FRANCES BENJAMIN JOHNSTON: IMAGING THE NEW WOMAN THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

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FRANCES BENJAMIN JOHNSTON: IMAGING THE NEW AMERICAN WOMAN THROUGH PHOTOGRAPHY

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ABSTRACT

At the end of the nineteenth century, Frances Benjamin Johnston’s photographs offer alternative images of the American woman that posed a stark contrast to the contrived illustrations found in magazines and the paintings by American artists found on museum and gallery walls. At the same time that illustrators and artists sought to reign in or tame women’s new freedoms, Johnston’s photographs presented another type of woman for real American women to identify with as well as giving the New Woman an outlet for representing herself. As a New Woman herself, Johnston was able to document the changing society and the blurring of (previously strict) gender roles through photography, a medium just as modern as the New Woman.

This thesis discusses the ways that Johnston promoted the ideal of the New Woman through her portrait photography and her self-portraits, her involvement in the Paris Exposition of 1900 as curator of the all-women’s photography exhibition, and her encouragement of women photographers, both amateur and professional, in popular literature. Johnston’s studio was of particular importance as a space that allowed both the sitter and photographer to explore different roles through portraiture. Her studio allowed her—and those she associated with—a space in which to create, experiment, and socialize in ways that the Victorian women before her never could.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

At the turn of the twentieth century, popular photography and print media were on the rise and more Americans than ever were taking advantage of the multitude of both, through access to portrait studios and popular magazines. Portraits were a fashionable way to represent oneself, while magazines allowed readers to gain access to prescriptive literature that told them exactly how to present themselves. Not surprisingly, the American public was offered a multitude of choices of who to be, what to look like, and what to buy in order to get that look. At the same time, a large number of American artists were building on and expanding the age-old artistic tradition of using the female body as a symbol of beauty. Painters and photographers alike created numerous works of art that portrayed women as other-worldly, pure, and allegorical.

Images of women were abundant at the turn of the century, regardless of the medium, whether it was photographic portraiture, popular advertising, or high art. In many cases, images of the American woman upheld the popular convention of the Cult of True Womanhood, the ideal that maintained that women should be chaste, domestic, submissive, and pious—a notion increasingly at odds with the reality of the New American Woman of the twentieth century, who was modern, educated, ambitious, and free from the constraints that had characterized her mother’s generation.¹ As the

designated keeper of the home, women were the largest and most-targeted consumers in
the increasingly commercialized market, and as such, representations of women were
especially important. Magazines employed illustrators such as Charles Dana Gibson to
depict women in such a way as to appear free-willed and “new,” while at the same time
adhering to the social prescriptions of Victorian society. When it came to taking portraits
(a newly-popular pastime for the new middle class), however, sitters were able to
collaborate with the photographer in creating their images and therefore had more agency
in defining how they were represented.

Frances Benjamin Johnston’s photographs offer alternative images of the
American woman in stark contrast to the contrived illustrations found in magazines and
the angelic waifs that appeared in paintings and sculpture. At the same time that the
creators of caricatures and unrealistic representations of women sought to reign in or
tame women’s new freedoms, Johnston’s images presented another type of woman for
real American women to identify with as well as gave the New Woman an outlet for
representing herself. As a New Woman herself, Johnston was able to document the
changing society and the blurring of (previously strict) gender roles through photography,
a medium just as modern as the New Woman. Amid the many different depictions and
characterizations of the American woman at the turn of the century, the portraits created
by Johnston provide valuable insight into how American women at the time perceived
themselves, both as they were and as they aspired to be. This thesis explores these topics,
as well as the importance of Johnston’s collaboration with other women photographers of
her time in order to argue that Johnston created an open environment in her studio and in
the Paris Exposition where women were allowed agency over their representation during
a time when popular culture was concerned with reinforcing traditional gender roles through the use of caricature, cartoons, and advertisements.

Few publications about Johnston existed prior to the 1960s and 1970s when, under the influence of the feminist movement, art historians began researching and “uncovering” previously unknown or unacknowledged women artists. Early research was mostly devoted to biography and Johnston’s involvement in the Paris Exposition. In more recent literature on Johnston, many art historians focus on Johnston’s subject matter as it is related to racial or sexual difference, especially in her Hampton Institute photographs, a series of promotional pictures for the school she completed between 1899 and 1900. For instance, Judith Fryor Davidov addresses how Johnston’s Hampton Institute photographs differ from those images produced by the women Pictorialist photographers shown in the Paris Exposition and from the way her colleagues approached the issue of race. Davidov argues that Johnston depicts the African-American students as meticulous, careful, and pristinely organized, a message that reflected the purpose of the Hampton Institute: “to transform the primitive, squalid, and disorderly into the improved, well-kept, and civilized.” Other historians, like Johnston’s biographer Bettina Berch, have

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2 The Hampton Institute commissioned Johnston to create the series of photographs of students that were to be used for promotional purposes. These images, totaling over 150, were included in the 1900 Paris Exposition in the Negro exhibit in the American Pavilion. Johnston was awarded the Grand Prix for her photographs, along with several medals. See *The Hampton Album: 44 Photographs from an Album of Hampton Institute*, (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966); Sarah Bassnett, “From Public Relations to Art: Exhibiting Frances Benjamin Johnston’s Hampton Institute Photographs,” *History of Photography* 32, no. 2 (Summer 2008): 152-68; and Jeannene M. Przyblyski, “American Visions at the Paris Exposition, 1900: Another Look at Frances Benjamin Johnston’s Hampton Photographs,” *Art Journal* 57, no. 3 (1998): 60-68.


4 Ibid., 158-59. Johnston’s images of African Americans at Hampton are in contrast to the disorderliness and sexuality that Davidov sees as an integral component of the images of African Americans created by Johnston’s contemporaries. Davidov cites Gertrude Käsebier’s *Black and White*, an image of an African-American woman bent over doing hanging laundry, which Davidov sees as “overtly sexual.” In contrast to Käsebier’s photograph, with its contrasting verticals and horizontals made up of black stockings and crisp,
examined the socio-historical context of the artist’s photographs in order to provide clues as to why she, who was living in a time period known for being restrictive towards women’s political, professional, and personal lives, was able to overstep the gender barriers and succeed in the professional world. Berch concludes that Johnston actively resisted and ignored the stifling limitations of the Victorian era by choosing to surround herself with other independent women and by never considering her gender to be an impediment to her professional life.

Scholars such as Constance Glenn, Bronwyn Griffith, and Rebecca Ruth Bergman have focused on different aspects of Johnston’s involvement in the Paris Exposition and her career as a portrait photographer. Glenn, co-curator with Leland Rice of the 1979 exhibition *Frances Benjamin Johnston: Women of Class and Station* at California State University, addresses Johnston’s portraits of upper class Washingtonian women, arguing that the variety of both sitters and styles of portraiture testify to the quality of Johnston’s art in that each of the women Johnston photographed, many of whom “lived their lives in the shadow of their husbands’ names and fame” were given “an identity of their own in a Johnston sitting.” Griffith, historian and curator of the 2001-2002 exhibition, *Ambassadors of Progress: American Women Photographers in Paris, 1900-1901,* underscores the significance of the exhibition of women’s photography at the Paris

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6 Ibid., 143-144. Berch argues that Johnston was able to do this because of her early upbringing in an egalitarian home where she learned the value of hard work and the importance of education. Her mother had a public career as a journalist and she encouraged Johnston to use her education to create a similar life for herself.

7 Constance W. Glenn and Leland Rice, *Frances Benjamin Johnston: Women of Class and Station* (Long Beach, California: California State University, 1979), 5.
Exposition, claiming that its primary objective was to emphasize the successes of
American women photographers at the turn of the century and that Johnston’s
involvement assured that an example of the modern American New Woman was
“represented as a symbol of progress” for the nation.  

Like Griffith, Bergman also
addresses the Paris Exposition by exploring in depth all aspects of Johnston’s
involvement in the exhibition, including her Hampton Institute photographs that were
shown in the American Negro exhibit, her photographs of Washington, D.C. school
systems which were exhibited at the American Education exhibit, and the American
Exhibit of Women’s Photography that she curated.

What is missing from current scholarship, however, is how, exactly, Johnston’s
career, specifically her portraits of women and the organization of the women’s
photography exhibition at the Paris Exposition, sheds light on how women represented
themselves photographically. Likewise, the role of Johnston’s self-portraits and personal
studio in fashioning her own artistic and professional identity has been largely ignored.

My thesis will examine the ways that women photographers imaged themselves and the
New Woman for audiences at home and abroad by building on the existing literature by
Glenn, Griffith, and Bergman that focuses on the Paris Exposition and Johnston’s
portraits. I will also contribute to current scholarship by providing a detailed analysis of
the central role of Johnston’s studio and self-portraits. An examination of Johnston’s
photographic portraits and the work of the women photographers she promoted in the

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8 Bronwyn E. Griffith, ed., Ambassadors of Progress: American Women Photographers in Paris, 1900-
Paris Exposition, along with an analysis of Johnston’s own self-representation, is central to this project.

Chapter 1 examines the way that Johnston portrayed the New Woman in her own photography by examining her many self-portraits, including two of her most famous images, *The Proper Victorian* (1896) and the *New Woman* (1896), as well as her commissioned portraits of the Washington, D.C elite. In her self-portraits, Johnston reveals her awareness of society’s expectations of the proper Victorian woman and responds to these expectations in a way that is simultaneously humorous and challenging. Many of Johnston’s self-portraits also provided a way for her to promote herself as a professional photographer. *New Woman* has been analyzed by a number of scholars, including Maria Elizabeth Ausherman, Laura Wexler, and Dolores Mitchell. Ausherman’s analysis argues that *New Woman* (or, *The Rebel*, as Ausherman alternatively titles it) is intimately tied to Johnston’s identification as a Bohemian.10 Similarly, Wexler and Mitchell look at Johnston’s posture and attributes in the room as signifiers of Johnston’s desire to rebel against Victorian norms and her identification as a New Woman.11 By building upon existing research that focuses on Johnston’s self-identification as a New Woman and by exploring a wider range of her self-portraiture, this thesis offers an original interpretation that shows how Johnston’s self-representation is related to her artistic aspirations, an aspect of her self-portraiture that has rarely been acknowledged.


Chapter 2 includes a detailed analysis of Johnston’s studio where she worked and collaborated with her clients and explores the atmosphere Johnston created in her studio for her sitters. I give special consideration to why her female patrons chose to represent themselves in the ways they did, which ranged from the conventional to the alarmingly controversial. Like her self-portraits, Johnston’s studio was also instrumental in fashioning her personal identity as a professional artist and a New Woman. Like many artists before her, Johnston deliberately used her studio to aid in furthering her photographic career. Scholars such as Glenn, Berch, and C. Jane Gover have all addressed Johnston’s studio in passing, but only provide basic physical descriptions of the space. Ultimately, Johnston’s studio was an integral part of her photography practice and contributed greatly to her professional success and the creation of her own artistic identity. Johnston fostered an open environment in her studio so as to make her sitters feel as comfortable as possible, which allowed for unique and personal photographic portraits. The studio also served as an outlet for artistic activity of the Washington, D.C. avant-garde groups at the time.

Chapter 3 considers Johnston’s efforts in promoting American women photographers. Johnston published several editorials in *Ladies’ Home Journal* which encouraged women in the field of photography and championed both amateur and professional photographers such as Gertrude Käsebier, Mathilde Weil, Frances and Mary Allen, and Emma J. Farsworth, among many others. Johnston also promoted women photographers through her participation in the Paris Exposition of 1900, where, as the designated United States delegate to the International Photographic Congress in Paris, she

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served as the curator of the all-women’s photography exhibition. Johnston collected over 140 photographs from 28 photographers, including Käsebier, the Allen sisters, and Zaida Ben-Yusuf. A great number of the photographs exhibited depicted women in various situations and were created in a variety of artistic styles indicative of the current trends in photography. The chapter examines the multiple ways that women photographers pictured the American woman for an international audience, as well as Johnston’s ideas and goals for the Exposition and how they were realized.

Much of the scholarship devoted to Johnston’s involvement in the Paris Exposition focuses on the artistic styles chosen by the women photographers, arguing that they involved the same artistic principles as their male contemporaries.\(^\text{13}\) Other scholars discuss how the show was received abroad and how the photographers involved acted out the role of the New Woman for an international audience.\(^\text{14}\) Still others, including Verna Posever Curtis, focus on how Johnston’s own work was fueled by the Exposition, noting that:

Johnston’s participation in the Universal Exposition of 1900 was the culmination of her activities during the previous decade. In both her career and through the subjects she photographed, she was riding the waves of what had gained currency as ‘new’ in American society: the ‘New Woman,’ the ‘New Education,’ the ‘New Negro,’ and the ‘New School of American Photography.’\(^\text{15}\)


I agree with these statements, but also argue that the photography on view in Johnston’s all-women exhibition, along with exhibiting American women’s achievements in the field, also showed a more representative and careful portrayal of the life of the American woman than was on view elsewhere in the Exposition, particularly in the display of American painting found in the Grand Palais.

