To become an artist at the turn of the century was not only a social matter of training and opportunity, it was also a question of aspiration, of imagining oneself an artist.

Lisa Tickner

The Indians in Käsebier's Studio

As the Indian craze spread, the celebratory image of the Indian artist began to be promoted by artists as well as reformers. This interest can be seen in two photographs of Indian men drawing made in the late 1890s by Gertrude Käsebier, a pictorialist, or artistic, photographer. Käsebier's photographs depict Indian artists as artistic peers. The portraits of Indians in the act of drawing conform to an emerging model of creativity and craftsmanship. The photograph of four Indian artists working together, for example, embodies the values of fellowship, spontaneity, and individuality that were the backbone of the philosophy of William Morris, a founder of the arts and crafts movement (see figure 42).[1] While they draw at the same board, each artist takes a different position: Sam Lone Bear is completely absorbed in his work, while the man across from him considers his next line, and Joe Black Fox looks up as if seeking inspiration.

Käsebier's portrait of Sam Lone Bear, which appeared in an article titled "Some Indian Portraits" in the January 1901 issue of *Everybody's Magazine*, provides further evidence for the suggestion that these portraits are designed to show the Indian models as artists (see figure 43).[2] Lone Bear is not

FIGURE 42 Gertrude Käsebier, untitled (Samuel Lone Bear, Joe Black Fox, and two unidentified sitters), ca. 1898. Platinum print, 7 7/8 × 5 7/8 inches. Photographic History Collection, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Gift of Mason Turner.

depicted in the act of drawing, but is instead shown in a manner conventional for the representation of European artists: he is posed in front of his work. The space behind the artist's head is filled with imagery that matches drawings signed by him that are reproduced elsewhere in the article. The placement of these designs behind Lone Bear's head gives the viewer the impression that they are the product of intellectual, as well as manual, work, and the fact that the hands that produced these sketches are barely visible in the photograph reinforces this. The reference to conventional representations of artists in their studios associates Käsebier's workspace with the Indians' creativity. This chapter looks at Käsebier's representations of Indian artists and their drawings as a means of advancing her own professional and artistic development, and shows how the appropriation of Indian creativity helped her resolve the contradictions of being a modern artist and a modern woman at the same time.

Central to this discussion are the text and illustrations of "Some Indian

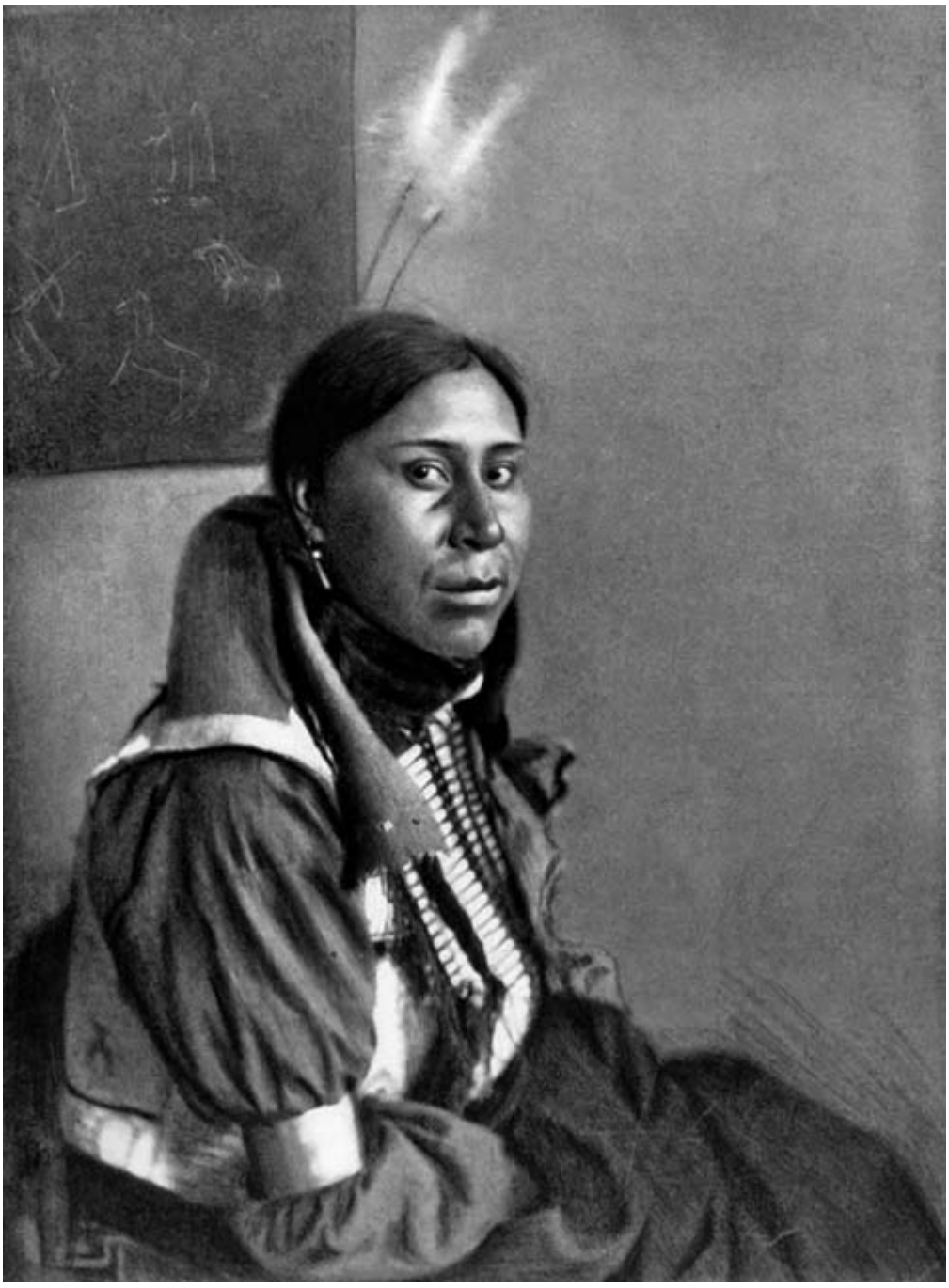

FIGURE 43 Gertrude Käsebier, "Sam Lone Bear," ca. 1898, from "Some Indian Portraits," *Everybody's Magazine* 4.17 (January 1901): 20.

Portraits." Rather than emphasizing the role of Indian art as a tool in the progress of Indian people toward civilization, the article suggests that adopting Indian aesthetics could help non-Indian artists advance their skills and their careers. "Some Indian Portraits" was illustrated with eleven Indian drawings and eighteen Käsebier photographs of *Wild West* show performers. The unsigned text was also likely written by Käsebier. She undoubtedly felt that an article in a high-circulating magazine linking her with a tremendously popular form of entertainment, then at its height, would add to her own reputation.[3]

There is a tension in the article between the subtlety of the photographs and the broad primitivism of the article's text. "Some Indian Portraits" tells the story of a European American woman photographer who invites Indian performers from the *Wild West* show to come to her Fifth Avenue studio for a sitting. The first sentences put the photographer at the center of the story: "The 'Wild West' parade was passing along the avenue. A woman looked down upon it from a studio window and saw Indians, real live Indians, tricked out in gaily colored finery, and astride wiry little horses. The mere sight of their painted dignity was enough to revive for her the fascination of the Plains. She longed for a breath of the prairies, for a far horizon, a dome of blue sky above, the majesty of the storm in the open" (1). When the parade passes out of view behind a skyscraper, the photographer determines not to miss an opportunity to fuel her nostalgia for her western childhood. She writes to the show's impresario and invites the performers to pay her a call. When she arrives at her studio the next morning, the Indians are already there. "She opened the door, and with difficulty suppressed an exclamation of mingled surprise and pleasure. Her request for Indians had been generously complied with. Seated in a large circle around the 'model-throne'—which was occupied by the chaperon as chief—were nine of the most gorgeous braves she had ever beheld" (2).

The article goes on to discuss the visitors' "gorgeous" appearance, their acceptance of a snack of frankfurters, and their use of time between poses to draw and smoke cigarettes. It ends by reproducing letters later sent to the photographer by several of the models that recount their experiences with other non-Indian women met while on the performing circuit and document the difficult transition back to reservation life when the *Wild West* season ends. The inclusion of the letters and drawings is explained by the

author's observation that they "amusingly" demonstrate "a certain naïveté and cunning simplicity . . . which seems inherent in Indian nature" (12).

