Hiding Genre Distinctions and Finding Gender Divides: An Iconographic, Formal, and Contextual Analysis of James Tissot’s *Hide and Seek*

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Abstract

MEGAN SWEENEY: Hiding Genre Distinctions and Finding Gender Divides:
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(Under the direction of Daniel Sherman)

Resisting the standard categories of genre, James Tissot’s *Hide and Seek* operates within the contexts of studio portraits and domestic scenes. Thus, while registering the character and status of the artist, the painting presents a particular image of the domestic realm and familial relations. It also lends itself to a gendered reading, which is here informed by a discussion of the Aesthetic Movement, *Japonisme*, and the ties between each of these movements and contemporary conceptions of femininity. In the face of Aestheticism’s perceived threat to the masculinity of artist and studio, *Hide and Seek* reaffirms the ideology of separate spheres. It achieves this end by depersonalizing, objectifying, commodifying, and enclosing the female inhabitants of Tissot’s home-studio while evoking an invisible, externalized male presence that seems to resist capture and domestication and to maintain subjectivity, agency, and mobility.
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Introduction

To date, very little has been written about James Tissot’s enigmatic *Hide and Seek* (Figure 1), a work believed to have been painted during the French artist’s final years in London, between 1880 and 1882, and now in the National Gallery of Art in Washington. By its title and iconography, the painting claims for itself the status of a domestic scene – more specifically, an image of children at play. While the identities of two of the four young girls remain unknown, Christopher Wood has identified the others as the daughter and the niece of Tissot’s convalescent mistress Kathleen Newton.¹ Notably, Kathleen herself modeled for the painting, as she did for many of Tissot’s London works, a number of which were provided natural settings and featured only women and children. That *Hide and Seek* might function not only as a domestic scene but also as a studio portrait is perhaps only recognizable to those viewers equipped with some knowledge of the true backdrop for the image. While Tissot staged many of his pictures in his Paris and London studios, *Hide and Seek* provides perhaps one of the most comprehensive views of the artist’s London studio, a lavishly and eclectically furnished room that adhered to the aesthetic model championed by an elite set of commercially successful and socially respected artists who rose to prominence in the second half of the nineteenth century. During Tissot’s time, the individual artist had become a celebrity, and the studio a

¹National Gallery of Art, Washington, Department of Curatorial Records, Curatorial File for *Hide and Seek*, Christopher Wood to David E. Rust, Esq., 22 June 1978. Wood writes: “Only two of the children in the Tissot picture can definitely be identified. The girl on her hands and knees is Mrs Newton’s niece, Lilian Ethel Henry (born 1875). The bigger of the two girls standing beside the screen is Mrs Newton’s daughter Violet, born in 1871. The other two children are definitely girls, and Mrs Newton’s son is not therefore present.”
destination for those yearning to glean something of the artist’s character from his workspace. The latter development was a product of nineteenth-century Europeans’ inclination to view architectural interiors as reflective of their inhabitants’ and decorators’ psychological interiors.

It is perhaps with this context in mind that Nancy Marshall and Malcolm Warner have read Tissot’s *Hide and Seek* as a “self-portrait” capable of “conveying a particular artistic identity,” proving Tissot’s dedication to an art of “everyday life,” and establishing “his credentials as … a sophisticated, financially secure connoisseur … [and] wealthy modern gentleman.” In the present text, I intend to perform a more sustained and in-depth analysis of *Hide and Seek*, unpacking its iconographic and formal elements within the context of Tissot’s larger oeuvre, including his early *japonaiseries* and his late domestic scenes; the work of his contemporaries, including William Merritt Chase, Edouard Manet, James McNeill Whistler, Alfred Stevens, and John Singer Sargent; and a particular set of artistic and social contexts, including the reintroduction of the studio into the domestic sphere, Aestheticism and the House Beautiful Movement, Orientalism, and the ideology of separate spheres. Ultimately, I wish to locate the painting in the interstices of two pictorial genres, the studio portrait and the domestic scene. Arguably, the most fruitful approach to the painting is one that takes its composite nature into account. Such an approach has the advantage of exposing the multivalent nature of the

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2For reasons that will be revealed in Chapter One, this thesis will focus on male artists.

image, its ability to operate within two spheres of meaning. At the same time, it allows for an interrogation of Tissot’s treatment of gendered spaces insofar as the fusion of pictorial genres in *Hide and Seek* simultaneously reflects and performs a merger of the professional and domestic realms and of the artist’s public and private identities. Ultimately, Tissot’s painting preserves the separation of masculine and feminine spheres that it appears, at first glance, to undermine.

While Marshall has already pointed to the compatibility between Tissot’s oeuvre and the Victorian ideology of separate spheres, the elision of the professional and the domestic, the public and the private, in *Hide and Seek* might cast doubt upon the apparent agreement between Tissot’s work and Victorian conceptions of gender. Indeed, a number of scholars read nineteenth-century home-studios as subverting conventional understandings of gendered spaces, while others conceive of the home-studio as a site for the reconciliation of masculinity and domesticity. While participating in these recent discussions on the gendering of the studio, I will draw upon prior analyses of late-nineteenth-century representations of bourgeois domesticity, including representations of women and children. A number of scholars have identified artists’ strategies for the objectification of human subjects, the visual and psychological isolation of individual family members, and the evocation of absent figures. I will also make use of studies on the perceived relationship of femininity to Aestheticism, interior decoration, and

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4Observing that genres are “rooted in subjects rather than rules and conventions alone,” David Smith maintains that “their boundaries are never as tight as the rules might decree. They often overlap and mix together, though they nevertheless remain intact and recognizable to one degree or another. And for this reason they can sometimes work together in a dialectical fashion, sharpening and deepening one another’s meanings by contrast.” David Smith, “Irony and Civility: Notes on the Convergence of Genre and Portraiture in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting,” *The Art Bulletin* 69, no. 3 (Sept. 1987), 408.

Orientalism, as well as the nineteenth-century assumption of correspondence between architectural interiors and psychological interiors.

This thesis comprises three chapters. In the first, “The Nineteenth-Century Studio: Realities and Representations,” I will establish the artistic and social milieu within which Tissot commissioned and subsequently pictured his home and studio in St. John’s Wood. Here, I will elaborate on the rise of a new class of artists, the production of lavishly and eclectically furnished studios, and the widespread fascination with and emulation of artist and studio, both of which became readily apparent in the popular press, artist interviews, studio visits, and the House Beautiful Movement. The presumed correspondence between architectural and psychological interiors undergirded the widespread perception that artists’ studios and houses reflected the identities of their owners. In keeping with my focus on genre and gender, I will discuss the bonds forged between artistic production and masculinity and between the presumably imitative “art” of interior decoration and femininity. The prevailing conceptions of masculinity and femininity placed the male aesthete in a precarious position while casting the home-studio as potentially disruptive insofar as it enacted the fusion of professional and domestic spheres as well as public and private identities. Finally, I will analyze Tissot’s and other late-nineteenth-century artists’ painted representations of the studio, assessing the manner in which these images participated in the construction of artistic personalities and, more specifically, the negotiation of gender identities.

Chapter Two, “Aestheticism, Orientalism, and Femininity: Late-Nineteenth-Century Intersections,” opens with historical background on late-nineteenth-century Orientalism, the Aesthetic Movement, and their points of intersection – most notably,
their shared association with femininity. Orientalism, Aestheticism, and femininity converge in the work of many late-nineteenth-century artists, including Tissot and his acknowledged influences James McNeill Whistler and Alfred Stevens. While nineteenth-century Orientalism encompassed fascinations with and representations of the Far East, the Middle East, and North Africa, I intend to focus more specifically on works that participate in *Japonisme*, manifesting the influence of Japanese art and decoration.

Michael Wentworth tracks Tissot’s progression from *japonaiserie* – defined by Wentworth as a relatively superficial engagement with Japanese art and design, entailing, on occasion, a mere copying of subject matter – to a more thoughtful and subtle *japonisme*. During the 1860s, Tissot arranged his Paris studio in accordance with Japanese design principles, stocking it with Oriental objects. At the same time, he produced a number of Oriental costume pieces, depicting women in Japanese garb and among Japanese objects. As Oriental objects were incorporated into home design, appearing in artists’ houses as well as the homes of aristocratic and bourgeois Britons, Orientalism and Aestheticism might be described as interlaced cultural phenomena. Like Orientalism, Aestheticism was associated closely with the feminine. That the women responsible for the decoration and upkeep of bourgeois houses were reflected in the form and appearance of their homes was a commonly held belief, and there emerged a tendency to elide distinctions between women and their households. I intend to argue that Tissot participates in this equation of woman and household object, depersonalizing, commodifying, and fetishizing the female subjects who occupy his *Hide and Seek*. An

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analysis of how Tissot’s work achieves these effects will serve as a bridge between this chapter and the final one.

Chapter Three, “Pictures of Domesticity: Assigning Objecthood and Subjectivity to Figures Inside and Outside the Home,” will develop further the argument that Tissot’s painting performs the objectification and fetishization of his female subjects. The chapter will also introduce the notion that, in objectifying woman and girl while absenting man and boy, Tissot’s *Hide and Seek* preserves the separation of spheres. Here, I will consider the resemblance between Tissot’s girls and late-nineteenth-century dolls. I will argue, however, that *Hide and Seek* displays a certain ambivalence; the apparent objectification of female figures is undermined by the presence of two mirrors, objects that might be deemed emblematic of interiority and subjectivity. Alternative interpretations of the mirror complicate this reading. Not only might the mirror allude to the mimetic aims of painting; it might also evoke the presence of an absent or externalized artist and audience. Arguably, by evoking this presence, the mirror places viewer and artist just outside the frame of the painting, albeit not necessarily outside the room portrayed therein. Insisting on the spatial and phenomenological nature of the vision Tissot’s picture invites, I will argue that the projection of the self into *Hide and Seek* is invited by the open space that stands at the foreground of the composition. Here, the yawning spaces of Sargent’s *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit* (1882) as well as Sargent’s and other artists’ evocation of absent fathers merit discussion insofar as these formal and compositional effects – also present in *Hide and Seek* – effectively replicate and validate the separation of spheres. Tissot’s *The Sphinx* and *The Liar* figure prominently in this discussion, as both of these

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pictures contain iconographic indicators of an absent presence while positioning the viewer in the same dimension as an externalized, invisible, and presumably male second subject.