Ultimately, Johnston’s career is proof of her own concern with furthering the efforts of the New Woman, particularly in the area of photography. She devoted much of her time as a professional photographer towards documenting the various manifestation of the New Woman, from prominent society women to well-known abolitionists, writers, and actresses. Her own self-portraits show how she herself represented the idea of the New Woman, and how she used her personal studio space to further her identity as both a professional photographer and a New Woman. Johnston’s studio practices allowed for an atmosphere that welcomed artistic collaboration with her sitters and provided a space where the unconventional was a welcome distraction from the strict prescriptions of Victorian society. Finally, her professional successes and distinct reputation put Johnston in a position to encourage women across the country to participate in the growing field of art photography and to promote these women on an international scale. Johnston’s exhibition at the Paris Exposition allowed audiences to view the work of individual women photographers and also see a large variety of images of American women that was more inclusive and representative of actual every day experiences than that regularly portrayed in high art.
CHAPTER 1
IMAGING THE NEW WOMAN THROUGH PORTRAITURE

Frances Benjamin Johnston began her artistic career during the late nineteenth century, a time of fast-paced change and innovation. During this period, the United States saw many developments that led to new perceptions and ideas about the role and character prescribed to women. The rise of prohibition and suffrage movements, women’s greater involvement in the paid workforce, changes in women’s fashions, a rise in membership among women’s clubs, and a larger acknowledgement of the economic importance of women’s role as primary consumers for their families were all social changes that led to the development of the New Woman.

The term ‘New Woman’ was first used by novelist Sarah Grand in an 1894 article in the North American Review in which she observed that, “the new woman… has been sitting apart in silent contemplation all these years thinking and thinking, until at last she solved the problem and proclaimed for herself what was wrong with Home-is-the-Woman’s Sphere, and prescribed the remedy.”¹⁶ Previously, proper women’s behavior was determined by the “Cult of True Womanhood,” which insisted that women be pure, chaste, submissive, and pious. The New Woman, as feminist historian Carroll Smith-Rosenburg defines her, was one who instead:

fought for professional visibility, espoused innovative, often radical, economic and social reforms, and wielded real political power… Her

quintessentially American identity, her economic resources, and her social standing permitted her to defy proprieties, pioneer new roles, and still insist upon a rightful place within the genteel world. Repudiating the Cult of True Womanhood in ways her mother – the new bourgeois matron – never could, she threatened men in ways her mother never did.\footnote{Carroll Smith-Rosenburg, \textit{Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 245.}

The New Woman, as pictured by Albert Morrow in a 1897 poster for \textit{Punch}, the popular English satire magazine, flaunted convention by reading, smoking, and pursuing an intellectual lifestyle outside of the domestic sphere that had previously been denied to her (Fig. 1).

Perhaps the most ubiquitous representation of the New Woman was Charles Dana Gibson’s “Gibson Girl”. Reproduced in magazines such as \textit{Life}, \textit{McClure’s}, and \textit{Collier’s}, these images depicted a white, upper-class, single, athletic woman with hair piled high on her head and her corset tied as tight as it could possibly go (Fig. 2). The Gibson Girl became so popular that her image eventually appeared everywhere consumers could hope to find it, including calendars, decorator plates, dresser sets, brooches, plaques, glove boxes, flasks, cigarette cases, and even wallpaper. As scholar Martha Patterson notes, the Gibson Girl image “offered a popular version of the New Woman that both sanctioned and undermined woman’s desires for progressive sociopolitical change and personal freedom at the turn of the century.”\footnote{Martha H. Patterson, \textit{Beyond the Gibson Girl: Reimagining the American New Woman, 1895-1915} (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 29.} The Gibson Girl was limiting in that she was never shown making politically-minded decisions and was rarely depicted as working. However, she still managed to represent the New Woman as one who made personal decisions for herself, albeit regarding consumer goods and future
husband prospects.¹⁹ The Gibson Girl was pure and American, and although her image could be appropriated by anyone, she was an “essentially ‘white’ bourgeois ideal representing the pinnacle of evolutionary accomplishment and serving as the foundation for American dominance on a world stage.”²⁰

Although she was not usually allowed the full freedoms of the actual New Woman, such as smoking, drinking, fighting for the right to vote, or pursuing a higher education, the Gibson Girl was a much more positive representation of the New Woman than was often found in popular literature. Humor magazines regularly published caricatures of the New Woman that deemed her new socially progressive ways as threats to the social hierarchy and the welfare of the human race. A rise in divorce rates—at this time, one in twelve marriages ended in divorce—and a drop in the number of children per family spurred a host of anxieties about the changing place of women in American society and a fear that, “the New Woman’s emergence was a sign that the ‘kingliest of races’ was in trouble.”²¹ Thus, some critics came to see these New Women no longer as “ladies” but as “manly women”, “wild women,” or even “women without a sex.” For example, George B. Luks illustrated an 1893 article in New York’s Truth entitled “The Mannish Girl” with vignettes of “One of New York’s Mannish Girls out for a Morning ‘Breather’.” Luk’s “mannish girl” is dressed in tie, vest, jacket, hat, and monocle, and is shown smoking. The writer of the article laments that she has fallen “out of sympathy

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¹⁹ Amanda Glesmann, “Reforming the Lady: Charles Dana Gibson and the ‘New Girl’, ” in Women on the Verge: The Culture of Neurasthenia in Nineteenth-Century America, by Katherine Williams et. al. (Stanford, CA: Iris & B. Gerald Cantor Center for Visual Arts at Stanford University, 2004), 56. Glesmann’s essay explores the ways that Gibson positioned the Gibson Girl as an unthreatening response to the rise of the New Woman. She argues that Gibson “linked the uncertain—and potentially dangerous—figure of the American Girl to a more familiar—and less threatening—pattern of life for women” by focusing on her courtship and relationships with men.
²⁰ Patterson, Beyond the Gibson Girl, 34.
²¹ Ibid., 39.
with her sex” and is “consigned to “eternal spinsterhood or the divorce court.” In turn, *Life* ran two illustrations in two years that depicted the New Woman as invading the social sphere of the men’s club. The first, published in 1895, is prophetically titled *In a Twentieth Century Club* (Fig. 3). In it, women make up the entire club scene, with the exception of the beaded male dancer on stage wearing a tutu, and are shown smoking and drinking. *Girls Will Be Girls*, a Gibson Girl illustration, is similar in that it shows women enjoying each other’s company in the setting of a (traditionally) men’s club (Fig.4). As historian Patricia Marks points out, these illustrators “read their own somewhat doubtful activities into their counterpart’s lives and then accuse women of being ‘manly’.”

A product of this era, Johnston was born in 1864 in Grafton, West Virginia, but later moved with her family to Washington, D.C. where she eventually ran her own photography studio and cultivated her career as a photographer to the nation’s political and professional elite. Johnston studied art at Notre Dame Convent in Govanston, Maryland, and then, for two years beginning in 1883, at the Académie Julian in Paris. Although the Victorian era has often been perceived as restrictive towards women, Johnston’s education was instrumental in helping to prepare her for a life in the arts. Upon her return to the States, Johnston jumped into the professional art world by enrolling in the Art Students’ League and working as a writer and illustrator for a newspaper. She began working for print media at the same time that photo duplication in magazines, as opposed to engravings or drawn illustrations, was becoming more prevalent, which worked perfectly for her burgeoning career in documentary and portrait photography.

22 Marks, *Bicycles, Bangs, and Bloomers*, 3.
23 Ibid., 127.
Johnston’s position in the print media business also made her aware of the
different representations of women in magazines. Johnston herself was made the subject
of a number of cartoons. A poster drawn by her close friend, artist and actor Mills
Thompson, depicts Johnston with her back to the viewer, walking off into the sunset with
her tripod under one arm and her camera case in the other (Fig. 5). The image, which was
apparently used for advertising purposes for Johnston’s studio, is set up in a similar
composition as would have been seen on popular magazines at the time, with
accompanying text that reads, “Miss Frances Benjamin Johnston makes a business of
Photographic Illustration and the writing of descriptive articles for magazines, illustrative
weeklies, and newspapers.” Thompson depicts Johnston as the confident, independent,
and capable woman that her friends and contemporaries described, walking into the
distance, perhaps on her way to her next job as a rising photojournalist. In another
drawing by Felix Maloney, Johnston stands in profile with one long, bony arm
outstretched, pointing to something outside the picture frame, and the other arm sitting
squarely on her hip (Fig. 6). Although she was described by her friends as a frail woman,
the drawing portrays Johnston as an older woman—definitely older than her 34 years at
the time of this drawing—rather than the dainty, energetic young lady shown in
contemporary photographs (Fig. 7). Maloney’s quick sketch is rougher and cruder than
Thompson’s, and more closely resembles the caricatures of New Women that used older
age and harsh, unidealized features to satirize women that overstepped traditional societal
prescriptions, such as not marrying or choosing to follow a career path (Figs. 8-9).
Portraits of the New Woman

In January of 1895 Johnston designed and opened her own photographic studio connected to her family home. There she would entertain friends, complete her commissioned assignments, including those of White House officials and the First family, and arrange portrait shoots by appointment for the wealthy and famous elite of the city. Her customers included the writer Frances Hodgson Burnett, artist Benjamin Constant, and a wide variety of other people including businessmen and politicians. Many of her patrons were women who would come to have their portrait taken and then gossip and drink tea with Johnston afterwards in the upstairs part of her studio reserved for receiving guests.

The women who came to her studio and those that she chose to portray were exemplary of the New Woman ideal. These portraits served as a way for these women to have control over their own representation. Some of her sitters included Susan B. Anthony, suffragist leader, Margaret James Murray Washington, leader in the black women’s club movement and Booker T. Washington’s third wife, Shakespearean actress and theater company manager Julia Marlowe, and Phoebe Apperson Hearst, mother of newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst and noted philanthropist, and many other notable women who crossed traditional gender boundaries during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

In some of these portraits, the sitter is presented as demure and entirely feminine under the constraints of traditional portraiture styles for ladies. Her photographs of society women with their children are excellent examples of how Johnston stayed within the long-established customs of female portraiture. A photograph of Jennie Tuttle Hobart,
wife of Garret Augustus Hobart, Vice President of the United States from 1897 to 1899, and her son displays “the precise level of propriety and refinement” that nineteenth-century mothers had towards their offspring (Fig. 10). The mood of the portrait is extremely formal; both sitters look directly at the viewer and show no sign of affection towards one another. Hobart is dressed in the finest fashions befitting of a lady of her status at the time, and her son is dressed in a formal suit like a tiny adult. In another mother and child portrait of Edith Kermit Carow Roosevelt, First Lady and second wife of President Theodore Roosevelt, and her son Quentin, Johnston shows a more intimate relationship (Fig. 11). The child leans against his mother, who wraps her arms around him and looks out at the viewer. The relaxed interior setting, more than likely taken inside the White House, gives the portrait a more familial mood than the austere black studio setting of the Hobart portrait. Both portraits attest to each sitter’s feminine qualities by calling attention to their fine clothing and their roles as mothers and proper society women.

In other portraits, Johnston highlights the sitters’ individual personalities, many of which are characterized by a sense of determination and self-assurance. In one photograph of Alice Lee Roosevelt, daughter of President Theodore Roosevelt and his first wife, First Lady Alice Hathaway Lee, she is shown standing with her arms crossed and glancing confidently downwards on to the viewer, suggesting self-assurance and strength, qualities missing in the traditional Victorian portraits of demure, genteel ladies.

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26 Ibid., 50. Glenn and Rice cite a 1903 *Washington Times* article that places a series of photographs that Johnston did of the Roosevelt family to commemorate Roosevelt’s rise to the presidency after President McKinley’s death and Alice Lee Roosevelt’s White House debut at seventeen inside the White House and on the White House grounds. This portrait of the First Lady, along with the following three portraits of Alice Lee Roosevelt, is a part of that well-documented series.
of previous generations (Fig. 12). That same “proud, almost regal expression” is present nearly every photograph Johnston took of Roosevelt (Figs. 13-14). The same “proud, almost regal expression” is present nearly every photograph Johnston took of Roosevelt (Figs. 13-14).  

These same qualities can be seen in Johnston’s portrait of Mattie Edwards Hewitt, her business partner between the years of 1913 and 1917 (Fig. 15). “From the set of her jaw to the angle of her elbows, Hewitt’s stance,” as Bettina Berch has noted, “suggests a very determined woman.” Her casual pose, with one arm propped on the shelf behind her and the other resting squarely on her hip, suggests a comfortable self-assuredness with herself and the viewer. The very fact that Hewitt is shown standing in a space resembling an office, with framed photographs hanging on the wall behind her (perhaps an intentional reference to the sitter’s profession), is unusual and goes against traditional Victorian portraiture where genteel ladies were generally seated or standing in front of studio backdrops, usually intended to indicate a domestic space such as a parlor. Hewitt’s hand-on-hip pose was often recreated by Johnston, and can be seen in a number of portraits of high society women of the time, including a 1904 photograph of Countess Marguerite Cassini, daughter of the Russian Ambassador Arthur Paul Nicholas (Fig. 16). The dark background with barely visible candle sticks and exotic lace costume, combined with Cassini’s almost challenging expression and the Japanese sword held confidently in her right hand, portray the sitter as “a dramatic and sultry Judith”—the complete opposite of the demure and quiet ladylike portraits that had previously been preferred by society women.

