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Mexican Photography Collected: Graciela Iturbide and Tina Modotti

Camille F. Porter
San Jose State University

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MEXICAN PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTED: GRACIELA ITURBIDE AND TINA
MODOTTI

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Art and Art History

San José State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements to the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Camille F Porter

December 2012

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The Designated Thesis Committee Approves the Thesis Titled

MEXICAN PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTED: GRACIELA ITURBIDE AND TINA
MODOTTI

Camille F. Porter

APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ART AND ART HISTORY

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY

December 2012

Dr. Beverly Grindstaff	Department of Art and Art History
Dr. Anne Simonson	Department of Art and Art History
Dr. Marilyn Wyman	Department of Art and Art History

ABSTRACT

MEXICAN PHOTOGRAPHY COLLECTED: GRACIELA ITURBIDE AND TINA MODOTTI

by Camille F. Porter

The act of collecting has increasingly become a focus of art historians in the last thirty years. Susan Pearce, Mieke Bal, Bruce Althuser and other scholars have written theoretical perspectives illuminating the ways in which the collecting of art influences the identity of a particular collector and in turn the ways in which the process of collecting art itself attaches meanings to objects.

In the last twenty years, there has been a surge in the collecting of Mexican photography dating from the 1920s to the contemporary period. Mexican photography has a long history of being at once an art form and documentation meant to bring social change to the people of Mexico. Tina Modotti was among the first to create photographs of this type in Mexico beginning in the 1920s. Graciela Iturbide is a contemporary photographer who continues to work in a similar manner.

This thesis examines specific collections of photographs taken in Mexico. Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser, a Los Angeles couple collects many art objects including Graciela Iturbide photographs. Susie Tompkins Buell, a social activist living in San Francisco also collects objects of art including Tina Modotti photographs. Greenberg, Steinhauser, and Buell use their collections to underscore their own identities as socially conscious people. The collectors' identities have come to enhance and perhaps supplant the original meanings gleaned from the objects they collect.

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FOREWORD

This thesis grew out of a seminar paper investigating gendered spaces, specifically the exhibition *Mexico as Muse* at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (SFMOMA) from September 2006 to January 2007. It was an exhibition of Tina Modotti and Edward Weston's photographs taken in Mexico. The resulting seminar paper fit well with the concept of gendered spaces and was presented at the *Eighth Annual Student Colloquium for the Department of History at the University of Laval* in Québec in 2008 and subsequently published in *Actes du 8e Colloque Étudiant du Département d'histoire de l'Université Laval (Acts of the 8th Student Colloquium for the Department of History at the University of Laval, 2009)*.¹ Susie Tompkins Buell lent many of the photographs by Modotti and Weston that appeared in the SFMOMA exhibition. Buell is well known in the Bay Area and beyond as a very successful entrepreneur and, more recently, for her role as a social activist. Interestingly, there are many parallels between Buell and Tina Modotti, the socially active artist she collects.

Much has been written about the concept of collecting itself. There are many biographies and exhibition catalogues detailing particular collectors, how they got their start and what they have collected over the years. However, few studies analyze a particular collector and his or her practices with the use of collecting theory. One exception is *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects* (2008) by Dianne Sachko Macleod.² In

¹ Artefact, Université Laval, Québec, *Actes du 8e Colloque Étudiant du Département d'histoire de l'Université Laval* (Canada: Bibliothèque nationale du Québec, 2009).

² Dianne Sachko Macleod, *Enchanted Lives, Enchanted Objects: American Women Collectors and the Making of Culture, 1800-1940* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2008).

her book, Macleod uses case studies to look at the collecting practices of women in the United States between 1800-1940. Among her main objectives is to show how women employed the act of collecting to define themselves and also to take the specific skills they learned through collecting to win the power to vote and thereby gain control over their own property. Macleod also uses psychological theories of collecting to dissect the motivations of her collectors.

It was clear from the onset of this study that there is something particular to be said about the work of post-revolutionary photographers in Mexico and those who now collect these works in the United States. In particular, a more thorough look at Buell and Buell's collection of works by Tina Modotti and Edward Weston seemed like a conceivably worthy topic for a thesis. A professor also suggested looking at a more contemporary figure, namely Graciela Iturbide. After a brief search, the collectors Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser arose. They have an extensive collection of Mexican photography including Graciela Iturbide's work, much of which was recently on view also at the SFMOMA. Primary source material comes from interviews with all three collectors. The collectors themselves are dynamic sources of knowledge with charismatic personalities, and were a joy to speak with on many subjects. They all have an incredible enthusiasm for and a somewhat intimate relationship with the photographs in their collections. In the coming chapters we will see the details of these relationships and the ways in which they underscore the identities of the collectors, the photographs, and the artists. The public life of post-revolutionary Mexican photographs has come to be intertwined with the identities of their collectors. These identities are in part

constructed upon the original meaning and reception of the photographs and their creators.

INTRODUCTION

One's personal identity may depend on the difference between one's collection and that of another. Identity is collected. Taste is a mirror of self. ~ Roger Cardinal and John Elsner 1994

It is oneself that one collects. It is impossible to prove that any object is entirely unique to the world, the subject collecting is what gives it its uniqueness. ~ Jean Baudrillard

Objects hang before the eyes of the imagination, continuously re-presenting ourselves to ourselves, and telling the stories of our lives in ways which would be impossible otherwise. ~ Susan Pearce

In September 2006 the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art launched the exhibition *Mexico as Muse: Tina Modotti and Edward Weston*. The exhibition showcased two rooms of photographs, some of which are owned by the collector and entrepreneur Susie Tompkins Buell. There are striking parallels between Buell and Modotti. Both have been identified as political activists by historians in Modotti's case and the press in Buell's case. Often, the identity of the collector is reflected in the artwork they collect. This study will focus on two collections of photographs, one belonging to Susie Tompkins Buell and the other belonging to Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser, in an effort to discern what the act of collecting might say about these particular collections and their collectors. Both collections include photographs taken in Mexico after the revolution of 1910 and among other subjects portray the lives of indigenous people in Mexico. Greenberg and Steinhauser collect works by Graciela Iturbide, a contemporary Mexican artist who was a pupil of Manuel Álvarez Bravo with professional ties to Modotti. Like him, Iturbide became interested in the lives of indigenous people in the same manner as the post-revolutionary artists, yet from the

perspective of a new generation. Her photographs are not simply ethnographic but are clearly her own poetic interpretation of life around her. Susie Tompkins Buell has a collection of works by Tina Modotti as well as by Edward Weston. Her collection includes prints by Modotti also representative of indigenous people in Mexico. While Modotti also photographed from a specifically artistic perspective, her photographs of the Mexican people were clearly meant to document lives of those less fortunate living in oppressive circumstances. As we will see, the Greenberg/Steinhauser collection and Buell collection both serve to represent the collectors' values and identities, as they exist in their personal lives as well as their public lives. Indeed, the identities of the collectors themselves also influence the perception of the works in the collections as well as the artists who created them.

John Mason Hart, a historian of Mexico, writes that throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first centuries Americans have commonly believed they are superior to Mexicans and often look upon the lives of Mexicans with indifference even though there has been a long history of interaction between the two nations.¹ Indeed, the belief in superiority has been provoked by images of Mexicans in photographs, a topic that has been widely discussed by art historians. Once the images are placed in a museum setting, there is an anesthetization that occurs due to the aesthetics often inherent to museum exhibitions. As a result of this phenomenon, a distance is created between the viewer and the subject at hand. The beliefs of the collectors in this study do not appear to correspond to these feelings of indifference and superiority. However, the display of these collected

¹ John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: Americans in Mexico Since the Civil War* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2002), 3.

photographs in American museums may contribute to the perpetuation of feelings of superiority over Mexicans. And yet, there is something to be said for the connection the photographs now have to the collectors who thought the pieces important enough to purchase. The collectors have their own unique perspectives and identities, which may produce an altered viewpoint of the subjects in the photographs in question.

Additionally, the manner in which the photographs are exhibited also has an effect on the way Americans might view the lives of Mexicans.

With the purpose of fully grasping the attitudes of Greenberg, Steinhauser, and Buell, interviews were conducted with each of them using specific questions geared toward comprehending their individual motivations to collect and how they perceive of their collections as well as the artists who created the photographs. In order to understand how the public might view the collectors, selected articles from newspapers and the Internet were also valuable. The material about Susie Tompkins Buell is mainly in the press. She has received a mixture of negative and positive press in local and national journals. Most of the press about Greenberg and Steinhauser is positive and has to do with where they donate money and their philanthropic connections.

The particular theories appropriate to this discussion are those regarding collecting by Susan Pearce and Mieke Bal.² Further research for this thesis came from volumes and scholarly articles on the history of Mexico, specifically the revolution of 1910, the history of Tina Modotti and Graciela Iturbide, the history of collecting and

² Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects, and Collections: A Cultural Study* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992); Mieke Bal, "Telling Objects: A Narrative Perspective on Collecting," in *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum*, Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, eds., (Burlington, Vermont: Ashgate, 2004).

collecting theory, display theory, and the history of photography in Mexico. These will all be covered in detail in the following chapter along with a summary and explanation of Pearce's theories on collecting. The two subsequent chapters will analyze the collectors and their reasons for collecting in order to understand how the collections define their identities and the artwork. These case studies will enable an analysis of the relationship between the works of art and the collectors by exploring what it means to own works depicting another culture's socio-political life. The motivation to collect will also be addressed and will show how the collectors are connected to the art and the artists who create the work they collect. An exhibition of Graciela Iturbide's photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum in Los Angeles and an exhibition including Tina Modotti's photographs at the SFMOMA will be examined in order to understand the importance in appreciating motivations to collect, the collectors themselves, and their collections.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In conducting research for this thesis, it was necessary to review many topics including theories of collecting and display, the history of Mexico, the history of the relationship between the United States and Mexico, the life and work of Tina Modotti, the life and work of Graciela Iturbide, and the history of photography in Mexico. Because they were all necessary to review, one cannot say any one topic was more important than the other. However, the theories on collecting and display form a framework for this study and therefore should be understood on a more detailed level than the other topics. Thus, what follows is a review of the writing about collecting and display and then a summary and explanation of the particular theories that fit into this discussion. Following that are reviews of the other topics with the more important points specified.

Collecting Theory

Central to this thesis is the extensive writing on collecting and the display of fine art and other treasured objects. In particular Susan Pearce's book *Museums, Objects and Collections* (1992) serves as the backbone to the analysis of both the Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser collection and the Susie Tompkins Buell collection.¹ Pearce's work is the most practical study on collecting theories, which she then uses to create her own examination and framework to describe what collecting is and how objects define us and vice versa. A common thread running through her work is that objects help us make

¹ Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects, and Collections: A Cultural Study* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992).

sense of the world around us. Indeed, individuals might use the objects around them to anchor or connect themselves to the surrounding world. Pearce says, “It is clear that the acquisition of objects is an important part of selfhood, whether they are additions to a collection or simply as a part of a shopping expedition.”²

Most collecting theory is psychological in background and Pearce’s work is no exception. Indeed, sources include an early twentieth century psychological interest in children as collectors. One example is Walter Durost’s *Children’s Collecting Activity Related to Social Factors* from 1932.³ These studies are early examples that define collecting and investigate what might be behind the urge to collect in children, but they also provide groundwork for later broader investigations. In 1959, Maurice Rheims published *Art on the Market: Thirty-Five Centuries of Collecting and Collectors From Midas to Paul Getty*.⁴ Like Durost, Rheims compares the collecting instinct to a broader animal instinct such as a dog burying a bone in the backyard, an activity more akin to hoarding that likely would not be considered a collecting instinct in more contemporary studies.⁵ Rheims also supplies us with the different psychological reasons behind collecting and categorizes types of collectors and their reasons for collecting, sometimes comparing collecting to a neurosis. The result of these studies is a foundation for collecting theories that carries through to Pearce’s study. In 1961 a compilation describing different collections in *The Collector in America* was published, which is

² Ibid., 56.

³ Walter N. Durost, *Children’s Collecting Activity Related to Social Factors* (New York: AMS Press, 1972). Second Edition.

⁴ Maurice Rheims, *Art on the Market: Thirty-five Centuries of Collecting and Collectors From Midas to Paul Getty* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1959).

⁵ Ibid., 21.

mainly a description and evaluation of art collections in America.⁶ It limits the reason to collect broadly to pleasure. Other writings about collecting are simply the stories of the collectors themselves and what they collected. These tend to place the collector in an exalted position. There are hundreds of examples including *One Hundred Years of Collecting in America: The Story of Sotheby Parke Bernet*⁷ from 1984 to *Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, and Twentieth Century Mexican Art: The Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection* from 2000.⁸ Beginning in the 1980s, more thought was given to the meanings behind collecting, display, and museums themselves. Studies were written about collecting in the disciplinary fields of sociology, anthropology, consumer research, cultural studies, as well as art history.⁹ All of these add up to a rich and massive group of materials allowing us to understand what influence a museum or collector might have on the message behind objects, which are collected and displayed. There are also critiques of the modern museum as an educational and cultural institution, which question the function of museums.

The intent of Pearce's *Museums, Objects and Collections* is to explore cultural traditions and philosophies forming the foundation of museums and their collections in order to discover how they create meaning. Pearce is concerned with the historical context of museums, where their collections have come from, and how they appear

⁶ Jean Lipman, ed., *The Collector in America* (New York: The Viking Press, 1961).

⁷ Thomas E. Norton, *One Hundred Years of Collecting in America: The Story of Sotheby Parke Bernet* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1984).

⁸ Toby Kamps, ed., *Frida Kahlo, Diego Rivera, and Twentieth-Century Mexican Art: The Jacques and Natasha Gelman Collection* (San Diego: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2000).

⁹ Pearce's Sources include Burk (1900), Whitley (1929), Belk & Wallendorf (1988; 1989; 1990), Stewart (1984), Dannefer (1980; 1981), Olmsted (1988), Moulin (1987), Saisselin (1984), Clifford (1988). *Museums, Objects, and Collections*, Susan M. Pearce (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 37.

before our post-modern gaze. She is also concerned with the symbolic nature of objects, collections, and museums. Pearce opens her discussion with the nature of collecting, presumptions and problems in curatorial work, and the philosophies used to create meaning through interpretation (in the form of exhibitions) and the dilemmas with which museums are faced. The world of museums and collections are an integral part of our society and material culture, and therein lies the importance of Pearce's work.

