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THE NATIONAL COLLEGE OF ART AND DESIGN

Faculty of Design

Visual Communication

"Photography of children: A focus on Sally Mann."

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## CONTENTS PAGE

Introduction	Pages
CHAPTER 1: <u>Photography in the Nineteenth Century</u>	
Part 1 - Introduction to nineteenth century photography	3
Part 2 - Charles Dodgson	4 - 12
Part 3 - Wilhelm van Gloeden	13 - 23
Part 4 - Julia Margaret Cameron	24 - 33
CHAPTER 2: <u>Photography in the twentieth century</u>	
Part 1 - Introduction to twentieth century photography	34 - 37
Part 2 - David Hamilton	38 - 48
Part 3 - Larry Clarke	49 - 50
Part 4 - Jock Sturges	51 - 61
Part 5 - Robert Mapplethorpe & Walter Chappell	62 - 66
Part 6 - Photographic laws and regulations	67 - 69
CHAPTER 3: <u>Sally Mann</u>	70 - 82
Bibliography	83 - 86

CHAPTER 1: Photography in the Nineteenth Century

Part 1	-	Introduction to nineteenth century photography	1
Part 2	-	Charles Dodgson	4 - 11
Part 3	-	Wilhelm van Gloeden	12 - 23
Part 4	-	Lilla Margaret Cameron	24 - 33

CHAPTER 2: Photography in the Twentieth Century

Part 1	-	Introduction to twentieth century photography	34 - 41
Part 2	-	David Hamilton	42 - 49
Part 3	-	Larry Clarke	50 - 59
Part 4	-	Jack Sturges	60 - 69
Part 5	-	Robert Mapplethorpe & Walter Chappel	70 - 79
Part 6	-	Photographic laws and regulations	80 - 89

CHAPTER 3: Sally Mann

Photography	90 - 99
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## INTRODUCTION:

To successfully approach the subject of the art of photographing children, and its attached controversies in contemporary culture, is barely possible in today's climate. As the 'art versus pornography' debate rages on, objectivity becomes ever more elusive as one focuses in on the core moral questions that are inevitably raised.

A contemporary photographer named Sally Mann, works almost at the centre of these questions. <sup>in</sup> Her evocative, some might say erotic photographs of her own children in their home environment, she takes the creative act of motherhood another step by creating an art object from the conclusion of her biological imperative. Or, perhaps simply exploring the subject she knows best.

Her skills as a technician are much praised, and her pictures are exhibited and reproduced around the world. There is no question as to her popularity, as these intimate depictions of the beauties and the dramas of childhood, have a universal reflection on the human experience.

In order to establish a context with which to examine Mann's photographic oeuvre, it seems sensible to make a brief investigation of child photographers since the beginning of the photographic medium. Included are some brief personal

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and historical background information, along with some of the more obvious differences and similarities in temperament and approach. Also, an interpretation of the work and prevailing concerns of their various times and settings.

The artists chosen are Charles Dodgson (Aka Lewis Carroll), Baron Van Gloeden, and Julia Margaret Cameron. To provide a contemporary backdrop, the photographers looked at include David Hamilton, Larry Clarke, Jack Sturges and Robert Mapplethorpe.

Though hardly an encyclopedia of the genre, it appears necessary to construct at least a rough framework of contrasting approaches to better view the work of Sally Mann. It seems pointless to try to tell someone to look at an image, as impertinent as telling someone how to listen to music. It does appear however, that from a critical perspective it is just the very same questions regarding consensus moralities and aesthetic principles that are predictably the most compelling. Though it must be said, nowhere near as significant as the images themselves.

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## CHAPTER 1 : PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

### Part 1 - Introduction to photography in the nineteenth century.

In the nineteenth century, photography was not the simple button pushing that it has become today. The plates were large and fragile, the equipment awkward, expensive, often hand-made, and the tools and chemicals had to be available in quantity. It was a cumbersome business. A combination of art, the science of optics, chemistry, engineering, as well as a considerable investment of time and money, with very limited opportunities to recoup the investment, photography was perfect for the wealthy dilettante, or enthusiast.

This period was one of the great heroic gestures and ideas. In retrospect it can appear quite precious and niggly. At the time, however, conceptual giants slugged it out in the academies. Debates raged on about what was beautiful and what was not, what was true, noble and good, and what was foul, ignoble and so on. Europe saw itself as a beacon of glorious light shining out of the clinging darkness of ignorance and superstition. Declaration of all kinds of moral victory were a common event, and it was all to be photographed. The truth could be recorded, the speculations of painting were a thing of the past.



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Part 2       -       Charles Dodgson

Out of this hothouse of science and philosophy comes our first profile of Charles Dodgson, mathematician, novelist, obsessive puzzle maker. He is known to the world by his literary moniker - Lewis Carroll, author of "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland", "Through the Looking Glass", and "The Jabberwacky". He was also a noted photographer of children, specifically little girls, more specifically little blond girls of upper middle class background, under four feet ten inches in height. This has been well documented and perhaps over researched by well intentioned academics and psychologists who have created the rumour that Carroll harboured libidinous thoughts about the young girl that inspired the book "Alice in Wonderland".

Let us set aside the obscure and ultimately unknowable aspect of Lewis Carroll's interest in little girls, and whether it was honourable, for just one moment, and look at the image of the beautiful child as it has appeared throughout history. The earliest images of this kind are perhaps the "calyphygeous" (beautiful buttocks) youths of ancient Greek art, the highly realized images of boy warriors and sexually explicit depictions of buggery common on Attic pottery of the period. Then later there was the Roman

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obsession with the ideals of youth. In all of these classical visual forms, even through the dark ages, the images of the child Christ and the Putti that all but infest Italian Baroque decoration, these images are specifically male. The image of the female child is notable by its absence in the visual vocabulary of western art forms. This is what makes Lewis Carroll's images of childhood fantasy so extraordinary. In a strange new artform he was exploring the image of the little girl in a way that had never been thought of before.

Lewis Carroll or Dodgson (as he was careful to keep his literary persona separate from his photographic one), in order to address the wit, the extreme privacy of the adventures of little girlhood, established a certain theatricality in his images that is common to Victorian photography. The highly staged surroundings seen in Carroll's photographs is not unlike those of his contemporaries. Long couches, loosely folded drapery and sometimes costumes for the models were common decorations. (Figs. 1, 2, 3 and 4).

The portrait of Lewis Carroll that we have become familiar with until recently, was that of a stuttering mathematician, who's obsession with "little girls", in particular Alice Liddell (Fig. 5) (The ten year old daughter of friends for

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whom he created "Alice in Wonderland" during the Summer of 1862), branded him a paedophile.

On recent discovery by Kardine Leach (author of a new biography of the writer) this "branding" may indeed be lifted from Carroll's reputation. According to Leach, Carroll secretly took part in an adulterous affair with Alice's mother, Lorna Liddell. She was the wife of the dean of Christ Church, Oxford, where Carroll was a deacon.

Evidence found from the cut pages of unpublished documents from the archives of Dodgson, have cast fresh light upon his private life. Extracts from the diary reveal secret meetings with Liddell, and that his use of Alice and other children in his photography was simply a means of paying court to Lorina.

Leach claims that "Carroll was never a paedophile, latent or otherwise, his life and creativity were shaped by a traumatic relationship with an adult woman, whom I believe to be Lorina Liddell. Other scholars have swallowed the post Freudian line but, seen with an unbiased eye, there is at least as much evidence to a more conventional pathology". (Harlow, 1997, Pg.3).

Considering whether one is to believe this new evidence or not, Carroll's photographs of the little girls may now be

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Considering whether one is to believe this new evidence or not, Carroll's photographs of the little girls may now

looked at with some objectivity. Appreciation of the technical skill for that time, which Carroll took pride in, as mentioned previously, that he was exploring an image that had rarely been recorded before, could Carroll now be admired rather than disapproved of?



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Fig. 1 - "Gertrude Chataway", C.L. Dodgson (no date given)







IRENE MAC DONALD

Fig. 2 - "Irene MacDonald", autographed, C.L. Dodgson, 1863.





Fig. 2 - "Irene MacDonald", autographed, C.L. Dodgson, 1883.





Fig. 3 - "Katie Brine", C.L. Dodgson, 1866.





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Fig. 4 - "Alice Grace Weld as 'Little Red Riding Hood'",  
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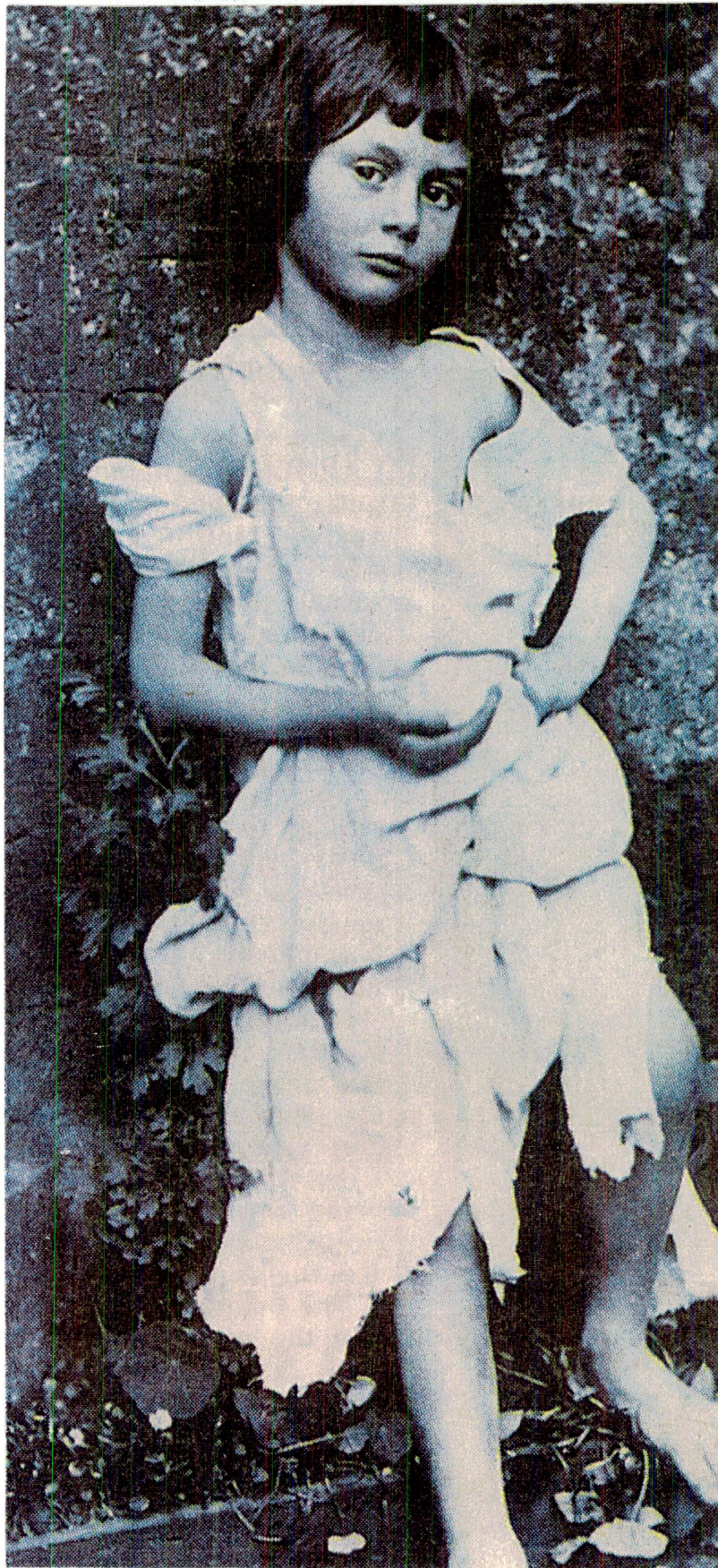


Fig. 5 - "Alice Liddell", C.L. Dodgson, 1862.