At the same time that Johnston was offering up a variety of representations of American womanhood to the world, and as images of women in general were ever

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27 Ibid., 20.  
29 Glenn and Rice, *Women of Class and Station*, 78.
present in popular media, male photographers also took up the female form as their subject matter. The state of photography as a form of high art was a hotly debated topic around the turn of the century, and the leading artistic movement in this debate was Pictorialism. Members of the Pictorialist movement, including leader Alfred Stieglitz, Gertrude Käsebier, and Clarence H. White, were dedicated to the goal of raising photography to the same level of esteem as painting and sculpture. Pictorialist photographers sought, Davidov writes, “to preserve in their carefully crafted pictures the very thing Walter Benjamin would declare dead after the invention of photography: the aura, the unique and irreproducible quality that made a pictorial work ‘art’.”

Their work employed the same stylistic techniques used in painting, including peaceful, agrarian subject matter, subtle middle-grey tones, and a soft focus. Just as in painting and sculpture, idealized female figures and nudes were a popular subject. In general, Pictorialist photography pictured women as symbols of beauty in order to signify art. Models were often shown nude or not facing the viewer, both techniques that serve to make the model a more universal character type rather than an individual sitter. Images such as White’s Morning (1908) and Stieglitz’s Sun Rays (1889) show how each photographer is more interested in elements of design and achieving an impressionistic style reminiscent of contemporary painting than in reproducing a likeness of the sitter for documentary purposes (Figs. 17-18).

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31 Ibid. Pictorialist photographers sought to achieve “painterly” effects in their work, which could be achieved by using soft-focus lenses and by retouching in the darkroom with tools, brushes, and their fingers to “shape or alter forms in the soft gums and oils with which they coated photographic plates.” Special papers could be used, ranging from the heavily textured to smooth, Japanese tissue papers, in order to enhance a photograph’s artistic qualities.
In contrast, Johnston’s portrait photographs address the female body in a
documentary style similar to her commissioned projects for various presidential
administrations, national parks, the World’s Columbian Exposition, and historical events.
Indeed, many publications commissioned Johnston to create series of photographs of
prominent people in the same manner that they asked her to document Mammoth Cave in
Kentucky or the inauguration of President McKinley. These kinds of photographic series,
such as the previously-mentioned series of the Roosevelt family, were completed with an
attention to detail that Johnston became known for.

Johnston “described herself as a reporter, a careful noter of detail, a documentor
of all aspects of American life” and her interest in portraying the personalities of
individual sitters was on equal footing with her desire to create artistic photographic
portraits.  

32 Although she shared with the Pictorialists a genuine interest in making her
photographic portraits “much as a painter would give a sitting” by employing poses from
well-known paintings and by consciously framing photographs to include patterns,
Johnston was very much concerned with reaching the most natural results possible with
each sitting.  

33 Johnston named several Old Masters as her inspiration, explaining that,

“In portraiture, especially, there are so many possibilities for picturesque
effects—involving composition, light and shade, the study of pose, and
arrangement of drapery—that one should go for inspiration to such
masters as Rembrandt van Rijn, Sir Anthony Van Dyck, Sir Joshua
Reynolds, George Romney and Thomas Gainsborough, rather than to
compilers of chemical formulae.”  

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32 Ibid., 77.  
33 Ibid., 406. Davidov references the similarities between some of Johnston’s work and paintings and
drawings by artists such as John Singer Sargent, Arnold Genthe, and Angelika Kauffman.  
34 Pete Daniel and Raymond Smock, Talent for Detail: The Photographs of Miss Frances Benjamin
To this effect, she was completely against the over-retouching of negatives, claiming that, “it is not too much to say that this is the worst fault of the average professionals. Their work strikes the level of insanity because they consider it necessary to sandpaper all the character and individuality out of the faces of their sitters.”³⁵ This concern with fair documentation is evident not only in her straightforward approach to her portraits of women but her inclusion of a multitude of different representations of women in her Paris Exposition show.³⁶

**Self-Portraits of the New Woman**

As a young woman herself, Johnston felt that same push and pull between old Victorian traditions and new social changes. In *Talent for Detail: the Photographs of Miss Frances Benjamin Johnston* (1974), historians Pete Daniel and Raymond Smock point out that the artist:

really lived two lives during the 1890s. She was a properly conventional Victorian woman... but, on the other hand, her friends and associates were artists, poets, playwrights, and actors whose lifestyles often mocked the Victorian conventions that Johnston publically upheld. She apparently moved with ease between these two worlds. To the eyes of some of her contemporaries the very fact that she was a woman in a male-dominated profession marked her as an unconventional person.³⁷

Johnston clearly recognized these two different versions of herself, for in 1896 she created a pair of self-portraits, one entitled *Self-Portrait as The Proper Victorian* and the other *Self-Portrait as New Woman* (Figs. 19-20).³⁸ In *The Proper Victorian*, Johnston is sitting

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³⁶ This aspect of Johnston’s involvement in the Paris Exposition will be further discussed in Chapter 3.
³⁸ The two images have been referred to by a number of different titles. Throughout the rest of the paper, they will be referred to simply as *The Proper Victorian* and *The New Woman*. 
sideways in a wooden chair with her head delicately propped on her (appropriately) gloved hand. She is turned to face the viewer and her expression is completely devoid of emotion. The portrait resembles many of Johnston’s commissioned portraits of the genteel elite women of Washington, D.C. in its propriety and adherence to nineteenth-century society expectations of what was deemed proper and feminine.

The second self-portrait, and perhaps her most famous photograph, *New Woman* depicts Johnston in front of the studio’s fireplace, sitting sideways and leaning assertively forward, a pose that mimics the stooped posture of the man on her beer stein, which she holds by her side. Johnston deliberately avoids the viewer’s gaze by facing away from the camera. Her legs are crossed in a masculine manner, her petticoats are showing, and she has been caught in the act of smoking a cigarette, which she holds confidently in front of her. Unlike the previous image, *New Woman* is set in a decisive setting, her upstairs studio room that showcases the many souvenirs from her travels as well as portraits she has recently taken. Overall, the portrait is “self-consciously assertive”; Johnston humorously addresses “the Victorian assumption that unconventional women were somehow ‘masculine’” by going over the top with her masculine pose, revealed petticoats, drink, and cigarette. 

Like many of her artist colleagues and predecessors, Johnston used her studio as a creative space in which to carry out her own self-representation. Many scholars have discussed this image in relation to Johnston’s identification with the New Woman, but through this photograph, Johnston also pays homage to traditional self-portraits of the

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artist which serves as a way for Johnston to align herself with past masters.\textsuperscript{40} In \textit{New Woman}, Johnston creates an artistic persona that draws on traditional representations of the avant-garde artist while also placing herself in line with major contemporary and past players in the art world. Johnston’s image recalls numerous images of artists in their studios through posture, props, and setting. For instance, the resemblance between Johnston’s self-portrait and a black-and-white photograph of expatriate painter James Abbott McNeill Whistler, dated 1860-1865, is striking (Fig. 21). Although it is unknown whether Johnston based her self-portrait on this image directly, there is a strong chance that she would have known about this photo, which was part of a large donation of art and papers to the Smithsonian Institution by Charles Lang Freer around the turn of the century. Regardless, because of her extensive art education and worldly travels, as well as her close proximity to the Smithsonian’s collection, Johnston would have been intimately familiar with the portrait and self-portrait tradition. Thus, through the display of attributes commonly associated with the artist and the artist’s studio, Johnston aligns herself with masters of the past and present.

Johnston, with her cigarette and beer stein, is shown as a member of the avant-garde Bohemian subculture that was commonly associated with artistic types. The cigarette was also associated with creative output in nineteenth-century lore that held that, “smoking aided creativity by stimulating fantasies and associative memories… In numerous 1890s \textit{Punch} caricatures of artists or philosophers struck by or waiting for inspiration, more than 90 percent are shown smoking.”\textsuperscript{41} The cigarette and Johnston’s

\textsuperscript{40} For additional analyses on Self-Portrait as New Woman, see Ausherman, \textit{The Photographic Legacy of Frances Benjamin Johnston}, 9; Mitchell, “The “New Woman” as Prometheus,” 6; Wexler, \textit{Tender Violence}, 161-162.

\textsuperscript{41} Mitchell, “The “New Woman” as Prometheus,” 8.
jauntily placed cap—a man’s cap—are signifiers of a Bohemian, artistic culture also pictured in numerous nineteenth-century painters’ self-portraits, including those by Vincent van Gogh, Gustave Courbet, and Edgar Degas (Figs. 22-24). The hat and cigarette were attributes commonly associated with the artist in the minds of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century audiences as well, to which a large number of caricatures and drawings from popular literature of the period attest.

Johnston was not the only female artist attempting to align herself through her self-representation with other great artistic minds. Ellen Day Hale, an American painter and portraitist who also studied at the Académie Julian in Paris, created a self-portrait that recalls both Johnston’s and those of many other artists in its confident pose and artistic attributes (Fig. 25). Like Johnston, Hale also discards most feminine attributes and chooses to focus instead on her self-assured artistic attitude and her ties to Bohemian culture with her black attire and an ostrich-feather fan. As art historian Tracy Fitzpatrick has noted, Hale’s portrait displays the artist’s "strength as a portraitist and her role as… the "New Woman"." 42 Although there are noticeable differences between the two portraits—for instance, Hale chose to present herself directly confronting the viewer with a piercing gaze, while Johnston’s photograph depicts her completely in profile—it is evident that both artists are using their respective media to assert their artistic identities to the public. This act of constructing an identity for the public was of increasing concern to artists practicing at the end of the century. As art historian Sarah Burns has noted,

the most dynamic form of advertisement [for an artist] lay in the construction of an intriguing public personality, a distinctive style, with the power to attract and hold attention on exhibition walls, in the social world, and on the pages of newspapers and magazines. The public self, of

which the art product with its recognizable accent of personal style was an extension, became a commodity.\textsuperscript{43}

Johnston and Hale, like so many other women artists, were participating in the larger trend of using portraiture to advertise themselves and their individual identities to the public, their potential customers. In Johnston’s case, her self-constructed image as a New Woman worked in her favor, as many newspapers and critics responded to the professional and admirable way, albeit still in gendered terms, in which Johnston carried out her business.

In most of her self-portraits, Johnston is shown in her own studio. The studio setting is commonly found in artists’ self-portraits for a number of reasons, the most obvious being that it served as a signifier of their profession. The inclusion of the studio was also as a way to market oneself as an artist. Johnston intentionally surrounded herself with items commonly seen in artists’ studios of the day, as well as in paintings and self-portraits by artists made in the studio. Oriental-esque drapery, elaborate furnishings, and the inclusion of the artist’s own work are common attributes associated with the artist’s studio and can be seen in both paintings and photographs from the time period, such as these by William Merritt Chase, William McGregor Paxton, Robert Fuller, and Louis Daguerre, as well as in Johnston’s own photograph recording her visit to artist friend Parker Mann’s studio (Figs. 26-30). Johnston would have been well aware of these common studio set-ups because of her art training, her experiences visiting museums abroad and locally, and her close association with contemporary artists in Washington, D.C.

This intentionality on Johnston’s part is underscored by the fact that she deliberately placed certain objects in the photograph. For instance, the photographic portraits that line the mantel behind Johnston can be seen in her studio only in this one instance. In another portrait of Johnston in her studio, the photographs are absent, but other details are added, such as the miniature sculpture copy of the classical Venus de Milo in the upper right corner of the room (Fig. 31). The objects in New Woman have been grouped close together intentionally to show their purpose as a collection of artistic items, whereas in the later self-portrait, they are more spread out throughout the room. Other added details include the spinning wheel in the left corner and the inclusion of the tea table that she sits behind. In this more inclusive shot of her studio, Johnston includes hints at both the studio’s role as a domestic, social space with the tea table and her position behind it and as a creative space with her photographic props displayed on the right side of the room, including an ornate drapery-covered chaise where her sitters would pose.

These details highlight Johnston’s awareness of her surroundings and the fact that she is consciously constructing an image of herself that she wishes to be viewed in a certain way. Indeed, as Vivien Margaret Gaston points out, for artists in the nineteenth century, the “dynamic potential of the self-portrait to shape the artist’s life through formulating a sense of his own inner directed significance was explored with increased self-consciousness.”44 Art historian Linda Nochlin underscored the importance of the self-portrait to nineteenth-century artists when she claimed that, “the question of the role

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44 Vivien Margaret Gaston, The Hypothetical Soul: The Self-Portrait in the Nineteenth Century, 1840-1900, Vol. 1. Ph.D. diss., Monash University, 1992, 21. Gaston discusses the ways that “the relation of a self-portrait with an artist’s life was altered and intensified” during the nineteenth century as a result of post-Romantic artists’ views on the nature and purpose of art in general, ultimately arguing that the self-portrait gained higher importance within artists’ oeuvre during this time period.
of the artist and the artist’s own preoccupation with his role… was never so important as it was in the nineteenth century.”