Arriving at the conclusion of my thesis, I will have established the ambivalence or ambiguity of Tissot’s *Hide and Seek* – that is, its ability to be read within the context of studio paintings and domestic scenes. Analyzed within these contexts, *Hide and Seek* articulates a particular understanding of gender roles and the gendering of space, one that ultimately proves consistent with the then-hegemonic notion of separate spheres.
Chapter One: The Nineteenth-Century Studio: Realities and Representations

Recounting his visit to Gustave Courbet’s Paris studio, a “vast, lofty room” containing an easel, “enormous rolls of canvas,” and “furniture . . . limited in the extreme: a tired-looking, rep-covered sofa, half-a-dozen odd chairs, an old pot-bellied chest of drawers, and a pedestal table littered with pipes, empty beer mugs, and old newspapers,” all “half-submerged under an avalanche of paintings,” art critic Jules-Antoine Castagnary writes reprovingly of a new species of studio, what he describes as the “show-off studio . . . waxed and polished, with its high-warp hangings, Henri II furniture, Japanese curios, grand piano, Chinese vases, and rare plants, with everything to impress the bourgeois and keep prices up.” In delivering this critique, Castagnary provides a physiognomic description of the lavishly decorated home-studios of a growing class of socially respected and commercially successful artists. Wittingly or not, he also attests to the fabricated and “manipulable” nature of the artist’s studio, alluding to nineteenth-century artists’ tendency to configure their studios in such a way as to project a particular persona and to curry favor with desired audiences and patrons. At the time, visual and verbal representations of artists’ studios might have been as effective and manipulable as their real-world referents.

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Tissot’s decision to stage the characters and events of his *Hide and Seek* in his London studio may or may not have been motivated by a desire to project an artistic and social identity or to secure private buyers and popular interest; nevertheless, Tissot’s choice of setting ultimately situates his work within the genre of studio portraiture. Accordingly, any analysis of Tissot’s unconventional and rather ambiguous *Hide and Seek* demands prior examination of several topics, including the professionalization of artistic practice, the appearance of the gentleman-artist, the proliferation of lavishly and eclectically furnished houses and home-studios, and the widespread fascination with and emulation of artists and studios. Such an analysis ought to be informed, moreover, by a discussion of the gendering of the creative act and of the space in which that act was performed as well as by analyses of other late-nineteenth-century studio portraits. As Tissot produced *Hide and Seek* during his time in London, my discussion focuses on events and conditions in England while touching, where pertinent, upon French and American examples.

**The Gentleman-Artist and the Aesthetic Home-Studio**

British conceptions of the professional and social status of the painter underwent significant revisions over the course of the 1860s. As wealth and education remained the criteria for gentility, the elevation of the artist and the validation of the artistic profession followed upon the reformation of artists’ education in the liberal and visual arts as well as artists’ gradual accumulation and display of wealth. Frequently, an artist’s ability to secure respect and remuneration also depended upon a renunciation of autonomy and a show of deference to a seemingly unrefined public. The seeming necessity of this compromise put considerable pressure on artistic professionals facing the lingering
effects of the Romantic ideal of the inspired and independent artistic genius.\textsuperscript{10} Indeed, British artists were generally criticized for the pecuniary motives that appeared to distinguish them from their Continental counterparts, who were ostensibly more interested in refining their technical skills than in making sales. While British critics and writers like John Ruskin advocated the separation of the aesthetic from the commercial, Edward Poynter’s 1871 lecture on “Systems of Education” characterized British artists as having abandoned the thorough training procedures upheld by their Continental counterparts. By that time, the Royal Academy had also begun to lose its credibility among critics, including Ruskin.\textsuperscript{11}

Despite having begun his artistic career on the Continent – more specifically, in Paris – Tissot exhibited many of the so-called vices of his English contemporaries. Edmond de Goncourt’s 1874 appraisal of the expatriate artist’s London career speaks only secondarily to Tissot’s commercial success, focusing instead on the artist’s willingness to forego whatever personal and professional convictions he might have had in order to cater to an uninformed and ever-changing popular taste. Goncourt writes:

\begin{quote}
Today, Duplessis told me that Tissot, that plagiarist painter, has had the greatest success in England. Was it not his idea, this ingenious exploiter of English idiocy, to have a studio with a waiting room where, at all times, there is iced champagne at the disposal of visitors, and around the studio, a garden where, all day long, one can see a footman in silk stockings brushing and shining the shrubbery leaves?\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}


Over the course of his career, Tissot enjoyed considerable success as a painter and printmaker, willingly adjusting his manner of working so as to appeal to potential buyers – particularly those belonging to the upper middle class. As Wentworth has suggested, Tissot’s career might be read as “an index of the developments that marked the second half of the century,” for it was marked by “brief, but potent, enthusiasms for Northern painting, Naturalism, Pre-Raphaelitism, Japonism [sic], Impressionism, and Aestheticism.”

The artist’s London works appealed to middle-class audiences by featuring familiar characters and activities, “avoid[ing] serious criticism or moralizing,” and catering to the widespread taste for eighteenth-century paintings and furnishings.

Tissot’s decision to commission a studio akin to those owned by his most successful London contemporaries provides additional evidence of his assimilation to the dominant artistic culture.

The proliferation of grand home-studios like Tissot’s might be attributed in part to aspiring gentlemen-artists’ desire to prove their popularity and commercial success and thus to secure the esteem and patronage of audiences.

Tellingly, work on one of the first purpose-built artist houses in London – namely, Frederic Leighton’s house and studio in the Kensington neighborhood – began in 1864, shortly after the British government had organized a committee to investigate the operations of the Royal Academy and evaluate the status of the artist, determining whether the artist could be classified as a gentleman.

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13Ibid., 17.


15Gillett, 18-68.
or ought to be consigned to the status of artisan and manual worker. In designing his home and studio, Leighton looked chiefly to artists’ houses in Paris, structures that were themselves modeled on Renaissance examples. Indeed, touring artists’ houses in Italy had become quite fashionable by the 1860s, and it was in the 1867 text *Architecture of the Italian Renaissance* that Jacob Burckhardt identified artists’ houses as a distinct architectural genre. In emulating the environments in which their fifteenth- and sixteenth-century counterparts worked, Victorian artists arguably manifested their sense of identification with their “successful, worldly and flamboyant Renaissance predecessors.” Of course, it was through their contents and decoration as much as their structure that the houses and studios of Victorian artists communicated the status and character of their owner-inhabitants. Artists’ collections of Old Master and contemporary works of art, furniture, Western antiquities, Oriental folding screens and ceramics, blue and white china, Middle-Eastern rugs and animal skins, and other luxury items and *objets d’art* lent character to home and studio interiors, where they indexed artists’ class positions, intellectual capacities, knowledge, connoisseurship, and sources of artistic inspiration. In some instances, they also served as props for artists’ works.

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18 Campbell, 287.

19 See Peppiatt and Bellony-Rewald, 73-91; and Zukowski, 99-131.
In putting his studio on display in *Hide and Seek*, Tissot in fact catered to a pre-existing, widespread, and “apparently insatiable curiosity about art and its practice.” That Tissot refused to depict himself at work, offering only an unattended easel and what appears to be a framed and presumably finished painting as evidence of his manual labor, hardly compromises such a claim. After all, British artists’ claims to gentility might have been undermined by any admission of their having performed manual labor.

Moreover, the image of the comfortably furnished, seemingly unproductive studio would have been quite familiar to contemporary audiences. During the second half of the nineteenth century, popular periodicals regularly offered commentary on and illustrations of artists’ houses and studios. While the popular press and print media catered to the general public’s fascination with the artist and the studio, London artists’ practice of receiving visitors to their studios provided another outlet for the curious public, who, on Show Sundays, were also permitted a glimpse of the works that were to be sent to the Royal Academy exhibitions.

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20 Gere, 23. Michael Cole and Mary Pardo attest to the timeless quality of this fascination with the artist’s studio, arguing that, “from the moment artists began to withdraw into the private, hermetic space of the *studio*, that space was already being glorified, put on public display.” Indeed, Cole and Pardo go so far as to claim that “the rise of the studio involved … the generation of artistic personae.” Cole and Pardo, “Chapter One: Origins of the Studio,” in *Inventions of the Studio, Renaissance to Romanticism*, ed. Michael Cole and Mary Pardo (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 23.

21 In Chapter Three, this “painting” will be identified as a mirror.


23 Gere, 56.
Notably, a sketch and description of Tissot’s London studio appeared in an issue of *Building News* (Figure 2) shortly after its construction in 1874. The reporting journalist described the lavish interior as follows:

As will be seen from the drawing, it is a large apartment, amply lighted, principally from the north and east. The whole of one side (the right in the view) is open to a large conservatory, from which it is separated by an arrangement of glass screens and curtains. The floor is laid with oak parquet, and the walls are hung with a kind of tapestry cloth of greenish blue colour.

Ten years after this metaphorical opening of Tissot’s home-studio to the public, F.G. Stephens published his *Artists at Home*; as its title suggests, Stephens’s book featured lengthy descriptions and illustrations of artists’ houses and the studio spaces contained therein. Among the artists who appeared in Stephens’s text was Frederic Leighton (Figure 3). Photographed in his studio at 2 Holland Park Road, Leighton assumes a relaxed and confident pose; his right hand rests upon a nearby table, gently gripping the base of a small figurine; freestanding sculptures and busts are interspersed among the paintings and bookshelves that fill Leighton’s seemingly expansive studio. Ultimately, Stephens’s photograph presents Leighton’s sources of inspiration as well as his finished products; like Tissot’s *Hide and Seek*, it omits any signs of manual labor. Stephens’s text constitutes but one instance of the dual representation of artist and artist’s environment, a recurring phenomenon that aptly suggests the degree to which the identity or persona of the “celebrity” artist was bound up in the image of his home and studio.

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24 Quoted in Gere, 202.

25 Droth, 213.

26 After addressing the dissemination of artist and studio portraits in the press, Droth argues that Victorian artists’ “studio-homes were as much show-homes as places to work and live,” adding: “These mediated environments were almost as public as they were private. Staged and controlled, they conveyed an image of high culture that played an integral role in the cultivation of an artist’s professional profile.” Ibid.
Gender in the Studio

Insofar as it constituted a workspace, a site for the production, display, contemplation, and marketing of art, the nineteenth-century artist’s home-studio assumed a masculine character. Among Britons, artistic genius was deemed incompatible with femaleness, which was most frequently associated with amateurism and diletantism. Indeed, it was not until the 1860s that women’s access to educational and exhibitionary institutions began to be liberalized. The female artist’s studio was also less visible than that of the male artist. While photographs and paintings of female studios do exist – the former in greater numbers than the latter – women’s professional workspaces were not documented or represented to the extent that their male counterparts’ were. The “studios” of many female artists were in fact indistinguishable from their living spaces. For example, after the destruction of her purpose-built studio during the Commune, Berthe Morisot began and continued to work in the living spaces of her later residences. Perhaps in recognition of the other domestic uses of those spaces, Morisot regularly stowed away her artistic equipment and canvases.

A similar fusion of living and working spaces occurred in male artists’ home-studios. Thus, the home-studio adopted the mantle of domesticity and femininity, qualities that were inextricably linked in the Victorian imagination. Some artists might

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29Ibid., 89-90.

30Linda J. Docherty and Kirstin Ringelberg discuss the ambiguity or dualism of the home-studio in an American context. Both address the studio portraits produced by American Impressionist artist William Merritt Chase. See Linda J. Docherty, “Model Families: The Domesticated Studio Pictures of William
have been able to empty their home-studios of any compromising, feminizing elements, redefining their lived-in workspaces as “seriously aesthetic” by omitting such emblems of feminine domesticity as flowers and embroideries or by avoiding the appearance of uninformed yet beautifying decoration and ornamentation. Thus, having found no evidence of an “attempt at elegance of arrangement,” visitors to Hamo Thornycroft’s home-studio were able to declare the space “dominated by the ‘master-spirit’ and ‘controlled by his taste.’”