Fig. 2 - "Alice Liddell", C.L. Dodgson, 1862.

Part 3 - Wilhelm von Gloeden

We can now turn to the expatriate austro-Hungarian photographer Baron Wilhelm von Gloeden.

Von Gloeden is a legendary figure, and there are ample grounds for the legends that have sprung up around him. The life of this Prussian Baron, who was born in 1856, in Schloss Volkshagen, East Prussia, and who died in Taormina in 1931, reads like a fairytale dating from the Victorian period.

Von Gloeden, a young Prussian country squire, left his homeland for Italy to regain his physical (he suffered from a lung disabling condition) and mental health (suggesting the psychological distress he experienced as a pederast unable to indulge in erotic fantasies) (Weiermeir, 1984, Pg. 6).

After arriving in Taormina, which towards the close of the nineteenth century was a small impoverished Sicilian town unknown to tourists, not only did health and psyche improve, but Von Gloeden was able to embark on his artistic career.

Using local boys as models, Von Gloeden endeavoured in his "tableaux vivantes" to achieve a vision of already the perfect innocent Utopia of the Classical World. The acceptance of Wilhelm Von Gloeden's libertine photography

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during the prudish Victorian era, and age when apart from medical or ethnological depictions, any graphic vendering of the sexual organs was censured, is a phenomenon which invites investigations.

Von Gloeden enjoyed a long period of popularity and patronage, specifically photographing boys, naked boys, unmolested and uncensored at around the same time that Lewis Carroll's photographs of clothed girls were arousing so much suspicion as to force him to go to great lengths to proclaim his good intentions. (Figs. 6 and 7).

According to Charles Leslie, one of Von Gloeden's earliest serious biographers, the baron was

"one of those rare men of the nineteenth century who refused to bargain away his inner nature, or consent to its annihilation, in order that he might be allowed to assume his place in the so-called civilised Western World, which officially condemned him for what he was" (Weiermeir, 1984, Pg. 7).

By Leslie's account, Von Gloeden was a man who treated everything as subordinate to the vital task of self-realization. That realization could not manifest itself in any credible and honest way without the frank admission that

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he was a man who craved little boys. He liked looking at them and was fascinated with the endless variety of faces, bodies and penises that they presented. With this admission out of the way, he was free to carry on with his work as a gentleman photographer of independent means.

And it is to the history of photography, and as an innovator of the nude image, specifically the male nude, that von Gloeden was a fearless pioneer. He was also one of the first to compose his nude studies outside the studio. Nineteenth century conventions demanded that a fig leaf be placed over the genitals, or that the retouchers in the dark-room strategically blur the anatomy. Von Gloeden dispersed with such restrictions, his large format plate camera faithfully reproducing each and every detail. The baron was chiefly a pure photographer, his point of view blunt and straightforward. Although he occasionally attempted to idealize cosmetically his models, to express what von Gloeden considered to be "representatives of an archaic and classless society", (Weiermeir, 1984, pg. 9) they always remained as their bodies revealed them to be, hard-working peasant youths. (Figs. 8, 9, 10 and 11).

However, today it is exactly this artistic quirk which we find so compelling. The idealised image of a historic paganism is in stark contrast to the frank realism of the



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boys themselves. This strange honesty somehow dulls the erotic impact. Yet, they are highly choreographed photographs of naked boys and, remarks Gert Schiff,

"The Victorian public and censors, in a consummate act of self-deception, succeeded in viewing these images as ethnological studies or lyrical evocations of antiquity".

(Weiermeir, 1984, pg. 11)

Von Gloeden's importance to nude photography arises from his utter dismissal of the genre's taboo, the confident manner in which he manipulates his pre-pubescent models, and the sheer magnitude of his output. With the exception of the platinum prints of Boston philanthropist, Fred Holland Day, a contemporary of von Gloeden's who filled his oeuvre with faux classical/historical devices (likewise legitimizing the nudity of his young models as an exigency of pagan themes) von Gloeden has no peer with respect to both quantity and quality of creative output, until the arrival of Robert Mapplethorpe during the 1970's and 1980's of our century.

That there are still people waiting to discredit Lewis Carroll when there are so many blatant paedophiles among his contemporaries is telling. Perhaps the author of "Alice's

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Adventures" is just too irresistible a target. Perhaps whispers and suggestions of a dark secret in the eyes of a delicate child is just inherently more compelling than blatant paedophile erotica.

Perhaps true pornography only exists in the dark hidden places of the mind, and when exposed in the full light, becomes an absurdity, or a monstrosity impossible to accept. One can say that an image is suggestive, but just what does it suggest? Who is doing the suggesting? The artist? The model? Or the observer?

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Fig. 6 - "Three boys on a bench", Von Gloeden, 1895.



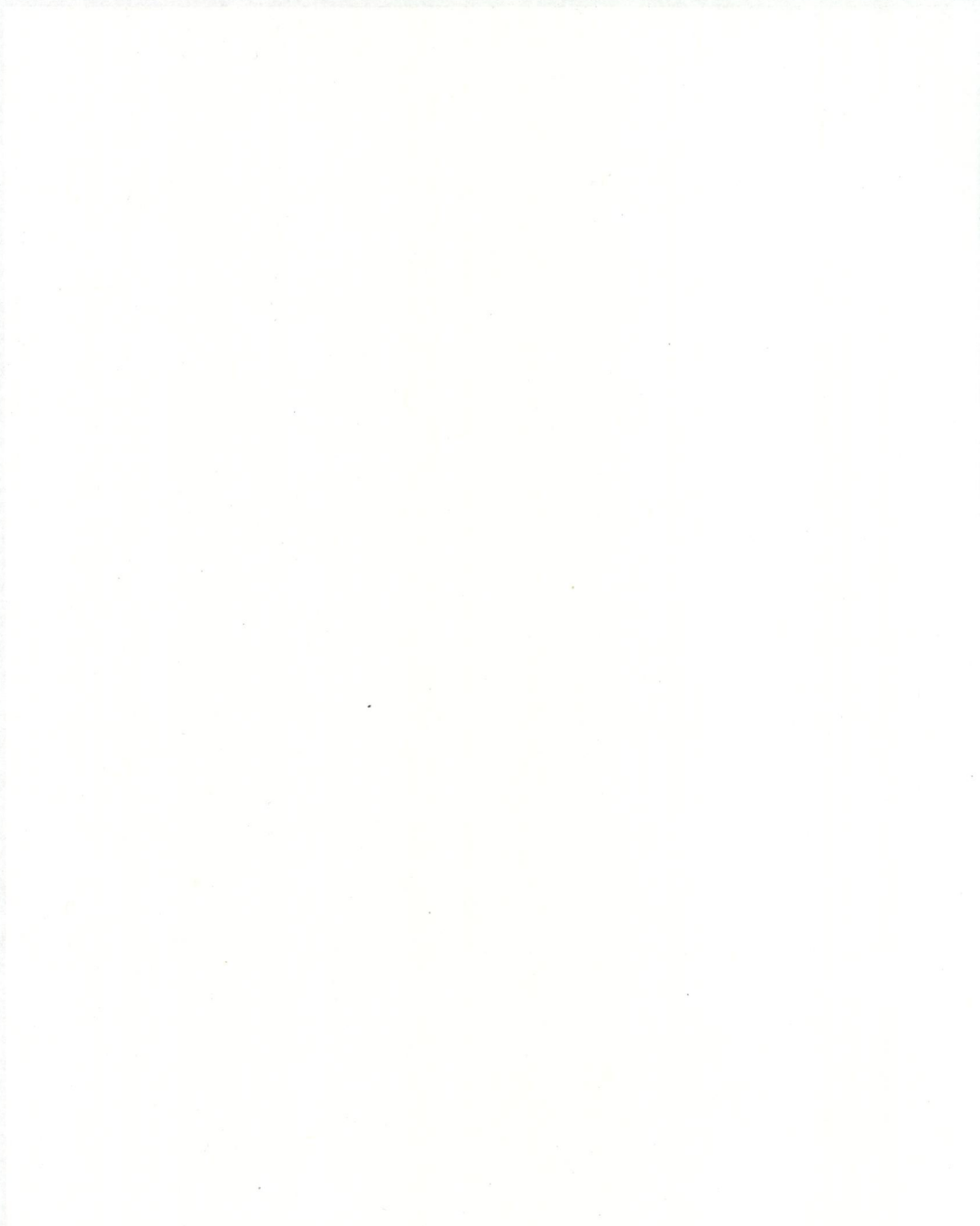


Fig. 6 - "Three boys on a bench", Von Gloeden, 1895.



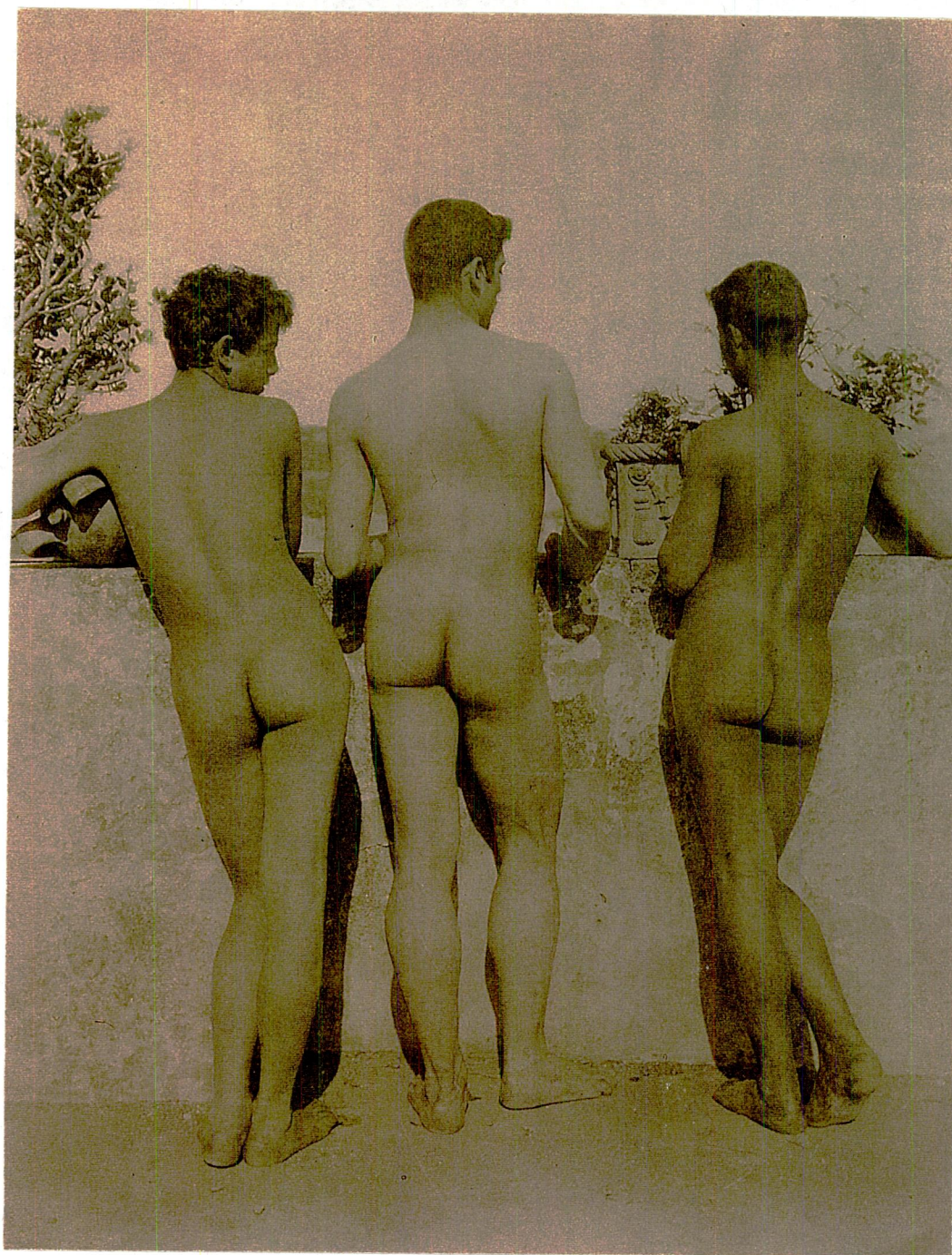


Fig. 7 - "Three boys", Von Gloeden, 1900.





