitkala-Sa seem restrained and subtle, compared to pictures she might have made had she documented the plight of Indians on reservations, their acuteness is revealed by contrasting them to Keiley's. Although four of Joseph Keiley's photographs show Zitkala-Sa in the same Indian outfit as Käsebier's, his pictures are moodier, softer in focus and more manipulated. Most show only her head and shoulders: no hands, no props. Her eyes are dreamy, unfocussed [Figs.90,91].

As with Keiley's portraits of Indian men, he often gave symbolic or generalized titles to his portraits of Zitkala-Sa. He called a triptych of her portraits An American; one of these portraits alone was alternately called Indian Girl or Sioux Indian Girl, while a variant photograph was titled Zitkala. Keiley's profile portrait of her, published in Caffin's Photography as a Fine Art, was titled An Indian Madonna, for no discernable reason. Moreover, Keiley's four photographs of her in Chinese costume (one titled Asia and a triptych titled Chinese Studies), indicate that he perceived her as an exotic to be costumed at will. Käsebier's portraits, on the other hand, were governed by her knowledge of Zitkala-Sa's specific talents, personality and background.
Photographing Women

Käsebier told an interviewer that she preferred to photograph men because "women's fussy clothes" and "bare necks and arms ... complicate matters and eliminate simplicity and sincerity." She disliked retouching, which most women required, because they were "determined to be made to look young and handsome no matter how old or ugly they may be."

Conventional women bored Käsebier. Her daughter recalled that Thomas Edison's daughter brought five or six gowns to the studio to be photographed in. When several changes of costume and fifteen minutes of posing evoked no lively response from this vapid woman, Käsebier directed her subject to return home. "But Mme. Käsebier, you haven't made a single picture," she complained. "I know," replied the photographer, "there's nothing there."

Käsebier said that she found "men's faces much more interesting than women's, for they are the ones out in the world doing things." In fact, Käsebier also enjoyed photographing women who were "out in the world doing things."

While her portraits of Zitkala-Sa should be seen primarily in conjunction with other Käsebier Indian portraits, they ought also to be grouped with Käsebier portraits of talented and creative women. When Käsebier destroyed the bulk of her commercial work and records (probably around 1920, after
giving up her studio), she kept pictures not only of the showgirl Evelyn Nesbit (who had become even better-known since her jealous husband shot and killed Stanford White in 1906), but of Rose O'Neill, the illustrator and inventor of the kewpie doll [Figs. 46, 48], and of Eulabee Dix, the miniaturist. Even the Gerson sisters, Virginia and Minnie, shown in what appear to be frivolous costume pictures, _The Crinoline Ball_ and _The Silhouette_ [Fig. 105], turn out to have been involved in the artistic circle around their brother-in-law, the painter William Merritt Chase. Virginia Gerson wrote and illustrated children's books that were charming (if too heavily indebted to Kate Greenaway), and sometimes designed theatrical costumes. Agnes Lee, though shown in her role of mother; in _Blessed Art Thou Among Women_ and _The Heritage of Motherhood_ [Figs. 17, 35], was a noted poet whose work included children's books and poems about motherhood. Mrs. Brandegee, in the family portrait, _Harmony_ [Fig. 24], was an accomplished cellist, and this photograph is notable because it shows her in her triple role of cellist, mother and wife.

Käsebier complained about vain commercial clients, but when she had an opportunity to depict active, versatile women like herself, she produced compelling and sympathetic portraits of them. Käsebier cared about more than the mere appearance of women. Her interest in the substance of women's lives, implied in some portraits, becomes uppermost in her thematic photographs.
Footnotes: Käsebier as a Portraitist


2. Ibid.

3. Mary Jean Madigan, Photography of Rudolph Eickemeyer, Jr. (Yonkers: The Hudson River Museum, 1971), n.p. reproduces three Eickemeyer photographs of Evelyn Nesbit. Many other pictures of Miss Nesbit are to be found in the Robinson Locke Collection, Library of the Performing Arts and Lincoln Center, N.Y.

4. See illustrations in Caffin, Photography as a Fine Art.

5. This photograph may have marked the beginning of a continued acquaintance between Käsebier and Riis. She preserved notes Riis wrote her in 1905 and 1908 (NYPL).

6. Käsebier began to monogram the mounts of her photographs by 1899. From about 1896-1898 she had blindstamped photographs "Gertrude Käsebier" in script. Throughout her career, she also signed photographs "Gertrude Käsebier."

   Whistler had led the vogue for distinctive monogram signatures on paintings. By using such monograms, Käsebier and her colleagues indicated their affinity to painters and to the aesthetic movement, and separated themselves from ordinary commercial photographers.


9. My father, Julian Loebenstein, an engineering student at Columbia from 1908 to 1912, often recalled a day when Professor Pupin filled the blackboard with calculus equations. Then, realizing that his solution had resulted in an incorrect answer, Professor Pupin said, "Gentlemen, the answer is unimportant. If you can write the basic equation, you can always get a mathematician for twenty dollars a week to solve it for you!"

   Other environmental portraits by Käsebier include Charles G. Bush, World's Work, Feb. 1901, p. 420; Solon H. Borglum, World's Work, March 1902, p. 1871; and Auguste Rodin (see Chapter V).
10. The photographs were illustrations to Mary Fanton Roberts [Giles Edgerton], "The Younger American Painters: Are They Creating a National Art?" *Craftsman* 13 (Feb. 1908): 512-532.


The Käsebier memoir mentions that a teacher from Pratt told her of Davies. That teacher was doubtless Ida C. Haskell, who owned two Davies paintings (Cortissoz, pp. 34, 36). Käsebier is listed as owning *St. Brigid*, 1895, 12"x6" and *Phantasies*, 1899, 13"x16" (Cortissoz, p. 31).


Käsebier saved a letter from Davies thanking her for her aid to the exhibition as well as a letter requesting the use of the negative of his portrait to make a photogravure. NYPL.


15. Ibid., pp. 132-133. From diary entries 28 May 1907 and 1 June 1907.

16. A label on the back of this print at The Museum of Modern Art is inscribed "Exhibited at the Studio of the Department of Photography Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences Date Jan. 7 1929." The print is listed as number 34-sp and is illustrated in the Catalogue of the Exhibition of Photographs by Gertrude Käsebier beginning January 7, 1929, Studio, Department of Photography, Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences.


19. Ibid., p. 24


22. Interview: Hermine Turner. I have not seen any examples of these photographs.


24. Barbara L. Michaels, "Rediscovering Gertrude Käsebier," Image 19 (June 1976): 31, says "Käsebier and Rodin... had undoubtedly been introduced by Edward Steichen who had met Rodin in 1901."

25. DeMeyer's letter of 1905 introducing Käsebier to Rodin is in the Musée Rodin; see Chapter V, note 3.


27. NYPL.


31. Ibid.

32. Roberts [Giles Edgerton], "Photography as an Emotional Art," p. 90

34. Imogen Cunningham, telephone interview, June 1976.


36. Ibid.

37. Such mountings and signatures were typical among pictorial photographers in this period (see the work of Evans, Day, Steichen, etc.), but unusual among commercial photographers.


39. Mina Turner and Hermine Turner, interviews. According to Hermine Turner, Käsebier dreamt of marching feet just as Belgium was being invaded during World War I, and understood her dream as a vision of that invasion.

See also GK to Day, 29 April 1899, Norwood: "There is no question but that your thoughts reach me sometimes. You were much in my mind yesterday. Last night my impulse to write you was so strong that I got out the pen and paper, the same I am using now. This morning comes the package of prints, and all is clear."

40. Memoirs, Mason Turner collection, and Mina Turner, interview.


43. The close-up of Evans is owned by the New Orleans Museum of Art; the picture of him crouching can be found at MOMA, LC and IMP-GEH.

44. Other early backlit pictures include Harmony, a group portrait of Indians in her studio, and ca. 1910, 1910, _The Visitor_, all MOMA.

45. Lowe, _Alfred Stieglitz_ , pp. 100-105 and 134.

47. Käsebier appears to have been less close to her son than to her daughters. Moreover, Henry Blanchford, who was acquainted with Fred Käsebier from business (his company, the Mac-Lac Shellac Company bought out the Käsebier-Chatfield Shellac Co.) wrote the author, 30 July 1978:
"Fred was a bit of a black sheep in a way. We hired him when we took over his company but it was obvious that he knew little of the processing of shellac. He was like­able but lazy. An unfortunate marriage, no children, etc. may have added to his ennui."

48. Interviews: Kate Steichen and Mina Turner.

49. Steichen to GK [March 27] 1902, Yale (in Stieglitz to Steichen folder, leaf 28. A note on the envelope indicates that Käsebier passed the letter on to Stieglitz).

50. The scrapbook, which had been Steichen's, was given to MOMA in 1983 by Knox Burger whose father, a business associate of Steichen's, had gotten it from him. Knox Burger's family also knew Käsebier, who visited their relatives, the Vitales, in Great Barrington, Mass. during the 1910's and 20's (Interview with Knox Burger, 1982.)

The scrapbook is datable not only by comparison with other 1901 photographs, but by a tintype of Steichen (on the inside cover), whose printed inscription "Erinnerung an das Jahr 1899" is corrected in handwriting: 1899 is crossed out and 1901 is substituted.

In addition to 20 mounted and four unmounted portraits of Steichen which are known to be by GK or can be easily attributed to her, the album contains an unmounted portrait of Steichen with Alvin Langdon Coburn's monogram, and another by a photographer whose unfamiliar monogram cannot be identified at present.

A drawing of Steichen derived from a portrait in the album and one derived from Serbonne (as shown in Camera Work no. 10) are in all likelihood by Käsebier; however, virtually none of her artwork has survived to compare these with. The pictures are less bold in style than Steichens of this period.

Presumably, Käsebier made the album as a souvenir for Steichen (she also compiled albums of her Indian photographs at about this time). However, the Steichen album contains a number of irregular items: a telegram from Steichen to GK, as well as a number of newspaper and magazine clippings that were glued in rather randomly; perhaps Steichen added them later as a souvenir of the 1901 summer.
51. Compare Steichen's photograph of the same cat, Longwell, Steichen: The Master Prints, plate 18.

52. Interview: Mina Turner

53. Lowe, p. 312.


56. Patricia Eichenbaum-Karetzky has suggested that the picture shows a Japanese sculpture of Daruma, and that this sort of figure was a popular item for export. Where Käsebier made the photograph is unknown.

57. Black Mirror (Chicago), no. 7 (1912), pp. 49-52. Earlier copies of the magazine identify it as "The Journal of the Colorists."