Pearce's analysis of collecting itself looks at the nature of "collection-making" and the psychological roots of the urge to collect. She says of her analysis:

The transformation from formally private to formally public, which can be quite an extended process, is an important aspect of collection making. The collecting processes analysed here seem to hold true regardless of which field in the disciplinary sense the collected material belongs within. Equally, they seem to have been characteristic of collectors over the last five centuries or so, and to be themselves part of the modern European relationship with the world of objects. The making of a collection is one way in which we organize our relationship with the external physical world of which collections are a part.¹⁰

Pearce analyzes the nature of collection making with a semiotic approach based on where objects come from and how we create meaning from these origins. Metonymy and metaphor are crucial here in that once a collector chooses an object the object is not only defined by its place of origin and its destination, but also by the actual choosing by the collectors themselves. Pearce finds Roland Barthes' language helpful in these discussions:

Another way of saying much the same thing is to draw vocabulary from writers like Barthes (1977) and say that collected objects are both the signifier, that is the medium that carries the message, and the signified, the message itself. This dual nature of the collection is at the heart of its significance. It explains why it carries

¹⁰ Susan M. Pearce, *Museums, Objects, and Collections: A Cultural Study* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992), 37.

the emotional resonance which comes from its 'real' relationship – the fish in the museum did once really swim off the Seychelles – and the intellectual interest which derives from its metaphorical content, which is not static but can go on carrying fresh interpretations.¹¹

Thus, an object always bears a relationship from its place of origin as well as to its inherent meaning. Further, the nature of collecting also has to do with meanings gleaned metonymically through cognitive processes occurring when the actual collection process takes place. Roy Ellen identified cognitive processes, which have to do with fetishism, that are “underlying features of categorization and representation characteristic of all thought. These are concretization, animation or anthropomorphism, conflation of signifier with signified, and an ambiguous relationship of control between person and object.”¹² Therefore, the perceived message is added to the original material from which the object came. This conflation of the message and the material is then incorporated into the life of the collector. Pearce says, “the objects are, in the language of an older anthropology, external souls: external because physically distinct and separate, but souls because the meaning projected onto them brings them into the interior of our personal lives.”¹³

Once Pearce provides the reasons people collect and the nature of collecting itself, she goes on to discuss three modes or processes of collecting. These modes are placed in three categories: collections as souvenirs, as fetish objects, and as systematics. Pearce says a collection might fall under more than one of these categories. The Buell collection and the Greenberg/Steinhauser collection do not fall under the category of the souvenir.

¹¹ Ibid., 38.

¹² Roy Ellen, “Fetishism”, *Man*, New Series, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Jun., 1988): 213.

¹³ Pearce, 45.

Souvenirs are memorabilia and can include almost any object. “They take their collection unity only from their association with either a single person and his or her life history, or a group of people, like a married couple, or, say, a scout troop, who function in this regard as if they were a single person.”¹⁴ Souvenirs are also a way to talk about and remember the past in an intensely personal manner and thus, are not usually of interest to museums.

In contrast, the Buell collection and Greenberg/Steinhauser collection both show characteristics of fetishistic and systematic collections. With a fetishistic collection, the collector has a somewhat obsessive nature and tends to focus his or her surplus libido or energy on prized inanimate objects. Often, the objects in fetishistic collections are arranged according to events in the collector’s life and include valuable objects of memorabilia but can often also be objects of fine art. Pearce says, “It seems that the personality of the collector, in a very particular sense, is the mainspring of this kind of collection-forming which is ostensibly presented in a more intellectual, dignified and objective light.”¹⁵ According to Pearce, the core of fetishistic collecting is that the collector’s “imagination identify with the objects which they desire.” Further, the obsessive behavior linked to this mode of collecting is associated with powerful emotions, which cause a desire for more objects of the same kind. Pearce says, “The whole process is a deployment of the possessive self, a strategy of desire, and this is part of the reason why this mode of collecting is described as fetishistic.”¹⁶ Pearce also

¹⁴ Ibid., 69.

¹⁵ Ibid., 81.

¹⁶ Ibid., 81.

discusses the origins of theories on fetishism, why it is not meant as a pejorative term and how it relates to collecting. Freudian and Marxist theories are the basis of theories of fetishism and both are useful when analyzing collections. From a Freudian perspective, a collection or collected object can be an emotional substitute for something else that might be lacking in the life of the collector. From a Marxist perspective, fetishistic collecting might be more concerned with objects having a life of their own and therefore having different meanings embedded within their relationships with people as they pass from their place of origin, to a collector, and then to a museum. Perhaps these meanings would originate with the artist who produces an object of art. To Marx, a commodity was inseparable from its production. Of course, there is an unlimited amount of labor within something like a photograph. One can go back as far as the tree the paper came from or the seed. But, the collectors, and the viewing public are more likely to associate a photograph with the labor and identity of the artist. As for how the identity of the artist may affect a collector, Pearce says, “The fetishistic nature lies in the relationship between the objects and their collector, in which the collection plays the crucial role in defining the personality of the collector, who maintains a possessive but worshipful attitude towards the objects.”¹⁷ Interestingly, Pearce also claims these collections are highly personal and “lie static” when placed in the museum setting. The collections analyzed in this thesis do have highly personal qualities, but they do not lie static in the museum setting. However, Pearce maintains the fetishistic collection is used to create a private universe for the collector. Neither the Greenberg/Steinhauser collection nor the Buell

¹⁷ Ibid., 84.

collection of photographs operates as a private universe to any extreme. Buell may see hers as telling a personal story, but there is a desire for outsiders to recognize the story as well.

Systematic collecting is the third and last mode of collecting Pearce describes. Greenberg, Steinhäuser and Buell also exhibit signs of this type of collecting. Pearce says:

For well over two centuries systematic collecting, both inside and outside museums, has in all its different manifestations in the various disciplines been accorded an intellectual primacy, which seems to derive from its apparent capacity to demonstrate understanding rather than feeling and so extend our control over the world.¹⁸

Systematic collecting originated with an interest in the natural world and was concerned with the classification of specimens. Hence, once objects are collected “they have entered our world [and] become part of the relationships which we construct for them and which, like all our social constructs, we are more prone to admire than criticize.”¹⁹ Collections of this type can be found in almost any discipline; the important words to remember are samples, planned, and organization. Indeed, with fetishistic collecting there is a tendency to collect as much as possible, whereas with systematic collecting there is a tendency to select examples. Pearce says:

Collecting is usually a positive intellectual act designed to demonstrate a point. The physical arrangement of the finds sets out in detail the creations of serial relationships, and the manipulation implicit in all this is intended to convince or to impose, to create a second and revealing context, and to encourage a cast of mind.²⁰

¹⁸ Ibid., 84.

¹⁹ Ibid., 85.

²⁰ Ibid., 87.

The two collections in this study do demonstrate a point and there is an intellectual primacy that resonates throughout the collecting process of both. And yet, the emotional value of each collection to their collectors is so strong that there is still a connection to the fetishistic type. Systematic collections also have something public to say and are conceived of as display. Greenberg/Steinhauser and Buell all have something they are interested in saying to the public and the display of their objects is always intended. The museum is important to all three collectors because they each seem to view their collections as their “extended selves.” In the arena of the museum, the collectors’ motives are masked but are not completely invisible, which alters the perceived identity of the object, artist and collector.

Mieke Bal also writes about the act of collecting. Of particular importance is her essay, *Telling Objects: A Narrative Perspective on Collecting* from 1994.²¹ Bal’s piece references Susan Pearce’s book, but places a twist on the idea of narrative within a collection in that the act of collecting is a narrative in itself that influences perspectives on the actual collection. Pearce says objects have a place in the course of history, which they carry into the future. This relationship to the past is fundamental to collecting, curating, and exhibiting. It is essential that objects within collections be studied closely in order to understand their relationship to the past and present. Additionally, the framing of an object in a collection is central to our understanding of that object. This view is tangential to Mieke Bal’s emphasis that the narrative unfolding in the creation of a

²¹ Mieke Bal, “Telling Objects: A Narrative Perspective on Collecting,” in *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum*, Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, eds. (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004).

collection is where some of this framing takes place. As presented by Pearce and Bal, both the narrative of the collection process as well as the narrative portrayed in an exhibition influence our understanding of individual objects and the artists who created them.

Bal says narratives make a statement, which may describe situations and events, characters and objects, and places and atmospheres. While a narrative is often assumed to be fact, it is often based on the subjective point of view. In the case of collecting, the narrative agent is the collector, a subjective agent whose view of events (or objects) will influence our interpretation of them.²² Thus, many narratives are fictional to a degree, which means that the collector or the museum has a voice in our interpretation of objects whether that voice is legitimate or not. Bal says, “I can imagine seeing collecting as a process consisting of the confrontation between objects and subjective agency informed by an attitude.”²³ Thus, the objects tell a story not only of the process of collecting, but of the attitude, which may also be interpreted as the values of the objects’ collector.

While the narrative of collecting can be analyzed through the use of semiotics, the need to collect (which also becomes a part of the narrative) can be analyzed through psychoanalytic terms. Here, Bal says collecting is fundamental to being human and begins with the need to tell stories without words and turns to Pearce’s study. Pearce says:

The emotional relationship of projection and internalization, which we have with objects, seems to belong to our very earliest experience and remains important to us all our lives. Equally, this line of thought brings us back to the intrinsic link

²² A narrative agent might also be the curator of an exhibition.

²³ Bal, 87.

between our understanding of our own bodies and the imaginative construction of the material world.²⁴

The idea that the collected object offers a mirror projection of the collector is a common one in collecting and museum theories. Thus, it is safe to say the collector sees the object as a projection of an aspect of story of their life or their identity thereby linking them not only to the object but to the creator of the object as well.

Bal continues to merge her discussion with Pearce's and continues with the psychoanalytic vein when she brings in Pearce's list of motivations to collect. These include: leisure, aesthetics, competition, risk, fantasy, a sense of community, prestige, domination, sensual gratification, sexual foreplay, desire to reframe objects, the pleasing rhythm of sameness and difference, ambition to achieve perfection, extending the self, reaffirming the body, producing gender identity, and achieving immortality.²⁵ Bal says the underlying component to all of these motivations is fetishism, but a hybrid fetishism of those described by Freud and Marx in that it involves a visual fixation and a relation between subject and object to the extent that they might be interchangeable.²⁶ The word interchangeable might be going a bit far, however. Perhaps a more appropriate term would be unified. This unification is important in the upcoming analyses of the two collections in this study. While there has been so much written about collecting practices, Pearce and Bal's writings proved extraordinarily useful in dissecting these collections of Tina Modotti and Graciela Iturbide photographs.

²⁴ Ibid., 89.

²⁵ Ibid., 90.

²⁶ Ibid., 95.

Post-Revolutionary Mexico

Although the history of Mexico and its Revolution of 1910 is not directly discussed in this thesis, it serves as an important background to the meaning of the photographs and therefore to the reasons why they are of interest to the collectors discussed in this study. In 1910 a violent revolution broke out in Mexico in which several political groups vied for control of Mexico. President Porfirio Diaz had been in power for over thirty years. During his time in office, wealth and power were in the hands of a selected minority. Many people lived in a state of poverty. Due to his popularity with the Mexican people, Francisco Madero was elected president in 1911 after the initial success of the revolution. Although he had originally declared the revolution, there were other revolutionary leaders, such as Emiliano Zapata, who led peasant uprisings in bids to gain control over farmland and water. A tumultuous period followed for the next nine years. Lives of peasants should have improved due to new provisions in the 1917 constitution. However, much remained the same and people still lived in horrible conditions.

Finally, after infighting where different leaders and groups sought control, Alvaro Obregón was elected president in 1920. And yet, different leaders still pursued control through violence and deception. The working poor in Mexico continued to suffer. Modotti lived and worked in Mexico from 1923 to 1930 and again from 1939 to 1942. Her work is inseparable from the lives of the working poor during this period of unrest in Mexico. The post-revolutionary period directly after the revolution is also called the Mexican Renaissance due to the governmental importance given to art to create a

national identity. The Mexican muralists played a large role in this. They included Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alvaro Siqueiros. Modotti was connected to the Mexican muralists intellectually, politically, and personally. She was also actively involved in the socio-political movements to aid the working poor. Modotti's photographs were a tool meant to create change through the documentation of those living in severe poverty. Later in her career, Modotti met the photographer Manuel Álvarez Bravo. Modotti influenced his photography as he also photographed Mexicans and the way they lived. Much later Bravo would become Graciela Iturbide's teacher and mentor. Iturbide's photographs, like Modotti's, document lives of Mexican people in a manner that is very much her own, but also informed by works of Bravo as well as Modotti. In 1934 Lázaro Cárdenas, was elected president. Graciela Iturbide was born in Mexico in 1942 two years after Cárdenas' successor was elected to the presidency in Mexico. The political strife had calmed by this time. Iturbide began photographing in 1979 and continues to work today. Though the revolution was over, there were political events such as the Tlatelolco student demonstration and subsequent massacre in 1968 that would shape the Mexico she lives and works in today.

In initial literature, revolutionary leaders and the revolution itself were mostly presented in a positive light. In more recent studies, such as Thomas Benjamin's *La Revolución: Mexico's Great Revolution as Memory, Myth and History*, this rhetoric has been reconsidered and dissected in an attempt to offer a more factual story of the complexities of the revolution and the period following it.²⁷ Also helpful to this study

²⁷ Thomas Benjamin, *La Revolución: Mexico's Great Revolution as Memory, Myth and*

has been John Mason Hart's *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (1987) in which Hart methodically traces the history of the revolution and offers new perspectives into the role of the United States Government in the revolution. He especially stresses that the revolution came at a time when other worldwide revolts were occurring and therefore was not an isolated event.²⁸ Hart also wrote *Empire and Revolution: The Americans in Mexico Since the Civil War*.²⁹ In this thesis, the relationship between the United States and Mexico is also not touched upon much, but it is important in that the collectors analyzed in the following pages are all from the United States while the photographs originated in Mexico. Hart points out that in 1883 prominent capitalists and politicians from the United States and Mexico met to discuss relations between the two countries. Mexico presented its case for U.S. participation in Mexican development and economy, while the United States vied for access to Mexico's natural resources. After the Revolution and World War Two, the United States lost its access to Mexico's natural resources, but gained the use of cheap labor in Mexico. Hart says agreements regarding free trade, foreign investment, and privatization of Mexican countryside still resonate today. Accordingly, after the Revolution and after World War Two, American students, teachers, artists, and retirees moved to Mexico. He also reminds us, we still make use of cheap labor in the form of

History (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000).