Johnston, with her carefully-constructed self-portraits, was knowingly participating in a trend that had been of great importance to her most recent predecessors and contemporaries in the art world. For instance, the portraits on the mantle—all of men—have been said to represent a kind of ironic statement on Johnston’s behalf, “a joke that could be shared with the public – that she has rejected a husband for a more independent artistic life (Fig. 32).”

That may be so, but the inclusion of her own photography also works as a way to underscore Johnston’s profession as a photographer when there are no other references to photography in the room, and also shows the viewer the kinds of upstanding citizens that visit her studio and the professional and elite circles that she worked within.

A self-portrait of Johnston seated at her desk, which was located in her private office on the ground floor of her studio, provides another example of how Johnston wished to be portrayed to her public (Fig. 33). Again, Johnston surrounds herself with photographs, presumably of friends, associates, and clients. She also includes references to her personal artistic tastes through the display of her well-known poster collection, which covers most of the wall space visible in the photograph. The collection of posters includes magazine covers from Harper’s, Scribner’s, and Lippencott’s, and many of them, as historian Laura Wexler points out, depict images of the New Woman. The location of the poster collection in her private office suggests that there is a personal connection with this particular display, one that is not only for show and self-

47 Wexler, Tender Violence, 166.
representation, but for private viewing as well. The collection serves as yet another reference to Johnston’s self-identification with the New Woman, but I believe that Johnston was also drawn to these images because of her interest in the graphic arts and her previous work experience with magazines and newspapers. Indeed, Johnston had been classically trained in basic drawing and compositional skills at the Académie Julian and started her career in the United States with all intentions of becoming a graphic illustrator. Johnston’s first jobs involved making drawings to illustrate articles for popular magazines.

Here, not only is Johnston following the trend of displaying one’s own art and art collections (i.e. signifiers of her profession) set forth by previous artist’s self-portraits, but she is also using the same compositional formula and props that appear in her photographs of the Washingtonian elite that were her clients. Wexler writes about the resemblances between Johnston’s image of herself and one she made of suffragist Susan B. Anthony while completing an assignment for a calendar (Fig. 34). Wexler notes the poses that “seem remarkably similar, perhaps even intentionally so.”48 Both women are assertive and businesslike, Johnston holds a pen and correspondence in her hand while Anthony sits at a desk that is covered with letters and similar paperwork. Like Johnston’s, Anthony’s desk area also houses a large collection of photographs, although, as Wexler points out, the “photographs with which Anthony surrounds herself are chiefly of women; those in Johnston’s studio are chiefly of men.”49 This distinction between the sex of those portrayed in Johnston and Anthony’s personal photographs is where Wexler ends her analysis of Johnston’s self-portrait. Wexler fails to offer a significant explanation for

48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
this distinction, whereas I would like to argue that just as Anthony’s office is
(presumably) full of photographs of her friends and colleagues, the same goes for
Johnston. Johnston is following the same format set up in *New Woman* by surrounding
herself with images of prominent people as a way of aligning herself with them.

Tellingly, Johnston’s office self-portrait recalls portraits of her male clients as
well, including politicians and intellectuals such as civic and religious leader John
Wanamaker, President William McKinley, and historian and State Senator Albert
Jeremiah Breveridge, to name but a few (Figs. 35-37). Johnston took many photographs
of her elite professional clients that show them in their work environment, often at their
desk with pen in hand, as if not even the presence of a photographer could interrupt their
important duties. These office portraits are limited to her male clients (with the exception
of the one Susan B. Anthony image), which has more to do with nineteenth- and early
twentieth-century portraiture conventions than with a professional photographic
statement on Johnston’s part. Because many of her women clients were members of the
elite upper-class and did not have jobs outside the home, it would have been impossible
to photograph them in a work environment that did not also read as a domestic setting.
Johnston’s objective with these portraits was to reveal the sitter’s professional character,
and her own office self-portrait, with the similar pose, setting, and props, fulfills that
same goal.

Johnston imaged the New Woman in the portraits she took of Washington, D.C.’s
elite women by instilling in each image a bit of the sitter’s individual character. Johnston
chose poses and settings that deviated from the norm for women’s portraiture, such as
crossed arms, raised chins, and open-air environments. While some chose to be portrayed
in a traditional, demure way, many women, including prominent socialites, such as Alice Lee Roosevelt and Countess Marguerite Cassini, and rising professionals, including Mattie Edwards Hewitt and Frances Hodgeson Burnett. Johnston furthered this idea of the portrait of the New Woman in many of her own self-portraits. She portrayed herself in unconventional dress that blatantly attacked Victorian conventions of proper womanhood by alluding to behaviors deemed, for the most part, inappropriate for women at the time – smoking and drinking. Her own relaxed, masculine posture that ignores the viewer is in direct opposition to traditional portraits of women. New Woman is Johnston’s carefully choreographed response to popular notions about the New Woman spread in popular culture. Both Johnston’s self-portraits and her commissioned works provide an alternative image of the American woman at the turn of the century from what was found in popular literature, such as those previously-mentioned caricatures and illustrations found in *Punch* and *Life*, while also furthering the New Woman ideal throughout her career.
CHAPTER 2
THE PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDIO OF FRANCES BENJAMIN JOHNSTON

The handheld camera gave nineteenth-century American women a new way to document their lives, and, for the first time for many, women were given the opportunity to create images of themselves and their environments from their own point of view. As a professional photographer, Frances Benjamin Johnston created an open atmosphere in her Washington, D.C. studio where her sitters were actively involved in the creation of their self-representation. Johnston helped to foster a creative environment for young and up-and-coming artists in Washington, D.C., while at the same time working towards furthering women’s work in the field of photography as a whole. As the previous chapter noted, Johnston also used her studio as an instrument in furthering her own career and fashioning her identity as a professional artist.

The artist’s studio is a kind of mystery for many, a sacred place where art is created, and, as such, has long been a point of interest for art historians. Many scholars have written on issues surrounding the studio, including myths and stereotypes fashioned around the studio that have come to influence the general public’s idea of what it means to be an artist. Art historians recognize the importance of the artist’s studio as a special

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kind of artifact, one different from a diary or a photograph, because of the different types of information that can be gleaned from such a unique and personal space. Art historian Wanda Corn writes that, “by reading these work sites as material artifacts and comparing one against another, we gain insights into the history of artistic culture as well as the art and aesthetic allegiances of the artists who created and worked in these spaces.”

Because of the medium’s relatively short history, photography studios have received less scholarly attention than those of prominent painters and sculptors. With the exception of minor asides describing its layout and design, Johnston’s Washington, D.C. studio, in particular, has for the most part been neglected by scholars. This chapter explores how Johnston’s studio served as a social and creative space, and, working much in the same way as her studio self-portraits, as a space that was instrumental in constructing Johnston’s professional and artistic identity.

The photographic studio as it is known today developed during the later decades of the nineteenth century. Early photographic processes required the use of wet plates that were coated with collodion on-site and then immediately developed, fixed, and printed in portable darkrooms. This meant that professional photographers had to take their equipment with them wherever they went, including glass plates, lenses, heavy tripods, cameras and their plate holders, solution bottles, and a glass tank for sensitizing, all of which were carried in a trunk that could weigh anywhere from 50 to 70 pounds (Figs. 38-39). In the 1870s, technological changes in the field of photography—including the introduction of dry plates, celluloid roll film, and the Kodak handheld camera—made the artistic process easier, lighter, and less expensive (Fig. 40). Photographs no longer had to

52 Gover, The Positive Image, 5.
be developed instantaneously; instead, photographers could store their film and develop their images later in a permanent studio darkroom. These advances in the field made photography more accessible to women. An average female factory worker, for instance, could purchase the basic setup of camera, tripod, lens, and plates for approximately the equivalent of two weeks’ wages. Women were able to practice photography in their own homes, using converted rooms as darkrooms. More ambitious women photographers opened public studios or created private studios in their homes.

In Washington, D.C., it was sometimes the custom among the more well-to-do artists to build studio additions to their homes. When Johnston opened her own public portrait studio upon returning to the United States from studying abroad in 1885, she hired Hornblower & Marshall, a noted architectural firm, to design her carefully thought-out studio. The six room studio and office building was added onto the back of her parents’ house at 1332 V Street, NW (Fig. 41). Johnston spent about $7,000 on the addition, which at the time “could have bought an entire three-story brick house in downtown Washington.” Before construction began, Johnston carefully studied other photographic studios in order to be sure that hers would be equipped with the necessities of a professional. The end result, which historian C. Jane Gover has called “the model of a well planned studio,” consisted of two stories, with a darkroom, office, and workroom on the bottom floor. The top floor was a 700-square foot space that was reserved as a studio space and a receiving area for visitors, and could be accessed by its own specially-constructed staircase that allowed visitors to enter from outside, instead of

54 Ibid., 22.
55 Anne E. Peterson, *Women of Class and Station* (Long Beach, California: California State University, 1979), 11.
through Johnston’s home. By having her photographic studio connected to her parent’s home, Johnston was in keeping with Victorian prescriptions of propriety, since a single, professional woman having clients over to a private studio may have seemed inappropriate to the nineteenth-century public. Johnston was not the only woman photographer who chose to construct her studio close to her home. Photographers Catherine Weed Ward, whose work Johnston would include in the American exhibition of women’s photography at the Paris Exposition in 1900, and Beatrice Tonneson also worked in studios constructed in their parents’ homes.

In many ways, Johnston’s studio space reflects photographer and artist M.A. Root’s description of the public photographic studio as a “temple of beauty and grandeur” (Fig. 42). Johnston took many of the same precautions in designing and decorating her studio that her painter contemporaries did, ultimately creating what Karen Zukowski has termed an “aestheticizing studio.” Zukowski defines the aestheticizing studio as a phenomenon “born out of the era’s impulse towards aestheticist endeavors… a deliberate attempt to create beauty for its own sake, to aestheticize the creative environment.” By creating her own aestheticizing studio, Johnston aligned herself with her male contemporaries who were practicing the so-called high arts: painting, sculpture, and even illustration.

As in a traditional painter’s studio, Johnston’s studio had a large, North-facing window that took up the majority of the 16-foot wall. This skylight was outfitted with a

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58 Gover writes, “[Ward] combined respect for the family claim and her devotion to photography by setting up her first studio on the top floor of the family home, very much in the manner of Johnston and Tonneson.” Gover, *The Positive Image*, 50.
59 Ibid., 30.
61 Ibid. See also Peppiatt, *Imagination’s Chamber*.
custom-made curtain that could be adjusted to control the lighting. Like many nineteenth-century artists’ studios, Johnston’s studio was filled with various types of furniture. Johnston decorated her studio space and the adjoining rooms with furniture created in the contemporary Arts and Crafts style, produced by her close friend Elbert Hubbard’s Roycroft workshops. Cashmere paisley shawls, Japanese prints, and framed watercolor landscapes were artistically placed around the room. Collections from her many travels, as well as an assortment of Native American ceramics, pottery, and basketry, were displayed on a high shelf that spanned the length of one wall, as well as on the mantel of the Colonial Revival style fireplace that served as the focal point on the east wall of the studio. These decorative elements reflected Johnston’s artistic tastes and personality. The decorative scheme of the studio also references her involvement in the wider art world. For instance, the Roycroft furniture and Colonial Revival fireplace show her ties to the Arts and Crafts movement, while her collection of Native American wares reflects the rising popularity of such objects among the American elite during the Gilded Age of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The framed watercolors were more than likely painted by artist friends of hers. The Oriental-style draperies and the Japanese prints are indicative of the larger social interest in non-Western cultures, as well as the artistic influence of Japonisme in the fine arts. Overall, Johnston’s studio worked to portray her as an intelligent, cultured artist with ties to both upper-class society and the Bohemian artist culture that was forming in Washington, D.C. at the time.

During Johnston’s early career, Washington, D.C. was still a small city, although it was quickly developing. Unlike New York and Philadelphia, Washington, D.C. did not have a fully-formed artist district, although, as historian Bettina Berch reveals, “many
studios did cluster in a few downtown locations: around Judiciary Square and the old Patent Office, in the Corcoran Building (15<sup>th</sup> and F), and on Vernon Row (10<sup>th</sup> and Pennsylvania Avenue) (Fig. 43). Even though Johnston’s studio was not located downtown, it nevertheless became a central hangout for her friends and clients. Like many other professional artists, including painters and photographers, Johnston held “at homes,” or specific times where she would be available in the studio for callers. These small entertaining events were held on Wednesday afternoons, and often involved sharing tea amongst a few friends. A photograph from about 1900 shows what one of Johnston’s “at homes” must have been like (Fig. 44). The photographic equipment has been stored away and a small tea table has been placed in front of the fireplace, creating a cozy atmosphere for Johnston and her close friends, Elbert Hubbard and artist and illustrator Mills Thompson.