58. Mason Turner papers.

59. Lowe, p. 312.

60. Interview: Mina Turner. "Some Indian Portraits," Everybody's Magazine 4 (Jan. 1901): 3. "The Indian as Gentleman," New York Times, 23 April 1899, p. 20. Keiley, "Gertrude Käsebier," quotes Käsebier's mother: "We had always to keep on the watch for hostile Indians. I don't see why Gertrude likes Indians so much now. She has not them to thank that she is here to-day. I cannot help feeling, from my own knowledge and experience, that the only good Indian is the dead one." (Photography, p. 223, Camera Work, p. 27. Other evidences of Käsebier's affection for Indians are a cabinet card photograph labelled "Aunt Cree," and another labelled "Granny's Uncle Cree" by J. Collier, 415 Larimer St., Denver (Mason Turner Collection) and a lock of coarse black hair labelled "Myron Moses, full blood Seneca Indian" (Patricia Costello collection).

61. Interview: Mina Turner.

62. The majority of Käsebier's Indian photographs and some Indian drawings are housed in the Photography Depart-
ment of the Smithsonian Institution. Her negatives (and study prints from them) are at the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division. The Indians' letters (the originals of which seem to have disappeared) and drawings are reproduced in "Some Indian Portraits."


There is no record of a visit when the Show was in town during 1902.

Between 1903 and 1906, Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show toured Europe. However, Käsebier's grandson, Charles O'Malley, recalled his "consternation and fright" at meeting Indians in full regalia when he was six years old--about 1906. (Memoir in family history, collection Patricia Costello.) Mina Turner also wrote about Indians visiting ca. 1900-1912 (Mason Turner Papers).

66. Chambers, "Called Greatest Woman Photographer, Gertrude Käsebier is Now a Cripple": see appendix.


68. "Some Indian Portraits," p. 7. What may have been the same incident is described differently in "Sioux Chiefs' Party Calls": "There was only one of the gentlemen guests at the studio tea who was not pleased with the pictures. He was one of the older gentlemen. The objector was Mr. Iron Tail. Mr. Iron Tail could not be called, strictly speaking, beautiful, but he was wonderfully picturesque, with his dark coloring and strongly marked face. The picture taken, simply, without the addition of a feather headdress was like a study in bronze.

"But Iron Tail said it was too black and he tore it up. Now he is having a picture taken to look white, but natural conditions will prevent his appearing too much like a pale-face."


72. Frances B. Johnston photographed over a hundred scenes of classes, vocational training, and other student activities, as well as the faculty of the Carlisle School in 1903 (LC, Lots 10975-10979). This was probably an outgrowth of her earlier work at the Hampton Institute. There is no apparent connection to Kasebier.

73. "Iron Tail," Indian Helper.

74. Iron Tail was also one of the models for the profile Indian head on the Buffalo nickel (coined 1913-1938), but there is no evidence that Kasebier's photograph was used in its design. J.E. Fraser, designer of the nickel, wrote: "The Indian head ... is not a direct portrait of any particular Indian, but was made from several portrait busts which I did of Indians. ...I used three different heads ...One was Irontail (sic), the best Indian head I can remember." (J.E. Fraser to Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 10 June 1931. Copy of letter received from U.S. Dept. of the Treasury, Bureau of the Mint.)


76. The Smithsonian's collection is exemplary, containing at least four different types of mounts. Some, on white cards, are inscribed "copyrighted 1898" and bear the blind-stamp "Gertrude Kasebier"—which she quit using about 1898. Another group has photographs pasted onto green or bronze colored mounts, which in turn are pasted on larger greenish-gray mounts. These are monogrammed "GK" in ink matching the green or bronze mount, and may have once been bound in an album.

Another group is mounted on black paper and bear a Kasebier monogram stamp (her initials in a stylized lens); some others are attached to white debossed mounts. Most are inscribed with the names of the Indian subjects.

77. "Artist Receives Indians."


81. Black Fox is listed as a chief in Route Book, Buffalo Bill's Wild West, 1899, reproduced in Sell & Weybright, p. 211.

82. Inscription by Käsebier on proof of portrait of Mary Lone Bear (later reproduced in "Some Indian Portraits"), Smithsonian Institution Photography Dept.

83. Exhibition dates for Keiley's Indian photographs are given in Naef, pp.395,396. Käsebier wrote Stieglitz from Paris, 21 Aug. 1901: "S. says my big indian is sure to be considered an imitation of Keiley. So much for good nature. Catch me again. My Blessed Art Thou was accused of being an imitation of Day." (Yale)


85. "Bonnin, Gertrude Simmons," Notable American Women 1607-1950, 1: 198-200, provides a useful bibliography and biography which is the source of information about her not otherwise attributed below.


87. She studied with Eugene Gruenberg of the New England Conservatory who taught her tuition-free (Eugene Gruenberg to William A. Jones, Comm. of Indian Affairs, 20 Jan. 1899, U.S. National Archives). See also Gertrude E. Simmons to Hon. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 12 Aug. 1899, National Archives, for reference to her violin studies in Boston. The New England Conservatory records for the years around 1900 are "very incomplete" and contain no reference to Gertrude Simmons (Chester W. Williams, Dean Emeritus, N.E. Conservatory to Barbara L. Michaels, 5 May 1982).

Nine letters at Norwood provide information about Zitkala-Sa's life in and around Boston. Three letters from Zitkala-Sa to Day (17 Feb., 11 Dec., and 29 Dec. 1899) give evidence of their friendship. Letters from Louise Peabody Sargent to Day mention Zitkala-Sa's visits to the Sargent's (21 Feb., 11 & 17 March 1899). During the summer of 1899
Zitkala-Sa stayed with the Chamberlins in Wrentham, Mass. They were friends of Day; Joseph Edgar Chamberlin was the author of The Listener in the Town, published by Day's firm, Copeland and Day, 1896. Zitkala-Sa is mentioned by Ida Chamberlin to Day, 5 Sept. 1899 and by J.E. Chamberlin, 18 Sept. 1899. Efforts to obtain a violin for Zitkala-Sa are mentioned by Alfred S. Manson, a Boston bibliophile, to Day, 16 Feb. 1900.

I am extremely grateful to William A. Gifford, Curator, Norwood Historical Society, for locating these letters, copying them for me, and for providing information about Mr. Chamberlin and Mr. Manson.


89. The Red Man, Feb. 1900, p. 8; April 1900, p.8; June 1900, p. 6. See also The Red Man and Helper, 12 April 1901, n.p., for criticism of "The Soft Hearted Sioux" by Zitkala-Sa.


92. Gertrude E. Simmons to Hon. W.A. Jones, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, 23 May 1900; Simmons to Mr. A.C. Tonner, 4 June 1900; Simmons to Hon. W.A. Jones, Comm. of Indian Affairs, 19 July, 17 Aug. 1900, 9 Sept. 1901, National Archives.

93. For example, Käsebier referred to her as Miss Simmons in writing to Day 12 & 29 April and 12 June 1899 (Norwood).

94. The print from Keiley's estate is illustrated in the Sotheby Parke Bernet, N.Y., catalogue of sale no. 5043, lot 438. Another print of the same negative, as well as prints of Käsebier's other photographs of Zitkala-Sa are in the Smithsonian Institution, Photography Department.

95. GK to Laura Gilpin, 1 Sept. 1923, Amon Carter.

97. The triptych, An American, no. 56 in The Catalogue of Prints, The Photographical Section, American Institute (New York: National Academy of Design, 1898) can be identified by prints and notations that Keiley entered in his copy of the Catalogue (now in a private collection). Two parts of the triptych are illustrated in Naef, figs. 362 and 363. The third part (wrongly identified by Naef as his fig. 361) showed Zitkala-Sa looking down and to her right. Naef, p. 395, cites sources for the variant titles of these photographs.

98. An Indian Madonna, illustrated Caffin, p. 98. Caffin writes (pp. 105-106): "The head of a young girl, very sweetly called An Indian Madonna, is inexpressibly moving, admitting us at once into the temple of a human mind. The outer court is beautiful, and the veil of mystery which hangs before the shrine not so dense but that we may peer through, guessing rather than seeing some vague hint of the mystery beyond. Who may penetrate the sacredness of a maiden's mind? And this is of an alien race—one fading from the earth, with memories and associations outside our own; she is of good education, too, and a beautiful habit of mind—what a tanglement of mystery one meets in trying to fathom the depth of her thoughts." Although Caffin's explanation is ineffectual, it shows that Zitkala-Sa was known to him.

99. Asia and Chinese Studies are also listed and illustrated in Keiley's American Institute catalogue as nos. 192 and 22. Asia, no. 192, is illustrated as Naef's fig. 361. Cf. note 37 above.


101. Ibid.


103. Mina Turner told me that her her grandmother had cast out her records and virtually all commercial negatives. The pictures and negatives that Käsebier found meaningful were donated by her and later by Hermine and Mina Turner to various museums and libraries.

I am grateful to Joan Gaines, Eulabee Dix's daughter, for providing information on her mother and for showing me Käsebier photographs of her. See also Norreys Jephson O'Conor, "Portrait Miniatures by Miss Eulabee Dix," International Studio 40 (June 1910): xciv-xcvi.

The negatives of the O'Neill and Nesbit portraits are now in the Library of Congress.


On Virginia Gerson, see Bertha E. Mahony, Louise Payson Latimer, and Beulah Folmsbee, Illustrators of Children's Books 1744-1945 (Boston: The Horn Book, 1947, p. 312).

Joan Gaines, whose mother Eulabee Dix was a friend of the Gerson sisters, also provided information about them.


106. See Chapter IV, footnote 18. The negative of "Harmony" is also in the Library of Congress.
During the nineteenth century, photography was chiefly a descriptive medium used to show the appearance of things. Even when photographers sought to use the medium artfully, the real world was the basis and inspiration for the vast majority of their pictures. Gertrude Käsebier was among the first photographers to consider photography, above all, a means for personal expression.

The idea of photography as an expressive medium informed the Photo-Secession, but no Secesssionist felt more strongly about it than Käsebier. In some ways, her carefully matted, intimate tonal pictures are representative of early twentieth century pictorial photography. But in their emotional content, Käsebier's personal thematic photographs reveal a sensibility unlike any other of her time. From early in her career, she spoke of photography as an expressive medium, an emotional art, declaring that she photographed "to express what there is in me." Nonetheless, she did not explicate her photographs, and the meaning of many pictures, like Blessed Art Thou Among Women, remains tantalizingly unclear.

