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### A sentimental journey

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ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of  
The College of Fine and Applied Arts  
in Candidacy for the Degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY  
By  
Rose Marie Sirois Sherwood

Date: *8/25/86*



APPROVALS

Adviser: Philip Bornarth/

Date: 8/13/86

Associate Adviser: Robert Heischman/

Date: 8/21/86

Associate Adviser: Dr. Richard Zakia/

Date: 4 August 1986

Special Assistant to the

Dean for Graduate Affairs: ~~Dr. Peter Giopulos/~~

Date: 8/13/86

Dean, College of

Fine and Applied Arts: Dr. Robert H. Johnston/

Date: 8/25/86

I, \_\_\_\_\_, prefer to be contacted each time a request for production is made. I can be reached at the following address.

Date: 8/25/86

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Fred Meyer used to come into my studio space and talk about many different things. Sometimes I never really knew whether the topics we discussed had anything to do with the artwork that I was doing. One thing that was relevant, however, was how he responded to the images that were directly related to my family, specifically the work in which children were an intrinsic part. Fred often said that he felt that my work might be in danger of being too sentimental. With the first mention of this, I remember rushing to Webster's dictionary. It appeared that sentimentality was to be much more elusive than what it was defined as being.

I wish to thank Fred Meyer for providing me with the seed for this entire thesis research. The quest to find out about sentimentality led me to examine exactly how I created images and what outside influences directed the decisions that were made. Fred Meyer gave me a focus and an awareness to really think about the how and the why of the art that I produce.

Without my close connection to my family, this work would not exist. So, it is here, that I must thank Terry, my husband, for his unfailing support. His encouragement made the tough times easier and provided the impetus to "keep at it...". I must also mention my children, Matthew and Laura, whose beauty has been a source of attraction and, because of all the facets of sentimentality, danger for my imagery.

I wish to thank the teachers who made me question what I saw and how I saw it. Richard Margolis and Phil Bornarth both sharpened my way of observing the world around me and provided me with intelligent criticism and insight.

In the early 1960's, before John Kennedy was assassinated, the entire country embraced the Kennedy family. The media was filled with the contents of their lives. Everyone devoured the printed words and the pictorial images. The "Camelot Years" provided America with a hero and heroine, a vitality, a youthfulness and a fantasy that had been missing from preceding times; everyone was so enamored of the Kennedy milieu that looking back on this period of history seems like reading a very long "People" magazine.

Like every other person who wanted to know the Kennedys, I was no exception. I was in Jr. High school when Kennedy was elected President. The first time that I had ever drawn a portrait was during this time. I started using photographic material to draw from and since the media was overwrought with Kennedy faces, I ended up using pictures of JFK, Jackie, Caroline and John Jr. The very first drawing of a face was that of Caroline and it was drawn from an illustration of her that had appeared in some women's magazine. I must have drawn that face twenty times before I felt that the likeness was similar to the copied illustration.

The memory of that illustration and the process of learning to draw a face is still quite acute even though everything has been since lost. It seems, in looking back and remembering the time of laboring to make this portrait that it really only took a few drawings to produce a lasting personal attachment to portraiture and figurative imagery.

Not only the Kennedy era pushed me into this type of work, but also another event, only this time very personal, had great impact on the current work. In the late 1960's, my father died. After his death, it seems impossible, but it was very hard to remember what he looked like. Not many photographs existed of my father. I tried drawing his face from memory but these drawings never seemed to be right.



It was not until years later, when I was taking art courses, that I found some photographs of him. One photo was taken of him on a fishing trip in Maine. My father and his brother, Willfred, had been fishing and had lain all their fish, along with the fishing creel, on the hood of my dad's old Buick. Emotionally this was a wonderful picture of my father; this was the country where he was born and raised and loved and this was an activity that he derived immense pleasure. This little picture brought my father home! The snapshot, itself, was small (2"x3"), black and white with not much contrast and, because it had not been stored well, it was crumpled. The picture was not treated as though it was important but, on an emotional level, it was the most significant and important image for me.

This snapshot was translated into an edition of lithographs. The scale was larger (11"x14"), the tonal range wider and the likeness of my father captured. The motivation for doing this was largely sentimental. I wanted to do this image as a multiple so that not only could I preserve the information derived from the photo but also I would be able to share what I had done for other members of my family, technically the process of lithography afforded the abilities to do this.

The described past events cemented the focus of the imagery primarily on portraits, figures and environments. Also this information will tell you, the reader, how I became bound to producing work that is strongly attached to a photographic source. As well, these two circumstances are tied together by the threads of sentimentality. In the case of the Kennedy drawings both nostalgia and idealism prevailed and in the drawing of my father the feelings and act of remembering were present.

As Susan Sontag has written: "...photographs actively

promote nostalgia..(1)." Perhaps, I am actually falling into the pitfalls of sentimentality, not only by using photographic material, but also by the use of children as the central focus in the imagery. Recalling the memory of how and when the picture was taken is very strong and powerful. The photograph freezes and captures, in a very neat package, a moment that actually existed for everyone(thing) participating in that time. The picture presents itself as the past in the context of present time. Likewise, when the photo is used to make a drawing, the drawing will take on some of the nostalgic aspects that the photograph has. The tenets of sentimentality can be addressed from an understanding of the alignment and fine tuning of photographic information to yield a finished drawing.

The purpose of the written thesis and the work done in the studio will focus on the concepts of sentimentality vs. universality. The thesis will concentrate on the use of children in fine art imagery.

Children are very much a part of my life, they provide some of the truth that I, as an artist, can focus on in my paintings and drawings. The images for this thesis will make definite statements about adults and children and how they relate to each other spatially and psychologically. These images will document a contemporary point of view of children. The present "art scene" does not feature much work that includes a look at children. Perhaps, artists are afraid of appearing sentimental, trite and cute if they were to use children in their imagery. The work done for this thesis will sharpen and shape my own perceptions about what is sentimental. .

In examining the elements of sentimentality, some historical precedents involving the use of photographs, realism and images with children must be looked at. The Victorian era provides a wealth of material in regard to photography and the cultural attitudes toward children. Sentimentalism was at its height during the Victorian heyday.

It was during the 1850's that we can see that the sentimentalization process was at work in the type of portraiture and illustrations produced of children. As Mary Lynn Stevens Heininger wrote:

"...a formulaic picture of children began to emerge. Perhaps with their roots in portrayals of Renaissance cherubs, these images depicted children as wide-eyed chubby-cheeked, and, especially toward the end of the century, fair-skinned and fair-haired. Their childish expressions became exaggerated, and they looked remarkably alike. At the turn of the century, the ultimate expression of this--the faceless "Sun-bonnet Babies" (Fig. 1)--were a tremendous success (2)."

These images of children without faces adorned china and other household articles and further cemented the association of children as decorative elements.

We can interpret from the above statement that, while the Victorian period valued children, it also stylized and idealized them in the imagery of the time. The characterizations of children as anything but human beings, faceless and associated with ornament, suggests a great disparity between adult society and what children were in fact capable of doing. The Victorians created the perfect child and in so doing denied them their individuality and their humanity. The perfect child became a precious china plate, a napkin holder



or a wall picture. The reverence was present but the denial was also much in evidence.

In the development of photography, a similar romantic view of the perfect child was offered. The daguerreotypes, tintypes and ambrotypes of the 1840's, 50's, and 60's presented photographic images of children that also embodied the Victorian ideals of the parents. Since the cameras of this time were big and bulky, and because it was a slower more involved process to record an image, the movement of anyone wishing to have his portrait made, had to be restricted. We can well imagine what this sacrifice meant to a five-year-old child let alone for a wiggly and active two-year-old! Yet photographs exist that show awkward and very stiff children that parody their adult keepers. These children confront the camera with uncertainty, weariness and sometimes outright hostility.