Fig. 7. "Three boys", Von Giesecke, 1900.



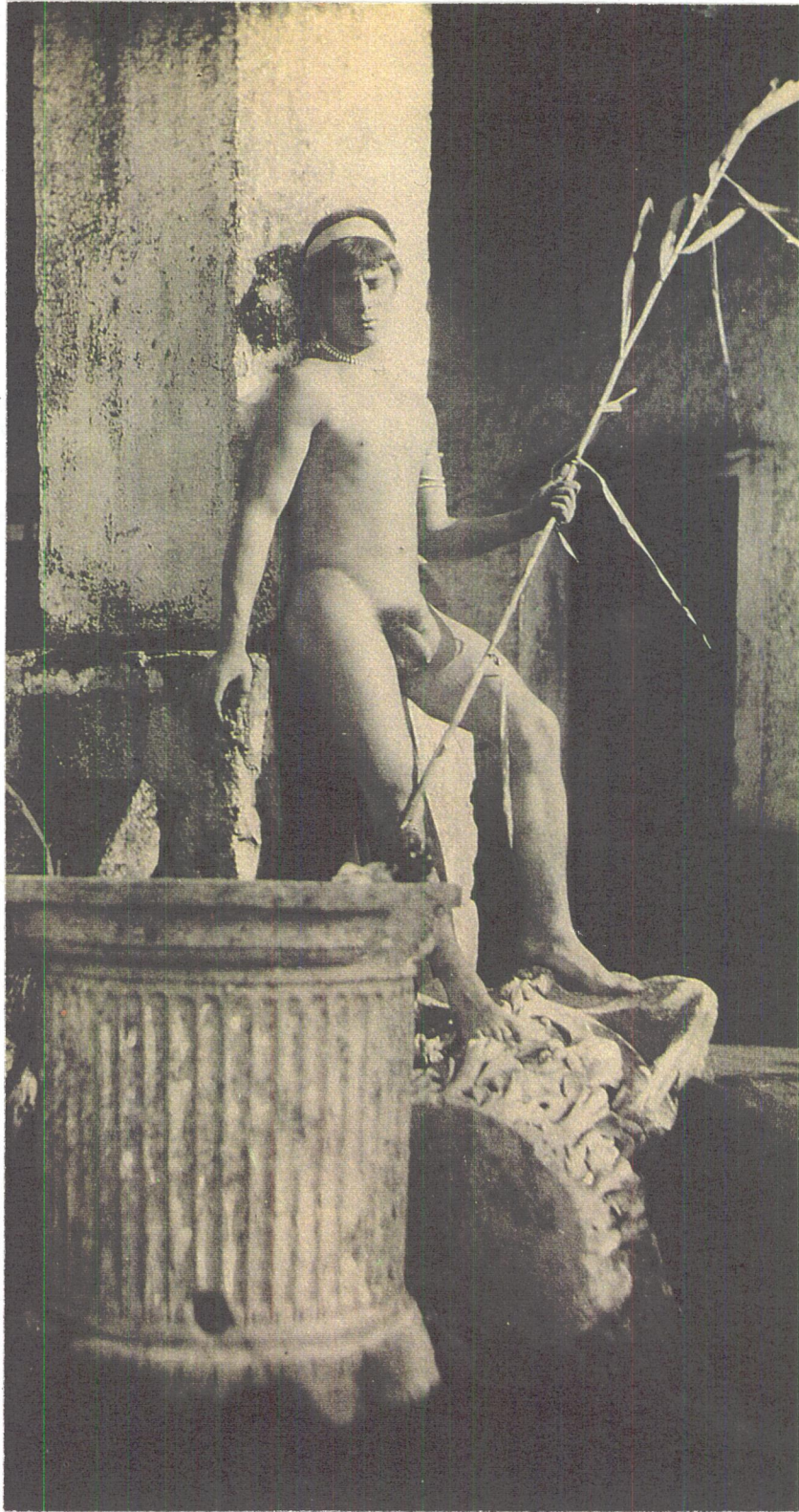


Fig. 8 - Von Gloeden, Taormina, 1900.





Fig. 8 Von Gleditsia, Taurina, 1900.



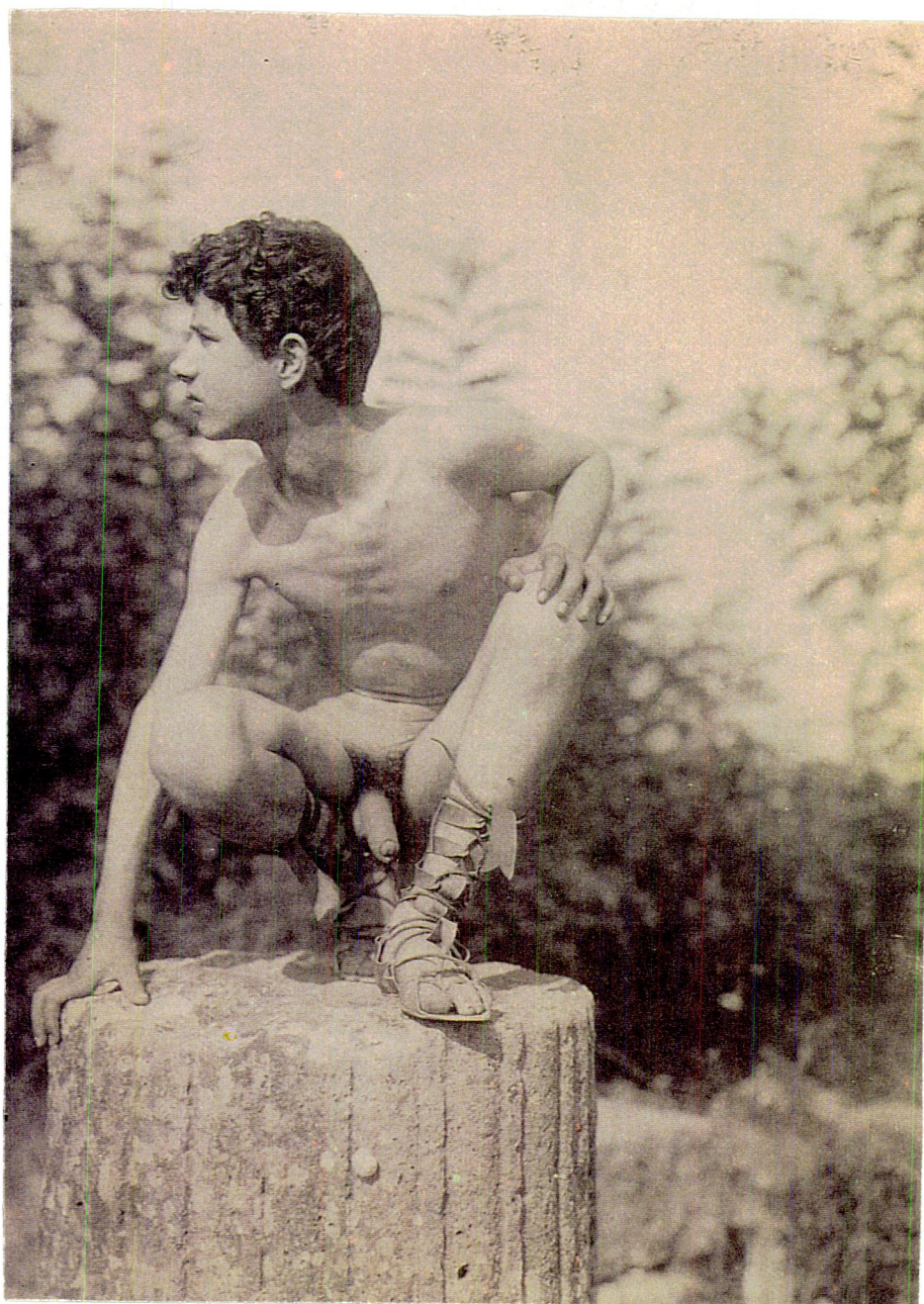


Fig. 9 - Von Gloeden, Taormina, 1900.





Fig. 9 - Von Gleditsia, Tachymia, 1900.



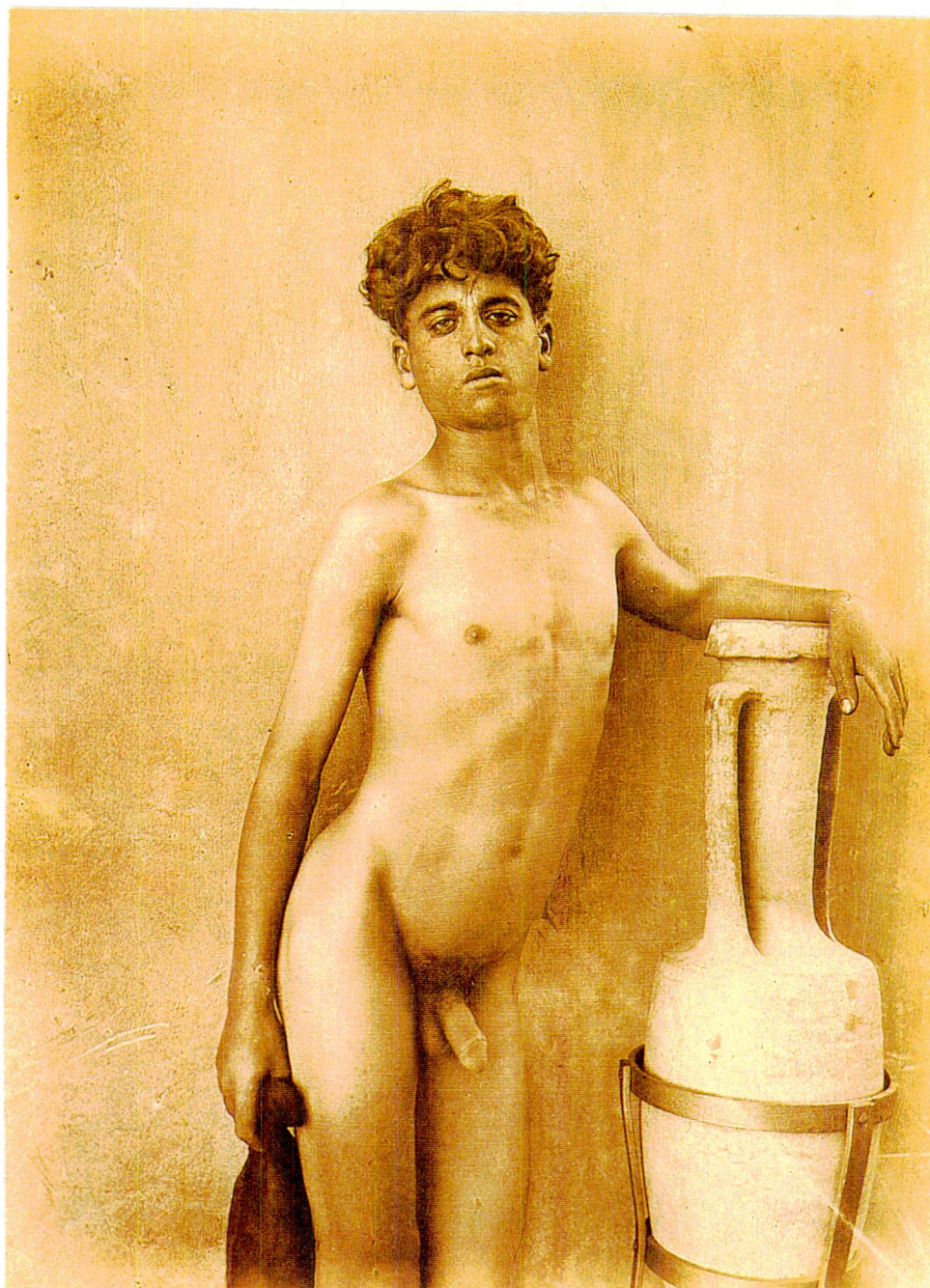


Fig. 10 - Von Gloeden, Taormina, 1900.