²⁸ Hart, John Mason. *Revolutionary Mexico: The Coming and Process of the Mexican Revolution* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1987).

²⁹ John Mason Hart, *Empire and Revolution: Americans in Mexico Since the Civil War* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2002).

immigrants from Mexico and within Mexico. Consequently, contact between the people in the United States and Mexico is largely a relationship of cheap labor. Hart writes:

A pervasive American belief in their personal superiority over Mexicans and an entrenched economic insularity created that sense of distance and continued to prevail in the last decade of the twentieth century despite the development of closer business and political ties. In spite of the intense and long-standing relationship between Mexico and the United States, the domestic “War on Drugs” and working class Mexican immigration, documented and undocumented, dominated public awareness of Mexico. The indifference of the great majority of Americans has left bilateral affairs in the hands of economic and political elites who are less than representative of American diversity, especially in the development of democratic institutions and respect for Mexican sovereignty.³⁰

This perspective should be kept in mind when considering how the American public perceives photographs taken of Mexicans in Mexico.

Mexico: A Brief History from 2006 by Alicia Hernández Chávez, translated from the Spanish by Andy Klatt, is a history ranging from the Mesoamerican era to the beginning of the twenty first century.³¹ Regarding the Revolution of 1910, Chávez stresses the role of different individuals and groups with differing agendas as the cause. The overall tone is dismal. Her history is thorough and leads up to the present day with discussions of different political leaders, economic fluctuations in Mexico, and the continued toll taken on Mexico’s poor. About recent conditions, she says:

The growing dependency on the U.S. economy is problematic, linking Mexican economic performance as it does to an economy in recession ... Better government has been promised, but we are still waiting to see an independent judiciary accompanied by an aggressive stand against corruption. The debt to Mexico’s growing poor population is overdue and unpaid. According to World Bank data, between 1984 and 1994, Mexico had painstakingly obtained a 10 percent point reduction in poverty that was lost with the 1994-1995 crisis. By

³⁰ Ibid., 3.

³¹ Alicia Hernández Chávez, Translated by Andy Klatt, *Mexico: A Brief History* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2006).

1996, roughly two of every three Mexicans were poor, and one in three was extremely poor.³²

This view is, again, important when considering the manner in which Americans might view photographs of Mexicans, as these are all factors that mediate the mainstream American reception of photographs of the Mexican poor.

Another resource that has been particularly useful is Leonard Folgarait's *Mural Painting and Social Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940: art of the new order* (1998), as it offers a clear description of the involvement of art and artists in the post-revolutionary period.³³ Folgarait presents a brief and interesting history of the revolution and its aftermath. He specifically discusses the use of the mural paintings as propaganda to the post-revolutionary government, but points out that the painters often came up with their own content as opposed to propaganda from other nations at the time:

In content, as will be seen, the Mexicans were less tied to direct orders given by the national leader, worked more through ministerial intermediaries, and at times developed a message that was either cynical as to its subject matter or more directly critical.³⁴

The content and presence of the murals is important for two reasons. Not only was Modotti directly linked to the muralists, but she also photographed many of Rivera's murals for documentation purposes. The murals were extremely popular with Americans, possibly because "they represent an exotic Other that the developed West has found easier to assimilate and appreciate, and...they do not threaten the world order."³⁵

³² Ibid., 343.

³³ Leonard Folgarait, *Mural Painting and Social Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940: art of the new order* (Cambridge, New York, Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

³⁴ Ibid., 4.

³⁵ Ibid., 4.

Thus, Americans might view photographs of the same subject with a feeling of superiority, while at the same time a desire for the exotic Other. The concept of the exotic Other in this context will be discussed regarding both collections.

Tina Modotti

The life of Tina Modotti and all writing about her is also crucial to this thesis. It appears that biographical histories of Modotti began in 1983 with the publication of Mildred Constantine's *A Fragile Life*.³⁶ This biography and most others, such as those by Pino Cacucci, Margaret Hooks, Patricia Albers, and Letizia Argenterì, are valuable in their telling of the life of this important artist.³⁷ They collectively cover her birth and upbringing in Italy, her move with her family to San Francisco in 1913, her marriage to Robo Richie and life in Los Angeles, her move to Mexico with Edward Weston, her subsequent political life, her photographic career, her lovers, her exile to the Soviet Union and move to Spain, and her final period back in Mexico. The more valuable of these biographies are those by Hooks and Argenterì. Both state they are attempting to make a break from the myth of Modotti. Hooks writes extensively about Modotti's photography and intermingles these passages with stories about Modotti's life. However, she still relies on the stories of romance and scandal that dominate most writing about

³⁶ Mildred Constantine, *Tina Modotti: A Fragile Life* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Ltd., 1983).

³⁷ Albers, *Shadows, Fire, Snow: The Life of Tina Modotti* (New York: Clarkson Potter Publishers, 1999); Argenterì, *Tina Modotti: Between Art and Revolution* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003); Cacucci, *Tina Modotti: A Life* (New York: Saint Martin's Press, 1991); Hooks, *Tina Modotti* (London: Phaidan Press Limited, 2002); and Hooks, *Tina Modotti: Radical Photographer* (New York: Perseus Books, 2000).

Modotti. Alternately, Argenteri strikes a different tone and seriously describes the facts of Modotti's life without too much drama. Unfortunately, there is only one short chapter about Modotti's photographs. Another portion of the literature on Modotti includes exhibition catalogues such as Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen's 1982 catalogue for the Whitechapel Gallery's *Frida Kahlo and Tina Modotti* exhibition. It includes sections by Mulvey and Wollen about the work of both artists as well as articles by Modotti herself and other figures from the era including Diego Rivera, Carleton Beals and André Breton.³⁸ Patricia Albers', Sam Stourdézé's and Karen Cordero Reiman's *Tina Modotti: The Mexican Renaissance* (2000) is more successful in placing Modotti in a position where she is considered separately from Weston and for her photography alone.³⁹ Andrea Noble wrote *Tina Modotti: Image, Texture, Photography* (2000), which differs considerably from prior works in that it dissects Modotti's photographs with the use of postcolonial and feminist theories.⁴⁰ Noble's writing has been extraordinarily valuable here because it doesn't glorify her life over her work.

Of course, much writing about Modotti also appears in books and catalogues about Edward Weston. However, these describe her as an adjunct to Weston and not as an individual photographer. This is perhaps a result of Weston's own descriptions of her in his *Daybooks*, which have also had an effect on Modotti biographies and exhibitions.⁴¹

³⁸ Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen, eds., *Frida Kahlo and Tina Modotti* (Whitechapel Art Gallery, 1982).

³⁹ Patricia Albers, Karen Cordero Reiman, and Sam Stourdézé, *Tina Modotti: The Mexican Renaissance* (Paris, France: Jean-Michel Place éditions, 2000).

⁴⁰ Andrea Noble, *Tina Modotti: Image, Texture, Photography* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2000).

⁴¹ Nancy Newhall, ed., *The Daybooks of Edward Weston: Volume I. Mexico*. (New York:

Truth, Myth and Erasure (1991) by Gary Higgins is a careful look at the photography of both Weston and Modotti. Higgins aims to detach the two from one another so that Modotti's work may be successfully distinguished.⁴² The overall result is quite strong and refreshing in its refusal to discuss Modotti's beauty and legendary life. Vittorio Vidali and Maria Caronia contributed essays to another volume titled *Tina Modotti: Photographs* (1981), which was originally published in Italian.⁴³ The text is once again biographical with only minor references to her photographs other than the photographs themselves. *Tina Modotti: A New Vision* (2000) written in Spanish and English is a catalog accompanying a reconstruction of her 1929 solo-exhibition in Mexico City at the National Library.⁴⁴ The essay is about the original exhibition and the reconstruction of that exhibition. There is no deconstruction of her photographs. However, there is also virtually no reference to her relationship with Edward Weston. Most valuable to the volume is the reprinting of the articles and criticisms of the original exhibition, which in many cases do analyze her photography and speak very little about Weston. *Dear Vocio* (1997), with essays by Pasquale Verdicchio and Patricia Albers, is a catalogue for an exhibition at University of California at San Diego in 1997.⁴⁵ Patricia Albers

Aperture, Inc., 1961, 1973) and Nancy Newhall, ed., *The Daybooks of Edward Weston: Volume II* (New York: Horizon Press 1966).

⁴² Gary Higgins, "Truth, Myth and Erasure: Tina Modotti and Edward Weston," In *History of Photography Monograph Series*, No. 28. (Arizona: School of Art, Arizona State University, 1991).

⁴³ Vittorio Vidali and Maria Caronia, *Tina Modotti: Photographs* (New York: Idea Editions and Belmark Book Company, 1981).

⁴⁴ Jesús Nieto Sotelo and Elisa Lozano Alvarez, *Tina Modotti a New Vision, 1929* (Mexico: CNCA/ Centro de la Imagen, Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos: Corporación Digital Gráfica, 2000).

⁴⁵ Patricia Albers, *Dear Vocio: Photographs by Tina Modotti* (La Jolla: University Art Gallery, University of California, San Diego, 1997).

rediscovered the photographs used for the exhibition in a trunk of Modotti's letters and photographs belonging to Robo Richey's mother Rose Richey, nicknamed "Vocio", with whom Modotti remained close long after Robo's death. The essays contain a significant amount of biographical information. Yet, the essay by Albers analyzes her photographs unlike any of Modotti's other biographers. Albers also published a biography of Modotti in 1999. Albers pays particular attention to uncovering whether Modotti took any of the photographs taken for Anita Brenner's *Idols Behind Altars* (1929), a question over which there has been considerable controversy.⁴⁶ *Tina Modotti and Edward Weston: The Mexico Years* (2004) by Sarah M. Lowe was originally written as a catalogue to accompany an exhibition at the Barbican Gallery in London.⁴⁷ It was later used for the *Mexico as Muse* exhibition at the SFMOMA. The catalog is a somewhat refreshing intermingling of Modotti and Weston's biographies with a judicious look at their photographs as well. Lowe writes of their years together in Mexico as a collaboration of comrades and stresses how the two of them shaped Mexican Modernist photography. Lowe also stresses the differences in their artwork without degrading one or the other. Somewhat disappointing is the inclusion of Modotti's love life within the biographical portions. Additionally, Lowe tries to downplay some of Weston's nude photos of Modotti by describing her as disengaged rather than passive. And finally, where the *Idols Behind Altars* controversy is concerned she seems to attribute most of those photographs to Weston without taking into account Albers' argument to the contrary.

⁴⁶ Anita Brenner, *Idols Behind Altars* (New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1967).

⁴⁷ Sarah M. Lowe, *Tina Modotti and Edward Weston: The Mexico Years* (London: Merrell Publishers Limited, 2004).

The life of Tina Modotti has been covered extensively. While the biographies are in some ways a valuable contribution to her history, there is a strong need for supplementation with analysis of Modotti's photography. The biographies largely serve to compartmentalize Modotti's identity within the frame of a beautiful, passionate, exotic and politically active woman. This description of her is one that began early on with writings by Diego Rivera and the entries in Edward Weston's *Daybooks* and continues to the present even in the format of the museum exhibition. Yet, the biographies do serve to illustrate a story of her life that may sometimes aid in the understanding of her photographs.

Graciela Iturbide

The literature on Graciela Iturbide is substantially different from that about Modotti in that it is almost always concerned with her photographs with scant attention paid to her actual biography. Cuauhtémoc Medina's book entitled *Graciele Iturbide* (2001) is the most biographical at this time, and even that gives a substantial amount of time to discussing her photographs.⁴⁸ This particular volume covers Iturbide's life and work up until the year 2000. Medina is adamant that Iturbide's work not be considered documentary in nature and sums up her work in these sentences:

If Graciela Iturbide's work has frequently been mistaken for some sort of visual equivalent of Latin American 'magical realist' literature, it is due to the exoticism with which the Western eye looks at indigenous life, and the unrest her images provoke in their viewers ... Without a doubt a great deal of Iturbide's work has focused on the lives and rituals of indigenous peoples in Mexico and beyond. But this work is also a personal quest for identity, and is based in great part on the

⁴⁸ Cuauhtémoc Medina, *Graciela Iturbide* (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2001).

experience of sharing the life and sorrows of her sitters ... We would miss the whole point of her work if we did not acknowledge that her photography is a means to enchant, surprise and move our minds in relation to the fragility and beauty of life in all its cultural diversity. Throughout her work there is a tension between the documentary quality her photographs suggest to some of her viewers, and their cultural and personal effect as poetic images.⁴⁹

In the discussions about each collection, “the exoticism with which the Western eye” views indigenous cultures will be important. Because the collectors and viewing public are of the Western eye, it naturally becomes a necessary part of this thesis to discern how they see Iturbide and Modotti’s work.

Other literature about Iturbide includes exhibition catalogues and photo-essays by Iturbide herself. *Graciela Iturbide: Images of the Spirit* (1996) accompanied an exhibition at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, which subsequently traveled to other venues.⁵⁰ The catalogue contains a preface by Roberto Tejada and an epilogue by Alfredo López Austin. Tejada is a poet, translator and art critic. He is also editor of a bilingual journal of poetry from the Americas. Austin is an anthropologist from Mexico who has worked as a research associate at the Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas and as a professor of Mesoamerican studies at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. He has also authored several books in Spanish that have been translated to English. The authors’ backgrounds are important here because the writings strike a different tone than most exhibition catalogues. Tejada’s preface has an especially poetic quality. Yet, like Medina, Tejada describes Iturbide’s work as an extension of the objective photograph, one in which she tells her own story of Mexico. Tejada says:

⁴⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁵⁰ Roberto Tejada and López Austin, *Images of the Spirit: Photographs by Graciela Iturbide* (New York: Aperture Foundation, Inc., 1996).