These visitors’ investment of Thornycroft’s studio with the spirit of the artist speaks to a broader tendency to read the spatial interior as reflective of the psychological interior of the man or woman behind its decoration. Although a number of scholars have stressed the nineteenth-century elision of the bourgeois housewife with the bourgeois home, maintaining that the “outward appearance of house and body” was then deemed reflective of a woman’s “deeper self or inner character,” period texts reveal that, to a certain extent, the male head-of-household was encouraged to shape and hence animate the domestic interior. In his 1876 publication *A Plea for Art in the House*, William John Merritt Chase and Edmund C. Tarbell,” in *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture*, ed. Christopher Reed (New York, NY: Thames and Hudson, 1996), 48-64; Ringelberg, *Redefining Gender in American Impressionist Studio Paintings*; and Ringelberg, “Risking the Incoherence of Identity: Locating Gender in Late Nineteenth-Century Paintings of the Artist’s Home Studio” (PhD diss., The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 2000). Charlotte Gere describes the nineteenth-century artist’s household as “something of a throwback, tracing its character to the time before the separation of business and domestic life which occurred in the eighteenth century.” Gere, 92.

31 Droth, 216, 215.

32 Beverly Gordon, “Woman’s Domestic Body: The Conceptual Conflation of Women and Interiors in the Industrial Age” *Winterthur Portfolio* 31, no. 4 (Winter 1996), 285. Although Gordon “focuses for the sake of space primarily on American sources and images,” she argues that the “identification between self and interior [that] became particularly linked with women … was international in scope … associated with bourgeois gender roles in Europe as well as North America.” Ibid., 281. Lisa Tiersten addresses this phenomenon in a French context. Maintaining that the French importation of the English word “home” marked a transformation in the French understanding of the household interior, Tiersten suggests that French bourgeois housewives came to view the domestic interior as “a mode of personal expression.” Here she also quotes decorating handbook author Henri de Noussane: “An apartment must bear the character of
Loftie invited “every [man] … so fortunate as to possess a home and to be the head of a family, to endeavor, so far as he [could], to make his family happy by making his home beautiful.” Writing six years later, Lewis Foreman Day maintained that the male homeowner’s “ideal should be the basis of the art around him, whatever that ideal may be;” what Day described as a man’s “ideal” might in fact have been reflective of a man’s interiority. This written evidence has led Imogen Hart to conclude: “There seems to be a tension between the notion that the subject of home decoration is primarily of interest to women and the conviction that the home, as a whole, represents the male householder.”

Implicit in the visitors’ observation that Thornycroft’s home-studio evidenced “no attempt at elegance of arrangement,” presenting “true culture [and] not its tea cup semblance,” is the notion that interior decoration might prove artificial and imitative rather than original and reflective of one’s genuine aesthetic sensibility. Insofar as tea-drinking and china were coded feminine, the concept of a “tea cup semblance” of “true culture” effectively linked the artificial and unoriginal arrangement of objects with the female sex and with femininity. Late-nineteenth-century attitudes toward female artists

the people who inhabit it, it must carry their stamp. There is no other way to really be at home.” Lisa Tiersten, “The Chic Interior and the Feminine Modern: Home Decorating as High Art in Turn-of-the-Century Paris,” in Reed, Not at Home, 20-1.

33 Ringelberg, “Risking the Incoherence of Identity,” 63.


35 Droth, 215.

36 The rise of Chinomania among nineteenth-century collectors, manifest in the continual pursuit of Oriental and eighteenth-century European porcelains, Delft earthenware, and other ceramics, was parodied in the popular press and interpreted as a sign of the effeminacy of collectors and aesthetes. Not only were women likened to china or porcelain, consistently characterized as malleable, lacking independent form, capable of being led astray, and susceptible to passing fashions. Moreover, the accumulation of blue and white ware was deemed an emasculating form of collecting. Whereas the manly collector modeled his collecting practices on the museum, accumulating objects so to demonstrate his social status or to increase and quantify his knowledge, the “unmanly collector, attracted to china, developed female susceptibilities,
prove consistent with this reading. Despite female artists’ demands for greater respect and freedom, the notion that women lacked the intellectual, imaginative, and creative powers requisite for superior achievement in their chosen profession persisted. Women were generally deemed better suited and better prepared for careers in the less-exalted field of design; after all, women’s domestic responsibilities included the decoration or design of the home interior. As Chapter Two will further substantiate, this association between femaleness, femininity, and the imitative arts of design and interior decoration facilitated the emasculation and feminization of the male aesthete preoccupied with the ornamentation of the home and unnaturally withdrawn from the public sphere that was his proper realm.

**Representing Studios and Negotiating Identities**

If, by its fusion of professional and domestic spheres as well as artists’ public and private identities, the home-studio disrupted the binary system aligning masculinity with the professional and the public and associating femininity with the domestic and the private, a number of scholars have questioned the implications of this disruption, reading it as productive and conciliatory rather than destructive and problematic. Alison Strauber reads Frédéric Bazille’s *The Artist’s Studio at 9, rue de la Condamine* (1870; Figure 4) as revelatory of “how male artists embraced domesticity and represented it as central to their

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acquiring a taste for the costly, exotic, useless and, above all, novel.” Superficial and easily seduced, he was castrated and unsexed. Anne Anderson, “‘Fearful Consequences … of Living up to One’s Teapot’: Men, Women, and ‘Cultchah’ in the Aesthetic Movement,” in Edwards and Hart, *Rethinking the Interior*, 111-29. Quote from Anderson, 126-7.

37 Gillett, 190.
creative identities.”\(^{38}\) Granting that studio portraits generally presented the space of artistic production as an all-male domain, Strauber acknowledges an increasing tendency among artists to “incorporate [into their representations of the studio] décor and activities associated with leisure and private life.”\(^{39}\) Accordingly, she highlights the presence of sofa, piano, and stove in Bazille’s Studio. Viewing the large window at the center of the composition as a dividing line between the professional and domestic halves of Bazille’s Studio, Strauber nevertheless argues that Bazille’s painting effectively blurs the boundaries between these professional and domestic spheres, citing as evidence the presence of a palette in the domestic half of Bazille’s Studio.\(^ {40}\) She concludes that Bazille’s painting renders masculinity, artistic creativity, and domesticity compatible.

In like fashion, Kirstin Ringelberg highlights the manner in which the artist’s home departed from bourgeois standards, effectively undermining the ideology of separate spheres by “meld[ing] the worlds of work and home.”\(^ {41}\) Through an analysis of American artist William Merritt Chase’s A Friendly Call (1895; Figure 5), within which “the conventional view of the studio as masculine and the parlor as feminine [is] not so tidily described,” Ringelberg argues that Chase “risked being gendered at least ambiguously, if not effeminately,” particularly within the context of period associations of women with artists as makers of taste and culture.\(^ {42}\) Ringelberg adds, however, that, if


\(^{39}\) Ibid., 122.

\(^{40}\) Ibid., 123-6.

\(^{41}\) Ringelberg, Redefining Gender in American Impressionist Studio Paintings, 38.

\(^{42}\) Ibid., 66, 56.
Chase’s pictures destabilize the separation of spheres, his manner of rendering his female subjects “blank,” devoid of any “psychological dimension,” and akin to the inanimate furnishings of his aesthetic interiors preserves Chase’s difference from the feminine.43

Many of Chase’s images of his Tenth Street Studio in New York deploy the iconography characteristic of late-nineteenth-century representations of the home-studio, alluding to the artist’s professional and material success, cosmopolitan knowledge, and bourgeois status by means of an impressive and eclectic assortment of art objects and luxury items; Chase’s Studio Interior and Tenth Street Studio (Figures 6 and 7), produced within years of Tissot’s Hide and Seek, typify this class of images. Nevertheless, a number of Chase’s later works – particularly those staged in his studio at Shinnecock – depart from established standards.44

Chase’s Hall at Shinnecock of 1892 (Figure 8) might, at a glance, be most readily interpreted as a domestic scene. Here, Chase depicts his wife Alice and his daughters Koto and Cosy. While Koto is preoccupied with the Japanese picture book that unfolds across the foreground of Chase’s image, Cosy gazes outward, perhaps meeting the eyes of her artist-father, whose reflection is barely visible on the surface of the Dutch kas that stands in the distant left corner of the room.45 Once recognized, Chase’s presence within the depicted scene reveals the faulty or illusory quality of viewers’ initial interpretation – that is, their perception of a hermetic domestic realm from which Chase himself is absent.

43Ibid., 63-5.

44Linda Docherty argues that “the domesticated studio theme, which Chase first explored in Brooklyn, reached its climax in the [1890s] at Shinnecock, Long Island.” Docherty, 54.

45Docherty reads Chase’s inclusion of a self-portrait of the artist at work as invoking Diego Velázquez’s Las Meninas. Ibid., 55.
By uniting the artist’s working and living space, his family members, and his own person, *Hall at Shinnecock* calls attention to Chase’s professional and domestic activities as well as his public and private roles – as professional artist, gentleman, husband, and father. Destabilizing accepted binaries, Chase’s picture effectively reconciles the presumably antithetical activities and roles of the artist; at the same time, it preserves at least in part Chase’s distinction from the domestic and presumably feminine realm via the inclusion of his reflected – rather than his actual – self.

Edouard Manet, one of Tissot’s known associates and influences, provided a precedent for the fusion of the domestic and the professional in representations of the artist’s studio. Manet combines markers of domesticity and professional practice as well as familial relations and public personae in his *Déjeuner dans l’atelier* (*Luncheon in the Studio*) of 1868 (Figure 9), a canvas the artist supposedly preferred to call *Après le café*.

