Jeanette May's *Easy on the Eyes*: Photographs for a Female Audience

Master thesis – Daniëlle de Hoog

Contents

Introduction

For many the term Feminism is associated only with the first wave of the movement in the sixties, little do they realise it is still active and current. In art the first phase of feminism started around 1970 according to Laura Meyer, the goal was to improve the position of women both inside and outside the art world.[1] Feminists felt women were not well represented in the major museums, so they set up public demonstrations and petitions. Female art historians organized exhibitions to prove there were many great women artists in European and American history. To further enhance the visibility of female artists, women writers began to develop a body of feminist art history and theory.

What bound the feminist art movement together was a celebration of art by women and even more, these women felt they shared a common sexual identity and social experiences.[2] But within the movement there were different ideas on how to achieve a better position for women. Meyer distinguishes three major approaches.[3] Many female artists wanted to seize control over the female body in art from their male colleagues and existing stereotypes which were often demeaning. They used their own body in their work to show the strength and dignity of the female body and her sexuality. Other women artists wanted to express a female experience of culture and a related feminine aesthetic. For example the use of fabric and other media affiliated with female crafts and not considered high art. Lastly feminists believed they could improve the female case in art by working together and presenting solidarity among them.

The second phase of feminism took centre stage in the feminist art production and in feminist theory in the 1980s. This was a critical response to the earlier feminists, who were accused of promoting a stereotyped view of female identity.[4] This younger generation of feminists stressed the problems of representation itself, rather than trying to create a positive image of the female body. The visual image was thought of as a symbol system, like that of language. This means images assume meaning through use. And meaning in its turn is "structured according to a system of binary oppositions in which 'woman' for example, functions as the negative and opposite of 'man'".[5] Keywords usually associated with the

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[1] Meyer 2006, p. 317. Laura Meyer is an Art Historian and painter.
[2] Ibidem, p. 318.
[3] Idem.
[4] Ibidem, p. 319.
[5] Idem.

male-female binary, are for example "activity" and "strength" which are ascribed to men and their opposites "passivity" and "weakness" to women. The second phase feminists thought that only by analysing the production of meaning can this construction of binaries be deconstructed and deprived of power. This then enables the idea of women to be active and strong too. Feminists of the second phase also rejected the use of "female crafts", this would only strengthen the idea of the female social sphere as a separate one.

There also was a lot of criticism on the solidarity the first wave feminists promoted, there were women who did not feel part of this group; lesbian women, women with different cultural backgrounds, working-class women. These women were all being marginalised at first by white middleclass heterosexual feminists who believed to be speaking for all women. Second wave feminists wanted to emphasise the diversity among women and they thought of the notion "woman" as a flexible category, changing continually, "examined through her representations and ideological constructions within a male system".[6]

In the relatively short history of feminism one of the most discussed subjects is the gaze, more specifically the male gaze. This term reflects the idea that most well-known artists are male and their art often has a female subject, so we get a men's perspective on the female body. These artworks were intended for a male audience or as John Berger puts it already in 1972 "the 'ideal' spectator is always assumed to be male"[7] and a white heterosexual male at that. To change this feminists have been concerned with art made by women, but few seem occupied with art made for women.

Especially the subject of women looking at men appears to be underrepresented; which is exactly what I am interested in here. While looking for a case-study in this subject I remembered the photographs of Jeanette May. During my internship at A.I.R. Gallery in New York I saw her works and I had the privilege to meet her. Jeanette May is a New York-based artist who uses photography to examine representation.[8] Like the second wave feminists

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[6] Meyer 2006, p. 319. Linda Nochlin and Maura Reilly organized the exhibition *Global Feminisms* in 2007 at the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York. They wanted to show diversity among female artists so they included women artists from different continents. In the accompanying publication the curators of the exhibition stress the diversity among the artists, but at the same time most of these artists use the female body in their work so it can be questioned whether the intentions of Nochlin en Reilly were accomplished.

[7] Berger 2008 [1972], p. 64.

[8] www.jeanettemay.com.

May believes any representation of the female body remains problematic, even if artists are trying to change the stereotypes using their own body.[9] That's why she decided to go a different direction and try and reverse the male gaze.

Her series *Easy on the Eyes* consists of colour photographs of men in a staged setting (See Conspectus of the *Easy on the Eyes* Photographs, p. 51). The men are displayed in different capacities, sitting at a table, lying in the grass, or standing nude in a shower. Their gaze is averted, so the spectator can look at them without embarrassment. But the wandering eye of the viewer does not rest at the men, because they seem to be waiting for someone and details in the pictures seem to point at a female presence. The narrative gets more complicated by the fragments of literature accompanying the photographs.

All together these intricate artworks are, according to the artist, intended to be attractive for women[10], they encourage the spectator to look and imagine themselves in a narrative with the desirable subjects of the photographs. But how exactly does May address a female audience in the photographs of her *Easy on the Eyes* series?

To answer this question careful scrutiny of May's series is needed; which will happen in three steps. The first chapter will look into the genre of photography May chose for these works, based on the activity of the model. The question here is whether the models for these photographs are posing or acting. This might seem futile, but since this binary relates to movement, stillness, narrativity, and mainly the expectations of spectators, it discloses a discussion about the positioning of the genre of photography May uses in relation to different mediums and what this entails for May's work. The two most important authors that will be involved in this chapter are David Campany and Michael Fried, who wrote about posing, acting and photography and absorption versus theatricality respectively.

In the second chapter the infamous male gaze and its reverse the female gaze are subjected to investigation. This because May was well aware of Laura Mulvey's well-known theory on the male gaze and in her *Easy on the Eyes* she seems to oppose it.[11] Still a female gaze is not just a matter of inverting its male counterpart, it is more complicated as Suzanne Moore and Sarah Kent try to show; the representation of men has to fit into the sexual fantasies of women in a way they feel in control of their own sexuality.

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[9] Interview with artist by author, see appendix, p. 49.
[10] Idem.
[11] When May learned I was going to write my thesis on her *Easy on the Eyes* series, she advised me to read Mulvey's *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*.

The third and final chapter will focus on the combination of the textual and visual elements in May's work. May appropriated fragments of books written by women over the last two centuries and combined them with her photographs. Both the titles and captions guide the beholder in interpreting these artworks. Clive Scott provides the main source of information in analyzing the image-text collaboration. This chapter also pays attention to the series as a whole and the possibility of serial narrativity.

Narrativity is an important aspect of the discussion of May's work; therefore an explanation of its meaning might be in place. A narrative is a spoken or written account of connected events[12], as such it might seem impossible for a photograph to contain narrativity; since a photograph shows only a moment and no progression in storyline. But to narrativize something means to present or interpret in the form of a narrative.[13] In this last sense a beholder could create a narrative on her own, aided by a visual, textual or audible source. In this thesis narrativity will be understood as something a spectator can construct in her own mind, stimulated by photographs and texts.

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[12] This definition was taken from the online *Oxford Dictionary*, www.oxforddictionaries.com.
[13] Idem.

Chapter 1: Posing or acting

At first glance the photographs in the *Easy on the Eyes* series may seem snapshots taken at certain moments in the daily life of the men on view. The scenes are very recognizable because anybody can experience them at any given moment—shopping, raking the garden, hanging on the couch, sitting in a restaurant, waiting at the train platform etc. Nothing out of the ordinary, but there is more to Jeanette May's photographs. Upon closer examination it becomes clear that much attention has been paid to the composition, the lighting and the details in the photographs.

Every detail is significant for the unfolding of the narrative in these pictures. If we take May's photograph *Clare* (2008, fig. 1) for example we see a man sitting on the steps of a porch, brown leaves scattered everywhere, four carved pumpkins decorate the stairs, a fake crow on one of them and on the porch a stuffed sheep with collar and leash and a shepherd's crook leaning against a rocking chair. The indexical nature of this image means there was a moment in time where this scene was reality. The clothing of the man and the objects around him could be interpreted as symbols. The man wears a blouse, vest, pants, a hat, earrings and boots and he holds a small sword, the combination of which suggest the stereotypical image of the pirate. The pumpkins and scattered leaves give a clue as to why this man is dressed as a pirate – since he is not shown on a boat at sea – it might be Halloween. The stuffed sheep is an icon, since it refers to animated sheep and together with the pink and ribboned crook it indicates a shepherdess. Only this supposed shepherdess is not present and the demeanor of the man may suggest he is waiting for her.

The narrativity in these photographs seems contradictory to the medium, since photography can only produce a still image of a point in time whereas narration is associated with movement and duration. This paradox extends to the required activity of the model[14]; posing is associated with standing still in a particular posture to be photographed, painted or drawn; acting on the other hand is affiliated with a time based performance of a fictional role in a play, film or on television.[15] In order to clarify these apparent discrepancies in May's photographs the following question needs to be answered: are the male models in Jeanette May's *Easy on the Eyes* photographs posing or acting?

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[14] The use of the word model in this thesis indicates a person employed by an artist, not necessarily a professional model.

[15] Campany 2006, p. 98. David Campany is a writer, curator and artist, with a Phd in photography.

David Campany wrote an article on the posing/acting binary in photography, which provides several aspects that will help answer this question. Being conducive not only for solving the posing/acting paradox, but also explaining what this means for May's photographs, Campany's theory will be the thread of this chapter.

Campany's understanding of posing and acting will be explained in the first section, applied immediately to May's photographs. The second part will discuss Roland Barthes' theory of the inclination people have to pose in front of a camera, the pose the camera imposes on its subject and the relation to May's work. Then we will look into some perspectives on the narrative photograph offered by Michael Fried and Campany. The significance of narrativity for the activity of the model and its involvement in May's photographs will also be examined in this third section. The next part will look into absorption and theatricality, or in other words the extent to which May's photographs and models show awareness of an audience. Fried will be the main source here. Subject of the final section will be the narrative tableau as an intersection between painting and cinema, a comparison with Cindy Sherman will show if May's photographs could be counted as narrative tableaus.

1.1 The difference between posing and acting according to Campany

In his essay 'Posing, Acting, Photography' [2006] Campany showed it is getting more and more difficult to differentiate between different mediums in art. He asserts that technological progress obscures the distinctive uses of media, producing composites, and increasing their diffusion.[16] These hybrids are significant in the understanding of images by makers and beholders. To underpin his statement Campany takes the still image or staged photograph as a case study using the posing/acting binary.

Campany's explanations of posing as stillness and acting as something time-based are associated with different media; stillness is a characteristic of photography and painting and examples of time-based media are theatre and cinema.[17] Though Campany straight away shows the blurring of the boundaries between posing and acting already starts in cinema, with the close-up. The close-up is a still moment in film where the actor has to pose more

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[16] Campany 2006, p. 98.
[17] Idem.

than act.[18] The attention of the spectator shifts from the narrative to the person on screen. Recognition of the actor lead to the emergence of the star-persona, the actor not only plays a role but also himself.

To lose this artificiality – here it seems Campany considers both posing and acting to be artificial – some directors chose to not work with professional actors.[19] The people they chose instead had to perform an action over and over until they were no longer self-conscious in front of the camera. Their performance became automatic giving them blank mimicry.[20] This way of working may have an uncanny effect on the audience, distancing them from the familiar. In photography this could be translated to the narrative pose, which opens up "…a space from which to rethink social conventions and stereotypes".[21]

In her *Easy on the Eyes* series May worked with nonprofessional models, but she did not have them repeat the same action. She wants her audience to enjoy looking at her photographs, so estrangement does not fit her purpose.[22] Her use of nonprofessional models makes sure they are not being recognized, which would distract from the image itself to the 'star personality'. However, as with the close-up May wants the focus of the spectator to be on the men in her photographs. Yet May's photographs are not entirely comparable to the close-up because they are not intermissions in a storyline; they are independent images. The performance of her models is still, not time-based, which suggests they are posing.

1.2 Portrait or not?

Another aspect pointing in the direction of posing is May's use of the medium of photography; a medium which automatically poses its subjects, according to Roland Barthes.[23] In his *Camera Lucida* [1980] he states he automatically poses when aware of the camera. He is already making an image of himself before the camera does.[24] This transformation happens because he feels the "Photograph creates my body or mortifies it,

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[18] Campany 2006, p. 101.
[19] Idem.
[20] Ibidem, p. 103.
[21] Ibidem, p. 106.
[22] See appendix, p. 49.
[23] Roland Barthes (1915-1980) was a French literary theorist, philosopher and critic. He was influential in several fields of theory including structuralism, semiotics, existentialism, social-theory, Marxism and post-structuralism.
[24] Barthes 2010, p. 10.

according to its caprice".[25] Campany explains it like this: "When we pose we make ourselves into a frozen image. We make ourselves into a photograph, in anticipation of being photographed. More importantly, even if we do not pose, the camera will pose us, perhaps in an unexpected way."[26] What becomes clear here is that posing in front of the camera gives some control over the representation of the self, but the outcome is in the hands of the photographer. The photographer chooses the perspective, the framing and the moment of releasing the shutter. The resulting photograph will show the same posture as long as it exists.