In the photography of the late 19th century we begin to see a romanticism shining through. Photography at this time tried to imitate painting. A group known as the Photo-Secessionists led the quest that photography could be more than just documentary. Their insistence that photography could be fine art produced work that often resembled painting.

Gertrude Käsebier, a member of the Photo-Secessionist group, made several images whose themes alluded to the madonna and child. Other photographers of this period presented children bound harmoniously to nature.

Sentimentalism was prominent in the Victorian years because socially there was a yearning to return to the simplicity and innocence amid a world that was oftentimes complex and corrupt. By combining their imagery of innocent children to that of innocent nature the artists and photographers offered a highly romanticized portrayal of the world. Mary Lynn Stevens Heiningner writes:



"...They answered a need to create the ideal children who could serve a useful function and whose presence was always welcome. The perfect child would embody the redemptive qualities of innocence and simplicity, yet require no fundamental change in adult values or behavior (3)."

The romanticism and sentimentalism of the mid to late 19th century was contrasted by what was actually happening to children; the world was being actively urbanized and industrialized. Children left rural areas for the cities and the factories that they held. The youth formed a work force that was needed for the rapid growth that cities experienced, but at the same time these children were badly exploited. They worked long, hard hours for little financial reward under conditions that jeopardized their physical and mental well being.

Two photographers were able to bring to the world their sharp, harsh and real images of the working young. Jacob Riis and Lewis Hine presented the stark, shocking faces of children to middle-class men and women in their impeccable homes. The faces staring out from newspapers and magazines were horrible contradictions to what had become the accepted American definition of childhood. These children were not perfect, care-free, happy or healthy and they must not have seemed to be children at all. Photography was to expose the reality that had been denied.

The realism that photography presented to the world was unlike the sweet, ideal images of children that were treated so preciously by the adult world. Photography's children called for social change, while the children of painting and illustration did little to arouse social conscience.

Heininger writes:

"...The image of the pristine child, which grew from bud to full flower over the course of about a century, reflects a persistent and paradoxical theme in American life. It is emblematic of the sense that the vicious, materialistic, and immoral qualities of American society can be counteracted by virtuous citizens. The pure and good child serves both sides of this dichotomy. Insistence upon separation of adult and child spheres is an active admission that innocent goodness and "the world" do not mix. Belief in their essential differences is also expressed in the use of children (in art and artifact as much as in actuality) as soft and smiling foils to a more grim and grownup reality (4)."

The work of both the Photo-secessionists and the documentary photographers, Riis and Hine was important for giving us both sides of the picture of childhood, the idealistic and the realistic. But, even more important, around 1880's cameras became more readily available to the middle-class and from this point on, a different cumulative image began to emerge of Victorian family life. The candid photograph began to show us a more relaxed and vivacious look at childhood. The snapshot gave millions of families the visual record of their presence in their changing and chaotic world.

If we look at paintings from this period we can also see that many artists were being affected by how the camera was viewing their world. Many artists were incorporating, into their work, visual elements that could only have come directly from their study and active use of photographic material.

Realism as an art movement begin to emerge. Isolated groups of painters, not unlike the photorealists painters of the 1960's, were adamant about creating a "living art" which

would be truthful about objective reality. Courbet is credited for having brought forth a revolutionary movement that had impact on mid-nineteenth-century painting. His beliefs about what art should be were published in a manifesto; "To be able to translate the customs, ideas, and appearance of my time as I see them--in a word, to create a living art--this has been my aim (5)." Both the critics and the public were to remain resistant to the position of the realists. These groups seemed to prefer the sentimentalized views of life to the more raw versions depicted by Courbet and his followers.

Since the proponents of realism were isolated and divided by the Atlantic ocean, many divergent art movements were to gain some merit, although the impact of realism remained within their framework. The work of the Impressionists, for example still had context in capturing the life as it was being lived. Degas and Mary Cassatt were among the painters who best represented real and breathing beings in their work.

Realism would reappear in America shortly after the turn of the century in a group known as "The Eight" or "The Ashcan School". Four members of this group were especially drawn to focusing on the subject of children. Robert Henri, William Glackens, George Luks and William Merritt Chase painted children at play, in a relaxed manner and, for the most part, unsentimentally.

To have some knowledge and understanding of the past and how it relates to the present only serves to clarify how the present work came to be. A keen examination of the Victorian era yields reams of information about the early days of photography, realism and cultural attitudes pertaining to children and their childhood. So much was happening in the mid to late 19th century, that to separate some of the main events tied to the developments in these areas can only serve to make clear how and why sentimentality became a prominent



element of this time. We can begin to gain some insight about sentimentality. Sentimentality, for the Victorians, was idealism, perfection, sweetness, innocence, and denial of chaos and complexities of their world. Sentimentality, for Victorian painters was the same thing; if you look at the children of Millais, you will see sweet, angelic figures that possess an ugly contrivance and artificiality. If it is Rossetti's work that is being looked at, you will see the romantic, soft, dreamy portrait. The idealized subject was pervasive in the paintings that came out of this era.

The Victorians seemed to prefer this idealization in the art work that came out of this period. In looking at the popular illustrations and much of the fine art that came from the Pre-Raphaelites, for example, children were used out of their real context. The art was narrative, usually involved a message or moral and portrayed an artificial view of reality. This comprised the sentimental ilk that was the accepted norm of this century. In regarding art history from mid to late 19th century the struggle of the various art movements that existed can be readily felt because the Victorian society clung to the imagery that was idealized.

In order to look further at what may constitute sentimentality, the artists who were directly influential to this present thesis work must be given attention. Many of the artists that were regarded in the framework of the thesis are artists who, in their creative process, have had a close working relationship with photography. Other artists, like Mary Cassatt and Robert Henri, were portrait painters who painted children in a more expressive manner and from life.

A very large debt for this entire thesis rests with Mary Cassatt. She was an ardent student of Edgar Degas, and while Degas is known to have had a snapshot mentality in regard to the paintings he produced, Cassatt is not known to have painted her subjects with the aid of photographs. For Cassatt to have done this is a great feat. By exhibiting the rigors of craftsmanship, she also resisted the pitfalls of sentimentality. This is an amazing testament to a great artist.

Mary Cassatt was brought to the attention of the art world that existed in Paris in the 1870's, by Edgar Degas. It is documented that Degas, on his long walks around the city, carried a camera and took many photographs of Paris life. Degas' photographic style showed up in his paintings. Visual elements like the cropping of heads and figures, blurring to suggest movement and strange points of view to the central subject, were directly incorporated into the paintings from his intense contact with photography.

Mary Cassatt must have been exposed to Degas' methods to record and translate from photographic sources, but a definite example of her involvement with photography could not be found. Only a few references about how she worked were documented. One such statement comes from Frederick A. Sweet, whose book on Cassatt is basic. Sweet quotes a letter from Mary's mother to her granddaughter Katharine: "I tell (Robbie) that when he begins to paint from life himself, he will have

a great remorse when he remembers how he teased his poor Aunt wriggling about like a flea (5)." The fact that Cassatt painted all of her children from life may well account for the lack of sentimentality in her work, she was just too busy on a technical level to let an overabundance of sweetness affect her love of color, light and line!

Cassatt's themes of children, mothers, and women alone with their thoughts, were treated with tenderness and respect. But Cassatt's reputation has suffered because of these very themes. For a long time her work has been overlooked by serious artists who have a prejudice against her subject matter. Mothers and children are vulnerable to the charge of sentimentality, but by Cassatt's skill and surety she has succeeded in bringing to the art world the vision of the world occupied by women and their relationships to their children.