Although a preliminary sketch suggests that Manet’s picture originated as a café scene featuring two male subjects, Manet’s finished painting has consistently resisted interpretation. In recent decades, Bradford Collins, Nan Stalnaker, and Michael Fried have attempted to disentangle the subject matter as well as the potential meaning of Manet’s image.46 Stalnaker’s reading of Manet’s *Luncheon* is perhaps most relevant for the discussion at hand. Stalnaker remarks upon the ambiguity of this “studio” picture,

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46See Bradford R. Collins, “Manet’s *Luncheon in the Studio*: An Homage to Baudelaire,” *Art Journal* 38, no. 2 (Winter 1978-1979), 107-13; Nan Stalnaker, “Intention and Interpretation: Manet’s *Luncheon in the Studio*,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 54, no. 2 (Spring 1996), 121-34; and Michael Fried, *Manet’s Modernism, or, The Face of Painting in the 1860s* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1996). Undertaking an iconographic study of the painting, Collins argues that *Luncheon* is symptomatic and reflective of Manet’s artistic commitments; he identifies the right-hand still-life, consisting of food stuffs and table settings, as a sign of Manet’s commitment to naturalism, and he sees the artist’s left-hand still-life, consisting of armor and various *objets d’art*, as embodying his bent for romanticism. At the same time, Collins maintains that *Luncheon* signifies Manet’s indebtedness to Baudelaire; not only does the central figure constitute a dandy of sorts; the artist himself identified with a kind of “dandy-intellegentsia.” Collins, 111.
describing the depicted space as hovering between private and public or, more specifically, between domestic space and public café. Indeed, houseplant, pitcher, table settings, and matronly woman lend a domestic and private air to the scene while an assortment of weapons and armor evokes a courageous masculine spirit as well as a fascination with and intimate knowledge of the medieval past. Manet’s inclusion and foregrounding of a dandified young man might also be said to signify the return of a public persona to the domestic sphere; after all, the dandyish flâneur presumably roamed freely and read, by sight, the public realm. Stalnaker suggests, however, that the depicted young man’s private self compromises his public face; she remarks: “Although the young man is dressed for public display, he looks … uncomfortable to be under public scrutiny. … Léon’s public face … reveals rather than hides the inner gnawing of a young, uncertain self.” As this brief excerpt suggests, Stalnaker also calls attention to the possibility that Manet’s Luncheon in the Studio constitutes a portrait of Léon Leenhoff, who was born to a woman who would eventually become Manet’s wife, Suzanne Leenhoff, and who was believed to have been fathered by Manet or by Manet’s father. In acknowledging this possibility, Stalnaker testifies indirectly to the difficulty of categorizing Manet’s Luncheon in terms of genre.

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47 Stalnaker seems to dismiss the notion that the depicted space actually constitutes a studio. Acknowledging that the armor “is generally accounted for as a random studio prop,” Stalnaker maintains that “there are no other indications that the room … is a studio, nor was there any reference to a studio in the title for the work that Manet is said to have preferred.” Stalnaker, 130.

48 As Collins notes, “the collecting of armor in France began in the 1830s as part of the widespread romantic interest in owning objects with historical, especially medieval, associations.” Collins, 108.

49 Stalnaker, 130.

50 Ibid., 132-3. Notably, when accepted together, Collins’s and Stalnaker’s readings of Manet’s Luncheon transform the painting into an index of the artist’s professional and private identities; whereas Collins focuses on Manet’s artistic style and inspiration, Stalnaker accounts for Manet’s private history as well as the formal qualities of his work.
Meanwhile, in *Manet’s Modernism*, Michael Fried addresses the issue quite explicitly. He situates Manet’s *Luncheon* within the context of “a new and vertiginous proliferation of genres or … a progressive erosion of all meaningful distinctions between genres, hence a vertiginous confusion of genres” – in other words, within the context of “a disconcerting fluidity of the discursive space in which paintings were identified, described, compared, judged.” Indeed, by virtue of its iconography, subject matter, and title, Manet’s *Luncheon in the Studio* refuses easy categorization, positioning itself within the interstices of studio picture, domestic genre painting, and portraiture. The same might be said of Tissot’s *Hide and Seek*; as the image of a potentially identifiable woman and potentially identifiable children at play within a lavishly and eclectically furnished studio, *Hide and Seek* might function as studio portrait, domestic scene, and group portrait.

It is the first of these pictorial genres – namely, the studio portrait – that has stood at the heart of this chapter; in Chapter Three, Tissot’s *Hide and Seek* will be read within the context of domestic genre scenes. In order to establish how Tissot’s studio portrait and domestic scene upholds the ideology of separate spheres, however, one must first attend to the rise of Aestheticism and Orientalism as well as the points of intersections between these cultural movements and the Victorian understanding of femininity. These themes are to be addressed in Chapter Two.

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Fried, 169. Leila W. Kinney describes the proliferation of new genres during the second half of the nineteenth century, a phenomenon she links to increased censorship and the subsequent death of history painting. Citing Frederic Jameson, Kinney maintains that genres function as “social contracts between [artists] and a specific public, whose function is to specify the proper use of a particular cultural artifact.” She adds that genres are not fixed and permanent but that discontinuity and hybridity are inherent in artistic form; according to Kinney, new genres and new modes of looking, seeing, and representing emerge from old genres. See Leila W. Kinney, “Genre: A Social Contract?,” *Art Journal* 46, no. 4 (Winter 1987), 267-77.
Chapter Two: Aestheticism, Orientalism, and Femininity: Late-Nineteenth-Century Intersections

In describing Tissot’s work as illustrative of the ideology of separate spheres, Nancy Marshall has focused on the artist’s choice of setting for his pictures. According to Marshall, “the garden of the suburban detached villa, [the setting for many of Tissot’s images of women and children], embodied the antithesis of the public world of male, paid employment, representing a private, domestic retreat not subject to the dictates of hourly wages.” While “middle-class men commuted easily between the two realms, alternating between the roles of businessman and suburbanite, in a new type of movement which altered the sense of the space of the city,” women “did not have this mobility.”

Tissot’s *Hide and Seek* indeed adheres to this basic model, setting its female subjects in an interior bordered by a garden and a conservatory. At the same time, the picture participates in the depersonalization, objectification, fetishization, and commodification of the feminine – a fact that emerges when one considers the picture in relation to Tissot’s larger oeuvre, late-nineteenth-century *Japonisme*, and the Aesthetic Movement.

*Japonisme* in Britain: Discovering, Displaying, and Deriving Inspiration from Japanese Art and Design

Prior to the 1853 arrival of an American squadron led by Commodore Matthew Perry, Western trade with Japan had been restricted. While large quantities of Japanese ceramics were produced for the export market and ultimately purchased by Western elites, Japanese authorities established strict terms and limited access to the country’s

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52 Marshall, 35.
ports. Subsequent to Perry’s sojourn, however, the American government negotiated a commercial treaty with the Japanese. Later, in August of 1858, the Treaty of Edo granted Britain “most-favored-nation” status, opening additional ports to the country and permitting trade with individuals.\(^{53}\) Among the items exported by the Japanese were china, porcelain, lacquer ware, *cloisonné* ware, fans, and folding screens. These *objets d’art* reached a broader European audience in 1862, when 600 objects from the collection of Sir Rutherford Alcock, the first British minister to tour Japan after its 1850s reopening, were displayed at the International Exhibition in London. Having come to view the international exhibitions as a means of establishing parity between Japan and Western nations, the Japanese government began to organize and fund its own displays, first exhibiting its wares at the Paris Exposition of 1867. Notably, these exhibitions also stimulated consumers’ demand for Japanese goods. While Japanese objects could be found in Paris during the 1850s, they did not reach London until the 1860s, when the collection Alcock displayed in 1862 became available for purchase in the Oriental Warehouse established by Farmers and Roger on Regent Street. In 1875, Arthur Lasenby Liberty, formerly employed by Farmers and Roger, opened his own shop on Regent Street. These businesses were quite profitable and regularly frequented by the artists and designers who catered to the popular taste for all things Japanese.\(^{54}\) Among the bourgeoisie, the possession of Japanese objects had become a sign of status; the greater the authenticity of one’s Japanese objects, the more elite one’s social position appeared to


be; as Klaus Berger notes, “the relevant indicators were the possession of fine imported ware, of cheap Japanese ersatz ware, or of European imitations.”

In Britain, the American-born James McNeill Whistler figured among the first artists to draw inspiration from Japanese art and design. One of Whistler’s associates, Ralph Curtis, in fact credited the artist with having “grafted on to the tired stump of Europe, the vital shoots of Oriental art.” Whistler’s Japonisme is frequently described as progressing from a superficial copying of Japanese motifs and subject matter to a deeper integration of formal and compositional elements employed by Japanese artists. This trajectory, also described as a progression from mere exoticism to a more progressive, Japanese-inflected modernism, has in fact been ascribed to the Japoniste artists as a collective. Among the late-nineteenth-century artistic products that might be classified as superficially exoticized and Orientalized are Whistler’s Purple and Rose: The Lange Lijzen of the Six Marks (Figure 10) and Purple and Gold: The Golden Screen (Figure 11). These paintings also introduce a “visual trope that,” in the words of Gabriel P. Weisberg, “was to strongly influence the way in which many other painters dressed European women in Japanese garb, or showed them transfixed by Japanese objects, which they held in their hands or peered at in shop windows or exhibitions.”

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57 See, for example, ibid., 57-82.


“trope” also appears in a number of works by Alfred Stevens, a Belgian artist who worked in Britain and eventually served as a model for Tissot. Stevens’s *The Blue Dress*, *La Dame en rose*, and *The Japanese Robe*, dated approximately to 1861, 1865, and 1872 respectively, are but three examples (Figures 12, 13, and 14). In each of these pictures, Oriental objects ornament a woman or her surroundings. These pictures not only cater to the widespread appetite for Japanese curiosities; they implicitly link the feminine to the Oriental, transforming their contemplative or introspective female subjects into curiosities equally worthy of contemplation.

Tissot’s early “Japanese” pictures perpetuate the association between the feminine and the exotic. Although Tissot was one of the first artists to build a collection of Japanese objects, much of which he housed in his Paris studio and some of which he featured in his paintings, Tissot also looked to the work of other early *Japonistes*, including both Whistler and Stevens. Nevertheless, Tissot’s work might be said to differ from that of his contemporaries insofar as it presented Japanese rather than European women in Japanese dress. This distinction is perhaps symptomatic of Tissot’s concern for archaeological accuracy, which is believed to have colored much of his work and has since authorized scholars to read Tissot’s modern-life subjects as something like historical documents – that is, as reasonably faithful records of late-nineteenth-century

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60 In a letter to his mother, dated 12 November 1864, Pre-Raphaelite artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti calls attention to Tissot’s appetite for the Japanese objects available at such venues as Madame Desoye’s shop in Paris: “I have bought very little – only four Japanese books … all the costumes were being snapped up by a French artist, Tissot, who it seems is doing three Japanese pictures, which the mistress of the shop described to me as the three wonders of the world, evidently in her opinion quite throwing Whistler into the shade.” Letter reprinted in Michael Justin Wentworth, *James Tissot* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), 69. See also Wentworth, “Tissot and Japonisme,” 130-1.
life in Britain and France.\textsuperscript{61} In addition to identifying Tissot’s influences, Michael Wentworth tracks the artist’s progression from \textit{japonaiserie} – defined as a relatively superficial engagement with Japanese art and design, entailing, on occasion, a mere copying of subject matter – to a more thoughtful and subtle \textit{japonisme}. While Tissot’s later work derived formal and compositional inspiration from Japanese arts, the artist’s early productions reflected a more direct assimilation of Japanese subjects and motifs.\textsuperscript{62}

Despite their conservative nature, Tissot’s early Japanese pictures are critical to the discussion at hand insofar as they rehearse the discourse linking and jointly fetishizing the Oriental and the feminine. In his \textit{La Japonaise au bain} (Figure 15), Tissot presents a realistically rendered, Orientalized, and eroticized young woman. This painting arguably derives its sensuous quality not only from its veiling and unveiling of an idealized female body, but also from its slick appearance and its inviting details. As Elizabeth Prelinger has said of Tissot’s many portraits of Kathleen Newton, “the degree of realism and engagement with detail in the artist’s handling of paint … parallels the intensity of his process of looking, a kind of scopophilia.”\textsuperscript{63} According to Prelinger, Tissot’s fetishization also extended to inanimate objects.