Still Barthes goes deeper into the subject matter. He claims conscious posing should not get in the way of the self's individuality.[27] An image should be in accordance with the self, but the self is never in accordance with the image; it is subject to change whereas the image is not. The photograph creates the experience of the self as other, a distancing between consciousness and identity. A person being photographed will at the same time be who he thinks he is, the one he wants others to think he is, the one the photographer thinks he is and the one the photographer makes use of for his art. The photograph represents the moment this person feels he changes from being a subject to becoming an object. Barthes even goes as far as to call it an experience of death. Therefore the photographer tries to get some liveliness in his subject, letting the model pose in different postures and at different locations.

Barthes is discussing portrait photography here; a genre of photography preoccupied with expressing the "inner" being of a sitter.[28] The sitter could be placed in a studio, implying its constructedness, or in "a context in which its life and day-to-day existence could be suggested and felt".[29] Analyzing May's photographs they seem to conform to the genre of the portrait; the context of the men appears to be part of their daily life, thus contributing to their personality or identity.

It is clear from May's process her models are aware of being photographed, they have been told they will be presented as objects of desire.[30] With Barthes' theory in mind we could imagine these males to pose automatically, to have some control over how they come

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[25] Barthes 2010, p. 11.
[26] Campany 2006, p. 107.
[27] Barthes 2010, p. 11.
[28] Clarke 1997, p. 101.
[29] Ibidem, p. 106.
[30] See appendix, p. 49.

to look in the photograph. During a photo shoot the model and photographer agree to try different postures to see what works best in the scene.[31] However in the end it is Jeanette May who has an idea in mind of how the scene should look and it is her who makes the determining decisions on location, posture, facial expressions, lighting, etc. In order to make these men desirable for the spectator May needs them to look animated, her way of accomplishing this is putting them in familiar situations and postures.

Thus understanding the *Easy on the Eyes* photographs as portraits would make one think the models are posing.

1.3 Narrativity

Narrativity plays a dual role in the May's photographs which compromises any classification of these photographs as portraits and the conclusions drawn so far and. On the one hand it gives a natural animosity to the models, their posing serves a purpose. On the other hand it makes the action of posing of the models questionable, they are not only representing themselves in the photographs, they are acting a part. Though May for one stays very close to the personalities of her models.

Narrativity could be described as a representation of succeeding events, which is usually associated with time-based mediums like theater and cinema, which in turn requires their characters to act. Since photography could be considered a still medium showing only one moment in time, it seems problematic to apply the term here. However Campany mentions the narrative photographic tableau as a genre of photography that "conjures an imaginary dimension".[32] In other words an image could stimulate a narrative in the head of the spectator.

Still a relation between photography and cinema becomes apparent through narrativity. Although before the narrative tableau photographers aspired the 'decisive moment' in their work to distinguish photography from cinema. According to Campany in the 1950s photography was seen as less of a medium than cinema, technically and culturally: "Photography was being used to serve and mimic cinema".[33] That is to say it was used for promotional purposes.

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[31] See appendix, p. 49.
[32] Campany 2006, p. 101.
[33] Ibidem, p. 100.

Even so in the second half of the 1970s there was a noticeable development within photography towards the narrative tableau, started by artists like Cindy Sherman and Jeff Wall. They were more and more dissatisfied with the so called realism and authenticity of photography and began experimenting with their own artificial world.[34] Sherman and Wall expanded the "pretty narrow repertoire of human expression and behaviour in art photographs"[35] and paved the way for artists like Gregory Crewdson, Tom Hunter and Jeanette May.

The French philosopher Denis Diderot (1713-1784) was the first to coin the term tableau, which he used for a composition of figures in theater able to stir its audience.[36] In his *Absorption and Theatricality* [1980] Michael Fried[37] mentions Diderot's advice to playwrights, which is; "…to seek what he called *tableaux* (visually satisfying, essentially silent, seemingly accidental groupings of figures), which if properly managed […] were capable of moving an audience to the depths of its collective being. The spectator in the theater […] ought to be thought of as before a canvas, on which a series of such *tableaux* follow one another as if by magic."[38]

In other words a tableau is a composed but seemingly natural scene, able to stir something with its audience. One could think of the Tableaux vivant – translated literally as living picture – which came up in the eighteenth century[39]; it was a form of theater where people would enact a scene of a painting, silent and motionless. Campany's focus however is on photography and he believes these images to have narrativity to them. He defines the narrative tableau as an artificial structure, on the edge of naturalism; a collection of things which at first sight seem to form a coherent whole, but on closer examination every part contributes to an assemblage of meanings.[40]

When Jeanette May was working on her *Easy on the Eyes* series, she had an idea of what a particular scene should look like and then went to search for the right place, objects

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[34] Genocchio 2005,
http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E07E7D91038F930A15752C0A9639C8B63. Benjamin Genocchio (1969-…) is editor in chief of artnet News, former art critic for the New York Times.
[35] Campany 2006, p. 100.
[36] See http://www.britannica.com/biography/Denis-Diderot. And Fried 1980, p. 78.
[37] Michael Fried (1939-…) is an Art Historian and Humanities scholar, as well as art critic for contemporary art and author.
[38] Fried 1980, p. 78.
[39] Idem.
[40] Campany 2006, p. 101.

and men.[41] She then carefully composed the scene, every little detail she put in its place to help tell the story of the photo. As for the men, they received clear instructions on where and how to sit, stand or lie down, where to look and what expression to have, with little room for improvisation. So every aspect of the photo was controlled by the artist, even though at first sight the images seem like shots taken from everyday life.

Take May's photo *Amy* (2009, fig. 2) for example, on first approaching it we seem to look in on a game of strip poker, where the opponent of the man in the scene seems to have stepped into another room for a minute. A sharp observer may see however that the man in this image dominates the space of the photo, like he has been put on display. The audience gets a good look of his well-lit body, which is subtly emphasized by his surroundings. The lines of the rug and table(cloth) point towards the man's torso and head, the last of which is being framed by curtains, the edge of the table and the upper edge of the photo. No matter where the spectator starts looking at his body, the model's posture guides the look up and down his body. The empty chair on the right is put in the same angle – with respect to the picture plane – as his own chair so as to face him.

The clothing on the floor and chairs seems to belong to the male character and an absent female. She stepped out, maybe to go to the toilet or get more beer or a snack, leaving him with only one piece of clothing on his body. These interpretations of what is happening in the photograph are just a few out of many possible readings. Point is it is an artificial construction which May employed to make the man the subject of the photo, of the narrative, every part in the photograph contributes to this. Because it is not a moment out of the male models real life, he is acting a part.

Even though the appearance of the photographs in the *Easy on the* Eyes series seems natural at first, they are very much composed. All the details collaborate to form a narrative, with the purpose of stirring something with the spectator. For the models this creation of a diegetic world means they are required to act.

1.4 Absorption and theatricality
As has already become clear May composed her photographs in such a way as to offer her audience an unobstructed view on the men in them.[42] She wants the beholder to subject

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[41] See appendix, p. 49.
[42] Idem.

these men to their fantasies. Therefore she composed her scenes in such a way to display them towards the spectator. But it does not stop at catering towards the beholder; the implied but unseen woman is a technique to make the viewer part of the narrative. The men are waiting for their female counterpart and the set-up of the scene makes you feel you are her. Thus the viewer is indispensable from the narrative. At the same time the male model does not seem to be aware of having an audience looking at him, which could make the spectator feel shut out. These two opposing motives in May's work could be related to the model's (not) acting.

Fried describes the opinion of Diderot on a painting's acknowledging of the spectator, which he thinks is theatrical.[43] In Diderot's vision this was equal to falseness because it is "… an artificial construction in which persuasiveness was sacrificed and dramatic illusion vitiated in the attempt to impress the beholder and solicit his applause".[44] Any consciousness of being watched stops action and destroys the subject. Emotions become insincere, or an act, if an actor is aware of an audience, it means they are just for show and it testifies to a desire to play to the public.[45] Instead an artist would get more admiration if the characters in a painting seem to not be aware of being looked at; they should be absorbed in an activity for then they behave more natural.

According to Fried absorption is "the state or condition of rapt attention, of being completely occupied or engrossed … in what he or she is doing, hearing, thinking, feeling".[46] Fried saw this motive already in 16th century painting and analyzed a number of paintings with minor figures who are in his opinion absorbed. In his theory absorption needs a focus and this requires consciousness, but unconsciousness and forgetfulness for everything other than the object of the absorption. Objects could contribute to this state of being in the subject by their association or function (a book for example). Fried saw the painter Jean-Baptiste Siméon Chardin (1699-1779) as a master in this theme, he was the first to really make absorption the subject-matter of his paintings and he naturalized it by putting his characters in an everyday environment.[47] He created the illusion that the absorption has duration, looking at his paintings a spectator can feel the subjects could stop their activity

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[43] Fried 1980, 95.
[44] Ibidem, p. 100.
[45] Ibidem, p. 97-98.
[46] Ibidem, p. 10.
[47] Ibidem, p. 45-46.

and start something different any minute. Absorption is a technique which gives the spectator a chance to watch without restraint.

Going back to May's photographs the term absorption could be used for the state of the men in them. Like many of Chardin's paintings, May took a single figure fully engrossed in an activity as her subject and placed him in an everyday surrounding (See the Conspectus of the *Easy on the Eyes* Photographs, p. 51). Though the absorption is not the subject of her work – as with Chardin –, May uses it as a technique to accomplish a tension between presence and absence. The subjects of these photographs appear to be absorbed in waiting, waiting for someone we have already established to be a woman. In every example of absorption Fried discusses, the object of the intense focus of the characters can be found in the picture plane, whereas with May it's only suggested (the absent woman). But a spectator can imagine the next moment from her photographs, when this woman – with some fantasy she could imagine herself being this woman – walks in and continues the narrative between male and female. Seemingly unaware of an audience the man's absorption enables the imagination of the spectator even more.

In Fried's explanation the terms absorption and theatricality have opposing definitions, the first signifying complete engrossment in an activity without being aware of the presence of a spectator, the second meaning being conscious of having an audience and catering towards it. How then is it possible May was able to incorporate both into her photographs to make them convincing? In Campany's opinion a photograph could unite the two. He arguments photography is a good medium to capture someone without that person knowing it (though he admits with a close-up that might be a little harder, but it is not impossible). Theatricality on the other hand would be created by the very act of photographing itself; "the posing of the scene *as* a scene by the camera"[48]. Which would mean when making a photograph of someone who is not aware of the camera, the theatricality is not in this subject (not) acknowledging the public, but in the compositional choices made by the photographer. Campany's explanation also resonates in a later book by Michael Fried; *Why Photography matters as art as never before* [2008]. Here he discusses absorptive motives in Jeff Wall's photographs, which at the same time acknowledge what he calls their "to-be-seenness".[49]

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[48] Campany 2006, p. 110.
[49] Fried 2008, p. 43.

Another way to join absorption and theatricality, according to Campany, is simulating; "with the resulting image becoming a theatrical representation of absorption".[50] To do this the subject, knowing he is going to be photographed, will act as if he or she is not aware of the camera.

This last strategy is the one Jeanette May employed for her series *Easy on the Eyes*. When she goes out looking for models she explains her purpose, she tells the men the idea of the photographs, so these subjects know they will be photographed. Because they seem absorbed in the results, they have to be acting. The appearing absorption of the subject, together with the theatricality of the carefully composed scenes by the photographer are mutually dependent. May's goal of getting her audience to experience these photographs as a visual stimulation to fantasize about their sexual desires would not be reached without the absorption and theatricality binary.

1.5 Painting versus cinema

Reverting to *Absorption and Theatricality* it is clear Fried used the term tableau to discuss paintings, a medium which would require a model to pose for the painter.[51] He writes: "… the *tableau*, the […] self-sufficient picture that could be taken in at a glance…"[52] So all the elements needed in order to understand the meaning and be moved by it, are present in a single image. Fried's description can also be applied to the photographic translations of the tableau. In each of May's photographs we immediately recognize the situation and when we examine them more closely we come to uncover a narrative and a meaning.

Because painting is not expected to give an objective view of reality, a painter has full freedom in what he paints, the worlds he creates on a flat surface. Maybe it is no coincidence that Cindy Sherman (1954) started out as a painter[53] and later turned to photography, keeping the desire to be free in creating her own worlds. Cinema provided her with the method to do this, as will become clear later on. The resulting narrative tableaus hover on the crossroad between painting and cinema; making the question of posing and/or acting problematic.

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[50] Campany 2006, p. 110.
[51] There are painters who chose to work without models, instead using photographs to copy, but the focus here is on the activity of a model. A painter would require the model to hold a pose for some time so he/she can observe the original and translate it on to the canvas.
[52] Fried 1980, p. 89.
[53] See http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/540087/Cindy-Sherman.

