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Representing Modern Women: Robert Henri, Portraiture, and Identity

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in History of Art and Architecture

by

Virginia Reynolds Badgett

Committee in charge:

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March 2021

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Representing Modern Women: Robert Henri, Portraiture, and Identity

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by

Virginia Reynolds Badgett

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Sara C. Pappa, Virginia E. Reynolds and Laura J. Thiessen,"Training for Success: Sisters of Fallujah Training Team Members Share Their Experiences." *Fortitudine* 34, no. 1 (January 2009): 16-17.

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ABSTRACT

Representing Modern Women: Robert Henri, Portraiture, and Identity

by

Virginia Reynolds Badgett

Over the course of the American painter Robert Henri's lifetime (1865-1929), pictorial strategies of representation were hotly contested, reconfigured, and reinvented through artistic reactions broadly categorized as "modernism." Within the last twenty years, scholars have redefined modernism from primarily abstraction to *modernisms*—a diverse range of stylistic responses to modern life. Henri's realist portraits, however, continue to be excluded from discussions of modern expression in American art due in large part to the association of Henri with the later called "Ash Can" school or circle, the historiography of which is critically examined in the first chapter of this study.

"Representing Modern Women: Robert Henri, Portraiture, and Identity" examines a group of portraits Henri painted of modern women in the 1910s: anarchist Emma Goldman, sculptor and future museum founder Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, and modern dancer Ruth St. Denis. Henri visually situated his realist portraits in an ambiguous space between academic and avant-garde art and in the onerous position of fighting against both fronts. Henri's portrait subjects are integral to his portraits' tendency to push, pull, stretch, and strain against the myriad competing representational strategies present at the turn of the twentieth century, especially portrait photography. Through three case studies, I analyze the individual

portraits' representational successes and shortcomings—their fault lines—for evidence of Henri's response to modernity while he continued to work within established visual conventions. Drawing upon Henri's portraits, biographical narratives, archival material, and photography, I argue Henri failed to anticipate the influence modern women like Goldman, Whitney, and St. Denis—through their own self-representational strategies—would have on the reception of his oil portraits. Instead of working with Henri to adapt realist portraiture to meet the demands of modern life, the modern women of Henri's portraits often worked against him. Goldman, Whitney, and St. Denis each fashioned themselves as more modern than Henri, and their individual expressions of modernity off the canvas challenged Henri's ability to produce realist portraits as modern as his subjects.

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Figure 4.20 Joseph D. Toloff (photographer), Joseph D. Toloff (photographer), *Ruth St Denis in The Peacock, at Ravinia Park a few days after the world premiere* (version 3), 1914, photographic print, 7 ½ x 9 ¾ in. (image), Jerome Robbins Dance Division, Denishawn Collection, New York Public Library, New York, NY, b12130420

Figure 4.21 Arnold Genthe (photographer), *Ruth St. Denis*, 1915, digital file from original negative, Genthe Photograph Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., LC-DIG-agc-7a00124

Figure 4.22 Arnold Genthe (photographer), *Ruth St. Denis* (version 2), 1915, digital file from original negative, Genthe Photograph Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., LC-DIG-agc-7a00123

Figure 4.23 Arnold Genthe (photographer), *Ruth St. Denis Dancers*, 1915, digital file from original negative, Genthe Photograph Collection, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C., LC-DIG-agc-7a02478

Figure 4.24 Ira L. Hill (photographer), *Ruth St. Denis in* The Peacock, about 1916, 10 1/5 x 8 in.(image), Jerome Robbins Dance Division, Denishawn Collection, New York Public Library, New York, NY, b12130415

Figure 4.25 Ira L. Hill (photographer), Ira L. Hill (photographer), *Ruth St. Denis in* The Peacock (version 2), about 1916, photographic print, 10 1/5 x 8 ¼ in. (image), Jerome Robbins Dance Division, Denishawn Collection, New York Public Library, New York, NY, b12130416

Figure 4.26 Ira L. Hill (photographer), Ira L. Hill (photographer), *Ruth St. Denis in* The Peacock (version 3), about 1916, photographic print, 8 ¼ x 10 1/5 in. (image), Jerome Robbins Dance Division, Denishawn Collection, New York Public Library, New York, NY, b12130417

Figure 4.27 Unknown Photographer, *Ruth St. Denis,* 1918, photographic print, Ruth St. Denis Papers (Collection 1031), UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California – Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA

Figure 4.28 Unknown Photographer, *Ruth St. Denis,* 1918, photographic print, Ruth St. Denis Papers (Collection 1031), UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California – Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA

Figure 4.29 Unknown Photographer, *Ruth St. Denis,* 1918, photographic print, Ruth St. Denis Papers (Collection 1031), UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California – Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA

Figure 4.30 Unknown Photographer, *Ruth St. Denis,* 1918, photographic print, Ruth St. Denis Papers (Collection 1031), UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California – Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA

Figure 4.31 Unknown Photographer, *Ruth St. Denis,* 1918, photographic print, Ruth St. Denis Papers (Collection 1031), UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California – Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA

Figure 4.32 Unknown Photographer, *Ruth St. Denis,* 1918, photographic print, Ruth St. Denis Papers (Collection 1031), UCLA Library Special Collections, Charles E. Young Research Library, University of California – Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA

Figure 4.33 Robert Henri, *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance*, 1919. Reproduced as frontispiece in Ted Shawn, *Ruth St. Denis: Pioneer and Prophet,* Vol. 2 (San Francisco: John Howell, 1920).

CHAPTER 1

Historiography at Odds with Art

Hastily sketched in crayon on paper, the American painter Robert Henri turns away from the sizable canvas in front of him in one of numerous caricature self-portraits found scattered throughout his correspondence to family and friends (1904, fig. 1.1).[1] Henri's standing figure blocks a clear view of the portrait in progress behind him, and the portrait's subject is nowhere to be seen, likely obscured by the canvas itself. With the sitter out of view, Henri becomes the subject. His disheveled hair and rumpled clothes attest to the feverish work taking place inside his studio. He holds a brush in his preferred left hand and a bundle of brushes and rag in his right. The skylight above casts a dark shadow behind him. The quickly rendered drawing is a portrait of the artist at work. Like his self-portrait, Henri as a historical figure stands between the viewer and his realist portraiture. Henri's stature in the world of American art at the turn of the twentieth century obstructs a clear view of Henri's relationships with his subjects and the effects of these relationships on him.

Active from the 1880s until less than a year before his death from cancer in 1929, Henri's career as an artist and teacher straddled two centuries and a dynamic period in American art. Over the course of Henri's lifetime, pictorial strategies of representation were hotly contested, reconfigured, and reinvented in dialogue with modernity, artistic reactions broadly categorized as "modernism." In the last twenty years, scholars have advanced a redefinition of modernism from primarily abstraction to *modernisms*—a diverse range of stylistic responses to modern life. Among revisionist approaches reframing modernism, the work of art historian Allan Antliff is of particular relevance to Americanists. As Antliff outlined in the introduction of his seminal book *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, and the*

First American Avant-Garde (2001), the standard definition of modernism throughout the twentieth century was based upon style—moving away from realism and towards abstraction—and formalist innovation in the absence of politics. Antliff's rejection of this definition revealed the instability of "modernism" as a classification used by contemporary critics and later scholars. *Anarchist Modernism* uprooted the narrow, previously accepted formalist definition of modernism by suggesting anarchism as an organizing artistic principle instead of style.[2] In recent years, scholars of American art have continued to reevaluate modernism as modernisms and now see realism alongside abstraction as a valid and equally complex artistic response to modernity.[3] Henri's realist portraits, however, continue to be excluded from discussions of modern expression in American art.

Henri's portrait subjects, explored in greater detail later in this chapter and throughout this study, are integral to his portraits' tendency to push, pull, stretch, and strain against the myriad competing representational strategies present at the turn of the twentieth century, especially portrait photography. In this study, I examine a group of portraits Henri painted of modern women in the 1910s: anarchist Emma Goldman, sculptor and future museum founder Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, and modern dancer Ruth St. Denis (figs. 1.2-1.4). Through three case studies, I analyze the individual portraits' representational successes and shortcomings—their fault lines—for evidence of Henri's response to modernity while he continued to work within the established visual conventions of realism. Henri failed to

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[1] Henri's self-portrait recalls Diego Velázquez's *Las Meninas* (1656, Museo del Prado). Henri deeply admired Velázquez and undoubtably was familiar with *Las Meninas.*
[2] Allan Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, and the First American Avant-Garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 2-3.
[3] See Susan Stanford Friedman, "Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of Modern/Modernity/Modernism," *Modernism/modernity* 8, no. 3 (September 2001): 493-513; Zhang Jian and Bruce Robertson, eds., *Complementary Modernisms in China and the United States: Art as Life / Art as Idea* (Goleta: Punctum Books, 2020); Richard Meyer, "Mind the Gap: Americanists, Modernists, and the Boundaries of Twentieth-Century Art," *American Art* 18, no. 3 (Fall 2004): 2-7; Joshua Shannon, "The Lure of the Contemporary: Some Thoughts on a Field in Transition," *American Art* 23, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 2-7; Judith Zilczer, "Beyond Genealogy: American Modernism in Retrospect," *American Art* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 4-9.

anticipate the influence modern women like Goldman, Whitney, and St. Denis—and their own self-representational strategies—would have on the reception of his portraits. Instead of working with Henri to adapt realist portraiture to meet the demands of modern life, the modern women of Henri's portraits often work against him. To varying degrees, Goldman, Whitney, and St. Denis each fashion themselves as more modern than Henri, and their individual expressions of modernity off the canvas undercut Henri's ability to produce realist portraits as modern as his subjects.

Although Henri could not have predicted the impact narrow definitions of modernism would have on his legacy as discussed in much of this chapter, he was aware of the modernist expectations for artistic production. He confessed in a 1917 letter, "[I] feel myself a decided modern but not of the 'modernist school.'"[4] The same description can be applied to Henri's realist portraits. "Modern" yet not "modernist" situates Henri and his portraiture in the ambiguous space in between academic and avant-garde art and in the onerous position of fighting against both fronts.

Claiming the middle ground, Henri opposed what he called "isms" and "schools," and advised his students to instead develop their own means of individual expression, an idea that coincided with his disdain for juried exhibitions.[5] "The only true modern movement is a frank expression of self," he wrote.[6] Contemporary critics pointed towards style and more specifically abstraction as the primary attribute of modernism, but Henri's understanding of modernism was not predicated on formalist qualities as discussed in greater depth later in this chapter. Henri embraced a more inclusive definition in which abstraction was not the only

[4] Robert Henri to Mr. Birmbaum (sp?), 19 October 1917, box1, folder 10, Robert Henri Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
[5] Robert Henri, "Progress in Our National Art Must Spring from the Development of Individuality of Ideas and Freedom of Expression: A Suggestion for a New Art School," *The Craftsman* 15 (January 1909): 387-401.

marker of modernism. Henri resisted modernist classifications that would later put him at odds with the trajectory of American art throughout the twentieth century. By painting modern women, Henri participated in a culture of modernity on his own terms through a decidedly non-modern medium: realist portraiture.

Henri looms large within the history of American art, but his portrayal by scholars and critics is riddled with contradictions. He personally despised cliques yet is consistently lumped with six or eight male artists, the "Ash Can" circle or "The Eight."[7] Both terms are of lesser consequence than their continued usage implies: the first resulting from Henri's early-career interest in painting gritty cityscapes and the second based on a single non-juried group exhibition of several weeks' length.[8] In most historical accounts, Henri's rapid rise among American painters at the turn of the twentieth century is quickly reversed following the 1913 International Exhibition of Modern Art, best known by its better-known title, the Armory Show. Henri's decline in relevance is frequently attributed to his ongoing preference for realism, rather than stylistic innovation and abstraction.[9]

There are other, even deeper contradictions. For example, Henri championed individuality through his teaching and his vocal opposition to the National Academy of Design, but contemporary critics, as well as subsequent art historians found his realistic

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[6] Robert Henri, *The Art Spirit: Notes, Articles, Fragments of Letters and Talks to Students, Bearing on the Concept and Technique of Picture Making, the Study of Art Generally, and on Appreciation* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 238.

[7] "Ash Can" artists typically include Robert Henri (1865-1929), John Sloan (1871-1951), George Luks (1867-1933), William Glackens (1870-1938), Everett Shinn (1876-1953), and George Bellows (1882-1925). "The Eight" consists of "Ash Can" artists with the exception of George Bellows and with the additions of Maurice Prendergast (1858-1924), Arthur B. Davies (1862-1928), and Ernest Lawson (1873-1939). "The Eight" exhibited together in a group exhibition at Macbeth Gallery in New York City, February 3-15, 1908.

[8] Alexis L. Boylan, *Ashcan Art, Whiteness, and the Unspectacular Man* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017); Elizabeth Kennedy and Peter John Brownlee, *The Eight and American Modernisms* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); Bennard B. Perlman, *Painters of the Ashcan School: The Immortal Eight* (New York: Dover Publications, 1988); Rebecca Zurier, Robert W. Snyder, and Virginia Mecklenburg, *Metropolitan Lives: The Ashcan Artists and Their New York* (New York: Norton, 1995).

[9] Milton Brown, *American Painting: from the Armory Show to the Depression* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1955); For a revisionist approach to this narrative, see Sarah Vure, "Independent Artists: The Post-Armory Show Career of Robert Henri and John Sloan" (PhD diss., Boston University, 2002).

portraits to be overly formulaic and dependent on character "types" rather than individuals.[10] When considered in tandem, the contradictions surrounding Henri, his art, and his legacy point to an underlying tension between Henri's self-representation and the reception of his portraits.[11] Henri is at odds with his art.

There are many potential points of entry to this problem: through Henri's classroom teaching, his students, his published writings in his immensely popular book, *The Art Spirit* (1923), which has never gone out of print, or finally, Henri's subjects. Henri's legacy as a teacher is one of the biggest barriers to taking him seriously as an artist; his charisma and influence on subsequent generations of American artists outshone his realist portraits, which were increasingly seen as passé after the Armory Show as modernism narrowly became characterized by abstraction or moves towards abstraction. Looking at Henri's teaching inevitably generates a circular discussion around his influence and in turn, how he fits into the historiography of American art. Henri's teaching did not have a modernist affect. Moreover, many of Henri's students were women, who on the basis of their gender, were denied the same opportunities afforded his male students and had less storied (and documented) careers.[12] Henri's male students, such as Patrick Henry Bruce, Edward Hopper, and Stuart Davis, developed individualized styles and, as their careers progressed, distanced

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[10] Rebecca Zurier, *Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

[11] Following the lead of art historian Harry Berger, I use the term "self-representation" rather than "self-fashioning" throughout this dissertation. Berger defines "self-representation" as "something you show about yourself and something you do with yourself, but not something you do *to* or *for* yourself, which may happen but is contingent to the definition. By definition, self-fashioning is something you do to yourself and with yourself (and, if you're lucky, for yourself) but not something you show about yourself. The showing per se may be a kind of doing, but the doing per se isn't a kind of showing." Berger continues to probe the nuances between the two terms, asking, "How, then, do we determine whether or not people are engaged in fashioning themselves—or, possibly, their selves—if they don't represent themselves fashioning themselves? And if they do, how can we tell whether the self-fashioning they represent to others is actually going on 'inside' the performers? So I call for a moratorium on the unqualified use of the term 'self-fashioning' unless it is preceded by some form of 'represent.'" Harry Berger, *Fictions of the Pose: Rembrandt against the Italian Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 19-20.

[12] Marian Wardle, ed., *American Women Modernists: The Legacy of Robert Henri, 1910-1945* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005).

themselves from Henri, which diminished the importance of his pedagogy.[13] If modernism and thereby artistic progress is narrowly defined by tendencies towards abstraction throughout the twentieth century, Henri—a realist—will never be considered "modern" or progressive.

Just as it is unfair to compare Henri to the subsequent careers of his students, it is equally unproductive to sideline Henri's portraiture for its realism. Historiography is both important and potentially limiting, especially if unexamined assumptions are left to gain the patina of authority with time. Focusing on Henri's portraits of modern women provides an alternate and underexamined lens through which to understand his legacy. Stepping outside of a formalist narrative of modernism, Henri emerges as a complex figure, who lived during a transitional period and fought—albeit with limited success— to adapt realist portraiture to meet the demands of modern life.

Henri and his contemporaries understood Goldman, Whitney, and St. Denis to be modern subjects in part because of their gender, activities, and engagement with public life. The United States changed dramatically at the turn of the twentieth century as urban environments and economies drew women beyond the domestic sphere and more prominently into public view. Women abandoned corsetry, sought economic opportunities outside the home, navigated public spaces alone, and demanded the right to vote. From her emergence in the 1890s, the visible presence and agency of the "New Woman" helped define the American cultural landscape as modern to contemporaries.[14] Goldman, Whitney, and St. Denis lived public lives and to a large extent, constructed their identities within the public

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[13] William C. Agee and Barbara Rose, *Patrick Henry Bruce, American Modernist: A Catalogue Raisonne* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1979); Gail Levin, *Edward Hopper: An Intimate Biography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Lowery Stokes Sims, et al., *Stuart Davis: American Painter* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1991).

sphere. As women who bent, broke, and re-envisioned social norms, Goldman, Whitney, and St. Denis each characterized aspects of new and modern womanhood. They were New Women.

Pictured as strong, successful women, Goldman, Whitney, and St. Denis' portraits prompt consideration of Henri's relevance to modernity and modernism represented through the lens of gender. Of course, there are alternate frames through which to view Henri's portraits. Race, for example, is exemplified through Henri's long-standing interest in ethnographic types and especially his portraits from the American southwest from the same decade of the 1910s. The advantage of gender to race is that it points to one of the central relationships in western art: the male artist and female model.[15] This relationship defined one kind of power relationship: male artist as master and female model as subject. But as women renegotiated their place in modern society, the power dynamics embedded within portraiture registered societal change.[16] In Henri's portraits of Goldman, Whitney, and St. Denis, gender becomes the fulcrum for negotiating identity, power, and modernity.

Henri's portraits of Emma Goldman, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, and Ruth St. Denis create opportunities to examine Henri within three public arenas that were most important to his self-image: politics, art, and performance. As with artistic movements, Henri strove to avoid official political affiliations although his close friend John Sloan and students identified Henri as an anarchist, as discussed in Chapter 2. Regardless of labels, Henri was

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[14] Carolyn Christensen Nelson, *A New Woman Reader: Fiction, Articles, and Drama of the 1890s* (Ontario: Broadview, 2001), 225-40. See also Jean V. Matthew, *The Rise of the New Woman: The Women's Movement in America, 1875-1930* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003).

[15] For recent discussions of the dynamics between artists and models see Elspeth H. Brown, *Work!: A Queer History of Modeling* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2019); Jill Berk Jiminez and Joanna Banham, *Dictionary of Artist' Models* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Denise Murrell, *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018); Susan Waller: *The Invention of the Model: Artists and Models in Paris, 1830-1870* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

[16] Holly Pyne Connor, "Portraits of the New Woman by John Singer Sargent," in *John Singer Sargent* (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 2018); Ellen Wiley Todd, *The "New Woman" Revised: Painting and Gender Politics on Fourteenth Street* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

clearly enamored by Goldman, read her publications, attended her lectures, and taught art classes at the anarchist Ferrer School at her request. In Whitney, Henri encountered another modern artist, but one who surpassed him in the physical monumentality of her sculpture, her vast wealth, and her ability to support a community of professional American artists. Turning to the stage, St. Denis was the quintessential modern subject, who embodied the spectacle, motion, and aura of modern life in her performances. Alongside Henri's full-length portrait, St. Denis' sophisticated use of portrait photography sought to overcome the ephemerality of dance by capturing modern expression with modern technology. Henri and his modern women subjects constructed their modern identities through politics, art, and performance.

Before considering the representational successes and failures in Henri's portraits of Goldman, Whitney, and St. Denis, several issues within the historiography of Henri and his representation within American art should be addressed. In the remainder of this chapter, I analyze the segmented nature of Henri's legacy as an artist and a teacher and his problematic positioning as the "Ash Can" figurehead. These issues elucidate Henri's representation by subsequent scholars of American art and more importantly, set the stage for a reappraisal of Henri's self-representation through his portraits of Goldman, Whitney, and St. Denis. At stake is the relationship of realist portraiture to modernism and modern identity.

Henri as an Artist

Born Robert Henry Cozad in Cincinnati, Ohio in June 1865, two short months after the end of the American Civil War, the future artist adopted the pseudonym Robert Earl Henri (pronounced Hen-rye) around 1883 following a family catastrophe. His father's business dealings in the Nebraskan town of Cozad, which the senior Cozad founded in 1873, went awry when the patriarch mortally wounded a local rancher in late 1882, an act of violence that forced the family to relocate to Denver, Colorado and then to the East Coast

within a year as they assumed a new life and aliases. One imagines there was a certain degree of adolescent trauma associated with fleeing the open plains and big sky country of central Nebraska for the east coast. Nevertheless, Robert Henry Cozad reinvented himself, an act that underscored the malleability of identity, for himself and in general.

Boyhood notebooks from young Cozad's Nebraska years are filled with winsome sketches, and his adoption of the French surname "Henri," a foreign twist to his given middle name, belies his early artistic ambitions, as France was seen as the world's artistic and cultural leader in the late-nineteenth century.[17] Under this new identity, Henri enrolled at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (PAFA) in 1886 the semester following Thomas Eakins' dismissal, a flashpoint in American art history and arts education as discussed later in this chapter. The Eakins controversy, or the residue of it, was another influential moment in quick succession in Henri's early adulthood as he started art school and envisioned an artistic life for himself. Continuing his studies abroad in Paris at the Académie Julian under the French academic painter Adolphe William Bouguereau (1825-1905) from 1888-1891 and the École des Beaux-Arts for several months in 1891, Henri received an education from elite institutions steeped in a Eurocentric world view and visual vocabulary, which he drew upon throughout his career.

Henri remains best known for his "Ash Can" paintings—gritty scenes of contemporary urban life—which fall early in his career from the 1890s until approximately 1904. *Snow in New York* (1902, fig. 1.5) captures qualities of the "Ash Can" scene. Buildings stretch imposingly upward and off the vertical canvas, and suggestive brushstrokes form clumps of figures along a secondary thruway. A horse and covered cart slog through the icy streets and dingy remnants of snow. These are the types of paintings—unpicturesque scenes

of city life—that inspired Henri's followers and enraged his critics. The criticisms surrounding these paintings were two-fold: first, gritty scenes and urban subjects—particularly immigrant communities—were not in keeping with traditional rarefied artistic subjects. Secondly, the paintings were stylistically radical to American eyes in their bold, unconventional application of paint.[18] Stuart Davis, a former Henri student, later put it, "The Henri School was regarded as radical and revolutionary in its methods, and it was." Davis continued, "Art was not a matter of rules and techniques, or the search for an absolute ideal of beauty…. It was the expression of ideas and emotions about the life of the time."[19]

After about 1904, Henri turned to portraiture which subsequently dominated his output. Henri's shift in focus occurred shortly after he and his first wife Linda Craig relocated to New York City in 1900 after a two-year stint in Paris where Henri painted his earliest urban scenes. By settling in New York, the Henris joined a number of close friends and artistic associates from Philadelphia, including William Glackens and Everett Shinn, who at various times were employed as newspaper illustrators.[20] For Henri, painted portraiture provided a means to distinguish himself amongst his newspaper peers. Along with processional models, Henri's wife Linda was the subject and model of his earliest portraits, including *Lady in Black* (c. 1904, fig. 1.6) until her death in 1905 following a prolonged illness.[21] As the primary subjects, women are central to tracing Henri's transition from painting gritty Parisian and New York City scenes to portraiture.

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[17] Cozad, an alternate spelling of Cossart, is also a surname of French origin. Joseph Arthur Cossairt, *Genealogy of the Cossart family, Cossairt family, Cassatt family, Cozart family, Cozad family [and] Cosad family* (San Pedro: 1932).
[18] William Innes Homer and Violet Organ, *Robert Henri and His Circle* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 109; Zurier, *Picturing the City,* 11.
[19] Quoted in James Johnson Sweeney, *Stuart Davis* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1945), 6.
[20] John Sloan was the last of the "Ash Can" group to move to New York City as late as 1904.
[21] Little is known about Linda, whose untimely death following a prolonged illness understandably greatly affected Henri. Before marrying Henri, Linda was one of his women art students and hailed from a prominent Philadelphia family. While not all women art students at the turn of the twentieth century can or should be classified as New Women, Linda's interest in obtaining professional training in art indicates her interest in an

Artistically Henri could have taken any number approaches and advocated for others to find their own individual paths. Henri did not come to portraiture half-heartedly or, as we shall see, out of economic necessity. Evidence of this can be found in a 1916 letter from Henri to an unidentified correspondent. The original letter survives in Henri's personal papers at the Beinecke Library at Yale University and was published in *The Art Spirit*, an editorial decision that emphasizes its overall importance. Henri wrote:

> I regretted there was but one of me, for as I said, if there were two, I could then paint both the people and the landscape. As it is, there being but one of me, I spend six to eight hours a day in actual painting and the rest of the time getting ready for the work, or resting, and in my passage to and from the studio where I paint people. And this is a true loss for me for I have the feeling, and have had considerable experience, in painting landscape.[22]

Henri discussed his daily life in terms of painting, not teaching or other professional activities. Specializing in portraiture was a conscious decision, one that honed Henri's skill along a particular course and took time away from his pursuit of other interests, such as painting landscapes.

Among the most respected American portrait painters of his generation, Henri's diverse portrait subjects distinguished him from his contemporaries and from the long-standing associations of portraiture with political power, high society, wealth, and privilege. Henri accomplished this, in part, by working largely outside of the traditional commission model. By specializing in non-commissioned portraiture, Henri positioned himself as adjacent to, yet distinct from genteel society portrait painters like John Singer Sargent (1856-1925) and William Merritt Chase (1849-1916). Rather than waiting for affluent patrons to seek Henri out, which they sometimes did, Henri sought out his own subjects and relied on

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increasingly public sphere that included the potential for greater self-expression, increased economic opportunities, and new social roles for women. The ranks of Henri's pupils swelled with women art students, and there were many New Women in Henri's orbit. Homer and Organ, *Robert Henri and His Circle,* 119.

[22] Henri, *The Art Spirit*, 113-114; original text, Robert Henri to Dr. [?], 21 August 1916, box 19, folder 257. Henri Papers.

his wife or friends to spot "interesting" individuals for him to paint.[23] Compared to commissioned portraiture, Henri's approach required considerably less networking. John Sloan noted in his diary, "[Henri] says he won't do the five o'clock tea drinking that is necessary for portrait work in this country today."[24] Non-commissioned portraits allowed Henri the freedom and flexibility to paint who and how he wanted and removed some of the pressure of securing his subject or patron's approval of the likeness.[25]

In "My People," a February 1915 article published in *The Craftsman* magazine, Henri wrote extensively about his choice of portrait subjects. Henri's far-flung travels and diverse sitters—from Romani people and bull fighters of Spain, rural villagers of north-west Ireland, and Chinese and Mexican immigrants, to Indigenous peoples in the American southwest—all collectively reiterated his intensive interest in, as Henri famously put it, "'My people,' whoever they may be, wherever they may exist, the people through whom dignity of life is manifest."[26] By extension, the identity of his subjects reinforced Henri's connection to American cultural values of personal autonomy and individuality as the artist visually associated himself with non-commissioned portrait subjects sought out from indigenous,

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[23] Derrick R. Cartwright and Valerie Ann Leeds, *Robert Henri's California: Realism, Race and Region, 1914-1925* (Fullerton: Grand Central Press, California State University, 2014).

[24] John Sloan Diaries, 1906-1913, 30 April 1907, John Sloan Manuscript Collection, Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives, Delaware Art Museum, https://delart.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/John-Sloan-Diaries-1906-to-1913.pdf.

[25] Henri sold his non-commissioned portraits to museums and collectors around the United States like Samuel O. Buckner of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who was the Agency Director of the Wisconsin Branch of the New York Life Insurance Company. In the history of Western art, Henri's non-commissioned portraits relate to the "tronies" or "character heads" produced by Frans Hals (1582/3-1666) and Rembrandt van Rijn (1606-1669). From the eighteenth until the mid-twentieth centuries, these paintings were understood to be portraits and were later recategorized. See Ann Jensen Adams, "The performative portrait historié" in *Pokerfaced. Flemish and Dutch Baroque Faces Unveiled*, eds. K. Van der Stighelen and B. Watteeuw (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011); Franziska Gottwald, *Das Tronie. Muster - Studie - Meisterwerk. Die Genese einer Gattung der Malerei vom 15. Jahrhundert bis zu Rembrandt* (München/Berlin: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2009); Dagmar Hirschfelder, "Portrait or Character Head? The Term *Tronie* and Its Meaning in the Seventeenth Century" in *The Mystery of the Young Rembrandt,* eds. Ernst van de Wetering and Bernhard Schnackenburg (Amsterdam: Museum het Rembrandthuis, 2001), 82-91; Dagmar Hirschfelder, *Tronie und Porträt in der niederlän-dischen Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 2008); Frederic Schwartz, "The Motions of the Countenance": Rembrandt's Early Portraits and the Tronie," *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics,* No. 17/18 (Spring - Autumn, 1989): 89-116.

[26] Henri, *The Art Spirit*, 141.

immigrant, and working-class communities.[27] Henri claimed to see people as individuals, not character types. At the turn of the twentieth century, Henri's eagerness to find a shared humanity among all people represented a shift away from the predominant epistemological framework of Charles Darwin's social evolutionary discourse that dominated a nineteenth-century Eurocentric worldview.[28] Yet even as Henri was determined to paint "his people," he failed to acknowledge the uneven power structures underlying his claims of kinship and comradery with peoples of other cultures and backgrounds. From his position as a member of the dominant culture, Henri appropriated minority cultures' "otherness" to construct, reinforce, and project his own individuality, a key attribute of the modernist formulation of selfhood.

Considered within Henri's diverse selection of portrait subjects, Goldman, Whitney, and St. Denis are atypical in some ways. Their identities are fully known, and each woman left a substantial cache of archival material for subsequent art historians to mine for biographical details, personal associations, and individual attitudes towards the issues of their day. Indeed, both Emma Goldman and Ruth St. Denis wrote about the experience of having their portrait painted by Henri.[29] The survival of intimate contextual details relating to their portraits speak to the women's varying degrees of wealth, public status, and privilege.[30] Bolstered by the historical record, the women's agency equalize the power dynamics between artist and sitter. Case studies of Henri's portraits of Goldman, Whitney, and St.

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[27] In the 1830s, Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville was the first to connect American democracy and character with individualism, which he pessimistically prophesied would lead to Americans' withdrawal from and deterioration of the public sphere. Steven Lukes, *Individualism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Publisher Limited, 1973), 13.
[28] See Alan C. Braddock, *Thomas Eakins and Cultures of Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Kathleen Pyne, *Art and the Higher Life: Painting and Evolutionary Thought in Late Nineteenth-Century America* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014).
[29] Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, who commissioned her portrait, is the exception.
[30] For every identified portrait within Henri's oeuvre, there are many others of yet to be identified individuals, such as *Chinese Lady* (1914, Milwaukee Art Museum). More often than not, the anonymity of Henri's subjects

Denis create a more equitable opportunity for considering the relationship between subject and artist and the subject's self-representation/representation than Henri's lesser-known subjects, who are only documented from Henri's perspective and regrettably do not have accompanying written archives.

Beyond his subjects, Henri's portraits are pressed from all sides by the politics of representation in the early-twentieth century America, namely the rise of modernism and portrait photography as fierce competitors to realism in painting. As referenced earlier, Henri defined modern art differently than the modernists. For Henri, modern art was about expression rather than style. He wrote in 1925:

> All work done today is modern. All serious works whatever their thoughts may be and whatever forms they may use in expression are useful. All great works, however 'representative' they are, contain the abstract, contain cubism.[31]

The expressive brushwork and paint handling of Henri's portraits give evidence of his familiarity with the formal principles of modernism within his realist portraits. Portions of the background of *Portrait of Emma Goldman* are wildly abstract and energize the composition. Seamlessly blending passages of abstraction with realistic depictions of individuals, Henri's portraits are simultaneously abstract and representative. Henri did not see the need to modernize realism; it was already made modern through its production. By insisting "all work done today is modern," Henri dismissed aesthetic hierarchies that privileged the movement towards abstraction over realism. Within Henri's portraits, realism and modernism were complimentary rather than being in conflict.

Calling for individuality as the guiding principle for modern American art, Henri attempted to position himself above debates over the merits of realism and modernism. One of the challenges surrounding Henri and the historical realism/modernism divide is Henri's

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coupled with the shortage of traditional archival materials related to their lives, limits discourse to thematic discussions and by default, privileges Henri's agency as the artist.

rallying cry to his students to produce Art from Life. At its inception, Art from Life was a powerful concept, inspiring a movement away from idealized subjects and limitations imposed by the Academy. Henri argued against the Academy—or any official body—acting as the arbiter of taste. After the widespread introduction of European modernism, Art from Life became associated with imitation. In 1915 an early proponent of modernism, the critic Willard Huntington Wright, summarized the conflict brewing around realism and early modernism, "Were realism the object of art, painting would always be infinitely inferior to life—a mere simulacrum of our daily existence, ever inadequate in its illusion…. A picture to be a great work of art need not contain any recognizable objects."[32] Henri agreed with the sentiment expressed in the later part of Wright's statement, but Henri did not equate realism as being "inferior to life." As Henri saw it, modernism depended on a plurality of styles and freedom of expression—including realism.

Beginning in the mid nineteenth century, photography democratized access to portraiture and by the turn of the twentieth century, photography was taken up by artists closely associated with modernism, most notably Alfred Stieglitz and his circle. Photography's realist qualities and association with modernism and portraiture complicate our understanding of Henri's portraits. A photographic portrait and a painted portrait are physically and materially worlds apart yet share a common human subject. The science required to create a photograph was chemical; the science required to create an oil painting in an era of commercially available paint was grounded in color theory and geometry or composition. Henri depended upon photography to reproduce and circulate reproductions of his portraits in the press, translating the painted portrait into a photographic one. As a result, black and white reproductions of Henri's portraits and photographic portraits often occupied

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[31] Robert Henri to unknown subject, April 1925, box 4, folder 82, Henri Papers.

the same visual space in newspapers and periodicals. Presenting, or re-presenting, Henri's painted portraits through contemporary printing processes brought them into closer alignment with photography. Printed in grayscale, Henri's portraits were resized and flattened to fit the page. This process brought considerable anxiety to Henri, who closely reviewed photographic prints of his paintings before the reproductions were cleared for publication. Rather than elevating photography to equal status with painting, Henri, like many turn-of-the-century painters, used photography as a tool for documenting and disseminating his paintings in print and elevating his image as a modern artist.[33]

The representational possibilities of photography and painting put the two mediums in competition for capturing likenesses. Henri compensated for photography's encroachment on portraiture through color, paint handling, and scale. However, these strategies only worked if the portrait was physically present. In the age of photography, Henri depended upon critics to articulate the plastic differences distinguishing his painting. W. Stanton Howard, the art critic for *Harper's Monthly Magazine,* aptly summarized the tensions surrounding portraiture in the early twentieth century and singled Henri out for his success:

> Much of modem portraiture has degenerated from art to photography. In place of spirit we find only sensation. But Mr. Henri is not given to portraying those modish women who flock to fashionable studios to sit in their evening gowns and elegant apparel. His subjects impress the beholder by their vitality and a certain diablerie that marks his work.[34]

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[32] Willard Huntington Wright, *Modern Art: Its Tendency and Meaning* (New York: John Lane Company, 1915), 32-33.

[33] For related discussions about photography in the early twentieth century, see Marcia Brennan, *Painting Gender, Constructing Theory: The Alfred Stieglitz Circle and American Formalist Aesthetics* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001); John Gage, "Photographic likeness," in *Portraiture: Facing the Subject,* Joanna Woodall, ed. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 119-130; Kate Sampsell-Willmann, *Lewis Hine as Social Critic* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2009); Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Anchor Books, 1990).

[34] W. Stanton Howard, "'The Blue Kimono,' by Robert Henri," *Harper's Monthly Magazine* 125, no. 749 (October 1912): 706-707. The illustration of Henri's portrait *The Blue Kimono* (1909, New Orleans Museum of Art) explicitly states that it was "Engraved on Wood by Henry Wolf from the Original Painting."

Howard began by disparaging modern portraiture and blamed photography for painting's recent decline, an indication of a level of competition between the two mediums. The critic opined that modern portraiture has become imitative rather than expressive. In contrast, Henri's vibrant subjects and his dramatic paint handling distinguished his portraiture, elevating it above his peers and photography perceived by its critics as a mechanical and therefore a less artful reproduction.

In the early-twentieth century, Henri's portraits entered a field crowded by varying representational strategies that differed not only in style but also by medium. Within modernism, abstraction upended pictorial representation as a whole. Photography, too, pressed Henri to develop painterly strategies to differentiate his portraiture. Advocating for a plurality of modernisms and individual expression, Henri created space for realist portraiture within the diverse expressions of contemporary art in the early twentieth century.

Henri as a Teacher

Henri represented himself as an artist, but his students saw him as a teacher. Henri's legacy as a teacher prevails because of several factors, chief among them are the large numbers of students Henri taught over his more than thirty-year career. Henri's women art students were among the most vocal in lionizing him and cementing his enduring influence on American art.

By the early twentieth century, women were making inroads as professional artists alongside their male counterparts, thanks in part to the increasing availability of arts education in the decades following the American Civil War. In the United States, formal arts education for women became accessible decades before similar opportunities opened for women in Europe, where several well-known academies remained gender-segregated well

into the twentieth century.[35] Founded in 1807, the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts (PAFA) permitted women artists to exhibit in their first annual exhibition in 1810, and the school officially admitted woman students in 1844.[36]

The presence of women, however, did not mean they were greeted by their male classmates and teachers without considerable angst, both social and professional. In fact, Henri's earliest years as an art student were marked by discord and conflict around the education of women in the classroom studio. As previously mentioned, Henri enrolled at PAFA in the fall of 1886, a semester following Thomas Eakins' infamous dismissal on account of removing the loin cloth of a male model in front of woman students.[37] In the final decades of the nineteenth century, an increasing pedagogical emphasis on human anatomy conflicted with tight-laced Victorian sensibilities and rigid gender-driven constructs around access to knowledge about the physical, material human body. Eakins' dismissal received considerable public attention and failed to blow over quietly or quickly, much to the chagrin of school administrators. Eakins remained in Philadelphia and continued to teach a group of disaffected male students without pay at the newly formed Art Students' League of Philadelphia.[38] As Linda Nochlin noted in her landmark article, "Why Have There Been No Great Woman Artists?," the inaccessibility of nude models and anatomical knowledge was a

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[35] Anna Havemann, "Expanded Horizon: Female Artists at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts during the Course of the Nineteenth Century" in *The Female Gaze: Women Artists Making their World*, ed. Robert Cozzolino (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, 2012), 31.
[36] The École des Beaux-Arts allowed women to enroll in 1893 and academies in Berlin, Munich, and Düsseldorf did not admit women until the 1910s and 1920s; Havemann, "Expanded Horizon," 32-33.
[37] The circumstances around Eakins' dismissal were complex, as Kathleen Foster explains, "By removing the loincloth from a male model in the course of a lecture to an audience of women students (or men and women), Eakins asserted the necessity for figure study untrammeled by popular morality. In doing so, he expressly overrode the board's policy, laying himself open to charges of insubordination. Previous patterns of obstinacy did not help his case, and the personal resentment of certain students and ex-students, including his own brother-in-law, brought other grievances into play…. The loincloth incident simply provided a clear-cut instance of behavior that had provoked the directors and rankled students in the past." Kathleen A. Foster, *Thomas Eakins Rediscovered: Charles Bregler's Thomas Eakins Collection at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 226-227.
[38] Foster, *Thomas Eakins Rediscovered,* 225.

severe detriment to the training and education of aspiring woman artists well into the nineteenth century.[39]

Regardless of how Henri may have felt about women artists in his early career, he soon found himself teaching classrooms full of women from his first teaching position at the Philadelphia School of Design for Women in 1892.[40] Following the American Civil War, women entered art schools in increasing numbers. By 1890, there were 11,000 women in the United States working as painters, sculptors, and art teachers; they represented almost 50 percent of professional artists.[41] Until his death in 1929, Henri by his estimate taught and mentored hundreds of women art students.[42] The presence of women in Henri's art classes was not unique, nor can Henri claim notoriety for an exceptional sensitivity towards women art students, although he seemed to support them in equal measure, a reflection of his left-wing politics. Instead, Henri's career bears witness to an increasingly heterogeneous atmosphere of art making and intellectual exchange, enriched by women's perspectives, participation, and voices.

The disconnect between Henri and his students—both men and women—over how he ought to be remembered is predicable. While Henri was both an artist and a teacher, it is unsurprising that his students promoted an image of Henri in the classroom. By sheer numbers and as being the primary bearers of his legacy, Henri's students dominate the

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[39] Linda Nochlin, "Why Have There been no Great Woman Artists?" in *Art and Sexual Politics: Women's Liberation, Women Artists, and Art History*, eds. Thomas B. Hess and Elizbeth C. Baker (New York: Macmillian, 1973): 1-43.

[40] Contemporaneous photographs taken within Henri's Philadelphia studio show male students carousing and boxing, suggesting an underlining tension between Henri's attitudes and behavior towards his male and female students. See Sarah Burns, *Inventing the Modern Artist: Art and Culture in Gilded Age America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 75-76.

[41] Kristen Swinth, *Painting Professionals: Women Artists and the Development of Modern American Art, 1870-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

[42] Wardle, ed., *American Women Modernists,* 6; Henri married two of his students: the first, Linda Craig Henri (1875-1905) and following Linda's death, he married Marjorie Organ Henri (1886-1930) in 1908. Marjorie, who worked as a cartoonist before their marriage, continued to modestly exhibit her work. After their marriage, she set aside, by choice or by force, her personal artistic ambition and dutifully supported her husband as the

discourse surrounding his life and work, especially in the years immediately following his death until the proliferation and professionalization of scholarship on American art around the middle of the twentieth century. Henri's students benefited from the hours upon hours Henri devoted to his own studio practice, yet this labor happened behind the scenes. While his studio practice became embedded within his pedagogical approach as a teacher, it was not always visible and front of mind to his students as he commanded the classroom. In his teaching role, Henri spent the bulk of his time lecturing and providing feedback to students. This work could not have been done without the artist's practical, experiential, and first-hand knowledge of his own, deeply personal artistic practice. Henri filtered all of his teaching through his experience as an artist.

Published in 1923, *The Art Spirit* is another factor in the privileging of Henri's teaching over his painting. The popular volume included transcriptions of Henri's teachings, philosophy, art criticism, and excerpts from his correspondence. The circumstances around publishing *The Art Spirit* further reveal the invaluable and underacknowledged role of Henri's women art students.[43]

The importance of *The Art Spirit* to Henri's legacy, art making, and art history in the United States cannot be overstated. Margery Ryerson, an artist and former Henri student, convinced Henri of *The Art Spirit's* worth and took on the sizable task of compiling the book. Ryerson's labor in assembling the volume remains foundational to all subsequent scholarship on Henri and as a result, Ryerson figures prominently in the earliest drafting of Henri's legacy, albeit largely out of sight. However, she was not alone. Women biographers and intellectuals as well as students, Henri's wives—Linda (d. 1905) and Marjorie (m. 1908)—

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vivacious Mrs. Robert Henri, a memorable and consummate hostess. See also F. Graeme Chalmers, "The Early History of the Philadelphia School of Design for Women," *Journal of Design History* 9, no. 4 (1996): 237-252.
[43] One notable exception to this is Wardle, ed., *American Women Modernists*.

and Marjorie's sister Violet, all contributed, often both discretely and monumentally, to Henri's success and prolonged popular memory.