Mary Cassatt presented the world as she lived it and knew it. The art that had previously existed before she received attention was work that was produced mainly by men. Cassatt's work was to provide new insights for the era of Impressionism. Even when Edgar Degas saw some of her etchings he responded, "I am not willing to admit that a woman can draw that well."

Cassatt's art is celebratory of the people she depicted. Her children are engaging because they are, themselves, engaged in their own inner thoughts. They seem to be totally unaware that they are sitters for a painting. Mary Cassatt's children are given the individuality and humanity that were previously denied to them by the blurred vision of the Victorian society.

When a baby bumped its head she painted what happened (Fig. 2). She also was there to paint sulky, sullen little children (Fig. 3). Cassatt gave us real children, not the perfect, idealized version that some of the Romantic painters had presented in their imagery.

Since Cassatt's work involved dealing with the real



moments of life, it can be said that her paintings are not sentimental, they don't count on idealization, or nostalgia or a recall of remembering how a person was. The success of Mary Cassatt's work depends entirely upon the technical expertise that is clearly demonstrated in her art. The high level of craftsmanship overrides sentimental sweetness. Cassatt's paintings thematically are based on subject matter that could be designated as sentimental, but when the color, composition, light and line are examined, these elements become as important as the central story of the work.

It was stated that a sentimentalization process came about during the midpoint of the Victorian years as a result of a yearning for a more simple and less complex world. The conclusion that painting children for Mary Cassatt could hold a particular sense of yearning, can be drawn. This is the only area that might be sentimental in regard to her art. Mary Cassatt never married and never had children. The paintings of children could be the artist's active wishing for dreams never fulfilled in reality. Some of the portraits of children and women that we see do have that far away, dreamy look that might account for Cassatt's hopes, dreams and yearning.

However, it is not the hopes and dreams that we see because they are elusive and can not be rendered with paint. It is the dignity, humanity and the knowledge that we are viewing human souls communicating with each other and with themselves that sets Cassatt's work apart from the effusive Victorians and frees it from the perils of sentimentality.

Like Mary Cassatt, Robert Henri was an artist who is well known for his portraits of children. Also like Cassatt, Henri never had children. His personal philosophy as it related to his attraction to paint the portraits of young people, is worth some attention. Perhaps, by discussing his feelings about his approach to his child models we can gain further

insight into the realm of sentimentality.

Robert Henri felt that a portrait should represent the human spirit, potential and dignity that is inherent within the person. He was an inspirational teacher who instilled in his students the quest to look into life and extricate a humanity, dignity, spontaneity and respect. In his book The Art Spirit he wrote, "Feel the dignity of a child. Do not feel superior to him, for you are not (6)."

Henri and his wife would summer on a small island off the coast of Ireland. This is where the bulk of the portraits of children were painted. The children were probably as drawn to the Henris', as the Henris' were drawn to the children. The children were motivated by a strong sense of Irish curiosity. Henri was attracted to them out of a deep inner conviction:

"If one has a love of children as human beings, and realizes the greatness that is in them, no better subjects can be found. The majority of people patronize children, look down on them rather than up to them, think they are 'cute,' 'sweet,' when in reality it is the children that have not yet been buried under the masses of little habits, conventions and details which burden most grownups (7)."

The portraits that Henri painted of children could be seen as an antidote to the oversophistication that most likely would stifle a person when adulthood was reached. These paintings represent children whose ages range from five to fourteen years of age, a period of innocence and naivete that seemed to be glorified by Henri. This element of glorification could be looked upon as containing some feeling of sentimentality; by painting children, he was not looking at them for their potential to become adults and in fact in his



paintings they would stay young 'forever'. The denial of becoming was present in Henri's work just as much as the reverence for the innocence of youth was shown, and this is very much a precept of romanticism.

Overall, it is not believed, however, that Henri painted his children in a sentimental fashion. Technically, he worked from life, just as Mary Cassatt did. He painted quickly and with much expression and spontaneity so his paintings can be said to be as much about how the pigment is applied to the canvas as they are about the subject (Fig. 4).

Robert Henri presented most of his portraits in a straightforward manner. They have a strong sense of looking out from the surface that they were painted on. The portraits are usually frontal and have simple dark backgrounds that illustrate the magnificence of the person being presented. The viewer is forced to look at the portrait for Henri did not use props or technical gimmicks that would detract from the main content of the painting. It is in this presentation of the person that we see nothing sweet, trite or sentimental.

In Henri's book The Art Spirit there are many references as to how he felt about children and living life. These statements indicate that he had the utmost respect and reverence for mankind and his hopes and dreams were directly bound to the children that he presented to the world of art.

"I have never respected any man more than I have some children. In the faces of children I have seen a look of wisdom and of kindness expressed with such ease and such certainty that I knew it was the expression of a whole race (8)."

Some of the artists that were informative to the direction of this thesis were more closely attached to what the

photographic vision could teach them. The works of Manet, Degas, Vuillard and Bonnard were regarded. It is well documented that all of them made photographs, studied their content, and absorbed the lessons put forth by this material into their painting.

Manet's style of painting was dependent on the contrast of light and shadow, the sharp tonality of photography was an element that attracted him. Manet's portraits are known to contain the slightest modulations of tonal range. The brightest areas hold notes of color that are almost imperceptible, while the shadows seem to be so black as to appear flat. Manet was so deft at being able to juxtapose light and shadow that his paintings convey a wonderful sense of drama.

The overall expanse of Manet's work really did not center around the subject of children, he was particularly studied for his use of the color black, and also for the manner in which he accurately depicted his era.

The painting of one's time can contain significant interpretations pertaining to the area of sentimentality. An artist can only paint what he knows and what is known is always in the context of the present. Nostalgia can enter into painting when past eras are viewed. Looking at paintings that were done at the turn of the century might be quite evocative for some viewers of art. Sentimentality can ride on the sensibilities that we all bring with us when we regard art. In 1861, Courbet wrote in an open letter to a group of prospective students:

"...the art of painting can consist only in the representation of objects visible and tangible to the painter. An epoch can be reproduced only by its own artists. I mean by the artists who have lived in it. I hold that the artists of one century are fundamen-

tally incompetent to represent the things of a past or future century--in other words, to paint the past or the future (9)."

The works of Degas, Vuillard and Bonnard were all important because not only did they use photographs as sources for their paintings, but their subject matter was focused on the family in its home.

The paintings of Vuillard and Bonnard indicate that photography was more of a pleasure in its own right, but that it lacked the quality of being done by hand. Both artists took great delight in capturing their friends and family in a photograph, but their fascination was clearly seen in the differing sensibilities of the painting versus the snapshot. Their paintings separate from photography because they are so expressive in depicting light, color and line. The subject matter is the only thing that is attached to the photograph.

It is Degas that really was the seasoned practitioner of the use of pictorial information culled from the photographs that he took. His paintings would not have been possible if he had not ardently known photographic space. His paintings have an instantaneous feeling about them. The works that are centered around the subject of dancers seem like frozen moments caught forever by Degas. His use of the photographic edge or cropping, his affinity for painting from a distinctly different point of view and his use of blurring to indicate movement are only possible through the use of the photograph.

These artists from the past have been most valuable in studying for the present thesis work. Cassatt and Henri for their avid portrayal of children, and Manet, Degas, Vuillard, and Bonnard for their innovative use of incorporating a photographic sensitivity into their paintings.