The text idealizes the visitors in antimodernist, primitivizing language, playing their unfamiliarity with the mores of New York artistic society against their honesty, virility, and naive charm. With its patronizing language, the article repeats many of the messages of other contemporary descriptions of Indian culture: Native Americans are "children" whose verbal and visual self-expression is best understood as a means of revitalizing non-Indian culture. While the drawings conform to the style and iconography of the Plains heraldic tradition, their importance as a means of cultural persistence is not explored. Instead, they are seen as the spontaneous products of individual imaginations. Yet the reader is invited to find in the drawings and photographs individuality and strength that are missing in more refined cultural documents. As in other expressions of the Indian craze, they are used to critique the direction that modern American "civilization" has taken. The simplicity of Indian culture is held up as an admirable quality at a time of urban hustle and bustle. The author mourns the loss of the "bands of roving red men, still free to come and go at will, with never a thought of 'reservations,'" and suggests that contact with European Americans has harmed, rather than improved, Native Americans. The poor education and aimlessness that characterize contemporary Indian life "suggest some interesting considerations as to the effects of our civilization upon our Indian wards" (1, 24).

Outside of this article and a few brief lines in personal letters, Käsebier did not discuss these pictures. However, the visuality of the photographs and the text that accompanies them associates them with the primitivism of the early modernist culture in which Käsebier participated. In their struggle for the acceptance of photography as a fine art, pictorialists like Käsebier used the formalist language that dominated contemporary art criticism to celebrate their work. At the same time, they, like contemporary artists working in other media, suggested that art could contribute to national social and cultural progress. "Some Indian Portraits" unites these goals, suggesting a relationship between an interest in Indian art and an interest in Indian welfare and holding out Indian culture as a model for the rejuvenation of non-Indian culture.

The association between her own artworks and Indian creativity was

desirable for a photographer who was working to advance the idea of photography as a modern artform. Käsebier was a member of the Photo-Secession, a movement promoting technical and creative experimentation in the medium, operating in New York under the intellectual and organizational leadership of early modernist photographer and impresario Alfred Stieglitz.[4] In advocating a subjective approach to photography, the Photo-Secession and the larger pictorialist, or art photography, movement of which it was a part annexed the language of the arts and crafts movement to bring attention to issues of craftsmanship, composition, tonality, and subjectivity in photography.[5] As in other wings of the arts and crafts movement, some pictorialist photographers capitalized on the discourse of Indian art's celebration of Native American creativity as a means of promoting their own originality. No one did this more than Gertrude Käsebier who, as a former student of Arthur Dow as well as a member of the Photo-Secession, had two strong links to primitivism.

At the same time, Käsebier allied herself politically with progressive women reformers of the day. Like Nellie Doubleday, Estelle Reel, and other middle-class European American women who championed Indian culture during this time, Käsebier celebrated the primitive as a means to explore a modern public sphere. Being a commercial and artistic photographer enabled her to pursue economic independence and self-expression. The wife of a German-born importer, she enrolled in art courses at the newly established Pratt Institute in 1889, when her youngest child was nine. Her artistic education inspired her imagination, but also gave her the idea of supplementing the family income through her work, especially after her husband faced business setbacks in the late 1890s.[6] After seeking some additional artistic training in Europe, Käsebier decided to pursue photography instead of painting, seeing it as a more lucrative, and equally expressive, form of art. She opened her first commercial studio in New York in 1898, and had an active, though not always smooth, career there for over a decade. Like other promoters of Native American art, she embraced the arts and crafts movement's suggestion that artistic and economic success could be linked, and that the promotion of art could effect social change.

Käsebier's studio can be thought of as a kind of Indian corner with one important difference: instead of decorating with Indian *art*, she decorated with Indian *artists*. Though these decorations were less permanent than the

textiles and ceramics with which other supporters of Indian aesthetics filled their homes, the photographs offered a permanent record of the visits of Native Americans. The shift changes the associations of such a space away from the nostalgic collection of obsolete works of art to the production of new works made in the spirit of Indian creativity. In Käsebier's photographs, the Indians are presented not only as markers for decorative primitivism, but also as artistic role models whose lack of "civilization" endows their work with an individuality, energy, and honesty to which non-Indian artists should aspire.

The significance of Käsebier's contribution to the Indian craze is twofold: it locates pictorialist photography at the center of a discussion about the aesthetic lessons offered by Native American art, and it illustrates how non-Indian women used Indian "otherness" as a means of exploring and enhancing their authority within the changing gender roles of the turn of the century. Käsebier's identification with Native draftsmen is not limited to their shared creative talents. She and they are also linked in their marginalization within contemporary debates about the nature of modern American culture. I will suggest that the photographs invite a challenge to the very primitivism they seem to celebrate by highlighting the fact that both the photographer's and her models' careers were impacted by very modern expectations of race and gender behavior.

KÄSEBIER'S PROGRESSIVE PRIMITIVISM

The idea to publish "Some Indian Portraits" likely grew out of several notices on the "Woman's Page" of the *New York Times* in April 1898 and 1899 that Käsebier had photographed *Buffalo Bill* performers in her studio. The very first account suggested the excitement caused by the event: "There was a studio tea up town . . . last week which probably exceeded in originality anything in the nature of an entertainment of that kind ever given. In the first place, the men outnumbered the women three to one, and their attire was more gorgeous than anything that was ever seen in the most startling ball gown. . . . The tea was given in the morning, which was also unique, but quite in keeping with the other features of the affair. . . . The studio was that of Mrs. Gertrude Käsebier and the gentlemen present were . . . nine Sioux Indians."[7] Studio gossip was a staple of turn-of-the-century journalism, and such articles contributed to the contemporary impression of the

artist as a bohemian, and stimulated a public desire to make contact with this exotic world. As such, the notices provided free advertising for the artists discussed.[8]

The publicity couldn't have been better timed for the photographer, who had only opened this, her first studio, a few months earlier. While she had received some public acclaim for exhibitions at her alma mater, the Pratt Institute in 1897, she was seeking ways to announce her new professional status. This interest is demonstrated by the location of the studio in the heart of the shopping district called the Ladies Mile, near other photography studios and the New York Camera Club.[9] Käsebier likely welcomed the *Times*' attention. She wanted to dissociate her work from common commercial photography, and thus avoided using print advertising. Instead, she relied on the celebrity of her models to attract attention to her studio. She photographed society beauties and included their portraits in her exhibitions and in the display case set on the street outside her studio.[10]

Photographs like the Indian portraits immediately signaled to the viewer that Käsebier's work was better than the conventional photographs churned out by portraitists and magazine photographers. Despite losing subtlety due to the halftone printing of *Everybody's* pages, these photographs of Indian artists are immediately recognizable as more self-consciously and subtly made than those circulating in popular magazines or government publications. As can be seen in the image of Kills-Close-to-the-Lodge (figure 44), the closely cropped portraits are generally taken full- or three-quarter-face, rather than in profile, providing the impression of an exchange of gazes between equals. The use of soft lighting and plain backdrops enhances the opportunity to appreciate the individual details of the models' faces and clothing. The inclusion of the models' names beneath the pictures further suggests that the images were meant to be appreciated individually.

One of the ways that Käsebier sought to differentiate her work from commercial photography was through her sophisticated participation in the contemporary interest in how artists' workspaces as manifestations of their creativity. Käsebier's portraits of other artists frequently show them to be in her studio. Often these pictures show the sitter posed in front of another Käsebier photograph. For example, a portrait of illustrator Rose O'Neill includes a crisp reproduction of the photographer's 1900 image "Real Motherhood." Such pictures suggest the suitability of Käsebier's work as wall decorations,

FIGURE 44 Gertrude Käsebier, "Kills-Close-to-the Lodge," from "Some Indian Portraits," *Everybody's Magazine* 14.17 (January 1901): 10.

but they are also a form of self-assertion, a desire to share the stage with the artist depicted. Käsebier includes her portrait of Rodin at the margin of her picture of Everett Shinn from 1907. Barbara Michaels has described this gesture as a kind of "symbolic Käsebier signature," and, indeed, the two pictures she examines are lacking in the literal signature with which Käsebier often embellished her work. But it is worth noting that these symbolic signatures show up predominantly in portraits of other artists. In general, Käsebier portraits use solid backdrops or close-cropping to strip away any sense that the sitter is in a specific locality. The special treatment offered artist-sitters suggests that Käsebier was seeking to offer an association between her own creativity and theirs. This can be seen explicitly in her portrait of Eulabee Dix (figure 45), in which the miniaturist leans over a framed mirror that reflects a large but blurry image of the photographer. The clear reference to the photographer's artistry with soft-focus photography turns the picture into a double portrait.

FIGURE 45 Gertrude Käsebier, "Portrait of Eulabee Dix," ca. 1907. Platinum print, 7 3/4 × 6 1/4 inches. National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C. Gift of Joan B. Gaines.

The Native American models make this connection between artists clearly. The portrait of four draftsmen at the board (figure 42) seems not only to illustrate their work, but to thematize creativity itself. It does this not only in its inclusion of the different facial expressions of the sitters, but also in the way it is posed against a wall where two backdrops almost meet. Instead of showing a finished product—a portrait staged against a backdrop—this picture gives the viewer a glimpse into Käsebier's tools of the trade—her studio as a staging ground, the backdrops as props—even as it shows Indian artists with works in progress. Such a juxtaposition suggests an affinity between their creative processes and her own.