The practice of entertaining other artists and friends was extremely common amongst late nineteenth-century artists and Johnston is known to have photographed and socialized at many other leading studios, including those of Alice Pike Barney (1860-1931), Parker Mann, and George Fort Gibbs. Corn describes Barney’s studio as having one room that was the “largest and most conspicuous room… designed to accommodate dozens of guests” that was used “not only as a workspace but as a performance area for modern music, dance, and drama.” Daniel Chester French (1850-1931) is another example of an artist whose studio included “a well-appointed reception room to entertain

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62 Berch, <i>The Woman Behind the Lens</i>, 22.  
63 Ibid.  
64 Corn, “Artists’ Homes and Studios,” 4.
clients and friends.” Like these artists, Johnston’s studio was well-equipped for larger parties as well as her smaller “at homes”. Much of the furniture and photographic equipment in her large upstairs studio space was collapsible or portable so that it could easily be moved out of the room to create room for parties and dancing—a piano was also kept in this room for that very purpose. Johnston and her friends formed an “artistic avant-garde group” made up of the literary and artistic members of Washington, D.C. called “The Push.” As an organizing figure of the group, Johnston hosted parties for The Push in her studio, which “often involved elaborate costumes and makeup and silliness.” A photograph from one of these parties shows Johnston in the center of a group of about twenty people, all of whom are bedecked in outrageous costumes (Fig. 45).

It was important to Johnston that her clients were also comfortable and at ease while visiting her studio. She did not rush through photo shoots, wanting to give her sitters plenty of time to get the best shots, sometimes scheduling “a half dozen sittings if necessary, to study… pose, expression and lighting: to give unlimited care to detail, to see the very best in a sitter and capture that if possible.” Johnston’s portrait of painter and Washington beauty Sarah Landon Rives holding her dog, an uncommon inclusion in formal portraiture of the period, shows the care that Johnston took in capturing each sitter’s individual personality (Fig. 46). In comparison to photographs of Rives created by Edward Steichen and Alvin Langdon Coburn, in which she plays the part of the

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65 Thayer Tolles, “The Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site and Chesterwood,” American Art 19, no. 1 (Spring 2005), 14. Like Johnston’s studio, French’s also had a main room with ample North-light windows and a separate workroom (like Johnston’s separate darkroom) where he would prepare molds.
68 Ausherman, The Photographic Legacy of Frances Benjamin Johnston, 10.
69 Anne E. Peterson, Women of Class and Station, 36.
unnamed model, Johnston’s intimate portrayal of Rives shows the sitter with her guard down, as if she has forgotten the presence of the camera and perhaps Johnston herself (Figs. 47-48). Steichen and Coburn employ Pictorialist tendencies in their work, dressing up the model and leaving her hair romantically long and wavy, while Johnston’s image is an example of a more straightforward approach that portrays Rives in a calm, thoughtful moment that feels personal. As with many of her portraits, Johnston shows Rives in proper Victorian attire, with her hair appropriately and conventionally done. The dark backdrop in the studio setting and close cropping of the image to show her seated from the waist up, looking fondly at her pet, create an intimate tone for the image. Missing the contrived and theatrical poses of Steichen and Coburn’s images, Johnston’s photograph appears to be made more for the sitter than for the photographer’s purposes. The titles of the three works further attest to the photographers’ different purposes. Both Steichen and Coburn give their works artistic titles, respectively ascribing Rives the allegorical role of the Muse of Tragedy or employing the word “study” to denote an artist’s work, whereas Johnston stays within the constraints of formal portraiture by giving her photograph the title of only the sitter’s name.

Johnston was also apparently accustomed to skirting the Victorian line of propriety during her photo shoots. Her photographs of Alice Berry are a prime example of the open atmosphere that her studio provided, one that served as a refuge from the restraints of conservative Victorian society. Berry, a young Washington society woman, came to Johnston’s studio in February of 1898 and requested that she be photographed nude. Because “she believed in art for art’s sake,” Johnston agreed, despite the possibility of negative reaction from the public. Johnston photographed Berry in a number of poses,
including a few in which she was shown emerging from the bath.\textsuperscript{70} The photos are no longer extant, but a photograph of an unnamed woman from 1900 may provide insight into what Johnston’s series of Alice Berry may have looked like (Fig. 49). Although the photos were developed in Johnston’s private studio so as to protect Berry’s privacy, the story of the nude photo shoot leaked and sparked Berry’s father to threaten a lawsuit against Johnston for tarnishing his daughter’s reputation. The lawsuit never came to fruition, but Berry’s father’s intensely negative reaction to the nude photographs is significant in showing how the late-nineteenth century public often reacted to young women acting outside of social prescriptions.

While the nude female body was a common subject for Pictorialist photographers, those images were created for the artist’s own purposes of exhibition and the models were often kept anonymous. Also, more often than not, the photographer of the female nude was male.\textsuperscript{71} Women artists were prohibited from attending life drawing classes based on strict societal prescriptions of propriety—a custom that dated back centuries. It was simply improper for a proper woman to be in the presence of a nude model.\textsuperscript{72} And although the customs were slowly changing at the end of the nineteenth century, as evidenced by Johnston’s own photograph of a women’s class at the Art Students’ League

\textsuperscript{70} Berch, \textit{The Woman Behind the Lens}, 30.
\textsuperscript{71} Of course, as Davidov rightly points out, women photographers other than Johnston also undertook the subject of the female nude: “It would be an oversimplification to say that only women posed for only men photographers: Ann Brigman and F. Holland Day photographed their own naked bodies and those of their friends; Käsebier made at least two photographs of nude women—in one of which Jane White (Clarence’s wife) posed as \textit{The Bat}; Cunningham photographed her husband’s naked body. Nevertheless, in photography as in painting, the predominantly male artist (as culture) transformed the female nude (woman’s body as nature) into a work of art.” Davidov, \textit{Women’s Camera Work}, 52.
\textsuperscript{72} Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock note that women have been excluded from the study of the nude model since the Renaissance, when the study of the naked human form became the most essential aspect of an artist’s training. They point out that at first, the male nude dominated in painting, but when this changed in the late eighteenth century, and “the painting of the nude became increasingly the painting of the female nude,” women continued to be excluded from artistic academies and schools, even as they became more present on the surfaces of the canvases these institutions produced. Rozsika Parker and Griselda Pollock, \textit{Old Mistresses: Women, Art, and Ideology} (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), 115-116.
in Washington, D.C. (c. 1900), a woman photographing another nude woman would still have been considered a shocking violation of these prescriptions (Fig. 50). It is noteworthy, and particularly telling of the changing times, that not only did Alice Berry feel comfortable enough with her own femininity and sexuality to be photographed nude by a woman photographer, but that she, for her own personal reasons, desired to represent herself in the nude and specifically sought out Johnston to be her photographer.

The comfortable atmosphere Johnston created in her studio has been said to be motivated by nineteenth-century prescribed roles to women as domestic caretakers. Historian C. Jane Gover writes: “Nineteenth-century women bore the responsibility for creating a home environment that would serve as a spiritual and peaceful retreat and testify as well to the family’s social status. Women photographers similarly created studios evocative of elegant, inviting middle class homes.”⁷³ As an example of this type of feminine studio, Gover refers to the studio of Lily Selby and her sister, located on Fifth Avenue in New York, where they set up a “lovely old blue and ivory studio… served afternoon tea and became known for their feminine style.”⁷⁴ While Johnston’s studio seems to be the epitome of an inviting, peaceful retreat, I would argue that her ultimate goal was not to have what Gover calls a reflection of “the woman’s world.”⁷⁵ Instead, what was foremost on Johnston’s mind was creating a studio that mirrored other professional artists’ studios in order to best carry out a productive photography business and successfully create a name for herself in the art world. Johnston’s own statements attest to this. She explained, “I have tried to make my skylight room as artistic, as

⁷⁴ Ibid.
⁷⁵ Ibid.
cheerful and as inviting as would be the studio of an artist.”

Indeed, having an inviting and comfortable atmosphere, as Burns argues, is crucial for almost any successful business and was a goal of male and female artists alike.

Attached to this idea of women as domestic caretakers is the notion of separate “spheres” for men and women. In the past, historians have ascribed to men and women the public and private spheres—men have been the possessors of the public sector, while women remained rulers over the domestic sphere, mainly the home. During the nineteenth century, however, these spheres experienced a disturbance. The rise of women’s clubs, department stores, public parks, and women’s colleges all contributed to the dissolution of distinct gendered spheres. Women’s roles in the public sphere were expanding and spaces were being created to suit the New Woman’s more expansive reach. These spaces included women’s clubs and colleges, where women could meet, discuss events and issues, and learn from each other. When looked at this way, the artist’s studio, with its atmosphere of creativity and open communication between artist and sitter, can be seen as another of these spaces that crossed the public/private spheres and blurred the lines between men and women’s prescribed spaces. Johnston’s own studio is a testament to this: inside her studio, she held parties for the Push, had male and

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76 Daniel and Smock, Talent for Detail, 18.
78 See Andrea Merrett, “From Separate Spheres to Gendered Spaces: The Historiography of Women and Gender in 19th Century and Early 20th Century America,” eScholarship, University of California, 2010. http://www.escholarship.org/uc/item/8dd143rj. Merrett provides a complete historiography of the methodology of the public/private spheres, including a thorough analysis of how historians’ views of women in the public and private sphere have changed over the past few decades.
female guests over for tea, encouraged discussion about art issues and events of the day, and completed her own portraits of both male and female sitters.

The many portraits of Johnston’s friends and sitters dressed in costume and in unconventional settings testify to the kind of open, creative atmosphere of her studio. Dressing up in theatrical costumes was a common pastime for Victorians, and many photographs from the period attest to the popularity of trying on different roles and performing for a camera. A group of portraits of her close friend, artist and illustrator Thompson, is an excellent example of Johnston’s ability to let loose and experiment in the studio. Taken around the time Johnston first opened her studio, these images portray Thompson in a variety of different guises and poses. In one, Thompson is shown closely cropped, with a toothless expression and a look of shock in his eye that seems almost deranged (Fig. 51). His suit, frazzled hair, and wrinkled forehead give him the appearance of an old man. In another, Thompson wears a wreath of cherry blossoms and a gauzy white veil (Fig. 52). A white shawl has been draped around his shoulders, with a large branch of cherry blossoms tucked inside that extends into the background. He is smiling and his hair has been brushed down, details that make this feminine portrait even more outlandish. In two photographs from the group, Thompson wears blackface, a form of theatrical makeup used by white actors in vaudeville shows for stereotypical African-American roles (Figs. 53-54). One is a closely cropped, head-and-shoulders portrait of Thompson dressed as a minstrel, while the other shows him in the guise of a native, stooped over with a large club in one hand and a knife between his teeth.

Since Johnston has left no documentation or written descriptions about the series of Thompson portraits, which also includes photographs of Thompson dressed in black-
face and a top hat and as a sultry Victorian lady, among others, it is impossible to know what purpose the series served for either Johnston or her model (Figs. 55-56). It is evident, however, that Johnston and Thompson were working together to create a humorous series of images that examine different characters, particularly characters commonly marginalized by society: the elderly or the mentally ill, the woman, the African American, and the aboriginal. In this way, Johnston’s studio serves as a kind of performance space, a private, safe place for “trying on” of different roles and acting out of different personas. The performances Johnston and Thompson created in her studio closely resembles the tableaux vivants which experienced a surge in popularity at the end of the nineteenth century at high society functions as well as in photographs. Davidov defines these tableaux vivants, or “living pictures,” as “grandiose presentations with large casts, exotic themes, and elaborate scenery and costumes especially popular with nineteenth-century theater audiences in Paris and London.”

In New York and elsewhere in the United States, these events were held not only on stage, but in hotels, private homes, boarding houses, churches, and artistic organizations—and were oftentimes hosted by artists. William Merritt Chase is but one artist known to have made these living pictures; Davidov cites Johnston’s colleague Gertrude Käsebier and English photographer Julia Margaret Cameron as examples as well (Fig. 57).

By photographing Thompson in such a vast array of guises and personalities, Johnston turned her studio space into a place for performance, with the resulting photographs serving as

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80 Davidov, Women’s Camera Work, 16.
81 Ibid., 61.
82 Ibid., 58-65. For more on Julia Margaret Cameron’s Madonna portraits, see Carol Mavor, “To Make Mary: Julia Margaret Cameron’s Photographs of Altered Madonnas,” in Pleasures Taken: Performances of Sexuality and Loss in Victorian Photographs (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1995), 43-70. When discussing Cameron’s staged photographs, Mavor describes her as a “stage director”: “She insisted that her guests be actors for her camera…. And subjected them to hours of character modeling,” (author’s emphasis, 45).
documentation of the well-choreographed show that took place. The Thompson portraits were not the first or last time Johnston utilized her studio as a stage for donning costumes and enacting roles. Her previously-mentioned *Self-Portrait (as New Woman)*, along with several of her other self-portraits and photographs of both known and unnamed models currently housed in the Library of Congress, also involved the act of dressing up and putting on a certain character (Figs. 58-59).