It does not suffice to say (as she and others have) that such pictures are about motherhood. Around 1900, a great many paintings and photographs portrayed mothers, yet Käsebier's work is substantially different from most. Turn-of-the-century artists generally represented motherhood as a timeless
ideal, often posing a contemporary mother and her offspring as a madonna and child. This is manifest in work by such artists as George de Forest Brush, Gari Melchers and Dagnan Bouveret. Even Mary Cassatt's apparently worldly mothers have been interpreted as "secular madonnas." Käsebier's interest, as will be seen, was in modern mothers.

Not that she—unobservant Quaker though she was—didn't make a motherhood photograph that echoed religious paintings. The Manger [Fig. 15] has always been seen as a Madonna and Child. Yet The Manger's alternative title, Ideal Motherhood, shows that Käsebier considered the picture a pendant and complement to Real Motherhood [Fig. 16]. The Manger/Ideal Motherhood connotes archetypal, perfect motherhood. Not only is the mother symbolically anonymous—featureless in a soft-focus haze—but this version of motherhood is so idealized that there is no child at all, just a bunch of tenderly held swaddling (as has been pointed out in Chapter III). The ideal child literally does not exist!

Käsebier knew from experience that motherhood was not all sweetness and light. "Children," she said, "they're an awful bother. But a woman never reaches her fullest development until she's a mother. You have to pay the price." In Real Motherhood, the mother and child (Käsebier's daughter Elizabeth O'Malley and her daughter) are defined, not vague. This child is not swaddled or confined, but lightly clothed, so that she can kick, reach or gesture. Yet even Real Mother—
hood, like most pictures of its day, portrays a benign, passive relationship between quietly embracing adult and peaceful inactive infant. Käsebier made a few other pictures of this sort (for example, Blossom Day, 1904-05), Naef Fig. 357), but for her they are exceptional. As a rule, she suggested that a mother must simultaneously protect her child and grant its independence. Käsebier's attitude to independence separates most of her mother-child pictures from those of her contemporaries.

To comprehend Käsebier, it is profitable to search beyond the confining motif of motherhood by adopting a broader view of her work:

1. by seeing that two overarching themes—inddependence and solitude—encompass her motherhood pictures and other expressive photographs;

2. by widening the context in which we understand her pictures, to see that her approach to childhood and marriage reflects attitudes that were new or current in her day.

The Theme of Independence

As earlier chapters have shown, Gertrude Käsebier was an independent minded person who lived an independent life, taking up portrait painting before her children were fully grown, and, later, travelling apart from her husband. Independence was central to her artistic philosophy: she believed that "the key to artistic photography is to work out your own thoughts by yourself," and that "if you want to have real art
Likewise, independence is an underlying theme in Käsebier's photographs of children. While most artists of her day depicted a baby's bond with its mother, Käsebier's infants seldom cling; they turn away, as if to explore the world. In photograph after photograph, a mother looks affectionately at her child while the child, in curiosity, looks out or away from its mother. As early as 1897 the motif occurred in *Mother and Child* (later also called *Adoration* or *The Vision*, Fig. 21), and it continued in *Blessed Art Thou Among Women*, 1899 [Fig. 17], in *Decorative Panel*, 1899 [Fig. 18], and in *A Group*, 1900 [Fig. 23], among others.

Comparisons show how Käsebier differed from her contemporaries. Putting a Käsebier [Fig. 19] beside a typical Mary Cassatt [Fig. 20], we become aware that the Cassatt baby's dreamy gaze, self-absorbed fingersucking and physical unity with its mother contrast with Käsebier's alert seated child who looks out at the world with curiosity. Käsebier and Eugène Carrière had common concerns: tonal description of the world and motherhood, yet Carrière repeatedly emphasizes the link between mother and child [Fig. 22], whereas Käsebier's baby sees beyond its mother and pushes away, rather than embracing her [Fig. 21].

Children's desire for self-reliance and independence becomes more evident in Käsebier's pictures of older children. In photographs like *Decorative Panel* and *Blessed Art Thou*
Among Women, Käsebier's mothers protect their children without restricting them, while the children approach the world with confidence, standing upright and gazing steadily ahead. No other turn-of-the-century artist so regularly represents middle or upper-class children as outgoing as Käsebier's.

In Decorative Panel, the mother, face hidden by her bowed head, helps her toddler daughter to walk ahead. The daughter looks directly out with an independent spirit. It is possible that Käsebier, admiring Millet as she did, found inspiration for this photograph in the similarly posed Millet, The First Steps (Les premiers pas), which she could have known in reproduction. But whereas Millet's child goes from its mother to the security of its father's outstretched hands, Käsebier's little girl typically walks to an undefined space. Her forthright expression and sturdy stance also lend her nudity an innocence and timelessness that are quite unlike the coy nudity and Lolita-like precocity of girls photographed by Käsebier's French contemporary, Robert Demachy [Fig. 44].

In Blessed Art Thou Among Women, the mother similarly protects and directs her daughter by placing her arm on the child's shoulder. As in Decorative Panel, the child confronts the viewer frankly while the mother devotes herself to the child. Käsebier consistently saw or awakened confidence and self-assurance in children while her contemporaries in
painting and pictorial photography tended to evoke coy or clinging behavior.

**Blessed Art Thou Among Women** is a picture of the poet, Agnes Lee, with her daughter, Peggy, taken at their home. The print of the Annunciation behind them not only echoes their forms, it is emblematic of Mr. Lee—Frances Watts Lee—the amateur photographer who was devoted both to Christianity and to the aesthetics of the Arts and Crafts movement. This print, circumscribed by the Biblical inscription, "And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women," was created by the English Arts and Crafts artist, Selwyn Image. Image's prints, and evidently especially his participation in the English publication *The Hobby Horse* (for which Image designed the first cover) apparently impressed Lee, who was involved (with F. Holland Day, Ralph Adams Cram, Bertram Goodhue and other aesthetically inclined Bostonians) in publishing the quarterly magazine, *The Knight Errant* (1892-92). In typographic and illustrative style as well as in content, the Knight Errant was a close cousin of its English predecessor. 8

**Blessed Art Thou Among Women** (known through reproductions if not from its exhibition at the 1899 Philadelphia Salon) may have influenced Zaida Ben-Yusef, one of Käsebier's leading competitors in pictorial portraiture, to make a similar picture about a year later [Fig. 43]. The format of two
standing figures recalls the Käsebier, but Ben Yusef typifies her time by emphasizing the link between mother and child. The daughter's head tilts towards her mother, and the girl shows no urge to move, perhaps because her mother's restraining hand forestalls her. Conversely, Mrs. Lee gives gentle encouragement to Peggy, who seems ready to cross the threshold of the room, and, symbolically, to traverse the threshold between youth and adulthood.

Other examples prove the singularity of Käsebier's imagery. Her colleague, Clarence White, showed his wife holding their two sons to her: one boy looks away but clings, the other clutches her hand while his immobile feet show no itch to venture away (Clarence H. White [Aperture], plate 49). Paintings show much the same pattern, whether one looks to Europe or to the United States. In Mother and Child, ca. 1892, by Fritz von Uhde, a founder of the Munich Secession whose work Käsebier might have seen, a girl stands close to her mother; although the child looks at the viewer, her hands remain clasped in front of her, her feet firmly planted (Ulrich Finke, German Painting from Romanticism to Expressionism, 1974, fig. 136).

In John Singer Sargent's society portrait of 1903, Mrs. Fiske Warren and her Daughter (Boston Museum of Fine Arts), the elegant Mrs. Warren sits beside her daughter. The girl, who is perhaps thirteen, rests her head on her mother's shoulder and entwines her arm in her mother's.
Willcox Smith illustration, *Mother and Child* of about 1908, a seated mother leans over to kiss her five or six year old daughter's hand, while her left arm embraces (but restrains) the child (Patricia Hills, *Turn of the Century America*, fig. 119).

In other Käsebiers, where children appear alone, their independence is implied by the pictures' compositions. *Happy Days* [Fig. 28] is closely cropped, to suggest that the children are absorbed in a world of their own, free from adult interference. On the other hand, *The Road to Rome* [Fig. 32] shows one small, solitary figure, Käsebier's grandson, on his own in an almost unbounded landscape. He seems to have the world before him. This picture may now seem typical of its time in its sentimental attachment to children and in its implication that the boy (like the girl in *Blessed Art Thou Among Women*) is somehow on the threshold of the future. When the picture was made, however, both Robert Demachy and Frederick H. Evans commented on its incomprehensibility; Demachy said that Käsebier's intended meaning could not be understood without a caption. A simple allegory like Stieglitz's *Spring* [1901, Fig. 31] would have been better understood. Stieglitz's title turns his snapshot-like picture of his toddler daughter in a budding landscape into a symbol of youth and life beginning anew.

Although Käsebier's picture is, like Stieglitz's, a picture of a child alone in a landscape, she seems to allude to
independence, imagination and adventure. In 1930, she told a newspaper reporter that Road to Rome remained one of her favorites, and that it was allegorical. In the picture, she said, her grandson sees "a wild rose. There is also a lamb tethered to a bush, and a duck idly floats on the water." Yet no rose, duck or lamb can be seen in the blackness of the photograph. Was the painting and retouching, with which Käsebier has transformed the landscape, intended to symbolize the way in which a child's freewheeling imagination can transform reality? The title suggests that in a child's mind, a path might lead farther than its sign--"Valley Road"--indicates. Indeed, the solitary boy in an empty landscape may have reminded Käsebier of her own unfettered childhood, when she "played alone among the rocks of Colorado" where "the vast altitudes and spaces appealed to me in an unforgettable way." As another woman who had grown up on the frontier wrote: "What a blessing is the childish nature which clothes dull surroundings in fancy dress and drives dull care away. The sand pile where we played after the red sun went down was transformed into moats and castles with just as much enjoyment as if the land, like Canaan, had been flowing with milk and honey." The photograph Yoked and Muzzled: Marriage [Fig.40] suggests that childhood's dream of independence may be dashed in adulthood. This picture (alternately titled Allegory: Marriage, or Yoked and Muzzled: Find the Parallel) is about
loss of independence. With wry humor, Käsebier equates matrimony to the yoking and gagging of oxen—two emasculated creatures who, inseparably, are forced to bear a weighty burden. Holding hands in a connotation of adult betrothal and marriage, a young boy and girl confront the looming oxen who may symbolize their future.

By comparing a print from Käsebier's original negative with her final version of the picture, we can see how Käsebier manipulated the image for psychological impact [Figs. 40 & 41]. Painting on an intermediate negative, Käsebier shaded the children's garments, blackened the spotted oxen and shadowed their yoke and horns; a daylight country scene reminiscent of some of her earlier pictures (My Neighbors, Happy Days) has become an evocative crepuscular vision whose very ambiguity is disquieting. Although the animals present no imminent threat (one is even lying down), their large shadowy presences seem to menace the children who stand immobile—in awe? in fear? in innocent wonderment? One doesn't know. But the overall message is clear: marriage means constraint. The picture surely had some basis in Käsebier's own flawed marriage, but its broader implications will be discussed below.