The abundance of detail in Tissot’s work and his engagement with objects of all sorts, from Japonaiserie to costumes, animal skins, furs, fans, betray an obsession with collecting and with the things themselves that fit into a fin-de-siècle phenomenon called ‘bric-a-bracomania,’ an obsession that is but a short step to the

\textsuperscript{61}Wentworth writes of Tissot’s \textit{La Japonaise au bain}: “It is scientifically precise in its documentation of Japanese objects and its attempt to reconstruct a daily life Tissot had never known.” Wentworth maintains that Tissot “essays a more anthropological method” than Whistler in his \textit{Jeune Femme tenant des objets japonais}, remarking: “It seems certain that the model who posed for [the painting] has been supplied with a head taken from a Japanese doll.” Wentworth, \textit{James Tissot}, 70.

\textsuperscript{62}Wentworth, “Tissot and Japonisme,” 127-46.

eroticizing of objects and the sexualizing of sight.\textsuperscript{64}

This elision of living woman and inanimate object finds ready expression in Tissot’s 

*Jeune Femme tenant des objets japonais* (Figure 16), another early painting that pairs an Orientalized and ornamented woman with a blue and white vessel. In *Jeunes Femmes regardant des objets japonais* of 1869 (Figure 17), Tissot seems to separate the Oriental object from the feminine subject; nevertheless, Tissot fetishizes and objectifies the young women, clothing them in elaborate dress and setting them at the center of his composition while obscuring the object of their own vision. Tissot actually painted three versions of this subject, all to similar effect (See Figure 18). Tellingly, one critic wryly observed that the series might be just as well have been titled “Japanese objects looking at young ladies.”\textsuperscript{65}

Stevens’s *Japanese Mask* (Figure 19), produced in the late 1870s, further dramatizes this objectification and fetishization of the female subject. A single, rather grotesque Japanese mask sits on the left border of the canvas; two young girls appear in profile against an otherwise nondescript background; they and their expensive garments, rendered with great attention to detail and in subtly modulated colors, become the focal

\textsuperscript{64}Ibid., 200. Prelinger draws on Emily Apter’s *Feminizing the Fetish: Psychoanalysis and Narrative Obsession in Turn-of-the-Century France* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991). More specifically, she defines fetishes as “instanciations of displaced desire” (209) and characterizes “obsessive looking” as a means of indulging in “fetishistic pleasures” (205). Thus, for Prelinger, Tissot’s focus on the details of individual objects establishes a “relationship between looking and desiring that is unmistakeably erotic and that thus transforms the objects involved into … fetishes” (209). In *Feminizing the Fetish*, Apter herself characterizes artists’ and readers’ attention to detail as festishistic (x-xi). Like Prelinger, she chooses to emphasize the “scopic” (xiii), arguing: “‘Seeing, which, Freud argues, ‘derives from touching,’ has an immense capacity to arouse perverse sexual interest’” (52). She also dedicates one chapter of her book to late-nineteenth-century “bric-a-bracomania, with its domestic altars of eroticized things” (x). In my thesis, I draw upon Prelinger’s and Apter’s readings of fetishization, emphasizing Tissot’s transformation of inanimate objects and their live female counterparts into objects of erotic desire, presented in detail and made vulnerable to an eroticizing, desiring gaze.

\textsuperscript{65}Margaret Flanders Darby, “The Conservatory in St. John’s Wood,” in Lochnan, *Seductive Surfaces*, 179. This critical response is also mentioned in Wentworth, “Tissot and Japonisme,” 133.
point of Stevens’s image. Notably, a kind of mirroring effect is at work in this picture. With eyes meeting on the same plane, the girls and the mask become reflections of one another, the young girls doubly objectified. Equally grotesque Japanese masks appear in Tissot’s *Hide and Seek*; there, they again seem to function as doubles of the depicted female subjects. The marked resemblance between the ostensibly disembodied, floating heads of three of Tissot’s young girls and the Japanese masks suspended from Tissot’s easel on the opposite side of the studio calls attention to the girls’ status as objects.

**Aestheticism: Feminizing the Aesthete and the Aesthetic Interior / Objectifying the Feminine**

The impact of British encounters with Japanese art and design extended to the realm of interior decoration. Designer and South Kensington Museum employee Christopher Dresser appears here as one representative of the larger class of designers and architects drawing inspiration from Japan. Having traveled east in 1877, Dresser published his *Japan, Its Architecture, Art and Art Manufactures* in 1882. There, Dresser presents the arts of Japan as suitable models for European artists, designers, and architects, writing: “I firmly believe that the introduction of the works of Japanese handicraftmen into England has done much to improve our national taste as even our schools of art and public museum [have done] … for these Japanese objects have got into or homes and among them we live.”⁶⁶ In truth, Dresser’s text is but one contribution to the vast body of late-nineteenth-century publications centered on design and interior decoration.⁶⁷ The Aesthetic Movement and the accompanying House Beautiful campaign

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⁶⁷Among these publications, several were devoted to Japanese design: Thomas W. Cutler’s *A Grammar of Japanese Ornament and Design* and George Ashdown Audsley’s *The Ornamental Arts of Japan* both entered the market in 1880. Checkland, 87-8.
stimulated the production of design and decorating manuals, many of them addressed to female homemakers. The Aesthetic Movement drew upon not only Japanese sources but also “sources from Ancient Egypt, Moorish Spain, Chinese, Indian and Persian art, and English eighteenth-century styles in various guises.” The eclectically furnished and widely publicized houses of artists, discussed in Chapter One, became models for bourgeois homeowners desirous of demonstrating their aesthetic taste and, not quite explicitly, their wealth. Artists were not, however, the only tastemakers or keepers of culture. The bourgeois woman responsible for the decoration and upkeep of the home assumed a similar responsibility. Nevertheless, woman’s artistry and agency were limited, and an encroaching femininity came to be perceived as a threat to male aesthetes preoccupied with appearances of self and home.

By endowing interior decoration and, more specifically, household decoration with significance, transforming these activities into a kind of art, Aestheticism effectively democratized artistic practice. The bourgeois housewife could now claim ownership of creative powers; her agency and freedom, however, were limited. After all, in composing her home interior, she merely selected and juxtaposed; her “art” was imitative rather than generative and original. Moreover, the decorating manuals that came to be read as prescriptive rather than loosely instructive circumscribed women’s artistic agency and creative freedom insofar as they fostered dogmatism and imitation. Kathy Psomiades has

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68 Gere, 64.


70 Tiersten, 18-32.
argued that Mary Haweis’s *The Art of Beauty* and *Beautiful Houses*, published in 1878 and 1882 respectively, encouraged the individual female reader to “combine the information in them with her own impression to form a taste unique to her and in defiance of external authorities,” thereby making her own “desires, impressions, and sensations the basis for [her] principles of selection.” Indeed, Haweis explicitly enjoins her audience to exercise their own powers of intellection and freedom of choice, writing:

> We cannot all hope to develop into Turners, Burne Joneses, Wagners … yet the mother of originality is freedom, to think for ourselves and to do as we like. What are we to do? In dress, in home-adornment, in every department of art – regardless of derision, censure and ‘advice’ – WE MUST DO AS WE LIKE.

Nevertheless, late-nineteenth-century aesthetes and housewives generally disregarded Haweis’s injunction against copying too closely the design practices of her featured artist-exemplars. As Anne Anderson has argued, “the ‘liberation of desire’” promised by Aestheticism was nothing more than “an illusion.” The bourgeois aesthete insisted on “choosing the right colours and curtains, demonstrating a ‘natural sense of taste’ that signaled acceptance of Aesthetic values.”

Before addressing the unique relationship between female subjects and their domestic surroundings, the compromised position of male aesthetes merits some attention. Not only did these men practice an imitative art, they also withdrew too much

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72 Admittedly, Haweis qualifies this statement with the words: “I do not intend to imply that the Beautiful will be attained by everybody rashly falling foul of everybody else, and by ignorant persons outraging the laws of good taste and feeling in Art more than in other things. … I have said, educate yourself before you act, and this may be best done by studying and comparing various styles and determining one’s own by careful judgment.” Mary Haweis, “The Art of Beauty” and “The Art of Dress” (New York: Garland, 1978), 224-5.

73 Emphasis added. Anderson notes that, “ironically, the artists behind the Aesthetic craze had not intended to impose dogma,” choosing instead to promote the “general principles … [of] comfort, harmony, soft colours, graceful and delicate effects, and quietness,” as well as “the careful selection and arrangement of unusual or unique objects.” Anderson, “‘Doing As We Like’,” 352, 347.
from their proper, presumably natural realm: the “public, masculine world of work and commerce.” George du Maurier’s “Intellectual Epicures” (Figure 20), published in a February 1876 issue of *Punch*, seems to encapsulate contemporary anxieties regarding the status of the male aesthete. Du Maurier’s cartoon invites a comparison between the “dilettante” who, “steeped in aesthetic culture, … complacently boasts that he never reads a newspaper, and that the events of the outer world possess no interest for him whatsoever,” and the manifestly unlearned and untraveled “old ‘ooman” depicted on the right. The feminization of male artists and aesthetes occurred at a time when a rising feminist movement and the need to maintain and demonstrate national virility gave rise to an ideal of active and vigorous masculinity.

Another cartoon by du Maurier suggests that Aestheticism had equally compromising effects on women. Titled “Aesthetic Love in a Cottage” (Figure 21), this cartoon presents a soon-to-be-married Aesthetic woman as gaunt and seemingly aged beyond her years. Here, the woman’s preoccupation with beautiful surfaces and decorated interiors deprives her of her own beauty and vitality. In du Maurier’s “The Six-Mark Tea-Pot” (Figure 22), however, a woman clothed in Aesthetic garb and framed by

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74 Andrea Kaston Tange, *Architectural Identities: Domesticity, Literature, and the Victorian Middle Classes* (Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 2010), 11. Tange describes the ideology of separate spheres as foundational to the “fiction of a stable, knowable, homogeneous middle class” (8).


76 Psomiades reproduces this image in her *Beauty’s Body*. She cites this work as revelatory of the fact that, for du Maurier, while “aestheticist women look like aestheticism’s other art objects and are aestheticism’s central consumers … a woman’s resemblance to aestheticist art objects does not usually make her beautiful.” Ibid., 155.
an Aesthetic interior seems to fulfill her aspiration of living up to her teapot, becoming herself an aesthetic object worthy of admiration.\textsuperscript{77} As Psomiades notes, “du Maurier represents his feminine character as having a kinship with [the teapot] that his male aesthete does not share, a kinship that comes through resemblance.”\textsuperscript{78} Indeed, du Maurier effectively elides the distinction between the Aesthetic woman and her Aesthetic surrounds, including teapot, vase, and Japanese folding screen.