The appearance of Käsebier's studio reinforces the idea that she supported a modern concept of the artist. She filled her first studio with furnishings that would demonstrate her commitment to progressive aesthetic positions. Interestingly, the Indian portraits provide the best documentation of the decoration of this space. Through them, we see the hardwood

FIGURE 46 William Merritt Chase, *Studio Interior*, ca. 1882. Oil on canvas, 28 1/8 × 40 1/16 inches. The Brooklyn Museum, New York. Gift of Mrs. Carll H. de Silver in memory of her husband.

floor, heavy carved-wood furniture, and plain, painted walls that created the setting for her work. The room has a spare, clean look that distinguishes it from the opulence of Victorian artists' studios, which mirrored the Gilded Age domestic taste for crowded, eclectic interiors, as can be seen in the paintings William Merritt Chase made of his workspace in the 1880s (e.g., figure 46). Like the owners of Indian corners, early modernists adopted an arts and crafts style to embody their aesthetic distance from the generation of artists who preceded them.[11] While Chase and his Gilded Age peers used their studios as places to market their own social connections and cultural sophistication as much as their work, turn-of-the-century artists wanting to demonstrate their commitment to the more austere and personal values of early modernism surrounded themselves with coarse, simple furnishings.

Visitors to Käsebier's studio associated it with the honest craftsmanship embodied by her work. Arthur Dow wrote of her in 1899, the year after the studio was opened: "She is not dependent upon an elaborate outfit, but gets her effects with a common tripod camera, in a plain room with ordinary light and quiet furnishings. Art always shows itself in doing much with few and simple things."[12] The pictorialist photographer and critic Joseph T.

FIGURE 47 Gertrude Käsebier, "Iron Tail," from "Some Indian Portraits," *Everybody's Magazine* 4.17 (January 1901): frontispiece.

Keiley noted the absence of "stage settings" and fancy furniture in his 1899 profile. "The true artist," he wrote, "depends not on these things for a good picture, but upon the individuality of the sitter, the ability fully to understand, appreciate and get in touch with that individuality, and the power to express it most characteristically and harmoniously."[13]

The simple, primitive look of Käsebier's studio is matched by a certain primitiveness in the appearance of her prints. Several of the photographs printed in "Some Indian Portraits" include signs of retouching, such as the exaggerated hatch marks around Sam Lone Bear's lap, on the blanket in Iron Tail's lap (figure 47), and Whirling Hawk's throat and arm. These lines traced in the negative do not serve to minimize a flaw in the composition or bring out a form; they seem instead to endow the prints with a heightened emotional immediacy. Other uses of retouching seem more specifically designed to imitate the Indian models' artistic expression. The photographer

has crafted a ghostlike headdress behind Whirling Hawk's head; she is also the person responsible for the copies of Sam Lone Bear's drawings in his portrait.

Unexplainable except as demonstrations of the photographer's whim, these retouchings ask the viewer to acknowledge the role her subjectivity played in making the photographs. As a pictorialist photographer, Käsebier was committed to the idea that photography could be a form of creative self-expression on a par with painting and sculpture. Members of the Photo-Secession asserted their individuality as artists by experimenting with diverse printing processes in pursuit of a distinctive "look." These processes helped bring the photographer's individual sensibility to bear on the prints. As Stieglitz explained, "The modern photographer, through the introduction of a great number of improved printing methods, has in his power to direct and mold as he will virtually every stage of making his picture."[14] Many pictorialists developed elaborate signatures to facilitate the viewer's recognition that their work was comparable to other forms of fine art.[15] (Käsebier's geometric monogram is visible in the lower left of the Sam Lone Bear portrait.) Endowing her prints with a "primitive," subjective, immediate appearance further associated Käsebier with the aesthetic trends of the period.

Pictorialists were particularly interested in aligning their work with the contemporary celebration of handicraft. Their commitment to artistic photography was explicitly designed to provide alternatives to cheap, mechanical commercial photographs. Articles in journals dedicated to cultivating pictorialist photography described composition and printing as requiring intelligence and craftsmanship. Platinum and gum bichromate, processes that brought out the materiality of the paper surface on which the image was printed, recalled the movement's interest in truth to materials. The traces of the photographer's hand in the application and manipulation of emulsion identified the photographer with the artistic individuality Dow and his peers celebrated.

Käsebier's bona fides as a modern craftswoman drew on her personal experience of the simple life during a childhood spent outside of Denver during the 1850s. Her western childhood was routinely presented as an inspiration for the values of independence and originality in her work. As Joseph Keiley explained, "The Wild-nature environments of her early child-

hood, with the semi-savage and altogether picturesque element of Indian life, its dangers and its poetry, have left indelible markings upon Mrs. Käsebier's character. . . . She sees . . . through [the eyes] of a child, who found companionship in the trees and flowers of the forest, and who came to look upon the Indian as part of that wild nature whose beauty she knew."[16] Käsebier herself connected her rugged childhood with the contemporary ideal of simplicity. She claimed to have learned not only her honest moral outlook but also her aesthetic ideas from "simple people." As she told an interviewer, "My grandmother was of the splendid, strong, pioneer type of women. She was an artist with her loom. She made her own designs, and weaved the most beautiful fancies into her fabrics. She knew life from living, and was great through her knowledge. She was a model to me in many ways, and the beginning of what I have accomplished in art came to me through her."[17]

Käsebier demonstrated her early commitment to preindustrial values in a pair of articles she published in *The Monthly Illustrator* after a summer spent with Frank DuMond's summer art class at Crécy-en-Brie, France, 1893. These articles reveal a primitivist tendency in the making.[18] They are illustrated with her own photographs and heavily laced with reformist nostalgia for preindustrial life. She describes village life as a vanishing culture, noting that young people have abandoned the town for the city. "Old France" is described as "ancient, primitive, soaked with historical associations, breathing of knightly adventure, abounding in picturesque features both of country and people."[19] Käsebier expresses regret that this "ancient, primitive" past of the Old World offered Americans "something the New World could not" in terms of a vision of unalienated, preindustrial culture.[20] For example, she describes Crécy-en-Brie as "a small, restful place, without a railroad, or gas, or electricity, or waterworks, or any of the thousand and one 'modern improvements' upon which Americans love to expatiate, and without which any village twenty-five miles from New York or Philadelphia, not to say of Chicago, would regard itself as only fit for social suicide."[21]

These articles also ally Käsebier with early feminism. She celebrates women's elevated role in French peasant culture as an alternative to the restrictions they experience in her own society. For example, she points out the beauty of the local women's muscular bodies that were "never hampered by the pressure of whale-bone and steel; their lungs are not enfeebled by breathing the vitiated air of close rooms; their strength has not been spent

PLATE 1 Unknown Navajo weaver, eye-dazzler rug, collected 1879. Wool with natural and synthetic dyes. Inv. no. 247200.000. Courtesy of National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Photo by NMAI Photo Services Staff.

PLATE 2 Grace Carpenter Hudson, *Baby Bunting*, 1894. Oil on canvas, 30 × 31 inches. Grace Hudson Museum, Ukiah, California. Gift of Dorothy and Jean Beatty in memory of Gertrude and Frederick Van Sicklin.

PLATE 3 Lacemaking class at Denison House, Boston, 1909. The Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

PLATE 4 Moccasin (one of a pair), made in 1893 on the Oneida Reservation, Green Bay, Wisconsin. Inv. no. 198649. From the Charles Edwin Kelsey Collection. Courtesy of National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Photo by NMAI Photo Services Staff.

PLATE 5 Unknown Pomo weaver, bowl, ca. 1900. Three-rod coiled willow with sedge root and bulrush root stitches, applied shell beads, and quail topknot feathers. Inv. no. 4/8786. Courtesy of National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Photo by NMAI Photo Services Staff.

PLATE 6 Mary Benson (Central Pomo), twined model cooking bowl, ca. 1905. Diagonal-twined of redbud and sedge. Inv. no. 24/2139. Courtesy of National Museum of the American Indian, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C. Photo by NMAI Photo Services Staff.

PLATE 7 George de Forest Brush, *The Weaver*, 1889. Oil on canvas, 12 × 15 inches. Terra Foundation for American Art, Chicago. Photo from Art Resource, New York.

PLATE 8 Angel DeCora, frontispiece for Francis LaFlesche, *The Middle Five: Indian Boys at School* (Boston: Small, Maynard, 1900).

FIGURE 48 Gertrude Käsebier, "The Old Market Women," from "An Art Village," *Monthly Illustrator* 4 (April 1895), 11.

upon the treadle of a sewing-machine; nor do they work with that feverish consuming energy that marks our western race. . . . They are not possessed of a desire to appear what they are not, nor to excel their neighbors."[22]

The photographs that accompany the articles on Crécy are among the first that Käsebier published. Though some have the soft focus that characterizes pictorialist photography, they are more like tourist snapshots than carefully crafted artistic prints. Most are portraits of the village's inhabitants at work. Posed stiffly at the center of the frame in their typical clothing, they sometimes smile, but more often look warily at the camera (see figure 48). These photos *document* Käsebier's primitivism; the Indian portraits *embody* it.

