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b e h o l d , b e s t i l l

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ABSTRACT

behold, be still illuminates my predilection, that of a portrait photographer, which is driven by a fascination with viewing and collecting the 'other', the male, now extending into this suite of still moving portraits. Through this act and in my art practice, I uncover the vulnerabilities, both for myself and for my subjects, as they are offered for scrutiny on screen to become 'public', unlike their previous position in my photographic archive, which is private. I reveal for the first time my pathology in the drive to collect surrogates and stand-ins, to console the loss and give solace for the absence of one- revealing a latent scopophilia.

Photography histories, specifically portraiture, and the moving image are discussed, focusing on the binaries of the medium/s, their reflective and reflexive qualities, and their inherent ability to reveal and conceal.

My visual inquiry is an expansion to experiencing the portrait by presenting the sitters as close to 'themselves' via the medium of high definition video portraits. I expel the implications of women looking at men, and review the work of both significant and historical feminine influences and contemporary women artists positioned and working in this territory and who employ both film and photography.

I highlight Victorian women and the melancholic age, where photography is deeply embedded, tracing the origins and lineage to my current work.

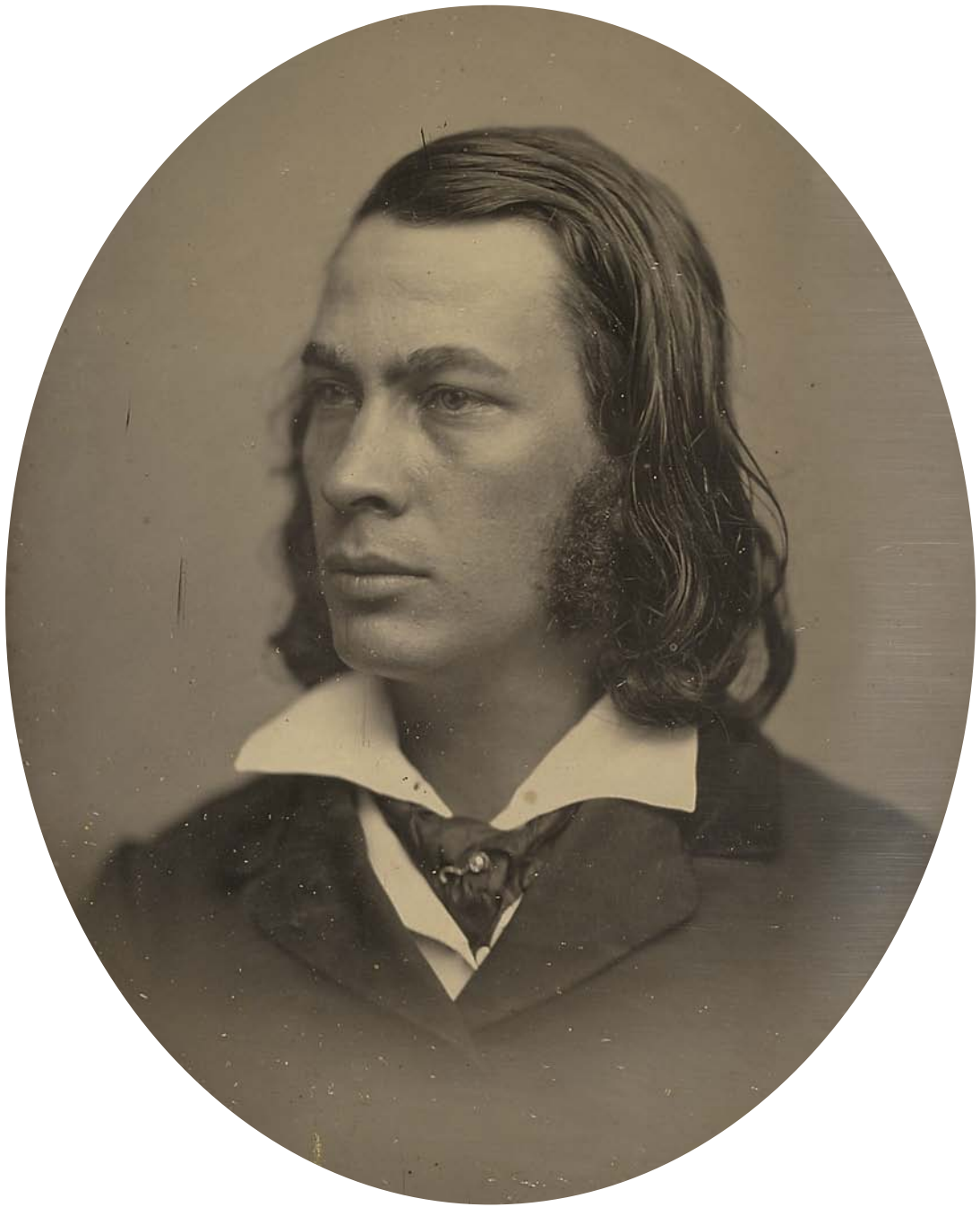
I seek to define and locate the notion of a beautiful masculine, investigating what it is to view, receive, and collect between the axis of photography and video via the intimate exchange and operatives of my gendered and privileged gaze.