Contemporary artists were also looked at to gain some insight into the use of children as focal subject matter and also to press forward in gaining more knowledge about sentimentality. Alice Neel and Alex Katz were studied and noted for their unwavering need to paint family members and people they know. Although these two painters technically are separate from the manner in which the thesis work was done, their sensibilities about color and also about the psychological aspects of portraiture must be taken seriously. Both Neel and Katz depict the era that they are part of, the current tenseness of the present is woven into their work. While Neel's realism captures the psychological intensity in her portraits, Katz has concentrated on the cool jet-set attitudes presented by the New York City people he knows. When their themes return to their family members, they both remain true to how they work with the canvas and paint. There is no departure from their technique and there is no change in how the people are presented to the viewer. Neel's family retains as much intensity as Katz's family retains coolness and ambiance. There is no insertion of sweetness or cuteness in the family paintings of either artist, the portraits are straight-forward technically and spiritually.

The psychology of a painting becomes very important in regard to whether we feel sentimentality is present. In Alice Neel's work we feel the realness of the life that has been lived by the people she paints. We feel the frustrations, anxieties and the hardness of life itself. The psychological manifestations of Neel's work dispel any germ of sentimentality. Neel's work exposes the vulnerabilities of her sitters and also reveals her acute sensitivity to humanity (Fig. 6).

The flat surface and coloration of Katz's paintings allow him to present his portraits and figures with a modernist at-

titude. This modernist stance is one in which the primary concern is in making art rather than making exact likenesses in the portraiture. Katz is still concerned, however, in depicting a good likeness. He has expressed the traditional view: "If you work strictly in the portrait form, the likeness is a factor in how good the picture is. Strangely enough, if you don't have a good likeness, you don't have a good picture." But he goes on to say, and this is the modernist speaking, "...you can wreck a painting very easily if you get too obsessive about likeness... (10)."

This modernist approach would preempt sentimentality in that it distances the painter from the person being painted. Katz's work does not appear to be sentimental at all, the relationship of painter to subject is not emotional in content nor is the relationship of viewer to the portrait overwhelmed with emotion and feeling. He achieves success with this cool, distanced perspective because we, the viewer, are forced to look at the technical devices that he has employed (Fig. 7).

While Neel and Katz work from life, there are other contemporary artists that have used a photographic sensitivity in their work. Chuck Close and Philip Pearlstein are two artists that have influenced the development of this thesis. Close works directly from the photographs that he takes, while Pearlstein maintains he doesn't work from them at all; Pearlstein worked as a photographer for Life magazine and knows the basics of photographic information (cropping, depth of field and the flattening of planes and space are constants in his work).

The paintings of these two artists are not concerned with the subject of children, but as far as portraiture is concerned, there are techniques used by Close and Pearlstein that are worth noting. Close's portraits are confined to close-ups of the head and shoulders. The scale that he chooses to work

in is also very grand, usually the size of the paintings are eight feet square.

The element of scale has not been addressed before but it is a component that has some significance in relationship to sentimentality. When we look at Close's work, because of the scale, it seems impersonal and we have to stand away from it to have a sense that this is a portrait being presented to us. At close range the face appears to read like a roadmap because of the infinite detail that Close shows. Close utilizes scale to find a new context for the portrait genre, a context that previously had been unfamiliar to the public in a fine art gallery sitting. The scale makes these portraits more inaccessible, more impersonal and more abstract.

Pearlstein, on the other hand, does not use scale to distance the onlooker, but he gives us an impersonal, spatially abstract view of his figures by giving everything he paints a sharp focus. Because of Pearlstein's ethic to give everything the same attention, a flattening of the spatial planes results.

Scale and the use of an abstract treatment of space take away any emotional content that might arise therefore, these elements do not contribute to producing work that could be said to be sentimental. Both Close and Pearlstein choose to portray the impersonal side of portraiture because they are much more interested in the technical process than in the subject matter they depict. This impersonalization does not venture near the sweet pool of sentimentality.

There are many artists that could be written about in these pages, but the above artists listed, past and contemporary, are the most important for the discussion of this thesis. From these people, we can get a sense of what offsets sentimentality.

For Manet, Cassatt, Neel, and Katz the depiction of the



era in which they were directly involved with, is an important aspect of the work they have produced. Sentimentality is more apt to be found in the work that does not adhere to Courbet's dictum of not painting the past or the future. These artists were concerned with portraying their present reality honestly and openly. There is no idealistic or overtly romantic concept in the art of these four painters.

In the paintings of Degas and Henri, while they too painted the years that they were part of, much of their work has a timelessness that seems to make it more universal in its perception. The ballet dancers of Degas work as much today as they did when they were first shown by him. Also Degas' snapshot ethic makes his work especially readable because we have become accustomed to looking at photos. The portraits that Henri painted of the Irish children could very well be children of today. This quality of timelessness disqualifies sentimentality by omitting nostalgia.

Foremost in analysing what may detract from supporting sentimentality is the technical expertise that all of these artists possess and bring to their work. For if we look at the way the surface is handled, we will be much less inclined to muster any feeling of sentiment towards the subject matter. When scale, abstraction of reality, color, gesture of line and composition are studied, these physical facets of the art can overwhelm any emotional content that may be there. Yet, when emotional intent by the artist is in the painting, the emotion must be real, raw and overwhelmingly human. Alice Neel was one artist who not only was successful with the physicality of the painting, but she was successful in being able to bring the human condition and the inner conflicts of her subjects to the canvas without invoking sentimentality. Her work succeeds because of her understanding and honesty in portraying the people she painted.

All of the artists named in this paper have been important in regard to the formation of not only my creative process but also in ascertaining some discoveries about the nature of sentimentality. Unlike Mary Cassatt and Robert Henri who painted children but who never had their own children, I am not only the painter of children but also the mother. Because I am emotionally and intimately bound to my subject matter, there are levels of my work that are sentimental and personal. My challenge as an artist rests with not letting the viewer see the sentiment but rather see the universal truth in the picture of the child and the world he lives in.

In the context of this paper I must let you see the areas that might pose some active confrontation with the problems of sentimentality. For example, when I take snapshots of my children, something certainly motivates me to take the pictures in the first place. Perhaps, it's because the children are growing up at such a rapid pace and I haven't taken pictures in several months or maybe it's because the baby has just learned how to walk. These are personal reasons for taking photos but also these reasons exist as universals for snapshot conduct. Anyone with a camera and children have pictures of their baby's first steps, first teeth, first day of school and all the other firsts that occur in their lives. The camera documents, immortalizes and gives evidence that all these moments existed. The snapshot becomes an object of tender regard that embraces the past to make the changes often-times bitter-sweet. This is the element of sentiment that we must be aware of and must try to avoid in the translation of photo to fine art.

Usually, for me, the quality of the light holds the greatest attraction for taking photographs. This is not the sentimental aspect of photography. The existing light, in most cases, is crisp with lots of bright areas and dark shadows and the resulting pictures have a great tonal range from



black to white. Rarely, will I take photographs on a hazy or misty day because I do not respond to that kind of lighting. The second element I am held by, is the texture of objects that are seen. Texture is concomitant with light--without the light, there would be no observed texture. On a bright, sunny day, the world viewed through the camera is full of light, shadow and texture.

I use the camera when I want to take pictures to draw from, the camera is my sketchbook and springboard for the paintings and drawings that I do. Often, so much time has elapsed from when the film was exposed to when the prints come back to me that sometimes I am surprised by the photos that are returned. Since I never label the cannisters of film to be processed, I have to remember actively when and how each picture came to be. Because so much distance in time occurs, this fact has the ability to desensitize the picture. This forces me to look at the photos for their compositional elements and not for their specificity and familiarity. The commercial process also blurs the intimacy of the moments recorded by printing off tones(sometimes the prints come back looking too blue or too yellow) and by not giving you full frame prints.