Cindy Sherman has been very influential in the genre of the narrative tableau and like May she participates in gender discussions, therefore a comparison between the two artists could provide interesting insights. With her *Untitled film stills* Sherman questions the stereotypical representations of femininity in Hollywood cinema using herself as a model.[54] Take Sherman's *Untitled #3* (1977, fig. 16) for instance; it is a close up of a woman leaning against a kitchen counter crowded with cooking and cleaning utensils. She wears an apron and a sleeveless shirt, tight enough to show her breasts. Sherman shows how tempting it is to believe myth, but she questions it at the same time.[55] With her employment of photography, a medium which largely partook in the creation of stereotypes, she addresses the audience of popular culture. She uses different techniques and methods so people will recognize visual styles and types of femininity, which suits Sherman's purpose.[56]

May is also concerned with gender in her *Easy on the Eyes* series, but in a different way. She – among others – feels it is more "progressive to reverse the gaze and stop looking at women"[57]. Producing an image of women without them being objectified is still very difficult.[58] For this reason May has chosen to use male models and address a female beholder. In her *Lélia* (2010, fig. 3) a man is also standing in a kitchen, buttoning up his shirt. He faces the spectator, showing a fraction of naked torso, his gaze on something outside the frame. Instead of questioning a stereotype[59] May stimulates the spectator to look at this man, for he is put on display not engaging in kitchen activities. Contrary to Sherman May's technique is very constant throughout her series in order to show her subjects optimally.

Jeanette May was also a painter at first, until she took a photography class in art school and fell in love with the medium.[60] Even though May does not seem to have a history or interest in film, her method of photographing is very cinematic. These three mediums – painting and photography on the one hand and film on the other – appear very contradictory. The experience of film always has duration and leaves no physical object behind; it needs actors who can empathize with a fictive character to keep the narrative going. Whereas both painting and photography can produce a tactile image (with the

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[54] Krauss 1993, p. 17.
[55] Ibidem, p. 32.
[56] Ibidem, p. 28.
[57] See appendix, p. 49.
[58] Owens 1992, p. 180.
[59] By showing a man in a kitchen for once.
[60] See appendix, p. 49 .

exception of projected digital photography), which does not show movement and which can be taken in at a glance.

Despite these oppositions artists like Sherman and May chose for a narrative approach to photography; an approach they adapted from cinema and which originated in literature and theater, where a fictional world is created in which professional performers represent a character. Even though it might not be clear at first the artificiality in May's *Easy on the* Eyes series is related to cinema.

In Cindy Sherman's *Untitled Film Stills* this connection to film might be more apparent. In the photographs of this series and their titles Sherman refers to the film still, which Rosalind Krauss defines as an "image taken from real film".[61] Campany however distinguishes two types of film stills, namely: a single frame taken from the moving film (twenty four of those frames make one second of film); and a photograph taken by a stills photographer on set, which requires the actors to repeat a scene in a slightly modified – more posed – way, so the narrative can be extracted from one image (this type is close to the narrative tableau).[62]

Sherman controls every part of her work, she is concurrently director, photographer and model. As a model she dresses up in a range of styles of stereotypical Hollywood or New Wave heroines.[63] As a director and photographer she uses the style and technique of *film noir*. Sherman's photographs look like scenes from a film, which some beholders believe to recognize from films they have seen. Krauss makes clear this is misrecognition, because: "The condition of Sherman's work in the Film Stills – and part of their point, we could say – is the simulacral nature of what they contain, the condition of being a copy *without* an original."[64] In short Sherman's photographs are not film stills, but they refer to both definitions according to Campany.[65] They allude to actresses acting conventional roles, while also posing for the (stills) camera. Sherman is posing for her own photographs in a way that seems like she is acting in a film.

This ambiguity can to a lesser extent be found in the photographic tableaus May. Her models are not professionals (as Sherman might be considered because of her many

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[61] Krauss 1993, p. 20. Rosalind Krauss (1940-...) is an art historian, art critic and author.
[62] Campany 2006, p. 107.
[63] Krauss 1993, p. 17.
[64] Idem.
[65] Campany 2006, p. 107.

experiences of being her own model), but people picked up on the street, in a bar, etc., for their appearance.[66] They are not being photographed as themselves or in their own environment; they are taking on a role, in familiar situations and the part does not differ too much from their own personalities. May prepared her models for the photo shoot by telling them they were going to be the subject, "an object of desire" for a female audience.[67] She also disclosed the narrative and the implied woman to them. Even though May's models did not have to put on a time-based performance representing a fictional character, with the information she gave them and the recognizability of the situation they could empathize with the man in the narrative.

As an intersection between painting and cinema, the photographic narrative tableau requires its models to do neither or both posing and acting.

The answer to the question if the men in Jeanette May's *Easy on the Eyes* series are posing or acting still hasn't been rendered clear. Various ways of looking at these photographs provide different answers. Following Campany's simple explanation of posing as stillness and acting as something time-based, we would conclude the models in these photographs are posing. Besides which both Barthes and Campany are convinced people will automatically pose as soon as they are aware of the camera, because they want to control what they will look like in the photograph. At the same time the camera poses everything in front of it, with the photographer deciding on what and how.

But, as has hopefully become clear, narrativity adds a dimension to the photograph which means the models have to act and empathize with the characters. Artists like Cindy Sherman and Jeanette May are using a cinematic way of working to create their narrative tableaus. Their models did not have to put up a time based performance, but because they were not being photographed as themselves they had to act. They had to act being absorbed, not being aware of the camera and the spectators looking at the resulting photograph. At the same time the photographer arranged everything so the pictures cater to an audience, thereby adding theatricality to the images.

As narrative tableaus May's photographs are hybrids on the intersection between painting and cinema, obscuring the boundaries between these different mediums. For the

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[66] See appendix, p. 49 .
[67] Idem.

models this means they are neither acting nor posing or they might be doing both, their activity might be a crossing between the two. In light of this the posing/acting binary might need to be redefined or it might be good to think of a new term to describe the activity in the grey area between posing and acting.

There is a dimension to the acting part of the binary which so far has not come to the fore, which is gender. In psychoanalytical theories on cinema men were regarded as the active characters who kept the narrative going, whereas women were the subject of close-ups, which were an intermission in the storyline and only required posing. The next chapter will intercommunicate more on this subject.

Chapter 2: The Male Subject as Object of the Female Spectator

Jeanette May chose to use men as the subjects for her photographs in *Easy on the Eyes*. She is interested in a reversal of roles between the sexes, the women actively looking and the men as object of female desires.[68] May tries to establish a female gaze with these photographs, which is more complicated than plainly inverting the male gaze because of the contextualizing social structures. In the dominant patriarchal culture different characteristics have been associated with male and female, leading to certain stereotypes in favor of men.

Several scholars have concerned themselves with the gaze, argumenting it entails more than simply a harmless type of looking. The word gaze essentially constitutes a steady and intense look.[69] According to Margaret Olin gazing requires knowledge and pleasure placed in the service of power, manipulation and desire.[70] When gender is added to the discussion of the gaze the general consensus is, according to Laura Mulvey, men are actively looking and women are the objects of their gaze.[71]

With his 1972 book *Ways of Seeing*[72] John Berger was one of the first to recognize how media culture influenced gender politics and the woman as object. He feels the presence of women is different than the presence of men.[73] The man's presence depends upon the promise of power he has on others. Whereas for a woman it is important how other people see her which determines her presence and her expression of her own attitude towards herself. Berger goes on to say that men act and women appear, men look and women watch themselves being looked at, she turns herself into an object. Finally Berger establishes the unequal relation between men and women to be deeply embedded in culture at the moment of writing his book; structuring the consciousness of many women.[74]

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[68] See appendix, p. 49.
[69] See www.oxforddictionaries.com.
[70] Olin 2003, p. 319. Margaret Olin is an Art Historian and critic.
[71] Mulvey 1999 [1975], p. 837. Laura Mulvey is a Feminist film theorist. Her main interests are aesthetics of stillness and the moving image, the 'new woman' and cinema.
[72] *Ways of Seeing* started out as a four episode television series which was later written down in book form. It offered a critique of Western cultural aesthetics, examining the dominance of visual culture in society and the creation and spreading of ideologies. The book *Ways of Seeing* became popular as an introduction to art, offering a different approach than the formality of standard surveys. John Berger (1926) is a Marxist literary critic and Art Historian.
[73] Berger 2008 [1972], p. 46.
[74] Ibidem, p. 63.

May tries to change this situation in the *Easy on the Eyes* series. She had a female audience in mind, heterosexual women who enjoy looking at the beautiful men she made subject of her photographs.[75] The title of the series reflects this goal and also hints at a relation between the spectator and the subjects of the photographs. It gives the beholder the feeling they are allowed to look at the men and they may even enjoy the looking. Which means the female beholder must feel comfortable to gaze at these men without embarrassment. What is more, the title gives an idea of the type of men in the photographs; they are easy to look at. What kind of visual representation of men would be easy to look at? How does Jeanette May represent men as objects of desire to a female spectator and allow for a female gaze?

This chapter is going to examine the power relations in the gaze and the possibility of attractive representations of men for a female audience, starting with a section on the relevance of Laura Mulvey's theory on the male gaze to May's *Easy on the Eyes*. The second part will discuss Mulvey's acknowledgment of women in the audience and May's focus on female spectators. According to Mulvey digitalization changed the spectator/object relationship in cinema. The consequences and application of this theory on May's (digital) photographs will be subject of the third section. The next section will contain a comparison between mild homoerotic imagery, from which the female gaze developed according to Suzanne Moore and Sarah Kent, and May's works. The fifth part will consider Moore's observation of the change in representations of men and her 'New Man' and see if May's work adheres to this idea. The sixth section continues this subject with Kent's examination of what kinds of representations of men are attractive to women and the application of this theory to the *Easy on the Eyes* series.

2.1 The Male gaze

To comprehend the gender dimension surrounding the gaze and May's photographs it is worthwhile to start with Laura Mulvey's understanding of the male gaze. In 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' [1975] Mulvey analyzes film spectatorship using psychoanalytic theories (taken mostly from Freud and Lacan). Cinema offers the pleasure of looking – scopophilia –, which Freud associated with the objectification of other people, "subjecting

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[75] See appendix, p. 49.

them to a controlling and curious gaze".[76] On the other hand Mulvey recognizes a narcissistic tendency in scopophilia, based on the identification with the characters on screen: "The first, scopophilic, arises from pleasure in using another person as an object of sexual stimulation through sight. The second, developed through narcissism and the constitution of the ego, comes from identification with the image seen."[77]

In other words the first demands distance between the erotic identity of the spectator and the objectified character and the second implies identification of the viewer's ego with the object of his fascination and recognition. According to Mulvey this paradox is overcome by desire.[78] She believes sexual imbalance is structuring the world, dividing the look in active/male and passive/female. The male gaze projects its fantasies onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. Women are at the same time being looked at and displayed. The female figure holds the look and plays into male desire. The presence of a female in film is an element of indispensable spectacle, but her visual presence works against the development of the narrative, breaking action down into moments of erotic contemplation. She is important in so far as she means something to the hero.

The difference between male and female controls the narrative structure. Mulvey explains "according to the principles of the ruling ideology and the psychical structures that back it up, the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification".[79] Men reluctantly watch objectified males. Hence the role of a male character is active and forwarding the story, controlling the film fantasy. As such he bears the look of the spectator, transferring it behind the screen to neutralize the extra-diegetic tendencies represented by woman as spectacle.

The spectator identifies with the male protagonist and projects his look on his likeness, his on screen replacement. The power of the male figure as he controls the events coincides with the active power of the erotic gaze, both give a satisfactory feeling of omnipotence. The male figure is free to control the spatial illusion where he articulates the look and creates action. The spectator can possess the objectified woman in the narrative through identification with the male protagonist.

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[76] Mulvey 1999, p. 835.
[77] Ibidem, pp. 836-837.
[78] Ibidem, p. 837.
[79] Ibidem, p. 838.

Mulvey's theory could be criticized for its negation of the presence of a female perspective in the cinema audience. And so it stimulated scholars to examine this female perspective. For instance Lorraine Gamman and Margareth Marshment compiled a book entitled *The female gaze*, where they theorized about women looking at existing visual representations of women, the woman as main character in literature and film and women looking at representations of men.[80] Several artists, Jeanette May among them, tried to challenge Mulvey's text by creating art for a female audience. Their point is not to negate the presence of men among the spectators (May for one is well aware of a possible male spectator[81]), but to produce artworks which are attractive for women.

In May's photographs there is both a male and a female protagonist, though with Mulvey's theory in mind they seem to have reversed roles. The male body is on display, whereas the woman cannot even be seen. She has not been visualized; however clues of her nearby presence have, seemingly putting her in control of a narrative.[82] The switching of roles becomes even more apparent when the spectator realizes she might be looking at the men in the photographs from the perspective of the absent woman. Thus the men are object of the gaze and women are actively looking.

2.2 Women as spectators

In her 1981 text 'Afterthoughts on "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" inspired by Duel in the Sun' Mulvey responded to the criticism of not taking women in the audience into account: "The in-built patterns of pleasure and identification seemed to impose masculinity as 'point of view'; a point of view which is also manifest in the general use of the masculine third person."[83] Which means female spectators could also get fascinated by the pleasure offered by cinema, even though the given perspective might be male.

Again Mulvey turned to Freud, this time for his definitions of femininity. He believes that women strive for masculinity before the development of femininity sets in, after which women experience moments of masculinity. Then Freud comes to discuss the libido, which performs a masculine as well as a feminine function; Mulvey criticizes him for either

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[80] The Female Gaze 1989. Gamman is a professor in Product and Spatial Design, she specialized in Women's Studies, focussing on film and cultural studies. Marshment is a lecturer in Media and Cultural Studies.
[81] See appendix, p. 49.
[82] If we assume that a narrative can start in a single image and continue in the mind of the spectator.
[83] Mulvey 2004, p. 68.

opposing masculine and feminine or seeing them as similar instead of considering them different. She feels the definition of femininity as opposing or similar to masculinity leaves women shifting between the metaphoric 'active' and 'passive'. The correct demeanor of women is considered to be passive. But cinema offers identification with an active point of view, allowing women to rediscover this part of their sexuality.