The sentiment expressed in du Maurier’s “The Six-Mark Tea-Pot” surfaces in other contemporary sources. Frances Power Cobbe’s 1869 essay “The Final Cause of Woman” is quite telling:

The more womanly a woman is, the more she is sure to throw her personality over the home, and transform it, from a mere eating and sleeping place, or an upholsterer’s showroom, into a sort of outermost garment of her soul; harmonized with all her nature as her robe and the flower are harmonized with her bodily beauty. The arrangement of her rooms, the light and shade, warmth and coolness, sweet odours, and soft or rich colours, are … the expression of the character of the woman. … A woman whose home does not bear to her this relation … is in one or another imperfect condition.\textsuperscript{79}

Notably, Cobbe’s essay presents womanhood and femininity as contingent on a subject’s success in achieving a marked resemblance to her surroundings. As was mentioned in Chapter One, the household interior was perceived as reflecting the character and social position of its inhabitants. Insofar as “taste became the privilege and obligation of

\textsuperscript{77}The underlying sexual pun must be acknowledged. It need not, however, be incorporated into the present discussion of the work.

\textsuperscript{78}Psomiades, 155. Psomiades also highlights the resemblance between the male figure and Oscar Wilde as well as the resemblance between the female figure and Dante Gabriel Rossetti’s muses.

women,” however, women enjoyed a “specific relationship with objects.” In the words of Nancy Armstrong, “the female subject … was what she bought, wore and put in her house.” Objectified through this comparison with her material belongings and physical surroundings, the female subject arguably takes on the status of a commodity. For Psomiades, the bourgeois woman and the bourgeois house came to “mark the place where aesthetic and economic value overlap.”

**Tissot’s Objectification of the Feminine: The Beginnings of an Analysis of *Hide and Seek***

Despite his close associations with and occasional emulation of Aesthetes like Whistler, Tissot never fully embraced Aestheticism, remaining a realist and a storyteller. He did, however, participate in the discourse that equated women with the decorative and domestic objects occupying their household interiors. Accordingly, in his *Hide and Seek*, Tissot depersonalizes, commodifies, and fetishizes his female subjects by collapsing the distance and distinctions between those subjects and the inanimate objects that occupy his home-studio.

To a certain extent, Tissot’s *Hide and Seek* closes the gap between female subject and inanimate object insofar it features the woman, children, furnishings, and bric-a-brac that served as reusable props for Tissot’s London paintings. Moreover, within *Hide and Seek*, Tissot treats these props in a consistent fashion, presenting them as somehow

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80 Nancy Armstrong, “The Occidental Alice,” *Differences* 2, no. 2 (Summer 1990), 34. Beverly Gordon and Lisa Tiersten are cited in Chapter One. Both of these sources address the unique relationship between the bourgeois housewife and the decorative objects around her, with Tiersten writing: “The objects in a woman’s home played a synecdochal rather than a symbolic role in relation to her identity; a room decorated by the bourgeois housewife was ultimately not so much her creation as an extension of her very being.” Tiersten, 31-2.

81 Psomiades, 133, 135.

interchangeable. He does not privilege his human subjects; nor does he grant any object prominence. Rather, by interspersing human subject and inanimate object, Tissot highlights the analogous relationship between them.\textsuperscript{83} This relationship emerges most readily in the aforementioned resemblance between three of the girls’ eerily disembodied heads and the Japanese masks hanging from the easel on the opposite side of the studio interior. Notably, in 1876, but a few years prior to Tissot’s production of \textit{Hide and Seek}, Edmond Duranty published his “Bric-à-Brac,” a short story within which the living occupants of a drawing room are mistaken with its furnishings.\textsuperscript{84} In establishing parity among figures and furnishings, Tissot’s \textit{Hide and Seek} arguably confirms Prelinger’s contention that Tissot animates his objects while depersonalizing and objectifying his female subjects. Prelinger writes:

> Tissot infused the objects in his environments … with such pulsating inner life that they exhibit incantatory power … Tissot furthermore reinforced the power of the \textit{thing} not only within a specific picture, but in the repeated use of the same props from his collection of costumes and accessories; whether fans, balls, or animal skins, they together comprise a set of mesmerizing internal cross-references.\textsuperscript{85}

Tissot’s animation of objects is also revealed in the critical response to his Japanese images – that is, in one critic’s express inclination to read Tissot’s \textit{Jeunes Femmes regardant des objets japonais} as an image of Japanese objects looking at young women.

The setting of Tissot’s \textit{Hide and Seek} also lends itself to a reading of Tissot’s female subjects as commodified objects. Of Tissot’s London pictures, Nancy Marshall

\begin{footnotes}
\item[83]Susan Sidlauskas ascribes a similar effect to Edgar Degas’s \textit{The Bellelli Family}, remarking: “Degas simultaneously exploits and critiques the tendency of the middle class to define itself through their possessions; here, possessions divide the members of the family … Degas subtly intensifies the analogy between persons and their things by juxtaposing Giulia’s fragile limb to the stick leg of the chair she sits upon.” Susan Sidlauskas, “Psyche and Sympathy: Staging Interiority in the Early Modern Home,” in Reed, \textit{Not at Home}, 70.

\item[84]Ibid., 71.

\item[85]Prelinger, 200.
\end{footnotes}
has contended that the topographical sites and figural types featured in Tissot’s paintings meant more to contemporary viewers than did the individual identities of his human subjects. In light of the fact that many of the images for which Kathleen Newton modeled were set in the then-suburban St. John’s Wood, Marshall has suggested, moreover, that contemporary viewers might have read these pictures as images of “kept women,” or bourgeois gentlemen’s mistresses. Knowledge of Tissot and Newton’s affair might have only solidified such an interpretation in the minds of these viewers, as Newton and Tissot never married, the former having been wed and divorced once before. Insofar as the kept mistress is “in business as both salesperson and commodity,” engaged in a system of sexual exchange and made valuable as an erotic object, Tissot’s St. John’s Wood pictures reveal themselves to be images of female commodities.

The objectification and commodification that Tissot effects in his *Hide and Seek* is performed in a number of his other pictures. One might cite Tissot’s Japanese pictures as well as his allegorical representations of women, including *October* (c. 1877; Figure 23) and *Spring* (1878; Figure 24). Among the pictures for which Kathleen Newton served as a model, *The Garden Bench* (Figure 25) and *Quiet* (Figure 26) exemplify Tissot’s fetishization of women; the artist dresses up his female protagonist, rendering her garments as carefully and in as much detail as he does the rich furs and lush vegetation

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87 Ibid., 36. Margaret Flanders Darby echoes Marshall as she remarks upon the ambiguity of St. John’s Wood, which she describes as “opulent yet risqué, often home to the privileged demi-mondaine kept in discreet comfort by her bourgeois gentleman lover.” Darby, 161.

88 Marshall, 38.
surrounding the figure.\textsuperscript{89} Perhaps pertinent to this discussion is critic and writer Octave Uzanne’s \textit{Les Ornements de la femme} (1892), in which animal skins or furs are presented as accessories capable of intensifying a woman’s allure.\textsuperscript{90} Women’s susceptibility to objectification and commodification finds expression in a number of images featuring tea sets. In \textit{Le Thé} (Figure 27), painted in 1872, Tissot offers a closer view of the ornately dressed woman occupying the left third of his roughly contemporary painting \textit{Bad News (The Parting)} (Figure 28). Extracted from any narrative scene, the young lady becomes an iconic figure. Her seemingly vacant or undirected stare seems to deprive her of interiority and subjectivity. Objectified, she enters into a synecdochical relationship with the precious tea settings that sit within reach on the table before her. The proximity between woman and tea settings is also highlighted in Tissot’s \textit{Reading the News} (c. 1874; Figure 29). Here, Tissot provides a foil for the objectified woman and her ceramic double by including the figure of a man who, by “reading the news,” demonstrates his own agency and subjectivity. As in Tissot’s \textit{Jeunes Femmes regardant des objets japonais}, the woman stands at the center of the composition, vulnerable to viewers’ objectifying gaze, while the male figure sits at the margins of the picture and is in fact cropped.

In some respects, Tissot’s treatment of Kathleen Newton in \textit{Hide and Seek} differs from his treatment of the female figures just discussed. After all, the Kathleen of \textit{Hide and Seek} assumes a maternal aspect by virtue of her proximity to the four young girls and despite her seeming lack of interest in the young girls’ activities. Clad in a rather

\textsuperscript{89} Prelinger discusses Tissot’s many images of Kathleen in terms of obsession, fetishization, and commodification. See Prelinger, 185-211.

\textsuperscript{90} Ibid., 204-5.
nondescript dress, the plainness of which is perhaps accentuated by its juxtaposition with a decorative lamp and a tiger’s fur, this Kathleen seems to resist the eroticization and fetishization that Prelinger ascribes to other representations of Tissot’s London mistress. By marginalizing Kathleen, whom he confines to a corner of the studio, Tissot further protects his model from the eroticizing and fetishizing stare of viewers. Finally, by presenting Kathleen in the act of reading a newspaper, Tissot endows her with a kind of subjectivity or agency akin to that demonstrated by the male figure portrayed in *Reading the News*. These observations may allow for an alternative reading of *Hide and Seek*; nevertheless, when considered in relation to the rest of the composition as well as Tissot’s larger oeuvre, Tissot’s figure of Kathleen can hardly be said to escape depersonalization.

Tissot’s objectification and commodification of his female subjects as well as his frequent – albeit, at times, partial – exclusion of male subjects from his pictures will be revisited in the final chapter. This chapter situates Tissot’s *Hide and Seek* within the context of other domestic genre scenes, revealing the ways in which the painting upholds the ideology of separate spheres while perpetuating the discourse that objectifies the female sex, a discourse to which late-nineteenth-century *Japonisme* and Aestheticism contributed.
Chapter Three: Pictures of Domesticity: Assigning Objecthood and Subjectivity to Figures Inside and Outside the Home

The preceding chapters have presented two major claims: first, that Tissot’s *Hide and Seek* defies any strict taxonomy of pictorial genres, bearing formal and iconographic markers of the studio picture, the domestic scene, and the family portrait; and, second, that, despite the threat that this confusion of genres poses to the ideology of separate spheres, Tissot’s painting ultimately preserves standard conceptions of gender difference and of gendered spaces. Here, both claims will be revisited. *Hide and Seek* will be read within the context of contemporary domestic scenes and family portraits, pictures with which Tissot’s painting shares certain formal characteristics and motifs. This re-contextualization and analysis of Tissot’s ambiguous picture will elucidate, moreover, the means by which the painting visualizes and in fact insists upon the separation of spheres.

More on the Objectification of the Feminine: Nineteenth-Century Dolls and the Boit Daughters

Tissot’s objectification and commodification of his female subjects, as one means by which the artist highlights sexual difference and the intimate relationship between femininity and the home, received considerable attention in Chapter Two. The present chapter elaborates upon this theme by way of a brief reference to the burgeoning doll-making industry and a more lengthy discussion of John Singer Sargent’s *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit* (Figure 30), a painting dateable to 1882, the year in which Tissot is believed to have finished his *Hide and Seek*. Notably, Sargent’s painting resembles Tissot’s painting in a number of ways, and not only by virtue of its date of production or
inclusion of young female subjects. Originally exhibited as *Portraits of Children*, Sargent’s work, like Tissot’s, might be read as a domestic scene populated by generic figures or as a family portrait featuring identifiable and nameable subjects; it, too, challenges standard genre categories.