These images are political. One of the major concerns in the work of Graciela Iturbide has been to explore and articulate the ways in which a vocable such as “Mexico” is meaningful only when understood as an intricate combination of histories and practices. Mexico’s contemporary culture is inextricably bound to a complex web of ideas regarding its indigenous presence: its *mestizaje* – or mixed racial genesis – has served alternately as founding myth and as official rhetoric, in both politics and art.⁵¹

Tejada goes on to say Iturbide’s images underscore a rift between belonging and citizenship in that they portray outsider culture within larger divisions of people. In other words, the identity of Mexico she portrays in her photographs vividly expresses the culture resulting from social and political changes in Mexico since colonization. Thus, because her works are a direct, albeit poetic look at this resulting identity of Mexico, the Western view becomes even more important to investigate. The preface by Tejada obscurely references events in Iturbide’s personal life. The epilogue by Alfredo Lopez includes a section that is a poem about identity. But, for the most part, the epilogue reads as a letter to Graciela and abstrusely references her subject matter.

Another particularly important volume is the catalogue, *Graciela Iturbide: Juchitán* (2007), put together by the Getty Museum for the exhibition *The Goat’s Dance: Photographs by Graciela Iturbide* at the Getty Center in Los Angeles from December 18, 2007 to April 13, 2008.⁵² This exhibition is important for purposes of this thesis because Susan Steinhäuser and Daniel Greenberg owned thirty of the fifty images in the show before giving them to the Getty Museum. Michael Brand, director of the Getty Museum writes about them in the foreword to the catalogue. Brand views Iturbide’s work as

⁵¹ Ibid., 12.

⁵² Judith Keller, “‘This World of Women’: Graciela Iturbide in Juchitán,” *Graciela Iturbide: Juchitán*, edited by John Harris (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2007).

subjective, which is interesting considering Roberto Tejada describes her work as an extension of objective photography. Perhaps it is a little of both. While Iturbide's photographs certainly have a documentary quality, they are also most surely taken from her own perspective and are a "personal quest for identity" as Medina states. Thus, they may lie somewhere in between the subjective and the objective, as most photographs probably do because they are always taken from the perspective of one person no matter how factual they may seem.

Judith Keller, who begins with a brief biography of Iturbide, writes the body of text for the Getty Museum's catalogue. It is puzzling that Keller uses the space of the first sentence to describe Iturbide's looks and her marriage. She then writes about how Iturbide learned photography from Manuel Álvarez Bravo. Soon Keller moves on to describe Iturbide's photographs and their backgrounds. She also explains the culture of the Juchitán women. Keller describes Juchitán as "mythical" and "legendary", words that perpetuate stereotypical readings of the Other. Keller also mentions Iturbide's aim to "know the rest of her country, especially the Indian part of Mexico celebrated by the post-revolutionary artists and intellectuals", and thus places Iturbide firmly in the generation following Bravo and Modotti.

In 2008 Graciela Iturbide won The Hasselblad Award. The catalogue for the exhibition accompanying the award is called *Graciela Iturbide: The Hasselblad Award 2008*. The catalogue includes an essay by Colin Westerbeck, which was extremely useful in its discussion of the complexities of Iturbide's work and how they are something more than documentary photographs, but also personal. He argues there is a feeling of

empathy in her photographs rather than sympathy. All in all, most scholars tend to look at Iturbide's work through more than just an ethnographic lens or a fine art lens, but tend to see it as poetic, personal, and mythical as well.

History of Photography in Mexico

Another essential topic to this thesis is the history of photography in Mexico. When photography was initially introduced in Mexico in the late nineteenth century it was a technical resource. *In Photography and Writing in Latin America: Double Exposures* (2006), Marcy E. Schwartz and Mary Beth Tierney-Tello say, "since photography's inception, European ethnographers have turned their eye to the New World in order to document their "Others," mostly for the purposes of European self-definition and to satisfy a hunger for the "exotic."⁵³ Later, it was used as a tool for the middle class to flaunt prosperity and fulfill class aspirations. Finally, it was not only seen as a form of art, but also as an ethnographic tool:

In the 1920s, Mexican photography began to take two different paths: the documentary photograph, or objectivist path, and the artistic photograph, or impressionistic path. Between 1930 and 1960, a large majority of photographers practiced both types of photography. Manuel Álvarez Bravo, a pioneer photographic artist in Mexico, provides a good example of this tendency.⁵⁴

Brief descriptions of the history of photography in Mexico, such as the above statement, appear in detailed examinations of groups of photographers. Particularly useful was Marina Pérez de Mendiola's essay *Mexican Contemporary Photography: Staging*

⁵³ Marcy E. Schwartz and Mary Beth Tierney-Tello, eds., *Photography and Writing in Latin America: Double Exposures* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006), 3.

⁵⁴ Marina Perez de Mendiola, "Mexican Contemporary Photography: Staging Ethnicity and Citizenship," *Boundary 2*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (Fall 2004), 131.

Ethnicity (2004).⁵⁵ Although the subject is contemporary photography, Mendiola does give a brief history of photography in Mexico. Her paper is frequently used as a resource in studies with a theoretical bent on specific photographers, including Graciela Iturbide. However, in almost all of the resources on Mexican photography, because so much of that photography is ethnographic, there is a stress on the unfortunate relationship between the subject of those photographs and the European gaze. For example, in *Between Worlds: Contemporary Mexican Photography* (1990), an exhibition catalogue, Trisha Ziff says:

There is a tendency within the First World to perceive ‘creators’ in many fields of the arts from the Third World as exotic. Their work is often marginalized, viewed and experienced outside the mainstream galleries, theatres, museums, and concert halls.⁵⁶

Thus, not only are the people in the photographs perceived as exotic, so are the artists themselves. Both Modotti and Iturbide have had exhibitions in mainstream galleries and museums, but there is still a marginalization that occurs, which will be discussed in the upcoming chapters.

Also useful to this study is *Photography and Writing in Latin America: Double Exposures* edited by Marcy E. Schwartz and Mary Beth Tierney-Tello. It is a documentation of the collaborations that have taken place between photographers and writers, a common practice in Mexico and all of Latin America. Iturbide has done at least one collaboration with a writer. She and the novelist Elena Poniatowska produced

⁵⁵ Marina Perez de Mendiola, “Mexican Contemporary Photography: Staging Ethnicity and Citizenship.” *Boundary 2*. Vol. 31, No. 3 (Fall 2004): 125-153.

⁵⁶ Trisha Ziff, *Between Worlds: Contemporary Mexican Photography* (New Amsterdam and New York: Impressions, 1990), 11.

Juchitán de las Mujeres together in 1989.⁵⁷ Modotti collaborated with Anita Brenner when Modotti and Weston took the photographs for *Idols Behind Altars*. Indeed, Modotti also produced many photographs and writings for *El Machete*, a journal written by activists at the time. *Photography and Writing in Latin America* also emphasizes the problematic of the Western gaze on indigenous cultures:

These collaborations of photography and writing go beyond responding to and documenting contemporary multimedia realities. In fact they are the legacy of European New World exoticism, expansion, and colonization and reflect the consequent policies of racist discrimination and social marginalization that independence in the 19th century institutionalized within a discourse of otherness. A reliance on both the verbal and the visual became and remains one of the representational strategies in the continuing quest for autonomous cultural identification in a postcolonial context.⁵⁸

There are two useful portions in this book. One is the Introduction, which outlines a history of photography in Mexico. The other is a chapter offering a thorough deconstruction of *Idols Behind Altars*, its beneficial and at the same time problematic portrayal of the indigenous, and its discussion of the controversy over the authorship of the photographs by Modotti and Weston.

⁵⁷ Graciela Iturbide, Elena Poniatowska and Mario Bellatín, *Graciela Iturbide: Juchitán de las Mujeres 1979-1989* (Mexico: RM/Editorial Calamus, 2010).

⁵⁸ Schwartz and Tierney-Tello, 2.

DANIEL GREENBERG AND SUSAN STEINHAUSER COLLECT GRACIELA
ITURBIDE

Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser began collecting art roughly thirty years ago. They collect pre-Columbian jade, Chinese jade, contemporary glass and wood vessels, photographs, and other fine art objects. The focus of this examination is their collection of Graciela Iturbide photographs, but it will inevitably make reference to their entire collection of photographs, including those by Manuel Álvarez Bravo and Tina Modotti, as well as their collection of three-dimensional objects. Greenberg and Steinhauser are active in the arts and involved in philanthropic activities concerning issues such as women's leadership, the environment, and education. Although their philanthropic activities are relatively broad, they have a decided connection to the couple's interest in art. The two have been involved in key issues for a long time and have sponsored exhibitions at various museums including an educational program in Santa Fe and a teachers' institute at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) with the intention of getting teachers and their students exposed to art.¹ Within their collecting activities, Greenberg and Steinhauser perform processes delineated by Susan Pearce as systematic collecting and fetishistic collecting. Both of these processes link the couple to the art they collect and to the artists who create the objects, and vice versa, allowing for statements about identity for these specific collectors, their objects, and the artists.

¹ Greenberg/ Steinhauser Interview Transcript, 121.

Greenberg and Steinhäuser regard Greenberg to be the primary collector of the two of them. He likes to amass objects, while Steinhäuser's preference is to keep their collections small and accessible. When discussing Greenberg's instinct to accumulate objects, Steinhäuser says:

Dan is truly a collector. He has to have it without regard for where it's going to be displayed or how it's going to be displayed. I mean at some point in time the house overtook us and Dan was keen to sell the house so that we could have a house that could accommodate all of the art. And my thinking was: we're two people, no children, no pets, we didn't need a bigger house ... Having objects is a great responsibility and not only brings you great joy, but it's a great amount of responsibility.²

Although Greenberg may want to acquire more objects than Steinhäuser, both see owning objects as a great responsibility and they spend a significant amount of time considering the purchases they make. The couple devoted three years to educating themselves about glass art before they began making any serious purchases.³ And yet, their first acquisition of an Iturbide photograph was somewhat spontaneous. However, before beginning to acquire work by a particular artist, they will usually learn as much as possible about their work before beginning to collect what they would consider key pieces.⁴

Both Steinhäuser and Greenberg are more attracted to objects they can touch, and do indeed open their case of jades to hold them. They treasure the photographs in a slightly different way. While they acknowledge they cannot touch the photographs, they do like to look closely at the images as they thumb through published books or view them

² Ibid., 123.

³ Ibid., 105.

⁴ Ibid., 110.

on the walls. Greenberg is initially more interested in photographs that are “striking from a distance”⁵, while Steinhauser has an affinity for photographs with a message, spiritual connotation, or an ability to educate about other cultures. Greenberg begins to appreciate these kinds of subtleties after he has made a purchase and spent more time with the object.⁶ When discussing their backgrounds in art and how it led them to collect

Steinhauser says:

With what Dan does – he really throws himself into it. It’s not so much scholarly. It’s more a gestalt. Like what we’ve done with pre-Columbian jade or we’ve done with the Chinese jade and I think with both done wonderfully. Art – you know art is not only a way of helping you see differently, but of helping you understand other cultures.⁷

To which Dan replies:

She thinks about animism and religion. I just think: look at this Chinese stuff ... and then look at the stuff from Mesoamerica and there’s something there that connects somehow. What is it? You know, so we start collecting both of them because they’re both valid in their own respects, but you know, I begin to see some places where they feel similar.⁸

Thus, while Susan may identify the principle behind the wholeness of the collections as cultural, Dan sees the similarities between the objects as perhaps a more ambiguous strength. But, there is something he recognizes as a connection between them, which is likely cultural. Mieke Bal discusses narrative and the interplay between subjectivity and the cultural basis of understanding, which she calls intersubjectivity. The subject is the basis and the object must be accessible to the subject:

⁵ Ibid., 107.

⁶ Ibid., 107.

⁷ Ibid., 125.

⁸ Ibid., 125.

Cultural objects must signify through common codes, conventions of meaning-making that both producer and reader understand. That is why they have to be intersubjectively accessible. A culture consists of the people who share enough of these conventions to exchange their views (*inter*-subjectively), so that making cultural artefacts is worth some subject's worthwhile.⁹

Perhaps this is what Dan recognizes in the objects – the intersubjectivity. Further, while Dan may not initially be interested in an object's cultural content, there is no denying it exists in the objects he collects. Thus, when these objects make their way into the museum and educational world, the cultural content within each object comes ringing through. Ultimately, the choices Greenberg and Steinhauser make help to form the message about a particular culture that comes across to the viewing public. Their collection of images of the Seri Indians and women in Juchitán by Graciela Iturbide are prime examples and will be discussed later.

Both Greenberg and Steinhauser began to collect at an early age. Greenberg's mother, Ruth Greenberg, seems to have had a profound influence on his interest in art. Indeed, she was instrumental in his decision to begin collecting photographs by Manuel Álvarez Bravo:

I don't have an intellectual antecedent with respect to all of this. That is, I eschew it in that regard and that is, I let my eye and my intellect and my mother's teaching and my experience do all the walking and essentially we ended up getting a huge body of work of Manuel Alvarez Bravo. It was the first real collection that we had in photography. That actually came from my Mom. The only time I took her up to see photography, we were sitting up at Rose's.¹⁰ Rose had a little alcove. You know, you always go in the back room to look at stuff. So, anyway, my Mom's sitting there. We both see these odd couple of pictures on top of the table. Can we look at those? So, they brought it over and my Mom said, "That's really good

⁹ Bal, 85.

¹⁰ Rose is Rose Shoshana owner of The Rose Gallery in Santa Monica, California.

stuff. You ought to think about buying some pictures from that person.” I said, “You’re right Mom.” And, we bought our first four Bravos that day.¹¹

Both Steinhauser and Greenberg came from families of collectors, a fact that lends a psychological aspect to their collecting practices. Greenberg’s mother was an artist and collector and also ran the Tide Pool Gallery in Malibu.¹² Greenberg’s parents collected works from the artists they surrounded themselves with socially. When he was ten years old, Greenberg and his brother saved their money to purchase some ceramic pots for their parents. Greenberg describes this as his first act of collecting, yet in reality it was an acquisition for other people.

Greenberg’s first true act of collecting was in college when he purchased several Escher prints for himself. Escher’s work features the regular patterns that Greenberg finds particularly appealing. His later acquisitions of two-dimensional art, especially the photographs, have this quality as well. Steinhauser collected silver demitasse spoons, green stones, and tin boxes as a youth. She considers herself fortunate to have had an aunt and uncle who were modern art collectors and active in the arts community as members of the Friends of Contemporary Art in Pasadena. Her aunt and uncle also organized a Wallace Berman exhibition and a Dander Rose exhibition in the 1970s and 1980s. Steinhauser’s mother influenced her philanthropic activities, as she was active in the community specifically in elections and adult education.¹³ Pearce’s discussion regarding the origins of our identification with objects, as quoted in the literature review,

¹¹ Greenberg/ Steinhauser Interview Transcript, 109.