"No matter how much work I may have done on these notes, I certainly never want to consider them in any light but as yours," Margery Ryerson wrote to her former art teacher Robert Henri upon the publication of *The Art Spirit*. She swiftly concluded, "I have no right to be paid for your ideas."[44] Yet Ryerson grossly underrepresented her herculean efforts to bring the book into being: she worked tirelessly as its editor and publicist. By compiling *The Art Spirit*, Ryerson played a significant role in establishing Henri's legacy within the pantheon of American art.

As Ryerson put it, *The Art Spirit* captured Henri's "ideas." Underlying Ryerson's deferential prose is another idea of perhaps greater historical importance: the volume itself. In her correspondence, Ryerson downplayed her role in bringing *The Art Spirit* into existence, but in actuality, she invested substantial time and labor to transcribe, distill, and loosely organize three decades of Henri's teaching into accessible prose. Through *The Art Spirit*, Ryerson gave shape and permanence to Henri's influential ideas. Without her efforts, Henri's philosophy would not have become as widely available or in circulation still today. *The Art Spirit* is an invaluable trove of Henri's philosophy, art criticism, and pragmatic advice about art making. To discuss Henri without mention or reference of *The Art Spirit* is nearly impossible or, in the very least, might be considered mediocre and half-hearted scholarship.

The Art Spirit aided art teachers and artists alike; however, it is a manifesto on art making, not the merits or joys of teaching. Art—not teaching or activism—was the central element of Henri's life. Art was the impetus for everything he did. Henri went so far as to

[44] Margery Ryerson to Robert Henri, 3 November 1922, box 9, folder 218, Henri Papers.

draw a line between art making and personal economy. He wrote, "I am not interested in art as a means of making a living," and passionately continued, "I am interested in art as a means of *living a life*" (my emphasis).[45] Being an artist was not a vocational choice for Henri; it was a lifestyle. While teaching was of secondary concern to Henri, it significantly impacted his oeuvre and legacy. Money from teaching coupled with the largess of his upper-middle class family gave Henri the flexibility to create non-commissioned portraiture, without the economic pressure of seeking out commissions. As the art critic Forbes Watson wrote his introduction to the 1930 edition of *The Art Spirit*, Henri lived "a life of uncontaminated devotion to art."[46] Teaching was an important part of the equation, but art gave life to teaching and every other aspect of Henri's personal and professional experience.

Henri as "Ash Can" Figurehead

The role of women in cementing Henri's legacy within American art history is complicated by Henri's association with and his leadership of the so-called "Ash Can" school or circle.[47] Used to describe unpicturesque scenes of New York City life, "Ash Can" art became synonymous with the early-twentieth-century work of a small, ill-defined group of exclusively male artists with Henri leading the pack. The historiographic use of the term "Ash Can" was deliberate: it asserted the masculinity and strength of Henri's project and the vitality of the male artists around him.

Over the decades, numerous scholars have sought to uncover the term's origins. "Ash Can" was commonly thought to come into regular usage in the 1930s, the decade following

[45] Henri, *The Art Spirit*, 156.
[46] Henri, *The Art Spirit*, 1.
[47] There is no consensus around whether Henri's cohort should be classified as a "school," "circle," or both. Within the most recent scholarship, Michael Lobel in *John Sloan: Drawing on Illustration* uses both "Ashcan School" and "Ashcan circle." Alexis L. Boylan uses the looser affiliation "Ashcan Circle" to describe the relationship between Henri, his associates, students, and their urban realism. Boylan, *Ashcan Art*; Michael Lobel, *John Sloan: Drawing on Illustration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

Henri's death at the age of 64 from cancer. The prominent art historian and professor of American art, William Innes Homer admitted in 1969, "A search of the art literature published during Henri's lifetime does not reveal any use of the phrase 'the Ashcan school.'"[48] Homer traced "Ash Can" to Holger Cahill and Alfred Barr's 1934 publication, *Art in America*. However, as Homer noted, Cahill and Barr used two descriptors—the "Ashcan School" and "Revolutionary Black Gang" to describe Henri's sphere.[49] In an effort to unearth any shred of historical evidence, Homer cited a 1913 drawing by George Bellows titled "Disappointments of the Ash can," which was published in the socialist magazine *The Masses* in 1913 and the *Philadelphia Record* in 1915 (fig. 1.7). This drawing was central to a dispute over artistic content in *The Masses,* as John Sloan recalled much later in life. Homer also referenced Theodore Drieser's 1915 novel *The Genius*, in which the main character—an artist modeled off of Sloan—makes references to garbage cans as an appropriate subject matter for art.[50] Lloyd Goodrich, another distinguished art historian, admitted in his earlier 1952 biography of Sloan, published the year after Sloan's death, that the origins of the term "Ashcan" are mysterious.[51] Goodrich's candor, coupled with Homer's hesitancy, signals the term's periodization problem, which comes with serious repercussions beyond perpetuating historical inaccuracies.

Before the 1913 Armory Show, two major factions attacked academicism within American art. Henri led one loosely associated group of former illustrators and painters, and Alfred Stieglitz led another cohort of painters and photographers.[52] In contrast to Stieglitz,

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[48] Homer and Organ, *Robert Henri and His Circle,* 280n18.
[49] The use of the phrase "Black Gang" has no relationship to race. "Black" is a signifier of the general darkness of color palette and gritty subject matter.
[50] Homer and Organ, *Robert Henri and His Circle,* 280n18; Robert Hunter, "The Rewards and Disappointments of the Ashcan School: The Early Career of Stuart Davis," in *Stuart Davis: American Painter* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc.), 31-44.
[51] Lloyd Goodrich, *John Sloan* (New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 1952), 35.
[52] A.T.K. Crozier, "Untitled," review of *Alfred Stieglitz and the American Avant-Garde*, by William Innes Homer, *Journal of American Studies* 12, no. 3 (December 1978): 404-405.

Henri has been sidelined as an artist, one aftereffect of the continued use of "Ash Can." Despite its strategic importance, at the very least, "Ash Can" is an anachronistic and misapplied term. Oswald Splenger, the influential early-twentieth century German historian and philosopher wrote, "There are no eternal truths. Every philosophy is an expression of its time."[53] While escaping historical relativism is impossible, every scholar has a responsibility to peel back the historiographical layers, however pernicious. As historically constructed in the years following Henri's death, the "Ash Can" movement was rooted in male comradery against the art establishment, a stance reinforced by narrowly defined subject matter centered on the urban scene: raw, unrefined, even grimy, dingy, and vile from time to time. Taking the underbelly of city life as its subject, "Ash Can" realism required access to urban environments impenetrable to women.

The inaccessibility of certain facets of city life to women in Henri's orbit went beyond shifting notions of propriety, but instead were exclusionary tactics that preserved the homosocial environment of the American artist. Consider, for example, the work of one of Henri's closet associates, colleague, and long-time friend, John Sloan. Sloan's painting *McSorley's Bar* (1912, fig. 1.8) depicts a casual bar scene: a solitary male figure drinks alone at one end of the bar, while two men, one in a vest and rolled-up sleeves and another in denim overalls, engage in a dynamic conversation at the opposite end of the bar. Another man stands to pay. The crisp white shirts and aprons of the bartender and server stand out in a palette of muted neutrals—gray, blue, and brown. A clock on the wall reads about five minutes past 11 o'clock. Given the relative calm of the ale house and limited number of patrons, the clock suggests late morning, perhaps just before the midday rush.

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[53] Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (London: Allen and Unwinn, 1918), 58.

Sloan frequented McSorley's Old Ale House at 15 E 7th Street often, and the establishment appears in a total of five of his finished oil paintings, along with numerous works on paper.[54] *McSorley's Bar* is a quintessentially "Ash Can" painting in subject—working class men—and expression through thick yet skillfully maneuvered paint laid upon the canvas with authority. While the painting celebrates male companionship, camaraderie, and labor, it achieves all of this through the complete and total absence of women. During Sloan's lifetime and for fifty-eight years after he first painted *McSorley's Bar,* McSorley's Ale House prohibited women. It remained an exclusively male space until 1970. By the time Sloan exhibited *McSorley's Bar* (as "McSorley's Ale House") in the 1913 Armory Show, the reputation of Henri's faction was well established.[55] *McSorley's Bar*, Sloan's submission to the Armory Show, further reinforced the gendered and exclusionary attitudes of the later-called "Ash Can" or male urban realist artists in Henri's orbit. The overtly masculine terrain and its prominent exhibition history of *McSorley's Bar* signaled that "Ash Can" environments and art were inhospitable to respectable women artists.[56]

The introduction of the term "Ash Can" obscured the presence of women and their relevance to Henri's professional network and his philosophy. "Ash Can" and its hostility

[54] In addition to *McSorley's Bar,* the four other paintings include *McSorley's Cats* (1928, Huntington Library, Art Collections and Botanical Gardens), *McSorley's Back Room* (1912, Hood Museum of Art, Dartmouth College), *McSorley's at Home* (1928, private collection), and *McSorley's Saturday Night* (1929-30, 1948, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden); Mariea Caudill Dennison, "McSorley's: John Sloan's Visual Commentary on Male Bonding, Prohibition, and the Working Class," *American Studies* 47, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 35n10.

[55] Henri exclusively submitted portraits to the International Exhibition of Modern Art: *The Spanish Gypsy* (1912, Metropolitan Museum of Art), *Figure in Motion* (1913, Terra Foundation for American Art), and *The Red Top* (1910, private collection?).

[56] Women figure prominently in many of Sloan's paintings. However, Sloan and other "Ash Can" artists typically paint working women and prostitutes, in other words, women of a very different character than middle-class women art students. A number of scholars have discussed the presence of women in Sloan's art, most notably Janice M. Coco. See Janice M. Coco, *John Sloan's Women: A Psychoanalysis of Vision* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004); John Fagg, "Chamber Pots and Gibson Girls: Clutter and Matter in John Sloan's Graphic Art," *American Art* 29, no. 3 (Fall 2015): 28-57; Gail Gelburd, "John Sloan's Veiled Politics and Art," *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 7, no. 1 (January 2008): 69-88; Michael Lobel, "John Sloan: Figuring the Painter in the Crowd," *The Art Bulletin* 93, no. 3 (September 2011): 345-368; Laural

towards women artists can be traced to social and cultural elements at work in the United States. The masculine qualities of Henri and his faction's art, attitudes, and actions aligned with turn-of-the-century constructions of white American masculinity.[57] Henri, his male students, and his mostly male critics used overtly masculine language to connect artistic production with white heteronormative masculine identity, effectively reinforcing centuries-old misogynist power structures that forced women artists to the margins. New York art critic Samuel Swift's 1907 article, "Revolutionary Figures in American Art," exemplified a pattern of hyper masculinizing Henri and the "Ash Can" group well beyond the established tradition of the American artist, understood to be a man by default.[58] Writing about Henri and other artists like William Glackens, George Luks, Gerome Myers, and John Sloan, Swift asserted:

> A sturdy strain runs through this body of artists. There is virility in what they have done, but virility without loss of tenderness; a manly strength that worships beauty, an art that is conceivably a true echo of the significant American life about them.[59]

Describing the group of artists within corporeal terms—"this body of artists"—immediately alienated women for the same socio-cultural reasons they were largely excluded from discussions of human anatomy in art schools. To early twentieth-century readers, "sturdiness" and "virility" were idealized qualities associated with the performance of manhood. Swift and other critics drew upon the artists' aggressive, confident style, and bold

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Weintraub, "Women as Urban Spectators in John Sloan's Early Work," *American Art* 15, no. 2 (Summer 2001): 72-83.

[57] Bruce Robertson, *Reckoning with Winslow Homer: His Late Paintings and Their Influence* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990).

[58] Samuel Swift was a New York City-based music and art critic at *The New York Evening Mail* (1894-1907), *The New York Tribune* (1907-09), *The New York Sun* (1909-10; 1912-13), and various other publications until his untimely death following an operation in 1914 at the age of 41. No correspondence between Samuel Swift and Henri is known to survive. It seems likely met through the MacDowell Club, where both men were members and Henri later organized a number of non-juried exhibitions between 1911 and 1919. Swift writes from a progressive point of view and in support of Henri's circle; this complimentary sentiment was not shared by Swift's successor at *The New York Sun*, Henry McBride (1867-1962). Marianne Doezema, *George Bellows and Urban America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 95; Samuel Swift, "Revolutionary Figures in American Art," *Harper's Weekly* 51 (April 13, 1907): 534-536; "Samuel Swift Dead: Noted Musical and Art Critic Was Member of MacDowell Club," *New York Times*, July 22, 1914, 9; "Samuel Swift Dead: Music and Art Critic Fails to Rally from Operation," *New York Tribune*, July 22, 1914, 7.

[59] Swift, "Revolutionary Figures," 534.

dashing of paint across the canvas as evidence of the embodiment of masculinity within their art. When Swift dared to mention "tenderness," he briskly countered it with "manly strength." Swift coded Henri, his coterie of artists, and the art they created as masculine: not too masculine as to be overly unrefined, yet not too refined as to be effeminate.

Swift continued his article by focusing on George Luks, the artist in Henri's circle who asserted his masculine identity most aggressively. Luks was notorious for his complete disregard of gentility and for his excessive drinking—two personal attributes at which he excelled tremendously, and which also triggered his demise. (Years later in 1933, Luks was found dead, slumped in a doorway after a drunken barroom brawl from the night before.) Luks's subjects, Swift noted, ranged from portraits and character studies of prostitutes and "wise old Russian Jews" to "children, cabmen, dock rats, children again, children of the very poor or of the comfortable East Side shop-keepers."[60] It was not just Luks' subject matter that aided in the construction and projection a hyper-masculine identity. Swift paid special attention to how Luks approached his subject matter. Swift wrote, "Mr. Luks gets his material at first-hand. In the crooked and the dark streets, in the bright sunlight of a windswept Hudson River dock, in the drawing-rooms, in theatres, everywhere he goes, this artist never tires of studying living creatures and their surroundings."[61] The people and places that provided inspiration for Luks' art like the art of Sloan and many other male artists of "Ash Can," were, due to their gender, largely off-limits to the middle and upper-class women simultaneously swelling the ranks of American art schools.

If language, style, and subject matter reinforced masculine associations of Henri and his associates, their vocal criticisms of the art establishment and defiant behavior provided additional evidence to support their claims of virile manhood in action. Swift's article

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[60] Swift, "Revolutionary Figures," 536.
[61] Swift, "Revolutionary Figures," 536.

appeared in *Harper's Weekly* in April 1907 to critique the National Academy of Design's eighty-second annual exhibition, which opened the previous month. Henri, an Associate member of the National Academy, served on the jury for the exhibition. When a handful of canvases including paintings by Luks and Glackens were rejected, Henri withdrew his own submissions, *El Matador* (*Felix Asiego*, 1906) and *Spanish Gipsy and Child* (*Maria y Consuelo,* 1906) (figs. 1.9-1.10). To further register his dissatisfaction, Henri then resigned as a juror. The next winter, Henri and seven other painters, all men—"The Eight"—organized an exhibition at Macbeth Gallery in New York City to continue their protest against the National Academy and juried exhibitions, which according to Henri and other opponents, stifled their originality, individuality, and self-expression.

As early as April 1907, Swift positioned Henri as the figurehead of this revolutionary movement in American art, publishing his article, "Revolutionary Figures in American Art," in the immediate aftermath of Henri's infighting with the National Academy. Swift wrote, "Some have dubbed these men and their associates the 'black school.' To others, they are 'the gang.'" Quoting anonymous sources, Swift used the descriptors "black school" and "the gang" to describe the group's "sober tones," and the epithets resonated beyond their palette. Swift found these dismissive descriptors unwarranted. He put the pointed, negative criticism of the group into context: "Men's capacity to understand and to enjoy the changing art of their time may be likened to a rubber band, which cannot stretch beyond a certain definite span."[62] Henri and his associates were radicals by the Academy's current standards and the rejection of their work, according to Swift, seemed inevitable as they ushered in dramatic change. From the rebellious act of painting dark, gritty urban scenes, and unpicturesque subjects to snubbing the National Academy, the "Revolutionary Black Gang" ran counter to

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[62] Swift, "Revolutionary Figures," 535.

the art establishment in multiple ways, yet in ways that predictably reinforced early-twentieth century constructions of white heteronormative masculine identity.

Swift's 1907 article, often referenced indirectly by later critics and art historians, established a critical tone and framework for understanding Henri and his male associates. With Swift's important and early article in mind, the later emergence of "Ash Can" as a classification begs a more fruitful question: when and how did "Ash Can" become so narrowly defined?

For example, when art critic and former Henri student Helen Appleton Read wrote the introduction for the 1937 exhibition, *New York Realists, 1900-1914* held at the Whitney Museum of Art, she used "Ashcan" along with other monikers to describe the group, perhaps influenced by Cahill and Barr's then-recent and influential 1934 catalogue.[63] However, for much of the 1940s, there was a glaring absence of the use, of any form of the term, "Ash Can."

John Sloan's longevity and the support of Helen Farr Sloan, the artist's legacy-minded and significantly younger second wife, enabled Sloan to view his own work through the lens of history. In an unpublished "Statement about 'The Eight,'" from about 1948, Sloan wrote:

> The term 'Ash Can School' of painting is a misnomer and the result of careless research on the part of many writers on art…. Just how and when the term 'Ash Can School' came to be applied to the realist is a matter which should be cleared up. Thomas Craven may have been responsible for picking up the press. This catchword pigeon-holes the work of work of [sic] some men, while it lends the critic and public to ignore the equally real work of many others working at the same time and in the same tradition of concern with life.[64]

Not only was "Ash can" historically inaccurate, Sloan warned, it was a taxonomy that did not reflect the diversity of artists and breadth of art produced.

[63] Helen Appleton Read, *New York Realists, 1900-1914* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1937).

Comments made around the same time in 1949 by Emma Bellows, the widow of George Bellows, illuminate the imprecise use of the term "Ash Can" and further suggest its use is anachronistic at best. An all-star athlete at the Ohio State University, Bellows was one of Henri's most celebrated and successful students until his untimely death in 1925 at the age of 42. Bellows often returned to sports—from boxing to polo—as inspiration for his paintings. The widow Bellows was furious after reading a 1949 issue of *Life* magazine, which reproduced the painting *Stag at Sharkey's* (1909, fig. 1.11) by her late husband. She criticized the editors for classifying Bellows as "the last of the Ashcan School," a title she understood to be exclusively applied to "The Eight." As she wrote emphatically, "George Bellows was not one of them [the Ashcan School]… I have always considered it highly insulting to designate as the Ashcan School such distinguished artists as composed 'The Eight' and feel it is about time someone spoke in a loud strong voice against highlighting this 'Ashcan' tag whenever these important men are mentioned."[65]

Twenty years following Henri's death, why did "Ash Can" emerge as the primary descriptor for Henri's circle of white male urban realist artists? By 1949, spurred by a young art historian named Milton Brown, the term "Ash Can" rose from its own ashes and entered the vernacular American art history vocabulary, in spite of the staunch opposition from both John Sloan and Emma Bellows.

In Brown's 1949 article "The Ashcan School," published in *American Quarterly,* he discussed the Henri circle, students, and other realists such as Glenn Coleman, Rockwell Kent, and Jerome Myers, but used—for the first time—the "Ash Can School" as the singular term to describe Henri plus George Luks, William Glackens, John Sloan, and Everett

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[64] "Statement about 'The Eight' and The Society of Independent Artists by John Sloan," c. 1948, box 49, folder 6, Sloan Manuscript Collection.

Shinn.[66] This was a portion of his dissertation that would later become Brown's seminal work, *American Painting, from the Armory Show to the Depression* (1955).[67]

At midcentury, the term "Ash Can" gained legitimacy and popularity through Brown's scholarship and as an ephitet, continued to build upon the masculine qualities emphasized by Henri, his cohort, and the critics who promoted their work. "Ash Can" ultimately reveals much more about the state of American art and culture during mid twentieth century than about the work of artists nearly fifty years earlier. Limiting "Ash Can" to a small cohort of artists reflects the canonization process at work. "Ash Can" becomes a short-hand notation. Somewhat romantic, anachronistic, and even nostalgic, the term "Ash Can" sidelines the influence of urban realist artists within the narrative of twentieth-century American art. Henri's rise and demise occurs synchronistically with the introduction of European modernism and the ensuing preference for abstraction beginning in the 1910s.

By 1949, the maturation of America's engagement with European modernism was seen to have come full circle as, for the first time in the history of the United States, contemporary American art, creativity, expression, and culture dominated global cultural discourse in the wake of the devastating effects of World War II throughout Europe. Abstract expressionist painters like Jackson Pollock (1912-1956) and Willem de Kooning (1904-1997) constituted an even more aggressive machismo within the context of post-war American exceptionalism. Their overheated rhetoric far surpassed the hyper-masculinity of the "Ash Can" by the mid twentieth century.

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[65] There is a hint of classism in Emma Bellow's distaste, suggesting she felt "Ash Can" was a low-brow term. Emma S. Bellows to Editors of *Life*, 22 February 1949, box 6, folder 6, Charles H. Morgan Papers on George W. Bellows, Amherst College Archives and Special Collections, Amherst College Library.
[66] Milton W. Brown, "The Ash Can School," *American Quarterly* 1, no. 2 (Summer 1949): 127-134.
[67] Brown, *American Painting.*

Historiography in-formation

If earlier scholars have misread the evidence and fallen prey to the biases within the historical record, how does this affect the scholarly discourse on Henri? Early Henri scholars William Innes Homer and Bennard B. Perlman largely focused on recording Henri's life. As previously mentioned, Homer wrote *Robert Henri and His Circle* (1969), the first full-length study of the artist.[68] Homer interviewed Helen Farr Sloan, Sloan's widow, and drew upon a manuscript by Violet Organ, Henri's sister-in-law, which remained unpublished and incomplete at the time of Organ's death in 1959. In keeping with the larger trends in American art historical scholarship at the time, Homer's monograph was biographically driven and intended to document facts surrounding the artist's life. Bennard B. Perlman's *Painters of the Ashcan School: The Immortal Eight* (1979) and *Robert Henri: His Life and Art* (1991), were also documentary rather than analytical and offered little new scholarship, but provided evidence to solidify Henri's stature in American art.[69] Like Homer, Perlman discussed Henri in association within a wider circle of artists.

Since Homer and Perlman, scholarship has consistently discussed Henri as the leader at the helm of a narrow group of artists. In 1995, the Smithsonian's American Art Museum (SAAM) organized an exhibition and catalogue entitled, *Metropolitan Lives: The Ashcan Artists and Their New York*.[70] The catalogue, authored in part by art historian and University of Michigan professor Rebecca Zurier, included a broad overview of the interests and concerns of artists across media, in addition to a discussion of social conditions in New York City. Building upon her career-long dedication to the subject, Zurier later published

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[68] Homer and Organ, *Robert Henri and His Circle.* Apart from Van Wyck Brook, *John Sloan: A Painter's Life* (New York: Dutton, 1955), Bennard B. Perlman was first to publish a book-length study on "The Eight." The first edition of *Immortal Eight: American Painting from Eakins to the Armory Show (1870-1913)* was published in 1962.

[69] Bennard B. Perlman, *Painters of the Ashcan School: The Immortal Eight* (New York: Dover, 1979); Bennard B. Perlman, *Robert Henri: His Life and Art* (New York: Dover, 1991).

Picturing the City: Urban Vision and the Ashcan School (2006).[71] Here, Zurier argued that the artists in Henri's circle practiced a new mode of looking, what she termed "urban visuality," within the burgeoning early-twentieth century American city. Taking the urban experience as their primary subject, Zurier noted these artists were more interested in capturing life than creating art.

To date, Zurier's argument remains among the most analytical and thoughtful treatment of Henri and his circle, but focuses on Henri's early work before 1904, rather than his portraits. By dismissing his portraits, Zurier allows Henri's early urban landscapes to define, and in so doing, effectively curtail a greater understanding of Henri's career. While Henri's portraits do not resolve the issue of his relevance or relationship to modernity and modernism, my analysis seeks to problematize narrow definitions of Henri's work as an artist and his position within modern art.

Several scholars have suggested alternatives to understanding Henri's circle beyond their urban subject matter, an organizing principle that largely excludes Henri himself, who dedicated much of his career to portraiture. Bruce Robertson's *Reckoning with Winslow Homer* (1990) is an important intervention. Challenging the notion that Homer had little influence on successive generations of American artists, Robertson noted Homer was celebrated by Henri, who, along with his students, took up distinctly non-urban, Homeric subjects.[72] *Painters of a New Century: The Eight and American Art* (1991), an exhibition and catalogue organized by Elizabeth Milroy for the Milwaukee Art Museum focuses on "The Eight," a diverse group of independent artists—including those with ties of friendship and

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[70] Zurier et al., *Metropolitan Lives*.
[71] Zurier, *Picturing the City*.
[72] Robertson, *Reckoning with Winslow Homer*.

style to Henri—who exhibited at Macbeth Gallery in 1908.[73] Barbara Weinberg, Doreen Bolger, and David Curry in the Metropolitan Museum of Art exhibition and catalogue, *American Impressionism and Realism* (1994), defined Henri's circle by style rather than subject matter.[74] The authors emphasized the many similarities of Impressionism and Realism, which are often overlooked by the scholarship and the organization of curatorial departments. Allan Antliff's previously mentioned *Anarchist Modernism* (2001) approached Henri's circle even more broadly under the category of modernism. He argued anarchism was the formative force behind modernism in the United States and valued by artists as diverse as Stieglitz and Henri.[75] *American Women Modernists: The Legacy of Robert Henri, 1910 – 1945* (2005), an exhibition held at the Brigham Young University Museum of Art and catalogue, while still focused on Henri's circle, critically extended this grouping to (finally) include his female art students.[76] *The Eight and American Modernisms* (2009), an exhibition and catalogue organized by the New Britain Museum of American Art is the most recent example of grouping Henri with "The Eight."[77]

Museum exhibitions and catalogues dominate discussions of Henri's portrait practice. An avid traveler, Henri's portraiture is routinely discussed and organized by location. The most recent example of this dominant trend in the literature is *Robert Henri's California: Realism, Race, and Region, 1914-1925* (2014).[78] In addition to contributing to a number of studies localizing Henri such as *Robert Henri's California*, art historian Valerie Ann Leeds authored two exhibition catalogues broadly focused on Henri's portraiture: *My People: The*

[73] Elizabeth Milroy and Gwendolyn Owens, *Painters of a New Century: The Eight & American Art* (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Art Museum, 1991).
[74] H. Barbara Weinberg et al., *American Impressionism and Realism: The Painting of Modern Life, 1885-1915* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1994).
[75] Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism*.
[76] Wardle, ed., *American Women Modernists.*
[77] Kennedy and Brownlee, *The Eight and American Modernisms*.
[78] Cartwright and Leeds, *Robert Henri's California.*

Portraits of Robert Henri (1994) and *Robert Henri: The Painted Spirit* (2005).[79] Much of this scholarship remains documentary in its practice, focused on the biography of Henri's sitters and his experimentation with contemporary color and compositional theory. Description, rather than analysis, characterizes these and the many previous scholarly treatments of Henri.

Through scholarship from the last twenty years, an emerging generation of art historians pulled discussions around Henri and "Ash Can" art in new and fruitful analytical directions. With biographical and historical narratives already laid out, art historians can begin the exciting work of revisiting, reviewing, and revising historical evidence and earlier scholarship. There is now both a forum and quorum for discourse. In "The Critical Reception of Robert Henri's Portraiture: Rejuvenation in an Overly-Civilized Nation," Julia Ince examined Henri's success in the New York art world and drew evidence from more than one-hundred contemporary reviews of his portraiture. Ince argued Henri's popularity arose in part from his paintings' association with celebrated period values such as vitality, simplicity, directness, masculinity, and strength. Margaret Stenz's interdisciplinary study convincingly situated Henri's portraiture within the historical context of cultural primitivism and nationalism and illuminates "the context and broader motivations for the creation and reception" of his work. Finally, Sarah Vure's revisionist work focused on the Post-Armory career of Henri and Sloan. She argued both artists remained active and relevant following the advent of European modernism on American soil. The aforementioned scholarship takes shape through dissertations, which one can only hope will be converted into book form.[80] My study builds upon their revisionist work.

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[79] Valerie Ann Leeds, *My People: The Portraits of Robert Henri* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994); Valerie Ann Leeds, *Robert Henri: The Painted Spirit* (New York: Gerald Peters Gallery, 2005).
[80] Julia C. Ince, "The Critical Reception of Robert Henri's Portraiture: Rejuvenation in an Overly-Civilized Nation," (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1998); Margaret A. Stenz, "Primitivism and Nationalism in the Portraiture of Robert Henri" (PhD diss., City University of New York, 2002); Sarah Vure,

Another pivotal recent publication for American art history at large and my analysis is *Ashcan Art, Whiteness, and the Unspectacular Man* (2017) by Rutgers-trained art historian Alexis L. Boylan. In her introduction, Boylan notes, "To consider American visual culture in this historical moment is to confront the power and reach of regimes of the visual."[81] Boylan's interest in the binary of spectacular/unspectacular extended an important line of inquiry around visuality within American art.[82] The "Ashcan Circle," a moniker Boylan uses to unseat Henri as a figurehead, is the focus of *Ashcan Art*. She confines the circle to six male artists: Henri, Sloan, Shinn, Glackens, Luks, and Bellows. Her argument centers on race and white heteronormative masculinity in "Ash Can" painting and as she explains, "how these artists intervened and resisted the very regimes of sight they were in some senses dedicated to, and how that resistance reimagined the possibility and privilege of the unmarked, white male body."[83] My study shares similar interests with *Ashcan Art* and Boylan's extended analysis of the gendering of "Ash Can" art. Although indebted to Boylan's work, my study takes greater issue with the continued use of "Ash Can" to describe Henri's work and the privileging of the white male body, especially given his contributions to American art as a portrait painter.

Re-presentations

Ashcan Art, Whiteness, and the Unspectacular Man devotes a chapter to portraiture, yet Boylan narrowly discusses the artists' publicity portraits and only in relation to the active

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"Independent Artists: The Post-Armory Show Career of Robert Henri and John Sloan" (PhD diss., Boston University, 2002).

[81] Boylan, *Ashcan Art*, 1-2.

[82] Zurier, *Picturing the City,* in addition to being key to the historiography of the "Ashcan" School, is also linked to an interest in visuality in American art history. The origins of this thread can be traced to Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the age of Diderot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980); Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On vision and modernity in the nineteenth century* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990); Wendy Bellion, *Citizen Spectator: Art, Illusion, and Visual Perception in Early National America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

[83] Boylan, *Ashcan Art*, 2.

self-representation of Henri, Sloan, Shinn, Glackens, Luks, and Bellows. My analysis makes clear that an artist's self-representation and subsequent textual representations are deeply intertwined.[84] The twentieth century Canadian-American sociologist Erving Goffman suggested that much of what we discern about one another comes through social interactions, which he defined as the "reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another's actions." This exchange is inherently performative.[85] As Goffman wrote:

> The self… is a dramatic effect arising diffusely from a scene that is presented, and the characteristic issue, the crucial concern, is whether it will be credited or discredited… [A person and their body] merely provide[s] the peg on which something of collaborative manufacture will be hung for a time.[86]

As a sociologist, Goffman was most interested in face-to-face encounters and discusses these at length in his book *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (1969). A process akin to Goffman's "presentation of the self" unfolds throughout the historiography of many disciplines, as experts seeped in specific epistemologies align or juxtapose themselves with or against the grain of preexisting knowledge. A similar phenomenon emerges within the history of art itself. In *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (1985), art historian Michael Baxandall argued, "Arts are positional games and each time an artist is influenced he rewrites his art's history a little."[87] Goffman's presentation (or representation) cannot exist without the performance itself, the very means through which the presentation and representation is constructed. After wading through and dismantling outdated frameworks for understanding Henri and his art, this study contributes to the current scholarship by beginning the important work of reappraising and reassessing Henri, his art, and his position within American art history.

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[84] See Harry Berger, *Fictions of the Pose.*
[85] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1959), 15
[86] Goffman, *The Presentation of Self*, 252-253.
[87] Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanation of Pictures* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 60.

Henri’s portraits are key to understanding Henri as an artist, both how he represented himself and how he is represented by others. Portraits dominate Henri’s oeuvre, and given their prominence, Henri’s portraits ought to be as thoroughly investigated as his urban scenes. By closing the gap between Henri’s self-representation and representation, I give portraiture—a historically marginalized genre—pride of place within my work. This effectively puts American portraiture and its consumption in the United States within the context of Western art history. Scholarship about art of the United States, in part for fear of appearing provincial, historically glossed over the European influences. An American- and European-trained artist, Henri understood himself and his portraiture within a broad, global cultural context. The European influences and connections found within Henri’s portraits should not be viewed as handicaps to his validation as an American artist nor as detriments to the portraits’ art historical relevance. Instead, the complexity of Henri, his portraits, and his legacy are harbingers of a need for greater contextualization and an opportunity for discourse.

Primary Sources Beyond the “Ash Can”

In addition to works of art, the bulk of the data for this study is drawn from documentary archival sources. One exception to this includes writings published by Henri and appearing in periodicals such as *The Craftsman* magazine, exhibition reviews, and other forms of art criticism. The Beinecke Library at Yale University houses Henri’s personal and professional papers, which include correspondence with the key portrait subjects in this study. Previous Henri scholarship relies heavily and almost exclusively on the Beinecke’s abundance resources. One aim of this study is to strategically broaden the breadth of archival material in order to provide a more nuanced understanding of Henri’s portraits.

A number of lesser-known and understudied archival and museum collections inform this analysis. One example is Elizabeth Campbell Fisher Clay's papers, which were donated to the Archives of American Art by Clay's daughter in 2015. Clay was a lithographer and etcher who studied and traveled with Henri and William Merritt Chase from 1898 until 1909.[88] As my research unfolded, there were other uncatalogued collections that serendipitously came to light, such as the Henry Lovins Papers now at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Donated in 2019 to UCSB's Architecture and Design Collection and housed at the AD&A Museum, the Lovins papers include unpublished correspondence between Henri and Lovins, a former student who went on to design set designs for Denishawn, Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis' dance company founded in Los Angeles in 1915.[89] Another profoundly fortuitous discovery was the rediscovery of the original costume St. Denis wore for *The Peacock Dance*, the very costume in Henri's portrait (fig. 1.12).[90] In addition to examining new materials, I took a closer look at other invaluable archival sources, such as the research papers of several prominent art historians: William Innes Homer, Bennard B. Perlman, and Milton Brown. By examining a range of old and new primary source material, my study offers a nuanced interpretation of Henri, a canonical yet misunderstood figure in American art history.

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[88] Elizabeth Campbell Fisher Clay papers, circa 1873-circa 2015, bulk 1890-1930. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

[89] Henry Lovins Papers, Architecture and Design Collection, AD&A Museum, University of California, Santa Barbara.

[90] Ruth St. Denis' peacock costume is in the Jacob's Pillow Archives collection, Becket, MA. It was transferred from and donated by the University of California, Los Angeles to Jacob's Pillow in the early 2000s. Although inventoried in 1981, Caroline Hamilton, a costume and dance historian, embarked on cataloging the collection in January 2018, when the costumes were rediscovered. St. Denis' peacock costume, among others, were the focal point of an exhibition curated by Kevin Murphy entitled "Dance With Must: Treasures from Jacob's Pillow, 1906-1940" (June 29 - November 11, 2018) at the Williams College Museum of Art. Gia Kourlas, "The Costumes in Modern Dance's Attic," *The New York Times*, June 19, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/19/arts/dance/the-costumes-in-modern-dances-attic; Caroline Hamilton, "Cataloging the Jacob's Pillow Costume Collection," *Adventures of a Traveling Historian* (blog), June 22, 2020, https://carolinehamiltonhistorian.com/2020/06/22/jacobs-pillow-costume-collection.

Organization

In each chapter, I compare Henri's portraits of modern women against other visual and textual representations of his subjects, including their personal writings, publications, biographies, art criticism, and photography. More than muses, Henri's women are agents of individuality, who inspire his understanding of identity through their political and social activism, philanthropy, and expression.

Between March and April 1915, Henri began three non-commissioned portraits of the anarchist Emma Goldman. The final version was photographed, toured, and last shown publicly at Randolph-Macon Woman's College in Lynchburg, Virginia. The Randolph-Macon exhibition took place just weeks before the passage of the Espionage Act of 1917, legislation that led to Goldman's imprisonment and deportation. By widely circulating Goldman's portrait during the charged political climate of World War I, Henri aligned himself with a radical and dangerous woman, according to some. Both Henri and Goldman associated individuality with personal freedom, including freedom of speech, expression, and association. Henri depicted Goldman with a sense of dignity, respect, and quiet confidence that ran counter to circulated descriptions of her. Yet, as the portrait's destruction and the destruction of the two other versions of *Portrait of Emma Goldman* suggest, Goldman exceeded Henri's grasp. Her anarchist politics, which Henri shared, proved more powerful than Henri's representation of her.

The next chapter examines Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney's 1916 portrait by positioning it within the visual and social culture surrounding Whitney's body. Henri repeatedly uses the seen to evoke the unseen in Whitney's portrait. I read the transnational elements of the portrait as extravagant expressions of Whitney's personality and lifestyle. Highlighting Whitney's elongated body, Henri exposes the biographical tensions of an

unconventional life lived between monied society and working artists and the public and private expressions of her individuality. The abstract and ephemeral expression of individuality is concretized in the portrait, which uses realism to gesture toward issues of identity and representation by depicting another artist.

In my final chapter, I analyze Henri's portrait of *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance* (1919), St. Denis' recently rediscovered costume in the Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival Collection, and surviving photographs documenting her costume, bodily presence, and gestural movements. Photography was St. Denis' preferred medium of portraiture, favored for its reproducibility and association with modernity. Henri's flashy portrait of St. Denis is colorful and life-size yet falls short of conveying St. Denis' performance. The portrait's explicit psychological themes of identity, self, and expression combine to elucidate the complex issues at stake in the construction and interpretation of modernity within Henri's realist portraits.

From Theodore Roosevelt's "rugged individualism" to the independence of the "New Woman," the turn of the twentieth century was rife with competing models for fashioning a public identity. Art, portraiture in particular, became a significant arena where debates over presentation, representation, and self-expression unfolded. Across chapter-length case studies, this study examines three portraits of avant-garde women painted by Robert Henri in the 1910s: Emma Goldman, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, and Ruth St. Denis. This group of portraits map Henri's social and intellectual circles in ways overlooked by standard histories and collectively expose a historiographic slippage between Henri as the figurehead of the "Ash Can," his portraits, and Henri's role as a champion of individuality. After deconstructing the "Ash Can" framework that has characterized Robert Henri, his portraits, and legacy for decades, this study is a reappraisal and revaluation of the canonical American

artist. Over the next three chapters, I work to resituate Henri's portraits within a discourse of gender, identity, and representation. A closer look at Henri's portraits of modern women reveals an ongoing struggle between the artist and his subjects in the context of early twentieth century identity politics and modern strategies of representation.

CHAPTER 2

Emma Goldman and the Politics of Representation

Introduction

At Robert Henri's request, Emma Goldman visited his studio on genteel Gramercy Park in New York City over the course of several weeks in the spring of 1915 to pose for a portrait. As she recalled in her 1931 autobiography, *Living My Life,* "Henri said he wanted to depict the 'real Emma Goldman.' 'But which is the real one?' I asked; 'I have never been able to unearth her.'"[1]

Even if Goldman questioned Henri's objectives and the feasibility of the portrait's success, she welcomed the opportunity to sit for Henri after years of friendship strengthened through their mutual commitment to anarchist causes. Goldman and Henri came to anarchism separately, yet they shared an understanding of anarchism and its revolutionary potential. Goldman defined Anarchism in her 1910 anthology *Anarchism an Other Essays* as "the philosophy of a new social order based on liberty unrestricted by manmade law."[2] She explained the movement's goal as "the freest possible expression of all the latent powers of the individual." All human activity should be "the result of inspiration, of intense longing, and deep interest in work as a creative force. That being the ideal of Anarchism."[3] Anarchism championed the unbridled freedom of human expression, which enabled individuals to grow into the fullest manifestations of themselves. Henri promoted similar themes of free expression and individual growth to his art students, and used personal autonomy as his justification for independent, non-juried exhibitions. Anarchism underpinned Henri's artistic philosophy as discussed later in this chapter.

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[1] Emma Goldman, *Living My Life* (Garden City, NY: Garden City Pub. Co., 1934), 529.
[2] Emma Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1910), 56.
[3] Goldman, *Anarchism and Other Essays*, 61-62.

During the months of March and April 1915, Henri began not one, but three paintings: two canvases in one of his standard sizes, 32 x 26 inches, and a third, larger portrait measuring 41 x 33 inches, which he never finished. Not one of Henri's original portraits of Goldman survive. A black and white photograph by Peter A. Juley & Son documents the first portrait in the group (fig. 2.1).[4]

By the time Henri painted Goldman's portrait in 1915, Goldman had spent most of the last thirty years in the United States gaining a reputation for herself as a radical and dangerous woman, which culminated with her deportation in 1919. The fate of Henri's portraits was intertwined with Goldman's own rise and fall as a social activist. As historian Andrew Cornell wrote in his book *Unruly Equality: U.S. Anarchism in the Twentieth Century* (2016):

> The United States' entrance into the Great War [in April 1917] provided authorities with an urgency and an opportunity to curb the mushrooming influence of various movements seeking the redistribution of power and wealth. Anarchists, who were becoming more sophisticated organizers and public speakers while still refusing to eschew political violence, became prime targets of a multipronged counterinsurgency operation that began in 1917 and lasted for five years.[5]

Goldman was the most outspoken and prominent woman anarchist of her generation. In the years leading up to Henri's portraits and especially from 1917 to 1919, Goldman, Henri, and by extension—the Goldman portraits—were caught by a confluence of circumstances. Against the backdrop of the Great War, anarchists were increasing perceived by U.S. government authorities as a real threat to democracy.

In their absence, the portraits continue speak to issues at stake around political identity, representational politics, and portraiture in the early-twentieth century United States.

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[4] I did not have access to Henri's complete record books and instead relied upon photocopies of individual entries scattered throughout the Perlman papers at the Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives, Delaware Art Museum. See "Henri Record Book Painting Notes and Diary," box 5, Bennard Perlman – Robert Henri Papers, Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives, Delaware Art Museum.

Goldman, as her exchange with Henri about depicting the "real" Emma Goldman indicates, was skeptical of all visual representations of herself and often defied or deflected the efforts of others to render her identity visible as discussed throughout this chapter. A master of self-representation, Goldman preferred to represent herself through the spoken, and later, written, word. Despite Goldman's shared anarchist politics and Henri's faith in portraiture to register truth, his portraits fall short of representing Goldman, an embodiment of anarchism. This chapter analyzes the production, exhibition and destruction of the portraits as evidence of Henri's inability to convincingly represent Goldman's politics and her character through realist portraiture.