The Theme of Solitude

Although Käsebier was a gregarious woman, pictures of solitude—of lone or isolated figures—recur in her work.
Solitude has been a familiar theme in modern painting, particularly in Symbolism. Käsebier must have been aware of examples such as Otto Eckmann's Solitude, or Paul Sérusier's Solitude, not to mention the portrait of F. Holland Day, titled Solitude, that Edward Steichen made just a few months before Käsebier visited him in Paris in the summer of 1901.¹⁴

But while the theme of solitude tends to be explicit or manifest in these and other turn-of-the-century pictures, it is almost always implicit and often subtle in Käsebier's. Her concern with solitude is representative of her era, but, more important, it signals an inner coherence to her work: the theme of solitude links otherwise disparate photographs. The motif is announced early, in Divinely Isolate in Mournful Thought [Fig. 5], one of Käsebier's prizewinning photographs in 1894. Later, with subtler titles and more convincing models, she suggested the solitude of woman's suffering in The Heritage of Motherhood and The Widow. The first of these shows Agnes Lee, the serene mother of Blessed Art Thou Among Women. Sadly, the Lees' lovely daughter, Peggy, died of an acute childhood illness, shortly after Blessed Art Thou... was taken. Perhaps even more tragically, their other daughter was permanently deafened by the same illness.¹⁵ Mrs. Käsebier saw Mrs. Lee's solitary mourning as a universal statement of the trials and sorrows of motherhood. She meant The Heritage of Motherhood to show that mothers were destined to bear a burden of worry and grief alone.

Käsebier had conceived the picture about fifteen years
before she took it. When she was in art school, she planned a "big picture" to "express the Heritage of Motherhood." The concept probably had roots in her trials as a mother. One experience of her own--days of lonely anguish when her teenage son was temporarily blinded--was surely a source for her conviction that motherhood inevitably had a dark and lonely side.

Although Käsebier must have been aware that the pose and mood of the Heritage of Motherhood echoed countless depictions of the Virgin mourning Christ's death, to her the similarity must have suggested universal, enduring sorrow, rather than religious conviction. Käsebier's notions about Christianity were not merely undogmatic, they were downright unconventional. A former photography magazine editor recalled Käsebier showing him a photograph and asking:

"Do you realize, Mr. Todd, why Christ on the Cross is instinctively dear to every woman?" I did not. "It's because he typifies every mother, for she is crucified for every child she bears, at least once, too frequently more than once. The idea of this picture came to me from the life of a woman whose children, one and all, had brought shame to her in one way or another. I have born (sic) children and know, know today, as one of them has hurt my feelings.

The second picture that suggests a woman's solitary suffering is The Widow [Fig. 39]. Little is known of the origin of this picture but that it was made at F. Holland Day's Maine cottage in 1913 and posed by the (unwidowed) artist, Beatrice Baxter Ruyl. Like the Heritage of Motherhood, it conveys a woman's desperation and isolation. The shadowy, empty
seat connotes her husband's absence; the infant's presence does not dispel the loneliness implied by the dark enclosure of the room and the viewless window that was made opaque by Käsebier's drawing on the negative or on a print that she later copied. Other pictorial devices suggest that something is out of joint: the effect is upsetting, even menacing. On analyzing the picture visually we note that it is composed of two closely related light forms on a dark ground. One is created by the white dresses of the woman and child, the other by the overlapping shapes of the table and window. The window and table read as a single form—an opening, or negative space. As a result the dark shapes surrounding the table leg become positive, or projecting, forms. The signals from our eyes contradict our knowledge, and it is only by an act of will that we can maintain a rational orientation to the picture's very ambiguous space.

The implications of this picture, beyond its disquieting representation of solitude, are discussed below.

Two other pictures that must also be counted among Käsebier's commentaries on solitude are symbolic animal pictures, *The Simple Life* [Fig. 33] and *The Pathos of the Jackass* [Fig. 42], that, up to now, have seemed unrelated to her other work. Käsebier felt them both to be significant enough to include among the 35 pictures in her 1929 retrospective.

Käsebier meant *The Simple Life*—a picture of a solitary duck in a monotonous grassy landscape—to be a metaphor for her own enforced solitude at the isolated suburban house that her husband purchased in Oceanside, Long Island, around 1904. Käsebier rebelled: by commuting there only on weekends, and by making this photograph which we understand only because her granddaughter explained its oblique and ironic title.
The picture suggests that to her, the so-called "simple life" was lonely, static and dull.

Another animal picture, The Pathos of the Jackass, also implies isolation and loneliness. If we perceive this as an image of the jackass or donkey as a beast of burden (and not as a fool), we can comprehend this picture as one in which the donkey stands alone and alien, among a herd of cattle. 22 While I have found no visual or literary precedent for Käsebier's curious picture, Ved Mehta's recent metaphoric use of the donkey as an alien in a world of horses, seems to parallel and confirm my interpretation of Käsebier's picture (which Mehta could not have seen). Mehta, recalling his years as a teenager from India studying in an Arkansas school for the blind, remembers his teacher saying: "There's no getting around the fact that we are a few blind people in a big sighted world...If we don't succeed in fitting into it, we'll never amount to anything." Mehta thought:

It's true...We're like donkeys in a world of horses. We have to prove our worth--justify our very existence--to the horses. We have to show them that if, for instance, we don't have their gait and mane, can't run as fast as they can, we can lug more weight, work harder, and put in longer hours. In another sense, as a person from a backward, poor land I'm a donkey even in this school. 23

Käsebier's picture is not as complete and lucid a symbol, however, as Mehta's metaphor. It is hard to interpret her picture, beyond seeing that the donkey looks isolated and pathetic. But whether she meant the picture to have a profound allusion, or whether she meant the title as a humorous
afterthought, to enliven a mild country scene, remains unclear.

It should be noted, however, that in its horizontal screenlike format, its silhouetted animal profiles, its soft landscape and shallow space, The Pathos of the Jackass, more than any other Käsebier, reflects the style and mysterious lyric mood of Arthur B. Davies's paintings, which Käsebier admired and collected. The silhouetted trees, in particular, also suggest the influence of Arthur W. Dow as well.

Though set outdoors, both The Simple Life and The Pathos of the Jackass depict confined spaces and suggest introverted solitude. The Road to Rome, on the other hand, shows that solitude need not be confining. The boy can be seen as a figure of adventurous self-reliance, solitary yet independent, against a beckoning distant prospect. Käsebier's enigmatic and atypical photograph, The Bat, can also profitably be placed in company with her images of independence and solitude [Figs. 27 & 32].

The "bat" is a nude woman with outspread "wings" (a dark space behind her outstretched arms). She confronts the viewer head on, ready to move from a dark (and possibly confining) background into a clearing. Like the boy in the Road to Rome, she is solitary, yet appears self-reliant. The picture was made in Newark, Ohio when Käsebier visited Clarence White in 1902; Mrs. White was the model. Stieglitz wrote: "White claims that he and Mrs. K. did [The Bat] together. That it was his
idea." Yet Käsebier always signed and exhibited the picture as her own.

A gesture as bold as Mrs. White's in *The Bat* is not to be found in her husband's photographs around 1902, when he depicted women in demure, contained, static poses (and seldom nude, e.g. Fig. 66). While White may have guided Käsebier to the wooded site and suggested the nude subject (virtually unique in Käsebier's work), the vision of an unreserved woman seems to be Käsebier's alone. It is also characteristic of Käsebier, but rare for White, to use obvious hand painting in her images (either by retouching negatives or by painting on a work print that is then copied), as she has in the murky area surrounding the figure in *The Bat*.

Whether to construe this picture as representing woman as vampire is another question worth raising, because the image of a woman who seduces and degrades men was so prevalent in contemporaneous European painting. However, there is no evidence that Käsebier (or White) had an affinity for such pictures, and her feminist attitudes (discussed below) would have been antipathetic to such imagery.

Käsebier's thematic pictures hew to her personal preoccupations: her tacit interest in solitude and independence, as well as her stated concern with motherhood. Yet they have even broader implications.
Käsebier in Context

Although Käsebier believed her photographs were simply expressing "what there is in me," it is now evident that her thematic pictures represent progressive attitudes of the early twentieth century. Ideas about childrearing and marriage that gained currency in Käsebier's day can be found embodied in her photographs.

Käsebier and the Kindergarten Movement

Käsebier's attitude towards children's independence drew upon ideas of Freidrich Froebel, the German founder of the kindergarten movement, who believed that mothers, as well as teachers, should foster children's intellectual growth and independence, from infancy on. During the 1890's, Froebel's ideas took hold in American homes as well as kindergartens, and articles on the kindergarten movement appeared regularly in many general magazines. 26

A magazine reader like Käsebier could not have missed these articles. 27 She would also have known and possibly observed kindergarten theory at closer hand, because Pratt Institute was among the leading educators of kindergarten teachers. Two training kindergartens were near the art studios, and pieces about the kindergarten program and kindergarten theory appeared regularly in the Pratt Institute Monthly, alongside reports on the art program in which Käsebier was enrolled. 28 The seeds of Arthur W. Dow's interest in Froebel
may also have been sown at Pratt. Käsebier must have learned (perhaps through Clarence White who taught with Dow after 1908) that this artist who had praised her pictures in Camera Notes had become "a convert to...Froebelian concepts" after 1903, when he began to teach at Columbia University's Teachers College. By 1914 his involvement was so great that he addressed the International Kindergarten Union on "Color in the Kindergarten." 29

Froebel believed a child's education should begin at birth. He recommended fingerplay games, among other things, to spur even an infant's intellectual development. His idea: "What the child imitates he begins to understand," was spread through books of songs and fingerplay, especially Finger Plays For Nursery and Kindergarten by Emilie Poulsson, which prints words and music for songs, and illustrates appropriate gestures. 30

A gesture from Poulsson's book is shown in Käsebier's photograph, The Hand that Rocks the Cradle [Figs. 37, 38 ]. The mother apparently recites a verse about a rabbit, simulating rabbit ears with two fingers while the child looks on wide-eyed and plays with its own fingers. Although the mother's pose has been perceived by one historian as "almost a gesture of benediction," 31 it is doubtless simply a picture of Froebel's ideas in action. Käsebier herself used old-fashioned finger play to engage the interest of juvenile sitters, as shown by the story of her playing "This Little
Pig" with children of a pork packer (Chapter IX).