¹² Valerie J. Nelson, “Artist, Shell Enthusiast Ran Malibu Gallery,” *Los Angeles Times* (November 28, 2008), <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/nov/28/local/me-greenberg28>, (accessed on 1/20/12).

¹³ Greenberg/ Steinhauser Interview Transcript, 125.

notes: “The emotional relationship of projection and internalization which we have with objects seems to belong with our very earliest experience and (probably therefore) remains important to us all our lives.”¹⁴ Collecting art was indeed a part of both Greenberg’s and Steinhauser’s earliest experiences. Thus, their activities in this realm tie them directly to influential family figures in their lives helping to form a vision of who they are now. Similarly, Susan Stewart says: “Each sign [object in a collection] is placed in relation to a chain of signifiers [other objects in the collection] whose ultimate referent is not the interior of the room -- in itself an empty essence -- but the interior of the self.”¹⁵ Greenberg and Steinhauser’s collecting activities are further linked to their upbringings through the moral value placed on philanthropy and their subsequent joining of collecting and philanthropy, which will be discussed later. They see themselves in the individual pieces and finally in the body of work they have collected.

Another component to their collecting practice is Greenberg and Steinhauser aspire to have their collections viewed by the public. This would strengthen not only their ability as collectors to form a vision, but also fortify the vision itself. Pearce says:

Many modern collectors [as opposed to earlier collectors seeking prestige by legitimizing large fortunes] cherish the hope that their collections will eventually achieve this kind of honour [prestige] when their contributions are ‘recognized’: another way of hoping that the world will one day come to share the collector’s view of his own material, and so of himself. Collecting is seen, or at the very least aspired to be seen, as a moral activity which, like games and love, ennobles the player.¹⁶

¹⁴ Pearce, 47.

¹⁵ Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1993), 158.

¹⁶ Pearce, 51.

Greenberg readily admits he wants his perspective to be honored and recognized, but also acknowledges the importance of the curator in communicating his or her own perspective. He says:

For a dedicated collector who is obsessive compulsive and neurotic like I am - the thing that you want is that you want the curators at a museum to have respect for your eye. So, the best way that gets translated when you give is for the work to be shown. So, remember that's the fundamental thing that all collectors want. And that is that what they've done with their lives, what's been so important to them will find expression or be intellectually calibrated perhaps by a curator who will essentially take all of that material and put it in time and space and you know in an orientation that sort of places it in context in the history of the country and everything else. Everything that I eschew, say that is not really important to me, they have a sense of importance about where it fits in. And so when you marry an eye with the history and the ability to sort of synthesize a lot of intellectual currents that makes a really interesting exhibition. So, that's what I'd say is first. You know, we're going to give a serious body of work, show it.¹⁷

Therefore, the purpose behind the collection is two-fold: Steinhäuser and Greenberg are continuing a life of service "drilled into" them by their parents, while at the same time possessing a serious drive to have their visions for their collections shown to the outside world. This vision is perhaps the result of the life of service they have in mind.

Additionally, Greenberg understands there are underlying currents in photographs that make an interesting exhibition when paired with his eye for a strong image. Ultimately, the collected images themselves provide an understanding of other cultures and reflect the collectors' own interest in providing support to others who may be less fortunate. This results in a philanthropic current running through the collection itself.

The tendency toward philanthropic activities and an appreciation for art was ingrained in Steinhäuser and Greenberg when they were children. Both feel that people

¹⁷ Greenberg/ Steinhäuser Interview Transcript, 119.

need to be educated about art at an early age. When asked why art is so important that children need to be exposed to it at an early age, Greenberg says:

Well, I start from the position that my Mom was an artist and she just passed away in the last year. I've been exposed to art since I was a kid. My parents valued the medium. Buying cars, buying too much caviar, running around in private jets...every hour on a private jet is one really nice photograph. I mean, you know when I start weighing how one uses money in a way that is not just to make more money or to provide yourself with, you know, a lavish lifestyle, but where money gets put to use in a fundamentally different way. Art rises to the surface of what's immediate. I mean there are a lot of things we do. My wife and I give away thirty percent of our gross income every year to charity of one kind or another: educational institutions, artistic institutions, women's leadership, people who are hungry. You know, you can run the gamut. But, the point of the matter is: a life of service has been drilled into us by our parents and so I think it comes pretty naturally – it's just the way in which it gets expressed.¹⁸

Thus, collecting art is one of the ways Greenberg and Steinhäuser can express their value of providing service to those less fortunate. However, it is obvious that the couple has a large source of wealth, presumably originating from Greenberg's position as CEO of ElectroRent, a company that "rents, leases, and resells electronic test and measurement equipment and computers."¹⁹ This income gives Greenberg and Steinhäuser the ability to buy large amounts of art. In some cases where there is wealth, a collector may collect solely for tax purposes. Although Greenberg and Steinhäuser may benefit from tax write-offs, they appear to be driven more by a love of art. Thus, it seems inevitable that they would tie their own philanthropic activities, such as education, into their collecting activities as they are dedicated to personal acquisition and philanthropy. Indeed,

¹⁸ Greenberg/ Steinhäuser Interview Transcript, 122.

¹⁹ Forbes Magazine has a profile of Daniel Greenberg at <http://people.forbes.com/profile/daniel-greenberg/28774> (accessed on 2/1/2012).

regardless of their different reasons for being attracted to particular pieces, they do have similar perspectives on art as an educational and socially proactive tool.

When questioned about the importance of exposing children to art, Steinhauser says, “Art is about expanding the way you see things. I mean you can’t look at Bravo’s photos or Lange’s photos or Iturbide’s photos without seeing things in an entirely different way.”²⁰ And Greenberg says:

We’ve held ... teachers’ institutes at L.A. County [LACMA] so that ... not only do teachers learn about it but ... kids come out and learn about it – you’ve got to hit kids early in life and get them started on a path of appreciating what’s going on in the world artistically. So, those are ancillary areas that [don’t] have anything to do with collecting, but [in fact do have] everything to do with collecting because it is essentially involving a lot of other elements in the community.²¹

The teachers’ institutes at LACMA provide teachers with tools to incorporate art into their own curriculum. The LACMA website advertises the program as such on their website:

Evenings for Educators is a professional development program that presents K-12 teachers with opportunities to look, learn, create, and connect with colleagues. Featuring LACMA's special exhibitions and permanent collection, each program presents strategies to incorporate the visual arts into the classroom with activities that explore the artistic process, approach works of art as primary sources, and emphasize the parallels between the visual arts and core content areas. Educators attend lectures by a museum curator or scholar as well as participate in gallery tours, discussions, and artist-led workshops.²²

One can see there is an intellectual predominance inherent in Steinhauser’s and Greenberg’s collecting activities and processes. Not only do they spend a great deal of time deciding which purchases to make, but there is also a desire to educate others tied in

²⁰ Greenberg/ Steinhauser Interview Transcript, 122.

²¹ Ibid., 121.

²² Los Angeles County Museum of Art, *Los Angeles County Museum of Art Website*, Education Page, <http://www.lacma.org/programs/education/evenings-educators> (accessed on 2/1/2012).

with their collecting practices. This places their collecting process at least partially in the group Pearce refers to as systematic collecting:

For well over two centuries systematic collecting, both inside and outside museums, has in all its different manifestations in the various disciplines been accorded an intellectual primacy, which seems to derive from its apparent capacity to demonstrate understanding rather than feeling and so to extend our control of the world.²³

In using the word “our,” Pearce presumably means humankind as a whole, and with collectors themselves the most immediately evident examples. In this sense, Steinhauser and Greenberg’s “control” has to do not only with the objects they choose and from which cultures, but why they choose them, to which museums they are bequeathed (because the hope is they will all ultimately be bequeathed to a museum), and hence how they are displayed. These factors will inevitably effect how the couple, the art, and the artist are perceived by the outside world. Steinhauser, in particular, has an interest in understanding other cultures through the photographs and Greenberg uses the act of collecting to exercise his knowledge about art, learn from others, and to create a collection of strong images to show to others. And, as discussed previously, they both use collecting as a means of philanthropy. Greenberg and Steinhauser have taken on the role of deciding which Latin American photographs ought to be collected and hence shown, thus the information a museum visitor absorbs when viewing their collection is largely informed by the choices made by the pair. The scope of this is indicated by the public appearances of their collections. This is also where semiotics and its relationship to collecting merit discussion. Pearce says: “It is the ability of objects to be

²³ Pearce, 84.

simultaneously signs and symbols, to carry a true part of the past into the present, but also to bear perpetual symbolic reinterpretation, which is the essence of their peculiar and ambiguous power.”²⁴ Part of the selection process is a determination on the part of the collectors to have the work shown, have their vision communicated to a wider audience, and educate the public about other cultures. Thus, an object is always a sign of its origin, but also may be symbolically reinterpreted over and over again. For example, a photograph by Iturbide is always a sign for Iturbide herself or the actual event depicted in a photograph. The same photograph may then become a symbol for something else depending on who collected it and where it is placed. In this case, a photograph may be a symbol for Greenberg and Steinhauser and therefore also be a symbol of a subject worthy of educating the public. However, there is the possibility for other interpretations of the objects once they reach the outside world. For example, Latin American photography has a long history of acting as a vehicle for placing the indigenous in the position of the Other. This is, unfortunately, a problem with which museums still grapple.

In 2007 the Getty launched a thirty-year survey of Graciela Iturbide’s photographs.²⁵ As described on The Getty Website, the exhibition was indebted to Steinhauser and Greenberg.

The breadth and depth of the selection has been made possible through the generosity of the artist, who opened her personal archive, and the magnanimity of Brentwood collectors Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser. They have followed Iturbide's work for more than 10 years and assembled a wide-ranging collection of her images, including many of the pictures created in the remote southern Mexican city of Juchitán, Oaxaca during the 1980s. Reflecting the extensive and discriminating Greenberg-Steinhauser collection, this important

²⁴ Ibid., 27.

²⁵ Exhibition took place December 18, 2007 – April 13, 2008 at the Getty Center in Los Angeles.

series, central to Iturbide's body of work, is a primary component of this exhibition.²⁶

The artist and the photographs within the exhibition are publicly linked to Steinhauser and Greenberg with this statement. Further, it clearly gives the collectors credit for selecting Iturbide's important works. Additionally, the word "magnanimity" infuses the description of the couple with generosity and nobility. Judith Keller states the following in her foreword to *Graciela Iturbide: Juchitán*, the catalogue accompanying the Getty exhibition:

The Getty museum has had the good fortune to mount these two major exhibitions [Iturbide exhibition and *Manuel Álvarez Bravo: Optical Parables* in 2001] and to add substantial numbers of photographs by both Iturbide and Álvarez Bravo to its permanent collection through the generous patronage of two Los Angeles citizens, Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser. Greenberg and Steinhauser contribute their time, financial support, and gifts to the collection through their involvement with the Getty Museum's Photographs Council. They have followed the work of Iturbide for more than ten years, building a holding that represents their favorite individual images from her three decades of practice, as well as highlights from her wide-ranging projects, such as the intimate study of the Seri Indians living near the Sea of Cortés or the later road pictures displaying her reaction to the bleak landscapes of the American South. In assembling their Iturbide collection, Greenberg and Steinhauser favored the 1980s images made during the artist's numerous visits to the remote city of Juchitán in southern Mexico. This important series, concentrating on the powerful matriarchal aspects of Juchitán culture, is now considered central to Iturbide's oeuvre. The Museum is greatly enhanced by the collectors' foresight. Their 2007 gifts of Juchitán photographs comprise the majority of the works presented in this volume."²⁷

Thus, the couple is acknowledged as highly generous and concerned with the subjects featured in Iturbide's work. After all, they had the foresight to collect a series of Iturbide's work that has since become important. They are, by way of the objects they

²⁶ J. Paul Getty Museum, *J. Paul Getty Museum Website, Exhibition Page, The Goat's Dance: Photographs by Graciela Iturbide*, <http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/iturbide/>, (accessed October 14, 2011).

²⁷ Keller, vi.

collect, publicly connected to a particular aspect of Mexico documented and interpreted by Iturbide: its cultural and societal activities. In some ways, Iturbide's work is the perfect pairing of the visually pleasing and the educational so appreciated by Greenberg and Steinhauser. In her biography and commentary on Iturbide, Cuauhtémoc Medina writes:

We would miss the whole point of [Iturbide's] work if we did not acknowledge that her photography is a means to enchant, surprise and move our minds in relation to the fragility and beauty of life in all its cultural diversity. Throughout her work there is a tension between the documentary quality her photographs suggest to some of her viewers, and their cultural and personal effect as poetic images.²⁸

Hence, Greenberg and Steinhauser have collected images with visual strength and beauty, but also images that document and therefore educate. And, they have collected works that have since become important. Therefore, as collectors, they have been instrumental in deciding what is meaningful for the public to see and learn about a particular aspect of Mexican culture. In short, they are presented in a positive light in connection to their collection of Iturbide photographs. Rochberg-Halton says: "Valued material possessions ... act as signs of the self that are essential in their own right for its continued cultivation, and hence the world of meaning that we create for ourselves, and that creates our selves, extends literally into the objective surroundings."²⁹ The collection becomes a sign for the self. In the case of Greenberg and Steinhauser, they may not need to collect to affirm their own meaning in the world, but the collection ultimately offers a statement about who they are. It also acts as a sign of a particular area of Mexico and thus connects the

²⁸ Medina, 4.

²⁹ Pearce, 55.

couple to that area of Mexico, interestingly an area that has long been a matriarchal system. Of these images Iturbide says,

In Juchitán I spent a lot of time at the public market, hanging out with the women there, these big strong, politicized, emancipated, wonderful women. I discovered this world of women and I made it my business to spend time with them and they gave me access to their daily world and to their traditions.³⁰

Steinhauser and Greenberg have been associated with women's leadership and have given financial backing to numerous women in the United States government and women's rights organizations.³¹ Consequently, the collection of Juchitán images underscores the couple's dedication to facilitating women's progress to positions of power. Indeed, Steinhauser and Greenberg's political activities shine an interesting light on the Juchitán images. One may perhaps view them as images of a progressive society ahead of our own. About how one's identity might be reflected on the objects one collects, Pearce says:

A number of studies carried out in America unite to demonstrate how significant possessions are to the self-image, and interestingly these tend to suggest that the critical factor is the extent to which we believe we possess or are possessed by an object: control, one way or another, is what makes an object become more a part of the self All such 'objects' act as reminders and confirmers of our identities, and probably our idea of our identity resides more in such objects than it does in any idea of ourselves as individuals.³²

Steinhauser and Greenberg may see themselves as collectors with a social conscience.