Commentators sensed but struggled to articulate a key element of Goldman's strategy of self-representation: the conscious juxtaposition between her physical appearance and physical presence. Writing privately, "It is more important to do propaganda with one's personality than with words," Goldman was deliberate in her strategies of self-representation.[6] Her physical appearance was unremarkable. John Sloan, who accompanied Henri to hear Goldman talk described her as "small, stocky, strong and earnest."[7] Sloan's description of Goldman corroborates other reactions to Goldman that her physical person was visually unassuming. However, when she opened her mouth to speak to a crowd, Goldman was transformed. As she spoke and became animated, Goldman's homely façade became more and more unrecognizable. The embodiment and performance of Emma Goldman—her impassioned language, excited voice, rhythmic cadence, and unusual mannerisms—considerably complicated her description and representation. This tension between

[5] Andrew Cornell, *Unruly Equality: U.S. Anarchism in the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016), 54.
[6] Alice Wexler, *Emma Goldman: An Intimate Life* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 198.
[7] John Sloan Diaries, 1906-1913, 22 October 1911, John Sloan Manuscript Collection, Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives, Delaware Art Museum, https://delart.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/John-Sloan-Diaries-1906-to-1913.pdf.

Goldman's conservative visual appearance and delivery of liberal ideals heightened interest in Goldman as a public figure. The radical nature of Goldman confounded visual representation. Goldman not only had to be seen, but she also needed to be experienced and heard. The performative dimension of Goldman's persona strained Henri's abilities as a portrait painter and challenged his strategies of representation.

Henri's choice of canvas size for Goldman's portraits—two 32 x 26 inches, and a third, measuring 41 x 33 inches—begin to suggest his attitudes towards Goldman and how he positioned her alongside his other women portrait subjects. Surveying Henri's portraits from his trip to California the previous year, he largely favored 24 x 20-inch canvases for three-quarter length portraits and sketches of a wide range of subjects and types.[8] Smaller than the Goldman portraits, the prevalence of 24 x 20-inch canvases among Henri's recent work and his decision to begin with a larger canvas signals his understanding of the significance of Goldman as a subject and importance of the portraits that would result from her sittings. The 32 x 26-inch canvas, which he used less frequently, was Henri's next size up from his most frequent 24 x 20-inch portrait; larger still, and even less frequent, were Henri's 41 x 33-inch portraits.[9] He reserved these two larger canvas sizes for subjects for whom he had a keen or familiar interest, for example his sister-in-law Violet Organ ("Viv"), a frequent subject, and his mother, Theresa Gatewood Cozad, who went by the pseudonym Theresa Lee in *Mrs. Richard H. Lee* (1914, figs. 2.2-2.4).[10] There was an economy to Henri's canvas sizes: the

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[8] Derrick R. Cartwright and Valerie Ann Leeds, *Robert Henri's California: Realism, Race, and Region, 1914-1925* (Fullerton: Grand Central Press, California State University, 2014), 92-93.
[9] By the early-twentieth century, all three sizes of canvases (24 x 20 in., 32 x 26 in, and 41 x 33 in.) were standard sizes and commercially available. See Lance Mayer and Gay Myers, *American Painters on Technique, 1860-1945* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2013).
[10] Cartwright and Leeds, *Robert Henri's California,* 17-18, 92*;* The measurements listed for *Viv in Blue Stripe* in *Robert Henri's California* are 32 x 36-inches, however, this appears to be a typo based upon earlier exhibition catalogues. See Valerie Ann Leeds, *My People: The Portraits of Robert Henri* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994), cat. no. 35. Henri's record book number for *Viv (New York)*, 1915 is published as 261-I and his first portrait of Goldman is labeled 264-I. Bruce W. Chambers and Helen Farr Sloan, *Robert*

larger the canvas, the greater investment required of his time and the longer the subject was likely to sustain his interest, or so he seemed to calculate.

Henri's decision to paint Goldman's portraits on canvases of the same size as recent portraits of his mother and Viv linked Goldman to two important women in Henri's life. Henri maintained close and affectionate relationships with both his mother and sister-in-law. Mrs. Lee doted upon Henri, her youngest son.[11] The bond between Mrs. Lee and her son is evident through their decades of correspondence. Mrs. Lee began her letters, "Mr. Robert Henri, My dear son," and ended with "Your loving Mamma." In turn, Henri wrote to his "Dear Missus," and often concluded letters with "Affectionately your son, Bob," revealing an intimacy and tenderness not seen through Henri's public-facing persona. Mrs. Lee wrote to her son in 1914, "I have saved letters of yours since you first went abroad… last week I had a looking over of all letters, read a good many of yours and found them so fine."[12] The sentimental value Mrs. Lee attached to her son's letters helped ensure their survival. Today, the letters between Mrs. Lee and Henri form the nucleus of his papers at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Yale University, a gift of Violet Organ's estate in 1960. Viv, who lived and frequently traveled with the Henris, assumed the mantle of the artist's widow and took over managing the Henri Estate after Henri's wife Marjorie died in 1930, a year after Henri.[13] Between 1914 and 1915, Henri completed his portraits of Goldman in close proximity to portraits of his mother and sister-in-law. The relationship between the portraits reinforces the significance of Goldman's portraits, already hinted at by their larger-than-

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Henri: Select Paintings (New York: Berry-Hill Galleries, 1986), 35; "Henri Record Book Painting Notes and Diary," Perlman-Henri Papers.

[11] Henri's older brother John A. Cozad, born on November 29, 1862, took the name Frank Southrn when the family moved to the east coast in 1883. William Innes Homer and Violet Organ, *Robert Henri and His Circle* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 10, 17.

[12] Theresa Gatewood Lee to Robert Henri, 24 June 1914, box 16, folder 397, Robert Henri Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

[13] For a related discussion, see Alexis L. Boylan, "The Curious Case of the Two Mrs. Sloans," *Women's Art Journal* (Spring/Summer 2012): 25-31.

average size, and the association points toward how Henri conceptualized his relationship with Goldman. Not only did Henri admire Goldman, but he also felt a kinship and strong attachment to her, as discussed throughout this chapter.

Goldman Biography

Born into an Orthodox-Jewish family in 1869 in present-day Lithuania, Goldman was just four years Henri's junior. She immigrated to the United States with her older half-sister Helena, in late December 1885, at the age of sixteen. They settled in Rochester, New York, where another sister, Lena had immigrated several years earlier. The following year, the remaining members of the Goldman family came to Rochester from St. Petersburg to escape anti-Semitic pogroms and to build a better life in America.[14]

Goldman arrived in the United States during a period of frequent and sometimes violent labor protests, which provide a prologue and context for Goldman's attraction to anarchism. In the aftermath of the American Civil War, the United States experienced rapid industrial growth, which concentrated tremendous wealth in the pockets of a handful of prominent individuals. The nature of everyday life—and work—changed for thousands of Americans. Factory labor fueled the industrial revolution, and poor working conditions, low wages, and wealth inequality contributed to the growth of the labor movement in the United States.[15] Goldman knew firsthand the physical toil of factory work, having worked in a glove and corset factory for a short time. She later described her experience, "The end of each day found me sapped, with just enough energy to drag myself to my sister's home and crawl into

[14] Goldman*, Living My Life,* 11, 20; See also Paul Avrich and Karen Avrich, *Sasha and Emma: The Anarchist Odyssey of Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2012); Richard Drinnon, *Rebel in Paradise: A Biography of Emma Goldman* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961); Candace Falk, *Love, Anarchy, and Emma Goldman* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984); Vivian Gornick, *Emma Goldman: Revolution as a Way of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011); Wexler, *Emma Goldman*.
[15] Wexler, *Emma Goldman*, 31-32.

bed. This continued with deadly monotony week after week."[16] This direct experience made her sympathetic to the plight of workers. Shortly after arriving in the Unites States, Goldman was swept up in activist and labor movements.

Pivotal moments in American labor history such as the Haymarket Affair reverberated throughout Goldman's life and featured prominently in her telling of her autobiography. Goldman, who was not directly involved in the Haymarket Affair, followed developments closely in the press.[17] Throughout the mid 1880s, workers' support increased for the eight-hour workday, an issue anarchists increasingly supported in solidarity with labor against factory owners and management.[18] At one such rally in Haymarket Square of Chicago in May 1886, a bomb detonated towards the end of an otherwise peaceful protest. After the bomb's terrific explosion, police drew their guns and fired into the crowd, which scattered quickly. The violence lasted less than five minutes and resulted in sixty-seven casualties among the police. Many of the officers were shot by fellow officers, rather than civilians. Civilians were killed and wounded in large numbers, too, although the precise death count was not recorded.[19] In Goldman's eyes, the bloodshed largely resulted from the unnecessarily aggressive response of the police.

Goldman closely followed the news from Chicago of the protest, violence, and trial. Eight men were put on trial, but the verdict seemed decided from the start. The extensive coverage of the incident in the press made finding jury members who had not yet formulated an opinion of the defendants challenging. A special bailiff was appointed to help with the selection of jurors, none of whom held sympathies for the labor movement. From the jury selection to the presiding judge, the trial was widely perceived as a farce by those

[16] Goldman, *Living My Life,* 15-16, 37.
[17] Goldman, *Living My Life,* 7.
[18] Paul Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 183.
[19] Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy,* 208, 210.

sympathetic to the anarchist cause. The trial lasted from June 21 until August 20 and the jury spent a mere three hours deliberating the verdict.[20] Seven of the eight men were sentenced to death on limited and inconclusive evidence. The bomb thrower was never identified. Goldman was bereft following the execution of the "Chicago Anarchists" the following year. Convinced of the accused's innocence, Goldman "devoured every line on anarchism" she could.[21]

In her autobiography, Goldman likened the outcome of the Haymarket trial to a spiritual awakening. She wrote: "I had a distinct sensation that something new and wonderful had been born in my soul. A great ideal, a burning faith, a determination to dedicate myself to the memory of my martyred comrades, to make their cause my own, to make known to the world their beautiful lives and heroic deaths."[22] Having lived in the United States for less than two years, Goldman was deeply influenced by the injustice of trial and overwhelming popular prejudice. Freedom—a founding principle of the United States—had not manifested itself and taken root among the citizenry. For Goldman, the Haymarket Affair exemplified an overwhelming lack of free and independent thought in the United States. Popular opinion, whipped up by exaggerated and often inaccurate accounts in the popular press, drove the outcome of the trial. The seeming abandonment of rational thought when the lives of men depended upon it infuriated Goldman. With youthful energy and idealism, Goldman was determined to do something.[23] The Haymarket deaths and trial set Goldman on a course to become one of anarchism's most fervent and eloquent supporters through her deportation in 1919.

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[20] Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy,* 263.
[21] Goldman, *Living My Life*, 9.
[22] Goldman, *Living My Life*, 10.
[23] Goldman, *Living My Life,* 10.

While Haymarket impacted Goldman emotionally, it also played an important role in framing anarchism for the American popular imagination. In the aftermath of the Haymarket Affair, public opinion turned swiftly against the anarchists and the radical movement as a whole, and it generated hostility towards anarchism that continued well into the twentieth century.[24] The fact many anarchists were immigrants acerbated the prevailing negative sentiments towards them. Press coverage of the Haymarket trial reinforced stereotypes of anarchists as blood-thirsty villains, who would go to extreme measures, even bloodshed, to overthrow American law and order.[25]

Henri's immediate response to the Haymarket trial is not documented, but his opinion of the trial is recorded in a passing diary reference several years later in 1890. Studying in Paris at the time, Henri and his colleagues found themselves debating capital punishment. Henri noted, "The subject of the Chicago anarchists came up. We opposed their hanging because even though opposing their creed, we might hang under other circumstances."[26] More than three years after the trial, the "Chicago anarchists" remained a relevant topic of discussion due in part to the related political unrest unfolding in the French capital.[27] By 1890, Henri was sympathetic to the anarchists, even if he opposed "their creed." As discussed later in this chapter, Henri continued to eschew labeling himself as an anarchist.

Another crucial moment in Goldman's life, anarchism, and labor history centered on the Homestead Strike in 1892. Goldman increasingly socialized in anarchist circles, which followed labor developments closely. In June 1892, attention turned to the Carnegie steel

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[24] Avrich, *Haymarket Tragedy,* 215; Cornell, *Unruly Equality*; Robert K. Murry, *Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955).
[25] Avrich, *Haymarket Tragedy,* 215. See also Timothy Messer-Kruse, *The Haymarket Conspiracy: Transatlantic Anarchist Networks* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2012).
[26] Quoted in Linda Jones Gibbs, "Robert Henri and Cosmopolitan Culture of the Fin-de-Siecle France" (Ph.D. diss, The City University of New York, 1999), 215, 258n48. As Gibbs explains in her footnote, "The 'other conditions' to which he [Henri] referred that might precipitate his own hanging was clarified when he added, 'all Democrats in America might hang after a Republican election.'"
[27] Gibbs, "Robert Henri and Cosmopolitan Culture," 210-227.

plant located in Homestead, Pennsylvania. The Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers presented Henry Clay Frick, the plant manager, with a new wage schedule as an earlier agreement approached its conclusion. Frick fiercely opposed organized labor, and with Andrew Carnegie in Europe, was given full authority to negotiate terms of the new deal. He refused to acknowledge the union and denied workers the ability to bargain collectively. The workers went on strike, but Frick closed the plant. Workers were laid off and their families evicted from company housing. The situation continued to escalate, with strikebreakers and Pinkerton guards brought in to protect the plant. A fight between Pinkerton agents and unionists turned deadly on July 6, and after a twelve-hour gunfight, 16 men were killed (seven guards and nine strikers). This time, the public at large sympathized and supported the unionists.[28]

Outraged by Frick's attitude towards workers, Goldman and a fellow anarchist, Alexander Berkman, developed a plan to assassinate Frick; this visibly, directly, and violently connected Goldman to the anarchist movement. The assassination was framed by Goldman and Berkman as an *attentat* or an act of terror in line with anarchist values and European precedents.[29] Berkman left for Pittsburgh and Goldman remained in New York; she intended to explain and champion his cause after the assassination was committed. On July 22, Berkman, claiming to have business with Frick, arrived at his office and asked for an appointment. He was denied. The following day, when denied access to Frick a second time, Berkman barged into Frick's office. He shot Frick three times and stabbed him in the leg before being restrained by carpenters, who happened to be working in the building, until police arrived. Remarkably, Frick survived. Berkman was sentenced to twenty-two years in prison.

[28] Avrich and Avrich, *Sasha and Emma*, 51-60.
[29] Wexler, *Emma Goldman*, 62-70.

Although Goldman was associated with Berkman in the press, she wrote, “The pictures of me in the papers in connection with Berkman’s act [attempting to assassinate Frick] were so unlike me that no one could have recognized me from them.”[30] A portrait of Goldman appearing in the Wilmington, Delaware *Evening Journal* shows a woman in eyeglasses and otherwise no distinctive features (fig. 2.5).[31] Goldman welcomed this anonymity, which enabled to her to continue living her life without major interruption. Goldman, however, would not remain out of the spotlight for long.

Representing the Goldman Portraits

As mentioned previously, Henri modeled his 1915 portraits of Goldman on recent depictions of his mother and sister-in-law, which indicated his warm and sympathetic feelings towards Goldman. A 32 x 26-inch size canvas predetermined some compositional similarities between Goldman’s first portrait documented by Peter A. Juley & Son’s extant photograph and Henri’s portrait of his mother, finished approximately 11 months earlier.[32] Beginning with the same available surface area, Henri faced decisions of how to represent Goldman. Rather than distancing Goldman from his elderly and distinguished mother, who appears in a white blouse and black and white jacket, Henri treats Goldman and his mother as similar subjects. The bodies of the two women take up comparable space, and their portraits are slightly longer than a three-quarter view, extending to below their waists. Both women are positioned at a slight angle, and the silhouette cast by Mrs. Lee’s sloping shoulders is mirrored in Goldman’s portrait. Henri took steps to emphasize Goldman’s non-threatening appearance, drawing upon the attitudes of his mother and his depiction of her within his earlier 1914 portrait.

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[30] Goldman*,* *Living My Life,* 110 - 111.
[31] “Dynamite in Pittsburg,” [Wilmington] *Evening Journal,* July 28, 1892: 2, chroniclingamerica.loc.gov.
[32] The verso of *Mrs. Richard H. Lee*’s canvas is inscribed in Henri’s hand: May 14, 1914.

Representing Goldman as a mother-like figure reflects Henri's sentiment towards her as well as Goldman's own efforts of self-representation. Goldman consciously positioned herself as the mother of the anarchist movement in the United States. While purposely childless, Goldman described her labor for the anarchist cause in the language of motherhood. She provided, for example, the following antidote as she described the genesis of the idea for the title of her journal *Mother Earth*:

> The soil was beginning to break free from the grip of winter, a few specks of green already showing and indicating life germinating in the womb of Mother Earth. 'Mother Earth,' I thought; 'why, that's the name of our child! The nourisher of man, man freed and unhindered in his access to the free earth!'"[33]

In giving birth to *Mother Earth*, Goldman in turn envisioned herself as the "nourisher of man" and the central figure of the anarchist cause.[34] The intentional connections Goldman made between herself and motherhood worked to frame Goldman and by extension, her anarchist ideals, as non-threatening. Goldman represented herself as life-giving rather than life-destroying, thereby distancing herself from Berkman's violent actions. Lulled by the charisma of his subject, Henri pushed very little against Goldman's strategies of self-representation. Henri instead amplified her frumpy and physically unremarkable appearance to align with her self-representation as a mother-like figure.

Identical in size and similar in sentiment, Goldman and Mrs. Lee's portraits differ in one crucial regard: their gaze.[35] Rendered against a background of abstract brushwork, Goldman looks unflinchingly at the viewer and, in contrast, Mrs. Lee's line of sight is diverted. The subversion of Mrs. Lee's gaze is symptomatic of a protective son and the

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[33] Goldman, *Living My Life,* 378-379.
[34] Heather Otsman, "'The Most Dangerous Woman in America': Emma Goldman and the Rhetoric of Motherhood in *Living My Life*," *Prose Studies* 31, no. 1 (2009): 55-73.
[35] For related discussions, see Harry Berger, Jr., *Fictions of the Pose: Rembrandt Against the Italian Renaissance* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Michel de Certeau. "The Gaze of Nicholas of Cusa," *Diacritics: A Review of Contemporary Criticism* 17, no. 3 (1987): 2-38.

guarded subjectivity of his mother, who lived a far more private life than Goldman.[36] Adept in confronting public scrutiny, Goldman's gaze is direct. While Henri's relationship with his mother and his portrait of her served as a starting point for Henri's portrait of Goldman, Goldman's notoriety required Henri to make adjustments and accommodations—such as gaze—to his otherwise dowdy portrait to bring the portrait more in line with Goldman's outward engagement with public life. Goldman, who maintained an extensive cross-country lecture schedule to promote anarchist ideals and related causes, constructed her identity publicly. Her gaze directly and confidently confronts the scrutiny of her audience or viewer.

Goldman's emergence as a public figure hinged upon her manipulation and defiance of social norms. At the turn of the twentieth century, idealized womanhood and female identity was still associated with the domestic sphere. Goldman disrupted these notions by constructing her identity in public. Standing on a soapbox in a public square or taking the lecture podium, Goldman dared to voice her thoughts and opinions in spaces traditionally reserved for men. In the words of one biographer, Goldman "defied conventional constructs of womanhood."[37] Goldman was acutely aware and attentive to the image she projected. In taking the stage, she realized audiences' intrigue with her character—perhaps even more so than her message. Goldman's portraits failed to fully account for the theatricality associated with her person and the public performance of her identity.

In the absence of the original portrait, color notations in Henri's record books provide additional evidence to reconstruct a more complete understanding of Goldman's first,

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[36] Henri was familiar with Whistler's portrait *Arrangement in Grey and Black No. 1, also called Portrait of the Artist's Mother* (1871, Musée d'Orsay), which simultaneously encourages and subverts viewership as a result of depicting the subject in profile. Of *Portrait of the Artist's Mother,* Henri wrote, "About the portrait Whistler painted of his mother I have always had a great feeling of beauty. She is old. But there is something in her face and gesture that tells of the integrity of her life." Robert Henri, *The Art Spirit: Notes, Articles, Fragments of Letters and Talks to Students, Bearing on the Concept and Technique of Picture Making, the Study of Art Generally, and on Appreciation* (New York: Basic Books, 2007)*,* 122.

second, and third portraits and to identify their potential relationship to surviving paintings.[38] According to Henri's short description for himself, Goldman's figure was set against a background of "orange gray."[39] The closest extant match among the backgrounds of Henri's paintings is *The Young Girl* (1915, fig. 2.6), although the colors of the figure study are likely more exuberant than Goldman's first portrait. Nude from the hips upwards, *The Young Girl* is a large 41 x 33-inch standing nude, the same size of the largest unfinished Goldman portrait. The sketchy nature of the finished study and use of a professional model (Edna Smith) freed Henri from the expectations of portraiture to represent a subject's likeness and character.[40] Painting nudes enabled Henri to experiment and arrive at a freer expression of himself as an artist. The sense of freedom conveyed through Smith's nude body, Henri's experimentation with color and form, and the suppleness of figure studies as a genre aligned with anarchist values, "for release and freedom from conventions and prejudice," as Goldman stated in *Living My Life*.[41] While *The Young Girl* and *Portrait of Emma Goldman* share little in common compositionally, Henri's use of color and the underlying freedom of expression draw the two canvases into dialogue.

Returning to a discussion of Henri's record books, Henri made careful notations to identify *Portrait of Emma Goldman*, which made it easier to track among his canvases. Among the defining characteristics of *Portrait of Emma Goldman* noted by Henri were Goldman's physical features and her colorful accessories. Henri described his sitter's

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[37] Candace Falk, Barry Pateman, Jessica M. Moran, Susan Wengraf, and Robert Cohen, eds., *Making Speech Free, 1902-1909,* vol. 2 of *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 9.
[38] "Henri Record Book Painting Notes and Diary," Perlman-Henri Papers.
[39] Several of Henri's Asian subjects from his trip to California in 1914 are silhouetted against orange backgrounds: *Tam Gan* (1914, Albright-Knox Art Gallery) and *Machu* (1914, Speed Art Museum).
[40] Edna Smith appears in several other paintings by Henri from this year: *Edna Smith-Torso* (1915, private collection, Florida), *Edna Smith* (1915, Regis Collection, Minneapolis), *Edna* (1915, Los Angeles County Museum of Art). James W. Tottis, ed., *Forging a Modern Identity: Masters of American Painting Born After 1847* (London: Giles, 2005), 118-119.
[41] Goldman, *Living My Life,* 56.

physical features: "blond brown hair blue eyes. Eyeglasses." Goldman's familiar pince-nez spectacles form circular frames around her piercing eyes and a "B[lue] and varicolored scarf" drapes lightly across her shoulders. Goldman's dress is described as "mousecolored." A "green" broach and a "white" ruffle down the midline of her dress suggest feminine refinement and softness, yet there is an erectness in her posture and self-assuredness in her gaze.[42] Not readily evident through the surviving photograph, Henri's first portrait of Goldman in its original form was vibrant and colorful.

Before finishing the initial portrait, Henri began two other portraits of Goldman, a demonstration of his prolonged labor to depict the "real" Emma Goldman. His record books are the single direct source of surviving information on the second and third portraits of Goldman, which were never publicly exhibited or photographed. The second portrait Henri began was the same size as the first. Departing from the first portrait, Henri continued to experiment with the composition in the second and presumably the third portrait. The record book entry for Henri's third portrait of Goldman is incomplete. Henri assigned the canvas a number, noted the size as 41 x 33 inches, and at some slightly later date wrote, "unfinished." And that is all the information he recorded. From the first to the second portrait, he changed the background from "Orange Gray" to "BG" or blue green.[43] The second portrait included a "red curtain" on the left.[44] Goldman again appears with a scarf across her shoulders, but the

[42] "Henri Record Book Painting Notes and Diary," Perlman-Henri Papers.
[43] Henri's record book entry for *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance* (1919, Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts) describes St. Denis' headdress as being "BG," which provides some suggestion of the background and color scheme of the second Goldman portrait. "Henri Record Book Painting Notes and Diary," Perlman-Henri Papers.
[44] From the late-nineteenth century leading up to World War I, the color red as well as red flags were widely associated with left-wing politics, especially anarchism. However, Henri's inclusion of a red curtain does not necessarily suggest he intended it to be read symbolically. Red curtains appear throughout the history of Western art in works such as John Singer Sargent's full-length portrait of the pioneering gynecologist Samuel-Jean Pozzi (1846–1918) in *Dr. Pozzi at Home* (1881, Metropolitan Museum of Art). See Candace Falk, Barry Pateman, Jessica M. Moran, Susan Wengraf, and Robert Cohen, eds., *Made for America, 1890-1901*, vol. 1 of *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 208n8.

colors of the scarf are more muted than in the first portrait. Henri describes the scarf in the second portrait as “B[lue] Gray and Blk.” Goldman’s dress is likely the same dress with a ruff down the center with the addition of a “gray white collar.” Henri’s notes indicate that he depicts the dress differently, darkening it from a lighter “mousecolored” to “dark gray.” Goldman’s jewelry also changes from the green broach to a “black bead chain.”[45] Goldman’s signature accessory—her eyeglasses—remain intact. Between Henri’s first and second portraits of Goldman, he shifts his color palette considerably from a high-keyed orange background and Goldman’s blue and multi-colored scarf to a jewel tone background of blue green, a red curtain, and a blue-gray and black scarf, or towards primary colors, which are more direct and straightforward. The overall effect between the two 32 x 26-inch portraits would have been quite different. Henri’s departures in the second portrait signal his intention to represent Goldman through other means than his first attempt. To balance the more explicit politics within the second portrait, Henri operates in a palette that is cooler and darker, but also uses primary colors to make it more straightforward and less playful.

Documented in various stages of completion, the three canvases provide evidence of Henri’s process and his ongoing struggle to represent Goldman through realist portraiture. It was not uncommon for Henri to work across multiple canvases, resulting in one or more finished paintings of the same subject. The previous year Henri took a similar approach when painting his wife, Marjorie Organ, who wears a broach similar to Goldman.[46] *The Beach Hat* (1914) and *Mrs. Robert Henri* (1914, figs. 2.7-2.8) depict Organ wearing a hat, red jacket, and white blouse. In the San Diego portrait, which was gifted to Henri’s former student Alice Klauber after the couple’s stay in La Jolla, California, Organ crosses her arms and leans

[45] “Henri Record Book Painting Notes and Diary,” Perlman-Henri Papers.
[46] In the portraits, the stone in Organ’s broach is blue, and Goldman’s broach is described by color notations as green. Whether or not it is the same broach, it continues a pattern of association in Henri’s portraits between Goldman and significant women in Henri’s life.

slightly forward. Organ appears more relaxed in the Detroit Institute of Arts' portrait, yet the modeling of her face is more confident, precise, and realistic. Henri encouraged this method of working on multiple canvases. He advised students at the Art Students League, "I myself have found it useful to work on two canvases, alternating them with every rest of the model…. The value of repeated studies of *beginnings* of a painting cannot be over-estimated" (emphasis in original text).[47] Instead of belaboring on a single canvas, Henri saw beginning the second and third portraits of a single subject as an opportunity to benefit from prior directly-related experience.

There were practical reasons for Henri to begin several canvases as he struggled to produce a successful portrait of Goldman. Given Goldman's exhausting lecture schedule throughout the spring of 1915, where she spoke on topics as wide ranging as modern drama and birth control, she was unavailable to sit for the full duration of Henri's work as he began three portraits.[48] Her absence helps to explain why Henri never finished the third portrait. Goldman likely made time for two or three sittings, or enough time for Henri to begin work on the first and second portraits. Henri's record book confirms the sequence of portraits, labeled with inventory numbers 264-I, 269-I, and 271-I respectively.[49] Henri began the first portrait during Goldman's first sitting and embarked on the second portrait when she returned to his studio several days later.

The third canvas which Henri began from memory registers his dissatisfaction and frustration, however brief, with the first and second portraits. Working from memory was a technique Henri recommended in the classroom. He told his students, "If you work from

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[47] Henri, *The Art Spirit*, 18.

[48] Goldman's lecture topics for March and April 1915 included "The Russian Drama," "Nietzsche, the Intellectual Storm Center of the Great War," "Limitation of Offspring," and "Man—Monogamist of Varietist?," among others. See Candace Falk, Barry Pateman, Susan Wengraf, and Robert Cohen, eds., *Light and Shadows, 1910-1916*, vol. 3 of *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 663-665.

memory, you are most likely to put in your real feeling."[50] Henri started a fresh canvas yet again, optimistically hoping a third attempt would yield a stronger portrait. In doing so, he gave himself a larger area—the largest yet—to communicate his feelings about Goldman and more time to leisurely depict his subject without conversing with her as he worked. Despite the advice he gave his students, Henri struggled to articulate his "real feeling" towards Goldman in the third portrait. His memory of her, even after years of friendship, was inadequate, and observing her on the lecture podium, where she first built her reputation as an anarchist, was insufficient for Henri's purposes as he fought to represent Goldman on his own terms. Henri needed Goldman in front of him; he needed her in his studio. Hindered by Goldman's absence and by his insufficient ability to represent her from memory, Henri set the third unfinished portrait aside. He returned to the initial canvas, which he finished in time to exhibit it in November of 1915.

Goldman's Spectacle of Notoriety

Henri's portraits of Emma Goldman must be considered within the context of Goldman's increasing visibility, notoriety, and public representation from the 1890s through the 1910s. In the midst of widespread unemployment, Goldman gave a number of speeches in New York in August 1893 that cemented her reputation as an anarchist agitator and would profoundly change her relationship to all varieties of portraiture. According to newspaper reports, Goldman told a crowd assembled in Union Square, "If you are hungry and need bread, go and get it. The shops are plentiful and the doors are open."[51] Speaking to the unemployed, Goldman encouraged individual agency and a redistribution of wealth. In launching an assault on the monied classes, Goldman foreshadowed the challenges Henri

[49] "Henri Record Book Painting Notes and Diary," Perlman-Henri Papers.
[50] Henri, *The Art Spirit*, 260.
[51] "Anarchists were to blame," *New York Times*, August 19, 1893, 9.

faced when approaching her as a subject for a genre with long-standing associations with wealth, status, and privilege.[52] Goldman was arrested in Philadelphia and charged with "inciting to riot" during her Union Square speech several days earlier.

Goldman's arrest in Philadelphia marked a shift in how she was imaged and how she was imagined. Upon her arrest, Goldman was photographed by the police. She recalled, "I was taken to a room where I was weighed, measured, and photographed. I fought desperately against the photographing, but my head was held pinioned. I closed my eyes, the photograph must have resembled a sleeping beauty that looked like an escaped felon."[53] By shutting her eyes, she maintained an air of female innocence, of "a sleeping beauty." Yet the context and format of the mug shot projected a conflicting identity onto Goldman, that of an "escaped felon." Goldman's escape comes through her attempts to dodge the camera and to thwart the documentary aims of police photography. Nevertheless, the photograph recorded a version of her likeness, even if she sought to interrupt the process and blur her resemblance.

The mug shot—a non-consensual portrait—frustrated Goldman's ability to control the narrative of her identity. While less innocent than Goldman imagines, the resulting photograph of Goldman bears evidence of her resistance (fig. 2.9). Neither the frontal view nor the profile image is quite squared within the frame. Goldman positions her body at a slight angle, upending the photographer's direct shot. The high shoulders of her jacket emphasize the awkwardness of her pose. In the frontal view, Goldman glares at the camera, her jaw and lips locked in defiance. Her eyes appear closed the in the profile photograph, and

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[52] Years later after hearing Goldman lecture, Sloan noted in his diary, "She was good, but here and there demanded too much social consciousness from the artist. For inst., she said that if the great painter (therefore revolutionist) should paint a wealthy lady, he would show the parasite covered with diamonds. This is too far. Takes it out of art, which is simple truth as felt by painter." 12 November 1911, John Sloan Diaries, Sloan Manuscript Collection.
[53] Goldman, *Living My Life,* 124.

her signature pince-nez glasses have been removed. Goldman was a recalcitrant subject; she resisted representation.[54]

Goldman's physical resistance within the mug shot signals her anticipation and understanding of the mug shot's repercussions. The mug shot framed her as a criminal, not as an enlightened intellectual. Unlike the generic portraits of Goldman that circulated in the press following Berkman's assassination attempt on Frick, Goldman's mug shot ensured the circulation of a supposedly more objective and realistic likeness as the photograph became the basis for portrait illustrations in newspapers (fig. 2.10). (As discussed later in this chapter, regardless of the widespread availability of Goldman's image in the press, she often went unrecognized in the flesh.) At this early stage in her career, portraiture posed more of a threat than an asset. It had the potential to increase the visibility and recognizability of Goldman. In other words, it heightened the potential for Goldman's surveillance and threatened her personal freedom, a foundational tenant of anarchism. Following her arrest for remarks in Union Square, Goldman was found guilty and spent ten months in Blackwell's Island Penitentiary in New York. Upon her release, a crowd of more than 2,800 people welcomed her. She addressed the crowd, "Friends and comrades, I have come back to you after having served ten months in prison for talking."[55] Goldman's police photograph was an inadequate means to capture her biggest offense: talking.

The assassination of President William McKinley in September 1901 brought increased visibility and surveillance to Goldman, again for talking or more specifically for inciting violence. Leon Czolgosz, the man who shot McKinley, had attended one of

[54] Mug shots and police photography are discussed by a growing number of scholars. See Nicole R. Fleetwood, *Marking Time: Art in the Age of Mass Incarceration* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020); Bruce Jackson, *Pictures from a Drawer: Prison and the Art of Portraiture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009); Sandre S. Phillips, Mark Haworth-Booth and Carol Squiers, *Police Pictures: The Photograph as Evidence* (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and Chronicle Books, 1997); Allan Sekula,

Goldman's lectures in Cleveland, Ohio earlier that year. He claimed Goldman was responsible for converting him to anarchism and ultimately inspired him to make an attempt on the President's life. *The St. Louis Republic* speculated on Goldman's influence over Czolgosz as he sat among the crowd during one of her lectures:

> Every sentence is driven at her audience like a tack-hammer's rap. They sound full of spite. It is the way she says things, rather than what she says, that carry the venom which Czolgosz has said fired him to attempt the life of the President.[56]

The reporter's misogynistic description of Goldman's oration emphasized her gender and the delivery of her ideas rather than their substance. Czolgosz, who fatally shot McKinley while attending the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, explicitly connected his actions to Goldman. Goldman was lecturing in St. Louis when the assassination occurred and departed for Chicago in disguise. Although it is not clear why she chose Chicago, it was a city of great significance for her, being the site of the Haymarket Affair. Because Czolgosz cited Goldman as his inspiration, she was soon arrested in Chicago and held for several days until the Buffalo District Attorney admitted that there was insufficient evidence to issue requisition papers for Goldman.[57] Goldman's mug shot from her arrest shows her in pince-nez glasses, with a wide taffeta ribbon wrapped and fastened around her neck (fig. 2.11). A cord attached to her glasses loops around her throat. Her hair is pulled back in a chignon on the back of her head. Goldman was eventually released, but later idealized Czolgosz and defended his actions, a stance that isolated her from many of her anarchist colleagues, who preferred to downplay anarchism's association with bloodshed.[58] The connection between Goldman's rhetoric and McKinley's assassination proved to authorities that Goldman was

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"The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (Winter 1986): 3-64; Shawn Michelle Smith, *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

[55] *New York World,* August 20, 1894, quoted in Wexler, *Emma Goldman*, 78-79.

[56] "Emma Goldman an Ideal Study in Contradiction," *The St. Louis Republic*, September 12, 1901, 4.

[57] Wexler, *Emma Goldman*, 106.

[58] Avrich and Avrich, *Sash and Emma*, 165-166.

indeed a dangerous woman, who could incite individuals to violence. In the years following President McKinley's assassination in 1901, Goldman assumed the pseudonym of Mrs. E.G. Smith and took a step back from public life as an activist.

Goldman remained committed to the anarchist cause and sought additional means beyond the lecture podium to promote her beliefs. An indication of the disruption McKinley's assassination created in her life, in 1905 she was working as the manager and interpreter for a troupe of Russian actors, a role that kept her largely out of public view. A benefit performance at the end of the company's United States tour provided the funds to kickstart *Mother Earth*, Goldman's "Monthly Magazine Devoted to Social Science and Literature." The first issue of *Mother Earth* was published in March 1906. Three thousand copies sold within the first week; a second run of 1,000 ensured the magazine's initial success.[59] Goldman enthusiastically recalled in her autobiography, "The spoken word, fleeting at best, was no longer to be my only medium of expression, the platform not the only place where I could feel at home. There would be the printed thought, more lasting in its effect."[60] *Mother Earth* provided Goldman an arena to more fully express herself and, perhaps more importantly, a means through which to reach an even broader audience. It provided a private, more intimate sphere for readers to engage with Goldman's ideas. The magazine literally and figuratively extended Goldman's presence through a different medium and intellectual network.

Goldman's new-found platform as an author brought an important shift in the production and reproduction of her portraits. With her 1910 anthology, *Anarchism and Other Essays*, Goldman continued the literary ambitions of *Mother Earth*, and she commissioned a photographic portrait by Takuma Kajiwara for the volume's frontispiece (fig. 2.12). Kajiwara

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[59] Peter Glassgold, ed., *Anarchy!: An Anthology of Emma Goldman's Mother Earth* (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 2001), xviii-xix.

immigrated to the United States from Japan around 1900 and operated a commercial portrait studio in St. Louis, Missouri for many years.[61] His status as an immigrant likely appealed to Goldman, an immigrant herself. Goldman appears in two extant photographs by Kajiwara probably taken in February 1910, when Goldman was in St. Louis for a lecture series (figs. 2.13-2.14).[62] Goldman's decision to reproduce one portrait over the other offers insights into her deliberate strategies of self-representation as she mediated between the "spoken word" and "printed thought."

Like Henri's portraits, Kajiwara's photographs of Emma Goldman are three-quarter length and focus the viewer's attention on Goldman's facial features. In their respective mediums of painting and photography, Henri and Kajiwara drew upon a shared visual tradition and vocabulary within portraiture. The frontispiece portrait of *Anarchism and Other Essays* reproduced a bust-length photograph of Goldman facing slightly left that sought to link the oratorical and literary sides of her career. Her face is squared towards the camera and her chin is slightly lifted. Beginning with the careful positioning of Goldman's body, Kajiwara's portrait pushes against previously circulated representations of Goldman in police photography. Confident and dignified, Goldman looks beyond the camera lens. Her signature pince-nez glasses are most visible by the nose piece's dramatic arc. Goldman's dress is understated, with a square neckline, covered buttons, and narrow decorative pleats running down from the shoulder. Goldman wears a felt hat with a thick, patterned ribbon around the crown. Goldman's hat, which was forcibly removed in police photographs, exerts another

[60] Goldman, *Living My Life*, 377.
[61] "Takuma Kajiwara," *Benezit Dictionary of Artists*, October 31, 2011. Although Kajiwara was professionally active in photography journals and won awards for his photographs, there is little scholarship on his life and career.
[62] The frontispiece portrait firmly establishes a 1910 date for its original photograph, and Goldman wears the same dress and broach in both portraits. While it is possible she returned for a second photographic session (she was in St. Louis again lecturing in late February and early March 1911), it seems highly likely that the portraits are contemporaneous. In an effort to regulate the circulation of his images, Kajiwara waited a year to copyright and release second portrait. *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History,* 2:620, 627.

layer of agency and identifies Goldman as a respectable woman. Presumably intended for the outdoors, the hat suggests Goldman's engagement in public life and immediately covers her from view. It hinders surveillance while simultaneously suggesting Goldman need not be surveilled. Kajiwara's portrait was an image of Goldman's making.

By reproducing Kajiwara's photograph as frontispiece portrait in *Anarchism and Other Essays*, Goldman sanctioned the circulation of his portrait and inserted herself into a long visual and literary tradition which linked authorship with portraiture and identity.[63] She welcomed the portrait in part because the text that followed articulated her ideas and provided further evidence of her individuality. Goldman's accompanying prose lessened the burden of Kajiwara's photograph to represent her. Consensual and promotional, the frontispiece portrait stands apart from the other visual representations of Goldman as an anarchist. Here she engaged with portraiture on her own terms. In Kajiwara's portrait, Goldman maintains authority over her representation. Unlike the silencing effect of the mug shot, Goldman retains her voice, expounded in the pages that followed.

In Kajiwara's second photograph, Goldman strikes a dramatically different pose, but one that was appropriate—if not even more so—to be reproduced as a frontispiece portrait for any author other than Emma Goldman. Goldman removed her hat, but she wears the same dress and broach. More of the dress is visible and reveals Goldman's womanly form beneath. Seated on a back-less bench, Goldman's left elbow rests on the bench's arm and her hand pensively supports her head in a well-established posture indicating thought. In the opposite hand, Goldman holds an unidentified book. Goldman's posture and the inclusion of the book

[63] Frontispiece portraits first appear with regularity in the seventeenth century. See Janine Barchas, "Prefiguring Genre: Frontispiece Portraits from 'Gulliver's Travels' to "Millenium Hall,' *Studies in the Novel* 30, no. 2 (Summer 1998): 260-286; Gerald Egan, "Radical Moral Authority and Desire: The Image of the Male Romantic Poet in the Frontispiece Portraits of Byron and Shelley," *The Eighteenth Century* 50, no. 2/3 (Summer/Fall 2009): 185-205; Ted Genoways, '"Scented herbage of my breast': Whitman's Chest Hair and the Frontispiece to the 1860 Edition of *Leaves of Grass,*" *Huntington Library Quarterly* 73, no. 4 (December 2010): 693-702;

clearly signaled to viewers her status as a writer and an intellectual. Goldman's complicated history with photography, portraiture, and representation meant she was a savvy consumer of images. The second photograph captured Goldman in a conventional and intellectual pose, but it spoke to only one facet of her identity. She likely objected to what she felt was the narrow, singular view of a subject presented by a portrait, suggested by in her question to Henri about painting the "real" Emma Goldman.[64] Goldman's publishing activities coincided with her public lecture tour series, and the final frontispiece portrait mediated between Goldman's emerging identity as a writer and her established career as an orator. Goldman reproduced one of Kajiwara's photographs in *Anarchism and Other Essays* because it spoke to the complexities of her identity.

To promote her ideas, Goldman cultivated a multi-pronged approach including *Mother Earth,* several book publications, and exhausting, cross-country lecture tours. Goldman developed a dramatic speaking style, unapologetically frank and peppered with sarcasm. Newspaper accounts vary in their descriptions of Goldman's oratory, but consistently note the ways Goldman—and Goldman alone—could captivated audiences. According to one report, "On the platform she [Goldman] makes no gestures but walks back and forth as she talks in a low, tense voice, strongly suggesting a black leopard in its cage."[65] Another paper confessed, "She is a good talker and can sway an ignorant audience by an appeal to the passions…. Miss Goldman's voice is clear and not unpleasant."[66] Moreover, Goldman spoke multiple languages fluently including English, Russian, and Yiddish. When speaking to audiences in English, she spoke with a slight accent, which added to the mystic

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Sarah Howe, "The Authority of Presence: The Development of the English Author Portrait, 1500-1640," *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 102, no. 4 (December 2008): 465-499.