The photograph's title is significant because the notion that "the hand that rocked the cradle" might "rule the world" seemed even more probable when Käsebier made her picture than in the mid-nineteenth century when William Ross Wallace wrote those noted lines. Well before 1913, a mother began to be considered responsible not only for the physical and moral development of her child, but for its intellectual growth as well. 32

The idea that "children must be taught independence early" came out of kindergarten theory, but filtered down to popular magazines such as the Ladies Home Journal by the turn of the century. The watchful but distant glance of the mother (Hermine Turner) in the photograph, Lolly Pops seems to exemplify one Ladies Home Journal article titled "Let the Children Live their Own Lives," which advised mothers against watching their children too closely and smothering their individuality. 33 Thus, Käsebier's vision—of children seeking independence and of their mothers granting it—has roots in educational theory of the day. Käsebier's mothers and children are modern mothers and children [Fig. 36].

In the context of her era, Käsebier's description of motherhood as a unifying bond between women is of more than sentimental interest. Speaking about her photograph, Real Motherhood [Fig. 16], she said:

While posing my daughter there suddenly seemed to develop between us a greater intimacy than I had

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ever known before. Every barrier was down. We were not two women, mother and daughter, old and young, but two mothers with one feeling; all I had experienced in life that had opened my eyes and brought me in close touch with humanity seemed to well up and meet an instant response in her, and the tremendous import of motherhood which we both realized seemed to find its expression in this photograph. 34 That sense of "the tremendous import of motherhood," of a mother's formative influence on her child's intellectual—and not just physical or moral—development, had emerged during the 1880's and 1890's, as Froebel's ideas and the kindergarten movement caught on in the United States. The strong bond between mothers that Käsebier describes was also recognized by kindergarten associations, which formed organizations of mothers to discuss fundamental problems of motherhood and childhood. 35 Such groups of mothers met at Pratt Institute while Käsebier studied there. 36

Käsebier and Women's Reform

Likewise, Käsebier's cynical Yoked and Muzzled: Married [Fig. 40] should be seen as one picture among many early twentieth century articles and books challenging the institution of matrimony. Feminist writers such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman and Emma Goldman had pointed out that most marriages were economic arrangements that enslaved not just the woman, (or the man), but both partners. A woman pays with "her name, her privacy, her self-respect, her very life 'until death doth part.' Man, too, pays his toll," said Goldman, "but he feels his chains more in an economic sense." 37 Gilman's
description of marriage as an "unlovely yoke" which hampers a woman's freedom, recalls Käsebier's imagery. 38

Because Käsebier was not in the forefront of feminism, her relation to the movement has gone unnoticed. Yet a close look at her career shows that she played a part in attaining "the modern freedom of women" that she "rejoiced in" towards the end of her life. 39 Letting actions speak more loudly than words, she had long shown feminist sympathies three ways:

1. by affirming her right to freedom in marriage, by travelling and working apart from her husband.

2. By showing her preference for comfortable, unconstricting clothes. 40

3. By asserting her right to work outside the home, for both economic independence and self-expression. Early in her career she encouraged "women of artistic tastes to train for the unworked field of modern photography." Later she led in forming an association of professional women photographers. 41

Considering these attitudes, Yoked and Muzzled: Married (which Käsebier deemed significant enough to copyright in 1915) must be seen not simply as an isolated, personal commentary on marriage and independence, but as an expression of prevailing feminist attitudes to marriage.

Similarly, widows had been in the news for several years before Käsebier made her photograph, The Widow, in 1913. From about 1910 on, newspapers and magazines reported efforts to provide for fatherless families. 42 By 1912, President Theodore Roosevelt publicly advocated pensioning dependent and
indigent widows; by mid-1913, thirteen states had enacted pension plans for widows. On Sunday, April 13, 1913, when Käsebier's portrait of Mrs. Lydig appeared in one section of the New York Times, an editorial in another section favored widow's pensions. 

Virtually anyone who read a newspaper or magazine at that period would have been aware of a burgeoning interest in the plight of widows. For example, impoverished widows could not support their children without working; while working away from home at industrial jobs they could not tend their children. Mothers were thus forced to relinquish children to inferior care in foster homes and institutions. Sometimes these children were even adopted by others. Families were often fragmented; brothers and sisters were separated from each other as well as from their mother. Advocates of widows' pensions, however, noted that "A mother's care should be better than the State's care of children in most instances, and it would cost no more under a properly devised pensioning arrangement." 

Like the widow whom one magazine described as obsessed by the fear that her children would be taken from her, Käsebier's Widow looks out with anxious eyes, clinging to her child in a pose uncharacteristic of Käsebier's mothers. Young widows who were financially comfortable (as Käsebier's Widow seems to be) suffered other hardships. Käsebier's photograph could well illustrate one widow's description of her
plight; this woman felt that while society was indulgent to a "grass widow"—a woman living apart from her husband—
the actual widow, the woman who, as in my own case, has experienced the great calamity of losing her husband by death, and who stands alone, honorably widowed—this woman is very often made to feel as though her widowhood were in some subtle ways an offense against the world, especially if she is in any degree young and sees years of solitude stretching away before her. 47

Because there are few visual precedents for The Widow it is reasonable to assume that Käsebier's interest in the subject was provoked by its timeliness. Although Käsebier's own widowhood may have made her especially susceptible to the topic, her photograph is not autobiographical. At 57, in 1909, Käsebier had been released, rather than trapped, by her husband's death.

Moreover, it was not unusual for Käsebier to intertwine personal vision and public matters, as she did in Yoked and Muzzled: Married and in The Widow. Käsebier felt personally involved with the events of her day. During World War I, she interpreted her dream of boots marching as a vision or premonition of the German invasion of Belgium. 49 About the same time, she introduced a photographic lecture by saying: "I was taken unawares when your President announced that I would address you upon 'Composition,' and I worrying about the Income Tax." 50

Yet, for all her worldliness, Käsebier kept unconventionality within acceptable bounds: her pictures surprised, but they did not shock. She did not try to reform social
injustices through photography (as Jessie Tarbox Beals did during the teens); she aided women photographers, but seems not to have reached beyond her own profession to become involved, for example, in woman's suffrage. Even her images of independence are subtle, rather than striking. Käsebier's mothers seem good, kind and patient; the children are attractive and well-behaved. In Käsebier's idealized world, mothers' granting independence to their children seems part of their duty. Though they grant independence more readily than Cassatt's mothers, they are also more limited than Cassatt's women in their motherly activities: Cassatt (but not Käsebier) shows daily routines of bathing, feeding and comforting children.

If Käsebier's pictures are at times ambiguous, it is because she wished to reach beyond mere facts to communicate inchoate sensations. To do so, she seems to have drawn upon Symbolist ideas, although unlike Steichen (whose early pictures have been linked to Symbolism\textsuperscript{51}), Käsebier cannot be closely connected to that movement. Like some Symbolists, she aimed to excite emotions through nuanced, evocative images.\textsuperscript{52} However, as her mother and child pictures show, the progressive notions that inform her pictures often differentiate them from those of her contemporaries. Beyond that, concepts of modern motherhood, independence and solitude do more than underlie her pictures, they enliven, impassion and lend coherence to Gertrude Käsebier's varied thematic repertoire.
Footnotes: X. Käsebier's Thematic Photographs

This chapter was originally presented, in somewhat different form, at the College Art Association Annual Meeting, New York City, February 1982.

1. In 1886, P.H. Emerson inaugurated the pictorial movement by seeing that photography could be "expression by means of pictures of that which [man] considers beautiful in nature." (Quoted by Peter C. Bunnell, editor, A Photographic Vision: Pictorial Photography, 1889-1923 [Salt Lake City: Peregrine Smith, 1980], p. 2. By the turn-of-the-century, photographers saw that they could express more than that: the unsigned introduction to the first Philadelphia Photographic Salon (at which Stieglitz was a juror) acknowledged that "The possibilities of photography as a method of artistic expression are now generally admitted." (Philadelphia Photographic Salon, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 1898, n.p.)

The first issue of Camera Work set forth the idea that the magazine was intended to "appeal to the everincreasing ranks of those who have faith in photography as a medium of individual expression," (Stieglitz, Keiley, Dallett Fuguet and John Francis Strauss, "An Apology," Camera Work no. 1, (Jan. 1902), p. 15. The third issue stated that the object of the Photo-Secession was "to advance photography as applied to pictorial expression," ("The Photo-Secession," Camera Work no. 3 (July 1903) n.p. [supplemental sheet].

Later, Stieglitz defined the Photo-Secession "as that phase of photography in which the photographer uses the camera and such other photographic medium as he chooses to express instead of merely to record." ("The Advancement of Photography as an Art," New York Herald, 21 Jan. 1906, Literary and Art Section, p. 4.

2. "It is not just that I am anxious to make these photographs for the sake of people...I am thirsty to do it for my own sake, to express what there is in me," Edgerton, p. 90.

In 1898, Käsebier had said: "Why should not the camera as a medium for the interpretation of art as understood by painters, sculptors and draughtsmen, command respect? .... An artist must walk in a field where there is something more than chemical formulae ... He must see nature through the medium of his own intellectual emotions..." "Studies in Photography," p. 270.

Frances Benjamin Johnston wrote that Käsebier "chose, with deep and careful purpose, photography instead of the brush or pencil, as a medium of artistic expression." ("The Foremost Women Photographers of America," Ladies Home Journal 18 (May 1901): 1.
The concept of working for self-expression was not limited to Käsebier or to artists of the period. In *Women and Economics* (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1898), p. 157. Charlotte Perkins Gilman points out the contemporary "demand in women not only for their own money, but for their own work for the sake of personal expression."


6. The child's pose in *Mother and Child/Adoration/The Vision* interested Vladimir Nabokov when he described an eccentric artist's studio in *Pnin*: "Nothing adorned its pale gray walls except two identically framed pictures: a copy of Gertrude Käsebier's photographic masterpiece 'Mother and Child' (1897), with the wistful, angelic infant looking up and away (at what?); and a similarly toned reproduction of the head of Christ from Rembrandt's 'The Pilgrims of Emmaus,' with the same, though slightly less celestial, expression of eyes and mouth." (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1957), p. 95. Käsebier's work was out of fashion in 1957; it took an unusual sensibility then to recognize its merit.

When Käsebier's granddaughter, Mina Turner, who then worked for Doubleday, noticed this sentence in *Pnin*, she wrote to Nabokov, offering him a copy of the *Mother and Child* he admired. He declined, saying he never accepted gifts. (Mina Turner, interview.)