Fig. 10 - Von Gleditsia, Tasmania, 1900.





Fig. 11 - "Boy wearing floral wreath", Von Gloeden, 1900.





Fig. 11 - "Boy wearing floral wreath", Von Gleditsch

1900.

Part 4       -       Julia Margaret Cameron

A friend and contemporary of Carroll's, English portrait photographer Julia Margaret Cameron, though not specifically a photographer of children, produced some of the most beautiful and compelling images of children of the period. They are neither erotic, nor charged with shades of questionable motives of any kind. They are simply beautiful and powerful images of children, yet somehow there is something more. As the images themselves will attest, there is a presence, a suggestion. But this time the suggestion is of another kind. Like all photographers of this period, the long exposure times made stiff wooden posing a necessity and yet a relationship between artist and model is still in evidence. There is trust, love, a sense of acceptance and safety reflected in the relaxed faces of the subjects of these images. Unlike the over sincere clowning of von Gloeden's child models, or the artificiality of Carroll's slightly self-conscious nymphettes, Cameron's children seem to breath a sigh of relief, suggestive of the thought, "It's o.k. I'm with my mother", and in a number of these images that was indeed the case. (Figs. 12, 13 and 14).

A camera measures light onto a photo-sensitive plate through a moveable aperture. It is simply light and shadow. But an image is captured with these lights and shadows, and with



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A camera measures light onto a photo-sensitive plate through a movable aperture. It is simply light and shadow. But an image is captured with these lights and shadows, and with

these images a story is told. A big part of this story is its emotional content; the relationships between artist and model can involve as diverse elements as fear, enslavement, love and loathing, and all the myriad shades of trust and distrust. And as different personalities respond to these relationships in their various ways, it is these responses in nuance, gesture and body language that is going to be recorded in light and shadow in the form of a photographic plate. And it is the element of trust in these relationships that Cameron as a loved mother and grandmother, would be particularly suited to inspire. It is this trust that she was photographing, and it is even in evidence in her adult subjects, generally eccentric old men.

Julia Margaret Cameron's motherly qualities and almost hysterical generosity is legendary. For example, "As nothing could stop the embarrassing flow of presents, Henry Taylor finally took to sending cheques to Mrs. Cameron's bank for their value. On one occasion however, the Taylors were defeated. Mrs. Taylor had accepted a particularly valuable shawl only under threat that otherwise it would be thrown into the fire. After an interval to allow Mrs. Cameron's feelings to calm down, it was returned, and nothing more was said. But it was impossible to defeat Mrs. Cameron. She sold the shawl, and with the proceeds bought an expensive invalid's sofa, which she presented in Mrs. Taylors

these images - they are not of the same order as the emotional elements in relationships between children. And it is the emotional elements as fear, enmeshment, love and hatred, and all the myriad shades of these, and distant. And as different personalities respond to these relationships in their various ways, it is these responses to advance, gesture and body language that is going to be recorded in light and shadow in the form of a photographic plate. And it is the element of trust in these relationships that Cameron as a loved mother and grandmother, would be particularly suited to inspire. It is this trust that was photography, and it is even in evidence in her adult subjects, generally eccentric old men.

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name to the hospital for incurables at Putney. The matter came to light many months later when Alice Taylor had occasion to visit the hospital and, to her astonishment, saw her name inscribed as donor".

In 1850 Alice Taylor writes,

"I have quite made up my mind about her and like her very much. She is a fine, generous creature with many virtues and talents, but her great gift is that of loving and forgetting herself".

(Gernsheim, 1975, p.19)

She reads her biography, on an on like this. Julia Margaret Cameron was from all descriptions available, a human volcano of love and compassion to the point of near madness. Stories of her goodness far outshadow any references as to her being a photographer.

On the subject of photography she herself writes,

"I believe in other than more conventional topographic photography; map making and skeleton rendering of feature and form without that roundness and fullness of force and feature, that modelling of flesh and limb, which the focus I use, only can give. Tho' called and condemned as 'out of focus', what is focus, and who has a right to say what focus is legitimate focus?"

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"I have quite made up my mind about her and like her very much. She is a fine, generous creature with virtues and talents, but her great gift is that of loving and forgetting herself."  
(Gernsheim, 1937, p. 107)

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On the subject of photography she herself writes:  
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"My aspirations are to ennoble photography and to secure for it the character and uses of high art by combining the real and ideal on sacrificing nothing of the truth by all possible deviation to poetry and beauty. But I need not tell you what my aims and efforts are. Your eye can best detect and your imagination conceive all that is to be done and is still left undone".

(Gernsheim, 1975, P.14)

Right there she stores it in grandiose expletives typical of the period. Her goal is to capture something of a greater substance than mere surface truth, or superficial accuracy. She is looking for the most ennobling element present in all beauty. And as is reiterated repeatedly in her biography, Julia Cameron's highest priority, her deepest reality was love. And it was this aspect in her relationship with her subjects that she sought to capture in her photographs, I believe successfully. (Figs. 15, 16 and 17).

"But I need not tell you what my aims and efforts are. Your eye can best detect and your imagination conceive all that is to be done and is still left undone".

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Fig. 12 - "Kate Keown", J.M. Cameron, 1866.





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Fig. 13 - "Florence Fisher", J.M. Cameron, 1872.





Fig. 13 - "Florence Fisher", J.M. Cameron, 1873.



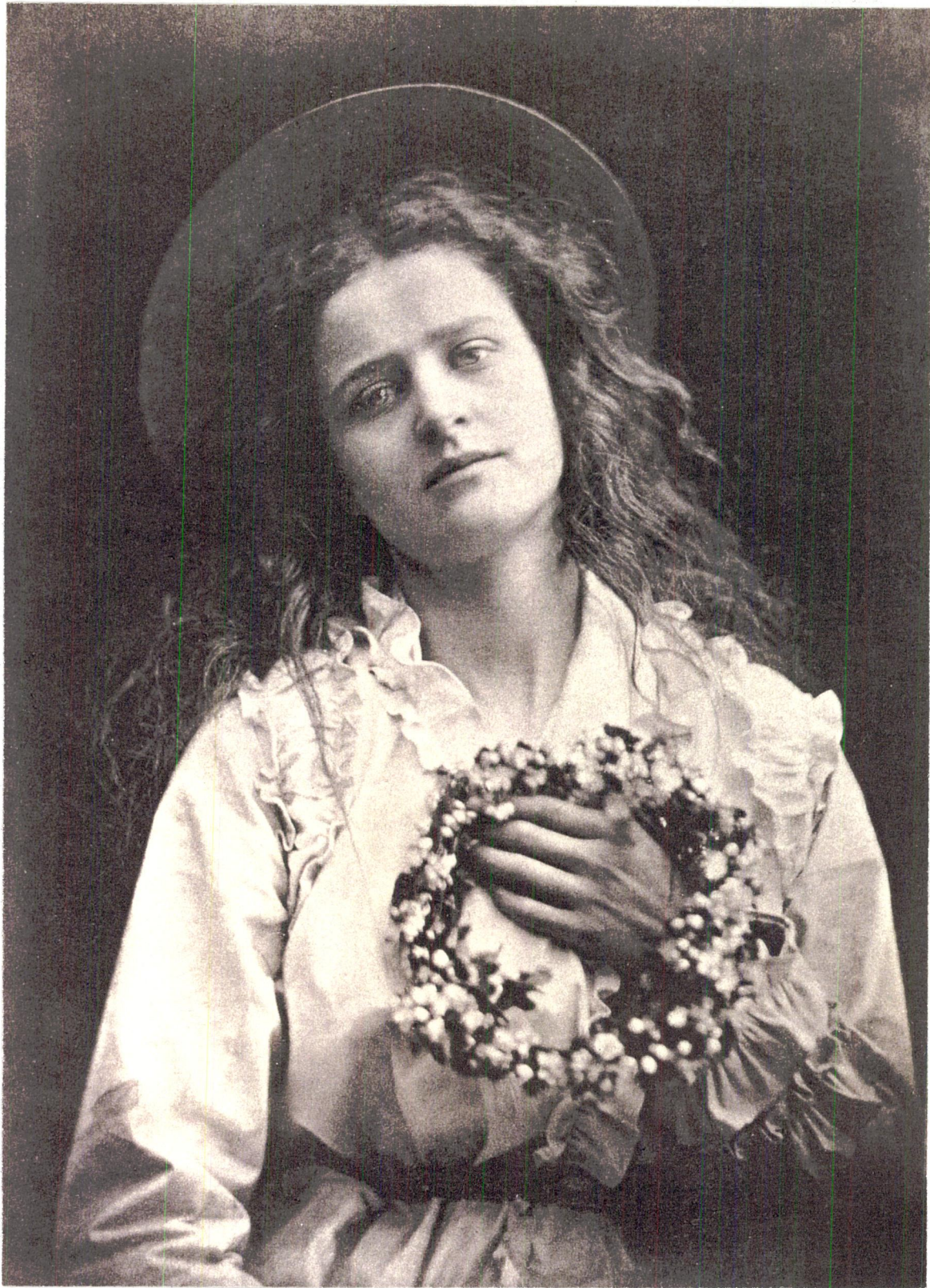


Fig. 14 - "The May Queen", May Prinsep, J.M. Cameron, 1874.





Fig. 14 - "The May Queen", May Princess, J.M. Cameron

1874





Fig. 15 - "The Kiss of Peace", Mary Hiller, J.M. Cameron, 1869.





Fig. 15 - "The Kiss of Peace", Mary Miller, 1869.

Cameron, 1869.





Fig. 16 - "Divine Love", Mary Hiller, J.M. Cameron, 1865.





Fig. 16 - "Divine Love", Mary Miller, J.M. Cameron

1865





Fig. 17 - "Summer Days", J.M. Cameron, 1866.



Fig. 17 - "Summer Days", J. M. Cameron, 1866.



## CHAPTER 2 : PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

### Part 1 - Introduction to twentieth century photography.

The twentieth century as it unfolded saw the photographer as "artiste", outnumbered and overrun by the 'picture-man', a class of commercial photographers documenting weddings, christenings, funerals, graduations, you name it he was there. Photographs documented and in many ways regulated the kinds of rituals that punctured our comings and goings by providing a permanent record to compare with the lives of our fellows.