The conventional division between men and women in cinema assures identification of the spectator with the hero. The female spectator has learned to adapt to this male perspective because of an age-old cultural tradition. Thus Mulvey stands by her argument in 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', with the difference that she now acknowledges there are female spectators who are bound to cultural tradition and have adjusted to a male perspective.

In May's photographs the opposite seems to happen: her intended audience is female and she might even push potential male spectators into a female perspective.[84] This female viewpoint is created through the absent woman: she is not visible, but details in the photographs point to her near presence. It is this motive of the absent woman which is the catalyst for a narrative. One could think that her perspective on the men coincides with the camera – and in extension also with the photographer, a woman as well –, impelling the viewer to identify with her and not with the man in the photograph.

In *Jane* (2009, fig. 4) for example a man stands in a room with all kinds of fabric stacked up in on shelves behind him, a mannequin shows a jacket and the man himself seems to straighten his tie. The scene appears to be in a store for the manufacture of male suits. On a chair next to the mannequin lie a woman's coat and bonnet and a purse leans against one of the chair's legs. The woman could have walked away to see the man in his (new) suit from some distance. The spectator also sees the man from a short stretch, which perspective could equal that of the absent woman.

By employing this strategy May disrupts the association of the active/passive binary with masculinity and femininity respectively. She does not just accept the cultural tradition that 'binds women'; instead she produced images to help change this limitation for women.

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[84] See appendix, p. 49.

2.3 Delayed cinema and the photograph

In 2006 Mulvey wrote the book *Death 24x a Second* in which she analyzes a change –
seemingly advantageous for women – in the relation between the spectator and the object
on screen with the coming of the digitalization of film. The spectator can now stop, rewind
and fast forward the film at any given moment, making it possible to "possess" the
heretofore fleeting images.[85] This both strengthens and weakens the idea of the male
looking and female "to-be-looked-at-ness". Mulvey calls this the feminization of the look:
the human body and detail in the film become more important and the narrative less,
undermining the control of the male character over the action in his diegetic world.[86]
Identification with him gets problematic, making the gaze of the spectator more significant:
"…the aesthetic pleasure of delayed cinema moves towards fetishistic scopophilia… The
'fetishistic spectator' becomes more fascinated by image than plot, returning compulsively
to privileged moments, investing emotion and 'visual pleasure' in any slight gesture a
particular look or exchange taking place on the screen."[87] Thus putting the spectator in a
position where he can objectify the female characters in films even more, "possessing" her
by stopping the film. Attention shifts from the narrative to the esthetic of the images in the
film. The stationary images are becoming tableaus containing drama and spectacle.[88]

  As we have seen in the previous chapter May's photographs could be described as
narrative tableaus, which type of photography relates to film stills. The coming of
digitalization in film, causing delayed cinema, seems to make this affiliation even closer. In
both delayed cinema and narrative tableaus the single image contains everything needed to
discern the situation in it at first glance. There is much attention for detail and the human
body. In the photographs of *Easy on the Eyes* the visual focus is on the male body. The male
protagonist is not at all in control of action here, making identification with him difficult. He
is solely an object of the spectator's fetishistic gaze, a position long reserved for women.

  With this explanantion the narrativity in May's photographs might seem subordinate
to their aesthetic, for the men in them are meant to be looked at unrestrictedly. However
the narrativity in these works is significant, evoked by the reverences to the absent female,
stimulating the spectator to gaze at the men from her position. Narrativity is a characteristic

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[85] Mulvey 2006, p. 161.
[86] Ibidem, p. 165.
[87] Idem.
[88] Ibidem. P. 166.

which May's narrative tableaus share with film stills, but it is the spectator who is in control of it, be it in slightly different ways. With film the viewer can stop and choose the fragment he wants to see, making decisions on the order of events and creating a different storyline. With the photographic narrative tableaus, the narrative is entirely formed in the mind of the spectator aided by visual clues, making it unique.

The digitalization of cinema makes the comparison between film and the narrative tableau more logical and therefore the use of Mulvey's theory on the gaze more applicable, because it is not about the digitalization in itself, but about the consequences for spectatorship. However the technological development does not change her opinion on the male gaze, since she still considers the female character an object of the male gaze, be it more in control of the spectator.[89] And even though May's work conveys the impression of her being aware of Mulvey's theory, she opposes it rather than apply it in her photographs. She is trying to create a female gaze to counter Mulvey's male gaze.

However following Mulvey's earlier statement men cannot bear being objectified by a gaze in an ideology where 'masculinity' and 'active' are perpetually connected. As much as men derive pleasure from looking at women, according to Luce Irigaray the act of looking is not as overpowering with women.[90] Since it is the eye which objectifies, possesses, this objectification might not be interesting to women. In other words women might not draw pleasure from representations of men where they are being objectified.

2.4 Homoerotic images

Suzanne Moore[91] is convinced that the development of a female gaze had its roots in soft-core homoerotic images, which would not have been possible at all without gay and feminist politics.[92] These movements championed the idea that sexuality is socially constructed instead of natural and fixed. Moore quotes Rosalind Coward who feels that as long as the male body is not seen as desirable, men remain in control of desire and the active look.[93]

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[89] Mulvey 2006, pp. 167-169.
[90] Hans 1979, p. 49. Luce Irigaray studied psychoanalyst theory under Jacques Lacan. She is a philosopher, psychoanalyst, linguist and feminist.
[91] Suzanne Moore holds a PhD in Theories of Pleasure from Middlesex Polytechnic, is a lecturer in Cultural Studies, freelance journalist and author.
[92] Moore 1989, p. 45.
[93] Ibidem, p. 46.

This kind of male dominance is dependent on not wanting to see themselves as desirable, which causes insufficient representation of the male body and alienation of their own body. Later on men could be represented as attractive within a homoerotic discourse. The appeal to women of homoerotic images lies in the offered possibility of an active female gaze.[94]

The idea of a female perspective coming from homoerotic imagery is shared by Sarah Kent[95] who states: "The history books are peopled with erotic male nudes made by men for each other. Women are used to living vicariously – viewing their culture voyeuristically and translating its material, as best they can, to serve their own needs."[96] She analyzes examples all through history of artworks made by men for men; showing male nudes with either feminine faces and young bodies or their musculature and energy in an attempt to look masculine and dominant.[97] Both types of representation are limiting the responses towards them. In order to be free of this Kent argues: "The absence of a will or personality are key factors in imagined erotic pleasure. One's eye or hand is then free to wander over every detail of form and texture without self-consciousness, embarrassment or fear of ridicule."[98] Homoerotic imagery seems to offer this type of male representations. An example is the work of Robert Mapplethorpe, himself a homosexual he photographed a lot of male nudes. Arthur Danto describes his work as being pornographic in content but classical in aesthetic presentation.[99] He also mentions Mapplethorpe did not want to make voyeuristic photographs; he rather acted as a participating observant.[100] This way he had the trust of his models and could make very intimate images.

Both Mapplethorpe and May chose a male subject, but they show them in very different ways. A lot of Mapplethorpe's photographs seem to revolve around the aesthetic of nudity – partial or full body –, in contrast to May's carefully composed narrative scenes. Mapplethorpe's models are conscious of being looked at, challenging the spectator by showing off their muscles and large penises, whereas May's models seem to be unaware of the spectator, allowing the spectator to gaze unashamed.

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[94] Moore 1989, p. 53.
[95] Sarah Kent is an author on Visual Arts, curator and an art critic with a feminist stance.
[96] Kent 1985, p. 77.
[97] Ibidem, p. 80.
[98] Ibidem, p. 82.
[99] Danto 1996, p. 23. Arthur Danto was a philosopher, author and art critic. He played a big role in shaping recent esthetic theory.
[100] Ibidem, pp. 43 and 78.

Take for instance Mapplethorpe's *Bob Love* (1979, fig. 17): an image of a nude black man sitting on a pedestal covered in white cloth. He faces the viewer, legs apart, so his penis – which is in the center of the image – leans on the pedestal. Dramatic lighting creates chiaroscuro, estheticizing the body of the man. Among May's photographs there are four examples of (partial) nudity (see the Conspectus of the *Easy on the Eyes* Photographs, p. 51): *Carmen* (2009, fig. 5) is one of them. Here we see a man looking out from the shower towards an open door, thus looking away from the spectator. His posture is not confronting like the Mapplethorpe, he seems unaware of the viewer. There is no dramatic lighting to emphasize his torso and his penis is not the focal point of the photograph. In fact compared to *Bob Love* his penis seems small and unimportant for the understanding of this image.

Kent's opinion on Mapplethorpe's photographs is they are an example of male pride and as such they are dominating the possible female spectator. For her these nudes remain traditional "confirming rather than questioning the myth of masculine virility".[101] In general Kent holds homoerotic images as an advantage for women; even though these images were made for a male audience, women can experience pleasure in looking at them and indulge in their voyeurism.[102] Still they are no ideal expression of female sexual fantasy.

2.5 The New Man

Moore points out the lack of information on women looking at men, which is surprisingly also a lack in the book her text comes from, *The Female Gaze*.[103] Rebelling against Mulvey's male perspective in audiences, this book focusses on women looking at women. Moore's essay is the only one concerned with women looking at men. She feels it is important to consider women's pleasure as distinct from men's, but we must not see them as fixed outside social conditions.

Representations of men have long focused on strong, active males.[104] Moore asserts: "Explicitly sexual representations of men have always troubled dominant ideas of masculinity, because male power is so tied to looking rather than to being looked at."[105] To prevent imagery of men from becoming passive subjects all kinds of strategies are employed

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[101] Kent 1985, p. 86.
[102] Ibidem, p. 87.
[103] Moore 1989, p. 45. Other texts in *The Female Gaze* discuss women as protagonists in literature, film or television and women looking at women.
[104] Ibidem, p. 46.
[105] Ibidem, p. 53.

to suggest manliness and dominance. The disadvantage of this is that women don't feel attracted to these representations.

But Moore observes a change in the eighties when images do start to present men as desirable – to a male and female eye. Moore calls this type of male representation the 'New Man' and describes him as being "tough but tender, masculine but sensitive": "He is not afraid to be seen caring but mostly he cares about how he looks".[106] Visual representation of this New Man have a softer feel, moody lighting, emphasizing the fact that they are just images.[107] A distance is created in order to allow the fetishization of the image.

May's photographs don't seem to conform to this idea of a female gaze. May uses harsh lighting and the men have been placed in everyday scenes. She appears to imitate reality for the sake of recognizability. Instead of a distance the spectator gets involved in these images, because of the strategy of the absent woman. Details of the picture give clues of her existence; heels, purses, rose roses, a peignoir etc. These men are waiting for this woman, who is quite possibly their lover, and she appears to be in their near presence. The men are not the main characters in the narrative, the absent women are. Where could these females be? Are they just in the next room? Might they have gone to the bathroom to wash their hands or powder their nose? The man in *Mrs. DeWinter* (2009, fig. 6) seems to be looking for the author of the letter he holds in his hand. Maybe he has not met her yet. And the male figure in *Esther* (2008, fig. 7) seems to have been left behind by an angry woman, the flowers scattered across the floor. But we can only guess what happened because except for some props, the women are not visible. This leaves a gap to be filled by the female spectator, using her own fantasy; she could even feel like she is the one waited for. She then becomes the subject of the photographs, of the narrative in the images.

Moore's main point in her essay seems to be that this new type of male representation, where men can be seen as desirable, has permitted a more dynamic consideration of desire, "which allows fluid relations of activity and passivity across multiple identifications".[108] On the one hand they encourage women to be open and active sexually. On the other hand they have created the possibility for men to be more concerned with themselves and their looks,

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[106] Moore 1989, pp. 44-45.
[107] Ibidem, p. 54.
[108] Ibidem, p. 55.

which Moore describes as the "'coming out' of male narcissism".[109] In the end Moore questions if this is what women really want. She summarizes: "If a female gaze exists it does not simply replicate a monolithic and masculinized stare, but instead involves a whole variety of looks and glances – an interplay of possibilities."[110]

May's photographs do seem to create a lot of possibilities, mainly because they contain ingredients with which the spectator can start fantasizing about the male subjects. But overall May's work does not seem to conform to Moore's theory on the New Man.

2.6 Attractive representations of men for a female spectator

In her essay 'The Erotic Male Nude' [1985] Kent examines the possibility of women exploring their sexuality through fantasy.[111] She discusses why there were so little representations of men suited to satisfy female desire, which she thinks comes down to power relations: when an image was directed at women, her presence had to become part of the signification of the image.[112] The male model tried to uphold his independence and he wanted to control the reaction of his audience. So while it seemed the male model was displayed for female desire, he was actually maintaining a position of sexual dominance. The spectator then was reminded of the predominant notion that in the real world men were the ones to gaze.