The prints are sorted and resorted for their ability to become paintings or drawings. Generally, first impressions are lasting ones and often snapshots that were disregarded end up becoming successful drawings. In a roll of 36 exposure film there might be one to three prints that will be chosen to be translated into a drawing. The selection process is not a hasty one. Selection is based on strong elements of light and dark areas and how they relate to each other in the space of the photo, also the texture of the objects is studied.

The rectangle of the snapshot is an important aspect to discuss. Usually the size of a print is 3"x5", this is an

area that can be well observed for spatial relationships and the artist has, in a small print, a thumbnail sketch of what the enlarged drawing will be similar to. The 3"x5" format can easily be enlarged without a great deal of loss of information. Any artist who has ever worked from a photographic source finds that it is an advantage to have a print that corresponds to a similar but different scale picture plane that will be the finished drawing or painting. The artist who is working in the realist tradition is especially concerned with the parameters of the picture plane. The realists are dealing with the fact that a work of art can be a picture of something and the problem of resolving the picture plane is of primary interest. If the artist takes his own photographs, he will bring with him the sensibilities of knowing composition and many of the problems that arise surrounding the issue of picture plane will be resolved before the camera's shutter is opened and the film exposed.

Something more should be said of realism. I have worked realistically by choice because I feel that realism touches the most people. You do not have to be well versed in the arts to be able to have some quality from a realist painting affect you. Realism offers me the most satisfaction and places an importance on focusing on reality as I am perceiving it. I feel that an artist has an obligation to paint what he knows and lives through and realism can attack this issue directly. Over the years, realism has suffered, especially from the modernist position, as not adding new, innovative ideas to the art world. The realists have added new ideas to art, however, by the very fact that every artist has a unique view of reality and through a vast array of approaches, he can reveal more than one would normally see in his choice of subject matter. The content of a realist work is often more than what we would expect to discern. As Glenn C. Janss wrote in her

introduction to American Realism, the realist work: "...involves more than pure subject matter; it expresses content and meaning and the irrepressible imprint of the artists' personality and intent (11)."

In the 1960's artists began to emerge that were working in the realist tradition, but they were pushing the limits of realism even further than had been previously known. These people were working quite directly with the photograph. Most of them were taking their own pictures and were focusing in on the subject matter that they wanted to depict in their paintings. In part, their process of using the photograph so directly was a reaction to the methods and vision of the abstract expressionists. In looking at the subject matter that was presented, however, the Photorealists' (as this group came to be called) view of their world was impersonal and bland. None of the major Photorealists were portraying the figure, and no one was painting children in the environments that they were painting. My drawings and paintings of children are a reactionary response to the neutrality given to us by this group of artists.

I admired the techniques that were employed by the Photorealists because I wondered how they painted their subject matter so realistically that it appeared to jump off whatever surface they had used. The fact that this work was made by the human hand and intellect also fascinated me. The only thing that bothered me, apart from their insipid and vapid look at the world, was the ambiguity of what I was actually looking at. What was I seeing a painting or a photograph? The Photorealists painted their surfaces so smoothly that the brush work was not discernible. I felt that the media had been betrayed by not being a recognizable element of the work. In my work, consequently, the audience will be able to know what they are looking at. Ambiguity will not be present as far as the



medium is concerned. To make marks with the hand on paper or canvas and to have them show as marks adds more strength and power to the finished piece of work. The Photorealists denied their art the force of the hand at work.

Several techniques were learned from the study of the way the Photorealists made their images. One such method was using the enlarger to project the photographic information directly onto the surface of the canvas or paper. I remember resisting the use of the opaque projector. Also, I rather enjoyed the grid technique for enlarging the image because it utilized a logical system that was still done by hand. The major disadvantage of gridding the paper or canvas was that it took a great deal of time. Often, several days were spent transferring information from the snapshot to the drawing surface. The enlarger became a much more efficient means to achieve the same end. But the first time I used the enlarger, I felt like I was cheating. I felt that it would be too easy to simply trace the outline of the subject of the photo onto the surface that I would be working on. After I used the enlarger, I found that it was incapable of projecting all the information held by the photo. The detail in the shadow and highlight areas of the picture were lost in projection. I always have to sketch this information in before starting the drawing. I learned that by working with the enlarger that it is not cheating because the artist still has to deal with the imperfections of the projector. Also, the enlarger does not interfere with the creative process of the artist.

After I have enlarged and traced the outline of the important aspects of the snapshot, I am ready to start painting or drawing in color. I can not really address color intellectually because color, for me, is more intuitive. I use a great deal of black in my work, this is from studying Manet, Degas, and others who use black in their art. I find that

black adds a crispness to the finished drawing. The colors that are present in the snapshot influence the colors that will be used in the drawing. Since the colors in the drawing are mixed directly through the method of layering, they will appear distinctly different from the colors seen in the photograph. I am always amazed at how different the finished drawing actually looks from the photo, there seems to be a point when it starts taking on its own individuality separate from its photographic source. Color is one facet directly responsible for this uniqueness.

When I am drawing I always work one area to near completion and then move on to a different space and do the same thing. There is a quality in seeing something complete on the flat surface that is almost surreal; the juxtaposition of finished area to untouched space on the paper is a powerful contrast that is enjoyable to witness. If I were working from life this method would not be easy to do. However, since I am involved with photographs this technique has proven its worth by keeping me actively motivated to see that the work is completed.

The factors of movement and change are entirely eliminated by the snapshot. There is absolutely no way that I could paint children in a natural context without the photograph. I know that it is immutable. When I become very involved with the drawing the photo loses its importance, but I know that when I am having problems with depicting information I can study what is seen in the photo.

I have digressed from the main point of the thesis, sentimentality, in order to present my methodology. The creative process is one that is not filled with emotion. When I am dealing with technique, I am not tenderly regarding the subject matter. I am completely involved with the how-to of getting it onto the working surface and that is all.

When I have gotten to the point of actually drawing the portrait, the face, technique and sentiment combine. I am concerned about being able to capture a good likeness in the portraits. This is because I know the people I draw and paint. It would be a source of consternation for me if the likeness was not right. The knowledge of intimacy and technique grapple with each other until the face is completed and the appearance is one that is true.

I feel quite strongly about the effect that technical skill has in being able to overcome sentimentality. When an artist is concerned with resolving the problems he confronts in producing artwork, his attention is totally bound to regarding compositional elements such as a line, color, light, form and space. The artist is often compelled to surrender the subject matter until the work is near completion. Even when I am working on the facial portrait, it is drawing technique and skill that win out over feelings because the technique is the area that is directly manipulated by me; if the likeness is off, it is only through technique that it can be made better.

When the images for the thesis were still in the planning stages, I started using pastels. I had no previous experience with this medium, so technique was an important consideration. After the first image was finished, I felt that the richness of color was wonderfully attractive. The media that I had used up to this time were color pencils and watercolors. The color produced by pastels surpassed what the pencils and watercolors had given me. I was determined to become more proficient with pastels primarily because of their full color potential.

Canson paper was originally used as the drawing surface for the first four images of the thesis. Canson is universally known as a first-rate paper for use with conté and pastel but, its size range is restricted. The four pieces that were finished were smaller in size than the previous work that I had



done. When I wanted to upscale my work, I had to special order Canson paper. This larger sheet of paper was only available mounted onto a piece of illustration board. When this was used the pastel appeared to handle differently from the unmounted paper; the pastel seemed scratchy and the richness of the color was dulled. The only reason I could give for these differences was that in mounting the canson onto the board, a compression of the paper had resulted. I did not feel that I wanted to struggle with the materials at this time because I was halfway through with my thesis production, so I tried new drawing surfaces. Arches paper was experimented with and abandoned as being too soft and too absorbent. Other surfaces were tried and rejected until I settled on a paper called Stonehenge. This paper gave me a larger drawing and had the ability to retain the high quality of color that I required.