All of that was to change with the mass marketing of the Kodak 'Brownie', an easy to use box camera, the film on a roll of celluloid instead of glass which allowed anyone who cared to, take pictures of anything they wanted. It was a revelation and revolution. 'Candid' images of the most informal and intimate settings became common currency in the lives of people all over the world. Snapshots of our children and loved ones flooded but never completely replaced the posed family portraits by professionals. What it changed was what we thought a photographic image should be. Combine this with the impact of advertising, which as the years progressed, established itself in every possible setting and

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every available space, presenting us with an almost generic 'intimate' family scene. This was nowhere as advanced as in the United States in the 1950's, where as a popular image the happy American family was sold to the world.

'Real life' and advertising became almost interchangeable. Our children taking baths, blowing out birthday candles, running around in pyjamas, or playing in the sun with a garden hose became universal images which were packaged and sold back to us as live insurance, food products, fashionwear, whatever. As our loves, fears, aspirations and insecurities, our very mortality, the inescapable transience of life was skillfully manipulated by advertising agencies, generating countless fortunes, the 'avant-garde' of art photographers limped along addressing often dry, formalist aesthetic problems. The most dramatic work being produced by photojournalists and the 'action' photographers, many of whom emerged from World War II, and were now using their knack for drama in publications such as Look, Life and National Geographic. All of these published and widely distributed some of the most compelling and effective images in the mid twentieth century.

By the 1960s innovations in lenses, colour, lighting and processing encouraged a popular surge towards the world of fantasy. Due to the social and sexual revolution in the

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fantasy. Due to the social and sexual revolution in the



wealthier countries and the growing popularity of psychedelic drug use among the middle class, a definite effect on photographers in general was seen. The work produced is now known as 'popular photography'.

For reasons that nobody can easily explain people in modern contexts were beginning to see themselves differently. One would suppose that this sense of changing had always been the case among affluent educated white people. However, whatever the playful distortions that amused so many photographers in the 1960s, nobody could have been prepared for the cold isolating shock that was the narcissistic obsession with young flesh in the 1970s.

Improvements in filmstock and processing gradually expanded the palette of visual style. Popular photographers, on their myriad quest for meaning or novelty, dispersed in every possible stylistic direction.

Of course it is easier to express ideas about photography than it is to photograph an idea. But in the period of examination that followed the '70s, ideas became more important to the artists themselves as specialization has been one of the principal ways that a photographer can establish a 'career' outside of purely commercial pursuits. Inevitably justifications and explanations would advance along the same specific lines as the images themselves.

...the growth of the photographic industry in the United States and the growing popularity of photography in the United States. The work of the photographer in general was seen as a technical and artistic effort to capture the world as it is, known as 'popular photography'.

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As there are a number of photographers since the '70s that chose the theme of children (some semi-clad, others naked) as their primary visual resource, one would think there would be a lot of justification and back pedalling surrounding use of such universal yet strangely modern taboo. This, however, is not the case.

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Part 2       -       David Hamilton.

Our first study is a photographer name David Hamilton, who comes out of the 'technique and light effects' school of the 1960s, graduating to the 'pink and bouncy' seventies. His oeuvre is young naked girls, his unconcealed obsession, bathed in evening light, standing or lying in suggestive poses, fondling each others hair, and arching their backs in ballet poses. (Figs 18 - 22). This staged and decorative work was immensely popular during the 1970s in Great Britain, France, Germany and the United States.

According to Liliane James (writer of Hamilton's introductions) it is,

"important to recall how many horizons seemed to open to the civilized world during this decade, to realize that 'Dreams of Young Girls' (this first album of photographs) were dreams shared by a freer, more aware, less violent society. Among those new freedoms, which promised to change one's life, there was one which touched us the most deeply: sexual liberty. By depicting the intrinsic eroticism of adolescents, Hamilton sought to give us a new perspective, free from the constraints within which such a subject had, until then, been imprisoned. His photographs would have had no impact had he used older women as models. It is youth itself that we find disconcerting".

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During the 1970s, Hamilton's naked young girls may well have been considered innocent and pure, 'a breath of fresh air', but through today's eyes the gauzy diffused atmosphere and the often vacant faraway gazes of his nubile models have now become so confrontational as to effectively promote their pornographic value. (Figs. 23 - 27).

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Fig. 18 - D. Hamilton, 1995.





Fig. 18 - D. Hamilton, 1995.



Fig. 19 - D. Hamilton, 1995.





Fig. 19. D. Hamilton, 1992.





Fig. 20 - "Heidi and Mona", Ramatueile, D. Hamilton, 1972.





Fig. 20 - "Heidi and Mona", Ramatuelle, D. Hamilton

1972





Fig. 21 - "The young dancer", South of France,  
D. Hamilton, 1985.





Fig. 21 - "The young dancer", South of France,

D. Hamilton, 1985.





Fig. 22 - "Shameless", Chateau Sant-Ame, D. Hamilton, 1978.



Fig. 22 - "Shameless", Chateau Saint-Amé, D. Hamilton,

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Fig. 23 - "Rowena", South of France, D. Hamilton, 1985.





Fig. 23 - "Rowena", South of France, D. Hamilton, 1982





Fig. 24 - "The Red Velvet", Paris, D.Hamilton, 1985.







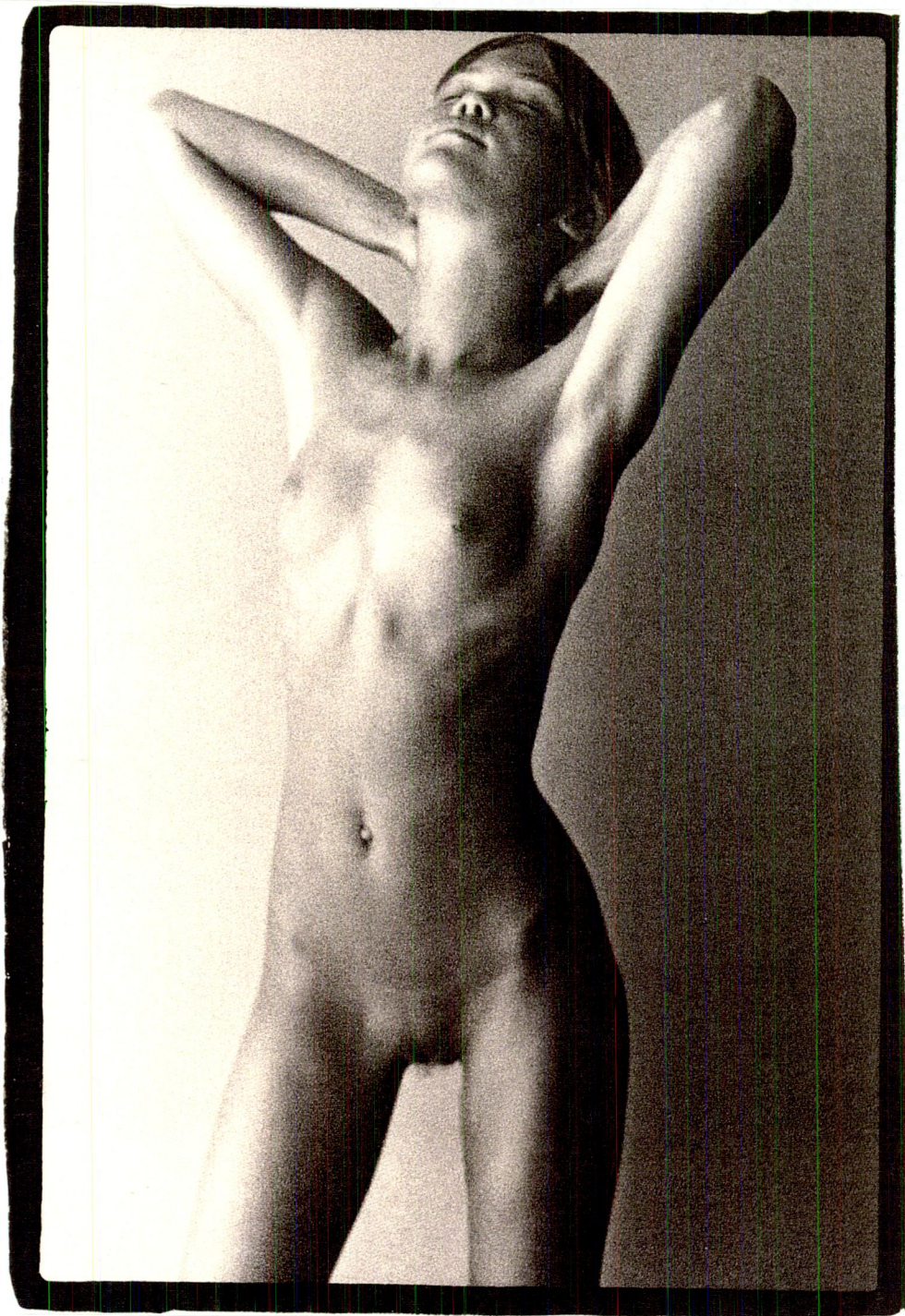


Fig. 25 - "Lena", South of France, D. Hamilton, 1979.





Fig. 25 - "Lena", South of France, D. Hamilton, 1979.



Fig. 26 - D. Hamilton, 1985.





Fig. 36 - D. Hamilton, 1985.



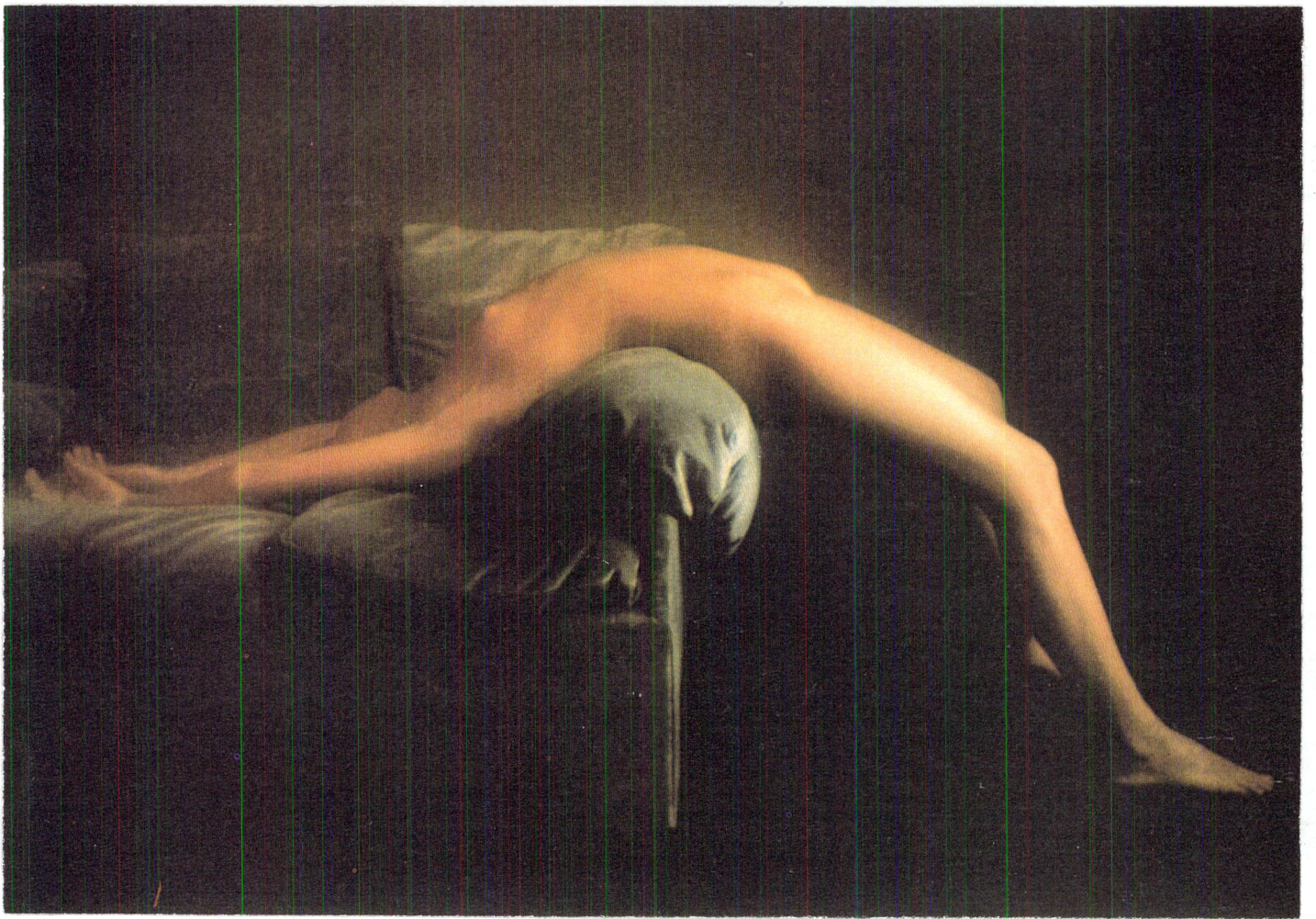


Fig. 27 - D. Hamilton, 1985.