[64] Goldman, *Living My Life,* 529.

[65] "Emma Goldman, Anarchist, Is the Most Dangerous Woman in the World," *The Baltimore Sun*, May 31, 1908, 15.

[66] "Emma Goldman's Last Brooklyn Appearance," *Times Union*, September 14, 1901, 2.

and the intrigue around her. Voltairine de Cleyre, an American-born anarchist and one of the few other women involved in the movement, described Goldman's delivery as "tongue of fire."[67] According to Goldman biographer Candace Falk, it was Goldman's "feisty, provocative irreverence that attracted audiences (sometimes numbering thousands) to her lectures."[68] Over decades of experience, Goldman cultivated an articulate, persuasive, and dynamic style of speaking. Although there were other women associated with the anarchist movement, there was only one Emma Goldman.

Beyond the power of her words, Goldman relished the controversy her presence often excited. She encouraged publicity. In response to being hounded by the police, Goldman at least once physically chained herself to a lecture podium to complicate and prolong her removal from a lecture hall. On another occasion when she was banned from speaking, she sat on stage in front of an audience with a handkerchief stuffed in her mouth.[69] Without speaking a word, Goldman's gagged presence on stage spoke volumes. Her physical presence reinforced her free speech agenda. She could be momentarily silenced, but she would not be erased. By appearing on stage, Goldman recognized and reinforced the extent to which she embodied anarchist ideals. The unpredictable nature of her dramatic appearances attracted large crowds to witness the public spectacle of Emma Goldman. Goldman succeeded in embodying anarchist ideas for a broader public.

While the press infrequently genuinely engaged with Goldman's ideas, they were obsessed with describing Goldman's presence to readers, focusing on the tension between her oratorial delivery, radical ideas, and physical bearing. Pioneering woman journalist Nelly

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[67] Donna M. Kowal, *Tongue of Fire: Emma Goldman, Public Womanhood, and the Sex Questio*n (Albany: State University of New York, 2016), 99.
[68] Candace Falk, "Emma Goldman: passion, politics, and the theatrics of free expression," *Women's History Review* 11, no. 1 (2002): 12.
[69] Falk, "Emma Goldman: passion, politics, and the theatrics of free expression," 13.

Bly interviewed Goldman in 1893 as she served jail time for the incendiary speech she gave in Union Square. Bly wrote:

> Do you need an introduction to Emma Goldman? You have seen supposed pictures of her. You have read of her as a property-destroying, capitalist-killing, riot-promoting agitator. You see her in your mind a great raw-boned creature, with short hair and bloomers, a red flag in one hand, a burning torch in the other; both feet constantly off of the ground and "murder!' continually upon her lips.[70]

Bly's dark description emphasizes destruction, violence, and an utter disregard for the societal markers of womanhood. In the public imagination, Goldman's dangerous nature is made explicit by imagining her emaciated form, short hair, and bloomers. Yet Bly's account is sensational for another reason: its dramatic plot twist. Upon arriving at the penitentiary, the journalist is surprised to find a polite, petite, and neatly dressed woman answering to name of Emma Goldman: "When the matron stood before me saying, 'This is Emma Goldman,' I gasped in surprise and then laughed."[71] The public expected an erratic and disheveled woman and instead encountered a well-mannered and articulate one. As early as the 1890s, the public's imagination of Goldman conflicted with her careful self-representation.

Bly's early interview set the tone for subsequent features on Goldman in the press by expressing shock and awe at Goldman's physical versus political being. An article in the *Sioux City Daily Tribune* from 1910 described a crowded lecture hall: "As the hour approached for the much talked of woman to arrive, heads were craned back toward the door…. Her general appearance did not differentiate her in any way from women seen on the street every day."[72] Goldman's anonymity fostered further intrigue about her. When a speaker introduced Goldman to an audience in Detroit, he cried, "Look at her…. Look at her; does she resemble the monster pictured by the press, the fury of a hetaera? Behold her black

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[70] Nelly Bly, "Nelly Bly Again. She Interviews Emma Goldman and Other Anarchists," *New York World*, September 17, 1893, 1, 3, https://www.lib.berkeley.edu/goldman/pdfs/NellyBlyAgain_NewYorkWorld_September17-1893.pdf.
[71] Bly, "Nelly Bly Again*,"* 1.

dress and white collar, prim and proper, almost like a nun…. You don't live up to your reputation."[73] Time and time again, audiences were surprised by Goldman's unassuming image. Visually there was nothing to indicate her anarchist agenda. Discrepancies between Goldman and descriptions of her drew frequent comment from those who interacted with her or attended one of her public lectures.

Goldman and Henri

Henri's encounter with Emma Goldman as an audience member speaks to her charisma and commanding oratorial presence. He first attended one of Goldman's lectures in Toledo, Ohio in January 1911, recording in his diary: "A woman of remarkable address, convincing presence. I never have heard so good a lecture. This is a very great woman."[74] Henri left his calling card, asked to be notified of Goldman's upcoming lectures in New York, and purchased a copy of *Anarchism and Other Essays*, which he eagerly read on the train back to New York. *Anarchism and Other Essays* deepened Henri's admiration for Goldman; he summarized the book as "a great work by a great and noble woman."[75] Several months later, Henri emerged from the crowd following one of Goldman's lectures in New York. Goldman noted in *Living My Life*, "I had heard of Henri, had seen his exhibitions, and had been told that he was a man of advanced social views."[76] A sense of mutual respect sprung from their initial encounter and Goldman soon pulled Henri closer into her orbit.

Prior to meeting Goldman, Henri read and absorbed the writings of important anarchists like Peter Kropotkin and Leo Tolstoy. As previously mentioned in my discussion of the Haymarket Affair, Henri encountered anarchism as an art student in Paris in the late

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[72] *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History,* 3:207.
[73] Goldman, *Living My Life*, 204-205.
[74] Robert Henri Papers, microfilm roll 886, frame 480, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
[75] Henri Papers, microfilm roll 886, frame 481.

1880s and 1890s when the anarchist movement was at its height in France; in the final decades of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, anarchist ideas permeated artistic circles abroad and in the United States.[77] Henri recommended Tolstoy's *What is Art?* (1898) to his students. Tolstoy wrote, "Every work of art, if it be a true one, is an expression of the intimate feelings of the artist, which are quite peculiar to him and not like anything else."[78] According to Tolstoy, for a work of art to be authentic or "true," an artist needed to identify their feelings towards a subject and tap into individuality to create art as a work of self-expression. Building on these ideas, Henri later paraphrased Tolstoy in *The Art Spirit*:

> Each individual artist's work is a record of his special effort, search and findings, in language especially chosen by himself and devised to expression him… appreciation is individual.[79]

Rather than focusing on the artwork itself, Henri directs his attention to the artist. He goes even further than Tolstoy to highlight the agency and sovereignty of the individual.

Beyond laying the foundation for Henri's artistic philosophy, anarchism provided an ideological framework for Henri's professional activities in the art world. In *What is Art?* Tolstoy continues to describe the ideal environment for creating art. He wrote, "One of the chief conditions of artistic creation is the complete freedom of the artist from every kind of preconceived demand."[80] Henri again agreed with Tolstoy as evidenced by Henri's withdrawal from the 1907 annual National Academy of Design exhibition and organization of "The Eight" exhibition at Macbeth Gallery the following year. Henri opposed juried exhibitions and prizes because he felt they limited artistic expression: "To award prizes is to attempt to control the course of another man's work. It is a bid to have him do what *you* will

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[76] Goldman*, Living My Life,* 528.
[77] Gibbs, "Robert Henri and Cosmopolitan Culture," 197-198; Allan Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, and the First American Avant-Garde* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).
[78] Allan Antliff, "Decolonizing Modernism: Robert Henri's Portraits of the Tewa Pueblo Peoples," *The Art Bulletin* 100, no. 3 (Sept. 2018): 107; Leo Tolstoy, *What is Art and Essay on Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), 204.

approve…. It is an effort to stop evolution, to hold things back to the plane of your judgement."[81] Henri's opposition to juried exhibitions was in line with anarchist ideals.

Additional evidence for Henri's anarchist beliefs come from his friends and students. John Sloan, Henri's long-time colleague and friend, reminisced that Henri "was an anarchist and had no sympathy with my devotion to socialism."[82] In *The Little Review,* Carl Zigrosser quoted an anonymous sitter, possibly Goldman herself, as saying, Henri's "greatest worth…is his sense of freedom, his fervent belief that only freedom can bring out the best in the individual. He is really an anarchist though he does not label himself one."[83] Henri's reluctance to label himself as an anarchist was itself aligned with anarchist values of nonconformity and anti-authoritarianism. He modeled this strategy after French artists Jean-François Millet (1814-1875) and Auguste Rodin (1840-1917). Henri recognized Millet and Rodin as having left-wing politics, although to Henri's knowledge neither artist explicitly self-identified as members of specific political movements.[84] Of Goldman's ideas and support of anarchism, Henri wrote, "I cannot see as a result of her inspirations the adherence to any *ism*, but I do see an incentive for each one to become a free and constructive thinker."[85] After her deportation and as late as 1925, the Henris and Sloans continued to discuss Goldman at dinner: "There was great and much talk. Art, politics, Russia, Emma

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[79] Henri, *The Art Spirit*, 215.
[80] Tolstoy, *What is Art,* 205.
[81] Henri, *The Art Spirit*, 138.
[82] Antliff, "Decolonizing Modernism," 106-107.
[83] Carl A. Zigrosser, "Henri and Manship," *The Little Review* 2, no. 7 (October 1915): 39. Today Zigrosser is best known as the art dealer for the Weyhe Gallery in the 1920s and 1930s and later, as the Curator of Prints and Drawings at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. In the 1910s, Zigrosser was active in the anarchist movement in New York. He was a student in Henri's evening art classes at the Modern School and edited the school's newspaper, *Modern School*. Allan Antliff, "Carl Zigrosser and the Modern School: Nietzsche, Art, and Anarchism," *Archives of American Art Journal* 34, no. 4 (1994): 16-23.
[84] Gibbs, "Robert Henri and Cosmopolitan Culture," 196-197.
[85] Robert Henri, "An Appreciation by an artist," *Mother Earth* 10, no. 1 (1915): 415.

Goldman, etc."[86] Even in exile, Goldman maintained a presence in sympathetic circles in the United States.

Art drew Henri to anarchism, and Henri's relationship with Emma Goldman further reinforced his politics. Goldman, who helped establish the Francisco Ferrer Center, a progressive education center named after the executed Spanish Anarchist and educator, recruited Henri to teach evening art classes at the Center beginning in November 1911. Henri's pedagogy was well aligned with the ethos of the school, which shunned dogmatic instruction of any kind, preferring instead to create an unregulated environment to nudge each student along an individualized path of personal growth and enlightenment.[87] A number of students who received instruction at the Ferrer School became well-known artists, including Adolf Wolff (1883-1944) and Man Ray (1890-1976). Man Ray recalled, "[Henri] never criticized our works, he'd pick up a drawing of ours that would inspire him to talk—and he'd say: don't take what I say literally today, because tomorrow I'll say the contrary of what I said today."[88] George Bellows, one of Henri's students, later joined him on the teaching staff. According to Goldman's autobiography, the two men "helped to create a spirit of freedom in the art class which probably did not exist anywhere else in New York at that time."[89] While artistic experimentation increasingly defined the work of American artists in the 1910s, Henri's message as a teacher was progressive and reflected his anti-academic stance towards artistic production, even as his own realist style remained indebted to the late nineteenth century.

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[86] Henri's daybook (copy), 21 January 1925, box 134A, folder 18, Sloan Manuscript Collection.
[87] Goldman*, Living My Life,* 529.
[88] Ann Uhry Abrams, "The Ferrer Center: New York's Unique Meeting of Anarchism and the Arts," *New York History* 59, no. 3 (July 1978): 320-321.
[89] Goldman*, Living My Life,* 529. See also Paul Avrich, *The Modern School Movement: Anarchism and Education in the United States* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980).

Goldman's influence and friendship encouraged Henri to take a more active stance on social issues associated with anarchism in the 1910s. According to Goldman scholar Candace Falk, Henri "donated paintings in support of the Lawrence strike (1912)" in Massachusetts, a cause championed by many faculty members at the Ferrer Center. Several years later in 1916 when Goldman was imprisoned for distributing literature on birth control, Henri joined the Birth Control Committee and along with anarchist Leonard Abbott planned a mass meeting at Carnegie Hall to support Goldman. Henri was also a member of the New York Publicity Committee for the International Workers' Defense League, which raised money in defense of anarchist agitators Warren Billings and Thomas Mooney.[90] Henri's public stance and involvement on these issues indicate his close philosophical alignment with and respect for Goldman, which extended beyond his level of interest in most portrait subjects. He was Goldman's long-time friend and a powerful advocate for her.

Reception

Although Goldman agreed to pose for Henri, it was not without hesitation, signaling her underlying distrust of portraiture, a medium through which she could not author a self-portrait. In her autobiography, Goldman wrote, "I was very busy at the time; besides, several people had already tried to paint me, with little success."[91] Unlike the other two sitters examined in depth in this dissertation—Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney and Ruth St. Denis—portraiture did not have positive connotations for Goldman. Most of Goldman's photographic portraits, which often took the form of a mug shot, were taken by force and not by choice. Henri's longstanding friendship and artistic reputation persuaded Goldman to allow him to paint her portrait, but her concerns over relinquishing agency over her self-image were understandable and valid. Goldman was not able to control representations of her body and

[90] *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History,* 3:700.

character, which helps to explain her otherwise meticulous strategies of self-representation. Her hesitation came out of a distrust of portraiture and preference towards representational strategies in which she could directly participate and control, such as the written word.

As Henri painted Goldman's portraits, he was aware that *Portrait of Emma Goldman* would enter a public arena saturated with conflicting visual and textual information about her. When comparing Goldman's facial features in Henri's first portrait to photographs, such as the photograph taken at the time of her deportation four years later in 1919 (fig. 2.15), a number of incongruities emerge. Henri modified Goldman's appearance to better conform to contemporary standards of beauty. Her face and nose are narrower. Her lips are full and contrast her skin. Her hair is carefully coiffed. In depicting an idealized, gentler version of Goldman, Henri aimed to show her as a dignified and orderly intellectual. In the three-quarter length portrait, the greatest attention and detail is given to her face, a nod to her intellect and skills as a public speaker.

Familiar with the issues at stake in representing Goldman, Henri made careful decisions in depicting his subject. Henri's portraits of Goldman capture her at the height of her career as an orator and activist in the United States. With brushes charged with paint, Henri employs thick, confident brushwork flesh out his notorious subject. The brushstrokes are passionate and swift. Henri achieved a unified vision of Goldman while also making his artistic labor visible. By making his labor visible, Henri provided material evidence of the freedom of his expression. In other words, deliberate—but free—paint handling enabled Henri to make himself visible through Goldman's anarchism and within her portrait. His portrait of Goldman departed from the widespread and popular depictions of Goldman by the

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[91] Goldman, *Living My Life*, 529.

press as ugly and repulsive. The portrait presents an alternate reality of his subject and challenges audiences' preconceived notions of Goldman's character.

After completing Goldman's portrait, Henri made the bold move to include the painting as one of two submissions for the annual circuit exhibition for the National Association of Portrait Painters, a public pronouncement to the art world of Henri's association and support of his subject and their shared politics.[92] The exhibition circuit ran from November 1915 until March 1916 and included the following venues: Galleries of the Fine Arts Society in New York, November 6-28, 1915; the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., December 3-26, 1915; the Art Institute of Chicago, January 2-24, 1916; the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburg, January 29-February 23, 1916; and the Memorial Art Gallery in Rochester, March 4-March 27, 1916.[93] Traveling throughout the mid-Atlantic and mid-Western United States, the National Association of Portrait Painter's exhibition circuit was extensive, and featured stops at some of the country's most important venues for contemporary American art. After this multi-state tour, Henri continued to exhibit Goldman's portrait at the Detroit Institute of Arts in Michigan and the Toledo Museum of Art in Ohio in spring of 1916 and finally, in an exhibition of contemporary American art at Randolph-Macon Woman's College in Lynchburg, Virginia in March of 1917.[94] By including *Portrait of Emma Goldman* in the Association of Portrait Painters exhibition and beyond, Henri put Goldman on a national tour.

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[92] Henri's second submission was a painting entitled *The Flower Boy.* The location and date of *The Flower Boy* are unknown, and the painting is not illustrated in any of the exhibition venue catalogues. Catalogues were individually printed for each venue; some are illustrated and include a reproduction of Goldman's portrait. See note 93.

[93] *An Exhibition of Portraits from the National Association of Portrait Painters and an Exhibition of Prints and Drawings by Joseph Pennell* (Rochester: The Memorial Art Gallery, 1916); *Catalogue of an Exhibition by the National Association of Portrait Painters* (Pittsburg: Carnegie Institute, 1916); *Catalogue of the Fifth Annual Circuit Exhibition of the National Association of Portrait Painters, Inc., 1915-1916* (New York: Galleries of the American Fine Arts Society, 1915).

While Henri did not select the Association of Portrait Painters exhibition tour venues, the cities in which Goldman's portrait was displayed were important locales to Goldman's life and career. By 1915-1916, Goldman's family continued to live in Rochester, where her sister saw the portrait, an incident discussed in the next section of this chapter. According to her autobiography, Goldman never saw Henri's finished portrait. However, she eagerly wrote to a supporter of *Mother Earth*: "While you are in NY Do not fail to go to the Arts Student Bldg an exhibition of Portraits mine is there."[95] Chicago, the location of the Haymarket Affair, and Pittsburg, the home of Henry Clay Frick, embodied great personal significance to Goldman. Goldman visited Washington, D.C, Chicago, and Pittsburg on her own lecture circuit—in some instances, multiple times—between November 1915 and March of 1916. In 1915 alone, Goldman gave 321 lectures with a total audience ranging from 50,000 to 75,000 people. [96] Concurrent with the exhibition at the Carnegie Institute, Goldman appeared at the Conservatory of Music in Pittsburg on February 3, 10, 17, and 24, where she presented a lecture series on drama.[97] Goldman's programs devoted to drama reflected her increased efforts after 1910 to reach middle-class audiences.[98] Therefore, there was the potential for overlap between museum- and lecture-going audiences.

Henri's intentional decision to display *Portrait of Emma Goldman* in the National Association of Portrait Painters exhibition ensured it would stand out, and it did. The members of the association included Henri's colleagues George Bellows, William Glackens, and George Luks as well as more conservative artists like Cecilia Beaux, William Merritt Chase, and John Singer Sargent. Although Henri's style remained grounded in realism, he

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[94] *Catalogue of the Second Annual Exhibition of Selected Paintings by American Artists and Sculpture by Anna V. Hyatt* (Detroit: Detroit Museum of Art, 1916); *Exhibition by Jules Guerin, Childe Hassam, Robert Henri, J. Alden Weir* (Lynchburg: Randolph Macon Woman's College, 1917).
[95] *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History*, 3:536.
[96] Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, 43.
[97] *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History,* 2:673-674.

distinguished himself among a more conservative lot by his choice of subject. Of the sitters profiled in the exhibition, Goldman was the most controversial. Her public identity singled her out among the genteel and anonymous subjects, such as William Merritt Chase's *Portrait of Mrs. Clark* (c. 1893, fig. 2.16). Visiting the exhibition at its first venue in New York, a reviewer noted the juxtaposition between Henri's choice in subject and that of Chase, Henri's senior and longtime teaching rival. The reviewer wrote:

> Nothing is mitigated of the severity of the subject [Emma Goldman]. The very blue eyes seen through glasses strike the one clear color note, and duller blues, grays and browns of the picture borrow vitality from the purity of this note. The portrait contrasts oddly with that by William M. Chase of a gentle 'tonal' lady in tawny white and wheat yellow, relieved by the black of her banded hair and a background of dull vermilion.[99]

Aside from being a much earlier work by Chase, Mrs. Clark and Emma Goldman were dramatically different subjects. Mrs. Clark (who may actually be a "Miss Clark" and a professional model) leans back gracefully in a satin gown, feather-trimmed opera cloak, and opera-length gloves.[100] She exudes a sense of wealth and privilege, in sharp contrast to Goldman's embodiment of anarchism. The reviewer was careful to point out that the difference in character between the two subjects is amplified by the color within Henri and Chase's respective portraits. The "blues, grays and browns" of Henri's portrait are as dissimilar to Chase's "tawny white," "wheat yellow," and "dull vermillion" as Goldman was to Mrs. Clark. The juxtaposition was jarring.

Reviewers noted another disparity within *Portrait of Emma Goldman* beyond the portrait's discordant visual presence in the gallery: that of the affable impression engendered by Henri's likeness and the radical reputation associated with his subject. A reporter for *The Hartford Daily Courant*, who saw the portrait in New York, noted the incongruities between

[98] Cornell, *Unruly Equality*, 43.
[99] "Annual Exhibition of Portrait Painters," *New York Times Magazine* (November 7, 1915): 21.

the version of Emma Goldman known through several decades of salacious journalism and Henri's demure portrait. The reporter described Henri's sitter as "a handsome, thoughtful woman with strong but not unamiable features becomingly gowned in a very paintable costume of silk and velvet and a great deal of white about the pillar-like neck." The anonymous reviewer continued:

> Miss Goldman might be a contented, well fed, youngish, married woman with houseful of children of whose future she was assured if physiognomy were a guide to life's history. To associate this ample serene presence with the real facts of her disturbed and distracting career would be impossible. The contrast between her portrait and her history is interesting.[101]

The critic especially noted the dissonance between Goldman's "serene" and motherly "presence" and her "disturbed and distracting career" advocating for free love, free speech, and birth control. As Henri widely circulated and exhibited Goldman's portrait, he assumed museum audiences were familiar with his subject. If they failed to recognize her likeness, printed exhibition catalogues revealed her identity.

As discussed earlier, the tension between Goldman's physical appearance and anarchist values was a common trope frequently repeated in descriptions of her. The *Hartford Daily Courant* noted how Goldman's portrait disrupted the physiognomic systems, which claimed that character could be read through the external features of the physical body. Physiognomy, a scientific-aesthetic system of reading the body, was promoted in the eighteenth century by the Swiss theologian Johann Caspar Lavater; it continued to influence approaches to the external surface of the body and the internal self well into the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries even as psychological theories began to take hold.[102]

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[100] Ronald G. Pisano, *William Merritt Chase: Portraits in Oil,* Vol. 2 of *The Complete Catalogue of Known and Documented Works by William Merritt Chase (1849-1916)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 110.
[101] *The Hartford Daily Courant*, November 16, 1915, 8.
[102] Sarah Blackwood, *The Portrait's Subject: Inventing Inner Life in the Nineteenth-century United States* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 24-25; James B. Salazar, *Bodies of Reform: The Rhetoric of Character in Gilded Age America* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 26-27.

Realist portraiture had long claimed to mediate between the external likeness and interior self to produce an accurate representation of a subject.[103] Goldman carefully aligned her strategies of self-representation with middle-class culture, leaving audiences—including Henri—struggling to reconcile the tangible and intangible qualities of her person. In other words, even as Goldman came to embody anarchism, she did not project it, at least as constructed in the popular imagination.

By destroying the conventional notion that physiognomy reveals character, Goldman as a subject presented a considerable problem for Henri that he was unable to resolve. In his famous "My People" article in *The Craftsman* magazine, Henri wrote of his portrait subjects, "The human body is beautiful as this spirit shines through, and art is [as] great as it translates and embodies this spirit."[104] Using portraiture to make the connections between the "human body" and "spirit" explicit, Henri provided clear evidence of his believe in physiognomic principles. Generally selective of his subjects, in the case of Goldman Henri overestimated his abilities as an artist. By Henri's own metrics, *Portrait of Emma Goldman* failed.

Outcomes

Having come to the defense of Goldman on multiple occasions, Henri understood and to some extent dismissed the volatile public opinions surrounding his portrait subject, however, neither Goldman nor Henri could have fully predicted the escalation of the Great War in the years immediately following *Portrait of Emma Goldman*'s completion. Although President Woodrow Wilson was reelected in 1916 as the peace candidate, within a year

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[103] Joanna Woodall, ed., *Portraiture: Facing the Subject* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 6-7. See also Kevin Berland, "Reading Character in the Face, Lavater, Socrates, and Physiognomy," *Word & Image* 9, no. 3 (1993): 252-269; Johan K. Stemmler, "The Physiognomical Portraits of Johann Caspar Lavater," *The Art Bulletin* 75, no. 1 (March 1993): 151-168; Bronwen Wilson and Paul Yachnin, eds., *Making Publics in Early Modern Europe: People, Things, Forms of Knowledge* (New York: Routledge, 2009).
[104] Robert Henri, "My People," *The Craftsman* 27, no. 5 (February 1915): 462.

Wilson reluctantly changed his position.[105] As the United States readied itself for global war, the stakes of Goldman's anti-government rhetoric and values shifted. Candace Falk explains, "Suddenly in 1915 and 1916 the same birth control talks Goldman had delivered for years were monitored more intensely by law enforcement officials. Birth control literature surreptitiously distributed to audiences landed Goldman in jail, sometimes overnight and sometimes for weeks or even months."[106] Changes in the political landscape shaped the reception of Goldman's character and by extension, the portrait too. Instead of ending the debate, Henri's portrait gave further evidence to Goldman's chameleon-like nature.

The same month Henri began Goldman's portraits, he contributed a short essay—"An Appreciation by an Artist"—to Goldman's monthly magazine *Mother Earth,* which revealed an underlying tension between Goldman's strategies of self-representation and Henri's representation of her. "An Appreciation" was itself a type of portrait, offering a textual representation of Goldman by Henri the artist. Henri's authorship of the essay came at Goldman's invitation. Goldman's receptiveness to Henri suggested her trust in his representational abilities. However, by promoting alternative forms of portraiture alongside painting, Goldman revealed her ongoing distrust of a portrait to capture the "real" Emma Goldman. Even as Henri began multiple versions of her portrait, Goldman presented Henri with an opportunity for yet another portrait in a language—the printed word—she was most comfortable.

Henri's text supplements the production of the Goldman portraits and elucidates the challenges Henri faced when trying to accurately represent his subject and their shared politics. Henri begins, "It is now several years since I went, out of curiosity, to hear Emma

[105] *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History*, 3:32-33. See also John Sayer, "'Art and Politics, Dissent and Repression: The Masses Magazine Versus the Government, 1917-1918," *The American Journal of Legal History* 32, no. 1 (January 1988): 42-78; Rebecca Zurier, *Art for the Masses: A Radical Magazine and Its Graphics, 1911-1917* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988).

Goldman speak. Like many another, I had heard of her as violent and dangerous agitator."[107] Notably, Henri emphasizes *hearing* about Goldman and then *hearing* her speak. For an artist invested in visual strategies of communication, Henri provides the reader with little visual evidence of his experience. In the third sentence of his one-page essay, Henri finally alludes to Goldman as a spectacle:

> I was curious to see and to hear for myself. I heard a cool, logical and brilliant speaker, appealing to the reason and understanding of her audience. Since that day I have heard her speak many times, have read her works; and I believe her to be one of the greatest fighters for freedom and growth of the human spirit.[108]

Henri acknowledges the need "to see and to hear" Goldman. However, he never describes what he sees; instead, his appreciation that follows focuses on what he hears.

Henri's character assessment of Goldman in "An Appreciation" revealed the problematic tension of Goldman as a portrait subject: Henri evaluated Goldman's character through her language and ideas rather than her visual presence. Throughout the essay, Henri emphasized Goldman's "arguments" and "ideas." He wrote, "Emma Goldman, with ideas and rarest quality of courage in expressing what she believes to be true, is here to talk plainly to us as though we were free thinking creatures and not the children of Puritans."[109] Henri, like many among artistic circles in the early twentieth century, aligned Puritanism with tradition and the stifling of creative expression. By inviting Henri to write "An Appreciation," Goldman acknowledged the challenges her self-representation created for portraiture and yet, Henri seems in denial. Henri's description of Goldman's position is clear, but it is neither provocative nor inspired by visual evidence. Subscribers to *Mother Earth* shared Henri's fond sentiment towards his subject; however, Henri offers little perspective from his vantage point as an artist.

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[106] *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History*, 3:34.
[107] Henri, "An Appreciation," 415.
[108] Henri, "An Appreciation," 415.

The contemporaneous appearance of Henri's "An Appreciation" and the production of the Goldman portraits provided evidence of Henri's respect for Goldman as well as his inability to effectively represent her visually. His appreciation for Goldman did not translate to a successful portrait. Goldman presented herself best through the spoken and written word. Henri on the other hand was most fluent in communicating himself and his subjects through painting. Between Goldman's self-representation and Henri's representation of her, there was an irreconcilable divide.

The resulting representation of Goldman in *Portrait of Emma Goldman* may not have been what Henri anticipated, but the production of the portrait was not without consequences. As a result of the portrait and Henri's continued teaching at the anarchist Ferrer Center, Henri fell under increasing government surveillance. Beginning in 1914, the Ferrer Center was "plagued by spies and provocateurs," according to art historian Allan Antliff. Police interventions continued to the extent to which "government operatives and police began showing up regularly to harass and arrest people."[110] Henri continued to teach under these conditions until the school's closure in April 1918. Coupled with Henri's earlier, widely exhibited portrait of Goldman, his brazen behavior provided ongoing evidence of his anarchist values. Henri's association with the school and his visible support of Goldman resulted in Henri himself being surveilled by government officials.[111]

Portrait of Emma Goldman had little impact on the reception of Emma Goldman's politics or her character, and it fell short of acting as a piece of anarchist propaganda for the mother of anarchism. Henri saw Goldman as a visionary and depicted her with an air of dignity within his portrait. With tensions heightened due to the war in Europe, government officials and the popular press grew increasingly impatient with Goldman's divisive rhetoric

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[109] Henri, "An Appreciation," 415.
[110] Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism*, 198.

and theatrical performances at the lecture podium. For decades, the scales of popular opinion teetered back and forth between labeling Goldman as a "dangerous woman" or as an enlightened intellectual. Henri's portrait entered the conversation at a moment of heightened tensions and emotions. His affable depiction of Goldman was less persuasive to audiences than he hoped.

While Henri's portrait of Emma Goldman had little bearing on public opinion, Goldman's behavior significantly influenced the survival of Henri's portraits. In the years immediately following 1915, Goldman continued to fight for freedom in an increasingly inhospitable environment. On June 15, 1917, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman were arrested in New York by United States Marshal Thomas D. McCarthy, a handful of detectives, and members of the police department. With a copy of the June issue of *Mother Earth* in hand, McCarthy declared that the volume "contained enough treasonable matter to land us [Goldman and Berkman] in jail for years."[112] Published and likely mailed to subscribers earlier that morning, the June 1917 issue of *Mother Earth* included an article written by Goldman and entitled, "The No Conscription League." The Conscription law went into effect on May 18, 1917, and *Mother Earth* quickly launched a campaign against it. In Goldman's short but biting article, she criticizes the United States, a country which prides itself on democracy and freedom, for compelling its citizenry to the front lines without regard to their individual rights. She announces the establishment of the "No-Conscription League… formed for the purpose of encouraging conscientious objectors to affirm their liberty of conscience and to translate their objection to human slaughter by refusing to participate in the killing of the fellow men."[113] Goldman summarized the League's platform as anti-war, anti-militarist, and for the autonomy of the individual in deciding for what they

[111] Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism,* 198.
[112] Goldman, *Living My Life*, 610.

would and would not fight. Goldman's stance against conscription and its infringement on individual liberty aligned with her understanding of anarchism.

The trial, which began less than two weeks later on June 27, 1918, was the culmination of decades of unresolved debate over Goldman, her public performance, identity, and ideals; its outcome shaped future representations of Goldman's character and identity. Years earlier, when she was arrested in Philadelphia in 1893, Goldman resisted being photographed by the police, and in her 1917 trial, she continued to question and obstruct authorities' abilities to represent her accurately. At one point during the proceedings, Goldman dramatically challenged a police stenographer to keep up with her rapid cadence. According to the *New York Times*:

> Miss Goldman made [the police stenographer] Randolph take pencil and paper and then started to speak. She told him to take down what she said. She talked so fast that a watch showed she read off 100 words in a half a minute. On a second test she read 125 words in 40 seconds, and on neither occasion was Randolph able to record everything that she read from the manuscript.[114]

The stenographer struggled to keep pace with Goldman's speech. This dramatic demonstration brought into question the validity of police transcripts and the quality of their surveillance. Goldman, again, evaded representation.

Goldman's character and the ability to truthfully represent it were ultimately on trial. During the trial, the prosecutor approached the jury:

> 'You think this woman before you is the real Emma Goldman,' he declared, 'this well-bred lady, courteous, and with a pleasant smile on her face? No! The real Emma Goldman can be seen only on the platform. There she is in her true element, sweeping all caution to the winds! There she inflames the young and drives them to violent deeds. If you could see Emma Goldman at her meetings, you would realize that she is a menace to our well-ordered institutions.'[115]

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[113] Emma Goldman, "The No Conscription League," *Mother Earth* 12, no. 4 (June 1917): 113.
[114] "Anarchists Deny Urging Violence," *New York Times*, July 4, 1917, 5.
[115] Goldman, *Living My Life*, 620.

In the prosecutor's statement, a familiar, yet unanswered question reemerged: who is the "real" Emma Goldman? The issue of authentic self-representation hinged on Goldman's charismatic presence versus her physical appearance. The prosecution argued that Goldman was not a "well-bred lady," but a "menace to our well-ordered institutions." Found guilty, Beckman and Goldman left New York to live out their respective two-year prison sentences in Atlanta, Georgia and Jefferson City, Missouri. For Goldman, this was the longest sentence she would serve in the United States.

The outcome of Goldman's trial and deteriorating conditions at the Ferrer School in her absence led to the destruction of the largest portrait of Emma Goldman. For three years, the large 41 x 33-inch canvas sat unfinished, awaiting another studio visit from Goldman or a burst of activity from Henri, neither of which materialized. As previously mentioned, Henri's art classes at the Ferrer Center were suspended when the building was forced to close in April 1918.[116] On April 28, 1918, Henri made a notation in his record book beside the largest, unfinished portrait of Goldman: "Distroyed" [sic].[117] Henri's act of iconoclasm was a symbolic acknowledgement of Goldman's unrealized vision for anarchism in America, which paralleled Henri's failure to represent Goldman as a subject. Coinciding with the closure of the Ferrer Center and overlapping with Goldman's prison sentence, the portrait's destruction marked a turning point for Henri. By destroying the portrait, Henri erased the physical evidence of the largest portrait's incompletion and its failure to represent the "real" Emma Goldman. He would never return to the canvas. In Goldman, he found a subject who outstretched his abilities as an artist.

A drastic measure, Henri's destruction of the largest portrait foreshadowed further challenging times ahead for its subject. Prior to the completion of Goldman's prison

[116] Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism*, 198.
[117] "Henri Record Book Painting Notes and Diary," Perlman-Henri Papers.

sentence, she received notice of the scheduling of her deportation proceedings under the Alien Immigration Act (1917) and Anti-Anarchist Act (1918). Goldman's lawyer appealed the decision, arguing Goldman obtained citizenship decades before through a short-lived marriage to a man named Jacob Kershner. The government, however, discredited the Kershner's citizenship, saying it was granted illegally; furthermore, Kershner had died several months earlier.[118] After several unsuccessful appeals, Goldman along with Berkman, found themselves among the 249 individuals deported to Russia in the early hours of December 21, 1919 (fig. 2.17). A young J. Edgar Hoover as a special assistant to the Attorney General Alexander Mitchell Palmer wrote assertively in a memo, "Emma Goldman and Alexander Berman are, beyond doubt, two of the most dangerous anarchists in this country."[119] Goldman's representation of herself as a rational speaker failed to persuade authorities, who insisted she was "dangerous" enough to deport.

The two remaining portraits of Goldman might have escaped notice among the hundreds of paintings within the Henri Estate if it were not for Goldman's detailed account of the portrait sitting in her much-anticipated autobiography, which was published in two volumes in 1931 and 1934. In her autobiography, Goldman admits that she never saw the finished portrait. Goldman wrote:

> I was naturally anxious to see the portrait, but knowing Henri's sensitiveness about showing unfinished work, I did not ask for it. I was not in New York when the painting was done, but some time later my sister Helena wrote me that she had seen it in an exhibition in Rochester. 'I should not have known it was you if your name had not been under it,' she told me. Several other friends agreed with her. I was certain, however, that Henri had tried to portray what he conceived to be the 'real Emma Goldman.' I never saw the painting, but I prized the memory of the sittings, which had given me so much of value.[120]

[118] Wexler, *Emma Goldman*, 288-291.
[119] Quoted in Wexler, *Emma Goldman*, 290-291.
[120] Goldman*, Living My Life,* 529.

Henri's portrait served as validation for Goldman of her identity, politics, and ideas, which were deeply intertwined. Goldman's sister and friends are her source for understanding Henri's portrait. Although Goldman recalled the sittings fondly, her sister was underwhelmed with the portrait itself.

According to art critics as well as Goldman's family and friends, Henri's portrait failed to accurately represent Goldman. Goldman's criticism of Henri's portrait by way of Helena arrived at an inopportune moment. In quick succession, Henri's estate passed to his wife, Marjorie Organ in 1929 and to his unmarried sister-in-law Viv, when Marjorie died unexpectedly in 1930.

Due to her outsized reputation, Goldman's remarks were a death knell to the two surviving portraits. Viv, perhaps on the advice of Emma Bellows (widow of George Bellows), began thinning the ranks of Henri's surviving paintings and destroyed paintings she felt were of lesser quality.[121] In 1932, the unfinished portrait with the red curtain was destroyed and two years later Viv destroyed Henri's finished and widely exhibited *Portrait of Emma Goldman*. Goldman's autobiography recorded Goldman's sister's disappointment with Henri's work, which became justification for the portrait's destruction. In a dramatic twist of fate, it is Viv who destroys two of the Goldman portraits.

Conclusion

Goldman embodied her politics for the American public. In the early decades of the twentieth century, the popular press and increasingly, government authorities painted Goldman as a volatile individual who could not be trusted. Across media, anyone but Emma Goldman struggled to represent Emma Goldman. She resisted the subjugation of representation at every turn, and the dissonance between Goldman's rhetoric, politics, and

strategies of self-representation stoked fear. Here was a woman who supported free love, free speech, and birth control and yet her sartorial choices and mannerisms were understated and matronly. On a personal level Goldman reconciled the oppositional elements of her personality, and she insisted the only valid representation of herself came through her own self-representation. The public, however, was not convinced. Henri's portrait of Goldman, while capturing his sympathetic feelings towards her, did not quell the debate surrounding Goldman's character. Instead, the portrait provided further evidence of Goldman's ability to deceive audiences.

Portrait of Emma Goldman represents not only Henri's failure, but a failure of physiognomy and the modern body to reveal character. With the collapse of assumptions surrounding information conveyed through the body's visual features, realist portraiture lost its representational autonomy and authority. Realist portraiture failed to represent Emma Goldman, a modern woman. The fact that Goldman could not be contained drew into question Henri's politics and entire artistic enterprise. Anarchism was foundational to Henri's beliefs as an artist and provided an ideological foundation to his understanding of freedom, which was then passed along to his students. Yet Goldman equated portraiture with surveillance and therefore, a loss of freedom rather than freedom in its fullest expression. Henri's chosen medium was at odds with his subject. By defying strategies of representation, Goldman rendered portraiture impotent. Working beyond the canvas, Goldman dismantled the power of portraiture and its authority to convincingly represent the subject. The "real" Emma Goldman remained elusive.

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[121] Janet Le Clair to Bennard Perlman, 16 June 1979, box 5, folder L2, Perlman-Henri Papers.

CHAPTER 3

Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney: Fashioning the Artist

Introduction

Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney wrote to Robert Henri in December 1915 asking that he paint her portrait (fig. 3.1). Henri enthusiastically replied, "Nothing would please me more than to paint a portrait of you and to do it in the best I can."[1] Despite his eager response, commissioned portraits were infrequent within Henri's oeuvre. He preferred to seek out his own subjects, avoiding the overt commercialism of commissions and the pressure of satisfying a paying spouse, parent, or subject.[2]

Yet Henri dared not refuse Whitney. In addition to collecting contemporary American art and providing exhibition space to aspiring artists, Whitney's recent success as a sculptor allowed her to cultivate an identity apart from her Vanderbilt and Whitney family names. Whitney approached Henri as a patron, but she was also a colleague who wished to present herself as a professional artist. Henri brought a deep awareness of the elite, classist associations of commissioned portraiture to Whitney's request.[3] Nevertheless, portraiture enabled Whitney to fashion an identity that aligned her with the American avant-garde rather than aristocrats. *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney* captures the ambiguity of Whitney's self-representation through her sensual posture, exotic costume, and subtle messaging about her status as a sculptor, visible to only those familiar with the seriousness in which she approached her art.

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[1] Robert Henri to Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, 14 December 1915, Object file *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney* (86.70.3), Permanent Collection Documentation Office, Whitney Museum of American Art (WMAA).
[2] A later example of a commissioned portrait is *Portrait of Mrs. William Preston Harrison* (1925, Los Angeles County Museum of Art). Two portraits illustrative of the diversity of Henri's non-commissioned subjects from this period include *The Laundress* (1916, Phoenix Art Museum) and *Portrait of Dieguito Roybal, San Ildefonso Pueblo* (1916, New Mexico Museum of Art).

Whitney's Odalisque

Lounging on a sofa, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney poses as an odalisque, a rich and complex art historical reference. The composition of *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney* suggests Henri's efforts to distance Whitney from commission-based society portraiture such as paintings by his contemporary John Singer Sargent. In the canon of Western art, the odalisque or female harem figure (often a paid model) and her suggestive posture Orientalized the reclining female nude, which first emerged in the work of the sixteenth-century Italian Renaissance artist Giorgione (1478-1510). The odalisque visualized fantasies of sexual availability and by the late nineteenth century held strong associations with French colonialism.[4] Whitney's portrait did not signal sexual availability, but rather the sexual freedom and individuality that in part characterized early-twentieth century bohemian culture and first-wave feminism.[5] Although Whitney's gaze is confident, her body simultaneously melts into the fashionable taupe Louis XV-style sofa. A purple length of fabric (possibly of Japanese origin) accented with floral motifs, butterflies, and gold triangles covers the seat of the sofa, creating a tension between her outward gaze and the inwardness suggested by her body. European artists like Édouard Manet (1832-1883) and Francisco Goya (1746-1828) among others depicted nude women in postures strikingly similar to Whitney. Their paintings were familiar to Henri and his well-educated, artist subject. Closer still is Antonio Canova's

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[3] For a discussion of the history of portraiture see Joanna Woodall, "Introduction: facing the subject," in *Portraiture: Facing the Subject,* ed. Joanna Woodall (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press), 1-25.

[4] This tradition begins in the early-sixteenth century with Giorgione (1478-1510) and Titian (1490-1576). In the late-eighteenth and nineteenth century, artists like Jacques-Louis David (1748-1825), Francisco Goya (1746-1828), Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780-1867), and Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) promoted the odalisque among their generation. The odalisque was a popular subject with the Impressionists, too, notably Édouard Manet (1832-1883) and Auguste Renoir (1841-1919). Henri was familiar with the work of these artists. He likely had the opportunity to see their paintings firsthand as a student in Paris and throughout his European travels. Henri, for example, may have seen Renoir's *Odalisque* (1870, National Gallery of Art) when it was exhibited in Paris in the late-nineteenth century or possibly at the Universal Exposition, St. Louis in 1904.