This idea was kept in place in part because of stereotyped characteristics that are attributed to women (yielding, considerate, in need of approval, caring, compassionate and sensitive) and men (independent, aggressive, assertive, dominant and interested in sex).[113] The male model tried to preserve these characteristics and the female spectator faced the challenge of asserting her dominance over him by looking while keeping within the boundaries of what was considered acceptable female behavior, otherwise she would have been embarrassed.

According to Kent this could be identified in representations of male pin-ups by postures, which are also informed by social rules: "… the model is often set back in space as an assertion of 'otherness' and non-availability while affirming his indifference to the viewer's stare by looking past or through her, or gazing upwards as though lost in thought

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[109] Moore 1989, p. 58.
[110] Ibidem, p. 59.
[111] Kent 1985, p. 76.
[112] Ibidem, p. 87.
[113] Ibidem, p. 88.

[…] unaware of her presence."[114] Thus the female spectator not only appropriates the masculine right to gaze, but also looks in on a private moment.

May's photographs of the men in the *Easy on the Eyes* series are not close-ups. Most of them have been set back in the pictorial space, creating some degree of distance between them and the spectator. The recognisability of the scenes in May's work might diminish the distance – created by the models set-back position in the composition – between spectator and subject. The men have been put in carefully composed settings, though they seem like everyday places. Even the men seem like regular men we could come across at any time. In *Mrs. De Winter* (fig. 6) for instance we see a man standing on a subway platform, wearing jeans, a leather jacket and a blouse underneath. And in *Scarlett* (2008, fig. 8) a man in a suit and tie is sitting near a fitting room, a few shopping bags at his feet and a mannequin next to him indicate he is at a clothing store. Other photographs show men in and around homes, in a restaurant etc. None of the men seem aware of the spectator's gaze, they are absorbed, making the audience feel like voyeurists.

Dress, Kent argues, functions as an enhancement to the dignity and position of a man within social spheres.[115] In May's photographs the clothing of the men appears to put them in the middleclass of society, they are the kind of clothing the average man would wear (See Checklist of Photographs, p. 51). May wants these representations to appeal to her audience, which is why she might elude distancing by making these men look too rich or poor.[116]

Undressing a male model is difficult without relegating him to the ranks of savages and animals, according to Kent, whereas a woman's nudity is considered more natural.[117] She continues to explain that one way to display a nude man is to give his nudity a purpose within the narrative of the image. Most of the men in May's photographs are fully dressed, only a few show naked skin, but only when the situation makes it plausible. The male in *Amy* (fig. 3) seems to be losing a game of strip poker, there is a guy standing in the shower in *Carmen* (fig. 5) and in *Elizabeth* (2008, fig. 9) the subject lies completely naked on a bed waiting for someone to join him.

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[114] Kent 1985, p. 89.
[115] Ibidem, p. 90.
[116] See appendix, p. 49.
[117] Kent 1985, p. 90.

A man's surroundings, pose and clothing in representations all contribute to show his personality. Kent argues that women cannot ignore the personality of a male model because of the "yielding, considerate, sensitive to other's needs and approval seeking" characteristics ascribed to them.[118] That's why in order for them to "… act selfishly and without fear of ridicule or censure, his personhood (*the male model's*) must be eliminated. He must be transformed into an object that does not make judgements, has no independent desires and whose life beyond the present moment is held in abeyance."[119] These are the conditions Kent feels need to be met in visual representations of men in order for women to allow her fantasies to roam free.

The male models in the *Easy on the Eyes* series do appear to have a personality, judging by their clothing, posture and surroundings, though it might not be their real personality. May has made clear that she composes the scenes very carefully and finds the men to fit in it.[120] She controls every detail regarding setting, dress and posture. Thus the personality her models display has been constructed by the photographer, rendering their own personality neutral. With this constructed personality May helps her female audience to let go of any inhibitions and start fantasizing.

Ultimately May's strategy acknowledges characteristics attributed to women and gives them the opportunity to be in control of the look and their sexual fantasies at the same time: the men in May's photographs have not been put on display to show off their muscular bodies or their masculinity; their set-back positions in the picture plane creates distance which is overcome by the recognizability of the scene; their averted gaze offers no resistance, while maintaining their confidence; their personalities have not been omitted, but neutralized[121].

Mulvey starts out with her theory on the male gaze, but admits to there being women in the Hollywood cinema audience as well; even though she feels they have to adjust to the male perspective. Her analysis of the digitalization of film at first seems to create more equality between the on screen male and female character, only to come to the conclusion that the

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[118] Kent 1985, p. 92.
[119] Ibidem, p. 92.
[120] See appendix, p. 49.
[121] To neutralize here means to render something ineffective by applying an opposite force or effect (see www.oxforddictionaries.com), in May's case this happens when the constructed personality replaces the personality of the model.

spectator is entirely in control of the narrative, enhancing his fetishistic scopophilia. Thus Mulvey does not abandon her original theory, which is what May opposes with her male subject and female spectator.

Both Moore and Kent focus more on a female gaze, originating in homoerotic imagery, but they differ in their description of the types of images that allow a female gaze. Moore sees a sensitive man, who stimulates sexual fantasy with his female audience, though at the same time he is more interested in himself. Kent however argues that male representations should neutralize personality, in order for women to look freely within the accepted social standards. May's *Easy on the Eyes* series seems to conform to this idea entirely, creating nice examples of male representations suitable for female sexual desire.

Another aspect of May's artworks in this series are the textual fragments joining each photograph. They complicate the male-female relation in these narrative tableaus even more. This will be the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Narrativity: Word and Image

The narrativity of the photographs in the *Easy on the Eyes* series has already been discussed in chapter one in relation to the required activity of the model, acting or posing. It is quite difficult for a single image to contain a narrative, because we only have the information we see.[122] One way to achieve a more established narrative is making a series of images which would give more visual information than only one image. Another option is accompanying the image with language.

Jeanette May did both. She created several images with the same subject for her *Easy on the Eyes* series. Each work consisting of two parts: the photograph, which has been thoroughly examined already; and a text-fragment. May's intention was not to merely illustrate the texts with accompanying photographs, but she did want there to be some connection between word and image.[123] Thus both elements are part of the narrativity in these works.

May is not the first artist to join photography with text. Since the invention of photography the medium has been pared with text: photographers compiled books with their photographs and their own writings on the medium (Henry Fox Talbot's *The Pencil of Nature* [1844-1846]), others made illustrations for literary works (Julia Margaret Cameron's photographs for Lord Alfred Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* [1874]) and there is the 19th century invention of the postcard for example.[124] Today, in 2015, the synthesis of these two mediums is unavoidable; their presence is all around us in books, news items, advertising, propaganda, exhibition spaces, the internet etc.

In art the combination of photography and text caught on with the Dadaists in Berlin (1920-1930); artists like John Heartfield and Hannah Höch created photomontages. This method emphasized its construction with the attempt to put the spectator in a more self-conscious position regarding the production of meaning.[125] Another art movement which favored the photography-text alliance was Conceptualism; which centered on language, but together with photography artists could create complex narratives (Joseph Kosuth's *One and*

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[122] Scott 1999, p. 247.
[123] See appendix, p. 49.
[124] For more information on Talbot's book: https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/works-of-art/1994.197.1-.6, Cameron 1997 [1899], p. 50 and Brunet 2009, p. 93.
[125] Edwards 2004 (a), p. 419.

Three Chairs).[126] Photography was chosen for its possible employment as "artless or style-free document".[127] These developments inspired later artists to join photography and text.

In all of these examples meaning is established by the collaboration of the textual and visual components of each work. There is plenty of information on the topic of image and word combinations, though most of it is about books illuminated with images (Jefferson Hunter) or the difference between word and image (W.J.T. Mitchell). Few scholars have written on independent works of photography accompanied by text. One of them is Clive Scott, his book *The Spoken Image* will be the most important source of information in this chapter.[128] The focus of this chapter will be on narrativity and how that is established in May's work. Therefore the main question in this part will be: How does the combination of textual and visual elements contribute to the narrativity in Jeanette May's *Easy on the* Eyes series?

In the first part of this chapter Scott's theory on the indexical, iconic and symbolic translation of the photograph into words will be applied to May's photograph, because as he argues a photograph is never free of language. The next section will consider seriality with relation to narrativity, since *Easy on the Eyes* is a series. The third section examines the word-image binary and how they cooperate in May's work. Then the role of May's captions will be discussed and finally the titles of her series in general and of the singular photographs.

3.1 Levels of signification in the word-image relations in Easy on the Eyes

In his 1936 essay 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction' Walter Benjamin was among the first to feel that photography needed language to direct the spectator.[129] Victor Burgin arguments photography is never free of language; usually photographs are accompanied by verbal elements – titles, captions, larger texts – and even free of those they are still being read by the spectator.[130] Interpretation will always happen within the social conventions of language. In his book *The Spoken Image: Photography and Language* Scott

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[126] Edwards 2004 (b), p. 140.
[127] Ibidem, p. 137.
[128] Clive Scott is a scholar of Literature, Drama and Creative Writing. He is, among others, interested in photography and the relationship between literature and the visual arts.
[129] Benjamin 2008, pp. 14-15. Walter Benjamin was a philosopher and literary critic.
[130] Burgin 1982, pp. 143-144. Victor Burgin is an artist who works in different mediums, photography among them. He is also a published author.

asks the question why photography has this tendency adhere to language so much. His answer is: "They [photographs] refer too pointedly and yet do not know how to name what they refer to. … Photography tends to strengthen our assumption that something is worth looking at only if we already know what it is".[131] In other words a photograph is only a fragment of the world as it is at the moment of releasing the shutter and in order for a spectator – who has not been present at the time of the taking of the picture – to understand what he is looking at, he needs information. W.J.T. Mitchell is convinced recognition of an image cannot happen without language.[132] He tries to identify the difference between word and image, but it turns out to be not entirely possible. Both are part of an intricate system of signs, of which Charles Sanders Peirce identified three types[133].

Roland Barthes is convinced the photograph is an indexical sign, because it is dependent on a subject placed in front of the lens.[134] Language on the other hand is more symbolic, a set of social conventions in order to communicate from one person to another. Scott agrees with Barthes to a certain degree, but he goes further; he thinks the photograph is capable of being all three types of signs. Language is indispensable in explaining a photograph on these three levels. On the indexical level language would be a description of what is the image shows, which would be tautologous.[135] When the photograph starts circulating, spectators want to get a better understanding of what they see, language now needs to explain, direct the viewers' attention. This brings the photograph into the iconic. The short-lived and local now give way to something more generalized, inhabitable. The process of interpretation takes the photograph further and into the symbolic code, the code of language.[136] Scott argues: "…the more the visual becomes involved in the language system, the more it will be carried over into the symbolic, the more deeply it will be carried into the semantic…"[137]

This could be exemplified with a photograph of May's series, *Elizabeth* (fig. 9). Indexically, this photograph was taken by May on a day in 2008; her male subject lies on a

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[131] Scott 1999, p. 60.
[132] Mitchell 2003, p. 52.
[133] Peirce categorized signs in three types: the icon, which resembles its referent; the index, which bears association with its referent; and the symbol, which relates to its referent only by convention. See more on http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/534099/semiotics#ref10414.
[134] Barthes 2010, p. 76.
[135] Scott 1999, p. 35.
[136] Ibidem, p. 40.
[137] Idem.

bed. The man is naked, lying on his side, with his head slightly uplifted, his gaze towards something out of the frame on the right. A lamp on one of two side tables illuminates his face and upper body. On the ground at the side of the bed there is an opened suitcase filled with clothing articles and letters, lingerie hangs over de side, touching the floor and tights hang over de lit of the suitcase. A pair of heels fills the corner left by the bed and suitcase. On the level of the iconic this photograph shows a man whose gaze and uplifted posture suggest he is waiting for something. He is being framed by the diagonals of the bed. The spectator gets a good view on the subject and the suitcase beside the bed because of the downward and angled perspective. A fold in the bedsheets emphasizes legs and the lighting his torso. On to the symbolic questions start rising. Why is this man lying naked on a bed? Why is there a suitcase with seemingly women's clothing and letters on the floor? What is the object of his gaze? Scott makes clear the photograph cannot answer these kind of questions, but language can.[138] Interpretation of this image could be that this man is meeting with his pen-friend, a woman. They have written for some time (suggested by the presence of several letters in the suitcase) and now they finally meet, maybe for the first time. The lingerie lingering over the edge of the suitcase and the naked man suggest it is a sexual encounter.

Slowly a narrative starts unfolding. This seems to be what Scott is getting at; the narrativity of a photograph starts in the image but is continued by the spectator through his/her interpretation.

3.2 Serial narrative

Recapitulating; narrativity in a single photograph is dependent upon language. The visual is not capable of producing a large narrative on its own, because it is a record of just one moment in time. What happens before and after is not shown in that same image. The lack of duration is at the same time a specific characteristic of the medium of photography. Scott finds a paradox in this for he feels that narrative is essential for photography if we are to understand the purpose and intention from the images.[139] His theory on why single images fail to accommodate this indispensable narrativity is that the limited duration of time in a

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[138] Scott 1999, p. 41.
[139] Ibidem, p. 54.

single photograph minimizes the imagination or the suspension of disbelief.[140] Time is not the only factor here, also photography's access to symbolism: "Of course photographs may generate symbolic readings, but they will tend to do so only if their primary justification cannot be found at the indexical and iconic levels".[141] And so if the possible historical, legendary or literary topic of the photograph seems illustrative to the spectator, the indexical translation will suffice. There is no need for further interpretation, since the intentionality of the photograph is so weak.