This self-image cannot help but be perceived behind an exhibition of the works they have collected, as it is made clear that the couple owns and purposefully selected individual

³⁰ Keller, 1.

³¹ <http://www.votesmart.org/candidate/campaign-finance/59904/julia-brownley> (accessed on 3/14/12)

<http://www.electiontrack.com/lookup.php?committee=1071446> (accessed on 3/14/12)

³² Pearce, 55.

pieces in a manner described as benevolent. Further, Pearce says of systematic collecting:

Systematics draw a viewer into their frame. They presuppose a two-way relationship between the collection, which has something public (not private) to say, and the audience, who may have something to learn or disagree with. This is one of two reasons why curators generally give the lion's share of their blessings, and of their exhibition space, to this kind of collecting.³³

Thus, not only is there a perceived self-image by the collectors themselves, but there is a perceived image, perhaps an image of socially concerned collectors, imagined by the viewing public with this kind of collection.

In order to understand what this image of social concern might be in more specific terms, a look at the actual photographs, the artist herself, and the public reaction to the exhibition is necessary. The subjects of the photographs in the exhibition include a traditional goat slaughter by women in Juchitán, seemingly documentary photographs of the life of the Juchitán women, and images of Latina women in East Los Angeles. Juchitán is a matriarchal region in Mexico in which some of the women still wear traditional peasant clothing. *Nuestra Señora de las Iguanas Juchitán, Oaxaca* (Our Lady of the Iguanas, Juchitán, Oaxaca) from 1979 [Figure 1] is one of Iturbide's most famous images and appears in the exhibition. The black and white photograph shows a Mexican woman from the chest up, staring off into the distance with about five iguanas on her head like a crown. The image is taken from below so the viewer is looking up at the woman. The woman appears to have a slight smirk on her face giving the image a slightly humorous quality.

³³ Pearce, 87.

1. Graciela Iturbide, *Nuestra Señora de las Iguanas, Juchitán, Oaxaca, Mexico* (Our Lady of the Iguanas, Juchitan, Oaxaca, Mexico), 1979
Gelatin silver print; 17 5/16 in. x 14 7/16 in. (43.97 cm x 36.67 cm)
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Gift of the artist; © Graciela Iturbide

Tina Modotti created a similar photograph titled *Woman of Tehuantepec*, circa 1929. It is a similar perspective of a woman from the same region, but the woman holds a gourd on her head. Iturbide's image seems to be a reinterpretation of an image that might generally be viewed as the exotic Other. In an on-line blog called *Tacos y Palabras* (Plugs and Words) a self-described Chicano poet writes, "The photographs in this Exhibit hit all the Mexican and Chicano stereotypes in a particularly efficient and excellent fashion."³⁴ *Tacos y Palabras* readers also commented on the exhibition after viewing it and many argued with this perspective stating that the poor Mexican is a reality, while others agreed that the exhibition persists stereotypes. One comment reads:

[I d]on't know why we are so willing to generate the same stereotypes about ourselves. In many ways my sentiments reflect Octavio Paz's discussion in the first chapter of *Labyrinth of Solitude*. [The] Tex[t]-Mex Gallery blog pointed out that Cheech & Chong are the best known Mexicans in the world. Questions begin to form about who is really defining who [sic].³⁵

³⁴ <http://tacosypalabras.wordpress.com/2008/02/23/review-graciela-iturbide-exhibit-at-the-getty-museum/> (accessed on 11/17/11).

³⁵ Ibid.

This is problematic. Suddenly, we are confronted with the thoughts of a viewer who does not perceive the selection of actual images as positive for Mexicans. Museums in general have a history of marginalizing people of color, which can complicate the exhibition of Iturbide photographs and in fact any exhibition of Latino photographs. Indeed, the viewer feels that Iturbide and hence Greenberg, Steinhauser and the Getty Museum are perpetuating a harmful stereotype. An overall message communicated or perceived from an exhibition of Iturbide photographs or any exhibition of Latino photographs is indeed complicated. While the intentions of artist, collector, and museum may only be good, there is a long history of oppression that distorts their intentions. Medina says Iturbide used the act of studying Indians to explore her own cultural and political identity as a modern Mexican, and yet:

This quest became involved in a cultural predicament. As Lorna Scott Fox has incisively noted in a 1993 article for *Poliester* magazine, the Mexican regime supported this photographic ‘anthropoetry’ in order ‘to trumpet its pride in ethnic pluralism’. Yet these images of Indians were actually consumed by European and American audiences to reassure themselves ‘that something survives the ongoing devastation of colonialism’. There is little doubt that photographers like Iturbide conceived their practice as a form of accompaniment to the struggles of the many Indian communities in the country.³⁶

Whether reassurance is what Greenberg and Steinhauser are seeking is not clear, however, they are subject to this perception as well as the possibility of being linked to a negative association with the portrayal of indigenous people in Mexico. Perhaps there is a difference in the perception of the photographs depending on the background of the viewer. Indeed, many of the contributors to *Tacos y Palabras* identify themselves as Latino. One wonders if Iturbide is simply continuing in a stereotypical vein or if she is

³⁶ Medina, 11.

successful in communicating something new. In an essay about Iturbide's work, Marina Perez de Mendiola discusses the manner in which Latinos have been portrayed in photography historically:

One may ask whether contemporary photography shares the same ethnographic lens present through the end of the nineteenth century—one that framed the indigenous people within the concept of primitivism and its multiple ideological definitions— or whether it offers an alternative way of foregrounding them. Interestingly enough, Mexican photography of the past twenty-five years is particularly resonant with a kind of ethnographic visual representation marked by exoticism and racist underpinnings.³⁷

According to this statement, Mexican photography has indeed bowed to traditional stereotypes. However, later she says specifically of Iturbide's work:

Although it is possible to consider her representations of the indigenous worlds a polite and dignified portrayal, the type of photograph that she has offered us over the years endeavors to transcend the image of the worthy *pelado* (pauper). This occurs not because she wants to wrest away the *pelado*'s dignity but because she hopes to eliminate the condescending, paternalistic, and benevolent nuances invested in this word by resemanticizing the notion of dignity.³⁸

Thus, according to the art historical community Iturbide has endeavored to eliminate a stereotypical view. Yet, one can see that there might be difficulty in viewing Iturbide's work without the taint of stereotypes, as many viewers are prepared to automatically see photographs from Latin America in this manner. Iturbide's oeuvre includes some seminal photographs, which may "resemanticize the notion of dignity". In some cases she directly references her predecessors and adds her own interpretation, while in other cases the works are completely new, giving the viewer a fresh perspective of societies typically seen as the Other.

³⁷ Mendiola, 133-134.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 140.

The first photograph by Iturbide Greenberg and Steinhauser purchased is called *Mujer Ángel (Angel Woman)*, an image included in the Getty exhibition [Figure 2]. The photograph shows a woman walking through the desert dressed in traditional clothing and carrying a boom box. Colin Westerbeck writes:

All her [Iturbide's] work is suspended in time between the historic world in which most of her subjects live and the modern one that she inhabits, and it is photography that allows her to go back and forth between them. One thing that this particular photograph of an Indian with a boombox "represents", she says, is "the change from nomadism to capitalism."³⁹

2. Graciela Iturbide, *Mujer Ángel, Desierto Sonora, Mexico* (Angel Woman, Sonora Desert, Mexico), 1979, printed later
Gelatin silver print; 9 ¾ in. x 13 in. (24.77 cm x 33.02 cm);
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Purchase through a gift of Jane Reed and the Accessions Committee Fund; © Graciela Iturbide

Westerbeck's view that Iturbide's subjects live in the historic world is part and parcel of the tendency to view Latin American photographs within the stereotypical lens. Yet, what is happening in this photograph is more in line with Westerbeck's description of Iturbide's ability to go back and forth between worlds and more specifically an ability to capture something real: a society's evolution from nomadism to capitalism. Operating

³⁹ Colin Westerbeck, "Suspended in Time, The Photography of Graciela Iturbide," in *Graciela Iturbide: The Hasselblad Award 2008* (Göttingen, Germany: Hasselblad Foundation, Steidl, 2008), 126.

alone, the photograph may work to perpetuate a stereotype; that certain Mexicans are somehow behind the times. Yet, viewed with other photographs in the collection there is the possibility for another interpretation. In another photograph from the same series, Iturbide places herself in *Self-Portrait with the Seri* (1979). Westerbeck writes, “What does inhere in the work is an ability to contain contradictions, to be both an outside observer of her subject’s way of life and an empathetic participant at the same time.” By including herself in the series, Iturbide clearly shows she is not simply an outside observer and there is a cross-evolutionary process occurring as a result of the intimate contact between herself and the Seri. Neither is part of an historic world. They are both in the present. Additionally, Westerbeck clearly describes empathy in this case as “the attempt to know the world from someone else’s point of view.”⁴⁰ This is keenly resonant with Steinhauser’s insistence that art is a way to understand other cultures. Yet, these images do not help the subjects in the photographs to understand the culture of those collecting them or those viewing them. The subjects are eternally forced into the realm of that which needs to be understood. The museum, collector, and viewer are free of being viewed.

Another viewer at the Getty exhibition was not offended by most of the images, and stated that the poor Mexican is a solid reality.⁴¹ However, as Iturbide’s photographs are artistic interpretations in a documentary vein, one is left wondering, is this what Mexico really looks like? This is in part the limitation of Iturbide’s work, but also a

⁴⁰ Ibid., 125.

⁴¹ <http://tacosypalabras.wordpress.com/2008/02/23/review-graciela-iturbide-exhibit-at-the-getty-museum/> (accessed on 11/17/11).

sometimes-neglected responsibility of the curators presenting and writing about her work. However, Iturbide has been clear that she is not striving for some sort of truth. These images in some cases may appear to be ethnographic, yet they are her poetic and artistic interpretation. Perhaps this is where the danger lies. Keller's essay in the catalogue for the Getty exhibition begins with a now-standard story of Iturbide's beginnings as an artist, one that describes her beauty, history and personal tragedy as the starting point. Iturbide herself uses the word "mythical" to describe the town of Juchitán. These are certainly all words used to describe her predecessors as well as the region Iturbide photographed in Mexico. The women of Juchitán are in the same region as the Tehuantepec women photographed by Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Tina Modotti, and others earlier in the twentieth century. Judith Keller points out that at the turn of the twentieth century Tehuana had come to mean "the exotic, indigenous women of this remote region."⁴² Keller goes on to say, "These women – alluring to northerners because of their pre-Hispanic Indian heritage, sumptuous apparel, and distant southern location – were idealized as a source of strength, of hope, for Mexican society."⁴³ Iturbide's photographs are the successors to Bravo and Modotti's photographs taken in the same region. As stated earlier, *Nuestra Señora de las Iguanas, Juchitán, Oaxaca* (Our Lady of the Iguanas, Juchitán, Oaxaca) from 1979 appears to be a reinterpretation of Modotti's *Woman of Tehuantepec* circa 1929 [Figure 1]. Thus, Iturbide's Juchitán photographs are reminders of Modotti's photographs. The word "mythical" immediately forces the people in the photographs into a larger than life realm, one that is perpetually viewed as

⁴² Keller, 5.

⁴³ Ibid., 6.

the realm of the Other. Although it is doubtful this is Iturbide's intention, and she is successful in fashioning a new view of the cultures she photographs, the words chosen by her and Keller are examples of why one is prepared to view her images as stereotypes. In turn, these puzzling tribulations inadvertently shed a light of naiveté on Steinhauser and Greenberg's collecting practices. Perhaps Greenberg and Steinhauser are aware of this possible perception of Iturbide's work, but they still see the value in collecting and displaying it.

Like systematic collecting, there are several qualities to Greenberg and Steinhauser's collecting process that link it to the fetishistic category. It is important to discuss both types of collections because they demonstrate how the art, art work, and collector are connected, but also how these connections might be perceived by the external world and how this changes one's perception of all three. The mode of fetishistic collecting may also be placed within Pearce's discussion *Collections as Play...*; one of the ways of looking at how collectors construct and come to understand the world around them or the reasons why they collect.⁴⁴ Indeed, the wish to have one's collection publicly recognized is part of play in that it can give the collector a sense of community in the correspondence, meetings, and the like necessary to facilitate exhibitions as well as purchasing. These are aspects to collecting that Greenberg particularly enjoys. When the couple acquires works of art for museums, they spend a great deal of time working with museum curators. And likewise, when they purchase works of art they spend a significant period with gallery owners. Moreover, the play side

⁴⁴ Pearce, 51.

of collecting includes a sort of sensual pleasure akin to fetishism when handling the objects as well as a reframing of the object once it has passed from the outside world into the collection itself. Indeed, once an object is a part of a collection it is the collector's possession. Possession is central to a "passionate desire" to collect an object, making it a characteristic of the fetishistic collection.⁴⁵ At the same time, the collector may use the sense of community involved in "play" to legitimize the desire to possess.⁴⁶

Greenberg asserts his true collecting practice began when he was thirty-three or thirty-four. At that time, he and Steinhauser began to collect contemporary glass art, about which he says, "I get sort of enormously excited by the inherent beauty of what I'm looking at." Together, the two built up strong collections of glass and wood vessels, pre-Columbian jade, Chinese jade, and many other items including photographs. However, in the beginning the work they collected derived from the craft-shop, as it was mainly the glass and wood vessels. Greenberg says, "I've just been interested in ... I won't say primitive, [but] more fundamental kinds of ways which people can express themselves and the transformation of something functional to something that has inherent beauty." Both Steinhauser and Greenberg are admittedly far more interested in objects they can handle like their small jade sculptures and glass and wood vessels. In fact, when they actually handle their objects, a sort of giddiness overtakes them and their love for the objects shines through. This is probably why they insist the objects remain accessible in their home rather than in storage. There are large glass display cabinets in the living areas of their home containing many of their three-dimensional objects. Steinhauser says,

⁴⁵ Ibid., 81.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 51.