Johnston’s photographs of Berry and Thompson show that her studio was not only used as a space for entertaining friends or conducting proper portrait sittings of the city’s elite. It was also a space that was used by Johnston and her contemporaries as a place in which to explore the boundaries and fluidity of sexuality and gender in an era that was generally restrictive towards such exploration. In the public eye, Johnston consistently played the part of the proper Victorian woman, a fact that the popular press repeatedly lauded her for. However, in the privacy of her studio, Johnston, along with her friends and sitters, stretched the boundaries of Victorian propriety by experimenting with their personal representation. Berry flaunted her sexuality by discarding her clothes voluntarily for the camera. Thompson donned different costumes to take on various identities, including dressing up as a woman in several photographs. Johnston herself played the part of actor for the camera by exploring the seemingly dual roles of womanhood that her culture prescribed: Proper Victorian or Rebellious New Woman.  

83 Thompson would have been well suited for this type of performance. *The Washington Post* described Thompson as one of the “cleverest members” of the Washington, D.C. art world whose “ventriloquism, his inimitable songs, his clever imitations, his droll dancing” have made him a “welcome guest” in the art community of the city. *The Washington Post*, November 8, 1896.  

84 It should be noted that several scholars have suggested that Johnston furthered this exploration of sexuality in her personal life. In this light, her New York studio that she co-operated with professional partner and close friend Mattie Edwards Hewitt from around 1913 to 1917 could be viewed as another space in which exploration occurred. The two women lived and worked together for over four years, and their correspondence before and during this time has been interpreted by some as indicative of a romantic
In short, Johnston’s first photographic studio in Washington, D.C., played a large part in helping to forge her early career, carrying a number of roles that were crucial to Johnston’s success as a photographer. There, she created an open, welcoming environment where women and other members of the Washington, D.C., elite as well as avant garde art groups could come to represent themselves and share ideas about photography and art. The studio also gave Johnston a setting for her self-portraiture that allowed her to fashion her own identity as both a New Woman and a professional photographer. By using her studio and her office as the setting for her self-portraits, Johnston was able to align herself with contemporary and past masters in the art world by employing props commonly associated with the traditional artist’s self-portrait. The inclusion of her art collections and her own photographs of Washington elite spoke to Johnston’s own artistic tastes and the prominent circles of which she was a part. Finally, Johnston used her studio in the same way that many of her contemporaries did: as a place to stage performances in front of the camera.

CHAPTER 3
SUPPORTING THE NEW WOMAN IN PHOTOGRAPHY AT HOME AND ABROAD

Johnston’s photographic portraits of society women, along with a number of her own self-portraits, reveal her regard for and identification with the New Woman. Her studio practices show that Johnston was extremely concerned with allowing her sitters to work along with their photographer in an open atmosphere that was conducive to creating personal, intimate portraits that oftentimes skirted Victorian ideas of propriety. Out of this studio came some of the most provocative images of the New Woman that America had seen thus far. Johnston’s studio also was instrumental in creating her own public persona as a New Woman and professional photographer. However, this is not where Johnston’s interests in promoting the New Woman and the field of women’s photography ended. In fact, as one of the nation’s most prominent woman photographers, Johnston had enormous influence over the promotion of women’s photography in America and abroad. She was able to support the efforts of women in photography, and thus promote the idea of the professional New Woman, in both printed literature, personal correspondence, and abroad in her role as curator for the 1900 Paris Exposition and as the only female American delegate to the International Congress of Photography, which was held in conjunction with the Exposition from July 23 to July 28.

From its inception in the early nineteenth century, photography has been considered an appropriate artistic outlet for women, who were often excluded from the art
academies and exhibitions of the “high” arts—painting and sculpture. Because of its relatively new status in the art world, photography was viewed by many established artists with a degree of skepticism. Many critics dismissed photography as a mechanical, science-based practice rather than one based on the same creative and artistic principles as the more traditional arts of painting and sculpture. Photography’s second-class status in the artistic hierarchy made the medium a suitable pursuit for women that did not threaten men’s dominant roles in the art world and the larger social sphere. Out of necessity, amateur photographers developed their images inside the home, or sent their film away by mail to a professional who would develop the images for a fee. Because of these practicalities, photography also served as a way to keep women inside of the home—a factor that was of increasing importance to a culture that was being threatened by the rise of the New Woman and women’s increasing participation in society outside of the home. Also, the subject matter of both amateur and art photography of the late nineteenth century, when debates about photography’s legitimacy as an art form were at a peak, revolved around portraiture, landscape, and domestic scenes—all of which were deemed appropriate creative subjects for women. Furthermore, photography could be seen as an extension of woman’s primary duties as caretaker of the home. As mothers and wives, it was seen as a woman’s duty to document and record her family’s lives—and photography offered women the means to do so while still exercising their creative minds.

These ideas were spread in popular magazines and art magazines, which encouraged women’s involvement in the field. *The Cosmopolitan* lauded the efforts of women in photography, noting that “unlike the gun, the racquet and the oar, the camera
offers a field where women can compete with men upon equal terms; and that some women have so successfully striven should encourage more to follow in their lead.”

*Godey’s Magazine* published several articles that focused on the successes of individual women photographers, being sure to include examples of their work and sometimes even images of their studio. Some writers attributed women’s aptitude for photography to their feminine qualities, claiming that the skills required of photography fit a woman’s natural disposition. Margaret Bisland wrote in *Outing* magazine in 1890 that, “photography appeals directly to a woman’s intelligence, demands constant exercise of her powers of judgment, giving her in return rapid and beautiful reward.”

George Eastman, creator of the first handheld Kodak camera, even created fashionable cameras that were specifically marketed towards the New Woman. The Vest Pocket Vanity cameras could be coordinated to match any outfit and the Vanity Kodak Ensemble even included a lipstick case, compact, mirror, and change purse (Fig. 60-61). Eastman’s advertising campaign specifically targeted women with its introduction of the Kodak Girl, a modern woman who traveled the world, took care of her family, participated actively in sports, and enjoyed leisure time with friends. For example, the “Take Your Kodak with You” campaign and the advertisements featuring the Kodak Girl on vacation in various locales referenced the modern woman’s ability to move between public and private spheres (Fig. 62-63). Whereas women had previously been mostly

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88 For more on Kodak’s advertising campaign, see Nancy Martha West, *Kodak and the Lens of Nostalgia* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2000).
limited to the domestic sphere of the home, the New Woman was now able to hold down a job, enter college, shop wherever she wanted, and more—and Kodak encouraged her to document it all!

In addition to the encouragement from popular literature and acceptance from the art world, and perhaps most significantly, women photographers made it a priority to give support to other women in their field. Many used photographic journals as an outlet for this form of encouragement. For instance, Catherine Weed Ward, a practicing photographer in Albany and the editor of the woman’s department of the English journal *Photogram*, encouraged women photographers in both her writing and her lectures.\(^\text{89}\) Elizabeth Flint Wade, an author, poet, and Pictorialist photographer, wrote two articles in 1894 on the subject of photography, both of which were published in *The Photographic Times*, and later shared her own experiences as a photographer in a series published by *The Photo-American* entitled “Amateur Photography Through Women’s Eyes.” Wade wrote that “what was begun as a diversion has now become a vocation, and my camera is a source of income as well as a source of pleasure and recreation… I believe there is no other vocation open to women in which so much pleasure and profit is combined with so little drudgery.”\(^\text{90}\)

Photography clubs were another way that women sought to promote their own work and find encouragement and advice from others in their field. These clubs served as a place where women could meet and openly discuss their work with other professionals and amateurs in their field. Women had achieved considerable success in photography by the late nineteenth century, and the fruitful careers of photographers such as Gertrude

\(^{90}\) Elizabeth Flint Wade, “Amateur Photography Through Women’s Eyes,” *The Photo-American* 15 (June 1894), 235. The series also included essays by Myra Albert Wiggins
Käsebier and others proved to be an encouragement to beginning photographers. Johnston in particular served as an influential mentor to and role model for other amateur and professional women photographers.

**Johnston as Role Model and Mentor**

Johnston’s success as a professional and artistic photographer made her a role model for other women in the field. Newspapers and photography magazines consistently touted Johnston as the leading woman photographer in the country. Aspiring photographers could see Johnston’s work in numerous magazines, including *Demorest’s Family Magazine*, *The Ladies’ Home Journal*, and *Women’s Home Journal*, and her photographs and written articles were also sought after by publishers like Harper and Brothers. Even before her participation in the Paris Exposition, Johnston had a long list of professional achievements to her name, including several appointments on photographic juries and involvement in photography exhibitions at home and abroad.

It is evident even early in her career that introducing women to photography as a means of making a living was a main concern of Johnston’s. In an 1893 article entitled “Women Experts in Photography,” Johnston is quoted as saying, “there are great possibilities in photography as a profitable and pleasant occupation for women, and I feel my success helps demonstrate this.” In 1897, Johnston was approached by *Ladies’ Home Journal* to write an article about her involvement in photography. In it, Johnston urged women to pick up the camera, claiming that “to an energetic, ambitious woman

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91 Moore, “Women Experts in Photography,” 586. Moore also highlights the work of Catharine Weed Barnes, Sarah Jane Eddy, and Emma J. Farnsworth, whose work was later featured by Johnston in the 1900 Paris Exposition.
with even ordinary opportunities, success is always possible.”92 A few years later, the magazine approached Johnston again, this time asking her to write a series of articles that showcased the talents of different women photographers, both well-known and amateur, including Käsebier, Zaida Ben-Yusuf, and Mathilde Weil.93

Gover discusses in detail Johnston’s role as a mentor to amateur and professional women photographers, highlighting the ways that Johnston promoted photography as an appropriate vocational and creative outlet for women. She argues that women across the United States looked to Johnston for guidance and advice and also perceived Johnston as a leader in the field. Gover states that Johnston’s “career and relationship with a number of professional and amateur photographers represented a crucial aspect of the nineteenth-century support system in photography.”94 Many letters from readers of Johnston’s articles attest to this claim. Some women wrote to Johnston for advice regarding their careers or revealing their concerns about balancing their work as photographers with their duties as mothers and wives. Virginia Sharp, an amateur photographer based in Nantucket, Massachusetts, wrote about how her familial duties had, “put a stop to all art” but how she later found photography to be an easier, more compatible way to “satisfy the longing… to do something in the art line” while still maintaining her role as mother.95

Some women sent Johnston requests for employment or instruction. Gover writes that, “aspiring women photographers who wished to train or study in Johnston’s studio frequently expressed a desire to enter into an apprentice arrangement with her in which

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95 Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers, Letters from Virginia Sharp to Frances Benjamin Johnston, June 13, 1900, and June 16, 1900, Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.
Johnston, the expert, would direct their careers and nourish their insecure spirits.”

Johnston did in fact enter into a mentor role with Mattie Edwards Hewitt, a close friend of Johnston’s who sought her advice in letters and ultimately became her partner, helping with darkroom procedures and doing enlargements to help Johnston in her later career as an architectural photographer.

**Johnston as Curator**

Beginning in the late eighteenth century, governments used international exhibitions in order to draw attention to the progress and achievements made by their country. Because of their perceived interdisciplinary nature, much research has been done on the subject of international exhibitions, which are alternatively known as World’s Fairs or Expositions Universelles. Scholars agree that these exhibitions were viewed by contemporaries as world stages where countries could showcase their art, inventions, and sociological developments in order to prove how much progress had been made—and certain exhibitions were conceived with the specific notion of progress in mind. For instance, the World’s Columbian Exhibition held in Chicago in 1893 was meant to mark the 400 year anniversary of Christopher Columbus’s discovery of the New World and to showcase how far the country had advanced in that span of time. France, a country that had long been involved in the staging of international exhibitions, held the Exposition

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Universelle of 1900 in its capital city of Paris in order to show the progress that had been made throughout the world during the entire nineteenth century.  

With that theme of progress in mind, the Paris Exposition of 1900 provided Johnston with another opportunity to encourage women’s advancement in the field of photography. In April, Johnston received a letter from Ellen M. Henrontin on behalf of Bertha Honoré Palmer asking that she assemble an exhibition dedicated to the work of American women photographers. Along with her curatorial responsibilities, Johnston was also chosen as one of five official U.S. delegates to the International Congress of Photography in Paris. Palmer, an honorary commissioner for the United States Delegation to the Universal Exposition, had been responsible for much of the organization of the Women’s Pavilion at the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago and was committed to representing the social advances of American women on the international level.

In Chicago, Palmer had been able to work closely with her hand-picked architect and designers, making sure that her chosen themes were carried out effectively. However, perhaps because of the short amount of time between Johnston’s appointment and the beginning of the exhibition and the Exposition’s location overseas, Johnston was able to make her own choices concerning the exhibition. For instance, Palmer had originally asked Johnston to give a “more or less technical paper” on photography—advice that

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99 The other four delegates were Max Levy, Edward Levy, M.E. Cameron, and S. L. Sheldon. Alfred Stieglitz had been invited to serve on the Congress, but declined. Beatrice Tonneson, a Chicago-based professional photographer, was also invited to serve on the Congress but was unable to travel due to the death of her mother.