Photographic solutions to this problem would be collage/montage or serial works.[142] It is this last option that is of interest in relation to May's work. The advantage of a series is that the succession of images allows for the telling of a story visually, though there has to be linearity in the sequence for it to be comprehensible. Each image can continue to show what happens after the last and thus together they can represent an event over time. But, as Scott observes, a series can neither enforce linearity nor narrative progression.[143] In his work Victor Burgin has been concerned with interpretation on the part of the spectator and with meaning accomplished between images, not limited in a singular image.[144] His *Gradiva* series is a case in point; there is not a set point of entry into the series and no linearity, but the images do have some relation to each other, allowing the spectator – with his own background – to establish an individual narrative. Therefore what must be considered is: a series is not necessarily a sequence. And the spectator might not be interpreting a narrative, but construct one.

May's series includes fifteen works of art, all with the same subject. Every photograph is composed to contain the same element; a man whose posture suggests he is waiting, items indicating a female presence in the vicinity and objects marking the location of the scene. In fact every photograph represents the same type of moment; the man has been together with a woman, who stepped out for a while and leaves the man waiting for her. From this it might already be clear there is no progression in a narrative created by all of these photographs together. Each image stands on its own, each with a different male subject in a different environment, but with the same motive. Thus *Easy on the Eyes* is a

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[140] Scott 1999, p. 240.
[141] Ibidem, p. 240.
[142] Idem.
[143] Ibidem, p. 307.
[144] Watney 2003, p. 113.

series, but it has no continuing storyline. Narrativity in the photographs of May's series is not created through seriality, but it is produced within the singular works. Still the collective of photographs might invigorate the motive in each individual image within the series.

3.3 Word and image

The visual aspects of *Easy on the Eyes* do not provide sufficient explanation for the narrativity of the photographs, consequently the verbal features have to be examined more closely. To put it in Jefferson Hunter's[145] words "…a photograph is always an object in a context, and the context is determined most obviously by the words next to the photograph".[146] Even more in Hunter's opinion photographs do not have control over the reactions they provoke; it is words that guide the spectator in her response. A photograph can provide proof to claims made by the accompanying text, but it can also ironically counter any argument made there[147].

Photographs can be used as illustration to provide evidence to the text, in this sense the photograph is subservient to the text. The ideal would be, according to Hunter, that both mediums are equal, because both are forms of self-expression and therefore perfectly complementary.[148] It would be even better if the affiliated text comments on the photograph, but only on what the image shows, not on how well because that harms the integrity of the work (the commentator becomes critic).[149] Overall Hunter seems to have a preference for non-fictional works, because of photography's relation to the reality placed in front of the camera.[150]

Corey Creekmur does not quite agree with Hunter's conviction, for he is interested in the freedom of the author to give a photograph any "narrative circumstances as well as psychologies for these characters".[151] He gives examples of authors who constructed a fictive story around actual existing photographs. By doing this they are taking the photograph out of its original context and give it a new one. They are using the photograph

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[145] Jefferson Hunter is a linguist and literary scholar. He also published several books about language, film and photography.
[146] Hunter 1987, p. 11.
[147] Ibidem, p. 23.
[148] Ibidem, pp. 36-37 and 163.
[149] Ibidem, p. 52.
[150] Ibidem, p. 39.
[151] Creekmur 1996, p. 76.

as evidence in an imaginary story, to give the reader reasons to believe.[152] This requires accuracy on the descriptions of the photograph, because the reader will go back and look at the photograph to check.

It is difficult to place May's works among these descriptions of photo-texts, instead her process seems more related to Burgin's. In his *Gradiva* series Burgin coupled photographs with rewritten (by Burgin himself) fragments from Wilhelm Jensen's 1903 short novel *Gradiva*.[153] Both May and Burgin did not make illustrations to a long text; their photographs seem to collaborate with the textual elements on an equal level. In May's work this is demonstrated by the positions both mediums pertain in these works; the text-fragments are placed to the side of each photograph, against a black background, creating two separate parts within the frame. Placed above or below would have pushed the spectator to a certain entry into these works, instead the spectator is now free to start wherever.

Like Burgin Jeanette May did not write the texts herself, neither did she collaborate with their authors. Instead she appropriated parts of novels she had read before, written by female authors, like *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell [1936]. Probably already with an idea or theme in mind she selected literary fragments and "compiled a database".[154] Then May produced the photographs and finally she searched her collection of excerpts to find a fitting fragment with each photo. In doing so she took the texts out of their original context and placed them in a new one; though references to the original are not only in the text itself as being part of that original, but also in the mentioning of title and author with each fragment.

All of the literary fragments precede the photographs in the *Easy on the Eyes* series made between 2008 and 2010; their publication dates ranging from 1833 (*Lélia*, George Sand) to 2003 (*The Time Traveler's Wife*, Audrey Niffenegger). Thus none of the authors were aware of these photographs and they could not have written their narratives to complement them. And while May was conscious of the kind of texts she had gathered, she did not compose her photographs with a specific text in mind. Thus she avoided making

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[152] Creekmur 1996, p. 78.
[153] Van Gelder and Westgeest 2011, p. 215. See also: http://www.galeriezander.com/en/exhibition/voyage_to_italy/information. Burgin reworked the original text to have a compact version of the narrative joining his photographs.
[154] See appendix, p. 49.

them into mere illustrations. The result of this method is that both components of these artworks could be considered independent from each other, though both fit May's purpose. Their placement side by side within one frame does influence the interpretation of the overall work. They invest each other with more information and enhance their narrativity.

In *Dorothy* (2010, fig. 10) for example, we see a man at the side of an indoor pool, he is taking off or putting on his shirt. On a sunbed near him lies the robe of a woman. The text joining this photograph is a fragment from *But the One on the Right* [1929] by Dorothy Parker. It is a short story of the authors own experiences at a dinner, where she describes the man on her right.[155] Without the text the photograph would just be an image of a man (un)dressing at the poolside. The text without the image would be what Parker made it to be. But put together the spectator is stimulated to look at and admire the man they see.

In a way May does the opposite of what Creekmur describes, she does not appropriate a photograph and add a narrative and psychology to the figures; instead she appropriates literary fragments and joins it with her photographs. The fictive nature of the texts emphasizes the constructed nature of her images; leaving space for the spectator to form her own interpretation and relationships between image and text with each work.

3.4 Captions

The text fragments in May's work could be considered captions; defined as a concise explanation joining a visual image[156]. Still this is a very simple description of the caption and Scott offers a more thorough examination. He states: "the distinguishing characteristic of the caption is that it is already a step away from the image towards its assimilation by, and interpretation through, language".[157] It anticipates the response of the viewer towards the image. It could retrieve the photograph from coincidence and incomprehension.

Here Scott poses the question if, with this explanation of the caption, it becomes indispensable from the image.[158] It is extremely difficult in photography to show authorship, but the caption seems to resolve this question of authorship; it endows the image with authorial consciousness. However it might not be worthwhile because the caption is never

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[155] Parker 1995 [1929].
[156] This definition was taken from the online *Oxford Dictionary*, www.oxforddictionaries.com.
[157] Scott 1999, p. 49.
[158] Ibidem, p. 52.

congruent with the photograph.[159] The caption either precedes or follows the photograph; displacing meaning. The photo-text either appears a metaphor or the image encourages a directorial voice and gets justified by the text in return.

Thus, Scott observes, the narrative space of the caption is trivial, capable only of describing the moment before or after the event in the image.[160] In this shallow space the caption has to close the distance between the spectator of the image and the photograph; for photography is a medium capturing the past cutting "itself off from us by the very virtue of its being taken […] the motif is by definition out of reach".[161] So while photographs create a distance keeping the viewer from connecting to the image, captions maintain accessibility and the possibility of relating. Another argument to support this is Scott's idea that a photograph cannot show the perspective of its subjects, it can only show them and likewise it cannot look into its subject; language on the other hand can do both.[162]

As has already been established the texts joining May's photographs were written before the images were made, which entails they cannot be understood as descriptions of the photographs, but they do offer an interpretation. The captions were consciously chosen by May to accompany specific images, therefore they could be understood as her voice guiding the spectator in how to look at these images.

Take for example *Harriet* (2009, fig. 11); a photograph of a young colored man lying on the lawn of a country-house. He is in the foreground, his head close to the center of the image, his body slightly turned away from the picture plane. His clothes are decent; striped blue and white trousers with a dark belt, a blue shirt and neat white and beige shoes. Behind him in the grass lie croquet utensils and a white head. Vegetation closes of a view of the background, except for stairs that lead to the house. It is a grey house with white window frames and a white door. The image does not give a clue as to whom he is other then he seems well-to-do. And more questions could be asked.

The text accompanying this photograph comes from *Gaudy Night* by Dorothy L. Sayers [1935]. It tells of a small group of women and a dean located inside a room, they are looking out of a window and talk about a man they see. Their descriptions of this man, soon identified by Harriet – the main character – as the Viscount Saint-George, are full of praise

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[159] Scott 1999, p. 53.
[160] Ibidem, p. 55.
[161] Idem.
[162] Ibidem, p. 259.

for his looks. Going back and forth between the image and the text it is clear the content of both media does not accord precisely. Still the characters in the Sayer's fragment are looking out from a window on a man's presence and the photograph shows a house from which such an action would be possible. The description of the man given by Harriet's company may encourage the spectator to examine the looks of the man in the photograph more closely. Being a viscount the Viscount Saint-George would be considered upper-class, matching the appearance of the well-to-do man in the photograph. And – maybe even most importantly – both men do not seem to be aware of being watched, allowing an unobstructed look.

Like the text joining *Harriet* the captions of the other photographs in the series are from books written by women[163] and with women as protagonists or in important roles. Only the fragment joining *Elizabeth* (fig. 9) is an exception; it comes from Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* [1928]. The main character in the book is Orlando, a born nobleman who at the age of thirty wakes up one morning and finds he has metamorphosed into a woman.[164]

The choice for a female perspective is no coincidence, though each of the photo-texts may be different, May chose fragments where women describe a man in some way; thus steering the attention of the spectator towards the appearances of the men in her photographs. May's captions do adhere to Scott's impression of captions having shallow space for narrativity; they give a description of a male subject as do the photographs and not much more. But they do this from the perspective of a female protagonist; strengthening the idea that even in the photographs the actual subject of these works is the absent female figure. Together this might be part of May's strategy to make her preferred female audience comfortable to look, as the women in the texts do, and stimulate them to fantasize about themselves and these men, create their own narrative.

This motive might get problematic if the spectator is familiar with the books May credits in her work; then the spectator is bringing a pre-existing narrative to them. Which puts May's photographs in danger of becoming illustrations to the viewer. The danger in this is, as Scott argues: "If historical or legendary or literary topics strike the spectator as illustrations, then indexical considerations will predominate and the reader will feel, given

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[163] George Sand was a pseudonym for Amandine Lucile Aurore Dudevant, see http://www.britannica.com/biography/George-Sand.
[164] Woolf 1928.

the weak intentionality of the photograph, that further interpretation is uncalled-for".[165] In this case the spectator will be disappointed with May's photographs because the images do not conform to the descriptions given in the text. This incongruity might lead the spectator to a different interpretation after all or it might make them turn away from the photographs misunderstanding their purpose.

3.5 Titles

Another verbal element accompanying the photographs of May – as it does most other artworks – needs to be examined; the title, the invitation to look at a photograph. Where the caption is "diversionary and compromising and attention-absolving", a title confronts spectators and focusses their attention.[166] Though titles are the identification tag of a photograph, they are not mere translations of the image.[167] Scott explains a photograph is never free of its inherent referentiality, even though the photographer might try to make a work of fiction instead of take a documentary type of picture.[168] But this referential quality of photography can only be appreciated because of the title; it gives referentiality a motive.

Hunter distinguishes two roles for the title of a photograph; it provides information on the image seen and it could guide the spectator into a certain way of looking at the photograph.[169] Scott on the other hand differentiates three functions of the title relating it to Peirce's sign-system; (a) explaining and synthesizing the image (iconic), (b) giving the spectator some direction but allowing the image to express itself (indexical) and (c) as analogous but incompetent commentary (symbolic).[170] But the more specific a title is, the more it becomes the legitimacy of the photograph, because language is increasingly given importance and the image will not convince the spectator.[171] Therefore Scott feels it is better to be less specific in the title, so the photographic image can move between indexical, iconic and symbolic meaning and keep its arbitrariness.

The title of May's series is *Easy on the Eyes*, is not so much confronting the spectator, it is more of an invitation to the spectator to look at the photographs within the series. The

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[165] Scott 1999, p. 240.
[166] Ibidem, p. 248.
[167] Ibidem, pp. 49 and 57.
[168] Ibidem, p. 58.
[169] Hunter 1987, p. 7.
[170] Scott 1999, p. 47.
[171] Ibidem, p. 64.

information this title gives is not factual, there are no names, dates or places in it. It also does not seem to explain the images. Instead this title functions on the level of the symbolic; the language serves as a translation of the motive of the photographs in the series. The 'eyes' in the title are those of the spectator and the 'easy' refers to the images in general and the men specifically; the whole of the title is giving permission, even more encouraging the spectator to look closely at these pictures. The composition and the postures of the men are put in such a way as to give the spectator an unobstructed view, without making the spectator feel uncomfortable; creating subjects who are easy to look at.