I was able to finish three more drawings that were larger and more complex than the first four. The final portfolio consists of seven pastel drawings. These drawings will be discussed separately and in relation to what has been discovered as to the nature of sentimentality.

As has been stated, this entire thesis owes its existence to the manner that Mary Cassatt painted her portraits of children. She was not only studied for her strong compositional and technical skill but, she was especially regarded for her numerous pastel portraits. Cassatt's lively expressive marks provided an impetus for me to be more free and direct in making my marks. This note of expressiveness tends to redirect the aspect of laboring over the drawing and tends to stall the bringing forth of a great deal of feeling about the subject matter being presented. I do feel that the directness of a painting can help to prevent a tinge of sentiment from entering the work.

I feel that in researching Mary Cassatt, my work is almost an extension of her approach. Being the artist and the mother of the children I present in my art, I am extending the potential of this subject. I think that Mary Cassatt must have felt the disdain, from others, for her work but as a strong willed, independent woman, she also saw the challenge. Her paintings presented the art world with a woman's point of view at a time when art was dominated by men. The male artists of Cassatt's day were painting their view of women in their world but Cassatt's work holds the honesty that she was keenly observant and very involved with what she painted.

I think that today I have much more freedom in depicting children in my paintings but due to the blatant lack of this subject in the contemporary art arena, I feel the prejudice. However, in the past five years, I have witnessed an interest in examining imagery of children and childhood. In 1980, Susan Kismaric, the Associate Curator in the Department of Photography of The Museum of Modern Art, curated an exhibit of sixty photographs that presented an historical view of American children and the changing context of their childhood. A book from the exhibit was published. The Metropolitan Museum of Art recently published a book titled Metropolitan Children. Also, The Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum presented an exhibit and book about A Century of Childhood 1820--1920. All of these exhibits and books deal with imagery culled from the past so the historical position of children is important. The most recent book published about American manifestations of realism does not contain a single image in which a child is the main focus. The challenge to humanize contemporary art is still present.

Certainly, the right to depict children as they are in real life is the important basis for the images that I have completed. These children are not the precocious, artificial,



cute, sunny children that the media exposes us to everyday. They do not sing the praises of Oscar Mayer bologna and they do not advertise the latest duds of the childrens' fashion industry. They simply are and because of my love affair with the camera and the snapshot, I can capture them as they are.

Considering the universality of snapshots and their presumed importance in our lives, the haunting thing about them is that they are all unique. They are all single moments that once existed in time. Lisette Model, a well known photographer, once stated about the snapshot: "...of all photographic images it comes closest to the truth. The snapshot is a specific spiritual moment (12)."

The artist who uses photos must be quite diligent in picking out the moment that contains universal appeal rather than sentimental recall. All the sensibilities of an artist interact in choosing the right moment. To judge whether a photograph is the right one to be translated into a drawing or a painting, the artist must be knowledgeable about all the requirements of aesthetic decision making. In other words, he must have an understanding of beauty, taste, importance vs. triviality, craftsmanship, and art. The selection process is a slow, deliberative and thoughtful one that requires the full attention of the artist. When the right photographic moment has been chosen, the artist has all the creative powers to transform it into something other.

In translating snapshot information to artwork, a magic happens, the photo ceases to be the object of importance. The creative license and discretion of the artist holds the greatest significance. The mind, hands and heart of the artist come together in the creation of art.

DISCUSSION OF PORTFOLIO

Magical Journey (plate 1): This was the first pastel executed for the thesis series. It measures 19"x 23". The photographic source for this drawing was a very blurred, low contrast image. In the sorting process, I had put this snapshot aside because of the poor quality of the print. But when I really looked at the image, there was something about it that attracted me to it. The large light form of the blanket in the center was the object that held the most pictorial information, the other forms were obscured by the undesirable haze. The blanket seemed as though it was floating. Its diamond shape was very dominant in the enclosed space and it felt as though it wanted to be free of the pen that circled it. And that is how I depicted it in the drawing.

The child is not the important element of the finished work. There is no sentimentality that can be associated with the presence of the child. There is no specificity or familiarity that exists between the child and the viewer. The work is about spatial relationships and the repetitions that occur with the diamond form.

One of the first stories that I remember my mother reading to me when I was little, was the story The Little Lane Prince. I've forgotten the author but the story was about a prince, who was unable to walk but, with the aid of a magic blanket, was able to travel over his vast kingdom. This drawing reminds me of this story. It recalls something from my childhood. This is sentimental in content, but for the audience it is not likely that this drawing will elicit the exact same response. I do not believe that this will be viewed as a sentimental work, but as a glimpse into the small, isolated environment of a child that has some of the magic of possibility.

Inside/Outside (plate 2): This pastel measures 19"x 23".

The drawing extends the ideas presented by the previous pastel in relation to spatial context. This drawing has, perhaps, the closest kinship to the manner in which the camera sees. The cropping of the forms on the edges attests to photographic vision. Also, this image has an ambiguous point of view for the audience. I know exactly how I took the snapshot from which this drawing was translated. The foot in the lower right hand corner belongs to me. There is no ambiguity in that fact. However, when a third party looks at this picture, he will not have that information. The viewer will almost sense that, because he is seeing this image head on, he is an active participant in this momentary glimpse.

The penetration of space by the forms is an important aspect of the image. There is a sense of tension from the separation of these forms. One, the child, is trying to come out beyond the pen that is the source of separation, and the other, the adult, is stabilized and is in a neutral position.

The adult's foot does not enter the interior of the drawing. It is the cross diagonals of the baby's pen that holds us in the state of suspense filled separation. It is this corral that has the most freedom in the drawing. We see the repetition of its shapes in the shadows on the ground between the two human forms. It possesses the entire composition; the pen controls all the edges of the drawing and also the interior space of the image. It would seem that the playpen is more full of life than the human figures it separates.

Is this sentimental? I think that the prominence of the enclosure makes this a drawing that has emotional content; I feel that the audience will respond to the captivity and separation of the human elements but the ambiguity of what the situation is will deter sentiment.



Terry! She has Lots of Hair! (plate 3): This pastel drawing is 19"x 23". The snapshot held a visual joke which I enjoy dealing with in the art that I do. The size of the ball in the picture seemed to take up the same amount of space that the head of the baby takes. Since the photo was shot at a time when my daughter's hair was not a prominent feature, the ball provided the perfect visual pun for the image. Also, the title tries to direct the viewer's attention to the fact that this child does not have a "bald" head. The ball is an active form within the drawing, one looks at the portrait and at the ball in a kind of ping--pong fashion.

The negative space around the ball and around the figure was done much darker than the photographic information called for. The darkness around the ball produced the feeling that it was suspended. This made the illusion of comparing the face and the ball much easier for the viewer. This is a case of artistic license, I have the ability to manipulate it in any way to secure what I want to communicate about the image.

In relation to sentimentality, this drawing might come close. If the baby had had a wonderful smile, than the joke would have been too cute and the spatial game playing would not have been as effective. The expression by the baby is one of puzzlement or, perhaps, even worry. This attitude is one that was directed at the time the camera was placed in front of the child's mother's face. It might very well be an expression of worry. Nevertheless, this look on the baby's face helps offset a trite sweetness that could have made this joke backfire.

When the element of humor is present in work, it has to have a universal appeal so that it may be enjoyed. The humor in this work is somewhat sophisticated because it relates directly to the spatial aspects of the drawing. The subject of the drawing is the tension between the key forms.