KÄSEBIER AS PRIMITIVE ARTIST

Käsebier's introduction of her own primitive gestures in her prints suggests that she finds Native American life an artistic, as well as a social model.

While Käsebier's presentation of drawings by untrained Indian artists alongside her own work in "Some Indian Portraits" might be seen as a suggestion of contrasts, a chance to demonstrate the difference between "civilized" and "primitive" representation, it is likely that she wanted viewers to see similarities as well as differences in the two kinds of visual expression. Käsebier's training and artistic affiliations would have exposed her to the ideas about primitive creativity advocated by the art educators discussed in chapter 3, especially in her classes with Arthur Wesley Dow.

Käsebier's interactions with the surfaces of the prints—her elaborate printing processes, retouchings, spottings, and signatures—can be seen as signs of her irrational, instinctive engagement with her art. Giles Edgerton described Käsebier as "an emotional artist" whose work was as much the product of her temperament and imagination as her technical skill.[23] She was also an avid student of the occult, given to falling into trances and following mysterious impulses. The interest in connecting the psychological with her artistic production may explain her interest in Native American art. Like Dow's summer students at Ipswich, Käsebier seems to be interested in Indian art as an attitudinal, not a formal, model. The artists at work in her pictures display the sincerity, devotion to simplicity in materials, and individuality of results that mark the arts and crafts community's interest in Native American art. Like other artists interested in Indian art in this period, Käsebier deculturizes the drawings, looking to them for universal lessons about art as opposed to their meanings for the Sioux men who made them.

Nancy Green has provocatively connected Käsebier's exploration of Native American subject matter in her photographs with Dow's interest in "primitive" art traditions as models of "the arts and crafts aesthetic of self-sufficiency in all media."[24] But Käsebier's interest in primitive creativity did not draw on Dow alone. The command to tap into a primal, instinctive source of creativity characterized a shifting concept of the artist at the turn of the century. On both sides of the Atlantic, groups of painters, sculptors, and designers were developing styles to demonstrate their unique modernist subjectivity or psychology.[25] This interest drew artists away from their commitment to illusionistic rendering to a greater involvement in decorative strategies designed to affect the mood, rather than the intellect, of the viewer. Such ideas strongly influenced contemporary artistic photog-

raphers, who staked their claim on the affinity of the photographic and painting processes through the use of such words as "temperament," and "individuality." Sandra Underwood has specifically related such terms to the ideology of the arts and crafts movement. Writing about the influential early twentieth-century American art critic Charles Caffin, himself a strong advocate of photography in general and Käsebier in particular, she explains that "Arts and Crafts defined a theory of artistic production which proclaims the work of the individual to be original and unique. The planning and the making of art were believed to engage artistic intuition and judgment."[26]

This interest in intuition fueled pictorialist primitivism, especially for photographers in the circle of Alfred Stieglitz. Stieglitz used exhibitions at his gallery, 291, and his curatorial and editorial work for the New York Camera Club and the Photo-Secession as sites for promoting the creativity of "outsider" artists. The most obvious manifestations of Stieglitz's fascination with "uncivilized" art were the exhibitions of children's drawings and African sculpture that were installed in 291 in 1912 and 1914, respectively. Stieglitz's interest in non-Western art and artistic subjects had, however, manifested itself fifteen years earlier, in his work as a photographic curator and editor, when he published F. Holland Day's "Nubian" portraits in the journal he was editing, *Camera Notes* (see figure 49).

The celebration of non-European artistic traditions as a source of imagery and method for American art might seem to suggest a recognition of the equal status of native and non-Native artists. Käsebier's representation of Indian artists in her studio supports this idea. But even if Käsebier intended to characterize her studio visitors as so many more modern artists at work, the culture within which she worked could not see them this way. Day's and Käsebier's photographs were not seen as signs of respect for another culture. At best, they were demonstrations of the artists' talents that were enhanced emotionally by a touch of exoticism. With their subtle lighting and velvety backgrounds, Day's photographs of Bostonian African Americans and Käsebier's pictures of Indian entertainers were singled out by critics as models of the careful printing and exquisite tonal range to which pictorialists should aspire. When Day's "Ethiopian Chief," for example, was reproduced in the second issue of *Camera Notes*, the editor's comments were limited to an observation of its "delicate qualities."[27] Joseph Keiley similarly uses the appearance of exotic models as a means of praising Käsebier's artistic skill. He

FIGURE 49
F. Holland Day, "An Ethiopian Chief," ca. 1897, from *Camera Notes* 1.2 (October 1897): plate 35.

chose her photograph of Kills-Close-to-the-Lodge to illustrate an article on tonality, which he saw as the ultimate test of a photographer's artistic skill, the "medium through which is stamped the artist's individual interpretation of and sympathy with his subject."[28]

Despite his reference to sympathy, Keiley strips the model of his cultural identity; the individuality he is interested in is the photographer's. Indeed, he seems to almost deny the existence of different pigmentation, claiming that it is the photographer who is in "control of the lights and shades of a picture" (145). The information the photograph gives him about Kills-Close-to-the-Lodge is not a sympathetic glimpse into the character or experiences of a *Wild West* performer sitting in a New York artist's studio, but a generic rehearsal of the stereotype of the savage Indian: "There he sits, arrayed in the habiliments of his people, one of the last of a rapidly disappearing race, looking out in proud silence upon that onrolling tide of humanity that is greedily devouring all that was his, and fast crowding his people from the face of the world. Too proud to protest, too thoroughly a warrior to complain, or to bow to the new order of things, he watches stoicly [*sic*]; and unbendingly awaits the inevitable end."[29] This familiar image of the stoic, van-

ishing Indian is not used to reflect on Kills-Close-to-the-Lodge's personal experiences, but instead to enhance the association between the savage model and the photographer's own primitivism in the use of techniques that brought raw directness to the photographic print. Keiley describes tonal harmony itself in primitivizing terms: "Tones of light and shade, like tones of music, have individually no meaning appreciable by the human intellect, but possess rather a certain sense value, which is pleasing, or otherwise, as it is harmonious or discordant; and, therefore, a combination of such tones may be quite foreign to conventional natural effects, and even diametrically opposed to them, and yet, nevertheless, so harmonious in its tone values as to be pleasing to the senses without appealing to the intellect, and, because of its sensuous charm, may possess an esthetic and lasting value."[30] Keiley's comments typify early modernist primitivism, which used non-European art as a field in which to cultivate new psychological and formal models of art making. While this development was often dependent on the participation of indigenous artists in Western popular culture, it did not often acknowledge them to be part of the same modern world as the non-Native artists, but continued to idealize them as part of a preindustrial ideal doomed by modernity.

PRIMITIVISM AND FEMININITY

"Some Indian Portraits" contributed to making 1901 the high point of Käsebier's professional career. Over the previous two years, Käsebier had participated in every major American photographic exhibition, had sent pictures to be displayed in London and Paris, and had been the subject of profiles in several photographic journals, including *Camera Notes*, *Philadelphia Photographer*, and *La Revue de la Photographie*. Within a few months of the *Everybody's* photo spread, she was the focus of a chapter of Charles Caffin's influential book *Photography as a Fine Art*.[31] *Everybody's* was pleased enough with her work that they hired her to provide photographic illustrations for a serialized novel titled *The Making of a Country Home*.[32] Her skills were also sought out by a new publication, *The World's Work*, dedicated to describing the issues and leaders of the nation's politically progressive community. In the midst of these accomplishments, Frances Benjamin Johnston proclaimed Käsebier one of "The Foremost Women Photographers in America."[33]

Johnston's accolade points out that Käsebier's gender was always a factor in her career. She was trained in an art school specifically designed to prepare women for careers in art at a time when men and women were understood as having distinct talents and capabilities. Building on the association between femininity and art within the arts and crafts movement, middle-class women of Käsebier's time who wanted to use their increased wealth and leisure to pursue an education often chose artistic fields. Schools like Pratt were specifically designed to train women art teachers, designers, illustrators, and painters.