On to the titles of the individual photographs; at first thought these titles seem to be indexical, giving names of persons – *Scarlett*, *Eleanor* (2009, fig. 12), *Jane* etc. And they might be indexical if they would only be referring to the characters in the literary fragments accompanying the photographs, because most of the titles are names from protagonists in the books from which these texts have been chosen. *Jane* (fig. 4) for instance is the main character of Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* [1847], though in some cases the books don't have one storyline and thus have several important characters; like *Bel Canto* [2001][172]. *Elizabeth* is an exception however, for her character comes from *Orlando* and she is not a protagonist, she has a relationship with the protagonist for some time. Still Elizabeth is a powerful woman and it is through her perspective that the viewer learns about the countenance of Orlando and because of that is encouraged to look at the man in May's photograph.

Yet the photographs in May's work also have to be taken into account and it is then that a discrepancy seems to exist. For all the names in the titles are commonly known as female names, or refer to women such as *Mrs. De Winter*, and the photographs show men. The titles then start to function on the level of the symbolic; the meaning of May's overall works does not lie in the title nor in the image, but somewhere in between.

These titles may be confronting to the spectator at first, they mention very specific female names and it could be that these females are the ones the men in the photographs are waiting for, the absent women. This could create distance between viewer and subject. Upon closer examination it becomes clear the names refer to characters in the texts accompanying the photographs. And so the titles capture the attention of the spectator and guide her into the works, where the caption provides pointers for the interpretation of the photographs.

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[172] Patchett 2002.

In conclusion, according to several scholars the photograph is never free of language; the spectator will always interpret within the confines of language. Language enables the understanding of the photograph on three levels: the indexical, the iconic and the symbolic. Analyzing May's work with this system leads to the start of a narrative. Within *Easy on the Eyes* there is not one narrative told with succeeding images, instead being part of a series strengthens the motive in each work.

Both the texts and images in May's works could be seen as independent works (as the literary fragments in their original contexts certainly are seen as), but placed together their meaning becomes complex while leaving space for the spectator to form her own interpretation. It is the title which attracts attention at first, because it does not seem to fit with the images, and then guides you to the captions, which subsequently encourage the viewer to start looking at the men in the photographs.

Conclusion

With her series *Easy on the Eyes* Jeanette May wanted to present men as objects of desire to a female audience. Her methods of achieving this are the subject of this thesis. As has become clear in the second chapter creating a female gaze is not as simple as reverting the male gaze, posed in Mulvey's theory. For a long time male models tended to hold on to their masculinity and dominance, making it difficult for women to actively gaze without feeling embarrassed. Kent argued that women need to see personality when they look at a men's body, but his personality cannot be overbearing. So in order to have women look at the men in her photographs uninhibited, May constructed a likeable personality for her models. Though she kept close to reality, because recognizability also lowers the threshold for her spectators, which is why May used everyday settings.

Another aspect which makes it easier for women to look at these men is their acted absorption. To overcome the problem of displaying men to an audience and make them easy to look at May used a genre of photography called narrative tableau. This genre of photography is a hybrid relating to both painting and cinema, making the question of posing and acting difficult to answer. Yet it allowed May to create her own diegetic world. With carefully controlling every detail in her photographs May directs the beholder towards a narrative. And since the details point to the near-presence of a woman, the spectator could identify with this woman and thus see the men through a female perspective.

Reinforcing this theory are the title and the accompanying literary fragments in the series. The titles of the individual works are confronting the viewer since they point at specific female names, which do not seem to agree with the men in the photographs. But these titles direct the beholder towards the captions; fragments of a selection of books written by women. The protagonists in the texts are all women and they are describing the looks of a man they know or see. In reading this the beholder of May's work is stimulated to look at the men they see in the photographs beside the texts.

However, May does not give an entire narrative in her work, she only hints at it, thus in going back and forth between text and image the spectator could form her own narrative. May's purpose is to make her audience feel comfortable to do so. The title of the series as a whole *Easy on the Eyes* seems to fit this intention and make it explicit to the public.

Appendix: Q&A with Jeanette May

Interview by Daniëlle de Hoog, taken via email on Januari 30th, 2014, with an addition on June 28th, 2014.

1. De Hoog: *Linda Nochlin writes about the medium of photography for feminists in the book 'Global Feminisms' (p. 49), she writes that according to Baudelaire the medium does not provide imagination and individuality. Nochlin claims that this is the reason the medium of photography was attractive to feminists, because they associated these characteristics with male dominated creativity. Feminists also chose this medium to refuse the patriarchal rule of the painted masterpiece.*
On your website it says you have studied painting and photography, why did you choose photography as your primary medium? Did the above stated argument have any influence on this choice?
May: I did start as a painter. The faculty in most art departments at that time (early 1980s) were older men. A change was happening right then, and the Photography Department (a younger, growing department) had several young women professors. I took a photo class almost on accident and fell in love with the medium, teachers, and the images they were showing us.

2. De Hoog: *Many feminists used their own body or female models to claim the female body from male perspectives and give it new meaning. You, who share yourself among the feminists, chose to use male models for your work, why?*
May: I started by photographing myself and other women. That was a common practice for women artists at the time. Later, I felt that it was more progressive to reverse the gaze and stop looking at women. My "Subjects of Desire" project includes both women and men because I was interested in how women could be more active "subjects" and men the "objects" of female desire. I still think it's very difficult to create an image of a woman without her being objectified.

3. De Hoog: *You suggested I should read an interview with Collier Schor by Harvard Photography Journal. In this interview Schor relates how she selects models for her photos, she finds her models among friends and relatives of her nephew. She searches for imperfections in them and believes they are becoming beautiful by her appreciation of them. Can you relate to this? How do you select your models?*
May: I selected the models for my "Easy on the Eyes" series by starting with the attractive men I knew already, and then being on constant alert (ha!) for more men. I wanted to photograph beautiful men that women would enjoy looking at. I don't think my photos made them more beautiful, though I attempted to present them as beautiful and desirable.

I was looking for attractive men everywhere I went. I found one in a movie theater buying popcorn, another was the waiter in a restaurant, some were my college students. The funniest example: I was dancing in a club with my long-time partner David. I leaned over and whispered in David's ear "Wait here. I need to give my phone number to that cute guy over

there." That guy turned out to be a wonderful model for me and David was very understanding!

4. De Hoog: *How do you choose the place and stage setting for each photo? Is it depending on the models you choose?*
May: Usually, I had the scene and location before finding the appropriate model. For the photo of the man dressed as a pirate, I went looking for a guy that would make a good pirate. Soon after, I found the perfect man was one of David's colleagues. He actually had that facial hair when I met him!

5. De Hoog: *How did you instruct your models before the shoot? Did you explain the narrative of the photo and ask them to empathize and play with this a bit or did you direct them into the right positions?*
May: Hmm. I'm trying to remember back to when I was taking these photographs. I remember explaining to the men that I was making the photographs with a female viewer in mind. They, the male subject of the photograph, were going to be presented as an "object of desire." I gave them a brief explanation of the narrative, including information about the "implied woman" in the scene. I directed the scene with little room for improvisation on their part. I told them where to sit, stand, lie down…where to look, what kind of expression to have on their face, etc. During the photo shoot we would try different poses and facial expressions, but I had a pretty clear idea of what I wanted in the final image. With few exceptions, the men I photographed were not actors or models. The men who posed nude in my photographs were working as nude models for art classes—that's how I found them.

6. De Hoog: *How do you select the pieces of literature you use in combination with your photos? Do you use the literature as a starting point for your photos, or do you make the photos and find a suitable text fragment to accompany it?*
May: I selected the literature while I was working on the photos. I tried not to let the literature influence the photos. I read and read; compiling a database of text selections. After each photo shoot, I sorted through my texts for a match. I wanted some connection, but I did not want the image to merely illustrate the text. The two elements should each bring additional meaning, and complication, to the other.

7. De Hoog: *Who is the intended beholder for your work?*
May: Women. Well, heterosexual women. Women who enjoy "gazing" at beautiful men. Feminists. And, although I'm sure some men can appreciate this work, they are not my intended audience.

Conspectus of the *Easy on the Eyes* Photographs

All photographs are Archival Pigment Prints on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Pearl Paper, 20 x 40"
and 15 x 30" printed in editions of 10.

Clare
2008

Mrs. De Winter
2009

Carmen
2009
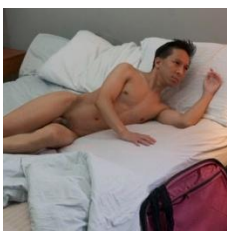
Elizabeth
2008

Eleanor
2009

Jane
2009
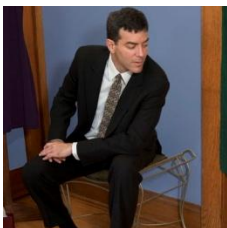
Scarlett
2008

Janie
2009

Amy
2009
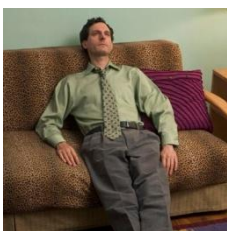
Emma
2008

Harriet
2009
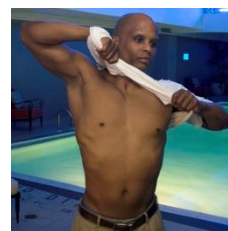
Dorothy
2010

Esther
2008

Rosa
2009
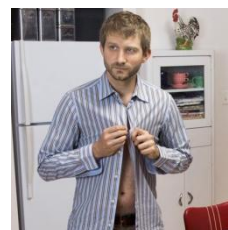
Lélia
2010

Illustrations: Easy on the Eyes

1. Jeanette May, *Clare*, 2008, Archival Pigment Prints on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Pearl Paper, 50,8 x 101,6 cm (20 x 40") or 38,1 x 76,2 cm (15 x 30"), printed in editions of 10.

Text:

We stand in line for a few minutes. Henry seems tense, on guard. He holds my hand, but stares out over the crowd. Henry is beautiful. His hair is shoulder-length, combed back, black and sleek. He's cat-like, thin, exuding restlessness and physicality. He looks like he might bite. Henry is wearing a black overcoat and a white cotton shirt with French cuffs which dangle undone below his coat sleeves, a lovely acid-green silk tie which he has loosened just enough so that I can see the muscles in his neck, black jeans and black high-top sneakers. Henry gathers my hair together and wraps it around his wrist. For a moment I am his prisoner, and then the line moves forward and he lets me go.

The Time Traveler's Wife
Audrey Niffenegger

2. Jeanette May, *Amy*, 2009, Archival Pigment Prints on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Pearl Paper, 50,8 x 101,6 cm (20 x 40") or 38,1 x 76,2 cm (15 x 30"), printed in editions of 10.

Text:

"If my memory serves me, you once thought it your duty to make a rich match; that accounts, perhaps, for your marrying a good-for-nothing like me…. You are not listening to my moral remarks, Mrs. Laurence"—and Laurie paused, for Amy's eyes had an absent look, though fixed upon his face.
"Yes I am, and admiring the dimple in your chin at the same time. I don't wish to make you vain, but I must confess that I'm prouder of my handsome husband than of all his money. Don't laugh,—but your nose is such a comfort to me," and Amy softly caressed the well-cut feature with artistic satisfaction.

Little Women
Louisa May Alcott

3. Jeanette May, *Lélia*, 2010, Archival Pigment Prints on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Pearl Paper, 50,8 x 101,6 cm (20 x 40") or 38,1 x 76,2 cm (15 x 30"), printed in editions of 10.

Text:

This Greek prince had the most handsome profile that antique sculpture had ever reproduced. He was as bronze a Othello, for there was Moorish blood in his family, and his black eyes burned with a savage sparkle; he was as tall and slim as the Oriental palm. There was in him something of the cedar tree, of the Arabian horse, of the Bedouin, and of the gazelle. All the women were mad about him….
He said little to her, but in a voice so harmonious, in such a poetic style, with such penetrating looks, and with such an inspired expression that Lélia paused for five minutes to observe him as a prodigy. Then she thought of something else.

Lélia
George Sand

4. Jeanette May, *Jane*, 2009, Archival Pigment Prints on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Pearl Paper, 50,8 x 101,6 cm (20 x 40") or 38,1 x 76,2 cm (15 x 30"), printed in editions of 10.

Text:

There was a smile on his lips, and his eyes sparkled, whether with wine or not, I am not sure; but I think it very probable. He was, in short, in his after-dinner mood; more expanded and genial, and also more self-indulgent than the frigid and rigid temper of the morning: still, he looked preciously grim, cushioning his massive head against the swelling back of his chair, and receiving the light of the fire on his granite-hewn features, and in his great, dark eyes— for he had great, dark eyes, and very fine eyes, too; not without a certain change in their depths sometimes, which, if it was not softness, reminded you, at least, of that feeling.
He had been looking two minutes at the fire, and I had been looking the same length of time at him, when, turning suddenly, he caught my gaze, fastened on his physiognomy.
"You examine me, Miss Eyre," said he: "do you think me handsome?"