“As much as I like the photographs – and I really do – and some of them you just feel a spark, but, there’s something I like about being able to handle things.” Even when discussing the photographs, the couple brought out books to hold and feel and show the works they find most pleasing. The desire to have physical contact with the objects gives the collection a fetishistic and emotional quality. Pearce writes in her discussion of play:

Danet and Katriel suggest that ownership, and the instant access which control brings is essential also for another reason: the sensuous aspects of collecting – handling, touching, playing with, caring for the collection – are made possible by it. One of their informers said, ‘the important thing is that you are able to handle it, because once it’s in a museum you can’t – this way you can take it and feel it and look at it.’⁴⁷

Pearce does not suggest outright that she is referring to fetishistic collections in the above statement. Yet, as previously stated, it is logical to connect play to fetishism because of the sensual pleasure involved:

Freud (1977) described the fetish as part of the body separated from the whole, or an object substituted for a bodily part, which then, like underwear, becomes the focus of sexual gratification in its own right. This, presumably, is linked to his remark ... about the collector who directs his surplus libido on to an inanimate object.⁴⁸

However, it must be stressed that Pearce also says of fetishism:

This is in many ways an unfortunate or even unpleasant term, but it is now so embedded in the literature that to avoid it would create more problems than it solves, so it will be used here on the understanding that nothing inherently pejorative is intended.⁴⁹

Freud’s foundational work in defining the fetish provides a starting point for Pearce. The obvious pleasure the collectors take in their art objects extends beyond merely visual

⁴⁷ Ibid., 52.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 82.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 81.

appreciation and prompts Pearce's analysis through Freud's concept of the fetish. For Greenberg and Steinhäuser and many other collectors, the objects cause a heightened kind of excitement, especially when they are able to handle them. Further, the couple's collecting tendencies have a direct link to important relatives in their lives. This is important in Freudian terms because the practice of collecting is perhaps a substitute for those specific familial relationships. In this way, the act of collecting helps to tie both Greenberg's and Steinhäuser's identities to their perception of their relatives' own identities as philanthropists and collectors.

As we know, Greenberg likes to accumulate objects, yet the couple tries to curb the size of the collection through a discerning selection process. This suggests there is a sort of balancing act occurring between fetishistic and systematic collecting. The tendency to accumulate is more akin to fetishism, while their actual selection process is systematic with some fetishistic qualities. Pearce describes accumulation and fetishism:

Powerful emotions are aroused by the objects which the objects seem to return, stimulating a need to gather more and more of the same kind. The urge is to samples, and as many as possible, rather than to examples – a notion we shall return to when we consider systematic collection. The whole process is a deployment of the possessive self, a strategy of desire, and this is part of the reason why this mode of collecting is described as fetishistic.⁵⁰

Greenberg's inclination to accumulate mingled with the couple's strong emotions about their collected objects connect their process to other important points made by collecting theorists regarding an object bearing metonymic relationships to the collection and its collectors and vice versa. Roy Ellen identifies four underlying cognitive processes in fetishism: the recognition of a concrete existence or the concretization of abstractions, a

⁵⁰ Ibid., 81.

state of mind in which the signifier and signified are conflated, the attribution of qualities of living organisms to the object, often (though not exclusively) human, and an ambiguous relationship between control of object by people, and of people by object.⁵¹ The conflation of signifier and signified as well as the object in control of people and people in control of object are both important aspects to the Greenberg Steinhauser collection. Conflation is particularly important here when considered with Pearce's point of view that "Objects hang before the eyes of the imagination, continuously re-presenting ourselves to ourselves, and telling the stories of our lives in ways which would be impossible otherwise."⁵² These examples have to do mostly with the collector's identification with the objects. It is useful to consider Karl Marx's definition of fetishism here: "So it is the world of commodities with the products of men's hands. This I call Fetishism which attaches itself to the products of labour, so soon as they are produced as commodities, and which is therefore inseparable from the production of commodities."⁵³ The labor provided by a worker, or in our case, a photographer, is united with its product: the photograph. Likewise, the labor provided by a collector is united with its product: the collection. Thus, the photographer and collector are linked by way of the object. The same phenomenon can also be explained with semiotics. Pearce says the object selected by a collector

bears an intrinsic, direct and organic relationship, that is a metonymic relationship, to the body of material from which it was selected because it is an integral part of it. But the very act of selection adds to its nature. By being chosen away and lifted out of the embedding metonymic matrix, the selected

⁵¹ Ibid., 39.

⁵² Ibid., 47.

⁵³ Ibid., 83.

collection now bears a representative or metaphorical relationship to its whole. It becomes an image of what the whole is believed to be, and although it remains an intrinsic part of the whole, it is no longer merely a detached fragment because it has become imbued with meaning of its own.⁵⁴

Presumably, this meaning the object becomes imbued with has to do with the collection it is now a part of and therefore the collector who has selected it. Furthermore, these meanings may or may not be known to the collector. Conversely, some characteristics are important enough to their identity that the collector will want them to shine through as the collection is displayed. Other characteristics may become a part of the collection with or without the collector's intent. One is not always aware of one's own characteristics or how one is perceived. This is where the control of the people by the objects or vice versa is relevant. As we saw in the analysis of the Iturbide Getty exhibition, one's intent does not always successfully present itself.

Characteristically, much of it [materials in museums] comes in groups which have been gathered together by a single individual, or sometimes a closely associated pair or group of individuals. We are accustomed to call each of these groups 'a collection' and to refer to the whole assemblage as 'the collections' and to refer to the whole assemblage as 'the collections'. The notion, then, of the group identity and personal association is deeply embedded in the material itself and in museum language.⁵⁵

The Steinhilber Greenberg collection has fetishistic qualities that can be described with Roy Ellen's cognitive processes, which compound the identification of the couple with the objects they collect because their identities become embedded in the meaning of the objects.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 38.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 37.

Further examples of control over the objects and especially a conflation of the signifier and signified appear within two symbolic actions by Greenberg and Steinhauser to share the lives lived by the subjects in their photographs, albeit one step removed. The first involves a photograph by Manuel Alvarez Bravo called *El Ensueño* (*The Daydream*) from 1931 in which a young girl leans on a balcony apparently daydreaming. The act took place when Greenberg and Steinhauser traveled to Mexico City to visit Manuel Alvarez Bravo. They saw the balcony, which had been the setting for the photograph that Bravo had taken decades earlier. Steinhauser conveys a personal interest in what she describes as a hope for a new utopia in Mexico during the revolutionary period in Mexico from 1910 to 1929, which she says Manuel Alvarez Bravo captured in many of his images. She remembers the instance where they saw the balcony and were compelled to run up to it with Bravo to pose in the way that the woman had been posing in his photograph.

...there was really a hope that Mexico was going to become a utopia and you had Russians coming and Americans coming and it was going to be a new world and that was an exciting era and the way Manuel captured the essence of the people and the folkways and the professionals there. And we went to where Don Manuel lives – we actually went to that apartment, we were on that balcony – you know the *El Sueño* [sic]. I don't know if you know Don Manuel's pictures, but there's one of a young girl on a balcony and she's like this and all of us went up there and we went like that.⁵⁶

Greenberg also remembers the instance with excitement, “1924, you know this picture was taken – somewhere in the ‘20’s. So, here it is almost, you know, eighty years later and we go running up to the same place.”⁵⁷ Thus, not only is there an excitement about

⁵⁶ Greenberg/ Steinhauser Interview Transcript, 124.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 124.

handling their objects, but the couple exhibits a similar kind of elation when imagining themselves in the same time and place, and indeed as the subjects of the photographs. As a result, their identity becomes further woven in with the origin of the photograph. Not only have they collected these photographs, but the action of posing as the photograph proves their kinship and concern for the subjects portrayed, in this case a new world and utopia. The utopian ideal is again not far from what the couple strives for in their philanthropic activities in which they try to help those less fortunate, who Diego Rivera might call “the masses.” Rivera is perhaps the most famous and productive of the muralists during the Mexican Renaissance, a time in which the government sponsored murals to create a national identity and foster pride. Rivera expressed the utopian ideals of the period when he said, “For the first time in the history of monumental painting, Mexican muralism ended the focus on gods, kings, and heads of state” and “made the masses the hero of monumental art.”⁵⁸ And yet, this is also what problematizes a viewing of Greenberg and Steinhauser’s collection. As Rivera said, Mexican muralism made the “masses the hero of monumental art.” Thus, those individuals in the masses become monumental, placed on a pedestal and objectified, intensifying the difficulty in seeing them for who they are rather than as a stereotype in a contemporary collection of photographs.

On another occasion, Greenberg and Steinhauser used an Iturbide photograph as the image on their Christmas card. Often, Christmas cards are simply photographs of a

⁵⁸ Museum of Modern Art, *Museum of Modern Art Website*, Gallery Label Text, http://www.moma.org/collection/object.php?object_id=80682 (accessed on 2/1/2012).

couple or a family sent as a greeting, but also to show how a family currently appears. Steinhauser indicated their collection is to them what children might be to others. In a sense the collection is their family. Thus, the Christmas card conveniently shows a couple, but also conveys to acquaintances, extended family, business associates and friends how Greenberg and Steinhauser perceive their own immediate family to be their collection. Unfortunately, there is an aspect of discomfort in the likely innocent act of using this particular image as their Christmas card. The photograph they chose is Iturbide's *El Matrimonio, Panamá (The Couple, Panama)* from 1974. The photograph depicts a Latino couple, probably in their thirties, standing against a wall. The man has his arm around the woman. He is looking up, while she stares into the camera with a slightly amused expression. They are dressed for an occasion, and she is wearing jewelry, a short dress printed with flowers, and is carrying a purse. In using this image as their Christmas card, Greenberg and Steinhauser are allowing for this couple to represent themselves. This image secures the extent of the couple's identification with their collection.

To conclude, Greenberg and Steinhauser are indeed generous and have been instrumental in the recognition of Graciela Iturbide's work. This recognition draws attention not only to the subjects photographed, but also to Greenberg and Steinhauser influencing an outside perspective of the couple and the photographs as well as Iturbide. Susan Pearce's theories of collecting place the couple's collection firmly in both the fetishistic and systematic modes of the collecting process. These modes underscore

Greenberg and Steinhäuser's identities as philanthropists who are actively concerned with the welfare of the people less fortunate.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL COLLECTS TINA MODOTTI

Valued material possessions ... act as signs of the self that are essential in their own right for its continued cultivation, and hence the world of meaning that we create for ourselves, and that creates our selves, extends literally into the objective surroundings. ~ Susan Pearce

A number of studies carried out in America unite to demonstrate how significant possessions are to the self-image ... and interestingly these tend to suggest that the critical factor is the extent to which we believe we possess or are possessed by an object: control, one way or another, is what makes an object become more a part of the self...All such 'objects' act as reminders and confirmers of our identities, and probably our idea of our identity resides more in such objects than it does in any idea of ourselves as individuals. ~ Susan Pearce

Susie Tompkins Buell is a well-known San Francisco businesswoman and social and political activist. She founded the clothing company *Esprit de Corp* in the early 1970s.¹ *Esprit* is known as, “a company with a social conscience [that] has made a commitment to support causes and speak out on issues that are of global concern.”² Buell no longer owns the company, and her activities became more politically and socially charged after she left her career in fashion. She has been deeply involved in presidential campaigns since the selling of *Esprit* in 1996 when she renamed the *Esprit* Foundation the Susie Tompkins Buell Foundation, which continues to support organizations that predominantly serve women and girls.³ Buell is determined to give women a larger voice in politics by helping more women become elected to political offices. She says, “I’d help any woman that wants to run for senate in the Democratic Party. I would probably

¹ <http://www.infomat.com/whoswho/susietompkins.html> (accessed on 3/21/12)

Susie and her husband Doug started the clothing company with their partner “Jane” in the late 1960s. The company became incorporated as *Esprit de Corps* in the early 1970s.

² Andrea Noble, *Tina Modotti: Image, Texture, Photography* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2000), 35.

³ <http://www.susietompkinsbuell.org/history.html> (accessed on 4/25/2011).

be there for her and it's kind of my reputation that the women senators really appreciate me and I try to really work hard for them because it's such a boys' network."⁴ Buell also says:

I'm such a supporter of women. You know I've worked with women. I have daughters. I just love women. I love being with women. I fight for women right now in politics – that's my whole purpose. I was really close to Hilary Clinton. [When she ran for president,] I thought: Oh god. Finally! It's just that I think that women are so underestimated and so underappreciated ... You know people used to say to me at work, "God, you know, isn't it hard being a woman?" And I'd say, "No. You just got to do what you got to do." But it is hard being a woman and women are not ... all around the world ... it's getting better, but they are taken for granted and they are not appreciated.⁵

This urge to fight for women is evident in many parts of her life including her collecting activities. One recognizes her appreciation of women in the photographs and the actual collections they comprise.

Buell owns a collection of quilts, photographs, and paintings. This study looks specifically at her collection of photographs by Tina Modotti and Edward Weston. Like Greenberg and Steinhäuser, Buell's collecting practices lie somewhere between systematic and fetishistic collecting. At first, it seems her practices are more systematic than fetishistic. For instance, she does not collect to collect and she tends in the direction of examples rather than samples. Additionally, in viewing her collection, one thinks of classification and organization to convey a point or a story. Finally, these examples rather than samples are carefully chosen and in one interesting case sold because the photograph took away from the intended story.⁶ And yet, Buell's collections have

⁴ Susie Tompkins Buell Interview Transcript, 135.

⁵ Ibid., 134.

⁶ Ibid., 135.

become a part of the narrative of her own life. They are stories within a story. Thus, Buell's mode of systematic collecting creates a collection that "plays the crucial role in defining the personality of the collector"⁷, a significant characteristic of the fetishistic collection. We again have a collection that straddles the line between fetishism and systematics. Thus, the collection expresses something very particular about the collector's public persona as a social activist in addition to a more private inner story.

Buell's true collecting practices began when she divorced her first husband, Doug Tompkins, and bought her own penthouse apartment in San Francisco's Pacific Heights. She simply needed something to put on the walls and decided she wanted to collect photographs. One aspect to Buell's collecting process is she likes her collections to be unique. Indeed she sees herself as a pioneer in her collecting practices as she considers herself to be one of the first to show an interest in atypical objects. Of her collecting process Buell says:

You know, I think quite frankly, knowing my personality that when something becomes a credible something to collect it turns me away. I mean I collected photography when it hadn't been considered a very good investment or a place to go. It just was not. I was a real pioneer in that area. Same thing with the furniture. Same thing with some of the beautiful ceramics that I have by this French artist. And then...you know I bought that like in the eighties and seventies and sixties at the flea markets in France and then when it got really like collectable it didn't really interest me anymore. I mean for one thing, you buy things for nothing and then all of a sudden they're worth twenty times what you paid for them or more. It kind of takes the joy out of it if you pride yourself in being an intuitive person or a person who likes to discover things. I think that's a lot of my collecting. It's the sense of discovering and the joy of being able to put things together. And then, like I say, if it becomes a scene or a thing it doesn't interest me that much anymore. I'm just glad I had the opportunity to do it when it was still ... that great extensive discovery.⁸

⁷ Pearce, 84.