As many scholars have noted, women were directed to fields that were understood as commensurate with a female sensibility. Women art students were encouraged to use art to cultivate their sympathy for children and their facility with offering moral instruction. The success of textile designers like Candace Wheeler paved the way for women to professionalize work in fields that had been traditionally associated with domestic responsibilities. Female members of arts and crafts societies generally worked at handicrafts that were similarly linked to age-old ideas of women's culture: china painting, needlework, jewelry making. In addition to the strength of tradition, these practices were understood as requiring specifically female skills, including patience, neatness, and fine manual dexterity.[34]

Though less traditional than these other trades, photography required many of the same skills, and it became an important option for women who wanted to pursue artistic careers at the turn of the century. Photography did not require the years of academic training that other careers did, which would require women to neglect their family responsibilities. Moreover, their inherent sympathy for other people was thought to enable women to put sitters at ease. In 1890, Catherine Weed Barnes noted that women's characteristic conscientiousness and neatness also suited them for photographic work. In her own articles and speeches, Käsebier allied herself with Barnes in recommending photography as an artform particularly suited to a woman's sensibility; she told one audience, "I earnestly advise women of artistic tastes to train for the unworked field of modern photography. It seems to be especially adapted to them, and the few who have entered it are meeting with gratifying and profitable success."[35]

In general, women's artistic responsibilities matched their domestic ones: their perceived delicacy and sentimentality were understood as suit-

FIGURE 50 Gertrude Käsebier, "The Manger," 1899. Platinum print, mounted on brown paper. Inv. no. LC-USZC2–5963, Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.

ing them particularly well for portraiture, especially pictures of women and children. In a discussion about a woman who worked almost exclusively with women and children, Barnes wrote, "The work is infinitely more refined and womanly than much which is eagerly sought after by women."[36] A significant portion of Käsebier's best known work, including her most critically acclaimed photographs, "Blessed Art Thou among Women" and "The Manger" (figure 50), conform to this subject matter.

As I have explained in previous chapters, women embraced a sexual division of labor within the art world, seeing their ability to contribute *as women* as a justification for their participation in artistic culture. While the materials, styles, and subject matter of turn-of-the-century culture drew on an idea of femininity based on preindustrial domesticity, women artists, like women reformers, used this idea to cultivate personal satisfaction and sometimes public acclaim through creative work.

The images in "Some Indian Portraits" identify Käsebier with Progressive

Era women's explorations of new realms of experience that resemble those undertaken by the mainstream women writers and reformers discussed in chapter 1. The article presents female readers with the opportunity to follow the photographer-protagonist through a complex web of commercial, social, and sexual desire. Significantly, these modern experiences are provided by contact with "primitive" others. The visibility of Käsebier's studio in these photographs enhances the impression of the actual presence of the models in a woman's place of work. When the *Delineator* printed a picture of Joe Black Fox, it described Käsebier's studio as the site of a possible exciting encounter: "While Mrs. Käsebier's chief work lies with society people, she has a particular penchant for photographing Indians, especialy [*sic*] those that travel the country with 'Buffalo Bill's' show. These she has made her favorites, and whenever they appear in New York her studio is sure to be full of them."[37] Notices of Käsebier's studio visitors in the *New York Times* also remarked on the social atmosphere of her studio. Significantly, the *Times* highlighted the fact that the Indians were men and the European Americans they met there were women. As one such news item noted, "Callers of this kind might not be so agreeable in a private house, but in a studio it is somewhat different, and Mrs. Käsebier and the young women artists who share the studio with her gaze at their guests with a feeling of deep artistic appreciation."[38] As this statement points out, the studio is not a domestic space. It is an example of the new kinds of locales that middle-class women were exploring at the turn of the century. As much as Käsebier's Indian portraits respond to the changing aesthetic debates of her day, they also respond to changing roles for women. Mixing the "primitive" and the modern, the Indian portraits link Käsebier's professional and social ambitions to those of other Progressive Era women.

One aspect of Käsebier's progressive femininity was her desire to turn her artistic activity into a career. Publishing in *Everybody's Magazine* was a sign of Käsebier's avid pursuit of success outside the circle of art photography. Contrary to some other pictorialists, Käsebier refused to believe in a division between professional and artistic photography. In an 1898 address, she told her audience that "[a photographer] can make a commercial article for the . . . money, and still another to justify himself."[39] For her, art was an expression of individual temperament that found its way into all modes of expression. Moreover, rather than supporting a compartmentalized view

of art and commercial work, Käsebier often put the same images to both uses—exhibiting her portraits and selling her noncommissioned work to popular magazines. The Indian portraits are the perfect example of this. Because they were made at the photographer's and not the sitter's or publisher's request, they are not truly commercial portraits. And yet the photographer clearly used them to build up a commercial clientele.

Everybody's was one of the most successful family magazines of the time, reaching an estimated 150,000 homes every month when "Some Indian Portraits" was published, and its readers included many middle-class women who, like Käsebier, were longing to explore their moral and economic power in the public sphere.[40] Owned by Wanamaker's department stores, *Everybody's* appealed to urban readers' interest in a larger world by offering them enticing advertisements and love stories set in historically and geographically remote settings. Through advertisements and articles that more directly addressed questions of taste and consumption, the magazine contributed to the growing idea that the desire to cultivate one's individuality through experience could be accomplished through therapeutic consumption. Käsebier's professional success reflects the fact that she gave magazine readers what they were looking for.

Like other journals of the time, *Everybody's* frequently presented coverage of the West. Stories and artworks by Owen Wister, Charlie Russell, and Carl Rungius set life in the region up as the opposite of the refined industrial culture of the East. "Some Indian Portraits" offers a vision of the primitive West specifically geared toward *Everybody's* female readers by presenting the models as the objects for women's sexual, commercial, and social desire. Within the explicitly commercialized context of *Everybody's Magazine*, Käsebier's photographs depict Indian men like so many more objects for the reader's contemplation, by focusing closely on their physical features and exotic costumes. Matter-of-factly seated against simple backdrops, tightly framed, almost invariably gazing out into the viewer's space, the models present themselves for the viewer's visual assessment. These photographs, though they display people instead of objects, draw on the magazine reader's fantasy of cultivating her own desire through an (in this case symbolic) possession of the exotic as in the photographs of Indian corners discussed in chapter 1. Indeed, the photographs seem to heighten the materiality of the men's bodies and clothes. The relatively high quality of

FIGURE 51 Gertrude Käsebier, "Red Bird," from "Some Indian Portraits," *Everybody's Magazine* 4.17 (January 1901): 5.

the halftone prints brings out the creases on the men's faces and captures the reflections of light on their ornaments, the softness of the feathers. The photographer's pictorialist style encourages the viewer to dwell on texture. In the photograph titled "Red Bird" (the Sioux poet and musician Zitkala-Sa), for example, the fact that the model's weighty strands of beads are out of focus in the foreground makes the crisply delineated ones more viscerally appealing (see figure 51). Such attention to detail puts the viewer in the position of a consumer evaluating the appearance of the models in terms of fashion, and indeed, the accompanying text provides lengthy descriptions of the models' attire. "They wore feathered head-dresses that were marvels; short jackets fairly covered with elaborate designs in solid beadwork; flannel shirts of vivid red, blue, and green; . . . brass and silver bands and silver rings stood out against the copper-brown of their arms and fingers" (4).

In addition to contributing to a visceral interest in the exotic aspects of the models' clothing, the article suggests that these pictures offer sexual

titillation. The second spread shows a photograph of Amos Two Bulls in profile, which seems to lock gazes with Zitkala-Sa, whose picture appears on the opposing page (figure 52). The author informs us that the feathers in the young man's hair signify that he is looking for a wife (4). The drawings reproduced in the article contribute to the romantic nature of the piece. Page 12 shows two figures, one male and the other female, standing outside a tipi—a young couple outside their home. A few pages later, a similar composition, this time with three male figures and one female, is reproduced with the words "Catch girls" written above them (figure 53). The letters reprinted at the end of the article similarly highlight the theme of courtship. Sammy Lone Bear's missive from October 23, 1898, informs us that there are "Plenty girls over hear [*sic*]." A letter from 1900 recounts meeting two "nice girls" in Philadelphia, presumably extending the models' interest to European American women like the magazine's readers.