Jane Eyre
Charlotte Brontë

5. Jeanette May, *Carmen*, 2009, Archival Pigment Prints on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Pearl Paper, 50,8 x 101,6 cm (20 x 40") or 38,1 x 76,2 cm (15 x 30"), printed in editions of 10.

Text:

But once they were all still, she crept around their bodies and went to look for Gen. He was in his usual place, sleeping on his back on the floor next to the sofa where his employer slept. Gen had taken his glasses off and in his sleep he held them lightly in one hand. He had a pleasant face, a face that stored a wonderment of knowledge. She could see his eyes moving quickly back and forth beneath the smooth, thin skin of his eyelids, but if he was dreaming, everything else was still. His breathing was quiet and steady…. Carmen held her breath and stretched out on the floor next to Gen. She was as silent as light on the leaves of trees. She lay on her side and put her mouth near his sleeping ear. She had no talent for asking but she was a genius at being quiet.

Bel Canto
Ann Patchett

6. Jeanette May, *Mrs. DeWinter*, 2009, Archival Pigment Prints on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Pearl Paper, 50,8 x 101,6 cm (20 x 40") or 38,1 x 76,2 cm (15 x 30"), printed in editions of 10.

Text:

He belonged to a walled city of the fifteenth century, a city of narrow, cobbled streets, and thin spires, where the inhabitants wore pointed shoes and worsted hose. His face was arresting, sensitive, medieval in some strange inexplicable way, and I was reminded of a portrait seen in a gallery, I had forgotten where, of a certain Gentleman Unknown. Could one but rob him of his English tweeds, and put him in black, with lace at his throat and wrists, he would stare down at us in our new world from a long distant past—a past where men walked cloaked at night, and stood in the shadow of old doorways, a past of narrow stairways and dim dungeons, a past of whispers in the dark, of shimmering rapier blades, of silent, exquisite courtesy.

Rebecca
Daphne du Maurier

7. Jeanette May, *Esther*, 2008, Archival Pigment Prints on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Pearl Paper, 50,8 x 101,6 cm (20 x 40") or 38,1 x 76,2 cm (15 x 30"), printed in editions of 10.

Text:

I looked at him secretly from under a fall of hair.
He was lying on his back, his hands under his head, staring at the ceiling. The starched white sleeves of his shirt, rolled up to the elbows, glimmered eerily in the half dark and his tan skin seemed almost black. I thought he must be the most beautiful man I'd ever seen….
And then I wondered if as soon as he came to like me he would sink into ordinariness, and if as soon as he came to love me I would find fault after fault, the way I did with Buddy Willard and the boys before him.
The same thing happened over and over:
I would catch sight of some flawless man off in the distance, but as soon as he moved closer I immediately saw he wouldn't do at all.
That's one of the reasons I never wanted to get married.

The Bell Jar
Sylvia Plath

8. Jeanette May, *Scarlett*, 2008, Archival Pigment Prints on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Pearl Paper, 50,8 x 101,6 cm (20 x 40") or 38,1 x 76,2 cm (15 x 30"), printed in editions of 10.

Text:

He was in his mid-thirties, older than any beau she had ever had, and she was as helpless as a child to control and handle him as she had handled beaux nearer to her own age. He always looked as if nothing had ever surprised him and much had amused him…
For all his exasperating qualities, she grew to look forward to his calls. There was something exciting about him that she could not analyze, something different from any man she had ever known. There was something breathtaking in the grace of his big body which made his very entrance into a room like an abrupt physical impact, something in the impertinence and bland mockery of his dark eyes that challenged her spirit to subdue him.

Gone with the Wind
Margaret Mitchell

9. Jeanette May, *Elizabeth*, 2008, Archival Pigment Prints on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Pearl Paper, 50,8 x 101,6 cm (20 x 40") or 38,1 x 76,2 cm (15 x 30"), printed in editions of 10.

Text:

"Here," she said, watching him advance down the long gallery towards her, "comes my innocent!" (There was a serenity about him always which had the look of innocence when, technically, the word was no longer applicable.)
"Come!" she said. She was sitting bolt upright beside the fire. And she held him a foot's pace from her and looked him up and down. Was she matching her speculations the other night with the truth now visible? Did she find her guesses justified? Eyes, mouth, nose, breast, hips, hands—she ran them over; her lips twitched visibly as she looked; but when she saw his legs she laughed out loud. He was the very image of a noble gentleman. But inwardly? She flashed her yellow hawk's eyes upon him as if she would pierce his soul. The young man withstood her gaze, blushing only a damask rose as became him. Strength, grace, romance, folly, poetry, youth—she read him like a page.

Orlando
Virginia Woolf

10. Jeanette May, *Dorothy*, 2010, Archival Pigment Prints on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Pearl Paper, 50,8 x 101,6 cm (20 x 40") or 38,1 x 76,2 cm (15 x 30"), printed in editions of 10.

Text:

I knew it. I knew if I came to this dinner, I'd draw something like this baby on my left…. Now what do you suppose is going on with the Greek God on my right? Ah, no use. There's still only the shoulder—the nice, *nice* shoulder. I wonder what the woman's like, that's got him. I can't see her at all. I wonder if she's beautiful. I wonder if she's Greek, too. When Greek meets immovable body—you might be able to do something with that, if you only had the time. I'm not going to be spineless any longer. Don't think for a minute, lady, that I've given up. He's still using his knife and fork. While there's hands above the table, there's hope.

But the One on the Right
Dorothy Parker

11. Jeanette May, *Harriet*, 2009, Archival Pigment Prints on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Pearl Paper, 50,8 x 101,6 cm (20 x 40") or 38,1 x 76,2 cm (15 x 30"), printed in editions of 10.

Text:

"Who is that incredibly beautiful young man?"
"Flaxman's fiancé, I expect, isn't it?"
"A beautiful young man?" said Miss Pyke. "I should like to see him." She moved to the window.
"Don't be ridiculous," said the Dean. "I know Flaxman's Byron by heart. This is an ash-blond in a House blazer."
"Oh, dear me!" said Miss Pyke. "Apollo Belvedere in spotless flannels. He appears to be unattached. Remarkable."
Harriet put down her cup and rose from the depths of the largest armchair….
"Why all the excitement, anyway?" asked Miss Hillyard.
"Beautiful young men are always exciting," said the Dean.
"That," said Harriet, at length getting a glimpse of the wonder-youth over Miss Pyke's shoulder, "is Viscount Saint-George."…She curled herself into the window seat and watched for nearly ten minutes. The viscount sat still, smoking a cigarette, and looking entirely at his ease.

Gaudy Night
Dorothy L. Sayers

12. Jeanette May, *Eleanor*, 2009, Archival Pigment Prints on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Pearl Paper, 50,8 x 101,6 cm (20 x 40") or 38,1 x 76,2 cm (15 x 30"), printed in editions of 10.

Text:

He had the muscular and easy-moving grace of a former high school all-star. He swiveled sideways, posed a moment near the machine, raised his eyebrows, and sauntered loose-limbed over to Eleanor. Her silence and solemnity seemed to crack his confidence, however, and as he neared her he stuffed his hands into the pockets of a light denim jacket, hesitated. A cloud flapped across the moon and the wind rushed overhead.
"I had to see you," he explained.
Her eyes were full of him. She hadn't been this close to a man for months and he smelled, elusively, of earthly things like paint and wool and fresh-cut lumber. She stepped nearer.
He cleared his throat and spoke roughly. "What the hell are you doing here, stuck away like this?"

Tales of Burning Love
Louise Erdrich

13. Jeanette May, *Emma*, 2008, Archival Pigment Prints on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Pearl Paper, 50,8 x 101,6 cm (20 x 40") or 38,1 x 76,2 cm (15 x 30"), printed in editions of 10.

Text:

She was more disturbed by Mr. Knightley's not dancing, than by anything else.—There he was, among the standers-by, where he ought not to be; he ought to be dancing,—not classing himself with the husbands, and fathers, and whist-players, who were pretending to feel an interest in the dance till their rubbers were made up,—so young as he looked!—He could not have appeared to greater advantage perhaps any where, than where he had placed himself. His tall, firm, upright figure, among the bulky forms and stooping shoulders of the elderly men, was such as Emma felt must draw every body's eyes; and, excepting her own partner, there was not one among the whole row of young men who could be compared with him.—He moved a few steps nearer, and those few steps were enough to prove in how gentlemanlike a manner, with what natural grace, he must have danced, would he but take the trouble.

Emma
Jane Austen

14. Jeanette May, *Janie*, 2009, Archival Pigment Prints on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Pearl Paper, 50,8 x 101,6 cm (20 x 40") or 38,1 x 76,2 cm (15 x 30"), printed in editions of 10.

Text:

He set it up and began to show her and she found herself glowing inside. Somebody wanted her to play. Somebody thought it natural for her to play. That was even nice. She looked him over and got little thrills from every one of his good points. Those full, lazy eyes with the lashes curling sharply away like drawn scimitars. The lean, over-padded shoulders and narrow waist. Even nice!
He was jumping her king! She screamed in protest against losing the king she had had such a hard time acquiring. Before she knew it she had grabbed his hand to stop him. He struggled gallantly to free himself. That is he struggled, but not hard enough to wrench a lady's fingers.

Their Eyes Were Watching God
Zora Neale Hurston

15. Jeanette May, *Rosa*, 2009, Archival Pigment Prints on Hahnemuhle Photo Rag Pearl Paper, 50,8 x 101,6 cm (20 x 40") or 38,1 x 76,2 cm (15 x 30"), printed in editions of 10.

Text:

She rarely thought about her fiancé, Esteban Trueba, not because she did not love him but because of her forgetful nature and because two years' absence is a long time. He was working in the mines in the North. He wrote to her regularly and Rosa sometimes replied, sending him lines of poetry and drawings of flowers she had copied out on sheets of parchment paper…. Rosa however, was in no rush to marry and had all but forgotten the only kiss they had exchanged when they said goodbye; nor could she recall the color of her tenacious suitor's eyes. Because of the romantic novels that were her only reading matter, she liked to picture him in thick-soled boots, his skin tanned from the desert winds, clawing the earth in search of pirates' treasure, Spanish doubloons, and Incan jewels.

The House of the Spirits
Isabel Allende

Illustrations: Other

16. Cindy Sherman, *Untitled Film Still #3*, 1977, Gelatin-silver print, approximately 19 x 24,1 cm (7 ½ x 9 ½"), New York, The Museum of Modern Art.
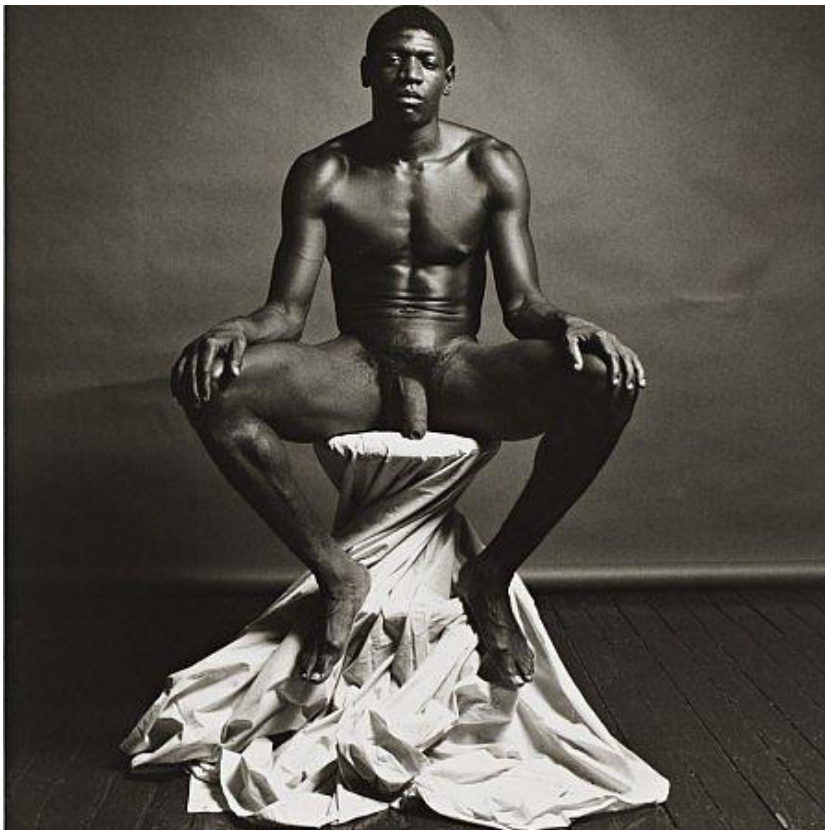
17. Robert Mapplethorpe, *Bob Love*, 1979, Gelatin-silver print on paper, 50.8 x 40.6 cm (20 x 16"), Scotland, National Galleries of Scotland (AR01140).

Provenance illustrations

1 – 15:
www.jeanettemay.com
Last updated 2015. Courtesy of the artist.

16:
www.moma.org
Last updated 2015. Last seen 25-06-2015.

17:
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