[5] Nancy Cott, *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 41-45.

neo-classical sculpture of *Pauline Bonaparte as Venus Victrix* (1805-1808, fig. 3.2), discussed in the next paragraph. Even as Whitney appears clothed, the confident orientation of her body leaves little question as to the abundant art historical references, which insert Whitney as subject and Henri as artist into narratives of Western art. For Whitney to appear as an odalisque is an unconventional maneuver for a society matron. The odalisque aligns her with less restrictive modes of self-representation and within the larger tradition and culture of costume balls as discussed later, a specific type of liminal space designated for freer expression.

One precedent for Henri's portrait was Italian neoclassical sculptor Antonio Canova's previously mentioned sculpture *Venus Victrix*, a partially nude sculptural portrait of Napoleon Bonaparte's younger sister as an odalisque.[6] Henri likely first saw *Venus Victrix* when he visited the Borghese Gallery on a trip to Rome in 1890, while he was studying as an art student in Paris, but it was also well-known in reproduction.[7] Both Pauline Bonaparte and Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney are depicted lying on their right side and bolstered by pillows. There is remarkable similarity between the positions of the women's right arms, which are bent. Bonaparte supports her head with her fingertips and with her head turned, gazes down the long line of her body. Whitney's head is unsupported, and her fingertips instead rest on her shoulder as she confronts the viewer.

In dialogue with Canova's earlier work, Henri's uses visual references to *Venus Victrix* within Whitney's portrait to mediate between the representational abilities of sculpture and painting. Similar in form, *Venus Victrix* and *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney* differ in medium, which enabled Henri to make visible within the painting (to those familiar with her activities)

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[6] Princess Paulina Bonaparte Borghese (1780-1825) was the younger sister of Napoleon Bonaparte and married Camillo Borghese, 6th Prince of Sulmona in 1803.
[7] William Innes Homer and Violet Organ, *Robert Henri and His Circle* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 56.

Whitney's professional career as a sculptor. Working in marble, Canova and Whitney engage an artistic practice that was three-dimensional, and sculpture's dimension rendered it more lifelike to contemporary viewers. An 1876 survey of Canova's sculpture said of *Venus Victrix:*

> While gazing on this enchanting object, a delightful illusion takes possession of your senses. You fancy that it is animated with life,—that you see it breathe, and, in the agitation of your feelings, entirely forget that you gaze on inanimate marble.[8]

The realistic qualities of *Venus Victrix* transformed the sculpture from an "enchanting object" to a lifelike representation. In paint, Henri emphasizes the dimensionality of forms within the portrait through the extension of Whitney's top leg, the illusion of shadows, and the naturalistic layering of fabrics. With a sculptor as his portrait subject, Henri fosters a dialogue between the mediums of portraiture, sculpture, and painting.

Henri also uses the odalisque to destabilize Whitney's identity as the wealthy subject who commissioned the portrait. Through the well-established tradition of the odalisque and in conversation with Canova's *Venus Victrix*, Henri blurred the lines between the genres of realist portraiture and nudes. Within the commissioned portrait, the subject's identity, articulated through character, physiognomic likeness, and psychological depth, was paramount to the enterprise.[9] The nude was largely about form, surface, and the expression of the artist through the depiction of a professional nude and often anonymous model. In the genre of the nude, both artist and model labored to produce an outcome, whereas the portrait subject—though still performing an identity—more passively depended upon the artist to generate their likeness. The odalisque, therefore, powerfully impacts the impression of the subject by mediating between portraiture and related genres, like the nude.

Beyond aesthetic similarities, Bonaparte and Whitney shared biographical details in terms of their elite social status, which may have further influenced Henri. The Vanderbilts

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[8] Isabella Teotochi Albrizzi and Conte Leopoldo Cicognara, *The Works of Antonio Canova in Sculpture and Modeling* (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1876), 18.

and Whitneys fancied themselves as members of an American aristocracy.[10] Canova's sculpture was well-known by the early twentieth century and a then-recently published biography on Pauline Bonaparte Borghese brought greater attention to Canova's sitter.[11] In 1914, Hector Fleischmann, a Belgian-French writer, published *Pauline Bonaparte and Her Lovers*, a biography which revealed an intimate portrait of a woman with so-called loose sexual morals. Bonaparte's promiscuity was exemplified by Canova's odalisque, making Henri's decision to depict Whitney along similar lines even more sensual and risqué. Like Whitney, Bonaparte found the lifestyle connected with her station in life to be dissatisfying. Bonaparte's biographer writes, "[Bonaparte] was perfectly open in her expressions of resentment, distress, and regret."[12] While there is no evidence to conclude Whitney read Fleischmann's biography of Bonaparte, it does seem likely Whitney would have sympathized with Bonaparte. Given the book's near-concurrence with Whitney's portrait, it is possible to surmise that the character of Canova's subject and the promiscuity of her pose had some influence in Whitney's decision to re-enact the odalisque.

Another painting with which *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney* shares similarities is Édouard Manet's perhaps more famous *Olympia* (1863, fig. 3.3), an overtly sexual odalisque which depicted a nude French prostitute and her Black servant.[13] Henri was not the first American to become entangled with *Olympia*. The painting was purchased for Manet's widow Suzanne at the time of the painter's death in 1883. In 1889, an American named William M.

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[9] Woodall, ed., *Portraiture: Facing the Subject*, 6.
[10] Whitney's younger sister Gladys and her first cousin Consuelo Vanderbilt both married members of the European aristocracy. For a discussion of the late-nineteenth century phenomenon of wealthy American women marrying European aristocrats, see Anne de Courcy, *The Husband Hunters: American Heiresses who married into the British Aristocracy* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2017).
[11] Upon its publication, the biography was advertised widely in *The Dial, The International Studio,* and *Publishers Weekly*.
[12] Hector Fleischmann, *Pauline Bonaparte and Her Lovers: As Revealed by Contemporary Witnesses, by Her Own Love-letters and by the Anti-Napoleonic Pamphleteers* (London: John Lane, 1914), 137.
[13] Denise Murrell, *Posing Modernity: The Black Model from Manet and Matisse to Today* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

Laffan attempted to buy *Olympia*. In an effort to stop the painting from entering a private collection, the American ex-patriot painter John Singer Sargent intervened and was among a number of Manet's friends who, through a public subscription, purchased the painting on behalf of France. In 1890, *Olympia* entered the Musée Nationale du Luxembourg, France's national gallery of contemporary art. *Olympia*'s acceptance into the Luxembourg reignited discussions over the quality and suitability of the painting for the museum's collection. At the time, Henri was studying in Paris as an art student and was undoubtedly privy to these debates. The Luxembourg held special significance for Henri, too. The museum purchased *La Neige* in 1898 and it was the first painting by Henri to enter a museum collection.[14] In 1907, *Olympia* was transferred to the Louvre's collection, but not without controversy over its elevation into the collection of France's most venerable institution.

In *The Art Spirit*, Henri praised *Olympia* for having "a supreme elegance, Manet's stroke was ample, full, and flowed with a gracious continuity, was never flip or clever."[15] Henri's language is highly sexual: he uses vocabulary associated with sexual intercourse in his thinly-veiled description of Manet's odalisque. In his own odalisque and in contrast to *Olympia*, Henri shifts the orientation of Whitney's body. By rotating her left shoulder towards the viewer, Henri positions Whitney's body almost parallel to picture plane. Doing this allows him to create a more dramatic sense of depth at Whitney's trousered legs. Similar to Olympia, Whitney crosses her left leg over her right, but is positioned in a much shallower space. Whitney's leg dangles over the edge of the sofa, casting a dark shadow on the purple Japanese shawl covering the sofa.

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[14] James Huneker, *Promenades of an Impressionist* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910), 256-257.
[15] Robert Henri, *The Art Spirit: Notes, Articles, Fragments of Letters and Talks to Students, Bearing on the Concept and Technique of Picture Making, the Study of Art Generally, and on Appreciation* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 75.

Also like Olympia, Whitney's footwear heightens the narrative tension within the painting. A jeweled mule dangles from her fleshy foot and appears ready to let gravity drop it to the floor at any moment; Whitney's status as dressed or undressed hangs precariously on this delicate detail. In contrast, Olympia's right mule is slipped off, the tips of her toes peeking out from behind her left shoe. Unlike the rest of her exposed body, Olympia's naked foot is largely hidden from view. The shoe suggestively lays on the bed beside her, anthropomorphically awaiting its missing member to slip inside, an allusion to intercourse and fetishism acknowledged by Henri's sexualized description of Manet's "stroke."

Manet's *Olympia,* of course, participates in a lineage of odalisques from Titian (1490-1576) and Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780-1867), which extends into the twentieth century with artists like Henri Matisse (1869-1954). Posing Whitney as an odalisque enabled Henri to reference another European artist he admired: Francisco Goya. Contemporaries connected Manet and Goya through their depiction of the nude female body. For example, in his 1914 travel narrative *An Idler in Spain: The Record of a Goya Pilgrimage*, John Flitch wrote, "Manet's 'Olympia' is next-of-kin to Goya's 'Maja.'"[16]

Between 1800 and 1808 the celebrated Spanish artist painted *La Maja Vestida* (1800-1808) and *La Maja Desnuda* (about 1797-1800) for Manuel Gody, the Prime Minister of Spain at the turn of the eighteenth century (figs. 3.4-3.5). Goya depicts the same model clothed and unclothed, her arms above her head, with elbows bent and hands cupped, staring at the viewer with an audacity similar to Olympia. In the nineteenth century, the pair of Goya's paintings were displayed at the Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando before they entered the Prado's collection in 1901. In publications throughout the nineteenth century, *La Maja Vestida* and *La Maja Desnuda* were frequently discussed together, with one of the two paintings (often *La*

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[16] John Ernest Crawford Flitch, *An Idler in Spain: The Record of a Goya Pilgrimage* (New York: McBride, Nast and Company, 1914), 216.

Maja Vestida) illustrated. The reproduction of *La Maja Vestida* left readers to devest Maja of her clothing and envision her naked body beneath on display in the painting's pendant. An admirer of Goya, Henri was familiar with these paintings by the artist and pasted facsimiles of both versions in his scrapbook.[17]

Whitney's posture of an odalisque enabled Henri to produce a complex portrait brimming with art historical associations stretching from the sixteenth century to the early-twentieth century. Whitney selected her own vibrantly colored apparel, wearing an Asian-inspired yellow and blue jacket accented with mauve and pink and paired with teal "harem" pants that gathered at the ankles. "Harem" pants were another popular expression of Orientalist aesthetics in the 1910s.[18] In Henri's acceptance of the commission, he wrote, "I wonder if it would be convenient to you for me to call some time tomorrow during daylight to see the costumes."[19] Whitney's original letter has been lost, but from Henri's response it seems clear Whitney approached him with an idea in mind, already having several "costumes" selected for the occasion. From her initial contact with Henri about the portrait, Whitney makes clear her intention to play an active role in the process of creating the portrait.

As Henri and Whitney met to discuss the portrait, her clothing or "costume" was the first major decision they faced. The finished composition of the portrait depended upon the freedom of movement allowed by Whitney's bifurcated—that is, split legs—and loosely fitting clothing. Whitney's sartorial choices worked in tandem with Henri's composition.

Whitney's eagerness to don the costume selected for her portrait arose from an impulse to signify her status as a modern woman of the artistic class. For American women,

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[17] Scrapbook, Robert Henri Archive, National Arts Club.
[18] Whitney's costume relates to yet another tradition in western art, that of western women dressing in *turquerie*. See, for example, John Singleton Copley, *Mrs. Thomas Gage* (Timkin Museum of Art, San Diego). Isabel Breskin, "'On the Periphery of a Greater World': John Singleton Copley's *Turquerie* Portraits," *Winterthur Portfolio* 36, no. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn, 2001): 97-123.
[19] Object File 86.70.3, WMAA.

bifurcated clothing remained unusual in 1916—worn only for athletic activities such as bicycling or specifically for lounging in the privacy of the home.[20] Whitney's outfit was, in fact, new—a recent purchase from the Whitney's family trip to San Francisco to see two of Whitney's sculptures exhibited at the 1915 San Francisco world's fair, known as the Panama Pacific International Exposition (PPIE), discussed in greater depth later in this chapter. Marjorie Organ Henri, the artist's wife, described the Whitney commission by highlighting one of the portrait's remarkable features: Whitney's outfit. As Marjorie wrote, to a friend, "Bob is painting Mrs. H.P. Whitney in a very interesting Japanese costume which she got in San Francisco. It's the unusual—coat and trousers effect, only that she wears three coats—all different colors—light blue green, yellow, and dark blue—it's a stunning effect, and the picture is going to be one of his finest."[21]

The harem pants ultimately worn in Whitney's portrait were an exotic souvenir from her recent trip to California. The Whitneys, like many East Coast tourists to the PPIE, visited Gump's, a legendary, luxury San Francisco department store founded in 1861. A nod to its West Coast origins, Gump's was known for its Oriental department featuring fine porcelain, paintings, lacquer, teakwood, kimonos, and other textiles. Anticipating increased traffic due to the fair, the store expanded its footprint to feature even more Orientalist goods.[22] Years later, Whitney remembered Gump's as "the Chinese place," a subtly racist and orientalist remark. In April 1920, as her daughter Flora was preparing to leave for her honeymoon to Hawaii and Japan via the West Coast, Whitney wrote: "Will you order me from the Chinese

[20] More broadly the emergence of exotic lounge wear points to an ongoing association between Turkish décor/costume, the harem, privacy, and relaxation in American interiors. "Turkish corners," which appeared in Aesthetic Movement interiors, remained popular in the early twentieth century. Gülen Çevik, "American Style or Turkish Chair: The Triumph of Bodily Comfort," *Journal of Design History* 23, no. 4 (2010): 373; Charlotte A. Jirousk and Sara Catterall, *Ottoman Dress and Design in the West* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2019), 200; Karen Zukowski, *The Aesthetic Movement: Creating the Artful Home* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 2006), 143-144;

[21] Marjorie Organ Henri to Helen Miles, n.d., box 7, folder 171, Robert Henri Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.

place (was it Gump's?) in San Francisco three (different colored) suits (like I had before, they are like pajamas) and tell them to send the bill with them to me, N.Y."[23]

While Whitney purchased her outfit in San Francisco, her harem pants belong to a larger international discussion over fashion, clothing women's bodies, and avant-garde culture. To much popular ridicule, in 1911, French fashion designer Paul Poiret introduced the *jupe-culotte* or harem pants into Western women's fashion. Bifurcated and gathered at the ankles, the harem pant challenged the social norms of fashion by freeing women's bodies from traditional women's wear such as restrictive corsets and burdensome skirts. However, according to critics at the time, harem pants functioned in insidious ways. In her book *Classic Chic: Music Fashion, and Modernism,* art and fashion historian Mary E. Davis explained:

> Perceived as a fashion emanating from the Orient, Poiret's harem pants were viewed as a racially based challenge to the French status quo, suggesting dangerously unrestrictive value systems, loose moral codes, and sexual availability…. Poiret's harem pants were open to critique on the basis that they situated fashion in the broad and contentious context of cultural identity and sexual play.[24]

In his designs, Poiret capitalized and further popularized the avant-garde aesthetics sparked by the Ballet Russe, the Paris-based dance company that revolutionized ballet by repositioning it on the vanguard of modern art in the early decades of the twentieth century.[25] Poiret defended his controversial garments, stating that they were appropriate for women "in all the harmony of her form and all the freedom of her native suppleness."[26] Pajama-like, harem pants increased in popularity in the 1910's, particularly for affluent women.

According to fashion historian Patricia Cunningham, the designers popularizing the style, Coco Chanel, Wiener Werkstätte, Poiret, and Mariano Fortuny, "created harem trousers

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[22] Anne Evers Hitz, *Lost Department Stores of San Francisco* (Charleston: The History Press, 2020), 79-82.
[23] B.H. Friedman, *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney* (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1978), 426.
[24] Mary E. Davis, *Classic Chic: Music, Fashion, and Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 32.
[25] Lynn Garafola, *Diaghilev's Ballet Russe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); see also Lynn Garafola and Nancy Van Norman Baer, eds., *The Ballet Russe and Its World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

as lounging pajamas, not as street wear." [27] Pajamas were further popularized in Paris during World War I for fashionable Parisian women evacuated to air-raid shelters in the middle of the night. *Silk,* an industry trade magazine, noted the interest in pajamas in Paris: "There is certainly a demand in the Paris shops…. The peculiar conditions in Paris where one is liable to rise hastily from bed, is responsible for this demand."[28] Harem pants, although radical, found practical application in war-torn France and invaded the wardrobes of chic, affluent modern women on either side of the Atlantic.

Whitney's choice of clothing—harem pants, which she remembers as being "like pajamas"—aligns her representation with the sensual and exotic.[29] By choosing to wear harem pants in her portrait, Whitney positioned herself as an active participant in debates over women's agency and fashion.

Casting aside expensive designer evening gowns, Whitney is literally and figuratively un-dressed. The brightly colored ensemble brings attention to Whitney's body. The blue-green color of her inner coat and teal trousers contrasts with the fleshy tone of her skin. Much like the shoe dangling from Whitney's foot, her multilayered garments invite the viewer to peel back the layers, to undress her body. This is further suggested by the front-center closure of her jacket and its opening at her waist, the precise resting place for the waistline of her trousers. Multiple garment layers intersect at Whitney's navel; the billowing of her jacket suggests the precariousness of her being dressed. A line from Whitney's navel extends along her legs and descends along her left foot, also precariously dressed but hinging on "undressed." In *The Art Spirit*, Henri instructed, "You see the signs of life in the body through

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[26] Quoted in Davis, *Classic Chic*, 33.
[27] Patricia Cunningham, *Reforming Women's Fashion, 1850-1920: Politics, Health, and Art* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2003), 212.
[28] Margaret Alice Friend, "Paris Fashion Service" in *Silk* 11, no. 1 (January 1918): 48; Mary Louise Roberts, "Samson and Delilah Revisited: The Politics of Fashion in 1920s France," in *The Modern Woman Revisited:*

the clothes, and the wrinkles and folds of drapery become living things."[30] Henri succeeds at his own instruction to show "signs of life… through the clothes." Henri depicts Whitney as being thoroughly comfortable in her body and her own skin.

The freedom of movement allowed by Whitney's pants did more than facilitate her posture and Henri's composition; it enabled her to work. Dresses and conventional women's clothing impeded Whitney's ability to move throughout her studio with ease.[31] Sartorial decisions played a symbolic role, too. Traditional clothing served as a poignant reminder of the omnipresent restrictions of society. As harem pants and other forms of bifurcated clothing for women became more readily available, Whitney embraced the style and preferred to wear trousers when working, which is documented through dry cleaning receipts and photographs of Whitney in her studio (fig. 3.6).[32] Even in posed studio photographs, the trousers Whitney wears are not as elegant as the pair worn in Henri's portrait. Bifurcated clothing had a liberating effect, physically enabling Whitney to carry out her work as a sculptor and symbolically distancing Whitney from the high society she sought to escape.

Another detail in Henri's portrait that marked Whitney as modern was her hairstyle. In 1916, bobbed hair was a novelty on both sides of the Atlantic. Whitney was an early adopter of short, chin-length hair, which remained controversial in 1916. Credit for originating and popularizing the style remains a subject of debate. American Dancer Irene Castle cut her hair

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Paris Between the Wars, edited by Whitney Chadwick and Tirza True Latimer (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 90n51.

[29] Friedman, *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney*, 426.

[30] Henri, *The Art Spirit*, 200.

[31] In the United States, dress reform movements in women's dress began as early as the mid-nineteenth century. By the 1890s and in keeping with the decade's interest in physical culture and health, American women adopted bifurcated garments to facilitate exercise, especially for bicycling, which was becoming increasingly popular. Women wearing trousers in the United States was not unheard of by 1896, but women continued to do so in very specific contexts, such as the gymnasium. See Cunningham, *Reforming Women's Fashion*; Gayle V. Fischer, *Pantaloons and Power: Nineteenth-Century Dress Reform in the United States* (Kent: Kent State University Press, 2013).

[32] Several surviving dry-cleaning receipts from 1919 show Whitney routinely had trousers sent to Old Westbury, the location of her studio. Receipts, 1911-1940, box 2, folder 4, Whitney Museum of American Art, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

in 1915 and by 1918 *The New York Evening Bulletin* ran the headline, "Women Accept Castle Bob," noting the rapid adoption of the hairstyle. French fashion designer Coco Chanel bobbed her hair in 1916 and two hairdressers working in France, Antoine Cierplikowski and René Rambaud, promoted the style in the 1920s.[33] Regardless of origins of the cut, Whitney's bobbed hair aligned her with the most current and avant-garde transatlantic trends in self-representation. Bobbed hair was a dramatic re-envisioning of the modern self with a sense of permanence not felt through clothing. Through her exotic clothing and hairstyle, Whitney presents herself as a modern and artistic woman, fashionable and corporeally confident.

Despite Whitney's efforts to fashion herself as an artistic rather than aristocratic woman, and Henri's diligence in circumventing the tropes of commissioned portraiture, evidence of Whitney's wealth remains clearly visible within *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney*. A long, expensive strand of pearls encircles her neck, only visible on her left side before they slip out of sight and beneath her blouse. The pearls trail out of sight at the center of her collar bone and meet the center opening of her sea foam green blouse. Whitney's fingers are elongated, and she wears large rings on either hand. A bracelet adorns her right wrist. Her right arm twists, bending her elbow and wrist as her jeweled fingers perch on her shoulder. Herein lies the greatest challenge Whitney and Henri faced in their respective strategies of representation: Whitney's burdensome wealth.

Whitney Biography

Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney's names—Vanderbilt and later Whitney—were synonymous with wealth and privilege at the turn of the twentieth century. Generational wealth defined many aspects of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney's life. An early biographer wrote, "Gertrude [Vanderbilt] Whitney…. Came into the world with a name as well known,

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[33] Roberts, "Samson and Delilah Revisited," 66.

here and abroad, as 'Fifth Avenue', 'Broadway' or the 'Brooklyn Bridge'."[34] Whitney's great-grandfather, "Commodore" Cornelius Vanderbilt (1794-1877) became one of the wealthiest men in American history over the course of his lifetime through shipping and investing in the United States' burgeoning railroad industry. By her birth in 1875, the Vanderbilt family name was synonymous with the extraordinary accumulation of wealth by a handful of American industrialists, leading Mark Twain in 1873 to satirize the excesses of his day, coining the term the "Gilded Age."[35] Being a Vanderbilt brought a level of celebrity. However, it also brought social expectations and restrictions. Whitney's 1896 marriage to Harry Payne Whitney, a self-defined "capitalist" and son of a wealthy businessman, further secured her position among the American aristocracy at the turn of the twentieth century. The Vanderbilt and Whitney families' jointly held wealth and privilege defined Whitney's life, and it also set her on a quest to fashion an independent identity.

As a teenager, Miss Vanderbilt posed for her first known oil portrait in the London studio of the Pre-Raphaelite painter Sir John Everett Millais, an experience that aligned the young Vanderbilt's social status with the refinement of commissioned portraiture and strategies of representation as she came of age (fig. 3.7).[36] The Vanderbilt's family trip abroad was well-documented in the press. With a customary, gossipy surveillance of America's moneyed classes at the time, the *New York Times* reported in March 1888: "Two weeks hence Cornelius Vanderbilt will sail on one of the steamships of the Cunard Line for Europe. He will be absent throughout the Summer, his family accompanying him."[37]

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[34] Frederick James Gregg, "Gertrude Whitney, Sculptor and Personage," n.d. (c. 1921?), box 1, folder 9, Whitney Papers.
[35] Charles W. Calhoun, ed., *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America*, 2nd ed. (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 1.
[36] On the career and life of John Everett Millais, see Debra N. Mancoff, *John Everett Millais: Beyond the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001); Christine Riding, *John Everett Millais* (London: Tate, 2006); Catherine Roach, "The Artist in the House of His Patron: Images-within-Images in John Everett Millais's Portraits of the Wyatt Family," *Visual Culture in Britain* 9, no. 2 (Winter 2008): 1-20.
[37] "Vanderbilts in Harness," *New York Times*, March 18, 1888, 10.

A visit to Millais studio was one of numerous activities that occupied the Vanderbilt family in London. Millais depicted Miss Vanderbilt dressed in white with a pink sash tied around her waist, billowing layers of lace at her chest and elbows, a hat cocked jauntily to the side. The thirteen-year-old is framed by oriental screens with peacocks and fenced in by elaborate gilded furnishings. She carefully arranges fresh-cut roses drawn from a basket placed on the edge of a chair into a glazed, footed vase. Begun in the summer of 1888, the commission was not finalized until the following year when Millais noted that he "altered hair of Vanderbilt girl to Mother's satisfaction, and that business at last completed."[38] A travel journal, possibly from this voyage, is among the earliest pieces of writing preserved in Whitney's personal papers, but she is silent about the experience of her portrait or reactions to the artist, recording instead the weather, sea conditions, and her occupations as she sailed home to New York.[39] The absence of references to Millais suggests that even as a teenager, Vanderbilt accepted the commissioning of portraits and luxury steamship travel as societal expectations.

Miss Vanderbilt's 1896 marriage to Harry Payne Whitney, the son of a politician and moneyed businessman, ensured a continuation of the status quo. For their honeymoon, the new Mr. and Mrs. Whitney traveled extensively, including to Japan. The decision was in part inspired by the recent travels of Gertrude's cousin and girlhood friend, Adele Sloane Burden, who traveled to Japan on her honeymoon a year earlier.[40] During her travels, however, Whitney began to regret their decision to follow the Burdens' footsteps: "The Burdens came before …yes, they did. I am beginning to wish they had not… we have the same guide they

[38] *Miss Gertrude Vanderbilt* by Sir John Everett Millais, Bt., P.R.A., lot 100, Victorian and British Impressionist Art, Christie's, London, November 15, 2012, http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/Lot/sir-john-everett-millais-bt-pra-1829-1896-5616431-details.aspx.
[39] Journal, Crossing the Atlantic from Liverpool to New York, c. 1886, box 9, folder 22, Whitney Papers.
[40] Florence Adele Sloane (1873-1960) married James A. Burden, Jr. (1871-1932), an industrialist, in 1895. Widowed, she later married Richard M. Tobin, an American banker and diplomat.

had; we hear the name Burden."[41] To Whitney, repeated mentions of the Burdens emphasized the conformity of her honeymoon itinerary and the insularity of her social networks. At home and abroad, Whitney's family name and its associations tempered her experiences and how others perceived her.

The Whitneys returned to the United States following their extensive honeymoon and the young Mrs. Whitney settled into the life assigned to her wealth and stature. Just after a year of marriage, Whitney gave birth to Flora Payne Whitney, the first of three children. Whitney bristled at the restricting nature of maternal duties and her lifestyle.[42] Remembering the early years of her marriage, Whitney later wrote, "I was not very happy or satisfied in my life."[43] Longing for an emotional outlet, Whitney turned to art.

A number of gilded-age industrialists collected art, including Whitney's grandfather, William Henry Vanderbilt (1821-1885). Art collecting and appreciation were among the legacies borne by the Vanderbilt family name. In the final decade of his life, Vanderbilt assembled one of the most significant collections of contemporary European art in the United States in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Between 1878 and 1882, Vanderbilt amassed a collection of more than two hundred paintings by prominent contemporary artists including John-François Millet, J. M. W. Turner, Eugène Delacroix, and Jean-Léon Gérôme. In an era when collections were rarely catalogued except in preparation for sale, Vanderbilt published a series of catalogues to publicize his holdings to connoisseurs. The nineteenth-century art historian Edward Strahan included Vanderbilt's collection in his three-volume work *Art Treasures of America* and subsequently published *Mr. Vanderbilt's House and Collection* (1883), a catalogue raisonné of the collection.

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[41] Friedman, *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney,* 154.
[42] Ellen Roberts, *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney: Sculpture* (West Palm Beach: Norton Museum of Art, 2018), 16.
[43] Autobiographical Writings, n.d., box 23, folder 22, Whitney Papers.

Beyond publications, Vanderbilt's collection had museological ambitions. Vanderbilt's opulent residence at 640 Fifth Avenue included a two-story gallery for his collection, which he regularly made accessible to the public. Completed in 1881, the mansion included a separate public entrance to the gallery, which was expanded the following year. Art historian Leanne Zalewski writes, "Although not the first American collector to provide public access to his collection, Vanderbilt opened it more frequently and to more guests than did others."[44] Vanderbilt's collection projected evidence of his wealth: making it more accessible to the public suggests he felt an underlying sense of civic responsibility to serving the public good, though "the public" was likely only his own social class. Whitney was only ten years old when her grandfather died in 1885, but he nonetheless planted the seeds of her interest in art and set an important precedent for her philanthropy later in life.[45]

Art was omnipresent in Whitney's life, first as an indicator of her wealth and gradually as an expression of selfhood. Whitney wrote, "The house I had stepped into after my marriage was furnished complete and full. Beautiful Renaissance tapestries, furniture of all the Louis, old French and Italian paintings hung on the walls. It was the very same atmosphere in which I had been brought up. The very same surroundings."[46] Given limited agency over her domestic environment, Whitney was overjoyed when the young couple had an opportunity to visit the American artist John La Farge's studio by way of an introduction from William C. Whitney, her husband's father. Gertrude purchased three watercolors during her visit to La Farge's

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[44] Kathleen McCarthy, *Women's Culture: American Philanthropy and Art, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 216.
[45] After his death in 1885, the collection descended in the family to Vanderbilt's great nephew, Brigadier General Cornelius Vanderbilt, whose widow sold the collection. The next generation of collectors, among them Henry Clay Frick and J. Pierpont Morgan, modeled themselves on Vanderbilt, although with shifting tastes preferred European old masters. Whitney's father, Cornelius Vanderbilt II, was also a collector, favoring the French Barbizon school, and served as a trustee for the newly formed Metropolitan Museum of Art. Leanne Zalewski, "Art for the Public: William Henry Vanderbilt's Cultural Legacy," *Nineteenth-Century Art Worldwide* 11, no. 2 (Summer 2012), http://www.19thc-artworldwide.org/summer12/leanne-zalewski-william-henry-vanderbilts-cultural-legacy. See also McCarthy, *Women's Culture*, 216.
[46] Autobiographical Writings, n.d., Whitney Papers.

studio. She later wrote, "I will never forget the feeling of inadequacy combined with pleasure I experienced—not only in possessing the La Farges but in having had the privilege of meeting so great a man. From then on I took an interest in American art. I began to realize the opportunity I had of acquiring."[47] Dissatisfied with the "same atmosphere" and "same surroundings," Whitney turned to American art to satisfy her collecting instincts.

In concert with her personal collecting interests, around 1900 Whitney began pursuing art more seriously as an artist. She wrote, "I wanted to work…. I had always drawn and painted a little. Now I wanted to try modelling."[48] Whitney's childhood friend and artist Howard Gardiner Cushing arrange for her to study with his brother-in-law Hendrik Christian Andersen, the Norwegian sculptor. Andersen, who worked in a classical style, advised Whitney to study human anatomy. He gave her private her lessons in the sculpture studio built on the property of the Whitneys' summer home The Breakers in Newport, Rhode Island. In 1901, one of Whitney's early sculptures—appropriately entitled *Aspiration*—was selected by architects John Merven Carrière and Thomas Hastings for the lawn of the New York State Building for the duration of the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo (fig. 3.8). *Aspiration* depicts an idealized male figure, standing straight and lifting his palms upwards.[49] Public recognition of *Aspiration* was a significant accomplishment for Whitney and an early encouragement.

Whitney's feelings towards becoming a professional artist intensified in the early years of the twentieth century as she felt increasingly dissatisfied with other facets of her life. Whitney confided in her journal in 1904:

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[47] Historian Dianne Macleod writes, "Because women expected the items they collected to serve a personal function, they were less affected by the impersonal valuation system of the marketplace." Dianne Macleod, *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects: American Women Collectors and the Making of Culture, 1800-1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 8; Autobiographical Writings, n.d., Whitney Papers; Friedman, *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney,* 160.
[48] Autobiographical Writings, n.d., Whitney Papers.

> I cannot succeed along the lines which I should succeed along in the position etc I am placed in. I cannot be the sort of a person which my life demands me to be—so why not try and be my own self. That is something I have never tried to be. Say what you think for a change, be what you are for a change. Throw away the sham under which you have been masquerading and be what you want to be.[50]

Society expected very little of substance from Whitney because of her wealth and privilege. She was not expected to have or pursue professional interests; she was not expected to seek out opportunities for self-expression. However, with characteristic resolve, Whitney committed to reinventing herself and following her individual passions regardless of societal expectations.

Three years after building a sculpture studio in Newport in 1903 Whitney moved into a studio in New York City overlooking Bryant Park, where sculptors James Earle Fraser—a student of Augustus Saint-Gaudens—and Italian sculptor Giuseppe Moretti critiqued her work. Within several years, she was receiving a small number of commissions from architects and spent several months studying at the Art Students' League, where Robert Henri would later teach.[51] In 1904 she exhibited at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, the second time after Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo her work was featured at a world's fair. Several years later, Whitney wrote in her journal:

> I have never cared about exhibiting or wanted to and had any feeling of pride about it, but I see now that as long as I have gone into the thing seriously I must do so. I must finish up something. Have something to show people and be sending to different exhibitions.[52]

Whitney recognized the importance of exhibitions. Exhibiting work was paramount to Whitney being recognized as an artist within and beyond artistic circles.

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[49] Roberts, *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney: Sculpture*, 18-19.
[50] Journal, 1904-1911, box 10, folder 2, Whitney Papers.
[51] Roberts, *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney*, 21.
[52] Art Journal, 1906-1907, box 10, folder 3, Whitney Papers.

Whitney and Henri

Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney and Robert Henri met by chance in March of 1906 as the result of a Henri portrait commission. Henri was in Aiken, South Carolina to complete a portrait for the family of George Sheffield, and Whitney happened to be vacationing nearby on the Whitney family farm.[53] Henri noted in his diary, "Today Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney is to come see [the portrait]." He continued, "I believe she is the one who is interesting herself in sculpture and decoration."[54] While acknowledging Whitney's work as a sculptor, Henri treats Whitney as a novelty and discounts her professional ambitions. "Interesting herself" suggests Henri understood Whitney to be filling her days by making sculpture rather than pursuing a serious career, which was her underlying goal as privately stated in her journals. Henri and Whitney's first encounter did not set the course of their relationship. With time, Henri grew to see Whitey as an artist in her own right.

Following their introduction in South Carolina, Whitney took an interest in Henri's work and began collecting it. In February 1908, Henri and seven other artists—the group that became known as "The Eight"—organized a counter exhibition at Macbeth Gallery as a protest against the National Academy of Design's juried exhibition process as it had unfolded months before.[55]

As a member of both the National Academy and the exhibition's jury, Henri was irritated by the rejection of works by George Luks, Everett Shinn, and William Glackens,

[53] By mid-April, both Henri and the Sheffield portrait were back in New York, an indication he intended to exhibit the work. When the painting arrived, John Sloan recorded his reaction: "It is a splendid thing. Ingenuous as great art is – unassuming and fine, the three children in a row across the canvas in white dresses and back of them green and red flowers her and there, a path they stand on beautiful in color." John Sloan Diary, 1906-1913, 16 April 1906, John Sloan Manuscript Collection, Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives, Delaware Art Museum, https://delart.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/John-Sloan-Diaries-1906-to-1913.pdf.

[54] Quoted in Avis Berman, *Rebels on Eighth Street: Juliana Force and the Whitney Museum of American Art* (New York: Atheneum, 1990), 74.

[55] "The Eight" included American artists Robert Henri, John Sloan, George Luks, Everett Shinn, William Glackens, Arthur B. Davies, Maurice Prendergast, Ernest Lawson.

along with disparaging comments made about his own submissions.[56] By staging an alternate, non-juried exhibition, Henri and his colleagues wanted to make a statement against the restrictive and conservative attitudes of the National Academy. "The Eight's" exhibition received a lot of attention in the press, yet few of the paintings found buyers. Whitney purchased four of the seven paintings sold in the exhibition, including Henri's *Laughing Child* (1907, fig. 3.9).[57] Of the exhibition, John Sloan bitterly recorded in his diary:

> All the sales in the exhibition (7) were to three buyers. Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney, the rich sculptress—at least she has a fine studio for this purpose—bought four. Henri's *Laughing Child* bought by her and he told me when I dropped in at his studio in the afternoon.[58]

None of Sloan's paintings sold, which underscored his disappointment and prompted his dismissive remarks about Whitney's work as a sculptor. While more than willing to accept her patronage, Henri and Sloan remained skeptical of Whitney's sincerity as an artist.

The "rich sculptress" took her work seriously and established a working, state-of-the-art studio to hone her artistic practice—and to escape the demands of high society. Whitney's studio was located at 19 MacDougal Alley on West 8th Street in Greenwich Village, a bohemian enclave far removed from her Fifth Avenue mansion and the numerous social obligations associated with it. Sculptor Malvina Hoffman remembered Whitney's studio as being in "perfect order," "splendid," and "fully equipped." Situated on the north side of the alley, the windows let in copious amounts of natural light needed to create ideal working conditions. Hoffman continued, "The array of modeling tools and glistening saws and chisels that hung over the workbenches, turntables that really turned, stands that did not wobble—

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[56] William Innes Homer and Violet Organ, *Robert Henri and His Circle* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 127.
[57] Whitney's purchase of *Laughing Child* came shortly after she purchased Édouard Manet's *The Smoker* (1866, Minneapolis Museum of Art). Contemporary critics often drew a lineage between Frans Hals, Manet, and Henri, which is exemplified through the two paintings formerly in Whitney's personal collection. *The Smoker* and *Laughing Child* share similarities in palette, brushwork, simplicity of composition and interest in capturing the sensory, ephemeral experiences of everyday life.
[58] John Sloan Diaries, 1906-1913, 20 February 1908, John Sloan Manuscript Collection.

the whole atmosphere of the place excited me and filled me with awe."[59] Although luxurious by most studio standards, 19 MacDougal Alley stood in sharp contrast to the richly appointed interiors Whitney most often frequented.

In the years leading up to Henri's portrait commission, Whitney worked hard to construct a public persona beyond her family's wealth and privilege. As early as 1908, she provided informal exhibition space to artists in her MacDougal Alley studio, a development possibly prompted by "The Eight" exhibition. This early venture went unnoticed by the press, suggesting it was largely promoted by word-of-mouth and exclusively within the surrounding neighborhood of artists. With the establishment of the Whitney Studio Club in 1914, Whitney formalized her efforts to support aspiring artists—both men and women—and further embedded herself into New York's artistic community. For a small annual fee, which was rarely collected, members gained access to exhibition space as well as "a place where they could meet, exchange opinions and gain inspiration," according to an early history of the Whitney Museum of American Art, which was founded in 1931 and traced its beginnings to the Studio Club.[60] Through the Studio Club, Whitney created an informal place for artists and by extension—herself. The Studio Club enabled Whitney to gain access to and participate in a community of artists.

The year 1914 was a pivotal one: the outbreak of World War I in Europe. Whitney was not content to watch idly from afar as war erupted. While the United States did not officially enter the conflict until April 1917, many of Whitney's philanthropic activities for the year related to the war effort. The first exhibitions of the Whitney Studio Club were for the benefit of war relief. Half of the proceeds from two December exhibitions and sales went directly to

[59] Malvina Hoffman, *Yesterday is Tomorrow: A Personal History* (New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1965), 73.
[60] *Whitney Museum of American Art: History, Purpose and Activities, with a Complete list of Works in its Permanent Collection to June 1937* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1937), 3-4.

artists and the other half to benefit the American Hospital in Paris.[61] Whitney herself traveled to Paris to help with the war effort and sponsored a French hospital in Juilly, France, 25 miles from Paris. Returning from overseeing hospital operations in France, Whitney wrote in 1915, "Perhaps I was mad to want to be there, mad even to want to help. Send a check—that's the best way, I was told. But checks could not still my desire."[62]

Against the backdrop of war raging abroad, Whitney exhibited several large-scale works at the previously mentioned Panama-Pacific International Exposition (PPIE) in San Francisco in 1915. Taking the family's private railroad car, the *Wanderer*, the Whitneys traveled to California in November 1915 to experience the PPIE.[63] The Whitneys visited in the final weeks of the fair, which closed the following month in December. Whitney exhibited two works—a fountain grouping of three classical nude figures, which appeared in the Fine Arts galleries of the exhibition, and a large-scale narrative fountain frieze entitled *The Fountain of El Dorado* (demolished, fig. 3.10). In addition to the mostly positive reception of *The Fountain of El Dorado,* discussed below, Whitney was awarded a bronze medal for "Fountain" (fig. 3.11).[64]

The Fountain of El Dorado received abundant attention from the press due to its poignant narrative, which was inspired by the Spanish colonial legend of a South American prince so rich he bathed and covered his body daily in gold. His extreme wealth fueled the avarice of Spanish explorers. A guidebook explained Whitney's iconography to those unfamiliar with the myth:

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[61] Friedman, *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney,* 350.
[62] Friedman, *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney,* 364.
[63] Friedman, *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney*, 373.
[64] *Official Catalogue of the Department of Fine Arts, Panama-Pacific* (San Francisco: The Wahlgreen Company, 1915), 146, https://library.si.edu/digital-library/book/officialcatalog00pana; James Ganz, "Introduction: 'A Beautiful Jewel Set in the Turquoise of the Sea'" in *Jewel City: Art from San Francisco's Panama-Pacific International Exposition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2015), 22.

> The idea of the fountain is that the Gilded One, representing the unattainable, the advantages of wealth and power which deluded men and women seek without value given to the world in return, has just disappeared through the gateway, the gates closing after him. On either side processions of seekers who have glimpsed the Gilded One, strain toward the gateway. Some loiter in love or play, some drop from fatigue, some fight their way along; and the first two, finding that the pursuit is fruitless after all, have dropped to their knees in anguish.[65]

Critic Sheldon Cheney, in his description of Whitney's *The Fountain of El Dorado,* focused on the sculpture's narrative symbolism, rather than commenting on Whitney's biography or technique. He wrote, "The fountain is notable for its symbolism and for the modeling of many nude figures." Installed adjacent to Edith Woodman Burrough's *The Fountain of Youth*, Whitney's fountain, according to Cheney, lacked "the appeal and charm" of the work by the other artist.[66]

In interviews, Whitney carefully pointed out *The Fountain of El Dorado*'s theme was assigned; it was not self-appointed. The tie between her fabulous inherited wealth and the sculpture's narrative went explicitly unstated by the press. The San Francisco critic Eugen Neuhaus praised Whitney's work, "The whole composition… shows Mrs. Whitney as a very skillful and imaginative artist." He continued, gesturing to the irony of the artist and her subject, "It is a gratifying spectacle to see a woman such as Mrs. Whitney, so much heralded, possibly against her own inclinations, in the society columns of New York, find the time to devote herself to so serious and professional a piece of work as the *Fountain of El Dorado*."[67] At the center panel of the frieze, two massive doors appear moments from closing shut. On either side, an emotionless guardian figure stands in front of the doors as a kneeling figure supplicates without avail; nearby figures, separated by a decorative column, rush frantically

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[65] Shelden Cheney, *An Art-Lover's Guide to the Exposition: Explanations of the Architecture, Sculpture and Mural Paintings, With a Guide for Study in the Art Gallery* (San Francisco: Sunset Publishing House, 1915), http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/7411/pg7411-images.html.
[66] Cheney, *An Art-Lover's Guide*.

towards the doors, their arms gesturing wildly and the certain failure of their attempt already carved in marble mere feet ahead. The fateful outcome of Whitney's frieze troubled another critic, lest the figure's unobtainable quest for "The Gilded One" be read as a reflection of the fair or American imperial or artistic progress: "The Panama-Pacific International Exposition is celebrating a great achievement, not a failure."[68]

Despite Whitney's efforts to distance herself from autobiographical interpretations of *The Fountain of El Dorado*, the associations were unavoidable. Her self-conscious deflection of the myth's personal significance indicates she treaded carefully on the subject of extraordinary material wealth. Whitney was aware of the irony of her class and mythical subject matter. Another critic was more pointed in understanding the symbolism of "gold" to Whitney's narrative: "The gold of El Dorado was used as a symbol of all material advantages which we so strongly desire—wealth, power, fame, et cetera."[69] Taking on the legend brought Whitney discomfort and anxiety about her own socio-economic status. The masses in *The Fountain of El Dorado* extort their bodies feverishly towards the pursuit of gold, but it is unreachable except for a chosen few, no longer visible and cloistered behind closed doors like Whitney's aristocratic cast. Having secured the unobtainable by her birth, Whitney's private struggle was of finding self-fulfillment, happiness, and personal meaning in a gilded and seemingly superficial world. She explored this through her own artistic production, collecting, commissioning, and supporting other American artists.