Part 3       -       Larry Clarke.

Hamilton's approach provides a contrast to the fly-on-the-wall realism of American photographer Larry Clarke. Clarke was essentially a drug-addled drifter with a camera, documenting his life in the crash-pads and shooting galleries in the American mid-west (Tulsa, Oklahoma). These images are of runaways, throwaways, drop-outs, junkies, hustlers and the simply lost. These are the children that the all-American family finds so disposable. Some of these images are indeed shocking, young bodies and minds scarred from years of abuse, the ferocious sexual contortions of the hopeless. Every combination and penetration is meticulously explored as these numb urchins comfort each other physically. This work is as erotically charged as can be, yet it is somehow less staged and more honest than gentler, less sexually explicit material. One gets the feeling that Clarke was simply taking pictures of what was going on at the time, be it sex, sleep, shooting up, selling stolen stereos, speed, or their own bodies. It is a stark look at "street" kids. It is pointless to interrogate Clarke as to whether he participated in the sex and drugs portrayed in the images, as it is pointless to have a world that makes people lived in this way. In this particular instance, to judge the artist, the subject or the setting is almost an impossibility without first assuming a position of moral superiority, a hopeless



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Part 4 - Jock Sturges.

Another contemporary photographer of specifically young girls is Jock Sturges. His beautiful documentation of the affluent inhabitants of various naturists beaches in France, Northern California, and East Coast summer resorts show real people who are at ease with both nature, the camera and themselves. These people and young women here modelled for Sturges over a period of years at the same places each summer. In these images Sturges achieves both a blend of innocence and sensuality, moving through these peoples lives capturing the growth from childhood to adolescents, documenting the development of sexuality in the most lucid manner.

Not all of Sturges's models are naked, but those that are, particularly the young girls that are photographed, approach the camera with such a confident gaze that we respond to these pictures in a completely different way to the work of Hamilton. These clear black and white images have no need for diffused atmospheres or floating chiffon scarves. (Figs 28 - 31).

Due to the media climate of the past decade which is still burning today, Sturges work has caused him a great deal of difficulty with the Federal Bureau of investigation.



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Due to the media climate of the past decade which has put pornography today, Sturges work has caused him a great deal of difficulty with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

In 1990 the F.B.I. raided his San Francisco studio and confiscated his entire body of work, citing violation of child pornography laws. However shocking or upsetting this may have been for him at the time, there was a knock-on effect in that citizens, artists and the media responded with outrage, thus creating a great deal of public interest in his work. Consequently books were published and exhibitions arranged so that the public could decide for itself what child pornography is and is not.

So, on the one hand, it is a terrible thing when the powers that be find it necessary to persecute artists and suppress their work. On the other hand, it is not the frenzy created around this persecuted art that is the foundation for its popularity? In fact, it is not true that in the confused and jaded world of the contemporary arts it is controversy alone that sells? It is as if these beautifully crafted photographs of 'gorgeous', sunbronzed young women were a looking glass that would reflect something different depending on who is looking. What are you? Are you worldly and sexually liberated? Or, are you uptight? Are you a bold protector of the innocent? Or, are you a drooling pervert? Do you appreciate beauty? Or do you just want to hide it away? Why? For your own personal pleasure, or the good of the world?

All of these images become a moral litmus test for whoever



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All of these images become a moral litmus test for whoever

sees them. And there is no way to know for sure what anyone else is seeing.

Jock Sturges, in article after article, meticulously examines, re-examines and explains his process, his intentions, the atmosphere of trust and good will that he takes care to maintain. He is quite monotonous in his sensitivity and good intentions. He simply wants to capture the beauty he sees before him, and he does. (Figs. 32 - 35).

"The result of this long-term communal effort, is one of the most clear-eyed, responsible investigations of puberty and the emergence of sexuality in the medium's history". (Coleman, 1993, Pg. 29). But, they are still pictures of naked young girls/women. No amount of tactful dialogue will change the kind of neurotic response that our contemporary world has when confronted with vulnerability.

The authority structure that in theory is in place to protect us, occasionally decides to destroy us for our own good. However, as one might expect from an artist still in his early thirties, Sturges has an uneven and unresolved body of work. "The sudden prominence into which it has been thrust is not one it achieved on its own intrinsic merits, in a state of abruptly arrested development, it has been rudely pushed centre-stage, not especially to its benefit". (Coleman, 1993, pg. 29).



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Fig. 28 - "Misty Dawn", Northern California, J. Sturges, 1992.



Fig. 28 - "Misty Dawn", Northern California, J. Sturges

1992





Fig. 29 - "Marie Et Bettina", Montavilet, France,  
J. Sturges, 1992.



Fig. 29 - "Marie Et Bettina", Montaville, France

J. Sturges, 1902.

55.





Fig. 30 - "Marine; Last Day of Summer 1", Montavilet, France, J. Sturges, 1989.



Fig. 30 - "Marine; Last Day of Summer" I, Montauk

France, J. Sturges, 1939





Fig. 31 - "Catherine and Angela", Block Island, Rhode  
Island, J. Sturges, 1983.



Fig. 21 - "Catherine and Angela", Block Island, Rhode

Island, J. Sturges, 1963.



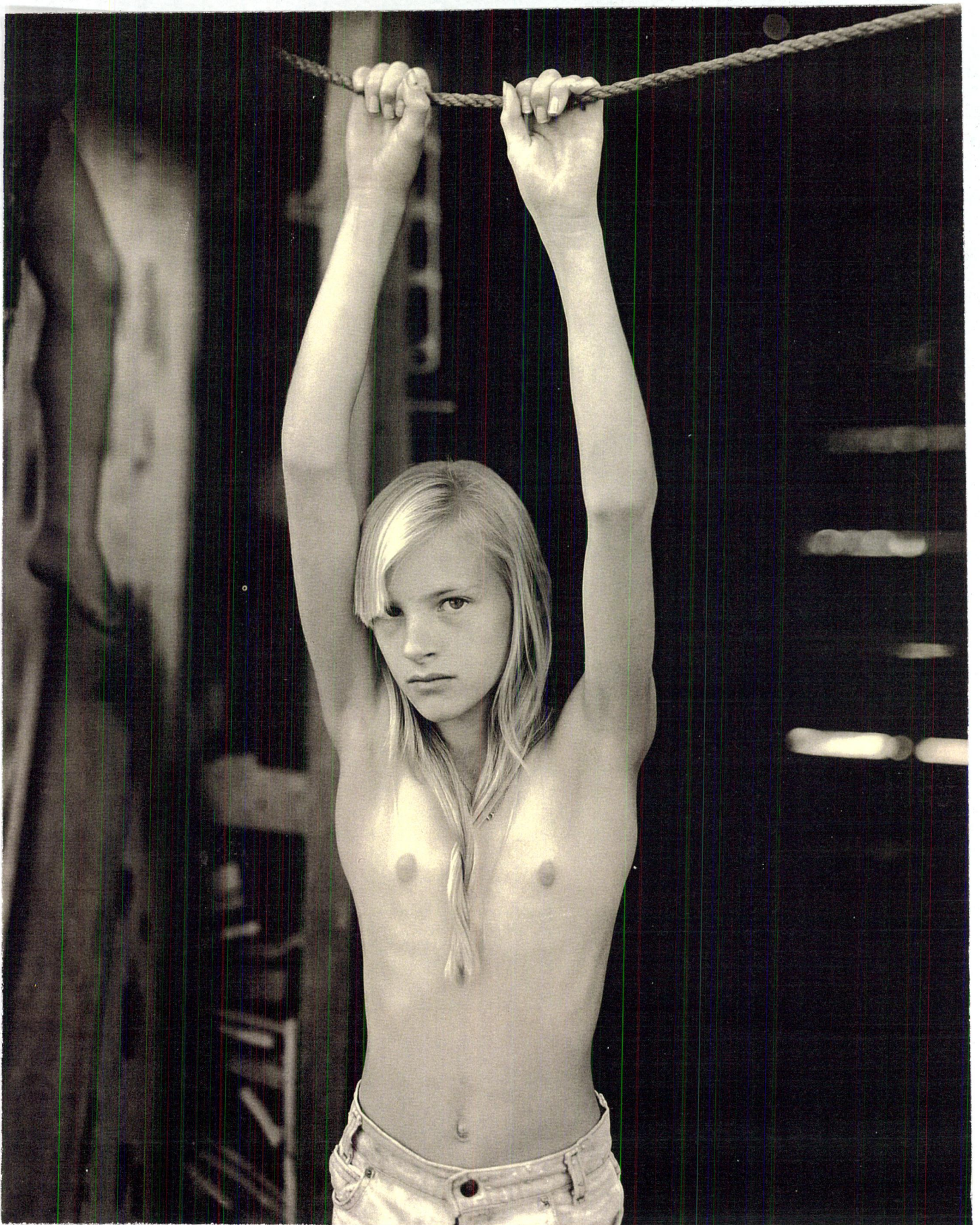


Fig. 32 - "Misty Dawn", Northern California, J. Sturges, 1991.



Fig. 32 - "Misty Dawn", Northern California, J. Burgess.

1931.





Fig. 33 - "Fan Chen", Northern California, J. Sturges, 1978.



Fig. 33 - "Fan Chen", Northern California, J. Sturges.