Big Brother/Little Sister (plate 4): This composition is 19"x 23" and is the last image of the thesis portfolio that was done on Canson paper. The snapshot source for this drawing was not originally considered for transformation into a pastel work. I had completed the previous piece, which was a portrait of the baby, I wanted something a bit more complex. Looking through my discarded photos provided this image. The snapshot provided complexity in the reflection of the smaller child on the form of the older child. In the drawing, the reflection has its own integrity without disrupting the recognition of the figure that it is contained within. This proved to be the challenge of the entire work.

The darkness around the smaller child's head related strongly to many of the works of the old masters where dark unencumbered backgrounds push the portrait out. I like the effect of the form of the head coming out of the black void. This drawing became a homage to past traditions and artists. The coloration of the drawing is much darker than the photographic information. I feel that this dark quality lends more of a tone of power and ominousness to the work and it also sets up a tense note to the interaction of the two children.

As a mother of a nine-year-old and a two-year-old, this drawing examines how these children relate to each other. The older kid knows how to tease and rile the younger one and this is presented in the drawing. The position of the hands of the top figure seem to control the position of the small child. The darkness of the hands relates back to the darkness surrounding the baby and makes a strong triangle that can not be ignored. We know this as the power of the "big brother".

The artist knows where the sentiment is here. Only a parent knows the separateness and uniqueness of her children, but she also hopes for some semblance and instance of unification of siblings. This drawing contains that hope.

Finger Flips (plate 5): This drawing is the first drawing that was done with Stonehenge paper and it measures 29"x 33". The attraction for this image lies in the way that the reality is felt. All the forms in this composition have been given a sharp focus. This gives the sense that no object in the picture is more important than any other and makes the image more fragmented and abstract.

The space is more shallow than the other drawings that were done. The point of view does not seem as though the artist/photographer were looking down at the baby in the pool. It feels as if everything in the picture had been lifted up, parallel to the viewing plane of the observer. The camera has recorded this space in a flattened manner. This is evidence of one of the limitations of photographic information. This drawing also has a kinship to Philip Pearlstein's manner of making images which are sharp focused and spatially flat.

This drawing is about light and shadow and how much detail is contained within those areas. How dark or light can an artist go before relinquishing the information held by these areas? This drawing motivated me to make decisions about how much or how little detail I wanted to keep. It forced me to go beyond the limitations of the camera's eye.

It is also about self-portrait; I feel that an artist can only produce a true self-portrait from what he actually sees and experiences about him-self. I am aware of my shadow, the body parts that I actually see and how I appear in a photograph. These are what I accept as honest and true. I am also aware of reflection but disregard this as not being an honest representation of the self image. Mirror-image is not how I appear to other people. This drawing contains my shadow and it becomes merged with the figure of the baby. The layer of shadow helps to hold the child in the pool and it is the symbolic bond of baby and adult.



Compositionally this drawing is quite strong. The forms keep repeating a semi-circular pattern that brings unity to this work. The eye takes in everything in this picture, attesting to the sharp focused objects, there is no center of attention to diffuse one's interest.

There is nothing here that even suggests that sentimentality is present. The abstract areas of light and shadow dispel the possibility of its entrance into this drawing. Also, the generic quality of the baby enhances the absence of any sweetness. It has enough distance from the particular and specific that the audience will not be enraptured by the child. Although the work is about a small child's tiny world, it goes well beyond the subject matter.

Impasse (plate 6): This is a pastel drawing that is 29"x 33". This portrait is very particular. The face stares out at the audience with a direct but emotional expression. This comes close to being sentimental in regard to the confrontational aspect it presents to the viewer. The child can not be ignored. The frontal placement and position of the child makes this drawing relentless. The only things offsetting some of the emotional force are the arrangement of the legs, feet and a small portion of the baby's corral. These have the effect of giving the audience some respite from the child.

This drawing exhibits the least shallow space. The space of this drawing is one that recedes to the right of the baby to provide some additional rest from the face. But, it is stopped by the appearance of the triangular forms of the play pen.

The repetition of triangles is a pervasive element of the composition. Their presence is underscored by the portrait, but they are conscious facets of the drawing. They provide a technical device that was employed to draw the viewer's attention from the central figure. Hopefully, they work to dissipate the sentimental bearing of the work. The original snapshot did not include patches of triangular shadows on the ground, but, because of the solid arrangement of the human elements, these were added to the make-up of the drawing.

One ingredient that was emphasized was the texture of the drawing. The mark making is readily apparent in this work and lends an expressive quality to the realism portrayed. The work of the hand gives more of a sense of freedom to the seriousness posed by the child.

Since this drawing comes the closest to what I actually experience, it draws closely to sentiment. It is thought that the technical merits of the drawing overcome its sentimental content, however.

Summer Son (plate 7): This picture represents the culmination of the thesis series. It measures 29"x 33". This work is definitely sentimental for the artist. There were a number of personal reasons for doing this piece. These reasons overwhelmed logical and intelligent explanations for not doing the drawing.

The source for this composition came from a Polaroid snapshot. When I took this picture, I was impressed with the way the light seemed to illuminate the outline of the boy's form. I was content to save this image as a photograph because I did not feel that making a drawing from this could possibly transcend the qualities presented by the photo. Until I discovered, that in washing some clothes, the photograph had been included in the laundry, too. The Polaroid was almost destroyed. In order to preserve the essence that I was attracted to, I decided to save it in a drawing.

Another reason for doing this image was the fact that most of the other drawings that I had completed were images of the baby. I suffered from mother's guilt because I had not done any drawings of my son. Before the baby was born, my son had been the inspiration for many drawings and paintings. I felt that he would certainly feel sad about being replaced by another model.

I had originally tried to do this drawing on Canson paper, but I experienced some difficulty in doing the image. A Polaroid print is much smaller than a snapshot from the 35mm format. The only information that I could obtain was the outline of the figure's form, everything else had to be improvised. I finished the first drawing and it was decided that the background was too black. I attempted to go back into the drawing with lighter pastels but the paper was not able to receive any further layers of color, there was no tooth left to hold new marks. I decided to scrap the drawing and start over.



Many of the problems that stemmed from doing this work were related to the relationship that I had with this child. We were going through some difficult times with him and I feel that these contributed to an inability to tackle the drawing. There was a definite psychological block present with the technical difficulties encountered.

When the second drawing was well under way, I started feeling a bit more competent and confident that it would be completed. I was more conscious of the background information and decided to enhance the bushes that were there. The original photo had a very dark backdrop and the texture of the foliage was not prominent.

The lighting of the image was another area that had to be dealt with. The Polaroid camera has a built in flash that produced a snapshot that had an exaggerated lighting; the figure was well lit frontally by the effect of the flash and the back was lit from the sunlight. The shoulders and the arms have a heightened light. This light looks incorrect, but when it is known that a photographic source was used, then it is more acceptable. Because the flash hit the figure head-on, it has the appearance of being more flat; the detail of the form was obliterated by the flash. In dealing with the portrait, more color was used to capture the detail to get a more natural and honest presence.

This drawing is perhaps more closely related to actual drawing technique. The photographic information could not be relied on, so a great deal of improvisation occurred. The image has a much more expressive look which relates to not being able to read and translate directly from the snapshot. Its qualities are quite different from the other images in the thesis production. At the same time, this work relates well to the other pieces because of the palette and similarity of surface.

This drawing might well be perceived as being sentimental by the audience. It is more confrontational than the other images and it smiles out at the viewer in an assertive, possessive manner. It is a portrait of a particular person and it sends out a feeling of familiarity. However, it follows the traditional methods of presentation, save the smile. It is the tradition and the technique that may defer sentimentality from being sensed.