The PPIE closed weeks before Whitney initiated the process to commission *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney*, and it marked a moment where both Whitney and Henri jointly exhibited

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[67] Eugen Neuhaus, *The Art of the Exposition: Personal Impressions of the Architecture, Sculpture, Mural Decorations, Color Scheme and other Aesthetic Aspects of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition* (San Francisco: Paul Elder and Company, 1915), 33, https://library.si.edu/digital-library/book/artexposition00neuh.
[68] Rose V.S. Berry, *The Dream City: Its Art in Story and Symbolism* (San Francisco: W. N. Brunt, 1915), 28.

on an international stage. Critics were more generous towards Whitney's submissions to the exposition than Henri's, whose paintings were ridiculed by some despite both artists winning awards for their submissions. Henri exhibited seven paintings in Gallery 51, including *Himself* and *Herself* (both 1913, figs. 3.12-3.13) and a nude, *Odalisque* (c. 1915). In her guide to the exposition, *The Dream City: Its Art in Story and Symbolism,* the critic Rose V.S. Berry, singled out Henri and others among "The Eight" for:

> Decrying all academic things, screaming at tradition; putting things down in pure color with no half tones and doing things along lines in a manner altogether different.... They possess a charm however; they are compelling and they demand attention if the visitor by any chance should pass before them.[70]

Eugen Neuhaus, cited earlier, reserved more biting criticism for the works displayed in Henri's gallery: "This magnetic collection comes somewhat as a shock to the public, who can't be blamed for its disapproval of the recent sensational experiments of Henri and Glackens." Neuhaus continues by targeting Glackens' *Girl with Apple* (1909, fig. 3.14) as "absolutely absurd and vulgar beyond description. She has 'character,' if that is what he is after, because her vulgarity is convincing."[71] Another critic went so far as to call Gallery 51 "the 'Chamber of Horrors,' because it shows several of the extremists."[72]

Beyond its title, little is known about *Odalisque*, the now-lost painting Henri exhibited at the PPIE that caused the ire of critics like Neuhaus, yet given Whitney's posture in *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney,* it can be inferred that Henri drew a connection between the two canvases.

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[69] Juliet James, *Sculpture of the Exposition Palaces and Courts: Descriptive notes on the art of the Statuary at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition, San Francisco* (San Francisco: H.S. Crocker Co., 1915), 24, https://archive.org/details/sculptureexposi00jamegoog.
[70] Berry, *The Dream City*, 275, 277.
[71] The figure in Glackens' *Girl with Apple* strikes a sensual pose yet lacks the orientalist trappings of an odalisque. Neuhaus, *The Galleries of the Exposition,* 78.
[72] Ben Macomber, *The Jewel City: Its Planning and Achievement; Its Architecture, Sculpture, Symbolism, and Music; Its Gardens, Palaces, and Exhibits* (San Francisco: John H. Williams, 1915), 121. Heidi Applegate traces the term "Chamber of Horrors" to descriptions of "Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum in London containing wax versions of decapitated heads from executed victims of the French Revolution…. When used to refer to works of fine art, the term was associated with artists who 'dismembered' traditional forms." See Ganz, ed., *Jewel City*, 152n39.

Based upon its title, Henri's lost canvas likely belonged to a series of nudes he completed around this period including two versions of *Betalo Nude* (both 1916), featuring Betalo Rubino, one of Henri's favorite models (figs. 3.15-3.16).[73] In addition to Henri's nudes, Rubino appears in another painting, *Dancer of Delhi* (1916), which is even more closely related to *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney* (fig. 3.17).[74] The three paintings share a common inspiration in the sensual form of the odalisque.

Painted in the same year, Henri makes strong visual connections between *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney,* his full-length *Betalo Nude*, and *Dancer of Delhi*. In *Dancer of Delhi* and *Betalo Nude* he depicts Rubino clearly as an odalisque. Rubino, like Whitney, is propped up on her right side. Rubino's costume consists of a bandeau top, strands of colorful beads, and gold harem pants, which contrast the crimson drapery beneath her. Orientalist in design, the costume suggests similar parallels between Asian cultures and exoticism felt through Whitney's Asian-inspired ensemble.

The associations Henri made between Rubino and Whitney extended beyond the canvas. Both women shared an interest in dance and sculpture. Whitney took dance lessons from none other than Ruth St. Denis, the modern dancer who appears in Henri's 1919 portrait discussed in the next chapter. Whitney became famous for her performances, often staged as benefits for philanthropic causes.[75] In 1914, for example, Whitney participated in a benefit for the Nassau Hospital.[76] The tabloid paper *Town Topics* described the event:

> The *clou* of the evening was Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney's Oriental scene. The lovely Mrs. Whitney chose well a setting that would fit her type, and when she came onto the

[73] Betalo Rubino, a dancer of Spanish descent, posed for a number of Henri's paintings, clothed and nude. Among the earliest portraits of Rubino by Henri is *The Red Flower (Betalo in a Spanish Chair)* (1910, Private Collection).
[74] Rubino danced in the vaudeville performance of *The Dancing Girl of Delhi* in 1916 under the direction of Ruth St. Denis' brother, Buzz. Ruth St. Denis, *Ruth St. Denis: An Unfinished Life* (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1939), 184.
[75] Elizabeth Kendall, *Where She Danced: The Birth of American Art-dance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), 86-87; Friedman, *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney,* 267, 272.
[76] Friedman, *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney,* 350.

> 'market place in Bagdad' it needed only an apparition of the good old Haroun al Raschid to complete the suggestion of a page from the Thousand and One Nights. She might have been the lady who told the tales, with her diaphanous robes and the brilliant macaws on her wrists, and her attendants with more macaws and legs quite modishly painted to match the birds. It was altogether scrumptious, and if the dance with which she favored the audience was no danger of putting Pavlova's eye out, it was roundly applauded—because Mrs. Whitney did it.[77]

Whitney's "Oriental scene" was akin to themes explored by Rubino, St. Denis, and other dancers on vaudeville. Under the pretense of philanthropy, Whitney's exotic performances were deemed socially acceptable for a woman of high society. According to contemporaries, Whitney's amateur status as a dancer, however, did not detract from the striking visual and theatrical effects of her performances.

Less well-documented than Whitney's dancing is Rubino's interest in sculpture, which comes directly from Rubino's correspondence with Henri. In a lengthy letter dated 1919, Henri responded to Rubino, who seems to have initiated their exchange:

> About you sending the bust you are going to do of me to the exhibition, my advice is to wait until you have done it…. Better never start in on a thing with a view that it is to go to any exhibition. Make it for itself alone. In this way you will most likely make a thing that will go to an exhibition. There can never be any certainty of success in a work of art.[78]

After being the subject and model of Henri's portraits, Rubino herself intended to make a portrait of Henri. Henri's use of the term "bust" suggests the portrait was likely a sculpture, rather than a painting. More important than evidence of the long-standing platonic relationship between Henri and Rubino, the letter reveals that in addition to her dancing career, Rubino was an artist who displayed (or desired to) her work in exhibitions.

The compositional and thematic connections Henri made between his canvases featuring Whitney and Rubino were based upon similarities Henri saw in the expressive qualities and personalities of the two women. By associating Whitney with Betalo Rubino,

[77] "Tableaux for benefit of Nassau Hospital," *Town Topics* 72, no. 17 (October 22, 1914): 3-4.
[78] Robert Henri to Betalo Rubino, 8 December 1919, box 1, folder 10, Henri Papers.

Henri acknowledged Whitney as a multifaceted artist, who sought personal expression through her deliberate self-representation as a sculptor and occasional amateur dancing. The sculptor Jo Davidson conveyed a similar expression of Whitney's identity in his 1916 bronze statuette of her (fig. 3.18). Her dramatic gesture and revealing costume are suggestive of modern dance. Especially in the years leading up to her portrait commission, Whitney worked hard to establish a career and reputation as a professional artist and member of a community of artists. Even if Whitney could not boast the same level of professionalism as Henri in 1916, Henri nevertheless saw and represented her as a member of the artistic class. Henri classified Whitney and Rubino as modern women within a broad, multidisciplinary artistic network.

Whitney, Portraiture, and Self-representation

Henri's association of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney with the dancer Betalo Rubino speaks to Whitney's larger strategies of self-representation aimed at cultivating an artistic identity. As suggested by the description of Whitney's dramatic 1914 benefit performance, Whitney materialized the artistic side of her personality by dressing in costume. Whitney's multicolored jacket, harem pants, and mules in *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney* fall somewhere between fashionable leisure wear for elite, bohemian women and "fancy dress," a costume created specifically for fancy dress balls and only limited by imagination.[79] While the ambiguity of her clothing in Henri's portrait has complicated the late-twentieth century interpretation of the painting as discussed later in this chapter, Whitney used fancy dress more explicitly in a number of portraits leading up to and following Henri's 1916 commission.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, fancy dress balls were a social practice shared between the aristocratic and artistic classes. Whitney was familiar with the

custom, which at times reached epic proportions.[80] Whitney's aunt by marriage, Alva Vanderbilt hosted one of the period's most elaborate and ostentatious fancy dress balls in 1883, with Whitney's mother, Alice Vanderbilt, dressing as a personification of electricity in a metallic ballgown designed by the Paris-based courtier Charles Frederick Worth (fig. 3.19).[81] Fancy dress balls remained exceedingly popular into the twentieth century. According to fashion historians Anthea Jarvis and Patricia Raine, "In the years immediately preceding the First World War the wearing of fancy dress reached near epidemic proportions."[82] While costumes for artists' balls were less likely to involve European fashion houses and gemstones, they were no less visually arresting. *American Art News* described the Architects and Artists' Ball in 1914, stating the artists "far surpassed" New York's social elite in "in artistic beauty and arrangement, historic correctness of costume and richness of said costumes." *American Art News* criticized and quipped:

> The New York dailies, usually so eager to exploit any such important and unique an art and social event, utterly failed to give their readers any adequate or satisfactory story of a costume ball, of equal social importance, from the presence and participation of New York's most prominent social leaders and followers, with the historic Vanderbilt and Bradley Martin balls.[83]

Members of high society as well as artists participated in fashioning (or having fashioned) elaborate apparel for fancy dress balls. Although there was little social mixing between the

[79] Celia Marshik, *At the Mercy of Their Clothes: Modernism, the Middlebrow, and British Garment Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 103.
[80] The history of fancy dress balls can be traced to the Venetian tradition of Carnival. For related discussions, see Terry Castle, *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1986); Beverly Gordan, *The Saturated World: Aesthetic Meaning, Intimate Objects, Women's Lives, 1890-1940* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2006); Anthea Jarvis and Patricia Raine, *Fancy Dress* (Aylesbury: Shire, 1984).
[81] Wayne Craven, *Gilded Mansions: Grand Architecture and High Society* (New York: Norton, 2009), 123-127; Haley Larsen, "The Spirit of Electricity: Henry James's *In the Cage* and Electric Female Imagination at the Turn of the Century," *Configurations* 26, no. 4 (Fall 2018): 357-358; David Nye, *Electrifying America: Social Meanings of a New Technology, 1880–1940* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), 244.
[82] Jarvis and Raine, *Fancy Dress*, 23; quoted in Marshik, *At the Mercy of Their Clothes,* 107.
[83] "The Beaux Arts Ball," *American Art News* 12, no. 21 (February 28, 1914): 4.

classes, the premise was the same. For Whitney, costume provided a familiar pathway into artistic circles.

The social ambiguity of costume between aristocratic elites and artists enabled Whitney to use fancy dress as a means to sartorially navigate between the two distinct class circles. Portraits of Whitney in fancy dress across several mediums attest to the importance she placed upon costume to help project her identity as an artist. In 1913, Baron Adolph de Meyer photographed Whitney wearing a tunic designed by Léon Bakst, a later version of which survives in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute collection (1919, fig. 3.20). The Bakst tunics as seen in photographs and the surviving example are decoratively embroidered and dramatically flare outward at the hips—Bakst's iconic "lampshade" design. The exaggerated form marks a dramatic deviation from contemporary fashion, which nevertheless was heavily influenced by Bakst's designs for the Ballet Russe.[84]

De Meyer, a Paris-born photographer of German descent, became one of the leading fashion photographers of the early twentieth century. A portrait of Whitney was his first photographic contribution to *Vogue* and launched his storied career (fig. 3.21). The following year, de Meyer was hired as *Vogue's* first fashion photographer. In de Meyer's portrait, Whitney stands upright, with her left arm akimbo and her right hand placed on a piece of furniture behind her. Several strands of pearls drape casually around her neck and cascade over her chest. The photograph draws upon pictorialist conventions by creating a dreamlike atmosphere. Whitney's figure seems to emerge out of the charcoal shadows behind her. She appears to be in a darkened room, with a vertical sliver of light behind her left shoulder. As illustrated in *Vogue,* de Meyer's portrait is cropped along the bottom portion of Whitney's tunic, hiding the costume's full effect. The design of the tunic is striking: dark abstracted floral

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[84] Mary E. Davis, *Ballet Russes Style: Diaghilev's Dancers and Paris Fashion* (London: Reaktion Books, 2010).

motifs are set against a light-colored silk background. De Meyer captures Whitney as an exotic figure and comfortable in her exoticism.

Least the portrait be mistaken as too frivolous, *Vogue* justified and contextualized Whitney's self-representation by captioning de Meyer's photograph. The full caption read:

> In spite of her exacting social life as one of the prominent hostesses of New York, Mrs. Whitney finds time to devote herself seriously to real work. She is a sculptor of ability and is interested in many art movements, one of which is the recently organized Stage Society. This striking photograph shows her in a Persian costume worn at a fancy dress party at which she was the hostess.[85]

Ironically, even though the caption highlighted Whitney's work as a sculptor, the portrait depicted her in the role of a society hostess. The "fancy dress party" gave Whitney the latitude to dress unconventionally on the cutting-edge of modern art and fashion. Whitney's interest in and contributions to the arts provided justification for her exotic self-representation.

At least three additional photographs survive from de Meyer and Whitney's 1913 fancy dress photoshoot.[86] Two photographs are full-length and show Whitney's complete ensemble, which the January 1913 *Vogue* photograph stops short of revealing. Beneath Bakst's tunic Whitney wears a pair of voluminous silk harem pants, gathered at her ankles. A third version shows the full tunic and extends partially down Whitney's leg. Variants of the *Vogue* photograph play up the combined drama of the "lampshade" tunic and harem pants. De Meyer places Whitney in front of a window, a different setting from the initial *Vogue* image. A stripped window shade—which emphasizes the verticality of the photograph's composition—is pulled down to create a luminous domestic backdrop. Silhouetting Whitney in front of a window shade is the photographer's clever environmental response to Bakst's "lampshade"

[85] "Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney (née Vanderbilt)," *Vogue* 41, no. 2 (January 15, 1913): 16.
[86] Prints of these images are among Whitney's photographs at the Archives of American Art. A gelatin silver print of the full-length frontal view is in the photography collection of the Museum of Fine Arts Boston (2004.2077). "Portraits of Baron Adolf de Meyer, 1910s," box 29, folder 26, Whitney Papers.

tunic. Sunlight through the window shade generates natural backlighting to emphasize the tunic's lampshade-like form: a shade shown against a shade.

One variant shows Whitney from the front, a second in profile, and a third with her back partially towards the camera (figs. 3.22-3.24).[87] In total, de Meyer's photographs capture a 270-degree view of the costume. In the frontal view, Whitney wears a plumed helmet. Her arms gracefully hover above the edges of the tunic; her wrists are extended, and her hands are parallel to the floor, echoing the horizontal lines of the rectangular molding below the windowsill. Her left foot is slightly forward. In the (nearly) rear view of Whitney's costume, she continues to wear the headdress, which is even more exotic viewed in profile. With both hands, Whitney holds a mirror out in front of her. The surplus of light from the window washes away any evidence of her reflection. As Whitney holds the mirror up to her face, she and de Meyer subvert the viewer's gaze. Whitney instead projects an impenetrable interiority. Although lacking in outward expression, these portraits excel in documenting Whitney's complete costume, headdress included.

The most dramatic of the three images is de Meyer's photograph of Whitney in profile. With the left side of her body towards the camera, Whitney steps forward with her right leg. Her right arm extends in front of her and her hand is vertical. Rotating her left shoulder towards the camera, her left arm drapes behind her and her left hand points towards her body. As Whitney steps forward, she shifts her weight back into her left leg and appears to balance on bent knees. The directional momentum of Whitney's movement forward and backward is canceled. Through the portrait, Whitney and de Meyer make a physically demanding and technical posture seem effortless.

[87] A second variant of the third photograph, also at the Archives of American Art, shows Whitney without the headpiece.

The photograph of Whitney in profile view was reproduced the following year to accompany an article in *Vogue* on de Meyer and portrait photography. The article is significant for the explicit connections it makes between fancy dress, Whitney's personality, and her participation in the artistic community. The article's anonymous writer (possibly de Meyer in the third person) describes de Meyer's process of photographing women at home where "a woman is always more natural… and her personality shows itself much more readily in those surroundings."[88] Instead of photographing his female sitters in their formal drawing-rooms, de Meyer:

> Very tactfully he asks to be shown some other rooms, where the sunlight may be better, and great is the surprise of his patron when he finally selects a simple, little morning room with plenty of sunshine, where nothing suggests the formal side of her life.[89]

Whitney's luminous profile portrait with a simple stripped window shade acting as a backdrop illustrates de Meyer's approach to portrait photography. The portrait is carefully composed and stripped of distracting domestic elements. It focuses on Whitney—and her fabulous costume. The article indicates de Meyer very likely photographed Whitney at the Whitney Mansion at 871 Fifth Avenue, where he struggled to find a space without evidence of "the formal side" of Whitney's highly formal life. He settled on the very narrow space in front of a window, a revealing hint at the suffocating opulence of the Whitney Mansion.

Since Whitney first appeared as the subject of de Meyer's photograph in *Vogue* a year earlier, Whitney's profile as an artist had increased. In the 1914 article, Whitney is no longer treated as a society hostess, but a distinct individual and an established artist. The article noted, "A fancy dress sometimes brings out a woman's individuality in a way which at once appeals to this artist [de Meyer]." The caption below Whitney's photograph elaborates further:

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[88] "Art: The Junior Member of the Fine Arts," *Vogue* 43, no. 2 (February 1, 1914): 20.
[89] "Art: The Junior Member of the Fine Arts," 20.

> The costume of a fancy dress ball lends itself to unique interpretation of Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney's personality. To her has recently been given the honor of modeling the statue to be erected in Washington in memory of those lost on the Titanic.[90]

As the article explains, "fancy dress" lent itself to an "unique interpretation" of Whitney's "personality." With a similar effect to the window shade backdrop, fancy dress made de Meyer's portrait of Whitney less formal. The bifurcated pants physically set Whitney's body free. However, the practice of wearing fancy dress embodied even greater significance for Whitney. As a whole, the costume had a liberating effect, enabling Whitney to realize a freer version of herself more in line with her artistic sensibilities. Whitney aligned herself with the artistic class.

The walls of Whitney's Long Island studio portray perhaps the most intimate portrait of Whitney in fancy dress, further reinforcing the connection she made between costume, the artistic self, and the authentic self. Between 1910 and 1913, Whitney commissioned architects Delano and Aldrich to build a Beaux-Arts studio on the Whitney family's Long Island estate in Westbury. Nestled on a quiet corner of the property, the studio complex included formal gardens and provided Whitney with an ideal atmosphere to carry out her work. Artist Jerome Myers later recalled of Whitney's Old Westbury studio: it was "the only place on earth where she could find solitude."[91] To "find solitude" was to locate one's authentic self. The studio included 32-foot ceilings and a skylight that flooded the space with pristine sunlight from its north-facing orientation. For the interior, Whitney commissioned Howard Gardiner Cushing, Robert Winthrop Chanler, and Maxfield Parrish to complete murals.[92] Within his mural, Cushing included a portrait of Whitney in her Bakst tunic.

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[90] "Art: The Junior Member," 20.
[91] Jerome Myers, *Artist in Manhattan* (New York: American Artists Group, 1940), 61.
[92] Patricia Hills and Roberta K. Tarbell, *The Figurative Tradition and the Whitney Museum of American Art: Paintings and Sculpture from the Permanent Collection* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1980), 20-21; Peter Pennoyer, Anne Walker, et al., *The Architecture of Delano & Aldrich* (New York: Norton, 2003), 94.

Little-known today, Cushing came from a prominent Boston family and was a long-time friend and mentor to Whitney. Cushing, who was educated at Harvard and studied art at the Académie Julian in Paris, developed an individual style, specializing in portraiture and decorative work.[93] Whitney wrote that Cushing "liked guiding my steps. He had a great gift of sympathy."[94] He encouraged Whitney's interest in sculpture and provided entre into artistic networks. Like Whitney, Cushing's wealth and social status influenced the reception of his artwork and the degree to which he was taken seriously as an artist.

Cushing's mural program at Whitney's Long Island studio wrapped around the full height of the outer wall of the staircase of the studio building leading to the second-floor auxiliary rooms. The mural, which was recently removed from situ and conserved, measured a total of 125 feet and depicted hallucinogenic plants, as well as vignettes of Persian harems and Mughal palace rooms.[95] A portrait of Whitney in the Bakst tunic and harem pants stands waiting at the top of the stairs (fig. 3.25). Whitney's deportment in the mural is suggestive of de Meyer's photographs, indicating Whitney herself as the original architect of the postures. Her right arm, for example, mimics her arm position in de Meyer's frontal view. Whitney's body is turned at a slight angle and she holds an exotic flower in her left hand. The heel of her right foot is raised, suggestive of motion. Her figure is set against a rose-colored background with exotic, stylized flora. Cushing's murals likely reveal the colors of Whitney's costume: a cream tunic accented with black applique, embroidery, and beads. Her harem pants are salmon pink.

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[93] "Howard G. Cushing," *American Art News* 14, no. 30 (April 29,1916): 4; William Adams Delano, "The Decorative Art of Howard Cushing," *Vanity Fair* 8, no. 1 (March 1917): 54-55; 134; 136.
[94] Quoted in Friedman, *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney,* 162.
[95] Wendy Goodman and Britanny Stephanis, "Inside Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney's Long Island Art Studio," *New York Magazine,* January 17, 2020, http://www.thecut.com/2020/01/interior-lives-john-leboutillier-gertrude-vanderbilt-whitney.html; Eve M. Kahn, "This Century-Old Mural Was Rescued from a Whitney's Stairwell," *New York Times,* February 6, 2018, http://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/06/arts/design/gertrude-whitney-cushing-murals.html; "Lowy Resurrects the Whitney Studio Mural by Howard Gardiner Cushing,"

If de Meyer's photographs of Whitney taken at her Fifth Avenue mansion sought to escape the formalities of her life and reflect her personality, Cushing's portrait went further. Cushing created an interior in concert with the exoticism of Whitney's costume. The imaginary and fanciful environment opened to a world of creative possibilities. Positioned on the second-floor landing of her private and isolated studio, Cushing's portrait was rarely viewed by anyone but Whitney herself. The intimacy of Cushing's representation of Whitney and the mural's limited audience underscores the significance of the work. To Whitney, the studio represented freedom from social obligations and restraints. Wearing fancy dress provided one entry point to the creative self and means to generate a public image of an artist. Working in the studio generated another, even deeper connection to the creative self. Cushing's portrait of Whitney on the walls of her studio makes the connection between fancy dress and Whitney's artistic identity explicit.

In 1920, Whitney commissioned John Singer Sargent for yet another portrait of her wearing the Bakst tunic (fig. 3.26).[96] The charcoal and graphite drawing moves beyond documenting the costume or suggesting the complex interiority of the subject. Whitney is exuberant and there is little restraint in the image. Sargent depicts Whitney energetically lunging forward with her left leg and outstretched arms. Her left arm is foreshortened and extended towards the viewer. Her right arm extends outwards from her side and is externally rotated; her palm faces upward.[97] Whitney's head tilts back and towards her left shoulder. Her lips open slightly as she gazes confidently and directly at the viewer. Whitney's body language—her exposed neck, open palms, and wide stance—depict an individual who has

March 27, 2016, http://www.lowy1907.com/lowy-resurrects-the-whitney-studio-mural-by-howard-gardiner-cushing/.

[96] The date "c. 1913" for this drawing as currently catalogued by the Whitney Museum is incorrect. Correspondence between Sargent and Whitney instead indicate the drawing was completed in 1920. See John S. Sargent to Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, April 1920, box 2, folder 5, Whitney Papers.

opened herself to the world. The charcoal portrait expressively conveys Whitney's vibrant personality. Since de Meyer's 1913 photographs, Whitney had established herself as a professional artist and had grown considerably in self-confidence, now outwardly on display in Sargent's portrait. Whitney is no longer dependent upon fancy dress as means of self-expression; she has become a self-expressive individual.

Reception and Outcomes

Whitney's decision to enlist Henri to paint her portrait was significant: it was her first major commission by an American artist since establishing herself as a professional sculptor.[98] After purchasing paintings by Henri from "The Eight" exhibition, Whitney followed Henri's career and supported the work of other realist artists in his orbit. Henri was not a society portrait painter, a plus for Whitney who wanted to distance herself from New York society and—by extension—society portraiture. Henri was deeply imbedded within New York's artistic circles, another benefit to Whitney as she affirmed her identity as a professional artist. Henri was an artist's artist. Finally, as a teacher, he was invested in encouraging the next generation of American artists, a cause he passionately shared with Whitney. These personal qualities along with Whitney and Henri's long-standing association help elucidate Whitney's decision for Henri to paint her portrait.

In spite of the gulf between Henri's non-commissioned portraits and society portraiture, Whitney's commission nevertheless drew satirical commentary. When news of the commission first became public, the following notice appeared in the magazine *Puck:* "Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney has given a commission to Robert Henri to paint her portrait. The work

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[97] The extreme and almost unnatural external rotation of her right arm recalls Sargent's *Portrait of Madame X* (1883-1884, Metropolitan Museum of Art).

[98] Since Millais' childhood portrait, Whitney appears to have sat for few oil portraits: one in 1902 by her close friend and confident Howard Gardiner Cushing, *Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney* (1902, Whitney Museum of

has been begun, but it will not be completed for possibly two months…. Let none speak to-day of the 'idle' rich."[99] *Puck* poked fun at the duration of the sittings and the notion of sitting for a portrait as work. According to contemporaries, for a woman of Whitney's social stature to sit in front of an artist was to be "idle."

Ironically, Whitney was very busy. She squeezed portrait sessions with Henri into a robust professional calendar, and her other activities often took precedent to Henri's painting. Returning from California and the PPIE, Whitney turned her focus to organizing her first solo exhibition (held at her own 8 West 8th Street), lending work to an exhibition at the Newport Art Association, and planning for her *Titanic Memorial.*[100] Whitney now lived the life of a professional artist. However, even by choosing an independent artist like Henri, Whitney could not completely avoid the connotations associated with the genre of portraiture.

In positioning herself as an odalisque and allowing herself to be depicted in the suggestive posture, Whitney assumed a greater risk of being criticized than did Henri, who was following in the footsteps of art historical precedents. Whitney's pose and clothing encouraged viewers to imagine her in an exotic, even sexual, context. According to Henri biographer Bennard B. Perlman, who likely gathered this antidote through family oral history and Flora Payne Whitney, when the portrait was delivered to the Whitneys' Long Island estate, "Mr. Whitney would not allow it to be hung in the house, for he refused to condone a lady posing in anything but a dress. As a result, the life-size likeness was displayed in Mrs. Whitney's Manhattan studio."[101] Despite her husband's efforts to censor Whitney's representation, the portrait was semi-publicly displayed and photographed for subsequent reproduction purposes.

American Art), and another by Prince Pierre Troubetzkoy in 1916 (location unknown). Both portraits are formal, society portraits.

[99] "Overcrowding the Profession," *Puck* (February 26, 1916): 22.

[100] Roberts, *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney: Sculpture,* 106.

Once complete, Whitney unveiled Henri's portrait with a dramatic party hosted at her Long Island estate, where Delano and Aldrich completed a studio for her in 1913 and Howard Cushing created a fanciful depiction of Whitney in her Bakst tunic and harem pants. Henri enthusiastically reported to his former student and friend Helen Niles, "She [Mrs. Whitney] invited a crowd, mostly artist friends to see the decorations painted by [Maxfield] Parrish, [Robert] Chandler and by [Howard] Cushing (and also my portrait of her)." Henri continues to describe the elaborate affair in great detail:

> A splendid train took us to Roslyn and then motors to the place—studio—way out in the wilds, a fine sunken garden with a pool and group of dancing girls a la Isadora [Duncan] did as near as they could imagine and physically demonstrate what Isadora would have done. It was a good idea for the girls looked fine out of doors and it mattered very little that they were not Isadora Duncans…. The decorations by Cushing very good (very Persian in character). My portrait was in a room by itself and there were those who were enthusiastic about it. Six Macaws in the highest plumage decorated two handsome high perches on the lawn and looked marvels against the green and in the sun.[102]

As Henri describes it, even traveling to Whitney's studio "way out in the wilds" was an adventure and careful choreographed by Whitney, from the "splendid train" to Long Island to the automobiles awaiting guests at the station. Dancers "a la Isadora" imitated the graceful, harmonious movements of the famed modern dancer. Henri carefully emphasized that they were not part of Isadora Duncan's school. Nevertheless, he found the overall effect to be a success in part because there was no formal performance, but instead a somewhat clumsily copied tableaux of Duncan's movements. Henri's remarks underscored the ubiquity of modern dancers to middle class and elite audiences by 1916; the dancers blended into the outdoor landscape surrounding the studio.[103] The main attraction of the party were the murals and

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[101] Bennard B. Perlman, *Robert Henri: Painter* (Wilmington: Delaware Art Museum, 1984), 133.
[102] Robert Henri to Helen Niles, 22 June 1916, box 7, folder 172, Henri Papers.
[103] A pictorial precedent for the environment Whitney created on the grounds of her studio can be found in the paintings of Thomas Dewing (1851-1938).

Henri's portrait, which Whitney connected to the outdoors through the similar palette and brightly colored plumage of the macaws.

In Henri's letter to Niles, he seems pleased that his portrait was displayed "in a room by itself." Based on his mention of Cushing's mural, which spanned the stairwell of the first and second floors, it seems probable that Henri's portrait was displayed in a bedroom on the second floor of the studio. To access Henri's portrait, guests climbed the winding staircase and passed by Cushing's exotic portrait of Whitney in the Bakst costume on the second-floor landing. Secluding Henri's portrait in an upstairs bedroom encouraged an intimate viewing experience as clusters of her guests circulated through the small and typically private domestic space. The context of display designated Whitney's portrait by Henri as a masterpiece worthy of close observation and quiet contemplation.

Installing the portrait in a bedroom influenced the painting's reception in another way: it reinforced the connections between Whitney's posture and the odalisque. The bedroom's general association with intimacy, privacy, and sexuality heightened the sensuality of the portrait. The bedroom at Old Westbury was a sanctuary within Whitney's studio retreat. It was the place where she retired after working in the studio, where she undressed at the end of the day and found temporary reprieve from the social expectations of her wealth. Although Whitney appears clothed in Henri's portrait, the bedroom context in which she chose to unveil the portrait for the first time made it suggestive. The act and freedom of undressing was implicit.

Traditional interpretations of Henri's portrait of Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney frame the painting in the context of patronage and her support of American artists. Whitney's June 1916 fête to reveal the portrait suggests otherwise. Placing the portrait in the bedroom above her studio, Whitney emphasized her identity and labor as an artist. Contextual details of the

portrait's first display, along with the portrait's primary audience of family and friends, makes it possible to read Whitney's relaxed posture as evidence of labor rather than her idleness. Visitors to Whitney's studio brought knowledge of Whitney's sculptural work and profession to the portrait. The commission celebrates a period of artistic growth and accomplishment for Whitney. Henri's portrait challenged the conventions of society portraiture just as Whitney resisted categorization as being among the "idle rich." In the portrait, Henri depicts Whitney relaxing after a long day in the studio. Instead of laziness, her repose suggests that Whitney has been hard at work, but only to those who were privy to her daily activities and her dedication to her artistic career.

However, without intimate knowledge of Whitney's private life and inner struggles to create an artistic profile for herself, *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney* is ambiguous. Is Whitney resting or being idle? The portrait diverges significantly from *The Art Student (Miss Josephine Nivison)* (1906, fig. 3.27), a vertical full-length portrait of the artist Josephine Nivison. Nivison was a student in Henri's class and would later wed Edward Hopper in what art historian Betsy Fahlman described, an "emotionally corrosive marriage."[104] In *The Art Student*, Nivison with charged brushes in hand, appears to have stepped away from her canvas, presumably just beyond Henri's composition. Henri depicts Nivison as disheveled, a woman more concerned with creating art than being the subject of it. Nivison's ill-fitting smock slips off her left shoulder revealing a bright red dress beneath; petticoats peak out beneath the smock's hem. Henri smugly recorded in his daybook: "Finished the portrait of Miss Josephine Nivison. Well satisfied with it."[105]

Compared to *The Art Student,* indication of Whitney's identity as an artist is less evident in Henri's 1916 portrait and only visible to those familiar with how seriously she

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[104] Wardle, ed., *American Women Modernists*, 101.

approached her sculpture. While Whitney's artistic labor again takes places beyond the canvas—there is no sculpture visibly in sight—it is referenced by her pose as an odalisque and similarities to Canova's *Pauline Bonaparte as Venus Victrix* discussed earlier in this chapter. Presenting herself as an odalisque, Whitney embodies the famous neo-classical sculpture. Through doing so, Whitney and Henri creatively combine the role of artist and subject. Playing the role of artist as subject, Whitney meets Henri on equal terms. She is not a student, but a professional artist, an artistic equal—or at least she aspires to be.

Following the portrait's unveiling, Whitney publicized it selectively, allowing *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney* to play a role in her own public representation. In addition to sending Whitney a bill for $2,600, Henri gave his approval of a proof of the portrait to be included in an upcoming issue of *Vanity Fair*. He ends the letter with a reference to Whitney's recent studio party, "We [Henri and his wife, Marjorie] had a beautiful time at your studio at Old Westbury. We are sorry the sittings are over but hope we will see a lot of you any way."[106]

The solicitation to reproduce a copy of the portrait was prompted by Frank Crowinshield, the editor of *Vanity Fair*, ever eager for recent portraits of Whitney.[107] Responding to Crowinshield's request to reproduce Henri's portrait, Whitney's secretary wrote, "Mrs. Whitney will be very pleased to allow you to have photographs taken of her portrait by Robert Henri, and she will be glad if you will have the proofs sent to her, so that she may choose the one she would prefer to have reproduced in *Vanity Fair*."[108] Even after

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[105] Robert Henri Papers, microfilm roll 885, frame 198, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC.
[106] Object file 86.70.3, WMAA.
[107] A year earlier, Whitney refused a similar request. In April 1915, Whitney's personal secretary wrote to Crowinshield, "In spite of what you say she [Mrs. Whitney] is altogether too busy to think of posing for sketches or such-like frivolities! Also she really thinks too many sketches and pictures of her have appeared lately and the public will be growing very tired of always seeing her in every paper and periodical." I.M. Givenwilson to Frank Crowinshield, 13 April 1915, box 5, folder 49, Whitney Papers.
[108] I.M. Givenwilson to Frank Crowinshield, 16 June 1916, Whitney Papers.

agreeing to the concept, Whitney asserted control over which photograph of the portrait would be reproduced.

The text of the *Vanity Fair* article in which the portrait appears focuses on Robert Henri, rather than Whitney, perhaps a compromise for "always seeing her in every paper and periodical."[109] The article is entitled "The Career and Work of Robert Henri and His Many Activities As a Leader in Art." Whitney's "recently completed portrait" appears at the beginning of the article, juxtaposed with Henri's photographic portrait by modernist photographer Gertrude Käsebier. In Käsebier's portrait, Henri's body is turned slightly so that he appears almost in profile; his hands and long, narrow fingers rest in his lap. Head tilted slightly down, he gazes into the distance. The article is short, a single page. Whitney's portrait takes up nearly half the page, indicative of its significance. It is the only painting by Henri reproduced, while the article focuses largely on Henri's professional activities as a celebrated and revered art teacher and a force for change at the National Academy. Of his art, the anonymous author writes, "Henri is usually cosmopolitan in his choice of subjects. He has roamed in his search for types from Monhegan to Spain, and from Spain to Western Ireland."[110] Whitney was unusual compared to Henri's typical portrait subjects nor could she be classified as a particular "type." She was an individual.

As suggested by their dueling portraits, the article has two focal points: Robert Henri and Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney. The short text block rehearses details about Henri and his career, revealing little new information to *Vanity Fair's* art savvy readership. Recently completed, Whitney's portrait is new and noteworthy, even if the text is silent on Whitney as a subject. The sizable reproduction of the portrait—and by extension, Whitney—dominate the article. The commissioned portrait illustrates the close association between Whitney and

[109] See note 107 above.

Henri. Within the article, it serves as positive publicity for both parties, mutually reinforcing their standing within the artistic community.

The desire to exhibit *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney* beyond Whitney's unveiling at her studio party was driven by Henri as an effort to promote what he considered to be a successful portrait and to highlight his relationship with Whitney. After the portrait's appearance in *Vanity Fair*, Henri approached Whitney about lending it to an exhibition at Knoedler's, a preeminent New York City gallery, planned for some time in early 1917. Henri wrote, "There will be a number of canvases by me in the show. Will you lend it for the exhibition? I will greatly appreciate it if you will."[111] Without justification, Whitney refused. Her secretary wrote, "She regrets very much that she cannot loan the picture for the exhibition, & hopes you will not be disappointed."[112] Naturally, Henri must have felt some disappointment in Whitney's response. Whitney's agreement to reproduce the portrait in *Vanity Fair* and her objection to including it in the Knoedler exhibition reveal that Whitney made a distinction between the circulation of her image in print and display of the near life-size portrait. Relocating the portrait disrupted her physical space. While the *Vanity Fair* feature closely associated the portrait with Henri, Whitney understood the portrait to be, first and foremost, about her own self-representation and agency.

Conclusion

When Whitney commissioned Henri's portrait in late 1915, it was an ambitious gesture of autonomy: her posture, clothing, and hairstyle all indicated that Whitney was a modern woman. The portrait represented Whitney as free-spirited, strong-willed, fashion-

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[110] "The Career and Work of Robert Henri and His Many Activities as a Leader in Art," *Vanity Fair* 7 (August 1916): 38.
[111] Robert Henri to Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, 4 September 1916, box 6, folder 44, Whitney Papers.
[112] Secretary to Robert Henri, 7 October 1916, box 6, folder 44, Whitney Papers.

forward, and unconventional. Whitney and Henri, through the composition, her ensemble, and the painting's dramatic unveiling, emphasized Whitney's artistic identity.

In the immediate context of its production, the portrait conveyed Whitney's wealth, work as a sculptor, and her broad interest in creative expression. Over time the portrait has been closely linked to Whitney's role as founder of the Whitney Museum of American Art, officially established in 1931, more than a decade prior to Whitney's death in 1942. The ease of this association results from the sensuality and sense of leisure conveyed through Whitney's posture. The portrait makes it easy, even convenient, to distill Whitney's identity into that of an art patron, rather than the working artist and tireless advocate for American art that she truly was. As the critic Henry McBride noted at the time of Whitney's death, "It is not an exaggeration to say that there is not a contemporary artist of note in America who has not been helped by Mrs. Whitney. From the moment of her first emergence into public life she began a system of philanthropies that finally placed the entire country in her debt."[113]

The predominance of Whitney's legacy as a patron rather than an artist shares similarities with the issues surrounding Henri's legacy as a teacher. Whitney's philanthropy impacted a generation of artists and provided a foundation for the robust development of American art throughout the twentieth century. A similar argument can be made for Henri's teaching. Henri's belief in individuality and support of non-juried exhibitions provided a path for students as diverse as Florine Stettheimer, Stuart Davis, Josephine Nivison Hopper, and Morgan Russell to express themselves freely without restraint. As art historian Ellen Roberts notes in her recent exhibition catalogue, "Since [Whitney's] death, her role as a patron has eclipsed her work as an artist, and the fact of her wealth has continued to fuel the assumption that her sculpture does not warrant serious consideration." Roberts also cites "the high

[113] Quoted in Hills and Tarbell, *The Figurative Tradition,* 11.

modernist view of art as progressing toward abstraction" as a rationale to overlook her work as an artist, a familiar refrain for Henri's realist portraiture.[114] Whitney's intention to promote herself as an artist within Henri's portrait becomes clearest when considering the broader contemporary context of the portrait, including related portraits, the symbolism associated with her costume and pose, and the portrait's dramatic unveiling at her Long Island studio in June of 1916.

Whitney's portrait remained within the Whitney family for decades and was routinely displayed for major anniversaries and other events throughout the Whitney Museum of American Art's history.[115] For the fiftieth anniversary of the Whitney Studio in December 1964, the portrait was proudly displayed behind speakers such as former Henri student Helen Appleton Read. Henri's portrait appears on the cover of Whitney's 1978 biography and other biographical publications written by Whitney's descendants.[116] Most recently when the Whitney museum celebrated its new building in 2016 and move to the Chelsea neighborhood of New York, the painting headlined one of the museum's inaugural exhibitions, *Human Interest: Portraits from the Whitney's Collection*, April 27, 2016 - February 12, 2017. Whitney's accomplishments as an individual and her sense of individuality enliven the portrait with meaning. It is Whitney as the artist/subject who made the portrait iconic, not Henri.

Neither Whitney nor Henri could have predicted the trajectory of Whitney's accomplishments as an artist, advocate, and eventually museum founder. Early in their relationship, Henri questioned the seriousness of Whitney as an artist. In the portrait, he continued to wrestle with how to best represent the contradictions present in Whitney's life.