100 Griffith, “‘Dainty and Artistic or Strong and Forceful,’” 17.
Johnston rejected in favor of championing the progress of American women in the field. Other than that small request by Palmer, it seems that Johnston had full authority over the organization of the exhibition. She chose to exhibit every photograph that was submitted to her, a detail that may be attributed to the fact that she only had six short weeks to organize the exhibition.

In order to collect photographs for the exhibition, Johnston sent a letter to each of the women she was considering, photographers whose work she was familiar with and who came from similar economical and educational backgrounds as Johnston. She had also written several of her male colleagues for suggestions, including Stieglitz and Juan Abel, editor of *The Photographic Times*. Both men approved of her list—Stieglitz responded with a letter of encouragement, writing that, “The women in this country are certainly doing great photographic work and deserve much commendation for their efforts.”

Although there were a few practicing African-American women photographers at the time of the Paris Exposition, Johnston did not approach them to be included in the exhibition. This could be attributed to a number of reasons, including the fact that Johnston had very little time to organize the exhibition or that she was not familiar with their work. Although the photographs in the exhibition will be discussed as an account of the lives of American women, it should be noted this account is not all inclusive. The women photographers represented are all white, middle- to upper-class, and from the North-eastern United States.

Johnston’s letter to the potential contributors explained that the commission, headed by Palmer, “recognizes [the work of American women photographers] as unique,

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102 Naomi Rosenblum discusses the opportunities available to African-American women at this time in photography in *A History of Women Photographers*, 151.
and it is their desire that [it] should be adequately and worthily represented at this Congress.”

She asked each woman to provide a brief biographical sketch, a number of prints they considered to be examples of their best work and, if possible, a photo portrait of themselves. Ultimately, Johnston was able to collect a total of 142 prints from 28 photographers.

The exhibition, held in the photographic section of the Exposition in the Palace of Letters and Science, opened on July 25 at the International Congress of Photography, where Johnston presented a paper entitled “The Work of the Women in the United States in Photography.” In her speech, she explained that, “American women photographers were interested in both professional and artistic pursuits in photography, that they kept up with new scientific developments in the field, and that they participated in camera clubs and important exhibitions.”

Johnston presented the successes of American women photographers to an international audience as yet another example of American progress on exhibit at the 1900 Paris Exposition.

Johnston chose to exhibit work from both professional and amateur photographers, from a variety of professional backgrounds and geographical areas across the country, a decision that worked to highlight the multiple ways that women in the

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104 Frances Benjamin Johnston Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.

105 Women included in the Exposition with the number of prints exhibited in parenthesis: Mary and Frances Allen (4), Alice Austin (7), Mary Bartlett (5), Zaida Ben-Yusuf (5), Rose Clark and Elizabeth Flint Wade (8), Annie Nelson Crowell (2), Sarah Jane Eddy (4), Fannie Elton (2), Emma J. Farnsworth (6), Floride Green (5), Gertrude Käsebier (9), Edith Lounsberry (4), Emily Mew (3), Mary Paschall (3), Annie Pilsbury (8), Virginia Prall (8), Addie Robinson (3), Mary Schäffer (3), Sarah Sears (4), the Selby sisters (4), Virginia Sharp (4), Alta Bell Sniff (4), Amelia Van Buren (6), Eva Gamble Walborn (4), Eva Watson (12), Mathilde Weil (10), Myra Wiggins (4), and Mabel Osgood Wright (2). Mary Devins was invited to show her work, but Johnston’s letter did not reach her in time. Devins’ work was included in the later showing of the exhibition at the Paris Photo-Club in early 1901. See Ambassadors of Progress for more in-depth information on each of the exhibitors, including detailed biographies compiled by Laura Ilise Meister, “Women Photographers in the Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection,” 137-187.

United States could choose to practice photography. Most of the photographs in the exhibition were portraits and genre scenes, although there were also nature images, landscapes, still-lifes, and figure studies. These subjects were popular with both men and women photographers, suggesting that despite common associations with portraiture, still-lifes, and images of nature with women’s art, in particular, women’s painting, the women photographers in the Paris Exposition chose their subject matter based on current trends in the field, not based on what they were restricted to portray. Indeed, women photographers often rejected the idea of their work being judged as “women’s photography,” a category separate from photography in general. In response to Johnston’s invitation, Eva Watson-Schütze revealed her apprehension at being segregated from the rest of the photography world:

I am a little bothered in regard to the world’s fair exhibit. It has been one of my special hobbies—and one I have been very emphatic about—not to have my work represented as “women’s work.” I want it judged by only one standard—irrespective of sex… Personally I would not want anything said of me unless it was simply that I was a serious student of painting, and am now a most serious worker in Photography.”

Of all the types of photography included in the show, portraiture seems to be the most prominent. The portraits of women were extremely varied—women were shown as idealized and as real people. Käsebier’s *The Manger* (c. 1900) depicts a veiled woman holding a swaddled baby in a barn, which is consistent with her Pictorialist desire to raise

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107 Ibid., 77.
108 Scholars have argued that women have been relegated to painting certain subjects because of their restricted position in society. For example, Linda Nochlin argues that Impressionist painters Mary Cassatt and Berthe Morisot painted domestic scenes and images of mothers with their children because social prescriptions prevented them from painting the night cafés and nude figure studies that were popular subject matter for male Impressionist painters at the time. This does not seem the case with photography because both male and female photographers portrayed similar subjects. Linda Nochlin, “Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?” *ARTnews* January 1971: 22-39, 67-71.
109 Eva Watson-Schütze to Frances Benjamin Johnston, June 10, 1900, Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress.
photography to the level of high art by employing the same kind of scenes found in painting (Fig. 64). 110 Frances and Mary Allen’s *A Holbein Woman* (c. 1900) is entirely devoid of a setting and instead focuses completely on the sitter, a modest-looking, un-idealized, older woman whose gaze avoids the viewer (Fig. 65). Zaida Ben-Yusuf’s work, *The Odor of Pomegranates* (c. 1900), depicts a more modern woman standing in front of an oriental curtain and holding a pomegranate at face level (Fig. 66). 111 Her hidden face and the ornate dress that allows her to blend into her surroundings recall the paintings of Whistler or Chase in which women merely serve as decorative objects along with the oriental souvenirs that surround them.

That the exhibition was a success is an understatement and Johnston’s efforts did not go unnoticed at home. One Washington, D.C. newspaper noted Johnston’s success at representing American progress abroad in a July 1900 article stating that:

> To startle the old world with a revelation of what the women of this country have accomplished in triumph over the remainder of the world, Miss Frances Benjamin Johnston of this city, one of the most widely known of women photographers, has succeeded in securing a collection of pictures of incomparable beauty from her feminine colleagues.” 112

International audiences equally appreciated Johnston’s efforts. The Russian delegate to the Congress was so impressed that he requested that the exhibit travel to St. Petersburg.


and Moscow in the fall of that same year. The exhibition then traveled back to France to be shown at the Paris Photo-Club from January 24 through February 13, 1901.

Part of the exhibition’s success can possibly be explained by the fact that Johnston’s exhibit was one of the few exhibitions of artistic photography from the United States that was on view at the Paris Exposition. Many male photographers had opted out of showing their work at the Exposition because of the current debate about the state of photography as a lower art form. In a revolt against photography’s classification in the Exposition in Group Three (Letters and Sciences) instead of Group Two (Fine Arts), Alfred Stieglitz, who had been asked to select American photographs to include in the Exposition, had instead used the opportunity to promote his agenda of raising photography to the level of high art. Unfortunately for Stieglitz, his request to have photography exhibited alongside painting and sculpture was denied and in turn, he encouraged his contemporaries to boycott the Exposition.

Despite the boycott by many of America’s practicing photographers, the Paris Exposition was not left wanting in visual, artistic representation of American life—nor was it lacking in imagery of America’s women. The paintings on display by American artists in the Grand Palais offered audiences a distinct view of the American woman. The types of women portrayed can be classified into four categories: portraits of society women, women at leisure, Virgins, and mothers and children. Women such as that found in Abbott Handerson Thayer’s *Virgin Enthroned* (1891) were considered powerful

113 Griffith, “‘Dainty and Artistic or Strong and Forceful,’” 19.
114 As a result of this boycott, Griffith notes, “the women photographers presented by [Johnston] formed the only collective representation of American Pictorialist photography in Paris until F. Holland Day’s exhibition of the “New School of Photography” in February 1901.” Ibid.
115 For a complete catalog of the paintings found in the exhibition, see Fischer, ed., *Paris 1900*. Fischer discusses the images of women in the show in her essay, “Constructing the “American School of 1900,” 46-61.
icons of American femininity by contemporaries (Fig. 67).\textsuperscript{116} Art historian Diane P. Fischer says that “critics praised this canvas… for portraying real American womanhood” and uses art critic Royal Cortissoz as an example, who wrote that “a nation that could produce a work like this, the foreigner must say, is a nation to reckon with.”\textsuperscript{117} Images such as Thayer’s that evoked the supernatural and ethereal were common in the exhibition. George de Forest Brush’s \textit{Mother and Child} (c. 1897), with its mother and child tableau reminiscent of that used in classical images of the Virgin and Child, and George Hitchcok’s \textit{Magnificat} (1894) are but two more examples shown at the Paris Exposition that attest to American painters’ interest in portraying otherworldly, often religious female types (Figs. 68-69).

It may go without saying, but the realistic American woman, the one who raised her children, worked in low-paying jobs, attended all-girls’ educational institutions, participated in women’s clubs, and enjoyed the perks of modern turn-of-the-century life, did not in fact resemble the Virgin Mary in physical appearance or in their day-to-day life. In this way, the various images of women included in Johnston’s exhibition provided a more truthful representation of what it was to be an American woman in 1900. This is not to say that religious imagery in keeping with the artistic trend of the day was not taken up by women photographers. Indeed, several images found in Johnston’s exhibition are strikingly similar to the aforementioned paintings, including Käsebier’s \textit{The Manger} and \textit{The Vision} (c. 1900) and Amelia van Buren’s \textit{Madonna} (c. 1900) (Figs. 70-71).\textsuperscript{118} However, the collection also showcased images of women working and at leisure, as well

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 49
  \item \textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{118} For more on Amelia van Buren and her work, see Rosenblum, \textit{A History of Women Photographers}, 103-104.
\end{itemize}
as intimate and realistic portraits of unidealized women that were for the most part absent from the painting exhibition.

Mary Frances Carpenter Paschall, an amateur photographer from Doylestown, Pennsylvania, objected to the “modern way of little to no focus” found in Pictorialism, preferring instead to document the subjects she found in and around her town in a straightforward, documentary style.\textsuperscript{119} \textit{Picking Geese} (c. 1900) portrays a working family in an open barn, two men and one woman pluck their geese while another woman supervises from behind and a young child plays in the tub of plucked feathers (Fig. 72). Author and photographer Mabel Osgood Wright’s \textit{Feeding the Calves} (c. 1900), a striking image of a young girl feeding calves in a pasture, and Sarah Jane Eddy’s \textit{Contentment} (c. 1900), a photograph of a young woman shucking corn, both show women working rural jobs (Fig. 73-74).\textsuperscript{120} These are but a few examples of images of working women included in Johnston’s exhibition, and they provide an alternative image to that found in the Grand Palais, which neglected to show actual American women working to provide for their families and care for their homestead.

Though more representative of the lives of actual American women, the photographs on view in Paris were not all inclusive. While they did show a variety of different women doing actual labor and daily chores, those portrayed were distinctly white and middle- to upper- class. Although women of color were portrayed elsewhere in the Exposition by Johnston—and lower-class factory workers had been a subject of Johnston’s documentary photography several times prior to the Exposition—these

\textsuperscript{120} For more about Mabel Osgood Wright, see Meister, “Women Photographers in the Frances Benjamin Johnston Collection,”187; For more information on Sarah Jane Eddy and her work, see Sarah Jane Eddy, “A Good Use for the Camera,” \textit{American Annual of Photography} 8 (1894), 186-187.
women were absent from the all-women’s photography exhibition. Nevertheless, the exhibition proved liberating for the women photographers involved in that it allowed them the freedom to show the world a view of life from their point of view.

Johnston’s collection of women’s work clearly revealed that there were women photographers in America experimenting with different artistic styles just like their male counterparts and that they used the female body in order to do so. A number of different types of American women were showcased in Johnston’s show, none of which recall the contrived illustrations of Charles Dana Gibson or the critical, over-exaggerated caricatures of magazines like *Punch*. The women represented in the portraits of the women’s show rejected the notion that women could be *either* Victorian, proper, and completely feminine *or* manly and unattractive usurpers of traditionally masculine roles. Also, although it is true that portraiture of women was a common subject for women photographers because it was easily accessible, it is also safe to assume that these women would have felt a strong sense of empowerment at being able to exhibit to the world how they saw themselves. As historian and curator Bronwyn Griffith noted in the introduction to the catalog for the 2001-2002 exhibition, “Ambassadors of Progress: American Women Photographers in Paris, 1900-1901,” the women involved in the exhibition were “examples of both social and photographic advancement: the accomplished techniques were proof of their photographic expertise and the fact that so many of them were professionals proof of the independent ‘new woman’.”