As has been argued, the four young girls featured in Tissot’s *Hide and Seek* betray their object status by outwardly resembling Tissot’s Japanese masks and by positioning themselves – or, more accurately, *being* positioned – among the inanimate contents of Tissot’s studio without claiming any prominence or privilege. At the same time, the young girls’ cherubic features – their puffy cheeks and wide eyes, particularly noticeable in the golden-haired seeker crawling on all fours and framed by an ornate rug and tiger’s fur – evoke dolls’ heads. A number of scholars, including art historians Anna Green and Greg Thomas, have argued that the uncanny resemblance between nineteenth-century dolls and painted children emblematizes and even participates in the acculturation, or conditioning, of young girls as well as their objectification and commodification.91 Citing works by Impressionist artists such as Renoir, Thomas argues that late-nineteenth-century artists “embrac[ed] rather than challeng[ed] the prototypes sold in Paris shops, … produc[ing] for the same class of consumers … another kind of luxury good circulating in the family market”: paintings “purchased by bourgeois patrons to adorn well-appointed homes.” According to Thomas, these paintings ultimately “propagat[ed] the same stereotyped model of girlhood” upheld by the makers, purchasers,

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and users of dolls. Thus, Tissot’s doll-like girls might signify not only the association of femaleness and femininity with objecthood and commodity status, but also the gender differences naturalized during children’s earliest years.

Notably, Sargent sets a doll in the lap of the youngest girl featured in his *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit*, a girl whose features are rather similar to those of Tissot’s youngest subject. David Lubin cites this doll as evidence of Sargent’s objectification of the toddler and her three older sisters. Reading the four girls as “a single symbolic being, the Female Child,” Lubin argues that Sargent renders this figure, the Female Child,

a costly aesthetic object, like the gleaming Oriental vase; a pearl to be displayed … a plaything or puppet, like the doll … something to be trodden upon, like the rug; something that is ultimately blank or empty, like the rectangular fireplace … trivial, ornamental, wholly predicated upon someone else’s enjoyment and delectation.

With these words, Lubin characterizes Sargent’s treatment of the Boit daughters as objectifying; Sargent bestows upon the Boit daughters a synecdochical relationship with the objects surrounding them while depriving the girls of any kind of agency or subjectivity. Tissot treats the young girls of his *Hide and Seek* in a similar manner. If, as Lubin suggests, Sargent’s picture speaks to the condition of all female children, Tissot’s picture might be characterized as equally totalizing. After all, insofar as Tissot’s girls possess no distinguishing features, appearing nearly identical, they, too, might be said to

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92 Of Renoir’s *Madame Charpentier and Her Children* (1878), Thomas writes: “Both Paul and Georgette appear as feminized, doll-like commodities put on spectacular display along with other showy commodities – Asian furniture, the Newfoundland dog, and their mother’s chic dress.” Thomas, 46-7.

represent archetypal female children – or, in Lubin’s words, to constitute “a single symbolic being, the Female Child.”

To a certain extent, Susan Sidlauskas’s interpretation of Sargent’s *Daughters* is consistent with Lubin’s. Drawing on psychological theory, Sidlauskas posits that, in Sargent’s time, children and adolescents were perceived as identifying with the external world and believing themselves to be continuous with the inanimate objects surrounding them. Like Lubin, Sidlauskas maintains that Sargent denies his female subjects any kind of perceptible interiority, and she grants that the Japanese vases featured in the painting call to mind the “objecthood of the woman as a possession of her family.” Sidlauskas’s interpretation of the Japanese vases nevertheless betrays a certain degree of ambivalence. Reading the vases as icons of “the exotic, or the Other,” Sidlauskas proceeds to establish an analogy between the vases and the Boit daughters, who are themselves icons of another “radical otherness”: childhood. Even as she determines that Sargent’s painting recites the popular discourse that renders the female child the “quintessential emblem for adult interiority,” Sidlauskas ultimately restores interiority to Sargent’s girls. That Sargent’s painting transforms his subjects into allegories of adult interiority while forestalling viewers’ penetration of the young subjects’ own psyches does not constitute a complete denial of the existence of those psyches. Tissot’s *Hide and Seek* may lend itself to such an ambivalent reading by virtue of its own ambiguity; the painting tends to

94Ibid., 92.

95Sidlauskas, *Body, Place, and Self*, 84, 88.

96Ibid., 88. Sidlauskas writes: “If [the Boit daughters] are to varying degrees sites of projection for an adult’s vision of childhood, then the vases can refer to something even more general: the childhood of humanity.”

97Ibid., 90.
restore interiority to the female subjects it depersonalizes, objectifies, and commodifies.

**Recovering the Female Psyche: Reading Tissot’s Inscrutable Mirrors**

The two mirrors that appear in Tissot’s *Hide and Seek* complicate the artist’s apparently objectifying treatment of the female subjects, alluding to the figures’ possession of unseen and perhaps unreadable psychological interiorities. One of these mirrors hangs on the wall adjacent to the folding screen, above three carefully aligned ceramic vessels. Perched upon a painter’s easel, the second mirror might be mistaken, at first, for a framed canvas. That the large gold frame in fact contains a mirror can be confirmed if one considers its relationship with its more modest companion. In each case, the enframed surface seems to reflect an image of the studio windows, the dividing bars of which create crisscross patterns. Effectively multiplying the studio windows, the mirrors might be said to open up the dark interior and counter the sense of enclosure; nevertheless, insofar as they are contiguous with the studio walls, the mirrors also heighten the sense of containment. Though the garden and the conservatory adjoining Tissot’s studio remain feminine realms, Tissot’s picture highlights the restricted nature of women’s movement.

The capacity of Tissot’s mirrors to restore subjectivity and interiority to his female subjects arguably hinges on the capacity of mirrors to signify the human psyche. Alfred Stevens seems to visualize the correspondence between mirror and psychological interiority in his *La Psyché (Mon Atelier)* of 1871 (Figure 31). In this studio portrait, Stevens depicts a popular type of standing mirror known as a *psyché*. Insofar as the term

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98 Another painting by Tissot, in which Kathleen occupies a space nearly identical to that which she inhabits in *Hide and Seek*, further substantiates the claim that the gold frame holds a mirror. In this painting, a gold frame sits upon an easel to Kathleen’s left. Within this frame, the green curtains hanging behind Kathleen are reflected quite legibly. These green curtains appear, too, in *Hide and Seek*. 
psyché also refers to the soul or mind of a person, Stevens’s mirror arguably becomes not
only reflective of external realities but also allusive to unseen and un-seeable interior
realities.99 James McNeill Whistler evokes the psychological valence of the mirror more
subtly in his Symphony in White No. 2: The Little White Girl of 1864 (Figure 32). Here, a
young woman, almost infantilized by Whistler’s choice of title, stands in Aesthetic dress
amidst the exotic and decorative contents of an Aesthetic interior. While restricting
viewers’ access to the girl’s face, occluding its left side entirely, Whistler depicts a fuller,
more emotive visage on the surface of a mirror. It is through her reflection that Whistler’s
Little White Girl reveals herself to be an introspective and contemplative, thinking and
feeling subject. Unlike Whistler, Tissot does not include mirror reflections of his female
subjects. Accordingly, the extent to which Tissot restores subjectivity to the female
inhabitants of his home-studio remains ambiguous, and Tissot’s picture remains
overwhelmingly objectifying and commodifying.

Of course, Tissot’s mirrors might lend themselves to other interpretations.
Gregory Galligan suggests two alternatives in an essay on Manet’s realism and the
semiotics of the painted mirror. According to Galligan, the mirror served not only as a
tool for or symbol of mimesis but as a cipher for the “essentially reflexive [and
subjective] condition of all looking” and of all representation, even realist
representation.100 By placing one of his mirrors on an easel and allowing unsuspecting
viewers to mistake that mirror for a painted canvas, Tissot indeed seems to offer

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99Juliet Kinchin advances a similar claim, writing: “The use of the term ‘Psyche’ to describe [full-length
dressing] mirrors points to their symbolic role in representing the alter ego.” Juliet Kinchin, “Performance
and the Reflected Self: Modern Stagings of Domestic Space, 1860-1914,” Studies in the Decorative Arts
16, no. 1 (Fall-Winter 2008-2009), 85-6.

100Gregory Galligan, “The Self Pictured: Manet, the Mirror, and the Occupation of Realist Painting,” The
Art Bulletin 80, no. 1 (March 1998), 140.
commentary on the nature of representation and, more specifically, realist representation. That Tissot pursued descriptive realism and archaeological accuracy in his work only lends additional support to the argument that the mirrors in *Hide and Seek* allude to the artist’s mimetic aims.

Tissot’s mirrors also betray the subjective nature of perception and representation. Tissot’s placement of the mirrors departs from Galligan’s basic model of the “mirror mode” of representation, according to which the mirror capturing the reflection of the objects, persons, and spaces an artist depicts sits on an unseen or unrepresented fourth wall, itself positioned behind or aligned with the artist and the beholder or viewer. Nevertheless, insofar as Tissot’s composition encourages a kind of “empathic, rather than alienated, mode of perception,” offering an open foreground as a receptacle for viewers’ projected selves, it exposes what Galligan calls the “paradoxical premise of all realist representation.”101 In other words, it reveals the extent to which the artist – as beholder and reproducer of a scene – assumes a position within the space and among the figures he professes to depict objectively; it reveals the artist’s compulsion to “figure his own body within the tableau, or pictorial ensemble, as though he had stood before an actual mirror.”102 While *Hide and Seek* evokes the presence of the artist and his viewers by potentiating an empathic viewing and a projection of the self into the pictorial space,

101 Here, Galligan draws upon James J. Gibson’s model of the “ecological beholder” – that is, a viewer who maintains a “subliminal awareness of the self as an object in the visual field.” Galligan, 150, 146. Notably, in her discussion of Edgar Degas’s enigmatic *Interior*, Susan Sidlauskas cites Gibson while deploying terms and concepts similar to those used by Galligan. She describes the yawning space at the center of Degas’s composition as “a site for projections of the spectator,” adding: “Degas devised a pictorial structure that actively solicits the imaginative musings of the spectator. Out of an absence – of persons, gestures, light, and communication – the artist shaped a presence whose expressive power is most fully realized through the receptivity of the viewer.” See Susan Sidlauskas, “Resisting Narrative: The Problem of Edgar Degas’s *Interior,*” *The Art Bulletin* 75, no. 4 (Dec. 1993), 684.

102 Galligan, 148.
Tissot and his viewers are ultimately absented from the picture. The last section of this chapter explicates the significance of these absences, which ultimately preserve and promote the Victorian ideology of separate spheres.