Käsebier was noted for her comfort in admitting her sexuality. Perhaps, as Estelle Freedman and John D'Emilio suggest was the case for other women of this period, marriage provided Käsebier with the chance to assert and explore her identity by exploring her sexual desires.[41] She told more than one acquaintance that she had married her husband because of his looks. (It was a decision she probably regretted. As she put it, "I married legs and I got legs.")[42] Moreover, she publicly connected her photographic practice with her sexual self-possession, in humor if not in plain language. For example, she ended an 1898 lecture on the appeals of photography as a profession for women with the remark: "Besides, consider the advantage of a vocation which necessitates one's being a taking woman"—"taking" having associations not only with attractiveness and deceit but also with sexual intercourse.[43]

The text and images of "Some Indian Portraits" inverts the usual formula of male pursuer and female pursuee, by focusing on the female photographer, and by extension the female visitors to her studio, as the agents in this romance. The article plays with the familiar trope of the sexually charged relationship between artist and model, redrawing the presumed power imbalance based on gender as one based on race. Opening with the photographer's "mingled surprise and pleasure" upon finding these "young educated bucks" and "mighty men of battle" (4) in her studio, the narrative shows her telling them how to pose and even what to wear. At one point,

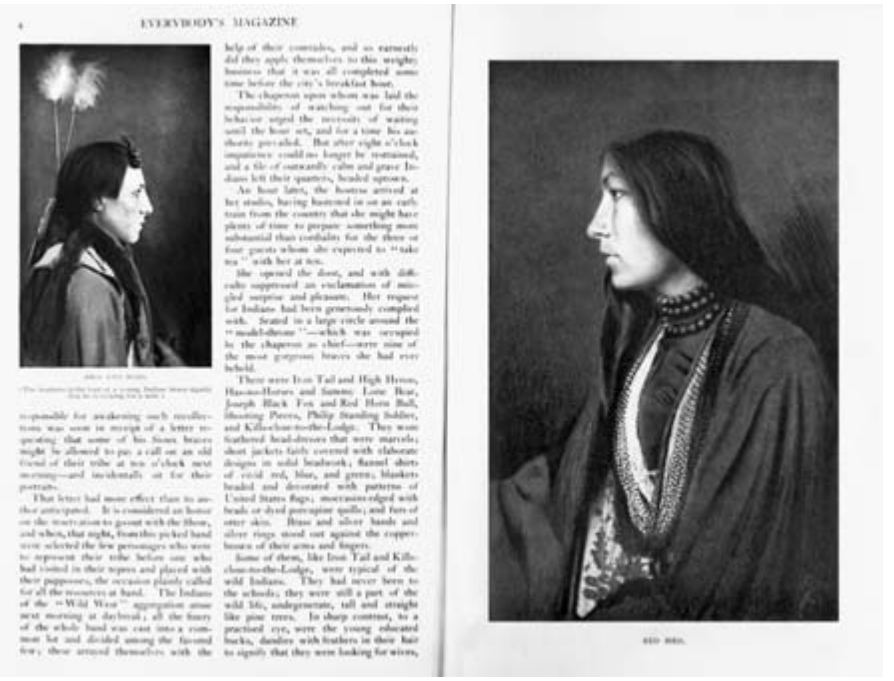

FIGURE 52 "Amos Two Bulls" and "Red Bird," from "Some Indian Portraits," *Everybody's Magazine* 4.17 (January 1901): 4–5.

FIGURE 53 Sam Lone Bear, "Catch Girls," from "Some Indian Portraits," *Everybody's Magazine* 4.17 (January 1901): 15.

having "wear[ied] of beadwork and feathers," she even undresses them, as described in this passage: "Quite at random she selected Iron Tail, and proceeded to divest him of his finery. Feathers and trinkets were removed, and amid a dead silence she placed him before the camera and secured the most remarkable portrait of the whole collection" (7). Following the tradition of artists' models, the Indians are presented as passively allowing themselves to be manipulated to fit the mold of the photographer's fantasy. The photographer brings out a quiet, even vulnerable side of these supposedly wild models, suggesting a woman's ability to tame them. Iron Tail is even described as obeying her "like an automaton." The connection between the photographer's control over these bodies and her desire to touch, dress, and manipulate them is reinforced by the fact that although Käsebier made portraits of women and older men, the article reproduces almost exclusively pictures of young male performers. In the picture of White Wolf, the model's casual posture, the slightly open positions of his arms and legs, and his direct look all seem to invite the viewer in (see figure 54). His barely visible wedding band absolves the viewer from the guilt of looking at him as a sexual object, even as it marks his sexual experience. In another portrait, Philip Standing Soldier's hesitant gaze similarly signals a curiosity about the viewer that she is asked to return (see figure 55).

An interesting sign of how the models are fit into the role of becoming the object of the viewer's desire is the fact that the *New York Times* and "Some Indian Portraits" feminize these warriors. The *Times* compared their clothing with dresses and referred to two models as "the belles of the occasion."[44] Throughout these articles there is a suggestion that the disempowerment that the performers suffer by being linguistically and culturally out of place symbolically turns them into women. One notice describes how Joe Black Fox's rosy complexion is set off by a bunch of violets given him by an admirer among Käsebier's friends.

In presenting the models as subjects for female visual delectation, "Some Indian Portraits" is picking up on an idea brought forth by the original accounts of the sittings that resulted in these pictures. The articles repeatedly stress the warm interactions between the models and the women artists in Käsebier's building. The models are described exchanging gifts with these women and posing with them. An April 23, 1899, account mentions "Catch

FIGURE 54 Gertrude Käsebier, "White Wolf," from "Some Indian Portraits," *Everybody's Magazine* 4.17 (January 1901): 11.

Girls" and suggests Joe Black Fox's interest in "a pretty young matron who did much to make the stay of the guests pleasant."[45] As with the *Everybody's* article, the suggestions of the Indian men's desire for European American women is matched by the women's interest in the Indian men. Articles sometimes hinted at the possibility of an unconventional alliance, as we saw in the aforementioned *New York Times* quotation that emphasized the deep gazes Käsebier and her female associates directed at the Native models.[46]

While attraction to the exotic other is frequently identified as the province of European American males, the turn of the century was characterized by white women's increased exploration of non-Western men. While not specifically identified as sexual objects, Native American men took on increased prominence as romantic heroes in sentimental fiction of the time written by women. Helen Hunt Jackson's *Ramona*, in which a half-Indian girl, raised as white, elopes with an Indian sheepherder, and Emily Pauline Johnson's magazine sketches of interracial romance presented women

FIGURE 55 Gertrude Käsebier, "Philip Standing Soldier," from "Some Indian Portraits," *Everybody's Magazine* 4.17 (January 1901): 17.

readers with Indian men who combined strong moral principles with hard bodies.[47] *Ramona* went through new printings in 1898 and 1899, and 1900 saw the production of a deluxe illustrated edition.[48]

Interracial sentimental fiction frequently described non-Indian women's interest in Indian men as growing out of their social interest in the "Indian question." Real-life interracial partnerships, like the marriage of Transcendentalist poet Elaine Goodale and Sioux physician/author Charles Eastman, were publicly discussed as alliances between moral crusaders rather than steamy romances.[49] However, the readers of these accounts often added in sexual overtones. Indeed, Valerie Sherer Mathes has suggested that the desirability of Jackson's Indian protagonist Alessandro impeded the political message of *Ramona*.[50] While the novel did not hurt the Indian reform movement that Jackson helped start, most of its readers used it as a tool for fantasy, not for real action.

But to pit women's social reform work against their cultivation of sexual

desire would be to miss the interconnected worlds of middle-class female self-development during this period. As Deborah Gordon has pointed out, women with training in social sciences who worked in Indian communities were exploring their own empowerment while pursuing work that was deemed an extension of the nineteenth-century idea of the "woman's sphere." Caring for others did not mean ignoring one's own desires. Gordon writes, "[It] developed from the search for different ways of being white and female. . . . Ironically in these women's search for difference they were constrained by authoritative social relations and thus, literally came to know Native American[s] . . . as the embodiment of their desires. The Other, which they sought in order to change themselves, was eclipsed by their own general understanding of white gender relations."[51] Similarly, Margaret Jacobs has noted that many of the feminists who became interested in Native American culture in the early twentieth century rejected repressive Victorian sexuality and celebrated the Pueblos' relatively open attitude toward sexuality as one of the qualities Western culture should adopt.[52]

The interpolation of reformist ideas in a popular magazine helped women negotiate a balance between their sense of their right to cultivate their own individuality through consumption and their interest in serving others. *Everybody's Magazine* was not an isolated attempt to link these worlds. As William Leach has shown, department stores like Wanamaker's often linked their displays with women's political issues.[53] Several commercial venues in New York more explicitly linked shopping and reform work. One such institution, the New York Exchange for Woman's Work, occupied the rooms directly below Käsebier's. The exchange ran a tearoom and consignment shop founded to help genteel women who had fallen on hard times. It is likely that Käsebier used her display case to appeal to the women who stopped to lunch there. The Exchange itself had played on the consumer appeal of the West, offering at different times dolls shaped like Rough Riders during the Spanish-American War and a year later sold "a large and rare collection of baskets from Alaska."[54]

Like the women anthropologists Gordon studies, Käsebier linked a variety of desires in "Some Indian Portraits," including an appeal to the reformist point of view. The article enumerates several contemporary critiques of the Indian situation. Reservations are described as confining. Government education is exposed as inadequate and corrupting. The author describes

"young educated bucks" as corrupted by schooling—turned into dandies "able to write a little, and to speak a comical broken English" (11).

That Käsebier herself promoted the cause of Indian reform is not inconsistent with the other goals of her work. She was a supporter of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, attending its graduation ceremonies in 1901. Her correspondence with the school's founder, Richard Pratt, and the progressive Yavapai Indian reformer Dr. Carlos Montezuma over the following decade suggests that this interest was ongoing.[55] These social goals, like her artistic ambitions and her exploration of her sexuality, were commensurate with a modern urban woman's activities. Indeed, women justified their exploration of the public sphere in terms of the social need for them to exert their moral influence over a wider field. At the same time, the interest in social uplift did not prohibit women exploring new opportunities outside the home from learning to cultivate their own tastes, and opinions. Such interconnected interests characterize the modern women who consumed the Indian portraits in *Everybody's Magazine* and other popular publications.