1978



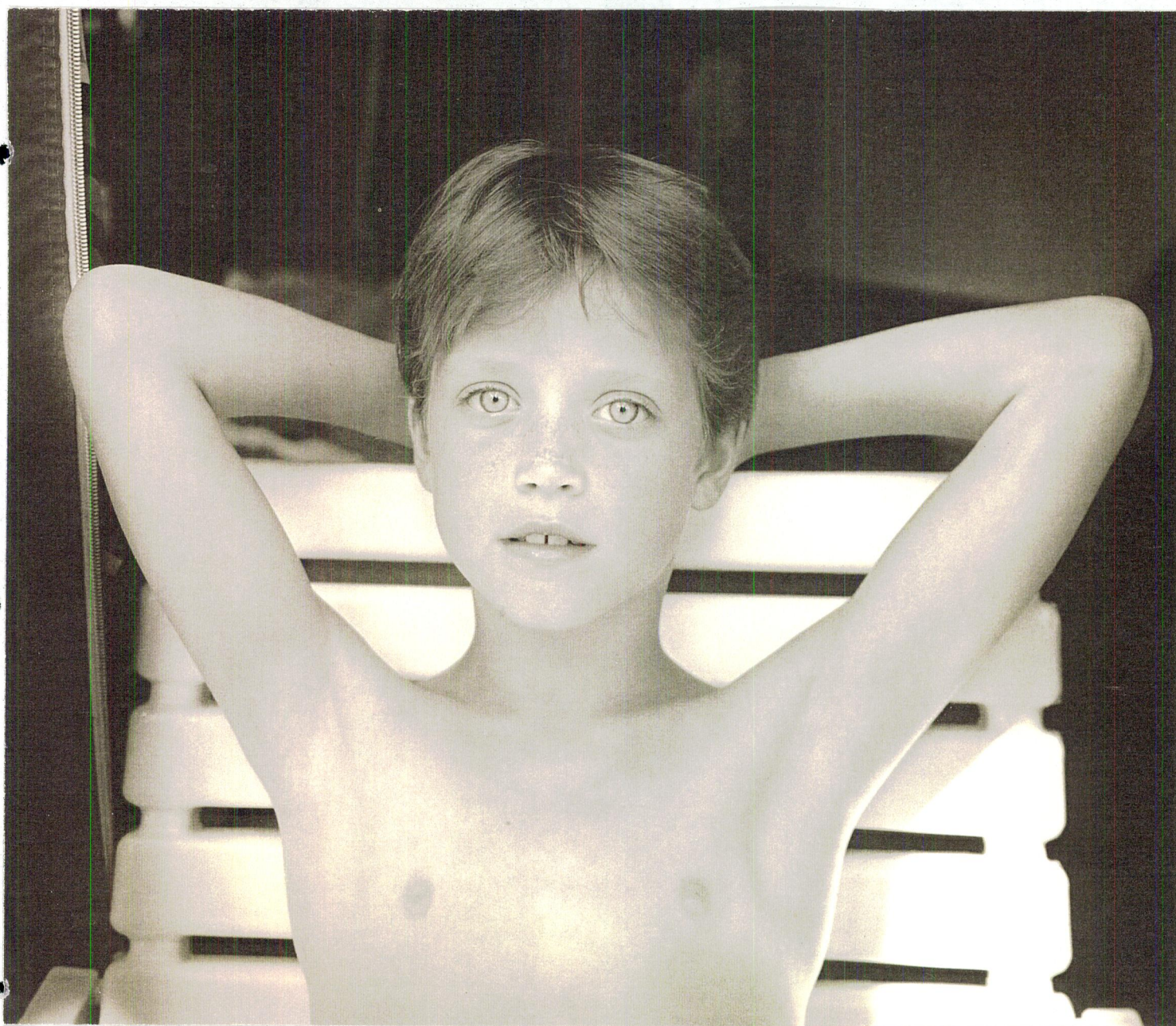


Fig. 34 - "Anike", Montavilet, France, J. Sturges, 1988.





Fig. 34. "Anike", Montavilet, France, J. Sturges, 1983.





Fig. 35 - "Misty Dawn", Northern California, J. Sturges, 1990.



Fig. 35 - "Misty Dawn", Northern California, J. Sturges.

1990.

41.

Part 5       -       Robert Mapplethorpe and Walter Chappell.

Other notable photography prosecutions during 1990 focused upon the photography of Walter Chappell and Robert Mapplethorpe. In January 1990 Federal officers in Maine instituted a forfeiture action against a photograph by Chappell, entitled "Father and Son", which the government characterized as a "lascivious exhibition of adult male genitals touching a young child". (Stanley, 1991, Pg. 22). The photograph, which was discovered by customs officials in a routine border search as it was being transported from Canada to its owner in the United States, shows Chappell with an erect penis holding his son. Neither Chappell's nor his son's face is visible in the work. Once the government learned that the photograph had been published in a book ten years earlier by "Harper and Row", a major American publisher, and after receiving a good deal of negative publicity, the prosecution was dropped.

In September 1990, a Cincinnati jury acquitted the Cincinnati Contemporary Arts Centre and its director Dennis Barrie, on charges of pandering obscenity and using minors in child pornography. The latter charges were based on the exhibition of two photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe of nude and partly nude children taken with the permission of their parents and depicting no sexual activity.



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The first photograph is entitled "Rosie" (1976), often mistakenly known as "Honey". It is of a four year old girl shown sitting on an ornamental garden bench with her dress pulled up in such a way that her genital opening is exposed. It is not clear as to whether her dress was arranged like this, she was told to pull it up or, maybe it just fell in such a way as to reveal herself unawares. (Fig. 36).

The second is of a young boy "Jesse McBride" (1976) who posed on a chair without any clothes at all. (Fig. 37) The explanation for Jesse being naked comes from his mother, who says that he had been running around their apartment like this and wouldn't stay still. "It was all done in a spirit of fun and innocence", she recalled. "I don't know how anyone could describe it as 'child pornography'".

(Morrisroe, 1995, Pg. 167)

Mapplethorpe's photographs of children are rarely fixed and stationary, as it is a well known fact that one can almost never succeed in getting a young child to do exactly what they are asked. According to Patricia Morrisroe it was not in Mapplethorpe's nature to coerce children to do things against their will. (Morrisroe, 1995, pg. 167) So, perhaps it was more the association of these children's photographs being exhibited amongst such explicit S and M images that begs the child pornography issue. "Rosie" has since been



The first photograph is a full-length portrait of a young girl, identified as "Honey", sitting on an ornamental garden bench with her back to the camera. She is wearing a light-colored dress and has her hair styled in a bun. The photograph is captioned "Honey" (Fig. 36). It is not clear as to whether her dress was arranged in this way or if she was told to pull it up or, maybe, it just fell in such a way as to reveal herself unaware. (Fig. 36).

The second is of a young boy "Jesse McBride" (1976) who posed on a chair without any clothes at all. (Fig. 37). The explanation for Jesse being naked comes from his mother, who says that he had been running around their apartment like this and wouldn't stay still. "It was all done in a spirit of fun and innocence," she recalled. "I don't know if anyone could describe it as 'child pornography'." (Morrison, 1995, pg. 167).

Mapplethorpe's photographs of children are rarely taken in a studio, as it is a well-known fact that one can almost never succeed in getting a young child to do exactly what they are asked. According to Patricia Morrison it was not Mapplethorpe's nature to coerce children to do things against their will. (Morrison, 1995, pg. 167). It was more the association of these children's photographs being exhibited amongst such explicit and Mapplethorpe's photographs being the child pornography issue. "Rosalie" has been named

"hastily withdrawn" from both the Hayward Gallery, London (Nov. 1996), and the Gallery of Photography, Dublin. (December 1996 - January 1997).



"Bobby W. Brown" from both the Hayward Gallery, London  
(Nov. 1996), and the Gallery of Photography, Dublin  
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Fig. 36 - "Rosie", R. Mapplethorpe, 1976.





Fig. 36 - "Rosie", R. Mapplethorpe, 1976



Fig. 37 - "Jesse McBride", R. Mapplethorpe, 1976.



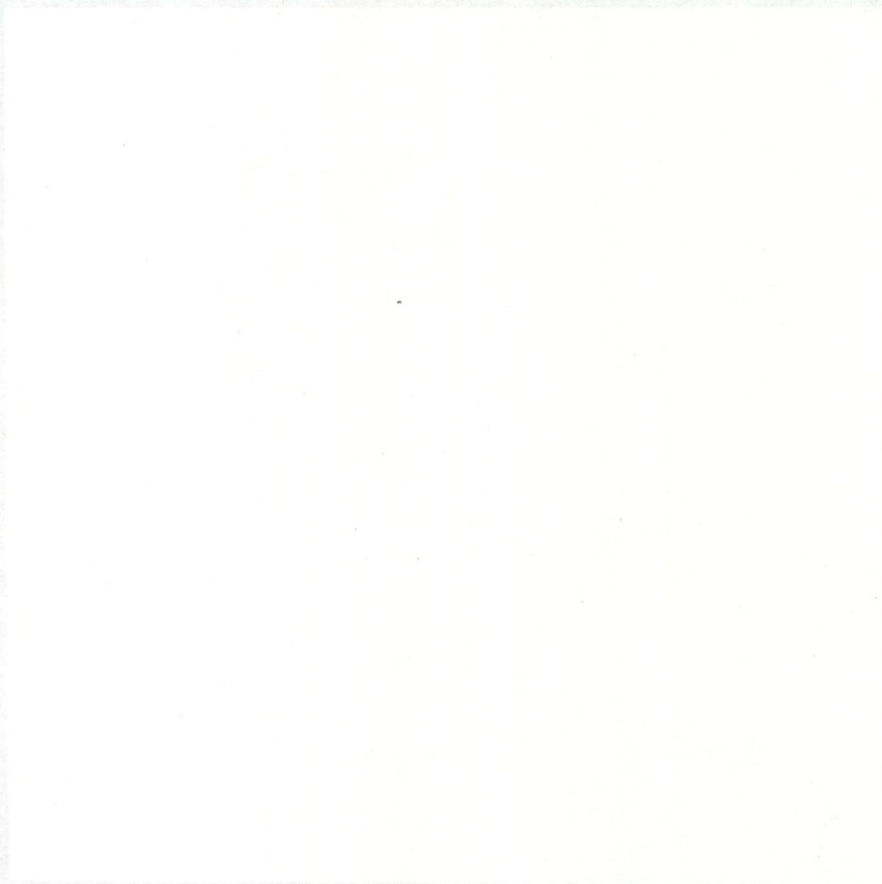


Fig. 37 - "Jesse McBride", R. Mapplethorpe, 1976.

Part 6       -       Photographic laws and regulations.

The current campaign in America to ban depictions of nude minors began around 1973, when the moral crusaders Julianne Densen-Gerber and Anita Bryant, among others, stormed the country to "save the children" from alleged widespread sexual exploitation by perverts and photographs.

These crusades and their small cadre of purported "experts" generated so much hysteria, and so distorted the issues and facts, that it appeared to many that failure by the American public to respond swiftly with draconian measures could herald the end of civilization itself. Densen-Gerber falsely claimed, among other things, that more than 250 child-pornography magazines were being published each month, that as many as 1.2 million American children were being kidnapped and/or forced into prostitution or to pose for child pornographers and perverts, and that child pornography was readily available in every adult bookstore in America. Others who testified before congress told tall tales of snuff films and chains of bordellos throughout the U.S., where children were kept under lock and key. One reporter even claimed that "according to Federal Statistics", child pornography was a "highly organized \$46 billion nation industry, involving a loose network of 2.4 million youngsters". Of course no such statistic existed. The



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claimed that "according to Federal Statistics", child pornography was a "highly organized \$46 billion national industry involving a loose network of 3.4 million 'youngsters'". Of course no such statistic existed. The

veracity of such claims is belied by a number of studies that have demonstrated that Commercial Child Pornography had almost disappeared from adult bookstores by 1978.

Despite the facts, the religious right and anti-porn feminists had finally found a volatile issue through which to press their agenda to rid the U.S. of pornography and perversion. Bible thumpers fumed about "Sadam and Camorra", law enforcement authorities called for more funding and greater power to investigate citizens. The anti-porn lobby proclaimed child-pornography to be the logical conclusion of the sexual revolution of the 1960s, whose ultimate goal, they believed, was the complete subjugation of women and children to male sexual desire.