**Traces of and Spaces for an Absent Presence: The Male Subject**

Indirectly visualized, evoked by and made present within a foreground that has been strategically emptied, Tissot himself constitutes one of the absent presences through which his *Hide and Seek* simulates the separation of spheres. As the productive and ordering hand behind the work of art, Tissot becomes an absent father whose avoidance of direct representation suggests his mobility outside the home. Absent fathers “appear,” too, in Sargent’s *The Daughters of Edward Darley Boit* and Renoir’s *Madame Charpentier and her Children* (Figure 33). Lubin interprets the empty foreground and the impenetrable black background of Sargent’s painting as evocative of an absent yet still-regulatory father, engaging in linguistic play so to transform the box- or boîte-like room into a cipher for Edward Darley Boit. Lubin claims that, despite his absence, Boit is the true subject of Sargent’s picture. Renoir’s *Madame Charpentier and her Children*, which predates Sargent’s and Tissot’s pictures by several years, might also be said to privilege the absent father. As Greg Thomas writes,

> the empty chair at the Japanese or Chinese bamboo table evokes a missing person, … the picture creates an impression of a semiprivate family space being shared with the public. All of this makes the picture typical of those family portraits, both photographic and painted, that eliminate the father and identify the rest of the nuclear family with the feminine, domestic space. Yet in some way the portrait is all about the missing dad.¹⁰³

Renoir indeed utilizes the figure of an empty chair and a set table to evoke the absent husband and father. This absence effectively places the male head-of-household outside

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¹⁰³Thomas, 174.
the domestic domain, confining woman and children to the aesthetic interior and preserving the separation of spheres. Tissot achieves a similar effect in his *Hide and Seek*. There, a golden teapot, two white teacups, and two plush, fur-laden chairs call attention to the artist’s absence while eliciting an expectation of his presence. At the same time, the exotic objects that occupy the studio interior allude to the male artist’s mobility as a cosmopolitan gentleman and collector. Thus, it is not only by virtue of its formal arrangement but also through its iconographic details that *Hide and Seek* registers a male presence and becomes an image of the absent father.

An iconographic detail that has yet to be addressed is the multicolored striped ball that appears in the bottom right-hand corner of Tissot’s picture. This children’s toy appears in other of the artist’s works, many of which feature Tissot and Kathleen’s illegitimate son Cecil George. Although the boy is not among the children pictured in *Hide and Seek*, the toy arguably evokes his presence. Like his father, Cecil becomes an absent male whose presence is visualized indirectly and whose agency and mobility are preserved. Thus, wittingly or not, Cecil becomes complicit in the maintenance of the ideology of separate spheres. Tissot’s *The Little Nimrod* (Figure 34) lends additional support to such a reading. Here, in the company of the striped ball, Cecil acts out the role of the biblical warrior and hunter Nimrod, imaginatively slaying the tigers his female companions represent. In and through the children’s play, gender roles are differentiated and naturalized.  

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104 Of this image and the significance of children’s play, Malcolm Warner and Nancy Rose Marshall write: “The boy is the main active figure in the image … Play, and representations of play, were influential reinforcers of gender roles. Playing at killing animals teaches the boy about the appropriateness of blood sport in the life of an English gentleman; implicitly it also compares the hierarchy of male over female to that of man over animal.” Warner and Marshall, 118.
Formal and iconographic indicators of an absent presence also appear in two pictures from Tissot’s *Femme à Paris* series. Painted after Tissot’s return to Paris in 1882, *The Liar* and *The Sphinx* (Figures 35 and 36) feature domestic interiors that bear a striking resemblance to the artist’s London studio, the backdrop for his *Hide and Seek*. Both of these paintings lend themselves to an embodied, empathic vision, and each picture positions its viewers in the place of an externalized, invisible, and presumably male second subject. Citing the ostensible subject matter of the paintings, Margaret Flanders Darby suggests that, in each instance, the externalized second subject is a male artist. In light of the fact that Tissot’s *The Liar* illustrates an episode in Alphonse Daudet’s “A Life’s Lie,” one of the short stories comprising Daudet’s *The Wives of the Artists*, Darby concludes that the picture stations its viewers in the same position as the “cuckolded [male] artist of [Daudet’s] story … who seems to have just risen from the tea tray and the ‘open book.’” Darby adds: “The masculine presence … remains, however, only a ghostly presence, its surveillance suggested rather than delineated.” *The Sphinx* likewise performs the conflation of viewer, absent male presence, and artist. Suspicions that Tissot’s one-time fiancée Louise Riesener modeled for this work have driven Darby to read the top hat and walking stick as “another masculine ghost … presumably the viewer, and perhaps the artist.”105

Ultimately, Tissot’s *Hide and Seek* reinscribes conventional understandings of gender difference while upholding the ideology of separate spheres. Not only does the image depersonalize, objectify, and commodify Tissot’s female subjects, it also maintains the traditional gender divide insofar as it omits any male subject, calling attention to that omission by retaining formal and iconographic traces of a male presence.

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105 Darby, 175-6.
Conclusion

By virtue of its participation in a longstanding modern tradition of studio portraiture as well as its resemblance to contemporary domestic genre scenes, Tissot’s *Hide and Seek* destabilizes the boundaries of genre while multiplying the analytical lenses and interpretive strategies that viewers might apply to the painting. Read within the context of studio portraits on the one hand and domestic scenes and family portraits on the other, *Hide and Seek* invites speculation about the identity of the artist, including the gendered dimensions of that identity, while projecting a certain image of the domestic realm and the familial relations acted out therein. In the face of Aestheticism’s perceived threat to the masculinity of the artist and the studio, *Hide and Seek* ultimately reaffirms the ideology of separate spheres. It achieves this end by its differential treatment of the female inhabitants of Tissot’s home-studio and an invisible, externalized male presence that seems to resist capture and domestication.

Insofar as my reading of *Hide and Seek* has entailed comparison with the work of Tissot’s British, American, and French contemporaries, it functions as a case study. It speaks, first, to the instability of genre distinctions. Drawing upon Frederic Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act*, Leila Kinney casts pictorial genres as “social contracts between [artists] and a specific public.”106 She nevertheless grants that genres are not fixed and permanent but inherently susceptible to revision and hybridization. In blending the subject matter and the formal and

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106 Kinney, 268.
compositional conventions of studio portraits and domestic scenes, Tissot’s *Hide and Seek* forges two separate contracts with its bourgeois audience, generating two divergent sets of expectations and satisfying neither. Meanwhile, despite its refusal to accommodate viewers’ expectations, Tissot’s picture reflects the *mentalité* of its bourgeois audience, visualizing and sanctioning the ideology of separate spheres that held such currency during the late nineteenth century.

In the one hundred and thirty years since Tissot’s production of his *Hide and Seek*, the artist’s studio and artists’ representations of the studio have continued to serve as real and imagined sites for the dramatization of gender identities and the relations among the sexes. While Tissot was painting his *Hide and Seek*, Degas was working on a portrait of Mary Cassatt in her studio (Figure 37). Positioning a seated and seemingly introspective or contemplative Cassatt rather close to the picture plane, Degas effectively obscures any other accoutrements of the artist’s studio. Thus, despite his admiration of Cassatt’s talent, Degas presents the female artist as foremost a model. In this respect, Degas’s portrait differs from the self-portrait Cassatt produced in watercolor in 1880 (Figure 38). In the latter work, Cassatt appears as an artist who maintains her femininity despite her engagement in a productive art, here signified by a drawing surface that is suggested by a few dashed-off lines. Degas’s veiling of his sitter’s studio does not account for Cassatt’s dislike of her colleague’s painting, which remained in her collection until at least 1912, when she requested that Durand-Ruel find a buyer for the painting outside America. Rather, it was because Degas had depicted her as an unattractive, “repugnant person” that Cassatt wished to dissociate herself from the painting.107 Norma Broude has in fact attributed the artist’s aversion to the portrait to her maintenance of

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“classed notions of femininity and decorum;” according to Broude, Cassatt demonstrated over the course of her artistic career, both a “resistance” to and “complicity” with the gender stereotypes of her time.”

Nearly seventy years later, across the Atlantic, a 1949 issue of Life presented to its audiences the studio and working practices of the Abstract Expressionist Jackson Pollock. There, a brief article featuring two images of Pollock at work in his studio opens with a photograph (Figure 39) of what the magazine describes as a “brooding, puzzled-looking man.” With his arms and legs crossed, his shoulders leaning against one of his canvases, and a cigarette dangling from his mouth, the Pollock presented on the first page of the magazine article projects a certain kind of rugged, uncouth, and nonchalant masculinity, one that would become quite familiar as the Abstract Expressionists rose to prominence in the international art world. Evidently, in using his studio as a site for the negotiation of gender, Tissot was participating in a pervasive and persistent tradition. Deriving meaning from its play with genre within the late-nineteenth-century contexts of Aestheticism and Orientalism, Tissot’s Hide and Seek constitutes but one proof of the capacity for art to articulate and circulate particular assumptions and ideologies, ideas and ideals of an artistic or social nature.


109“Jackson Pollock: Is he the greatest living painter in the United States?” Life (August 8, 1949), 42.
Figure 2. J.M. Brydon, Studio for James Tissot, Esquire, Grove End Road, lithograph in The Building News (15 May 1874). Source: Katharine Lochnan, ed., Seductive Surfaces: The Art of Tissot (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 163.
Figure 4. Frédéric Bazille, *The Artist’s Studio at 9, rue de la Condamine*, 1870. Oil on canvas, 98 x 128.5 cm. Musée d’Orsay, Paris, France. Source: ARTstor.
Figure 8. William Merritt Chase, *Hall at Shinnecock*, 1892. Pastel on canvas, 32 1/8 x 41 in. Terra Foundation for American Art, Chicago, Illinois. Source: ARTstor.
Figure 12. Alfred Stevens, *The Blue Dress*, c. 1861. Oil on panel, 12 9/16 x 10 ¼ in. Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute, Williamstown, Massachusetts. Source: ARTstor.
Figure 13. Alfred Stevens, *La Dame en rose*, 1866. Oil on canvas, 87 x 57.15 cm. Musée Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique, Brussels, Belgium. Source: Saskia de Bodt et al., *Alfred Stevens, Brussels-Paris, 1823-1906* (Brussels, Belgium: Mercatorfonds in association with the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium and the Van Gogh Museum, 2009), 171.
INTELLECTUAL EPICURES.

SWEPTED IN AESTHETIC CULTURE, AND SURROUNDED BY ARTISTIC WALL-PAPERS, BLUE CHINA, JAPANESE FANS, MEDIEVAL STUFFY, BOXES, AND HIS FAVOURITE PERIODICALS OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY, THE INCIDENT DE TOMBYNS COMPLACENTLY BOASTS THAT HE NEVER READS A NEWSPAPER, AND THAT THE EVENTS OF THE OUTER WORLD POSSESSED NO INTEREST FOR HIM WHATSOEVER.

IN HIS OWN WORDS:—

"I'VE OFTEN HEARD REMOURS
OF WARS AND CONSEQUENCES,
SEA-SERPENTS, AND COMICS AS LIGHTS OF THE SKY;
- STREAM-HEADING ABSENT;
- AND BANKERS AS FOLKS DANDY IN,
    BUT THEY DON'T NEVER FEET A OLD 'OMAN LIKE 1!"

Figure 33. Auguste Renoir, *Madame Charpentier and her Children*, 1878. Oil on canvas, 60 ½ x 74 7/8 in. Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York. Source: ARTstor.
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