THE INDIAN PORTRAITS AND "MODERN" IDENTITY

Like the female promoters of Indian corners, non-Indian women artists promoted interpretations of Native American culture that helped them resolve problems they were facing in their own communities. This is a provocative way to think about Käsebier's Indian portraits. There is reason to believe that Käsebier's artistic community was not comfortable with how her work implied active female desire. As I will show, the critical reception of Käsebier's work avoided some of the most radical implications of her work. Moreover, an understanding of Käsebier's marginalization as a woman within her own artistic community opens up the possibility of reading the Indian portraits as suggesting a richer identification between the woman photographer and the Native American artists than that of other early modernists.

Critics interpreted Käsebier's talent through the lens of femininity. The perception that women's talents lay in their interpersonal skills led critics to focus on Käsebier's studio, rather than her darkroom, as the site of her real work. Giles Edgerton claimed that "her real work is done with the sitter, not in the darkroom."[56] Though he praised others' manipulated photographic prints, Charles Caffin singled out Käsebier's talent as her "keen intuition of character, and a wonderfully swift inventiveness of means to express

it."[57] These critics rarely addressed Käsebier's sophisticated darkroom techniques, despite their palpability in her prints. Sometimes this avoidance seems willful. When the photographer's work was reprinted in the first issue of the publication of the Photo-Secession in 1902, the editors identified her as a "straight" photographer, all the while apologizing for the loss of "velvety richness" in the reproduction of a gum print.[58]

The avoidance or outright criticism of Käsebier's printing techniques is related to a contemporary reluctance to see a woman artist's technical proficiency. Kirsten Swinth has observed that the language of art criticism in turn-of-the-century United States tended to identify good technique as a "masculine" quality, associated with capacity to "reason" that was perceived to be challenged by female emotionalism.[59] Käsebier contributed to the understanding of her work as being essentially emotional rather than technical. In an early address, she expressed herself as unversed in what she called "dark-room etiquette": "I confess to staining my hands with pyro, to burning my gowns with acids, sometimes making two exposures on one plate, and sometimes forgetting to make any."[60] Memoirs of her studio assistants confirm her reluctance to admit to technical proficiency, recognizing that "she professes greater ignorance than her results warrant."[61]

As with other aspects of early modernist discourse, the emphasis on technical aspects of artworks frequently masked social concerns. The avoidance of discussing women's activities in the darkroom may stem not only from a low expectation of women's technical ability, but also because the darkroom could be seen as an unseemly place for women. At a time when female virtue was policed by observation of public behavior, the darkroom provided a site in which women's activities were invisible. The New York Camera Club, where Käsebier and other pictorialists worked and exhibited in the late 1890s and early 1900s, understood that the darkroom was a potentially dangerous place. They did not permit women to print on their premises until 1899, when they had constructed darkrooms for men and women on separate floors.[62]

The Camera Club's policy was probably due to the fact that the darkroom was a place where women might be exposed to unwanted physical contact with male photographers. But Käsebier's Indian portraits hint at the possibility that the darkroom also provided the opportunity for physical contact—at least symbolic contact—between women photographers and

their models. In her analysis of the photography of Julia Margaret Cameron, Carol Mavor has suggested an association between manipulative printing techniques and caresses. She describes them as "printed with eroticism, as if they have been touched all over."[63] Given the provocative poses and suggestive texts surrounding the pictures included in "Some Indian Portraits," it is possible that critics seeking to advance the cause of art photography wanted to avoid the implication that Käsebier's connection to her sitters would be anything other than a professional, feminine interaction in the light of the studio. In Käsebier's case, the dusky intimacy of the darkroom was not only a potential site for physical bodies to rub up against each other, but also a place where the artist transformed the bodies of her sitters into personal expressions, reflecting her exploration of her sexuality as well as her creativity.

Some critics expressed their anxiety about changing gender roles by criticizing the way Käsebier conducted her career. An example of this can be found in Sadakichi Hartmann's criticism of Käsebier's photographs. Hartmann was a critic and art historian of American painting who contributed photographic criticism to several art journals.[64] He supported the goal of revitalizing American culture through the cultivation of individuality. For instance, he described the value of F. Holland Day's work as its attempt to "render our modern life more harmonious." His celebration of individuality in art builds on a social critique. Day's project is, for Hartmann, "no easy task, truly, in this age of ours, when everything tends towards the effacement of character, when uniformity of dress is almost universal, when the leveling of the classes is every day causing our personality to disappear more and more."[65] Yet Hartmann was unable to appreciate the modernity of Käsebier's mixing of social, economic, and artistic goals in her photographs. He found her work clever but overly picturesque and imitative of old master painting. He recognized the presence of subjectivity in her prints, but reads it as revealing an "apparent, almost obtrusive . . . [and] rather a superficial" individuality.[66] He felt that anyone who made portraits on commission was not capable of being an artist. As he wrote, "In my opinion only men like Messrs. Stieglitz, Day, and Keiley are artistic photographers: like the true artist, they only depict what pleases them, and not everybody who offers them twenty-five dollars in return. This is the line which divides artistic and professional photography, as it does art and pot-boiling."[67]

As I have argued already, the turn-of-the-century art world's retreat from the commercial world was intimately bound up with the methods and materials of the market, but it often downplayed this connection. Thus, instead of seeing Käsebier's very participation in New York's commercial and artistic culture as a sign of her exploration of worlds only newly available to women, Hartmann branded her insufficiently excited about the artistic implications of what was "going on around her in this great city." Käsebier seems to have been aware of how closely artistic photographers scrutinized one another's behavior. She cautioned an audience in 1898 that frequent publication could look "promiscuous."[68] Her language suggests that the criticism of her avid pursuit of clients is linked to a suggestion that this behavior is particularly dangerous for a woman's reputation.

Käsebier's situation illuminates the difficulty in conceptualizing a female modern artist within the critical discourse of the period. Sarah Burns has convincingly argued that the turn of the century brought a watershed of public discussions about what artists were and how they should act.[69] At the same time, this very period brought increased scrutiny of women's behavior as women increasingly entered the public sphere through education, commerce, and work. Despite numerous articles celebrating exemplary women artists, these publications used the idea of an innate female aesthetic to dissociate women from the qualities thought to be required by vanguard artists. Indeed, as Burns has shown, even when women artists deployed the same artistic strategies as men in their work, or the same bravado in their social activities as their male counterparts, it was nonetheless judged in different, and often disparaging, terms. The rejection of Käsebier's configuration of modernist artistic practice contributed to a consolidation of control of aesthetic debates in the hands of men.[70] Both Kirsten Swinth and Sarah Burns see the emergence of gendered language as an attempt to preserve male dominance in an art world with increasing female participation.[71] The solution was to delineate male and female artistic qualities to differentiate and subtly rank men's and women's work.

In borrowing from the arts and crafts movement, early American modernists, such as Stieglitz and his close associates Marsden Hartley and Charles Sheeler, appropriated the movement's fraught negotiation of progressivism and antimodernism. While using their engagement with craftsmanship and individuality as a way to critique the anonymity and powerlessness they

perceived to be a product of industrial modernity, at the same time they embraced the notion of artistic progress and invested themselves in the idea that art could lead both practitioners and viewers to higher levels of civilization. Generally this conflict of ideas was not commented upon, nor did it seem to cause difficulty for artists and critics who wanted to play both sides of the argument. Indeed, as Sarah Burns's recent work has demonstrated, no matter how antimodernist, an early twentieth-century artist needed to master the "modern" skills of self-promotion if he or she wanted to succeed in a culture that increasingly asked artists to externalize their creative personas by representing themselves in ways that fit the evolving definition of how an "artist" should behave.[72] Tension nevertheless existed between the "antimodern" or the "primitive" ideals expressed within artistic communities and the demands placed upon them by the public to use "modern" strategies of self-representation.

This tension is visible in the reception of Käsebier's Indian portraits. While the photographer's male artistic peers were comfortable seeing themselves as straddling primitivism and modernity, they downplayed the modernity of Käsebier's and other women's work, praising it in terms of transhistorical female values that linked them to age-old domestic ideals.

Significantly, the use of Indian art as a model for modern art production may have contributed to European American women's unequal status in the turn-of-the-century art world. While they were by no means as clearly identified as working at a distance from modernity as Indian artists, there is some suggestion that primitive art served to control women's participation in artistic culture. A return to the cases discussed in chapter 3 suggests as much. The students that George Brush steered toward making Indian ceramics were all women. Although Dow had male students at his summer school, the people making Indian art in the photograph of his summer school are also women (see figure 35). While all artists were encouraged to learn from Native American designs through the articles and exhibitions of the arts and crafts societies, it appears that the actual imitation of Native American *forms* was often understood as women's work. As I explained in chapter 1, most of the Indian material culture that was characterized as "art" by the arts and crafts movement was made by women, and conformed to contemporary ideas of women's culture. By making hand-built ceramics, baskets with southwestern motifs woven into them, and textiles woven on

Navajo looms, women artists benefited from the understanding that they were participating in noble female traditions. At the same time, this association suggests that it is more appropriate for women to continue these primitive traditions than to explore avant-garde forms of art.