Image's *Annunciation* was one of a series of chromolithographs known as Fitzroy Pictures. They were published by the Fitzroy Picture Society of Fitzroy Street, London, according to information printed on *The Annunciation*.

The pictures were "avowedly designed for the decoration of schools, mission-rooms and hospitals," and were "roughly described as posters which insist on a religious, moral or
patriotic idea rather than on the merits of an article."

Image designed at least two religious pictures in addition to the Annunciation; other designers, including Heywood Sumner, also designed the Fitzroy prints. (Charles Hiatt, "The Fitzroy Pictures," The Poster [London] Dec. 1898, p. 270.) Copies of the Annunciation may now be found in the NYPL Print Room as well as in the Victoria and Albert Museum Print Room.

Image was educated both as an artist and as an Anglican priest. Disillusioned by church politics, he left his curateship to devote full time to painting, designing, teaching and writing. However, his pictures and writings often retain religious themes. See: "The Work of Mr. Selwyn Image," International Studio 5 (July 1898): 2–10; A.H. Mackmurdo and the Century Guild Collection (Walthamstow: William Morris Gallery, 1967); Selwyn Image, Selwyn Image Letters ([London]: G. Richards, 1932), especially pp. 35–37. Image's Poems and Carols (London: Elkin Mathews, 1894), pp. 26–27 and Hobby Horse 2 (1887): 18–19, contain Image's poem on the theme of the Annunciation, "Gabriel and Mary."

Lee was employed as the printer at the Boston Public Library, and achieved some recognition as an amateur photographer (see Wilson's Photographic Magazine 36 (Dec. 1899): 566, on his photographs at the Philadelphia Salon. Also: Photo-Miniature 3 (Sept. 1901): 277–8, and Day's Exhibition of Prints by the New School of American Photography, 1900.

Lee's photographs are now rare, however the Boston Public Library owns a print by him of the Library's courtyard (probably one of several referred to in Camera Notes 5 (Jan. 1902): 209). The Boston Public Library is also the best source for Lee's writings on William Morris and on the Church Social Union. The Boston Museum Print Dept. owns a Käsebier portrait of Lee.

According to Mina Turner (interview), Lee was extremely devout, and felt that his daughter's death was punishment for his not having entered the ministry.

9. Demachy wrote: "The obscurity that one may have sometimes objected to in Mme. Käsebier's compositions occurs in part because the feeling that presided over the work's conception could not be expressed clearly enough by the imperfect means the photographer has at his disposal today. Also because the motif's point of departure, often intimate and episodic, cannot be fathomed without a caption which it is, of course, impossible to add.

"I cite, for example, a dull picture... (of) a dreary avenue, with trees standing out against the dying glimmer of twilight. In the foreground, the silhouette of a child seems to hesitate, hardly showing up against the ground drowned in shadow. But it is a remembrance, it is only a personal remembrance, and full of poetry. The story connected with it is
touching, and as soon as I have understood it, I submit newly to the charm of the unquestionably imperfect picture. The public does not know and will understand no more than I understood at first." "Mme. Käsebier et son œuvre," La Revue de Photographie (15 July 1906), p. 290.

"L'obscurité qu'on a pu reprocher quelquefois aux compositions de Mme. Käsebier vient en partie de ce que le sentiment qui a présidé à la conception de l'œuvre n'a pu être assez clairement exprimé par les moyens imparfaits dont dispose aujourd'hui le photographe. Aussi de ce que le point de départ du motif, souvent intime et épisodique, ne saurait être deviné sans une légende qu'il est bien entendu impossible d'ajouter.

"Je cite, par exemple, une image terne... C'est une avenue triste, aux arbres se détachant contre la lueur mourante du crépuscule. Au premier plan, la silhouette d'un enfant semble hésiter, se découplant à peine contre le terrain noyé d'ombre. Mais c'est un souvenir, ce n'est qu'un souvenir personnel et plein de poésie. L'histoire qui s'y rattache est touchante et je subis le charme, tout nouveau, du tableau imparfait à coup sûr, dès que je l'eus connue. Le public ne la connaît pas et ne comprendra pas plus que je n'ai compris tout d'abord."

Evans, "The Photographic Salon, London, 1904. As Seen Through English Eyes," Camera Work no. 9 (Jan 1905), p. 40, wrote: "The Road to Rome...is a sheer enigma to me. I like it as a piece of rich black-and-white, but what it is all about, or what is its relation to the very definite title given, is too much for me to grapple with."

10. Chambers, see appendix.

11. Her handwork is shown in a glossy workprint of Road to Rome which she painted over and then copied. This, as well as an excellent gum version, is at the Princeton University Museum. MOMA owns a platinum print of Road to Rome.

12. GK to Laura Gilpin, 1 Sept. 1923, Amon Carter.


Solitude has been a frequent theme in American painting (as well as literature), as shown in the exhibition catalogue Solitude: Inner Visions in American Art (Evanston, Ill.: Terra Museum of American Art, 25 Sept.-30 Dec. 1982). The catalogue
explains how diverse artists, from 1840-1979, dealt differently with the theme, either explicitly, or implicitly like Käsebier. However, there is no direct connection between Käsebier and the artists mentioned in the catalogue.

15. Barbara LaSalle, whose grandmother was Agnes Lee's sister, wrote that Peggy presumably died of "something like scarlet fever, since her surviving sister was affected by that disease at about that time, losing both hearing and most of speech for the rest of her life. (Memo to the author.)

Agnes Lee, who published poems and children's books, was a celebrity in her own right. Her children's book, The Round Rabbit, was published by F. Holland Day's firm, Copeland and Day, in 1898. (Some of its illustrations, signed O'Neill Latham, were by Rose O'Neill, whom Käsebier later photographed.)

After her marriage to Francis Watts Lee failed around 1900 (owing, according to Mina Turner, to Lee's difficult personality), she married Dr. Otto Freer, a surgeon, in 1911, and returned to Chicago, her home town. (She was a daughter of William H. Rand, co-founder of Rand-McNally, the map publishers.) She became active in Chicago literary circles, and was a frequent contributor to Poetry magazine. Many of her letters (from 1912-1938) are in the Poetry magazine papers at the University of Chicago.

No correspondence between her and Käsebier is known to survive. However, we can assume that their friendship was based partly on their mutual concern with motherly love, sorrow and sacrifice. For example, Lee's poem, "The Asphodel," "dramatized the story of a Hawaiian mother whose little son was stricken with leprosy, and who put him to sleep in death rather than let him be removed to the dreadful Molokai colony... The human terror and beauty of the sacrifice emerged in spite of some stilted lines," wrote Harriet Monroe (H.M., "Comment: Agnes Lee," Poetry [Mar. 1932], pp. 324-8.) In "Motherhood," Lee dramatizes mothers' undying, unqualified love for their children in an imaginary poetic conversation between Mary, mother of Jesus, and the mother of Judas Iscariot.

My first clues to Mrs. Lee's name and profession came from letters at Norwood, giving her full name (Martha Agnes Lee to Day, 18 May 1893) and identifying her as a writer (Elliott R. May to Mrs. Freer, n.d., ca. Sept. 1922). Her biography and bibliography followed on knowing her name, but in 1978 I failed to find descendants of the Rand family through Rand-McNally of Chicago.

The next year, Barbara LaSalle, Registrar of the Brooklyn Museum, was surprised to see, in Blessed Art Thou Among Women, a picture of her great-aunt "Matt" hanging in the Käsebier exhibition a few floors above her office. She has been kind enough to provide me with information and photographs, and I am grateful to Barbara Millstein of the Museum for putting her in touch with me.

17. Memoir addressed "For Mrs. Vitale" in GK's hand, and written in GK's hand, but marked "Please Return/ Hermine" in Hermine Turner's hand, n.d. (ca. 1918?), NYPL Manuscript Division.

Rosamond Vitale was a friend of Käsebier's from about 1910 through the 1920's. Käsebier often visited the Vitale family's summer estate, "Hilltop," in the Berkshires. There, Ferruccio Vitale (Rosamond's husband, and a noted landscape architect) had designed the gardens. He had also installed a darkroom for Käsebier in the basement of "Hilltop."

The Vitale's eldest daughter was the victim of an unidentified childhood disease, of which she died around 1919. Käsebier apparently sent the memoirs to Mrs. Vitale to bolster her during her daughter's illness. I am grateful to Nina Vitale Cohen and to Knox Burger for providing information about the Vitale family. Mrs. Cohen's Käsebiers helped me to identify the portrait of her mother, Rosamond Vitale, which is now at the University of Kansas Museum (73.18). The portrait of her grandmother, Mrs. Vitale's mother, was reproduced in *Studio Light*, Nov. 1911 (the unpaged illustration shows a woman pouring from a carafe into a glass).

It is regrettable that an album of Käsebier photographs of the Vitale family, formerly in the collection of Mies Hora, has disappeared.

18. F. Dundas Todd, "My Photographic Reminiscences," *Abel's Photographic Weekly*, 26 Jan. 1924, p. 80. Time had blurred Todd's memory when he wrote that Käsebier said this apropos her "noted photograph of the Crucifixion"; however, it is not unlikely that she owned one of Day's Crucifixion prints which evoked the comment. Or, she may have shown Todd The Heritage of Motherhood, because he recalled her saying "The idea of this picture came to me from the life of a woman whose children, one and all, had brought shame to her in one way or another." The Heritage is about a mother's sorrow, not shame—but the difference is not that great for a recollection more than ten years old.

I have been unable to determine whether Käsebier was aware of George Minne's sculpture, for example Mother Mourning over her Dead Child, c. 1886 (Goldwater, *Symbolism*, fig. 155) which would have provided examples of timeless, non-religious depictions of mothers' anguish. However, Minne's mothers grieve over death; Käsebier is concerned with a more generalized sorrow.

19. Beatrice Baxter Ruyl is identified as the subject in the list of photographic glass plate negatives given to the Library of Congress (copy in MOMA Käsebier biographical file).
The Widow, The Hand that Rocks the Cradle and a picture of Mrs. Ruyl nursing her child were apparently made at the same time in Day's "Chateau," whose interior and furnishings have remained remarkably unchanged between Day's era and my visit to the "Chateau" in 1978. (The "Chateau" in Georgetown is in private hands; it remains secluded and inaccessible by automobile.)

Käsebier must have made these pictures on her 1913 visit to Georgetown (see Chapter VII, footnote 3). The pictures could not have been made before 1913, when Day's home was completed, nor after, because The Hand that Rocks the Cradle was published in American Photography 8 (June 1914): 327.


22. As a species, donkeys are capable of reproducing themselves. They should not be confused with mules, who might be pitied because of their sterility.