The success is determined by the tension between these two machines and resulting portraits, as the act in sitting for a portrait with the technology of today, renders a more 'accurate' portrayal. From this the moving portrait completes the desire and an opportunity to obtain and possess the beloved after their absence.

Crucial issues become apparent as I examine the imprint of the real in the photograph, the camera as a surrogate for myself, and the passive yet consensual subject.

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(Fig. 1). George Lippard. *Photographer Unknown*. (ca. 1850).

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*'In our age there is no work of art that is looked at so closely as a photograph of oneself, one's closest relatives, one's friends, and one's sweetheart.'*¹

¹ Alfred Lichtwark. (1907).

*'Thus from thy power,
inspiring LOVE, we trace.
The modell'd image, and the pencil'd face.'*²



(Fig. 2). Joseph Wright of Derby. *The Corinthian Maid*. (1782-1784).

² Judy Egerton, (1990). Wright of Derby, p.132-34. Metropolitan Museum of Art. Joseph Wright of Derby was patronised for his skills as a portraitist by ceramicist, Josiah Wedgwood, who commissioned and purchased Derby's painting *The Corinthian Maid*. Wedgwood's ceramics imitated the ancient vessels as well as borrowing their motifs, and regarded as descendents from Dibutades' first relief portrait.

behold, be still

Outlines of Solace and Surrogacy

In this text I examine and discuss the practice of the portrait photographer, as a taxonomist and collector of typologies- one who has an avid fascination to view and receive the gaze of another, whether it be the face of a stranger, foe, friend or lover.

The distinctive and curious human trait of seeking to locate the absent through a photographic image is examined in consideration to the process of picturing the beloved.

I wish to respond to this desire to collect or render a memento of substitution of the absent beloved, which is evident and positioned firmly within both historical and contemporary collections of photography and nestled in my own biography and art practice.