In the face of the sexism of the artistic culture in which she worked, I propose that Käsebier's Indian portraits allow for a critique of the very primitivism they celebrate by suggesting that the photographer and models occupy a similarly marginalized relationship to modern culture. The photographer's use of the discourse of Indian art provides new insights into the roles of gender and race in early modernist aesthetic debates. Käsebier made use of contemporary ideas of "primitive" Indian creativity throughout her career, using her association with it as a way to posit her own modern artistic sensibility. Käsebier deculturated Indian art, in much the same way as her artistic contemporaries who promoted Native American culture in distinctly European American terms. At the same time, in her self-consciousness about her artistic identity, she may have shown a more subtle configuration of Indian aesthetics than her peers. This subtlety draws on her experiences as a woman artist.

While not denying the significance of a difference in economic and cultural power between the photographer and her sitters, I would suggest that these photographs hint at a mutual identification between the photographer and the models. In fact, the photographs seem to suggest that the Indian artists are experiencing the same blending of commercial and "artistic" needs in their own self-expression as the photographer. Reina Lewis has suggested that "women's differential, gendered access to the positionalities of imperial discourse produced a gaze on the . . . 'other' that registered difference less pejoratively and less absolutely than [men's]."[73] Käsebier's Indian portraits can be read as an attempt to reconcile the conflicting needs of a culture with conflicting expectations of the various roles they played, including performers playing to an audience as "authentic" representors of their sex and race. The Indian portraits, therefore, not only reveal the studio to be the site of interconnected desires, they also illuminate how artists negotiated contemporary definitions of creativity and their limitations.

My reading also runs counter to much current scholarship on photographic representations of Native Americans from the end of the nineteenth century, which often concentrates on the question of whether the photog-

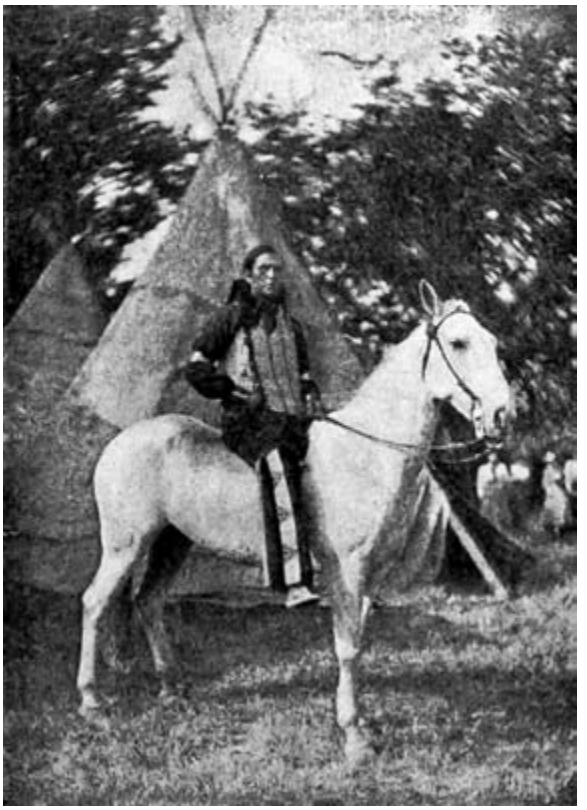

FIGURE 56 Gertrude Käsebier, "High Heron," from "Some Indian Portraits," *Everybody's Magazine* 4.17 (January 1901): 24.

rapher allowed the personality of the sitter to come out in the picture or projected his or her own fantasies of Indianness on the sitter.[74] Criticism of Käsebier's Indian portraits makes use of this approach. For example, in her 1990 book on Käsebier, Barbara Michaels argues that the photographer's pictures of Indians stand out from the stereotypical representations of her time in the individual treatment of the models and the choice to portray them in a contemporary setting (her studio).[75] Jennifer Sheffield Currie disagrees with Michaels, interpreting Käsebier's pictures as timeless images of "Noble Savagery." "Life with the Wild West Show was the reality that Käsebier's subjects experienced," she writes; "however, we receive little, if any, sense of this world when viewing Käsebier's images."[76] While Currie is right that Käsebier did not produce a photo-essay of the daily activities of the performers, the photographer *did* include photographs taken at the troupe's tipi camp in her article, including one featuring High Heron (figure 56).

On initial viewing, this small photograph of the performer in front of a

tipi might lead the viewer to think the photographer had been inspired by her encounter with these models to return to the West. But details proving this supposition wrong emerge with the second glance. The lush greenery framing the scene does not does not describe a western landscape, but an eastern one. The background on the photograph includes more than leafy trees; to the right of the tipi the blurry images of European Americans can be made out. They are looking at High Heron, mirroring the viewer's gaze, reinforcing the idea that he is on display. The photograph is not taken during the *Wild West* show, but nevertheless, High Heron is performing. His tipi "home" is just another part of the entertainment. As was typical of the *Wild West* shows, audience members were encouraged to visit the Indian camp and get a glimpse of "authentic" primitive life before and after the stage show.

When touring with the performing company, Käsebier's Indian models were always conspicuous, always on display; and their behavior was always evaluated against a popular stereotype of Indianness.[77] And it is on the Native American models' self-consciousness of their participation in European American fantasies of Indian life that my argument turns. The very question of whether photographs capture the true personality of a sitter links these late twentieth-century critics to an investment in "authenticity" every bit as problematic as the primitivization of Indian models. Rather than trying to find out the "truth" behind the photographs, I find it more productive to look at the images as representations constructed by both the photographer and her models.

Many of these models were professional performers who had been part of Buffalo Bill's troupe for many years before meeting Käsebier, and their appearance in Käsebier's photographs builds on their self-consciousness of non-Indian audience's expectations. Luther Standing Bear, a member of the Wild West Company in the early 1900s, recalled that Indian performers experimented with different roles while on the road, playing Indians of four different tribes and sometimes playing the part of a cowboy for an enjoyable change.[78] Moreover, he suggests that only the most talented and experienced performers were chosen for the troupe. While performing work was underpaid and many aspects of it were experienced as degrading, Standing Bear's memoirs suggest that the performers enjoyed the opportunity to meet people and win them over. The letters sent to Käsebier and reprinted

in "Some Indian Portraits" reinforce this impression. Whether or not they truly saw Käsebier and the other women they met on the road as "friends," the correspondents clearly saw something to be gained by writing to Käsebier and by visiting with her when they were in New York. I would argue that these performers had a sophisticated, and playful, approach to the roles they were asked to play, whether it was "artist," "dandy," or "savage," an interpretation that makes reading the expressions of White Wolf and Philip Standing Soldier more complicated (see figures 54 and 55).

While Käsebier clearly had more economic and social power than her models, she also needed to negotiate her own aspirations within society's standards of appropriate female behavior. Käsebier performs the female artist even as her models perform "Indianness." Her work and her lifestyle demonstrated her originality at a time when it was a leading determinant of an artist's merit. She sought out ways to achieve her professional and artistic ambitions, stretching but not compromising her reputation as a woman.

For both the artist and her models, identity limited their professional and personal opportunities. They belonged to groups whose behavior was deemed "authentic" only when it was disengaged from modernity. They responded to this situation by playing these roles with a self-consciousness that betrays a modern understanding of how to maximize their options. In their understanding of the fact that their identity was more of a performance than an expression of some "authentic" core, both Käsebier and her sitters demonstrated themselves to be "modern" artists. As Sarah Burns writes, "This dialectic—artists as actors who are acted upon, representing themselves and being represented—constituted the phenomenon of 'modernization': that process through which artists responded, reacted to, and were remodeled by new conditions of producing and marketing their work, and themselves, in a rapidly urbanizing and incorporating society in which mass culture, spectacle, commercialism, and consumerism were fast becoming common denominators of modern experience."[79] Moreover, in the playfulness with which they appear to have approached this fact, the maker and the subjects of "Some Indian Portraits" push the Indian craze in new directions, revealing its inability to banish marginalized artists from participating in modern life.

The article suggests the possibility of transculturation on several different levels. Käsebier borrows from patriarchal primitivism in order to negotiate

a role for herself as a modern artist. At the same time, her own experience of marginalization allowed her to avoid a total commitment to the myth of the authentic primitive Indian and present her models as performers playing roles. The models, in turn, demonstrate a familiarity with non-Indian expectations of their behavior and attempt to turn those expectations to their own advantage. As I will explore in the next chapter, the self-conscious appropriation of primitivism was a strategy Indian people adopted for political, as well as personal, ends.