25. A now unidentifiable nude was listed in the catalogue of the 1898 Philadelphia Photographic Salon, no. 109.


27. Not only did Käsebier enter magazine and newspaper contests during the 1890's (see Chapter I), but she later referred to magazine articles in letters to F. Holland Day and Laura Gilpin (Norwood and Amon Carter). She also clipped
and saved articles about herself and others (NYPL Manuscript Division and Mason Turner Collection).


32."'The mother who rocks the cradle,' women learned, 'is entrusted with a greater responsibility than merely caring for the physical requirements of her babe.' She 'has the privilege of witnessing the first burst of the bud of intelligence.' She 'must meet the demands of a newly awakened consciousness...must shape those activities into concentrated directed force.'" Cora L. Stockman, "Our Nursery," Kindergarten 3 (1891): 337, quoted in Sheila M. Rothman, Woman's Proper Place (New York: Basic Books, 1978), p. 99. Rothman, p. 103, also quotes Elizabeth Harrison, an active promoter of kindergartens, as explaining in 1895 that Froebel established that "the destiny of the nations lies far more in the hands of women--the mothers--than in the hands of those who possess power."

33. Mary P. Ryan, Womanhood in America (New York & London: Franklin Watts, 1983), p. 212, mentions this article, in the December 1899 Ladies Home Journal, as well as one in the January 1900 issue that says a child "must be taught independence early." These issues are missing from the NYPL.

34. Edgerton, pp. 91-92.

35. Vandewalker, pp. 59-60.


Along the same lines, Ida M. Tarbell wrote: "The immorality and inhumanity of compelling the obviously mis-mated to live together, grow on society. Divorce and separation are more and more tolerated. Yet little is done to prevent the hasty and ill-considered mating which is at the source of the trouble." The Business of Being a Woman (New York: Macmillan, 1912), p. 57. Originally published in American Magazine.

38. "So sharp is the reaction from this unlovely yoke that there is a limited field of life to-day wherein women choose not to marry, preferring what they call 'their independence,'--a new-born, hard-won, dear-bought independence. That any living woman should prefer it to home and husband, to love and motherhood, throws a fierce light on what women must have suffered for lack of freedom before." Gilman, Women and Economics (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1898), p. 91.

39. Chambers (see appendix).

40. Concerning reformist ideas on women's clothing, see Helene E. Roberts, "The Exquisite Slave: The Role of Clothes in the Making of the Victorian Woman," Signs 2 (Spring 1877), pp. 557-568. Käsebier commented on the clothes of French peasant women: "We dared once to pity their women because they were laborers in the field. To-day...we begin to ask whether they cannot teach us many a lesson in contentment, healthful dress, industry, patience, and unaffected manners. "It is true that French women labor like men in the fields, in spring, in hot summer, and again in the still warm autumn; but it must be remembered that their muscles are never hampered by the pressure of whale-bone and steel..." (Käsebier, "Peasant Life in Normandy," pp. 271-2.) These sentences show that Käsebier was aware of the recent movements advocating greater freedom in women's clothing (see Roberts pp. 558, 567-8).

Over the years, Käsebier herself abandoned tight clothing. Photographs show her as a fashionably corseted matron ca. 1895 (Homer, Käsebier, p. 13). But in her studio she was "utterly careless of dress or appearances, and just as apt as not to emerge suddenly from the dark room into a group of fashionably-dressed patrons...enveloped in a voluminous, badly stained developing apron..." (Keiley, 1904, p. 227). Her loose unconventional attire in later life included pale gray silk Chinese blouses, Chinese jackets, black broadcloth skirts that reached her ankles, and a cape over all. (Mina Turner, interview.)
41. Concerning work for self-expression as well as for remuneration, see footnote 2 above.

Käsebier concluded "Studies in Photography" by saying: "I earnestly advise women of artistic tastes to train for the unworked field of modern photography. It seems to be especially adapted to them, and the few who have entered it are meeting with gratifying and profitable success." (p. 272.)


Käsebier was also a mentor to a number of other photographers, as shown in the concluding chapter.

42. The Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature and the New York Times Index show scant interest in the topic of widows from 1900-1910. Between 1910 and 1913, the interest mushroomed. For example, between 1905 and 1909, there are only six entries in the Reader's Guide for the topic of widows, and no entry for widow's pensions. The 1910-14 volume devotes one and a half columns of listings to "Pensions for Widows."


44. "State Aid for Widowed Mothers," New York Times, 13 April 1913, section III, p. 6. The photograph of Mrs. Lydig accompanied a feature article on the founding of the Drama Society, of whose Executive Committee Mrs. Lydig was a member (section V, p. 13).


48. While the picture has some precedents in English pictures of women who are (or soon may be) widows, such as The North West Passage by Millais and Pray God Bring Father Safely Home by Julia Margaret Cameron, there is no evidence that Käsebier knew or admired these pictures. American paintings are scarce (although there are some portraits of them unrelated to Käsebier's photograph), according to Phoebe Lloyd, who attempted to study the subject of widowhood in American painting but found too few examples to complete a study (conversation with Phoebe Lloyd, 1983).

49. Hermine Turner, interview.


52. Käsebier derided an unidentified photograph, saying "It is one of my earliest efforts, but I don't show it. It excites no emotion." Sabine, Abel's, 26 Sept. 1931, p. 379.
CONCLUSION

When Gertrude Käsebier asked the priest, Father Wenzel, how she could reciprocate for his generosity in teaching her photography, he replied, "Pass it on." And, said Käsebier in 1931, "I've passed it on ever since."¹ In person and by example, photographers learned from her.

There are two aspects to Käsebier's photographic "legacy." The more evident shows her direct and immediate influence on photographers; the more elusive suggests some broader and lingering effects of Käsebier's work and career.

Of all the photographers who took Käsebier as a model, no one felt a more sudden or lasting impact from her work than Imogen Cunningham. After more than seventy years she recalled how seeing a reproduction of Käsebier's Blessed Art Thou Among Women inspired her to become a photographer around 1901, when she was still a high school student in Seattle. "That's the one that really hooked me," she said of Blessed Art Thou Among Women. "That was the photograph that ... decided me on being a photographer, because before (that) I never knew there was such a thing as photography...I was pretty ignorant at the time" — and Seattle was quite provincial, she recalled.² Edward Curtis, for whom Cunningham later worked, had not yet been acclaimed for his Indian photographs, so she did not know his work. And, although she met Mrs. Käsebier a decade later in New York, their brief encounter had no lasting impact. "We did not have a complete
association," Cunningham recalled of their acquaintance. 3

Best known of the women and men who apprenticed in Käsebier's studio are Alvin Langdon Coburn, Alice Boughton and Alice Austin. Käsebier's influence showed most clearly on Boughton, who followed Käsebier's lead as a portraitist, photographer of children, contributor to magazines, and member of the Photo-Secession. Like Käsebier, Boughton had attended Pratt Institute, where she even succeeded her mentor as president of the Art Students Fund Association. In an article, "Photography, a Medium of Expression," Boughton set forth ideas like Käsebier's, and promoted the use of the gum print around the time that Käsebier favored it. 4

Alice Austin said she "came under the influence of Mrs. Käsebier and her work while an amateur photographer in Brooklyn. 5 She later practiced portraiture in Boston from about 1899 to 1920, and ought not to be confused with the now better-known Alice Austen, who often travelled from her Staten Island home to photograph people on the streets of Manhattan. 6 Käsebier's influence is exhibited in Austin's "endeavor to obtain the personality of my sitter and at the same time to turn out a photograph which may lay some Claim to Art." 7 It also appears that Austin absorbed some of Käsebier's philosophy about mothers and children: her photograph, This Little Pig Went to Market, published in 1913, shows a mother playing with her baby's toes. 8

Although Rose Clark, who turned briefly from painting and design to portrait photography, is little known today,
Stieglitz owned a couple of the photographs she made in partnership with the more technically minded Elizabeth Flint Wade. Her talents were also admired by her former pupil, Mabel Dodge, whose Florentine villa she furnished during the 1890's. Clark credited Käsebier with inspiring her to take up photography, and she felt she owed her "any success she had had with a camera." By telling Joseph Keiley "we all owe her much" in 1900, Clark suggested an even greater scope to Käsebier's early influence. 

For Laura Gilpin, Consuelo Kanaga and Clara Estella Sipprell, all of whom became well-known during the 1920's and 1930's, Käsebier's friendship, encouragement and example as a successful woman photographer were more important than specific precedents she set: by the time Käsebier knew these women she was reaching the end of her career.

Of the three, Laura Gilpin knew Käsebier best. While studying at the Clarence White School during 1916-1917, she frequently visited Käsebier; they then corresponded between 1918 and 1928, when Gilpin had returned to Colorado. The gentle quality and homelike surroundings in Gilpin's early portraits are reminiscent of Käsebier, and The Little Medicine Man (1932), a close-up of a blanket-enshrouded Navajo Indian, echoes Käsebier's Red Man, which Gilpin knew from a copy of Camera Work Number One that Käsebier gave her. Nonetheless, Käsebier's influence on Gilpin seems to have been less stylistic than supportive. Gilpin did a great deal of outdoor photography which Käsebier praised; she deemed one
Colorado landscape "doubly precious" because it recalled her childhood surroundings. At other times, the older photographer counseled on practical matters, endorsing one "business scheme" as "fine and practical, sound and sane." Understandably, in 1977 Gilpin recalled that Käsebier had "inspired me to go ahead... She was always an inspiration when I saw her."  

Clara Sipprell's portrait of Käsebier [Fig. 112], which she apparently made at Clarence White's school in Maine, suggests the student photographer's respect for her instructor. In later years, Miss Sipprell spoke warmly of Mrs. Käsebier, noting "how good she was to young photographers." Similarly, Consuelo Kanaga, who often ventured from her studio to photograph impoverished Black families in Harlem, seems to have found in Käsebier a "very helpful older woman's appreciation of a younger woman's photographs."

Kanaga also spoke admiringly of Käsebier's independence from her husband. Indeed, as a married working woman with children, Käsebier must have been a model for many, especially early in the century when women were expected to choose: marriage or career. Many names of photographers who followed her example are known, but we may also surmise that her fame and success spurred some women to try other careers along with marriage.

Käsebier also expanded the notion of what a photographic career might be—for men as well as for women. That Käsebier doubtless influenced Coburn and Steichen to try to depict personalities, rather than merely to catch surface appearance—
ces in portraits has already been shown in Chapter IX. But her influence on them was both deeper and subtler than that: Käsebier had invented and created a demand for the sort of artistic-commercial photography that Coburn and Steichen undertook. Her versatility helped to show them that studio portraiture need not be a one-track profession (as it was for most 19th century studio photographers), but could parallel innovative scenic or figurative work. Her example lives on today, in photographers like Richard Avedon and Irving Penn, who combine commercial portraiture and fashion photography, done for magazines, with creative photographic work made for their own pleasure and for museum and gallery exhibition.