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[114] Roberts, *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney: Sculpture*, 13.
[115] Upon Whitney's death in 1942, the portrait was inherited by her daughter, Flora Payne Whitney Miller. Upon Miller's death in 1986, the portrait entered the museum's collection.

The resulting portrait was a collaboration that demanded greater risk from Whitney than Henri, who inserted *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney* into a long, art historical genealogy of the odalisque. Nevertheless, Whitney's lived experience and self-representation exceeded the boundaries of a static, seated representation.

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[116] Friedman, *Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney*. See also Flora Miller Biddle, *The Whitney Women and the Museum They Made* (New York: Arcade, 1999).

CHAPTER 4

Ruth St. Denis and the Performance of Modernity

Introduction

In Robert Henri's portrait, *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance* (1919), Ruth St. Denis' supple and semi-nude body gently bends, swaying in motion (fig. 4.1). Fully absorbed in her performance, St. Denis' eyes narrow with purpose. Her nose is turned upwards, and her red lips hinge slightly open. St. Denis' neck is elongated and elegantly exposed. She appears to be in the middle of one of her most famous dances, *The Peacock Dance* (1914). Her elaborately costumed body is silhouetted against an abstract patchwork of cool blue and gray colors. Her heels lifted, St. Denis struts forward. Beads festooned from her cropped iridescent peacock-blue sequined bodice dance across her nude torso as she moves and manipulates the emerald-green peacock train behind her. Her movement is expressive, yet not intentionally sensual. Henri balances the coolness of the portrait's background with the warm jewel tones found in St. Denis' costume. Aside from the rosiness of her cheeks, Henri renders St. Denis' pale flesh in cool alabaster tones, carefully deflecting any lustfulness projected onto the portrait by way of St. Denis' bare skin. She is depicted as a serious subject made modern through her movement and the stunning spectacle displayed on the public stage.

St. Denis and her appearance in *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance* bring into question what it means to embody and represent modern subjectivity. *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance* is one of numerous portraits showing St. Denis in the costume and attitudes of *The Peacock Dance* as discussed throughout this chapter. However, Henri's portrait is the only known oil painting of *The Peacock Dance*. Like many turn-of-the-twentieth century celebrity performers from vaudeville and Broadway to Hollywood, Ruth St. Denis' preferred

medium for portraiture was photography.[1] Contemporaries classified dance and photography as modern inovations. Less expensive, more easily reproducible, extremely portable, and highly versatile, photographic portraiture maintained many advantages over its painterly rival.

Photography expressed and was more suited to modern life in ways full-length painted portraiture was not. By selecting St. Denis as a subject, Henri asserted realist portraiture's participation in modernity through a subject—a modern dancer—whose emergence was seen as emblematic of modern times. St. Denis, in turn, could use Henri's portrait as a self-promotional strategy to counter the ephemerality of dance, while actively pursuing multiple avenues for representation. St. Denis' love of photography, discussed throughout this chapter, underscores Henri's and St. Denis' conflicting priorities: for Henri, the production of a singular authoritative representation of St. Denis and for St. Denis, a variety of representations. This chapter argues that the singularity of *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance* made the life-size portrait ill-suited as a visual expression of modernity. As a subject, St. Denis' modernity was more nimbly expressed through photographic prints, which allowed for a greater fluidity of representation.

St. Denis Biography

Born Ruth Dennis in Newark, New Jersey in 1879, Ruth came from a family of modest means and her earliest engagements with dance were purely commercial. Ruth's mother, Ruth Emma Dennis, played a formidable role in her daughter's life and career. As St. Denis recounts in her 1939 autobiography, *An Unfinished Life,* her introduction to dance began at the age of ten. A few years later, St. Denis' mother decided to take her daughter to

[1] Judith Brown, *Glamour in Six Dimensions: Modernism and the Radiance of Form* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018); Robert Dance and Bruce Robertson, *Ruth Harriet Louise and Hollywood Glamour Photography*

New York in an effort to further St. Denis' career and bolster the family's meager income. St. Denis' first big break came upon meeting American theater tycoon David Belasco and appearing in the production of *Zaza*, which traveled to London.[2] St. Denis continued to perform for Belasco for several years, yet in her retelling of the narrative, began to distance herself from the commercialism of the company and dance as popular entertainment.

While Belasco's company provided a steady income, St. Denis became weary of touring and performing, which she perceived as stifling her creativity and autonomy as an emerging artist. She wrote in her autobiography, "As time went on, the atmosphere, the people, the plays, D. B.'s own personality were increasingly inharmonious to my deepest self. I was not unhappy, but I was dissatisfied."[3] The monotonous repetition of the same routine, night after night, town after town led to physical exhaustion and left St. Denis with little time to pursue other creative outlets.

On a national tour of *Dubarry*, the Belasco company stopped to perform in Buffalo, New York. Sitting with a friend and fellow Belasco cast member and sipping soda at a drugstore counter in Buffalo, St. Denis' eyes settled on an Egyptian Deities cigarette poster. St. Denis became mesmerized by the depiction of Isis, the stoic Egyptian goddess enthroned in the poster. She recalled:

> Here was an external image which stirred into instant consciousness all that latent capacity for wonder, that still and meditative love of beauty which lay at the deepest center of my spirit…. It was, however, not merely a symbol of Egypt, but an universal symbol of all the elements of history and art which may be expressed through the human body.[4]

Leaving the drugstore, St. Denis begged her friend to return and acquire the poster for her. Staring at the poster later than evening, St. Denis "knew that my destiny as a dancer had

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(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); David S. Shields, *Still: American Silent Motion Picture Photography* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[2] Ruth St. Denis, *Ruth St. Denis: An Unfinished Life* (London: George G. Harrap and Company, Ltd., 1939), 34.

[3] St. Denis, *An Unfinished Life*, 51.

sprung alive in that moment. I would become a rhythmic and impersonal instrument of spiritual revelation rather than a personal actress of comedy of tragedy."[5]

Of equal significance to St. Denis' artistic development was her encounter with Indian Nautch dancers on Coney Island in the summer of 1904. Akin to St. Denis' response to the cigarette poster, she wrote, "Something of the remarkable fascination of India caught hold of me," to the point that St. Denis assumed the identity of an Indian dancer.[6] St. Denis dwelt far less on this episode in her autobiography than the cigarette poster. Involving bodily encounters and St. Denis' absorption of the movement of brown bodies, this encounter was more intimate and more taboo. St. Denis' adherence to entrenched racial hierarchies prevented her from explicitly acknowledging the full impact of the Indian subjects she observed, although she immediately sought to imitate their whirling motions. Unlike the static cigarette poster, the dancers' movements provided a kinesthetic model which St. Denis could emulate. St. Denis' inspiration for dance, therefore, was visual, corporeal, and crossed racial boundaries. As dance scholar Priya Srinivasan notes, "St. Denis, in her performances, conflated her own body with that of a brown Indian woman, collapsing the character she performed onstage with herself."[7] St. Denis' performance of "otherness" and conviction in her claim to Indian culture belied her own cultural background as a white, middle-class woman.

Describing the abrupt shift of her interest from Egypt to India, St. Denis noted, "The image of *Egypta* had set into vibration an inward state that would inevitably express itself from a certain center and after a certain pattern, and it made no difference what the artistic

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[4] St. Denis, *An Unfinished Life*, 52.
[5] St. Denis, *An Unfinished Life*, 52.
[6] St. Denis, *An Unfinished Life*, 55.
[7] Priya Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris: Indian Dance as Transnational Labor* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2012), 80-81.

environment or race culture was that I transmitted through the dance."[8] St. Denis' comments illustrated her complex relationship with the cultures she drew inspiration from for her dances. Through dance, she strived towards an embodiment of culture. St. Denis sought to achieve this by suppressing her individual identity, itself a form of modernist expression. As literary scholars Julia A. Walker and Glenn Odom noted:

> Historically, [art critic Clement] Greenberg's model [of modernism] has been used to value works at the "high" end of the scale, neglecting those closer to the "low" pole of self-reflexivity, suggesting the symptomatic repression of not only the verisimilar logic of a persistent realism but also what it stands to represent—the material conditions of life.[9]

St. Denis' repression of selfhood within her performances put her in conversation with the larger currents of modernist expression. Practitioners of an embodied artform, dancers like St. Denis negotiated between the self-reflexive qualities that made their performances unique and the self-repressive and formalist demands of modernism. Early in her career, St. Denis' personal identity and stage persona became collapsed, as becomes clearer still with her signature dance *Radha*, a solo performance Henri witnessed when it was first staged in 1906.

St. Denis and Robert Henri

Radha was St. Denis's New York solo debut in 1906 at Proctor's vaudeville theater on Twenty-third Street (fig. 4.2). Originally booked for one week, the dance proved popular enough it was extended for three weeks.[10] The performance, set in a Hindu temple, depicted Radha, a milkmaid and consort to the Hindu god Krishna, carrying out rituals with symbolic items corresponding to the five senses. St. Denis' performance of *Radha* was incongruous

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[8] St. Denis, *An Unfinished Life*, 56.
[9] Julia A. Walker and Glenn Odom, "Comparative Modernist Performance Studies: A Not So Modest Proposal," *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 31, no. 1 (Fall 2016): 144.
[10] Ted Shawn, *Ruth St. Denis: Pioneer and Prophet, Being a History of Her Cycle of Oriental Dances,* 2 vols. (San Francisco: John Howell, 1920), 1:9; see also Jane Desmond, "Dancing out the Difference: Cultural Imperialism and Ruth St. Denis's 'Radha' of 1906," *Signs* 17, no. 1 (Autumn 1991): 28-49; Suzanne Shelton, *Divine Dancer: A Biography of Ruth St. Denis* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1981), 25.

and higher-minded than accompanying acts and as a result of its exoticism, sexual and potentially offensive to turn-of-the-century audiences. As St. Denis recounted in her autobiography, "My act went on between Bob Fitzsimmons, the pugilist, and a group of trained monkeys."[11] The variety of program reflected the state of vaudeville at the turn of the century ranging from musicians and dancers to comedians, acrobats, jugglers and magicians.[12] By the writing of her autobiography in 1939, the juxtaposition between St. Denis and "trained monkeys," while factual, was comedic. It underscored the distance modern dance traveled over the course of several decades—from low-brow amusements appearing in vaudeville theaters to an aura of celebrity associated with high modern art.[13] St. Denis nurtured these developments. St. Denis' her own self-promotion and efforts to elevate dance's status above cheap entertainment profoundly impacted the status of dance in America.

In her earliest performances, Ruth St. Denis danced under the pseudonym "Radha," collapsing her personal identity with her stage presence. However, her mother quickly realized this would limit the scope of her daughter's career. In an exchange recorded in her autobiography, St. Denis' mother stated, "Up until now we've called you Radha. But as you're going to do other things, I think we ought to use your own name. After all, you are an American dancer, and not an East Indian."[14] St. Denis was the name Belasco called Ruthie Dennis, a reflection of her stoicism, piety, and an appropriation of the Basilica of Saint Denis north of Paris. This exotic twist to her name obscured the dancer's American roots and

[11] St. Denis, *An Unfinished Life*, 66.
[12] David Monod, *Vaudeville and the Making of Modern Entertainment, 1890-1925* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2020).
[13] On the connections between dance and modernism, see Ramsay Burt and Michael Huxley, *Dance, Modernism, and Modernity* (New York: Routledge, 2020); Susan Jones, *Literature, Modernism & Dance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013); Carrie J. Preston, "Introduction: Modernism and Dance," *Modernist Cultures* 9, no. 1 (2014): 1-6; Julie Townsend, *The Choreography of Modernism in France: La Danseuse, 1830-1930* (New York: Routledge, 2010).
[14] St. Denis, *An Unfinished Life*, 68.

shrouded her in mystery. Upon St. Denis's mother's recommendation, the title stuck and was an act of commercially strategic self-fashioning. Linked to solidifying her presence as a serious dancer rather than popular performer, St. Denis assumed a new identity and officially adopted the title "Ruth St. Denis" shortly after her debut solo appearance in New York.

St. Denis began attracting the attention of other artists in these early days of her solo career. John Sloan, his wife Dolly, and Robert Henri attended a matinee performance of St. Denis at Proctor's theater on February 15, 1906. Sloan noted in his diary, "Saw 'Radha' 'Hindoo barefoot dance of the senses.' It is done by a friend of one or two of his [Henri's] girl students at the N.Y. School of Art. It was very good."[15] While Sloan unfortunately does not elaborate on his experience and reaction to seeing St. Denis on stage, the remarks are illuminating. Sloan's comments indicate the intersections of multiple artistic communities in early-twentieth century New York City. St. Denis' friendship with Henri's female art students connected her to mainstream currents in American art.[16] In addition to connecting St. Denis to American fine arts, Sloan's comment reveals something about the relationship between Henri and his students. It was upon their recommendation that Henri and Sloan arrived at Proctor's Theater to witness St. Denis dance. This suggests a reciprocity and multidirectional flow of influence not regularly acknowledged between Henri as a teacher and his women students. Henri encouraged his students to explore the streets, lecture halls, theaters, and concert venues of New York City; they encouraged and expected him to do the same.

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[15] John Sloan Diaries, 1906-1913, February 15, 1906, John Sloan Manuscript Collection, Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives, Delaware Art Museum, https://delart.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/John-Sloan-Diaries-1906-to-1913.pdf.

[16] In 1906, William Merritt Chase, who founded the school in 1896, and Robert Henri both taught at the New York School of Art. They often taught the same students, leading to an infamous rift between the two instructors the following year. See Kimberly Orcutt, "Painterly Controversy: William Merritt Chase and Robert Henri," *Antiques and Fine Art* (Spring 2007): 180-184.

Henri recorded his perspective and response to St. Denis' early New York solo performance in his daybook, which he contributed to with far less reliability than his friend John Sloan, a prolific diarist and documentarian of everyday life. Henri wrote enthusiastically:

> Saw Miss Dennis do her 'Rhada' dance (hindoo) at Proctors 23d St. This is her first engagement with the dance. The public is not certain but it looks as if it may take to her—she has the genius for the dance.[17]

St. Denis' 1906 performance was enough to spark Henri's interest in the dancer for the long-term, and he began following her career. Returning to his February entry in December 1906 he added in the unoccupied space on the opposite page: "It is interesting that since her little 'artistic' success and popular failure in N.Y. Miss St. Denis has figured successfully and has been more or less a sensation in Europe. London. Paris."[18]

Performing Otherness

Ruth St. Denis built her career on cultural appropriation, and her rise took place against a backdrop of xenophobia and widespread racism and violence towards Asian-Americans, among other immigrants and minorities in the United States.[19] White audiences' acclaim for St. Denis' performances was in part due to the fact she herself was white. St. Denis' racial identity helped to make her performances of Indian-inspired dances socially acceptable. Dance historian Priya Srinivasan and others have argued that cultural appropriation became a means for "white bourgeois women" to resist "patriarchal dominance" and to claim "cultural citizenship" in their fight for suffrage and for agency in

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[17] Robert Henri Papers, February 15, 1906, microfilm roll 885, frame 198, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C.
[18] Henri Papers, microfilm roll 885, frame 198.
[19] Passed in 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act exerted unprecedented control at the federal level over immigration. Decades later, the 1917 Immigration Act expanded the sweep of the Chinese Exclusion Act, thereby closing United States to further countries, including India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. See Angelo N. Ancheta, *Race, Rights, and the Asian American Experience* (New Brunswick: Rutgers

the public sphere.[20] As St. Denis and other non-cultural representatives performed otherness on stage, visual culture reinforced their inaccurate, racialized impersonations and contributed to the problematic essentializing of non-white cultures.

St. Denis claimed her primary source of cultural information and inspiration came through visual sources. Isadora Duncan, characterized in relation to St. Denis, found similar inspiration in ancient Greek sculpture and pottery.[21] While these assertions were exaggerated, St. Denis' reliance upon visual imagery and acknowledgement of its power helps elucidate the interest she took in her own image.[22] Reinterpreting static images of "exotic" cultures, St. Denis claimed to breathe life into the "Orient." She capitalized on the popularity of eastern-inspired aesthetics and an American fascination with non-western cultures by essentializing the "other" into the visual realm.

Highly problematic by twenty-first century standards, at the beginning of the twentieth century, St. Denis fashioned herself as a conduit for Asian culture, reinterpreting and repackaging it for popular consumption. Rather than accurately representing Asian cultures as she claimed (especially in the early days of her career), St. Denis herself reproduced a limited vision often framed by her personal reactions and interpretation, rather than historical specificity.

Sloan's assertion that Henri discovered St. Denis by way of his women students is supported by Henri's choice of words in his daybook. In 1906, St. Denis was performing

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University Press, 2006); Erika Lee, *America for Americans: A History of Xenophobia in the United States* (New York: Basic Books, 2019).

[20] Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris*, 69-73.

[21] Samuel N. Dorf, "Dancing Greek Antiquity in Private and Public: Isadora Duncan's Early Patronage in Paris," *Dance Research Journal* 44, no. 1 (Summer 2012): 16. See also Ann Daly, *Done Into Dance: Isadora Duncan in America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

[22] St. Denis wrote in her autobiography, "My intense interest in India had sent me into the byways of New York and I collected a little company, which used to meet I our flat to rehearse two or three times a week. They were of all varieties—Hindus, Moslems, Buddhists…. They would sit on the floor and answer in a chorus the questions I flung at them." Several of these men performed on tour with her between 1909 and 1914. St. Denis, *An Unfinished Life*, 56. See also Srinivasan, *Sweating Saris,* 83-102.

under the stage name “Radha.” By calling her by her given name, “Dennis,” Henri reveals an informal familiarity with the dancer and his knowledge of her not through the theater or press, but through St. Denis’ own, largely female social networks. Following his first encounter with St. Denis on stage, Henri’s source for knowledge of her career shifted from informal networks amongst his art students to the international press. Using her recently established stage name—St. Denis—Henri acknowledged her self-presentation and shifting subjectivity in light of her emerging celebrity and an international stage career.

Throughout his career, Henri recruited dancers to act as models or, more frequently, to pose dressed in dazzling costumes associated with their leading roles.[23] For example, Jessica Penn, a Ziegfeld Follies performer, was among Henri’s favorite models throughout the first decade of the twentieth century. In *Jessica Penn in Black with White Plumes* (1908), Penn’s confident deportment exposed her training as a dancer (fig. 4.3). Traveling to Spain, Henri became enamored with Spanish dancers like Milagros Moreno (*La Reina Mora,* 1906) and Josefa Cruz (*La Madrileñita*, 1910), of whom he painted six canvases in several different costumes (figs. 4.4-4.5). Many of Henri’s paintings of dancers are not intended as traditional portraits but are instead better classified as pictures in which Henri employs dancers as professional models.[24] The dancers’ brightly colored costumes accented with fringe, embroidery, sequins, and gemstones were a key component and extension of the exoticism embodied through their performances on stage. These paintings, many of which are life-size, demonstrate Henri’s technical prowess as an artist rather than capture the expression and

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[23] Two notable slightly earlier examples of this type of portrait include *La Carmencita* (1890, Musée d’Orsay) by John Singer Sargent and *Carmencita* (1890, Metropolitan Museum of Art) by William Merritt Chase.
[24] Within European art history, there is a long tradition of employing prostitutes and theatrical performers as models. See Karolien de Chippel, Katharina van Cauteren, and Katlijne Van der Stighelen, eds., *The Nude and the Norm in the Early Modern Low Countries* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011); Jill Berk Jiminiez and Joanna Banham, eds., *Dictionary of Artists’ Models* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Marie Lathers, *Bodies of Art: French Literary Realism and the Artist’s Model* (Omaha: University of Nebraska Press, 2001); Susan Waller, *The Invention of the Model: Artists and Models in Paris, 1830-1870* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

individuality of his models. In other words, Henri is most interested in surface rendered as sensual and exotic rather than psychological depth.

Among his paintings of dancers, *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance* shares the greatest compositional similarities with Henri's *Salome Dancer* (1909), although the context and sentiment of the two paintings are radically different as discussed shortly (fig. 4.6).[25] The model for *Salome Dancer* was Mademoiselle Voclezca.[26] Voclezca stands astride and exudes confidence as she gazes directly at the viewer. Her nose tips haughtily upwards. Her abdomen is bare and her legs tantalizingly visible through a gossamer fabric. She holds a sheer pink veil with her jeweled fingers. Voclezca's cheeks are red, and her flesh radiates the warmth of physical exertion—a sharp contrast to Henri's depiction of St. Denis' icy body. Both *Salome Dancer* and *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance* represent modern dancers in similar costumes, yet the *Salome Dancer* is highly sexual, and Ruth St. Denis actively deflects sensuality, in part by ignoring the viewer's presence. St. Denis' total absorption in her dance sharply contrasts Voclezca's overt awareness of her audience and her active display of her body.

Unlike *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance*, which represented a specific individual, *Salome Dancer* was not a portrait but instead a picture of a popular cultural icon sweeping the United States and Europe. The obsession with Salome reached epic proportions in the first decade of the twentieth century and was dubbed "Salomania" by the *New York Times*.[27] Inspiration for Henri's *Salome Dancer* arose from the notoriety of Richard Strauss' 1905

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[25] A second version of Henri's *Salome* is in the collection of the John and Mable Ringing Museum of Art, Sarasota, Florida.
[26] Bennard B. Perlman, *Robert Henri: Painter* (Wilmington: Delaware Art Museum, 1994), 101.
[27] "The Call of Salome: Rumors that Salomnia will Have a Free Hand this Season," *New York Times*, August 16, 1908, 4. Henri submitted Voclezca's portrait to the National Academy of Design's 1910 spring annual exhibition, where it was rejected more likely for the commercial appeal of its subject matter as "Salomania" or the Salome dance craze swept New York than for Voclezca's sensual and partially nude body. Rebecca Zurier, Robert W. Snyder, and Virginia Mecklenburg, *Metropolitan Lives: The Ashcan Artists and Their New York* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1995), 19.

opera *Salome,* based upon Oscar Wilde's 1891 play and the biblical figure who demanded the head of John the Baptist. After being banned in London and other cities, the United States premiere of Strauss' *Salome* took place on January 22, 1907 at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, with the ballerina Bianca Froelich performing the very sexy *Dance of the Seven Veils* while soprano Olive Fremstad sang the title role. The production was shut down after a single performance when Louisa Morgan Satterlee, the daughter of J.P. Morgan who was on the Met's board of trustees, raised objections to the opera's salacious content.[28]

Also in 1907, the Canadian-born dancer Maud Allan began performing *The Vision of Salome* in Berlin and later at the Palace Theatre in London.[29] Dancer Gertrude Hoffman, sponsored by theater tycoon Oscar Hammerstein's son Willie, traveled to London to watch Allan perform and copied Allan's Salome for American audiences upon her return to the United States.[30] Hoffman's rendition of Salome premiered on July 9, 1908 at Hammerstein's Victoria Theatre. (Hoffman was arrested for indecency as part of a publicity stunt, which further popularized her scandalous performance.)[31] Salome was not limited to celebrity performers and prestigious venues. In October of 1908, there were twenty-four Salome dancers on the vaudeville circuit alone.[32] The second U.S. production of Strauss' opera took place in 1909 by Oscar Hammerstein's Manhattan Opera Company—a rival to the

[28] Larry Hamberlin, "Visions of Salome: The Femme Fatale in American Popular Songs before 1920," *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 59, no. 3 (Fall 2006): 634. For addition discussions on Salome in popular culture, see Toni Bentley, *Sisters of Salome* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Richard Bizot, "The Turn-of-the-Century Salome Era: High-and Pop-Culture Variations on the Dance of the Seven Veils," *Choreography and Dance* 2, no. 3 (1992): 71-87; Davinia Caddy, "Variations on the Dance of the Seven Veils," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 17, no. 1 (March 2015): 37-58; Deborah Jowitt, *Time and the Dancing Image* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989); Udo Kultermann, "The 'Dance of the Seven Veils.' Salome and Erotic Culture around 1900," *Artibus et Historiae* 27, no. 53 (2006): 187-215; Daria Santini, "'That invisible dance.' Reflections on the 'Dance of the Seven Veils' in Richard Strauss's 'Salome,'" *Dance Research: The Journal of the Society for Dance Research* (Winter 2011): 233-245; Judith R. Walkowitz, "The 'Vision of Salome': Cosmopolitanism and Erotic Dancing in Central London, 1908-1918," *The American Historical Review* 108, no. 2 (April 2003): 337-376.
[29] Hamberlin, "Visions of Salome," 651
[30] Hamberlin, "Visions of Salome," 651
[31] Hamberlin, "Visions of Salome," 652

Metropolitan Opera—and starred Mary Garden, who sang and danced.[33] In contrast to *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance*, with Ruth St. Denice performing her leading role, Henri did not depict Maud Allan or Mary Garden as Salome. Henri's *Salome Dancer* was anonymous and intended to be a composite of the well-known turn-of-the-twentieth century Salome-type figure. By painting *Salome Dancer,* Henri hoped to capitalize on a contemporary cultural moment.

Salome Dancer and *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance* were both exotic paintings but drew their exoticism from different sources, the later painting engaging more significantly with Orientalism. For *Salome Dancer,* the exoticism of the painting relied upon the sexuality of the partially nude female figure. With St. Denis, exoticism came by way of Orientalism and St. Denis' reliance upon the motif of the peacock, which was strongly identified with Indian culture and oriental aesthetics and design.[34] *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance* was a flashy portrait and sensual, but not sexual. The dance itself was artistic, even philosophical as St. Denis came to embody the form of a male peacock. St. Denis' vision for dance was spiritual. She wrote in her autobiography, "I believe my path of vision for the dance, in leaving the lowlands of mere aestheticism and entertainment for the clear, austere summits of spiritual revolution, will come to pass; not because I say so, but because the vertical line is always the line of progress."[35] While *Salome Dancer* and *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance* share compositional similarities, the two paintings represented very different subjects and aspirations for dance.

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[32] Bentley, *Sisters of Salome*, 39; George Dorris, "Dance and the New York Opera War, 1906-1912," *Dance Chronicle* 32, no. 2 (2009): 195-262.
[33] Hamberlin, "Visions of Salome," 670. St. Denis performed a version of the *Dance of the Seven Veils*, too, but it was part of a broad repertoire of dances. St. Denis' participation in "Salomania" indicates she was attentive to popular taste and willing to capitalize on the popularity of Salome to push her larger agenda for theatrical dance. See Helen Thomas, *Dance, Modernity, and Culture: Explorations in the Sociology of Dance* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 77.
[34] Bartholomew F. Bland and Laura Vookles, eds., *Strut: The Peacock and Beauty in Art* (Yonkers: Hudson River Museum, 2014).

Henri recognized the distinction between St. Denis and his paintings of other dancers. Following the completion of St. Denis' portrait, Henri wrote to Frank Crowinshield, the influential editor of *Vanity Fair*. Henri praised the range of St. Denis' abilities as a "philosopher, a humanist and a very fine actress" and lamented the limited support she received. Henri encouraged Crowinshield to support artists like St. Denis and elevate her above vaudeville. He wrote, "Aren't there enough people in New York who appreciate the art of gesture and pantomime to make it go—a pure art needs backing—can't you inspire some backers into action?"[36] From his comments, Henri's respect and admiration for St. Denis' work as an artist is clear. He saw her as an artist, inventing new forms of creative expression through her gestures.

In order to differentiate herself among the proliferation of modern dancers and other performers, Ruth St. Denis focused on creating original choreography, and through her inventive choreography and dazzling performances, she succeeded in distinguishing herself as a distinct stage personality. St. Denis charted new territory for modern dance through an avant-garde vocabulary of kinesthetic movement and choreography that emphasized the visual components of dance over the muscular, temporal, spatial, or rhythmic. As she immodestly wrote in her autobiography:

> In claiming my share of the word 'pioneer' I would like to state that… I first opened vaudeville to the classic dance; at the Hudson [Theater] it first invaded the legitimate theater; at Martin Leonard's open-air theater at Mount Kisco, in 1913, the modern world of out-of-door dancing began, followed by many performances in stadiums all over the country.[37]

[35] St. Denis, *An Unfinished Life*, 195.
[36] Robert Henri to Frank Crowinshield, 6 May 1919, box 3, folder 69, Robert Henri Papers, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University.
[37] St. Denis, *An Unfinished Life,* 195.

Emphasizing a number of milestones for dance, St. Denis centered these accomplishments on her own performances. Throughout her career, St. Denis advocated for the seriousness of dance as an embodied art form and for the significance of her legacy within those histories.

Henri's reintroduction to St. Denis preceding her non-commissioned portrait may have come by way of another dancer he painted numerous times throughout his career by the name of Betalo Rubino (see Chapter 3). Rubino, a Spanish-born dancer, first appeared in Henri's portraits around 1908, when she posed as the model for *Dancer in a Yellow Shawl* (c. 1908, fig. 4.7). Rubino is the model for a number of Henri's nudes, such as *Betalo Nude* (1916), and his full-length standing portrait, *Betalo Rubino, Dramatic Dancer* (1916, figs., 4.8-4.9). To great acclaim, Henri painted her as the *Dancer of Delhi* (1916), a full-length portrait of the dancer posed as an odalisque in an exotic orientalist costume discussed in the previous chapter (fig. 4.10). Rubino's Spanish heritage was known to Henri, but it was her convincing performance of Indian culture that most interested him. St. Denis, as an American dancer, held similar appeal. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* praised *Dancer of Delhi* as "very stunning… which for richness, purity and brilliancy of color, even Robert Henri has seldom equaled and certainly never surpassed. The flesh painting in the semi-nude torso is a delight, and Henri may be congratulated upon a masterpiece."[38] The performance of *The Dancing Girl of Delhi* appeared on the vaudeville circuit the same year as Henri's portrait and was produced by St. Denis' brother "Buzz." Sadie Vanderhoff, known as Vanda Hof, a former Denishawn dancer, was cast in the leading role with Betalo Rubino accompanying her.[39]

Beyond providing a link between Henri and St. Denis, Rubino's relationship with Henri elucidates his interest in modern dancers. In 1915, Henri noted in his daybook, "Betalo Rubino rehearsal at Union Sqr theatre…. At request stopped to give suggestions as to accent

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[38] "Younger Artists' Display," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 17, 1916, 27.
[39] St. Denis, *An Unfinished Life*, 184.

of postures, entry and exits, etc. etc."[40] Rubino's solicitation for Henri to "give suggestions" indicates her eagerness to elevate modern dance to equal status to painting and her respect for Henri as an authority in matters of art. Instead of Rubino serving a muse for Henri's nudes and portraiture, Henri becomes a muse for Rubino's dance, upending artistic hierarchies and gender norms. Rubino's request emphasizes the synergy between dance and painting, with the two mediums drawing inspiration from one another.

The appeal of dancers to Henri was two-fold. Henri was attracted by dancers' movement, especially by what he called "gesture." Henri was not alone in his interest in "gesture," which emerged out of turn-of-the century body cultures, such as Delsartism, of which St. Denis and Isadora Duncan were both familiar. Within Delsartism, every gesture was imbued with specific meaning.[41] Of modern dancer Isadora Duncan Henri wrote that she is "perhaps one of the greatest masters of gesture the world has ever seen, carries us through a universe in a single movement of her body. Her hand alone held aloft becomes a shape of infinite significance."[42] According to Henri, Duncan was able to communicate powerful messages through the delicate yet simple articulation of her limbs. Henri felt a connection between the embodied nature of dance and painting. The artistic gesture of a dancer's limb found its parallel in the swift stroke of a charged paint brush across canvas, which registered the feelings of the artist towards their subject. "Gesture, the most ancient form of expression—of communication between living creatures. A language we have almost lost," Henri wrote in *The Art Spirit*.[43] Although expressed through different mediums, gesture as an

[40] Henri Papers, May 8, 1915, microfilm roll 886, frame 677.
[41] Robin Veder, *The Living Line: Modern Art and the Economy of Energy* (Dartmouth: Dartmouth College Press, 2015), 59. See also Robin Veder, "The Expressive Efficiencies of American Delsarte and Mensendieck Body Culture," *Modernism/modernity* 17, no. 4 (November 2010): 819-838.
[42] Robert Henri, *The Art Spirit: Notes, Articles, Fragments of Letters and Talks to Students, Bearing on the Concept and Technique of Picture Making, the Study of Art Generally, and on Appreciation* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 52.
[43] Henri, *The Art Spirit,* 187.

artistic maneuver created a sense of common ground between painting and dance; dancers, given their fluency in gesture, were highly appealing subjects to Henri.

Another important appeal of dance to Henri was its association with modernity. Participatory social dances and choreographed performances in the form of classical ballet existed prior to the dawn of the twentieth century, but the advent of modern dance signaled the coming of an artform contemporaries felt was characteristic of modernity. Sadakichi Hartmann, an eccentric art critic of Japanese and German descent discussed later in this chapter, summarized the differences between ballet and modern dance in an important 1914 article in *The Forum*:

> The old ballet was calligraphic, obeying certain set formulae and canons of beauty: the modern dance resembles individual handwriting, which is willful and impressionistic…. [Modern dancers] have invented a new code of natural movements, of steps and alluring sways of limb and body, derived from classical examples, paintings, and statuary, Delsartean studies and reminiscences of national, historical and religious dances. Their movements are more plastic, less academic and acrobatic, but deprived of set forms not necessarily more expressive.[44]

According to Hartmann, modern dance promoted less restrictive movement and expressions of the body; it looked and felt wildly different than ballet. Art historians and early dance critics Charles and Caroline Caffin wrote in 1912, "The Dance Spirit is awakening, not as a passing fad of the moment, but as a vigorous, vital element of our modern life."[45] In the early decades of the twentieth century, dance emerged as a distinctly modern form of expression.

By painting dancers like Betalo Rubino and Ruth St. Denis, Henri presented himself as a modern artist. Significantly, both St. Denis' dance and Henri's realist subject depict the modern subject outside of a modernist framework. According to dance historian Sally Banes, "The movement we call modern dance was never 'modernist' in the Greenbergian sense. That is, unlike the reflexive work of modernist painters and sculptures, historical modern

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[44] Sadakichi Hartmann, "Black Butterflies," *The Forum* 51 (February 1914): 299.

dance never revealed its own essence as an art form."[46] Henri nevertheless capitalized on St. Denis' articulation of modernity, if not modernism, in order to grant himself access. Henri's painterly style remained consistent and firmly grounded in realism.[47] The focus in the portrait shifted from the painter's status as modern, to the subject. Henri could paint St. Denis in a realist style and still claim to depict modernity through a modern subject.

Dance synthesized contemporary interest in the body and motion. These ideas were codified across other mediums, including painting, as evidenced by two diverse submissions to the Armory Show in 1913. Robert Henri's *Figure in Motion* (1913) and Duchamp's *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2* (1912) captured radically different yet sympathetic responses to modernity, motion, and the body (figs. 4.11-4.12). In Henri's painting, a nude female figure rendered through realistic but expressive brushwork steps forward with her left arm gently extended from her body. Her legs are crossed. The motion Henri captures is multiplanar, moving left to right and front to back as his model and the space around her is transposed onto the two-dimensional plane of the canvas.

In addition to the qualities of her movement, the physical characteristics of Henri's subject suggested modernity. While the specific identity of Henri's subject remains unknown, Henri's brief description in his notebooks reads: "Nude of Jewish Girl black hair. Brown skin." Prior to deciding to title the painting *Figure in Motion*, Henri instead considered "Orientale," a contemporary synonym for Jewish.[48] The figure's features enabled

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[45] Charles H. Caffin and Caroline Caffin, *Dancing and Dancers of Today: The Modern Revival of Dancing as an Art* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1912), 301.
[46] Sally Banes, *Writing Dance in the Age of Postmodernism* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1994), 312.
[47] For a concise analysis of abstraction's association with modernism and the historical antecedents of antirealism, see Linda Nochlin, "The Realist Criminal and the Abstract Law," pts. 1 and 2, *Art in America* 61, no. 5 (1973): 54-61; no. 6 (1973): 97-103.
[48] Anna-Dorothea Ludewig and Axel Stähler, *Orientalism, Gender, and the Jews: Literary and Artistic Transformations of European National Discourses* (Oldenbourg: De Gruyter, 2014); Bennard Perlman – Robert Henri Papers, Series I: Before 1890 – 1918, folder 1913, Helen Farr Sloan Library & Archives, Delaware Art Museum.

Henri to project a vague and non-descript exoticism upon his painting. By changing the title, Henri subverted discussions of ethnicity, choosing instead to embed them within the painting's visual presence rather than more explicitly through its title within an exhibition context. Given her deportment, it seems highly probable the subject of Henri's *Figure in Motion* was a dancer or had some exposure to modern dance, thus directly inspiring the composition and titling of Henri's painting. According to historian Julia L. Foulkes, Jewish women made significant contributions to the development of modern dance, especially in New York, which was home to the largest Jewish population in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century.[49] The subject of Henri's *Figure in Motion* was suggestive of a specific figure—that of a dancer, whose kinesthetic motion contributed to a reconfiguring of the relationship between the physical body and modernity.

In *Nude Descending a Staircase, No. 2,* the more infamous of the two paintings, Duchamp's figure is androgynous and shown in profile. Reminiscent of Muybridge's motion studies, the articulation of movement is laid bare across Duchamp's canvas in a fragmented, distorted, and jumbled composition. Depicting the figure's movement through space and time, Duchamp flattens space into jagged lines, sharp edges, and partial circles suggestive of a figural mass descending a spiral staircase. Nudity is suggested through color rather than form, ranging from mocha to ivory. Duchamp obfuscates gender, often explicit in other nudes, such as Henri's *Figure in Motion.* Predominately angular and lanky, the nude is androgynous. The blocks of color between the nude's legs suggest the blurring of perception in relative to motion. While the figure's torso seems flat, the area in closest proximity to the pelvis and buttocks is decidedly curvaceous. Curves and arcs, suggesting motion, rush across the canvas. They also impregnate the painting with a sense of fecundity, both through the

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[49] Julia L. Foulkes, "Angels 'Rewolt!': Jewish Women in Modern Dance in the 1930s," *American Jewish History* 88, no. 2 (June 2000): 233-252.

abstracted nude figure itself and the robust potential for multifaceted interpretations. Painted at a historical moment when gender roles and identities were heavily prescribed, Duchamp's painting turns nudity upside down. *Nude Descending a Staircase* introduced themes Duchamp explored in greater depth as his career progressed. He continued to interrogate issues of gender, identity, and representation, most notably through his female alter ego, Rrose Sélavy.[50]

Figure in Motion and *Nude Descending a Staircase* exemplify two distinct artistic responses to modern movement. Henri's response is a modern one, while Duchamp is more aptly described as modernist through its experimentation with form. Duchamp is frequently used to chart a genealogy of modernism; however, *Figure in Motion* illustrates that the formalist construction of modernism was not predetermined. Henri focuses attention on the figure and her movement through space. *Figure in Motion* is a realist response to depicting a modern subject in motion.[51] Duchamp, on the other hand, is engrossed in articulating movement itself, flattening the figure to focus upon the action. There were many paths within modernism.

St. Denis, Dance, and Photography

Dance's impermanence created a representational challenge for the visual arts. More robust than everyday motion, dance carried with it rhythm, color, and meaning. The

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[50] Amelia Jones, "'Clothes Make the Man': The Male Artist as a Performative Function," *Oxford Art Journal* 18, no. 2 (1995): 22. For a discussion of Duchamp and his career, see Jacquelynn Baas, *Marcel Duchamp and the Art of Life* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2019); Pontus Hultén, ed., *Marcel Duchamp: Work and Life* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1993); Rudolf Kuenzli and Francis M. Naumann, eds., *Marcel Duchamp: Artist of the Century* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1990); Jarrold E. Seigel, *The Private Worlds of Marcel Duchamp: Desire, Liberation, and the Self in Modern Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).
[51] Thomas Eakins's *Wrestlers* (1899, Los Angeles County Museum of Art) expresses modernity through a related disruption of space. See Bruce Robertson, "Paired Perspectives: Thomas Eakins's *Wrestlers* and the Practice of Art," *American Art* 23, no. 3 (Fall 2009): 89. Henri student Morgan Russell exemplifies a radically different path towards modernism, while simultaneously revering Michelangelo and drawing inspiration from Michelangelo in his paintings. See Michael Leja, "Cubism in Bondage: Morgan Russell's Synchromism," *American Art* 29, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 42-63.

abovementioned critic Sadakichi Hartmann (who also wrote extensively on photography, discussed shortly), poetically described the ephemerality of dance:

> Dancing is the most fleeting of all arts. It is like perfume, fugitive like the odor of fading roses, unsteady like words of love that youth whispers into willing ears. Nothing remains. It is naught but a flash of color, a sudden movement, the twinkling of limbs, the evanescent attitude—a momentary feast for the eye. For one moment it is all motion, joy, ecstasy, delirium, thereupon merely an intangible souvenir.[52]

Earlier in his essay Hartmann expressed the qualities of dance that made its representation viable. It was still possible to represent the dancer, if not the dance.[53] Hartmann defined dancing as "a scripture of corporeal forms against space, of blurred ever-changing silhouettes against some unobtrusive scenery, and within these contours a rhythmic display of lines, shapes and colors."[54] The "blurred ever-changing silhouettes" of dancers, although fleeting, could be represented. Dance was inherently the most embodied of art forms. The expressive body became the medium for modern dance and through motion, revealed artistic labor and process in ways that painting could not. While motion could not be recorded in a static image, the body was a prime subject and bore evidence of dance's movement.

Embodied yet ephemeral, dance was nevertheless highly visual. St. Denis wrote, "I want to bring home the fact that dancing is essentially a visual art. Its appeal is primarily to the eye."[55] Emphasizing the visual components of dance made St. Denis both an attractive portrait subject and dependent upon portraiture to accommodate the ephemerality of dance. Dance required an intermediary to represent the art form beyond the stage and into the world. That preferred medium was photography.[56] Modern dance and photography burst onto the popular scene in the final decades of the nineteenth century as quintessentially modern forms

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[52] Hartman, "Black Butterflies," 301.
[53] For an interesting discussion of the relationship of dance to still photography see Matthew Reason, "Still Moving: The Revelation or Representation of Dance in Still Photography," *Dance Research Journal* 35/36, no. 1/2 (Winter 2003-Summer 2004): 43-67.
[54] Hartman, "Black Butterflies," 299.
[55] Ruth St. Denis, "The Independent Art of the Dance," *Theatre Arts Monthly* (June 1924): 371.

of visual expression. A shared contemporality made dance an attractive subject for photographers and photography a favorite medium for dancers. Photography was accessible and affordable. Perhaps even more importantly, photography was reproducible, enabling dancers to inexpensively entice stage managers and potential funders, and to lure audiences visually when innovative performances defied easy description. For these reasons, dance and photography shared a close kinship as emerging means to record and express modernity.