Indeed, when given the opportunity to show Paris a selection of American photography, Johnston showcased not only an excellent collection of works characterized by a variety of subject matter and superb technical skill in line with what the (male) photographic masters were creating, but also examples of the independence and advancement of American women photographers.

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she was also presenting to the world the efforts and successes of a group of empowered, professional New Women. While the images themselves may not have been radical in the sense of blatantly opposing Victorian traditions—the subject matter was quite tame and in line with what their contemporaries promoted—the women who produced them were enacting through their work the progressive ideals of a new century.

Just as the United States saw the Paris Exposition as a chance to showcase American progress on all fronts, Johnston viewed her women’s photography exhibition as a way to affirm women’s own progress in the arts. Not only did the exhibition effectively show how women have succeeded in the field of photography, it allowed American women to control how they were represented to the rest of the world. In her 1998 article about Johnston’s Hampton Institute photographs, historian Jeannene M. Przyblyski argues that the Paris Exposition, and the exhibition of Johnston’s photographs from the Hampton Normal and Agricultural Institute in particular, provided African Americans with a “key site for the social construction of the ‘New Negro’,” an effort by African Americans to craft a positive self-representation in the face of stereotypes. The all-women’s show served the same purpose for American women, but was perhaps more effective in terms of self-representation because it was women themselves doing the representing. Although African Americans participated in the construction of the American Negro Exhibit, including important black leaders such as W. E. B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington, the exhibit was still organized and produced for the most part by white Americans. In the case of Johnston’s women’s show, the entire exhibition was curated and represented by a woman, the opening address to the exhibition was given by a woman, and the photographs included were produced entirely by women.

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122 Przyblyski, “American Visions at the Paris Exposition, 1900,” 60.
Ultimately, Johnston’s involvement in curating the all-women’s photography show at the 1900 Paris Exposition, along with her constant encouragement of women photographers in the popular press, are examples of how Johnston used her considerable influence in the art world to promote the idea of the New Woman in the field of photography both at home and abroad. The Paris Exposition gave Johnston an international stage, which she used to show the world the contributions that American women had made to photography as amateur, professional, and artistic photographers. Johnston stressed to eager audiences in Paris and in the United States that women were able to make considerable strides as professionals in the field of photography—and the photographs on view at the Exposition, not to mention the successful careers of the women involved, were visible proof of her statements.
CONCLUSION

It is evident that, like many young, American women during the late nineteenth century, Frances Benjamin Johnston was what was known as a New Woman: educated, successful, independent, and a free spirit. She started and ran her own successful photography studio, ultimately acquiring for herself the reputation as one of the foremost photographers in the country. Johnston was determined to make a name for herself in the field, and did so by exhibiting her own work, serving as judge on several exhibition panels, writing extensively about the medium, and even organizing the work of other women photographers at the 1900 Paris Exposition.

Although the New Woman was a concept fraught with contradictions—the term was decidedly exclusive, restricted to white women of a certain economical class—she, as a progressive figure at the turn of the century, was readily apparent in Johnston’s photographs. Many of Washington, D.C’s elite women sought Johnston out specifically to photograph them, including prominent socialites and rising professionals. As Chapter 1 showed, Johnston made specific artistic choices through pose and setting that emphasized the individual sitter’s characteristics. Johnston’s own self-portraits also included imagery directly referencing the New Woman ideal—especially in the instance of Self-Portrait (as New Woman) in which Johnston shows herself in unconventional dress that unashamedly opposed the Victorian conventions of proper womanhood.
Johnston’s photographic studio was a place where the New Woman could flourish. It served as a place for Johnston’s own personal representation as a New Woman in the form of several self-portraits and was also where many of her patrons—many of whom were New Women themselves—came to be photographed. Her studio was also a unique type of space that denied categorization as a gendered sphere. The commonly-held belief that men and women resided and belonged to separate spheres fell away once one entered the artist’s studio. Instead, Johnston held elaborate costume parties for the men and women of Washington, D.C.’s art world, discussed art and other issues with her patrons and close friends (both male and female), and staged portrait sittings where costume and role play were encouraged. As the Berry and Thompson photographs have shown, Johnston’s studio was also a private place where sexual and gender identity could be explored in front of the camera, a concept that is radical in comparison to the proper lady persona that the popular press placed on Johnston. As a New Woman, Johnston was not to be constrained to the domestic sphere. Her studio allowed her—and those she associated with—a space in which to create, experiment, and socialize in ways that the Victorian women before her never could have.

But Johnston did not stop there. Not only did Johnston give other New Women a way to express themselves in her studio, but, as this thesis shows, Johnston was also a dedicated advocate of the New Woman, especially in the professional art world. She worked tirelessly to promote the efforts of individual women photographers, amateur and professional alike. She encouraged women, through her writing, to pick up the camera and earn a living for themselves, claiming that photography was the perfect means for a woman to earn money of her own. Johnston took her efforts to the international level with
her involvement in the 1900 Paris Exposition by both organizing the all-women’s photographic exhibition and speaking about women’s efforts in the field to the International Congress of Photography. It was one of Johnston’s main concerns to show the world that women in the United States were capable of producing photographs of impressive artistic quality and that their skill should be recognized and applauded.

As this thesis has showed, Johnston was successful in her efforts in promoting the New Woman through photography. However, another major theme of this project has been the fluidity of identity and how Johnston explored her personal identity through her self-portraits and studio activities. After all, a self-portrait is more than a documentary photograph of one’s self. It reveals not only the photographer’s physical features, but their ambitions, their ideas of themselves, and how they want to be represented to the outward world. Likewise, the studio, a place of personal creative expression that can be as open or as closed to the world as the artist prefers, tells scholars much about an artist’s personal ambitions and ideas of themselves.

By centralizing this thesis around these issues of identity and self-representation, my thesis has arguably opened up more avenues of inquiry around Johnston’s work and career, specifically around her photographic studio as not only a space of performance but a space of transformation, where gender and sexuality were things to be explored. Also, as New Woman, an idea already loaded with contradictions and complications, Johnston explored turn-of-the-century America in a tentative position. She was able to traverse boundaries her female ancestors could not, but was still unable to participate fully in a world where her career was burgeoning because of age-old societal prescriptions of propriety. In this way, her two self-portraits most revealingly tell how
Johnston saw herself: as two people, one prim and proper, rising to the popular expectation for women of her day, and the other, a New Woman, able to conquer her own destiny and provide for herself. However, this duplicity is also apparent in her private and public lives. For instance, while her actions in her studio seem radical for the time period—taking nude pictures of elite, genteel women and photographing friends in drag, for instance—her very public role as curator of the all-woman’s photographic exhibition resulted in a decidedly tame, non-confrontational representation of women’s photography.
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Fig. 1. Albert Morrow, *The New Woman*, featured in *Punch*, 1897

Fig. 2. Charles Dana Gibson, *The Gibson Girl*, c.1900
Fig. 3. *In a Twentieth Century Club*, featured in *Life*, June 13, 1895

Fig. 4. Charles Dana Gibson, *Girls Will Be Girls*, featured in *Life*, July 8, 1897
Fig. 5. Mills Thompson, poster of Frances Benjamin Johnston, c. 1895

Fig. 6. Felix Malony, caricature of Frances Benjamin Johnston, 1898
Fig. 7. Photograph of Frances Benjamin Johnston, c. 1905

Fig. 8. Charles Dana Gibson, *People Who Will Have Their Own Way: The Girl Who Refused Us*, 1899
Fig. 9. Charles Dana Gibson, *The Spinster’s Revery*, 1900

Fig. 10. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Jennie Tuttle Hobart and Son*, c. 1898
Fig. 11. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Edith Kermit Carow Roosevelt and Quentin*, c. 1902

Fig. 12. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Alice Lee Roosevelt Longworth*, 1902
Fig. 13. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Alice Lee Roosevelt Longworth*, 1902

Fig. 14. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Alice Lee Roosevelt (Longworth)*, 1902
Fig. 15. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Mattie Edwards Hewitt*, c. 1913

Fig. 16. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Countess Marguerite Cassini*, 1904
Fig. 17. Clarence H. White, *Morning*, 1908

Fig. 18. Alfred Stieglitz, *Sun Rays*, 1889
Fig. 19. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Self-Portrait (As Proper Victorian)*, c. 1896

Fig. 20. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Self-Portrait (as New Woman)*, 1896
Fig. 21. Unknown photographer, *Whistler Seated*, c. 1860-1865

Fig. 22. Vincent van Gogh, *Self-Portrait with Pipe*, 1886
Fig. 23. Gustave Courbet, *Self-Portrait with Pipe*, c. 1849

Fig. 24. Edgar Degas, *Self-Portrait: Degas Lifting His Hat*, c. 1863
Fig. 25. Ellen Day Hale, *Self-Portrait*, 1885

Fig. 26. William Merritt Chase, *In the Studio*, c. 1882
Fig. 27. William McGregor Paxton, *In the Studio*, c. 1905

Fig. 28. Robert Fuller, *Millais in his Studio*, 1886
Fig. 29. Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre, *The Artist’s Studio*, 1837

Fig. 30. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Parker Mann’s Studio*, c. 1900
Fig. 31. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Self-Portrait of Photographer Frances Benjamin Johnston in her Studio at 1332 V Street, N.W., Washington, D.C., c. 1900*

Fig. 32. *Self-Portrait as New Woman, detail*
Fig. 33. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Frances Benjamin Johnston Seated at a desk in her Studio/Office*, c. 1890-1900

Fig. 34. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Susan B. Anthony in Her Study*, c. 1900
Fig. 35. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *John Wanamaker*, c. 1890

Fig. 36. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *William McKinley*, 1897
Fig. 37. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Albert Jeremiah Beveridge, 1862-1927*, c. 1900

Fig. 38. Roger Fenton, *The Artist’s Van*, c. 1855-1865
Fig. 39. Alexander Gardner and His Portable Darkroom, c. 1867

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Fig. 40. Advertisement for the first Kodak camera, priced at $25, c. 1889
Fig. 41. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Rose garden and Frances Benjamin Johnston’s house and photography studio, 1332 V. Street, NW, Washington, DC, 1898, printed later*

Fig. 42. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Interior of Frances Benjamin Johnston’s studio at 1332 V St. NW, Washington, D.C., showing a large camera mounted on wheels, c. 1900, printed later*
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Fig. 44. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Frances Benjamin Johnston having tea with Elbert Hubbard and Mills Thompson at her studio in Washington, D.C.*, c. 1900, printed later
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Fig. 46. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Sarah Landon Rives,* c. 1890-1910
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Fig. 48. Alvin Langdon Coburn, *Study – Miss R.*, 1904
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Fig. 50. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Art Students’ League*, c. 1900
Fig. 51. Frances Benjamin Johnston, Mills Thompson, head-and-shoulders portrait, facing front, posed as toothless old man, c. 1890-1910

Fig. 52. Frances Benjamin Johnston, Mills Thompson, head-and-shoulders portrait, facing right, with cherry blossoms in hair, c. 1890-1910
Fig. 53. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Man in Blackface as Minstrel*, c. 1890-1910

Fig. 54. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Mills Thompson, 1875-1944*, c. 1890-1910
Fig. 55. Frances Benjamin Johnston, Untitled Image of Mills Thompson, c. 1890-1910

Fig. 56. Frances Benjamin Johnston, Untitled Photograph of Mills Thompson, c. 1890-1910
Fig. 57. Gertrude Käsebier, *Cornelia*, 1896

Fig. 58. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Boy in Silk Robe, Seated Under Tapestry*, undated
Fig. 59. Frances Benjamin Johnston, *Miss Apperson*, c. 1895

Fig. 60. Advertisement for the Series III Vest Pocket Vanity Kodak, c. 1927
Fig. 61. Vanity Kodak Ensemble, released in 1928 by the George Eastman Kodak Company.

Fig. 62. Kodak Girl advertisement, c. 1901.
Fig. 63. Kodak Girl advertisement, c. 1910

Fig. 64. Gertrude Käsebier, *The Manger*, c. 1900
Fig. 65. Frances and Mary Allen, *A Holbein Woman*, c. 1900

Fig. 66. Zaida Ben-Yusuf, *The Odor of Pomegranates*, c. 1900
Fig. 67. Abott Handerson Thayer, *Virgin Enthroned*, 1891

Fig. 68. George de Forest Brush, *Mother and Child*, c. 1897
Fig. 69. George Hitchcock, *Magnificat*, 1894

Fig. 70. Gertrude Käsebier, *The Vision*, c. 1900
Fig. 71. Amelia van Buren, *Madonna*, c. 1900

Fig. 72. Mary F. Carpenter Paschall, *Picking Geese*, c. 1900
Fig. 73. Mabel Osgood Wright, *Feeding the Calves*, c. 1900

Fig. 74. Sarah Jane Eddy, *Contentment*, c. 1900
Fig. 75. Mathilde Weil, *The Embroidery Frame*, c. 1900