Still, perhaps the most fascinating residue of Käsebier's photographic powers may be found lurking in the work of that anti-commercial idealist, Alfred Stieglitz. That Käsebier's photographs of hands probably influenced his later partial portraits of Georgia O'Keeffe has already been suggested in Chapter IX. It is more surprising to discover that *Blessed Art Thou Among Women* seems to have haunted him too, years after Käsebier and Stieglitz had parted company, yet Stieglitz's 1921 portrait of Georgia Engelhard [Fig. 113] can be seen as an unwitting homage to the Käsebier photograph that he so frequently exhibited and reproduced. Like *Blessed*
Art Thou Among Women, the Stieglitz is a picture about transition from youth to maturity, a picture in which a girl stands in a doorway, on a threshold which seems to symbolize the threshold of life.

In each picture, a rectangular form behind a figure evokes someone outside of the picture: the husband and father in Blessed Art Thou Among Women (as shown in Chapter X); Stieglitz in Georgia Engelhard. The cloudy reflection in the doorway, forecasting the cloud pictures that Stieglitz was to begin a year later and which were to become "equivalents" for Stieglitz's emotions, seems emblematic of his affection for this niece, who later became a photographer, and to whom, as Sue Davidson Lowe has shown, he felt closer than to his own daughter. 18

It would be more accurate to say that Stieglitz has conflated Käsebier's two subjects into one, than to say that he has eliminated one figure. Georgia Engelhard is midway in age between Käsebier's mother and daughter; she blends the appearance and gestures of the two Käsebier figures. Like Peggy Lee, Georgia Engelhard's face greets the viewer frontally; like her she wears short youthful garments. But, while Peggy Lee had not crossed the threshold of youth, Georgia Engelhard, standing before a closed door on the front edge of the threshold, seems to have left childhood behind her; the slight turn in her torso, the bent knee and her lithe arms recall Agnes Lee, who is similarly dressed in white, posing gracefully against a mostly white background: both
pictures are deliberate studies in the subtleties of pale tones. And, as much as Georgia Engelhard's outstretched right arm anticipates the "tortuous beauty" of Stieglitz's "great cumulative portrait of Georgia O'Keeffe," it equally harkens back to the mother's gesture in Blessed Art Thou Among Women—to the spread thumb and forefinger of her right hand. However, by couching his sharply focused, uncropped image as a snapshot, and by catching his subject in a taut, angular pose, Stieglitz has made his photograph bespeak stark modernity, rather than turn of the century sentimentality.

It has always seemed that Käsebier owed her greatest debt to Stieglitz at the turn of the century, when he boosted her popularity by declaring her a great portraitist and by devoting the first issue of Camera Work to her photographs. Yet it might now be said that Stieglitz never paid a greater tribute to Käsebier than when he "quoted" Blessed Art Thou Among Women in this inadvertent imitation. That Käsebier's imagery imbued as strong and original a photographer as Stieglitz testifies to the strength and staying power of her work and helps to explain why, over the years, her pictures have continued to attract admirers.

Gertrude Käsebier's success in creating thematic photographs, combined with her achievements in studio portraiture, won her a place among the most outstanding practitioners of her day. She set an example for many colleagues;
in particular, she paved the way for future generations of ambitious women photographers. Today, her photographs continue to be appreciated as models of composition, execution and emotional insight. Seen as a whole, Käsebier's career comprises a consequential chapter in the history of photography.
Footnotes: Conclusion

1. Sabine, Abel’s, 5 & 12 Sept. 1931, pp. 299, 323.


3. Ibid. (interview).


5. Alice Austin to Frances B. Johnston; quoted in Quitslund, p. 113.

6. Quitslund, p. 113.


7. Quitslund, p. 113.


For Austin, see also: Alvin Langdon Coburn, "American Photographs in London," Photo-Era 6 (Jan 1901): 211, and An Exhibition of Prints by The New School of American Photography (London: Royal Photographic Society, 10 Oct. - 8 Nov. 1900).


10. Clark to Keiley, 25 May and 11 June 1900, Yale (leaves 95 & 97 in Keiley to Stieglitz folder).

11. The Käsebier-Gilpin letters are now in the Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas.


13. Ibid.

14. Laura Gilpin, telephone interview with the author, April 1977.

15. Note from Phyllis Fenner, longtime friend of Sipprell, to the author, 12 July 1978. I have been unable to locate any correspondence between Käsebier and Sipprell. See also Chapter VII, footnote 2.


17. Jean Strouse points out this attitude in a review of Alice Hamilton: A Life in Letters by Barbara Sicherman, New York Review of Books, 9 May 1985, p. 38 (Alice Hamilton, b. 1869, was a physician and the first female professor at Harvard; her sister was the classicist Edith Hamilton): "Only about half of that first college generation did marry—many, including Alice Hamilton, thought a woman had to choose between family and work, and those who chose careers often felt a sense of special privilege and social obligation. Dr. Hamilton commented on this "transition" time in 1896, when her cousin Allen Hamilton announced his engagement to a medical student, Marian Walker: 'I do think it such nonsense Marian's studying medicine,' Alice wrote another cousin. 'That is the fault of the transition period in which we live. Girls think now that they must all have professions, just because they are free to, not realizing that the proper state of society is one in which a woman is free to choose between an independent life of celibacy or a life given up to childbearing and rearing the coming generation. We will go down the path of degeneration if we lose our mothers and our home-life....""


Aged Artist Looks Back with
Pride to Work Museums
Are Honoring.

By WALTER CHAMBERS.
New York Telegram Staff Writer.

SHE calls herself "the mother of all photographers," and Rodin, when he photographed her, autographed it "to a true artist."

Gertrude Kasebier smiles, in happy recollection, at the window of her daughter's apartment at 17I W. 12th St.

For as years go, Gertrude Kasebier is old now. Retired from business ten years, she has been a hopeless cripple for five.

But when her daughter, who, like her, is a photographer, brings out an album of choice examples of her work, many of them famous, she raises herself from the couch and describes, in the old time vigor and enthusiasm, the inspiration with which she caught, the cruelty, the cunning and the mystery in her American Indian, which hangs, with two-score other of her subjects, in the Congressional Library.

Almost Dead for Years.

Long years over the development took to her laboratory irreparable tore ligaments in both hips. Besides, from early womanhood, she has been almost deaf. But this, she contends, was a blessing.

"Three rules I followed all my life," she said, and they are, she contends, essential to any creative artist.

"I kept out of the newspapers. I stayed out of the courts, and I kept away from people."

"Being unable to hear much," the creative instinct "bouded" inside her, she declared.

"I started the study of art," she continued, "to paint my children, but all seemed so hard I couldn't keep up. So I bought a camera."

She has three children, two daughters and a son.

Humor In Her Studies.

Humor features many of Mrs. Kasebier's studies. There is her conception of Marriage. It's an ox and a cow, yoked and muscled, pulling against each other.

Her black and white is a silhouett of women's headdresses hanging on the tree against a background of white sheets and green fields. Over the tub a N e w ­ r e s t r a n k s , her black face half in shadow. Ivory gleaming teeth contrast more contrast.

One of her favorite studies is her "Road to Rome." It, too, is allegorical. A low-headed grizzly stands on the bank of the creek among the daisies. He sees, she said, a wild rose. There also is a lamb tethered to a bush, and a duck idly floats on the water. Across the ford a path winds between avenues of low-hanging trees.

"What I accomplished," she said, "was because I looked for things others could not or would not see.

"The photograph," she added, "is not the medium of the imagination. You must wait and wait and wait to catch, the right expression. I worked two years on the Road to Rome."

Masterpiece an Accident.

"My Indian" was the last of a hundred photographs. I had seen from my studio window a parade of a Wild West show. I wrote and asked for the Indians to come to my studio.

"They came every morning for weeks. I never could get what I wanted. Finally one of them, petulant, rose menacingly, raised his blanket about his shoulders and stood before the camera. I snapped and had it."

"My art is a business," she said, "and a business it is because I charged a price for my work. The way I figured it was that money is a form of exchange and that anything artistic must have a value."

Mrs. Kasebier rejoices in the modern freedom of woman.

She leaned to look at photography commercially when physicians told her husband, in 1896, that he had only a year to live.

"My artistic friends," she said, "last interest in me because I charged a price for my work. The way I figured it was that money is a form of exchange and that anything artistic must have a value."

Her Work Praised.

When the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences held an exhibition of 25 studies by Mrs. Kasebier last year Walter L. Hervey, director, wrote:

"In the annals of pictorial photography the name of Gertrude Kasebier will always be an honored one. She was a pioneer, a connoisseur, a discoverer, laboring to make photography a fine art, and inspiring others to work with light. She was, in the words of Robert Henri, "an inventive, searching, daring, self-expressing creature."
Catalogue listing from Exhibition of Photographs by Gertrude Käsebier
Brooklyn Institute of Arts & Sciences
January, 1929

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS
G—Gum    P—Platinum
P—Platinum    T—Japanese Tissue
V—Japanese Vellum
Notes on Style and Abbreviations

Occasional misspellings in manuscripts by Gertrude Käsebier have been corrected.

The following abbreviations have been used:

Amon Carter  Laura Gilpin Collection, Amon Carter Museum, Fort Worth, Texas
IMP-GEH  International Museum of Photography at George Eastman House, Rochester, N. Y.
LC  Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. (Prints & Photographs Division for photographs, Manuscript Division for manuscripts)
Met  Metropolitan Museum of Art, N.Y., Department of Prints and Photographs
MOMA  Museum of Modern Art, N.Y., Photography Department
National Archives  Record Group 75 (Indian Affairs), National Archives, Washington, D.C.
NYPL  New York Public Library
Smithsonian  Division of Photographic History, National Museum of History and Technology, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
Yale  Collection of American Literature, The Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, Conn.
Patricia Costello Collection  Collection Patricia O'Malley Costello (Gertrude Käsebier's great granddaughter)
Käsebier-Turner Memoirs  Private Collection
Mason Turner Papers (or Mason Turner Collection)  Photos and memorabilia, collection Mason E. Turner, Jr., Wilmington, Delaware
Interview: Kate Steichen  Interview by the author with Kate Rodina Steichen, Wilton, Conn., Sept. 1977.
Interview: Hermine Turner  Interview by the author with Hermine M. Turner, G. Käsebier's daughter, N.Y., 1973
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**PAUL STRAND**


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