Early in her career, St. Denis seized upon photography as an integral component of her creative process and a means to document her dances, stage sets, and costumes. In St. Denis' autobiography, she wrote, "The first thing I did when I got to San Francisco [while on tour for *Dubarry*] is probably the last thing I shall do before I go to a better world: I searched out a photographer."[57] St. Denis' appointment at the photographer's studio came at the conclusion of the *Dubarry* tour, which had plodded its way across the United States to California. Along the way, St. Denis choreographed *Egypta*, her dance inspired by the Egyptian Deities cigarette poster. The resulting photograph depicts St. Denis, seated on a makeshift thrown, impersonating the figure of Isis in the Egyptian Deities cigarette poster (fig. 4.13). St. Denis' comment hints at the frequency of her visits to photography studios throughout her career. It was a routine journey nearing ritualistic levels and closely aligned with her artistic practice as a dancer. More significantly, however, St. Denis' remarks connect photography with her ability to cultivate a sense of selfhood. Modern life necessitated photography. By aligning sitting for a photographer with the very state of being alive, St. Denis makes a powerful statement about her attitudes towards photography. To St. Denis, to be photographed was to be alive and to be seen as an artist. The photograph

[56] William A. Ewing, *The Fugitive Gesture: Masterpieces of Dance Photography* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994).
[57] St. Denis*, An Unfinished Life*, 53.

becomes a portal through which St. Denis gains access to her audience as well as a reflection of herself.

Photography helped St. Denis promote and generate interest in the visual spectacles she performed on stage. As she toured across the United States, photographs were printed in regional papers, giving local audiences a tantalizing taste of and aid to visualize new forms of artistic expression. In the first part of St. Denis' career and in the absence of dance critics, both sophisticated viewers and the general audience alike lacked the vocabulary and framework to adequately describe what they witnessed on stage.[58] One contemporary viewer responded by stating:

> What is most needed by Miss St. Denis is some one [sic] to prepare adequate program material for the audience to follow the stage. This at least will permit them to speak intelligently regarding her act after they have witnessed it and will give them an opportunity to appear as though they were real high-brows and knew all about the art of symbolic dancing, and it will add much to the effectiveness of her offering.[59]

Early audiences often lacked the vocabulary to effectively summarized the meaning and significance of St. Denis' performances.

While the expressive movements of St. Denis could not be completely communicated via photography, photography created an entry point for viewers. By 1910s, photography was a more familiar medium than modern dance to early-twentieth century audiences. A static, black and white image conjured up traces of St. Denis' performances. Disseminating her performances by way of photography became among the best strategies to communicate her vision to curious audiences. As a teacher, St. Denis "especially emphasized" the importance of photography to her students, "because I believe that good pictures of the dancer are a

[58] St. Denis' performances in the first quarter of the twentieth century predated the emergence of dance critics. Throughout their long careers, St. Denis and her husband Ted Shawn were instrumental in encouraging this nascent thread of art criticism.
[59] "New Acts this Week: Ruth St. Denis and Co." *Variety* 53, no. 10 (January 31, 1919): 22.

necessity of her career."[60] St. Denis built her career through performance and portraiture, often photography.

To a different extent, Robert Henri used commercial portrait photography to promote his own career. The advances in printing technologies at the turn of the twentieth century made it easier to reproduce photographs in newspapers. Henri and his colleagues were among the first artists to utilize photography to create public personas for themselves.[61] Featured alongside reproductions of his paintings, Henri's embrace of commercial portrait photography gave an eager public a glimpse of Henri as an individual alongside reproductions of his paintings.

Among the most widely reproduced portrait of Henri was taken around 1907 by pictorialist photograph Gertrude Käsebier (fig. 4.14).[62] This portrait, along with Käsebier's portraits of "The Eight," was included in Mary Fanton Roberts' *The Craftsman* magazine article publicizing the 1908 MacBeth Gallery exhibition.[63] Käsebier's portrait of Henri defies easy description. Henri faces to his left and seems to perch upright on a stool, with one leg visible at a ninety-degree angle. His right arm is akimbo and his right hand is dramatically silhouetted against his dark suiting. In the opposite hand, he grasps his hat with the crown facing outward. Gathered behind the hat are an overcoat, much of it obscured from view, and the head of a walking stick. Henri's visible accessories gesture towards his active public life and engagement with the modern urban environment. While much of his body appears in profile, Henri's face is turned towards the camera and his head is tipped slightly forward. Henri's gaze is averted. Käsebier crisply captures the imperfections and wrinkles of Henri's

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[60] St. Denis, *An Unfinished Life*, 244.
[61] Alexis L. Boylan, *Ashcan Art, Whiteness, and the Unspectacular Man* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 50.
[62] Although Käsebier is associated with the Stieglitz circle, by 1907 Stiegliz was actively distancing himself from the female photographer. Boylan, *Ashcan Art,* 71. See also Barbara L. Michaels, *Gertrude Käsebier: The Photographer and Her Photographs* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1992).

face. The portrait is dignified, yet ambiguous. Käsebier nor Henri give any indication of Henri's occupation. Nevertheless, the cleanly dressed figure in Käsebier's portrait is headed places.

While Ruth St. Denis and Robert Henri both utilized photography to create public personas, the stakes of their photographic portraits were markedly different. For Henri, photographic portraits supplemented reproductions of his artwork and accompanying exhibition reviews. Henri's portraits added a personal note and served as a means to connect his artwork to an individual. For Ruth St. Denis, photography served both marketing and self-reflective purposes. In absence of language to accurately describe St. Denis' performances, photography became a significant marketing tool to entice audiences. On a didactic level, photographic portraits enabled St. Denis to step outside her performance and get a sense of the visual effect generated for audiences. St. Denis almost always appears in costume, collapsing her public and private identities into one.[64] The embodied nature of dance lent itself to the construction of a singular identity for St. Denis—as a performer—through portraiture.

The Peacock Dance

The Peacock Dance was originally conceived by St. Denis in London in 1910 during an improvisation session with the composer Edmund Roth.[65] Several years passed before St. Denis debuted the work in June 1914 in Ravinia Park in Chicago during an outdoor

[63] Mary Fanton Roberts [Giles Edgerton, pseud.], "The Younger American Painters: Are they Creating a National Art?" *The Craftsman* 13, no. 5 (February 1908): 512-532.
[64] Sadakichi Hartmann using his *nom de plume* Sidney Allan, criticized Evanston, IL based photographer Joseph Toloff's portrait photograph of St. Denis in streetwear for the absence of even "a slight suggestion of Oriental glamour" for which the dancer had become famous for on stage. "The ordinary street costume strikes us as a trifle prosaic," Hartmann wrote. See Sadakichi Hartmann [Sidney Allan, pseud.], "Looking for the Good Points," *Bulletin of Photography* 18, no. 448 (8 March 1916): 299.
[65] Suzanne Shelton, *Divine Dancer: A Biography of Ruth St. Denis* (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1981), 124-125.

performance with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Ted Shawn, St. Denis' husband and partner later wrote:

> The music for *The Peacock* was composed by Edmund Roth; it might properly be said to have been born of the dance, for the music was composed as Ruth St. Denis executed her movements. Dance and accompaniment, each reflecting the rhythm and grace of the other, thus became unity.[66]

St. Denis strutted, pranced, and sauntered along, mimicking the movements and postures of a peacock. As she moved, Roth composed his score in response to St. Denis' gestures. Music, to St. Denis, was secondary to the visual impressions made by the human body and its movements. Rather than subjecting the body to music, St. Denis sought ultimate freedom of expression, unrestrained by melodic strains. Shawn's genius for marketing and promotional biographical writings communicated St. Denis' lofty ideas for the general public.

The dance, although kinesthetically interesting, lacked the virtuosity of balletic movements. *The Peacock Dance* was slow and precise as St. Denis mimicked the movements of the bird of pride as she made her way around the stage. The dance's emphasis was on postures, rather than fluid movements. In other words, motion—a defining characteristic of modern dance—was suppressed. A contemporary reviewer wrote:

> When one says that Ruth. St. Denis dances, that is only part of the truth, for she is a many sided artist, and her posing, pantomiming and mimo-draming [sic] are as full of meaning and eloquence as her specific terpsichorean efforts…. Her portrayal of the peacock in the Indian legend was a powerful study in pantomime and facial expression…. The costumes and lighting effects were of particular attractiveness.[67]

St. Denis' peacock, therefore, was a departure from previous explorations in modern dance or "excessive agility of the body," to use Hartmann's language.[68] Melting from posture to posture, St. Denis' challenged contemporary definitions of dance grounded in motion and instead emphasized static poses. Drawing inspiration from nature, St. Denis sought to mimic

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[66] Shawn, *Pioneer and Prophet*, 1:66.
[67] "Ruth St. Denis Dances," *Musical Courier* 71, no. 26 (December 30, 1915): 27.
[68] Hartmann, "Black Butterflies," 300.

the peacock, rendering her interpretation realistic to nature while simultaneously abstracting human motion.

St. Denis performed *The Peacock Dance* into the 1920s and the dance (as well as St. Denis herself) experienced a revival in the 1940s, which coincided with the establishment of Jacob's Pillow, Ted Shawn's property and summer dance festival in the Berkshires of western Massachusetts. No recorded rehearsal or performance film footage of St. Denis in *The Peacock Dance* is known to survive, but the choreography is well-documented through photographs and newspaper reports. Although choreographed and largely performed as a solo piece, *The Peacock Dance* was a collaboration between St. Denis and Shawn, much of Shawn's contributions happening behind the scenes.

Initially, there was no narrative associated with *The Peacock Dance*, but Shawn felt St. Denis' mimetic movements were too abstract for audiences. Shawn invented the dance's narrative framework. A work of historical fiction, the narrative associations nevertheless brought a great aura of authenticity to the dance. Shawn wrote that the peacock who struts around "marble tombs of a Mohammedan cemetery" was an "incarnation of a beautiful woman," poisoned to death by a female rival in the rajah's court.[69] Not grounded in historical fact or Indian cultural heritage, the story of incarnation was invented in order to make St. Denis' creative expression and gestures more interesting to a general audience.

The costume of *The Peacock Dance* visually registered the dance's effect and was of equal importance to the choreography. As her career advanced, St. Denis depended upon the talents of Pearl Wheeler, a former student, to design, create, and repair her costumes.[70] However, during this period, St. Denis and her mother likely made the costume, consisting of a sequined bodice, leggings, and long train. By the 1940s, the peacock costume was quite

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[69] Shawn, *Pioneer and Prophet*, 1:65-66.
[70] St. Denis, *An Unfinished Life,* 201.

"bedraggled and filthy," leading another dancer, Barton Mumaw, to exclaim during a rehearsal, "Why, in heaven's name, doesn't she have that cleaned?" St. Denis replied, "Because, dear, in heaven's name it would fall apart!"[71] Repairs were made to the costume over time, but it was never replaced and remarkably survives in the Ruth St. Denis UCLA Costume Collection at Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival Archives in Becket, Massachusetts (fig. 4.15). The costume, like the dance itself, held sentimental value for St. Denis.

As mentioned, St. Denis debuted *The Peacock Dance* in Ravinia Park in Chicago in June 1914. By August 1914, she was married. From her 1939 autobiography, written years after the fact, St. Denis' struggled with the idea of marriage and her own sexuality are emotionally fresh. She wrote:

> Ted and I brought to the whole problem of marriage two fairly well-developed individuals. But in our attraction to each other, there were in reality four beings to be adjusted and unfolded. Four distinct people were found in the circle of our marriage. The masculine in me and the feminine in Ted were as much alive and needing to be expressed as the physical man and woman which the world saw.[72]

From the start of their marriage, St. Denis insisted upon a freer, more open relationship than monogamy occasioned.[73] Extramarital liaisons, however, often resulted in jealousy and conflict on the part of both St. Denis and Shawn, and although it seems St. Denis never acted upon her homosexual desires, both St. Denis and Shawn questioned St. Denis' sexual orientation.[74] While the couple did not live together after 1931, they never legally finalized a divorce, fearing negative consequences on their respective public images and careers.[75] It was under these circumstances—St. Denis' questioning of marriage, sexuality, and identity—

[71] Jane Sherman and Barton Mumaw, *Barton Mumaw, Dancer: From Denishawn to Jacob's Pillow and Beyond*, paperback edition (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 2000), 280.
[72] St. Denis, *An Unfinished Life*, 167.
[73] Paul A. Scolieri, *Ted Shawn: His Life, Writings, and Dances* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 79-81.
[74] Scolieri, *Ted Shawn,* 236, 457n135.
[75] Shelton, *Ruth St. Denis*, 280.

that she performed *The Peacock Dance* for the first time. The dance would remain a staple within her repertoire as she continued to negotiate these intimate details of her life.

With questions of sexuality at the center of St. Denis' personal life, I would like to suggest that a psychoanalytical reading of *The Peacock Dance* emerges. Between St. Denis and Shawn, Shawn was the greater champion of *The Peacock Dance* and partially responsible for its enduring legacy. He singled it out as "one of the most artistic dances of her career and one which everybody loved" within his two-volume tribute to his new wife entitled *Pioneer and Prophet* and published in 1920.[76] In his autobiography, *One Thousand and One Night Stands*, Shawn related how St. Denis acquired the elaborate headpiece for her peacock costume by plucking it off the hat of an unsuspecting Denishawn guest.[77] For their first wedding anniversary, Shawn also purchased a live peacock as a pet for his beloved, and St. Denis named the creature "Piadhi Morh."[78] The peacock quickly achieved fame in the local paper for his daring escape from the Denishawn grounds in Los Angeles and the hysterical efforts of bathing-suit-clad female students to return him home.[79] In multiple ways, Shawn worked to fashion *The Peacock Dance* into a legend indicated by the title the dance would later assume, *Legend of the Peacock*.

Performing *The Peacock Dance*, St. Denis mimicked in both movement and plumage, the gestures of a male peacock. The masculine gendering of her stage persona is significant, especially in light of Shawn's repeated praise and championing of the number. Shawn's interest in the masculine persona of St. Denis à la peacock suggests his private homosexuality and foreshadows his later homosexual relationships. For St. Denis, the dance created an arena through which she could explore the boundaries of her sexuality.

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[76] Shawn, *Pioneer and Prophet*, 1:65.
[77] Ted Shawn, *One Thousand and One Night Stands* (New York: Da Capo Press, Inc., 1979), 50-51.
[78] The name is possibly derived from an inaccurate translation of "My beloved" in Hindi.
[79] "Bathing-Suit Girls Chase Peacock," *Oakland Tribune*, May 2, 1915, 28.

Photographs of *The Peacock Dance*

Emerging at a significant moment in her personal life and career, *The Peacock Dance* exemplifies St. Denis' savvy manipulation of photography and builds upon her belief in dance as a primarily "visual art." Photography played a key role in visualizing dance. *The Peacock Dance's* choreography, costume, and ambivalence towards music effectively positioned it to be photographed. At least four photographers—Joseph Toloff, Arnold Genthe, Ira L. Hill, and one unknown photographer—photographed St. Denis in *The Peacock Dance* prior to Henri's full-length portrait in 1919. Photographs of the dance appeared in newspapers across the country. They were critiqued in emerging photography periodicals, celebrated in *Vanity Fair,* and used as promotional material by St. Denis and Shawn. These photographs created a corps of visual imagery that reinforced, extended, and complimented St. Denis' live performances of the dance. In their variety and circulation, photographs of St. Denis in *The Peacock Dance* competed with Henri's painted portrait.

Joseph D. Toloff, 1914

The earliest photographs of *The Peacock Dance* date to its debut in Ravinia Park in Chicago in 1914 and were taken by Russian-born photographer Joseph D. Toloff (figs. 4.16-4.20). Although he arrived in the United States several years prior, Toloff had only recently established his photography studio in the Chicago suburb of Evanston, Illinois, where he would become the city's leading photographer for decades.[80] Five photographs of St. Denis in *The Peacock Dance* by Toloff survive in the New York Public Library's collection. All are taken outdoors and in three, St. Denis seems to strut around the park's grounds. In a fourth photograph St. Denis kneels and in a fifth, she lies on her side as a modified odalisque, her legs obscured by the elaborate train of the costume. In each of Toloff's photographs, the

emphasis is on the costume and the peacock tail train frequently dominates the image. Within the dance, the train also played a major role: St. Denis' skillful and the inventive manipulation of the fabric was itself an essential component of the choreography much like Loie Fuller's skirt dances a decade earlier. The costume became an extension of the dancer and served to register St. Denis' movements, amplifying them and enabling them to ripple out into space beyond her physical body.[81]

When Toloff photographed St. Denis, he also photographed Ted Shawn and his dance partner Hilda Beyer.[82] It was Toloff's photographs of Shawn and Beyer that initially attracted attention in the Evanston community and by extension, the national press. Seeking to establish his reputation in Evanston as a gifted photographer and sophisticated consumer of culture, Toloff took the bold move of displaying Shawn and Beyer's photographs in his studio window. The dancers' "shy and flimsy habiliments" created alarm and caused Evanston residents to debate the division between "art and indecency."[83] As another commentator put it, "Everybody in Evanston has been around to take a look at them [the photographs], and incidentally everybody in Evanston knows the name of Toloff, photographer."[84] The publicity around Toloff's photographs attracted the attention of artistic circles.

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[80] Joseph D. Toloff (1888-1957) appears in a number of contemporary photography periodicals but has yet to receive scholarly attention.

[81] Loie Fuller and the skirt-dancing craze at the turn of the twentieth century served as precedents for St. Denis' manipulation of her costume as a key component of the choreography. See Ann Cooper Albright, *Traces of Light: Absence and Presence in the Work of Loïe Fuller* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2007) and Heidi Brevik-Zender, *Fashioning Spaces: Mode and Modernity in Late Nineteenth-century Paris* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 82.

[82] Beyer replaced Norma Gould, Shawn's long-time dancing partner, when Gould suffered a "nervous breakdown" and was unable to travel to Chicago. Scolieri, *Ted Shawn*, 77.

[83] "What do you think about it?" *The Tacoma Times*, October 28, 1914, 5; "Our Cover Portrait and the Hall of Fame," *Portrait* 9, no. 3 (July 1917): 15.

[84] "Advertising—of a Sort," *Abel's Photographic Weekly* 14, no. 357 (October 31, 1914): 423. The focus on Shawn and Beyer received likely irritated St. Denis, who still billed and thought of herself as the primary dance attraction. Shawn and Beyer distracted—even briefly—from the debut of *The Peacock Dance*. Regardless of the potential for interpersonal tensions created by the company photography session, press coverage of the additional Toloff photographs suggests something very important about their context and composition. Toloff

In 1916, Sadakichi Hartmann published and reviewed one of Toloff's photographs (fig. 4.16) in the *Bulletin of Photography*. As mentioned earlier, Hartmann took a dual interest in modern dance and photography. Hartmann praised Toloff's image for giving the viewer "a detailed record of the elaborate costume" and for showing "the performer in this costume in a characteristic attitude of the dance." Hartmann criticized Toloff for the photograph's sense of stasis: "it shows no motion and little animation…. [it] does not suggest the art and mystery of dancing."[85] By critiquing Toloff, Hartmann inadvertently critiques St. Denis and her evolving definition of dance. St. Denis' choreography for *The Peacock Dance* was more restrained that other works, including *Radha*. *The Peacock Dance* was a series of postures rather than a series of movements as one impression metamorphosized into another. Motion, therefore, was articulated slowly with incredible precision. In *The Peacock Dance*, St. Denis complicated the rubric within which dance was previously understood. St. Denis and Toloff were in the process of constructing an emerging genre of dance photography, one that sought to create a portrait of the dancer and create an impression of the dance. Neither could be fully replicated through the photograph.

Toloff's portrait of St. Denis was broadly disseminated and proved to be widely popular, despite Hartmann's criticisms. Shortly after her debut performance, the photograph appeared on September 10, 1914 in the *South Bend Tribune.*[86] Toloff's photograph was the most widely circulated image of St. Denis in *The Peacock Dance.* When St. Denis' photographic image appeared in papers it was most often to announce her arrival for a local tour. Once released into the public sphere, St. Denis and Toloff ceded control over the

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believed photographing St. Denis and her company would be beneficial for his career. Moreover, the photographs Toloff took of St. Denis were not a private collaboration between the photographer and dancer. Instead, members of St. Denis' company were present just beyond the frame, giving feedback, criticism, and providing comradery.

[85] Sadakichi Hartmann [Sidney Allan, pseud.], "Looking for the Good Points," *Bulletin of Photography* 19 no. 473 (August 30, 1916): 256-258.

circulation of the image. The photograph efficiently represented the dance in photographic form. Ted Shawn also chose to include it in *Pioneer and Prophet*.[87]

Given descriptions of *The Peacock Dance*, the postures and gestures captured in Toloff's photographs at Ravinia Park, Chicago, are suggestive of *The Peacock Dance* itself, which included long holds that feel even more static when photographed. By *The Peacock Dance*'s debut in 1914, St. Denis was a seasoned performer and a frequently photographed subject. She acknowledged the ephemeral nature of dance and utilized photography to capture its impressions for publicity and posterity's sake. Her performance, therefore, was constructed with the acknowledgement and consideration that it would be photographed. St. Denis as a choreographer considered the role of photography from the conception of her dances: how would her motions inspire audiences and how could they be recorded in static images? St. Denis' pantomimic motions were ideal for photography. *The Peacock Dance* was made for the camera.

Arnold Genthe, 1915

Chronologically, the second photographer to photograph St. Denis in *The Peacock Dance* was the German-American pictorialist photographer Arnold Genthe.[88] Genthe's photographs of St. Denis in *The Peacock Dance* were taken in 1915, shortly after the founding of the Denishawn School in Los Angeles—another brainchild of Shawn. Given St.

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[86] "Ruth St. Denis, 'The Peacock,'" *South Bend Tribune*, September 10, 1914, 6.

[87] The second volume of *Ruth St. Denis: Pioneer and Prophet* includes numerous plates illustrating St. Denis diverse costumes, eclectic choreography, and expansive range of interests.

[88] Much like St. Denis, the career of German-American photographer Arnold Genthe crisscrosses the United States. He immigrated to San Francisco from Germany in the mid-1890s to serve as a tutor for the son of Baron and Baroness J. Henrich von Schroeder. Like many early photographers, Genthe took an interest in the emerging art form and taught himself. After early critical success by way of photographic publications, Genthe opened a portrait studio. Prior to the 1906 earthquake, Genthe photographed San Francisco's Chinese residents and his photographs of the aftermath of the earthquake, which destroyed his studio, are among his most famous. By 1911, Genthe relocated and established a second portrait studio in New York City, where he catered to political and social elites. See Arnold Genthe, *As I Remember* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock, 1936) and Nicky van Banning, *Arnold Genthe: Pioneer of Dance Photography* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2016).

Denis' emphasis on the importance of photography to her students, it is unsurprising that she would choose to be photographed in the peacock costume at the newly founded Denishawn school. *The Peacock Dance* helped to establish St. Denis as a serious artist, and St. Denis' transformation from lowbrow to high art enabled her to attract students and form the school of dance. By the time the images were captured by Genthe in 1915, he himself had opened a portrait studio in New York City. However, that year he was back in California photographing buildings for the Panama-Pacific International Exposition (PPIE) in San Francisco.[89] Given his interest in the development of modern dance, it is not surprising Genthe set aside time to visit the newly established Denishawn school during his West Coast travels.

Multiple negatives of St. Denis in the peacock costume survive in Genthe's collection at the Library of Congress. The most recognizable image by Genthe of St. Denis depicts her face and neck in profile, with the peacock train dramatically swirled around her ankles like a Christmas tree skirt (fig. 4.21). She faces left and away from a light source. Her torso twists dramatically, continuing the counterclockwise rotation of her skirt. With her left leg extended, her left foot emerges from layers of silk, perfectly arched and pointed. St. Denis' hands rotate inwards, fingertips resting gently on her hips; her elbows are splayed outward. Her chin is lifted in a dramatic gesture of self-assuredness. In this photograph, which Genthe proudly published in his 1916 *The Book of the Dance,* the background of the image is undiscernible. Wooden floorboards suggest a stage, but there are no props, no backdrops, no other visible figures. The light catching St. Denis' beaded headdress and sequined costume is bright, but it casts uneven shadows across the floor. The focus—front and center—is on St. Denis in her arresting peacock costume.

[89] Mary Fanton Roberts, "How Arnold Genthe Uses Sunlight to Capture Beauty," *The Craftsman* 29, no. 2 (November 1915): 174.

The Book of the Dance attests to Genthe's long-standing interest in dance photography. It features images of Isadora Duncan, Maud Allan, Ruth St. Denis, Loie Fuller, and Anna Pavlova, among others. Not only is the chapter devoted to St. Denis the longest section in *The Book of the Dance*, Genthe's images of St. Denis demonstrate the broadest range of creative expression. St. Denis and Isadora Duncan both admired Genthe, yet they responded to the photographer differently. Duncan described Genthe as:

> a wizard…. [his] photography was most weird and magical. It is true he pointed his camera at people and took their photographs, but the pictures were never photographs of his sitters but his hypnotic imagination of them. He has taken many pictures of me which are not representations of my physical being, but conditions of my soul.[90]

St. Denis, in her response to Genthe, focused much more on the experience of being photographed than the resulting image. She wrote in her autobiography:

> Arnold Genthe, the photographer. What visions to us dancers that name conjures up; what hours of sheer delight watching his tall, distinguished figure bending into extraordinary postures as he sought effects for his sitters, or smiling into his twinkling blue eyes when he emerged from behind the black cloth to see that ever drape was in place. By some subtle alchemy he stimulated his sitters into being their most romantic and most beautiful selves.[91]

St. Denis describes Genthe's photography sessions as a performance that she took "delight" in watching. Photographer and dancer interacted as if rehearsing a duet, and ironically, the moving figure became the photographer. Genthe's expressive photography conveyed a deeper sense of selfhood than simply relating a dancer's body and choreographed movements. Nevertheless, St. Denis remained in tune to the performance of photograph rather than Duncan's soulful representation.

Two unprinted negatives of St. Denis in *The Peacock Dance* not featured in *The Book of the Dance* reveal both the location of the images at Denishawn as well as convey important information about St. Denis' attitudes in front of the camera (figs. 4.22-4.23). No

[90] Isadora Duncan, *My Life* (1927, repr., New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013), 292-293.
[91] St. Denis, *An Unfinished Life,* 149-150.

longer shrouded in darkness, the background provides sufficient context to determine the location of the images. Distinctive characteristics of Denishawn's outdoor dance studio are clearly visible: x-shaped banisters, swags of fabric and tropical foliage to create shade from the California sun. Genthe photographed St. Denis in her studio.

The reproduction of Genthe's peacock dance portrait in *The Book of the Dance* suggest both he and St. Denis considered it a success. Two unprinted negatives provide useful comparatives and benchmarks against the image reproduced from the Denishawn photography session. In the first unprinted negative, St. Denis again presents herself in profile. She balances on the ball mounds of her toes, but her weight is unevenly distributed. As she struts forward, she leans slightly backwards, her right arm gracefully extended in front of her. The positioning of her left arm is similar to the published version in *The Book of the Dance*, although shown from a different angle. The train of the peacock costume trails beyond the pictorial frame. Genthe uses light—likely natural light given the outdoor location—dramatically. The light shines through the tulle layer of the peacock tail, adding a greater sense of the material through its texture and transparency.

The second negative feels the least polished. In the image, St. Denis appears to move in the direction of the light source on the right. The front of her body is angled slightly towards the camera and her face is most visible, revealing deeply rouged lips and thick eyeliner. Again, her chin is slightly lifted with a sense of alertness, but lacks the confidence exuded by Genthe's other images. Her weight is supported by her left leg, and St. Denis trails her right foot behind her. As her right shoulder dips, the right side of her body contracts. The modesty panel of fleshing material covering her midriff visibly ripples, registering the slack of fabric, muscles, and flesh. The angle of her body and light cast over it emphasize St. Denis' thighs in an unflattering way. Her arms are tucked close to her torso, and her hands

extend at ninety-degree angles. The peacock train trails behind her. Through this image, the viewer becomes most aware of the artifice of the costume and the human form beneath it. Instead of disguising St. Denis' abdomen, the fleshing draws attention to it. Sunlight, cast against rather than through the tulle of the peacock train, makes the costume appear burdensome as St. Denis drags the limp fabric across the floor. For an instant, the façade of St. Denis' performance is broken.

Genthe's work underscores one of the central advantages to photography over painted portraiture: the potential for multiple the exposures. Not limited to a single image, St. Denis and Genthe could experiment without the consequences of failure. If failure occurred, the negative was registered as a failure, passed over, and then forgotten.

Ira L. Hill, about 1916

A photographer of wider popular recognition than Genthe, Ira L. Hill also photographed Ruth St. Denis in the 1910s. Hill's photography studio was located at 463 6th Avenue in New York, where he quickly established himself as a fashionable society photographer. As an extension of his society portraiture, he became well known for his theatrical portraits, especially of dancers such as Vernon and Irene Castle and Anna Pavlova. His photographs were frequently published in the pages of *Theatre* magazine and defined the intersection of theater, fashion, and society for New York in the nineteen-teens.[92]

Hills' portraits of St. Denis are studio portraits, which distinguish them from the outdoor setting of many of the other photographs of *The Peacock Dance*. While there are numerous studio portraits of St. Denis in other dances and costumes, *The Peacock Dance* is unusual in the diversity of contexts in which she performed for the photographer. St. Denis' desire for a studio portrait along formulaic lines suggests her aesthetic alignment with other

relevant contemporary tastemakers. There seems to be an eagerness to confirm to pictorial standards rather than establish them as she did in the dance itself. St. Denis inserted herself into popular visual culture.

Hill's surviving photographs of St. Denis show her in three distinct yet different postures: standing, kneeling with the peacock tail fanned out and suspended behind her as a backdrop, and finally, on her stomach and the tail extended (figs. 4.24-4.26). In the standing pose, an elaborate painted backdrop is visible, the type of studio backdrop that Hill became well known for and which drove his popularity among dancers and actors. The background is Gainsborough-esque, giving a painterly feel to the photographic image. This hybrid aesthetic gained popularity with theater producers, and the overall effect is exemplified in St. Denis' full-length portrait.

Hill's portrait occupies space between Genthe's Denishawn portrait of St. Denis and Henri's painted portrait. Hill's portrait is carefully staged. St. Denis' posture is erect. Her left arm is akimbo and right arm and fingers extended. Her left leg slightly bent and foot resting on the ball mound. It is a static image largely divorced from the dance which otherwise provided context for the costume and inspiration for St. Denis' gestures. The train of the costume is artfully arranged in front of St. Denis. The careful draping and even folds again suggest a deliberately constructed studio image. Hill's other photographs also borrow from earlier photographs of St. Denis—likely conveyed through St. Denis rather than visual evidence. (It seems hard to imagine a photographer willfully coping the composition of another photograph.) This translation came through St. Denis herself, who likely suggested or assumed similar postures. In Hill's photograph of St. Denis kneeling, the dancer has adorned herself with layers of beaded necklaces and bracelets; she holds an additional strand

[92] David S. Shields, "Ira L. Hill," *Broadway Photographs*, https://www.broadway.cas.sc.edu/content/ira-l-hill.

in each hand. In front of her sits an overflowing jewelry box and elaborate mirror. The train of the peacock costume has been tacked up to resemble the bird of vanity. St. Denis looks directly at the camera. While the additional accessories, presumably acquired over time, are absent from earlier photograph, the pose itself is similar to one assumed in Toloff's photograph in 1914.

Unknown Amateur Photographer, 1918

Perhaps the most intriguing grouping of photographs of Ruth St. Denis in *The Peacock Dance* are a series of unpublished photographs taken by an unknown amateur photographer on the grounds of Kronota, the Hollywood headquarters of the Theosophical Society where St. Denis performed *The Light of Asia* in 1918. Although the California pictorialist photographer Arthur Kales photographed Denishawn's performance of *The Light of Asia*, the photographs of St. Denis in the peacock costume lack the finesse of a professional photographer. Considered as a series, the photographs are compositionally erratic and even playful. The number and variety of St. Denis' postures and the prints' diminutive scale suggest they were taken with a Kodak Brownie camera.[93] Throughout the summer of 1918, Shawn was absent, having enlisted in the Army. The anonymous photographer was likely female and a member of the Denishawn company.

Kronota's architecture and grounds created a stunning backdrop for St. Denis in the peacock costume. The Theosophical Society purchased the land to construct their new headquarters in 1912, and by 1919 all of the major buildings on the campus were complete including major works by important California architectural firms, the San Diego-based firm

[93] Eaton S. Lothrop, Jr., "The Brownie Camera," *History of Photography* 2, no. 1 (January 1978): 7.

of Mead and Requa and work by Arthur and Alfred Heinemann.[94] A correspondent for the *Los Angeles Times* described the otherworldliness of Kronota:

> Away off up on the Hollywood heights… your climbing automobile will suddenly at a twist in the road, land you in a wonderful garden, facing a picturesque old Moorish house which might have been transported from ancient India… the little Moorish summer houses with their enveloping vines will make you sure you've discovered a bit of Dreamland.[95]

The architecture, grounds, and environment created at Kronota set it apart from modern life.

Of all the photographs taken of St. Denis in the peacock costume, the Kronota photographs are the most improvised (figs. 4.27-4.32). While St. Denis translates several familiar poses, such as lying on her stomach on the grass, the environment creates further opportunities for exploration and choreographic adaptation. In these photographs, St. Denis fully engages with the environment, which within other photographs the environment functioned as a backdrop. Engaging with the environment—especially the Moorish architecture—adds another dimension to St. Denis' movement. She must contend with the architecture and interact with it as if she were a peacock.

St. Denis' amateur photography session on the grounds of Kronota illustrates her love of photography. The black cardstock residue on the verso of the prints suggests they were once pasted into a scrapbook, although the scrapbook is no longer extant. These were images for private consumption. On the grounds of Kronota, St. Denis did much more than pose for a photograph, she performed as she had done for Toloff and Genthe several years before. For St. Denis, photography was not something on the periphery of her artistic practice, it was in the foreground. There is self-consciousness to her performance, an awareness of the photographer's ever-present lens and the photograph's ability to reach a far-flung audience. While self-conscious, St. Denis is also very comfortable in front of the camera and uses it to

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[94] Alfred Willis, "A Survey of Surviving Buildings of the Krotona Colony in Hollywood," *Architronic* 8, no. 1 (1998): 1.

amplify her impact. The photograph freezes her motion in time, but its circulation increased the impact of her movement in powerful ways. Photography extended St. Denis' dance.

***Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance*, 1919**

Thirteen years passed between Henri's first exposure to St. Denis and his non-commissioned portrait of her in *The Peacock Dance*. Between the performance of *Radha* and his portrait, Henri continued to follow St. Denis' career—her celebrity, performances, and through photography, the visual spectacle created by her elaborate costuming, physical body, and kinesthetic motion. Henri's scrapbooks contain several pages filled with photographic clippings capturing St. Denis in numerous dances: *Radha*, *O'Mika*, *The Egyptian Ballet*, *Cobras*, *Garden of Kama* (with Ted Shawn), among others.[96] St. Denis appears in multiples: multiples of herself and occasionally even duplicates of the same dance, yet in slightly different poses. In creating and preserving this visual archive, it is as if Henri sought to, through layers of visual imagery, reconstitute the dancer into three-dimensional form in his mind from the confines of the two-dimensional page. All of the photographs selected by Henri capture St. Denis in motion. She lunges, twirls, and strides across the scrapbook's pages. Updating traditional vocational portraits with action shots, St. Denis does not pose for her portrait. Visually, she takes a far more active role by instead performing within the portrait. For St. Denis, the portrait becomes an active, rather than passive, form of self-representation.

By 1919, Henri and St. Denis were equally respected and established in their respective fields. The year marked a turning point for St. Denis' career. She planned to retire from vaudeville in 1919 in order to focus the Denishawn school founded in 1915 with Ted

[95] Grace Kingsley, "'Light of Asia' Should Prove a Big Delight," *Los Angeles Times*, June 16, 1918, 18.

Shawn. (St. Denis returned to the stage time and time again, continuing to perform for decades to come.) This incubation period from 1906 until 1919 as well as the fact *The Peacock Dance* was an established routine by 1919 suggests a greater significance behind Henri's (and St. Denis') choice in the portrait subject than simple novelty. Henri was not painting Ruth St. Denis in the latest and most current or avant-garde routine. Being "current" did not concern Henri. This was also a mechanism to avoid competing with photographers, who could work and circulate their imagery of St. Denis much faster. Henri accepted the existence and circulation of photographic representations of St. Denis and, as seen through is scrapbooks, even participated in the culture surrounding her image. Choosing to paint St. Denis in *The Peacock Dance*, Henri relied upon the familiarity of the dance to connect with gallery and museum-going audiences. The full-length image of a dancer was a well-established genre of painting, even if St. Denis retained a sense of individuality.[97] Because photographs, especially when circulated in newspapers, were only reproduced in black and white, color and scale immediately gave Henri an advantage when drawing a distinction between his portrait of St. Denis and other images of her.

Henri wrote excitedly to his former student and friend, Helen Niles, about his progress on St. Denis' portrait. He singles the portrait out as one of the triumphs of the previous months. He writes of "a portrait…of Ruth St. Denis in her costume and gesture of the 'Peacock Dance.' It was a great pleasure to paint her—she is a remarkably fine woman, fine spirit and fine mind. She is a thorough artist all through." He continues, "It is almost done—have a foot to finish without her, which is difficult as it is important—must be <u>her</u>

[96] Notably, the *Peacock Dance* is missing among these terpsichorean representations of St. Denis; however, the dance's popularity and wide-spread circulation of related imagery nearly guarantees Henri's familiarity with the dance, even if it is not illustrated within his scrapbook.
[97] See note 24 above.

foot. No other will do. Have several drawings I made of it but it is difficult nevertheless."[98] In Henri's portrait, St. Denis' feet are bare, marking a departure to how the artist typically appeared on stage. What challenged Henri was not the foot itself, but elements of the costume. Compositionally, what worked on the stage did not translate perfectly into painting. Henri's portrait documents the "dance," but he also remained faithful to his personal aesthetic sensibilities. Had Henri painted St. Denis wearing a foot tong, as she typically appeared on stage, a sequined roundel would have appeared on top of her foot, disharmoniously drawing the eye to the bottom of the painting, rather than up towards St. Denis' face. The naked foot helps emphasize the sensuality of her performances as well as the emergence of new forms of dance.

Despite its success, by 1919 *The Peacock Dance* was not listed on the regular season program. Nevertheless, St. Denis had not retired the number and the costume was on hand when the Denishawn company appeared in New York in the early months of the year. In her autobiography, St. Denis recalls with fondness her time in Henri's studio off Gramercy Park. From her description of the experience, the two had high-minded discussions as Henri worked. During their portrait sessions, Henri suggested that everyone, at some point in their lives, should be made to stand in a public space completely nude, an exercise that would encourage the cultivation of "personal dignity" and healthful attention to the physical body. According to St. Denis, "This was to prove that clothes could no longer conceal our deficiencies."[99]

Henri's portrait of St. Denis was reproduced as the frontispiece for *Ruth St. Denis: Pioneer and Prophet*, published the following year (fig. 4.33). In an undated letter to Henri St. Denis wrote, "It occurred to me that Ted will probably want to have the picture for the

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98 Robert Henri to Helen Niles, 9 April 1919, box 7, folder 174, Henri Papers.
99 St. Denis, *An Unfinished Life*, 184.

book first before anybody reproduces it…. It has all been a perfect joy—posing and knowing you and the beautiful result!"[100] Although Henri exhibited the portrait in 1919 and retrained the non-commissioned portrait in his possession, it was not reproduced until St. Denis and Shawn' book. The acceptance of St. Denis' request indicates Henri's understanding of the circulation of her image. The portrait embodied greater significance than demonstrating Henri's abilities as an artist. It also represented St. Denis' visual impact as a performing artist. Henri granted St. Denis agency over the reproduction and circulation of her image.

Conclusion

Through its size and scale, *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance* produced a representation of St. Denis that photography could not. However, the portrait's physical dimensions and visible heft work against the impermanence and circulation of dance. Henri's portrait is not nimble; it is massive. It cannot be cupped gently in one's hand or tacked up in a dressing room. While St. Denis capitalized on the cachet of being painted by a prominent American artist in her autobiography, Henri's portrait became most useful to her when photographed, shrunk down, and reproduced alongside the frontispiece in the second volume of *Pioneer and Prophet*.

St. Denis' expression of modernity through exotic themes and elaborate costumes did not translate to Henri's canvas. The quintessential modern subject—the modern dancer—did not guarantee a modern portrait. In other words, St. Denis' embodiment of modernity was non-transferable. St. Denis' modernism underscored the dissonance between her expression of modernity and Henri's attempts to translate modernity to realist portraiture by painting a modern subject. Henri's *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance* proved encumbered by centuries of artistic tradition and painting St. Denis was an insufficient means to tap into

[100] Ruth St. Denis to Robert Henri, n.d., box 9, folder 224, Henri Papers.

modernity, as St. Denis was able to through modern dance. Between Henri and his subject, there was a disconnect between the meaning and representation of modernity; this issue went unreconciled in *Ruth St. Denis in the Peacock Dance*.

Ruth St. Denis built her career as a dancer on the stage and through the circulation of costumed portraiture. Accomplished artists in their respective fields, St. Denis and Henri understood the well-rehearsed role each was to play: St. Denis as the subject and Henri as the portraitist. The visual interest of St. Denis' performances attracted Henri as an artist, and the dancer and colorful costume created an attractive model. St. Denis anticipated interest in her dance and choreographed *The Peacock Dance* to be translated across media, from bodily gestures to photography and painting. In Henri's portrait and other representations of herself, St. Denis is an active agent and asserts confidence and authority. For St. Denis, Henri's portrait was one in a series of many representations of herself and she depended upon diverse perspectives as an extension of dance. Henri's attempt to depict St. Denis and *The Peacock Dance* through a singular image was antithetical to the modern body and modern dance, which found greater empathy through photography.

CONCLUSION

This study began with a reappraisal of the historiography surrounding Robert Henri and the later called "Ash Can" school and it ends by questioning his ongoing relevance. If "Ash Can" is an anachronistic moniker and Henri's portraits of Emma Goldman, Gertrude Vanderbilt Whitney, and Ruth St. Denis fall short of modernizing realist portraiture, is Henri as important as Americanists once thought? The privileging of abstraction throughout the twentieth century overshadows artists like Henri, sandwiched between the academy and the avant-garde. What makes Henri and indeed his portraits of modern women interesting—and relevant—are the slippages between Henri's progressive artistic philosophy of anarchism, individuality, and freedom of expression and his realist portraits. As this study reveals, the friction between the strategies Henri uses to represent his portrait subjects and the strategies his subjects use to represent themselves challenged Henri's autonomy over his canvas.

In *The Art Spirit*, Henri cautioned artists and readers, "Fight with yourself when you paint, not with the model. A student is one who struggles with himself, struggles for order."[1] Henri's remarks bring him philosophically close to art critic and academician Kenyon Cox, who wrote, "[The Classic Spirit] seeks not merely to express individuality or emotion but to express disciplined emotion and individuality restrained by law."[2] Despite promoting freedom of expression and opposing the National Academy, Henri allowed himself to be restricted by the conventions of realist portraiture in ways Goldman, Whitney, and St. Denis rejected in their own lives. As Goldman, Whitney, and St. Denis experimented with

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[1] Robert Henri, *The Art Spirit: Notes, Articles, Fragments of Letters and Talks to Students, Bearing on the Concept and Technique of Picture Making, the Study of Art Generally, and on Appreciation* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 252.
[2] Kenyon Cox, *The Classic Point of View: Six Lectures on Painting* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), 4; quoted in Allan Antliff, *Anarchist Modernism: Art, Politics, and the First American Avant-Garde* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 13.

strategies of self-representation, they destabilized Henri’s realist portraiture through politics, art, and performance.

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