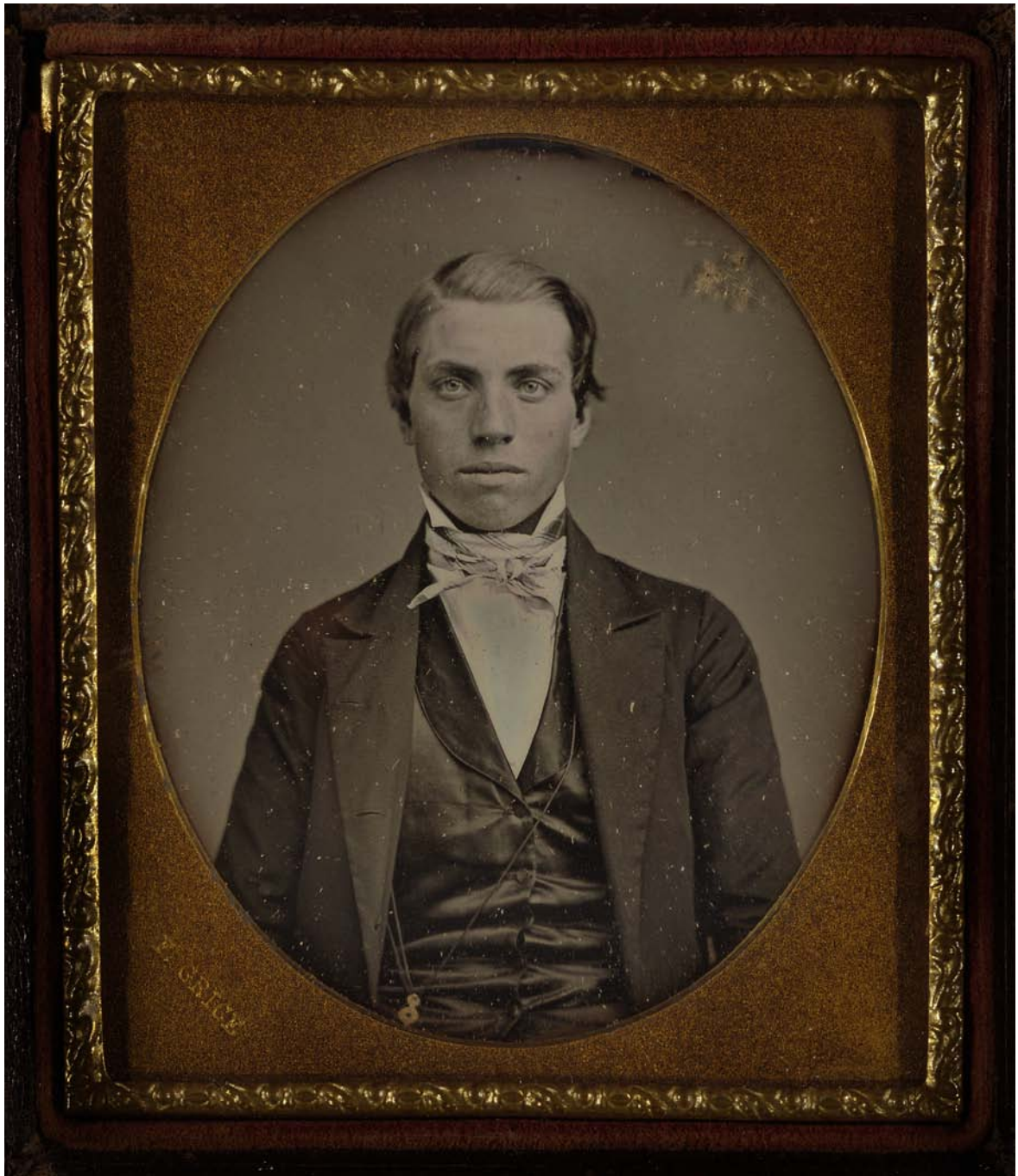
I seek to question why this quest is so inexhaustible, my attachment to possessing a replica of a person, a stand in, now via the medium of the video portrait. With the still moving-image, I explore the potential to conceive and possess a more 'complete' equivalent for this latent absence to be transformed into a readable and animated performance and tangible presence.

My final works re-examine the transaction of a specific gendered gaze and my predilection to picture a masculine surrogate embarking on a collection beyond the fixed photographic portrait.

Exploring the modes of portraiture, critical texts and employing a determined set of parameters, particular concerns were revealed and brought into focus for me to disclose.

I present four key attributes, which have emerged from my practice in order to trace their lineage, illuminate connections, and identify the significant references aligned with my work and this subsequent inquiry.

The Absent Beloved, in which I seek to replace this figure of absence in new portraits. The Photographic Object and its mnemonic powers, where I pay homage to the daguerreotype. The Archive, which emanates from the photographers pathology to collect, and finally to my own Scopic Drive in which I employ and meditate on the two machines- the still and video camera and consider the potential implications of a portraitists feminized gaze and in the acts of picturing the male.



(Fig. 3). Daguerreotype. *Unidentified Man*. (ca.1855).

The Absent One:

Historically, the discourse of absence is carried on by the Woman: Woman is sedentary, man hunts, journeys; Woman is faithful (she waits), man is fickle (he sails away, he cruises). It is woman who gives shape to absence, elaborates its fiction, for she has time to do so.

(Barthes, 1979, p.39).