At the time I was doing this drawing, I was looking at the paintings that Robert Henri did of children. Henri caught and presented them as they were. There is a candid, honest, direct and human power that exudes from his work. There is also a jubilation for living that is felt strongly. These are the qualities that I wanted for this image. Summer Son extends the visions of Robert Henri and exists as a tribute to his teachings.

It was in completing the studio segment of the thesis that I learned a great deal about sentimentality. The images of many artists were studied and technical devices learned and acquired for my work. The rigors of craftsmanship and technical expertise have a great role in preventing the art from appearing trite and sentimental.

All the artists researched felt a strong attachment to drawing skills. I found out, in my last year at RIT, that I wanted to draw and not push paint around. It is through perfecting the methods of drawing that craftsmanship and mastery have become more pronounced. It is hoped that my knowledge will be experienced by the audience and that it will not be limited by the personal and sentimental aspect that is present.

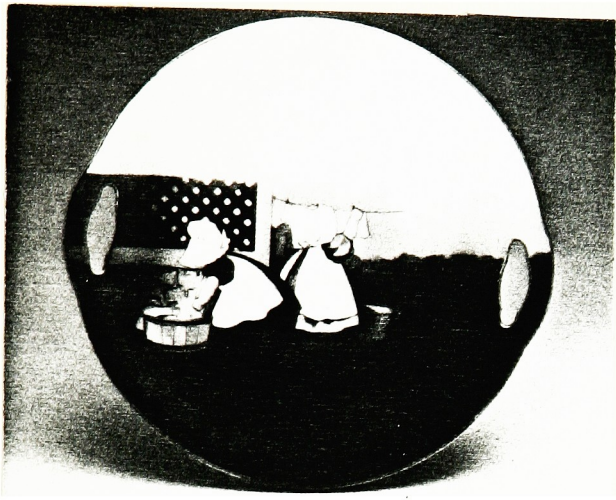
In order to make an image that is honest, the artist has to have a subjective and deeply personal involvement with the subject matter. This subjectivity leads to careful observation and knowledge that, in turn, enters the work to achieve the desired content and effect. There is a sentimental level to all the work that exists. Some artists let it shine through more than others by their choice of subject matter.

Children, in fine art imagery, will always present more of the perils of sentimentality. But, they are the subject matter that I am directly and personally involved with. I know what I paint and I can share that knowledge and truth with you.



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS:

- Fig. 1.....Sunbonnet Babies, a popular illustration that occurred at the turn of the century, were decorative motifs on household objects.
- Fig. 2.....Susan Comforting the Baby was painted by Mary Cassatt in 1881.
- Fig. 3.....Little Girl in a Blue Armchair was done by Mary Cassatt in 1878. This painting shows the influence of Degas and the knowledge of Japanese prints.
- Fig. 4.....Mary Ann With Her Basket was painted by Robert Henri in Ireland in 1926.
- Fig. 5.....Ginny and the Baby. Alice Neel painted her daughter-in-law and her first child. This painting shows the tensions of new motherhood. 1975.
- Fig. 6.....Alex Katz painted Ada in Polka Dot Blouse in 1975. It shows the entire Katz family. It is a painting within a painting.



(Fig. 1) Sunbonnet Babies.



(Fig. 2) Susan Comforting the Baby, Cassatt's ordinary moment.





(Fig. 3) Mary Cassatt caught this child exhibiting a sullen, bored countenance. Little Girl in a Blue Armchair is charming in its natural way.





(Fig. 4) Robert Henri's Irish child. Mary Ann With Her Basket is quite straightforward in its presentation.



(Fig. 5) Alice Neel has captured the anxiety of a first baby in her painting of Ginny and the Baby.





(Fig. 6) Alex Katz's Ada in Polka Dot Blouse shows his wife standing in front of a painting entitled The Walk. The Walk is one of Katz's more tender works. It depicts the artist watching his son. The device of making this painting fit into another work de-sentimentalizes its subject.





Plate 1 Magical Journey



Plate 2 Inside/Outside



Plate 3 Terry! She has Lots of Hair!



Plate 4 Big Brother/Little Sister





Plate 5 Finger Flips



Plate 6 Impasse



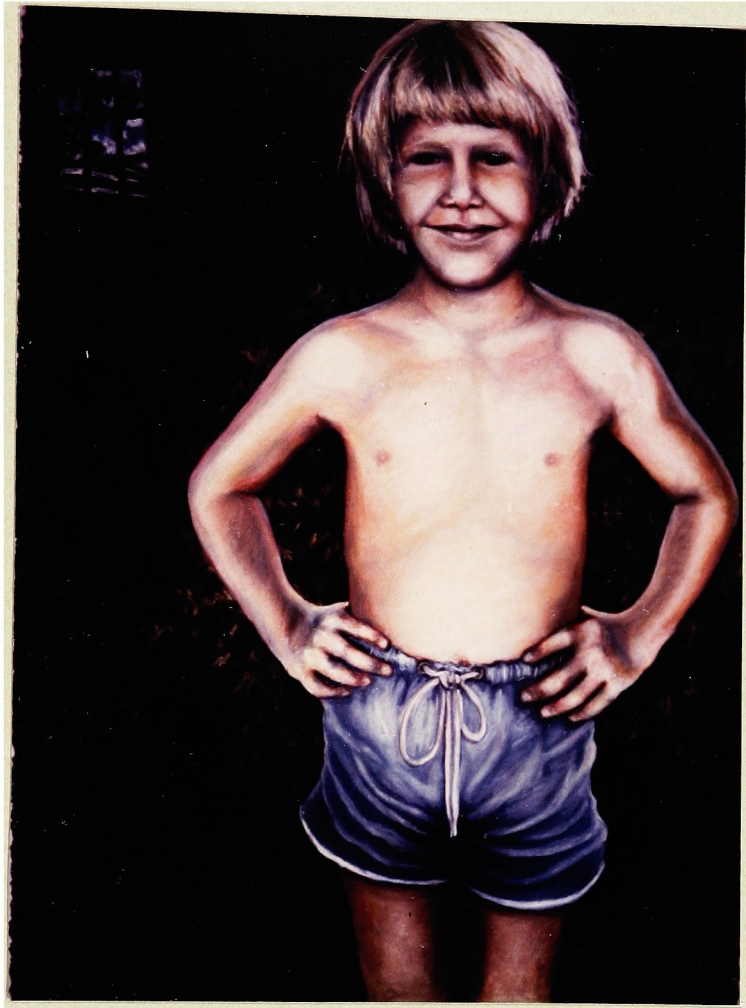


Plate 7 Summer Son

NOTES

- 1 Susan Sontag, On Photography (New York: Penguin Books, 1974), p. 15.
- 2 Mary Lynn Stevens Heininger et al., A Century of Childhood 1820--1920 (Rochester, N. Y.: The Margaret Woodbury Strong Museum, 1984), p. 23.
- 3 Ibid., p. 26.
- 4 Ibid., p. 31.
- 5 Frank Getlein, Mary Cassatt: Paintings and Prints (New York: Abbeville Press Publishers, 1980), p. 54.
- 6 Robert Henri, The Art Spirit (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1958), p.27.
- 7 William Innes Homer, Robert Henri and His Circle (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1964), p. 207.
- 8 Robert Henri, The Art Spirit (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1958), p. 238.
- 9 Robert Goldwater, ed., Artists on Art (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), p. 296.
- 10 Frank H. Goodyear, Jr., Contemporary American Realism Since 1960 (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1981), p. 69.

- 11 Glenn C. Janss, Introduction to American Realism, by San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1986), p. 15.
- 12 Graham King, Say "Cheese"!: Looking at Snapshots in a New Way (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1984), p. xiii.



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