Nearly every newspaper in the country carried editorials and articles in support of these crusaders. As in wartime, few asked the more difficult questions regarding actions on the front lines. It was only important that the war be won.

In 1978, the first Federal Child Pornography law took effect in the U.S., and in the ten years that followed, it was amended twice to prescribe an ever increasing list of activities. At the same time, law enforcement agency budgets to investigate child pornography mushroomed and a massive effort was begun to compile intelligence information on



Veronica. I am sure it is being handled in a proper manner. I have demonstrated that Communist child pornography has almost disappeared from adult bookstores by 1978.

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suspected perverts. States also began to pass their own Child-porn laws, some describing nudity or partial nudity as erotic nudity, or photographs that might sexually stimulate the viewer.

In 1984, due to the U.S. Government's singularly unimpressive arrest and conviction rate of child-pornography related crimes and cries from the right for still tougher legislation, Congress amended Federal Law to prohibit the receipt of child pornography. This move allowed the government to embark on a massive campaign to market and sell child pornography to unsuspecting individuals who were merely curious or had thought that they had found what they were looking for. As a result, between 1985 and 1989 thousands of individuals were arrested, convicted and sentenced to terms ranging anywhere from probation to ten years in prison for purchasing a magazine or video-tape from government agents posing as child pornography dealers. Convictions under these sting operations in fact, comprise the vast majority of all related kiddie-porn convictions. One might also observe that in order to launch such an operation, the U.S. government would necessarily become one of the biggest, if not the biggest kiddie-porn distribution network in the world. This is an irony one hopes is not wasted on the anti-porn lobby so desperately trying to enlist the law enforcement agencies to protect them against male-sexual aggression.



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### CHAPTER 3 : SALLY MANN

The contemporary photographer Sally Mann has written of her work,

"These are photographs of my children living their lives here too. Many of these pictures are intimate, some are fictions and some are fantastic, but most are of ordinary things every mother has seen a wet bed (Fig. 38), a bloody nose (Fig.39), candy cigarettes (Fig. 40). They dress up, they pout and posture, they paint their bodies, they dive like others in the dark river. They have been involved in the creative process since infancy. At times it is difficult to say exactly who makes the pictures. Some are gifts to me from my children. Gifts that come in a moment as fleeting as the touch of an angels wings.....

When the good pictures came, we hope they tell truths, but truths 'told slant' just as Emily Dickenson commanded. We are spinning a story of what is to grow up, it is a complicated story and sometimes we try to take on the grand themes; anger, love, death, sensuality and beauty. But we tell it all without fear and without shame".

(Mann, 1992, extract from intro.Nopg )



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(Mann, 1992, extract from *John Mago*)

Out of this long and varied tradition of child photography, and because of, or in spite of the current climate of repression, Sally Mann has emerged.

Born in 1951 in Lexington, Virginia, she has been taking the American "family album" to new worlds of emotion and sensitivity. The photographs of her children have literally captured the American imagination. The sense of a sacred bond of trust between mother and child, artist and model is very evident in her lush black and white explorations. They are all the more dramatic in the climate of suspicion that clouds the institutions of family, marriage and child rearing. The U.S. State has been called upon to quell child abuse and rampant perversion that is felt to have infected the very fabric of society. The paranoia has become so endemic, that in Mann's most recent exhibition at the Houk Friedman Gallery in New York, she decided to withdraw an image "The Three Graces" from the show out of fear of controversy, not a notion that is commonly associated with Mann. She kept the picture behind the scenes, and in this instance, perhaps wisely so, for "The Three Graces" would certainly have incited critical comment if no serious trouble.

A self portrait of the artist, who wears an unhinged expression and nothing else, is shown with her hips thrust



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A self portrait of the artist, who wears an unadorned  
expression and nothing else, is shown with her three

forward at the viewer next to her daughters, Jessie 14, and Virginia 10, also nude but seen from the rear. The family trio stands shoulder to shoulder urinating together, as though modelling for a ribald fountain of bacchus.

As an artistic advisor, Larry Mann, her husband of twenty five years, helped set-up the photograph under her direction, but as her lawyer, he strongly counselled against unveiling it in public. "He said he couldn't bail me out of jail if I put it in the show", she says. "I like the picture a lot, but it was the right decision not to include it. Everyone would have to write about how their newspaper or magazine couldn't publish it. I didn't want to create a sensation. I wanted people to slow down and look at the work in a different light".

(Woodward, 1996, Pg. 38).

Mann has been repeatedly attacked in the press since her 1992 travelling exhibition and the publishing of her book "Immediate family". She has been both famed and defamed as the mother who photographs her daughters Jesse and Virginia, and son Emmet, often unclothed and/or in sexually charged tableaux. (Fig. 41)

The pictures have made Mann, forty-four, a millionaire and one of the most talked about photographers of her generation.



followed at the viewer's feet to her daughter, Virginia, who was also nude but seen from the rear. The family's attitude towards the photograph was one of indifference, though modeling for a ribald fountain of bacchus.

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(Woodward, 1995, p. 105)

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The pictures have made Mann, forty-four, a millionaire and one of the most talked about photographers of her generation.

But they have also invited accusations from feminists, psychologists and other mothers, claiming she was an unfit parent, a trafficker in kiddie-porn, and a recovering sexual abuse victim in deep denial. "The questions that people raised were often quiet insulting, sometimes hurtful", she says. "The bad mother business. The presumption of my father's supposed sexual improprieties with me, that was excruciating to live through. Do I regret making and showing the pictures? No, but it was a difficult time".

(Woodward, 1996, pg. 39).

"I was stupid to be shocked by the effect these pictures would have on others", "and I was stupid to be shocked about the effect their comments would have on me. I've learned a lot".

(Woodward, 1996, pg. 39).

In many of her images Mann uses her camera as a way of gaining objectivity by placing the device between her and her beloved children. Other times, as in the photograph of a child lying on an operation table (Fig. 42), or the one of a nude boy's torso with popsickle drippings that look like blood (Fig. 43), she uses it to capture her worst maternal fears. There is often a sense of menace that child possesses, that many of us have forgotten. But there is still the question, why does this woman choose to photograph her children naked, swollen and hurt? (Figs. 44, 45 and 46).





Motherhood, Mann seems to be saying, is a role one can't help play with some ambivalence. But it is the role of mother that is the guarantee of her relationship with her subjects. She writes in the introduction of her second book,

"There's the paradox: we see the beauty and we see the dark side of things: the cornfields and the full sails, but the ashes as well. The japanese have a word for this dual perception - mono no aware, it means something like beauty tinged with sadness. How is it that we must hold what we love tight to us, against our very bones, knowing we must also, when the time comes let it go?"

(Mann, 1992, Intro.)



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(Mason, 1995, p. 10)





Fig. 38 - "The wet bed", S.Mann, 1987.









Fig. 39 - 'Emmets bloody nose', S. Mann, 1985.









Fig. 40 - 'Candy cigarette', S. Mann, 1989.



Fig. 40 - 'Candy cigarette', S. Mann, 1989.





Fig. 41 - 'Emmet, Jesse and Virginia', S. Mann, 1989.









Fig. 42 - 'Jesse's cut', S. Mann, 1985.



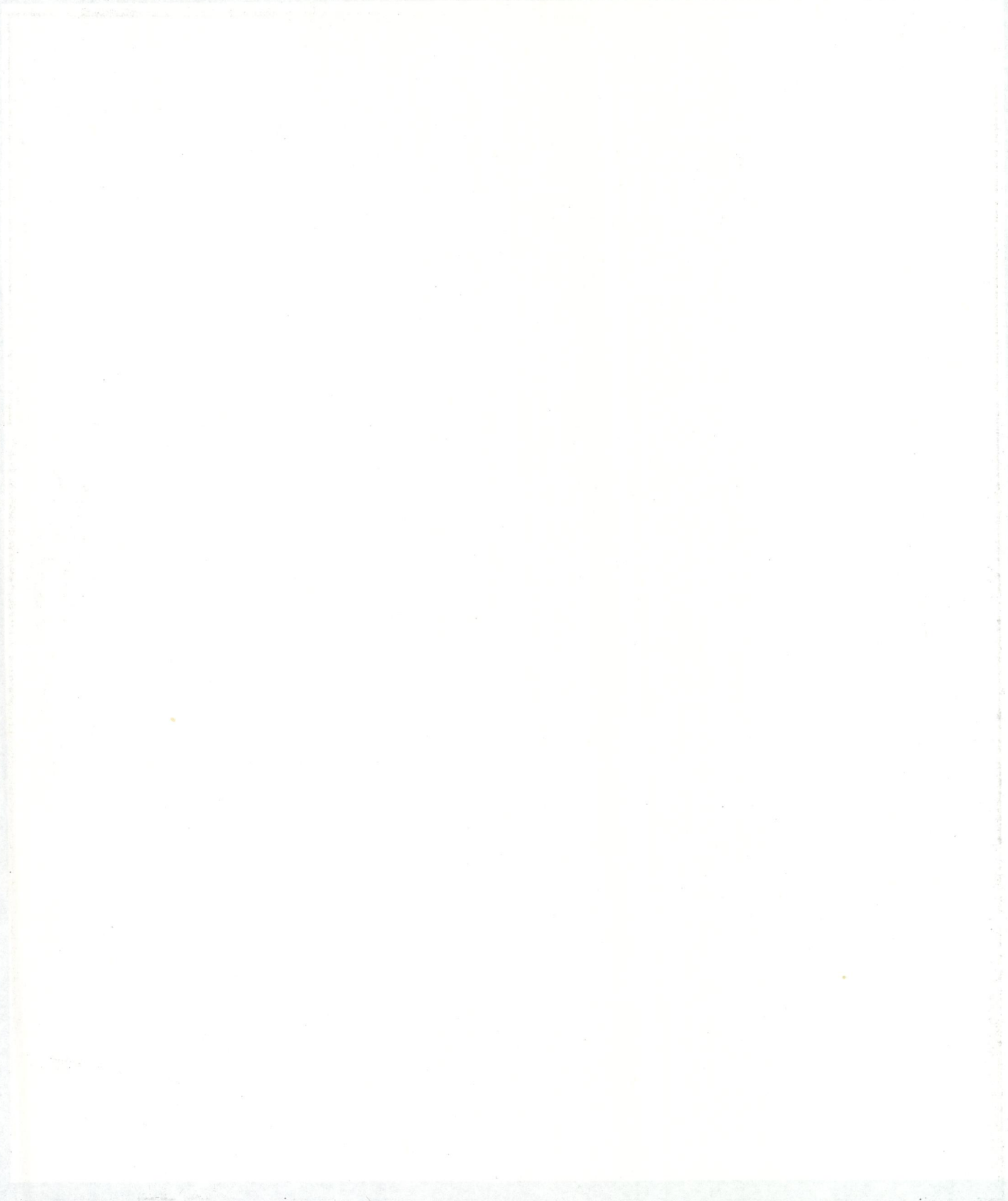


Fig. 42 - 'Jesse's cut', S. Mann, 1985.





Fig. 43 - 'Popsicle drips', S. Mann, 1985.





Fig. 43 - 'Popische draps', S. Mann, 1982.



Fig. 44 - 'Jesse at 6', S. Mann, 1988.









Fig. 45 - 'Damaged Child', S. Mann, 1984.





Fig. 42. 'Damaged Child', S. Mann, 1984.



Fig. 46 - 'The terrible picture', S. Mann, 1989.



Fig. 46 - 'The terrible picture', E. Mann, 1989.

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