⁸ Susie Tompkins Buell Interview Transcript, 133.

Susan Pearce places this kind of thinking in the realm of collection as play and describes objects in these collections as objects of dominance and control where rarity is extremely important. In Buell's case, it isn't necessarily the rarity of the objects, but the unique idea to collect a particular object and then the story the collection as a whole is telling. Pearce also places the idea of control within the sensuous side of collecting or fetishistic collecting. Further, what matters here for Buell is the "reframing of the object within the collection, as an act of formal admission from one state to another."⁹ Buell takes objects that have supposedly been unimportant to buy and places them in her own category of something worthy of collecting that she feels she discovered first. Buell was one of the first to spend a large sum for a Modotti print creating a stir in the art world.¹⁰ Indeed, Andrea Noble has written a detailed discussion about the purchase of *Roses* [Figure 3]

3. Tina Modotti, *Roses, Mexico*, 1924
Palladium print, 7 3/8 in. x 8 1/2 in. (18.8 cm x 21.6 cm)
Gift of Edward Weston
The Museum of Modern Art, New York, USA
Digital Image ©The Museum of Modern Art/ Licensed by Scala/ Art Resource, NY

⁹ Pearce, 51-52.

¹⁰ Noble, 33.

and Buell's interest in aligning her own identity with that of Modotti and hence to Madonna (who also bid on *Roses*) and radical women in general.¹¹ In fact, Noble points out that Merrily Page, Buell's photography consultant, mentioned Madonna's interest in "feisty women" in a press release regarding Buell's purchase of *Roses*.¹² Buell would later reproduce *Roses* in a hangtag for *Esprit* garments thereby further aligning herself publicly with Modotti.¹³ In fact, Buell even added her own signature to the hangtag, an act that may have served to fully conflate Modotti with Buell.

Pearce says, "In a certain sense, objects have rites of passage as do we, and for them this comes when they enter the classification system, the dividing, comparing and contrasting of whatever kind which for each collection constitute the rules of the game."¹⁴ When Buell purchased the photographs she reclassified the Modotti prints as something extremely valuable to collect. The prints also entered a new classification system once displayed in Buell's dining room according to her own sense. Indeed, Buell went through a rite of passage and entered a new phase in her life upon her divorce and subsequent selling of *Esprit*. At about the same time, she purchased the Modotti and Weston photographs. Thus, the photographs went through a rite of passage but are also a symbol of Buell's own passage from one state to another. This aspect brings to mind the ways in which collections frame our control over the world within the realm of systematics. In Buell's case, her control has to do with her reclassification of the objects to create a stir and hence tell her own story publicly.

¹¹ Ibid., 33-44.

¹² Ibid, 36.

¹³ Ibid, 42.

¹⁴ Pearce, 52.

Upon deciding to collect photographs, Buell enlisted the help of her friend Merrily Page an expert and conservator of photography who became Buell's photography curator. Buell says this of Page:

She was so right for me at that moment in my life where I was just discovering my passion because I really needed – I wasn't consciously looking, but a new chapter in my life was beginning. I had this apartment, I'd sold my business, you know, what's next? And she just turned me on. Her passion was so beautiful and one thing led to the other. But, I did think at first, "Oh I'll have pretty pictures."¹⁵

Thus, Buell's collecting activities are woven into the narrative of her life. The particular collection of Modotti and Weston photographs marks the beginning of "a new chapter in [Buell's] life" when she was developing new interests. The collection not only marks the beginning of her life after her first marriage, but they also highlight the beginnings of her life as a social and political activist. About what the acquisition of objects may do for a person at certain times in their lives, Pearce says:

Buying a prominent object like a parlor organ might initiate a new chapter in a set of lives, not only by providing a new way to use time but also a new tool to measure time. In later years the object would serve to remind its owners of the day it first entered their home and of the time that had passed since then. It would not only structure their present but also their perceptions of their own past. They knew from experience that purchasing a major object could be a significant and momentous occasion in itself, a time of heightened positive emotions and feelings of well-being and importance ... a major purchase would transform them in their own eyes and in the eyes of others. They would become worth more ... and acquire greater status. By doing so they would receive more respect and deference from others which would, in turn, make them feel better about

¹⁵ Susie Tompkins Buell Interview Transcript, 127.

It also should be noted that Buell was quoted in SFGate's obituary for Merrily Page saying something else: "I wanted to collect photos with real social significance -- I didn't want to collect just pretty flowers," Buell told a San Francisco magazine in 1996.

San Francisco Chronicle (May 10, 2000),

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2000/05/10/MN46647.DTL> (Accessed on 5/4/12).

themselves. Buying a parlor organ would make them something they were not before.¹⁶

In the story of Buell's life, a narrative created with the support of her collections, her photographs highlight her socio-political passions. When discussing the beginning of her collecting practices and characteristics of the artists themselves, Buell often used the word "passion". She was discovering her own passion and saw the quality in Merrily Page, but she also values it in the actual photographs:

And then Merrily helped me understand that I wanted to know about the inspiration of the photographs and what was behind them. It wasn't just might and beauty, which I'm very attracted to also, but it was more of a documentation of difficulty or passion... And then I went from Dorothea and we started looking at the Tina Modotti and the Consuelo Kanaga and there was always so much deep passion behind those pictures – social passion that really attracted me so much. I wasn't really a social activist at the time, but it was something that was coming and I think those photographs really inspired me a lot. Especially the Dorothea Lange ones and Tina Modotti's life.¹⁷

Buell goes on to say:

It's just so inspiring to see what has taken place for us how people that have seen it – that have seen that kind of despair and been able to document it so beautifully and so passionately in a way that has endured so amazingly well for so many years.¹⁸

Interestingly, the word "passion" has been attached to Modotti since her beginnings as a photographer. N.F. Carlins titled his review of *The Mexico as Muse* exhibition *Passion and Photography*.¹⁹ In a review of a biographical play about Modotti a critic writes, "Tina Modotti (1896–1942) was a whirlwind of a woman who, by any standard, led an incredible life. Arriving in San Francisco from Italy at the age of 16, she was an actor,

¹⁶ Pearce, 56.

¹⁷ Susie Tompkins Buell Interview Transcript, 128.

¹⁸ Ibid., 128.

¹⁹ <http://www.artnet.com/magazineus/features/karlins/karlins11-2-06.asp> (accessed on 3/28/12).

model, photographer, and passionate political activist. All this plus a legendary love life.²⁰ Octavio Paz claimed that Tina Modotti belonged “more to the history of passions than to the history of ideologies.”²¹ Another review of a different exhibition of Modotti’s work *Tina Modotti: Photographs* at the Philadelphia Museum of Art is titled *A tempestuous life of art, passion, love and death: Tina Modotti*.²² These examples are only a sampling of Modotti being seen as synonymous to the word passion. This phenomenon is problematic at best as we are constantly reminded of her passionate love life, which often overshadows her activities as a social activist or even photographer. Yet, Buell uses the word freely to describe Modotti perhaps to serve a different purpose originating in a desire to conflate her identity with Modotti’s. Roy Ellen identifies conflation as a cognitive process in fetishistic collecting: “a state of mind in which the signifier and signified are conflated”.²³ One can see the identities of Buell and her collections being conflated in her statement:

I think that my collection of things pretty much speaks for themselves [sic], that it’s really a social interest of mine. I have so much work from women and it inspires me and it’s beautiful at the same time ... and I love seeing beauty in that ... I’ve heard people comment on my collection that it’s very socially aware. It represents my activities. I’m happy when I hear that. It validates the reason I’m doing this. You know, I want to be attracted to things because it really makes a difference in my life and not just because it’s a thing and it’s beautiful or everybody’s doing it or it’s what’s happening. That actually turns me off.²⁴

²⁰ Karl Levett, “Modotti,” *Backstage* (June 11, 2010), <http://www.backstage.com/bsr/reviews-ny-theatre-off-broadway/modotti-1004097680.story> (accessed on 3/28/12).

²¹ http://www.floricantopress.com/tina_modotti's_mexico.htm

²² Gale Cengage Learning, “A Tempestuous Life of Art, Passion, Love and Death,” *Photographic Society of America, Inc.* 1996. <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/A+tempestuous+life+of+art,+passion,+love+and+death%3A+Tina+Modotti.-a018116294> (accessed on 3/28/12).

²³ Pearce, 39.

²⁴ Susie Tompkins Buell Interview Transcript, 134.

Although it serves Buell's purposes to associate the passion connected to Modotti and her work with her own zeal for social and political activism, there are complications in this association. In some ways Buell's conflation may act to highlight Modotti's political passion rather than her passionate love life, as Buell is well known as a political activist.²⁵ The fact that Buell leads a somewhat public life compounds this point. However, the fact that Buell uses the word passion in describing her self and the feelings behind the Modotti photographs is problematic as it perpetuates a dominant view of Modotti as passionate. It does matter some that Buell means social passion rather than sensual passion as most people already equate Modotti with sensual passion. The conflation of Modotti and Buell highlights and heightens their socio-political interests, but the linkage of Modotti to the word passion remains problematic as it still serves to remind the public of the passionate persona created by others to define her.

Buell feels that her collection of Modotti and Weston photographs is complete. The photographs she has are all displayed in her dining room and tell a particular story in their arrangement. Buell addresses the room in which the Modotti and Weston photographs are displayed:

So my whole business world was about gathering and presenting and making a story. Because this room is a story and I didn't realize it when I was doing it. But, that's the way I kind of live my life now. I was very conceptual and I think that's how this collection's been put together.²⁶

²⁵ There are several articles defining Buell as a political activist.

<http://www.womencount.org/about> (accessed on 4/25/12)

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2012/02/15/MND61N71MS.DTL&ao=all> (accessed on 4/25/12).

<http://www.eatmedaily.com/2009/03/alice-waters-political-flailings-a-misguided-love-story/> (accessed on 4/25/12).

²⁶ Susie Tompkins Buell Interview Transcript, 131.

Not only does she tell a story with her collection of photographs, but she also equates it to her business world of making a story with a collection of clothing. She wouldn't want to have to store any of her collection and seems to value the particular story her images tell. Indeed, she even sold the valuable Weston photograph *Nautilus* because she felt it didn't go with the rest of her collection. Mieke Bal's essay, *Telling Objects: A Narrative Perspective on Collecting*, describes the actual process of collecting as a narrative with a beginning, middle, and an end. In the collecting arena, there are several possible spaces for narrative such as the process of collecting, the collection itself, and the collection once it is placed in an exhibition. The subjectivity of the collector influences the perception of all of these narratives. Indeed, Bal says the collector is "an agent of vision whose view of the events will influence our interpretation of them."²⁷

As previously stated, with Buell's purchase of the Modotti and Weston photographs, Buell was not only ushering in a new era of social passion for herself but also an era of life after her marriage to Doug Tompkins. She often raises the topic of the relationships between the artists she collects and their significant others. Buell says of her collection of Modotti and Weston prints in talking about the story they tell:

Well, I'll tell you what I really love. You can walk down the hall and see things. But, I love the idea of this room [the Modotti and Weston prints are all in the dining room and comprise all of the two-dimensional art in that room] that it's some of their greatest work and that her portrait of him and his portrait of her are looking at each other. He didn't like to have his picture taken so she took that when he wasn't looking or he posed without looking. So, it's very personal and I think it really represents...without having thought it out: I didn't plan it out. It just worked out. Like they were just hanging and I thought, "Oh my god. It's a story." And like those two pictures of these women working and then his picture that's so

²⁷ Bal, 85.

modern and graphic and *that* one that's so modern and graphic and their work together where I think you can see each other's influence. I just think it's a concept. It just came together. And I think it's quite remarkable. And with the show in the museum I think it was showcased that way a bit. But not really. But, that's just the way I look at things. I like something to kind of hold me together.²⁸

Thus, for Buell the story is about Modotti and Weston's relationship as photographers, their influence on one another, and hence perhaps their personal relationship as well because these were intermingled for Modotti and Weston. Indeed, Modotti's work was more about space and composition initially. Then, she became more interested in documenting social realities. Interestingly, if Buell had kept *Nautilus* and displayed it next to *Roses* it would underscore the aspect of the collection as their influence on one another, especially Modotti's influence on Weston as there has been discussion about the possibility that Modotti's *Roses* influenced Weston's shell prints. Carol Armstrong says, "The local inception of this series of photographs by Weston lay in Modotti's less masterful hands. For she made the earliest moves in this direction, beginning in 1924, with the *Roses* and the *Calla Lily*, and continuing at least into 1925, the year of Weston's first such effort, the *Excusado*, with the *Calla Lillies*."²⁹

Mieke Bal says the collector can be considered a narrative agent whose "motivation ... is subjected to the development of plot."³⁰ In the case of Buell, the plot she has developed may inadvertently retain the classically told story of Tina Modotti in which the men in her life and her passionate personality define her and her work.

Because these two aspects of the story of Tina Modotti have gone hand in hand since

²⁸ Susie Tompkins Buell Interview Transcript, 131-132.

²⁹ Carol Armstrong, "The Photography Which is Not One: In The Grey Zone With Tina Modotti," *October*, Vol. 101 (Summer, 2002), 27.

³⁰ Bal, 98.

Weston began framing her in his Daybooks, the ownership of Weston's photographs serve to reinforce the perception of the identity of Tina Modotti through her photographs rather than allow us to see each photograph in an autonomous light. According to Durost, whom both Bal and Pearce refer to, "if said object or idea is valued chiefly for the relation it bears to some other object or idea, or objects, or ideas ... then it is the subject of a collection."³¹ In this case, Buell does value her objects as they relate to one another and to particular concepts such as social activism and angst-ridden relationships. The relationships between artist couples came up several times during the course of the interview. She has some paintings by the artist/ photographer Consuelo Kanaga. Buell is fascinated by a story of how Kanaga's husband "dumped" all of her paintings after Kanaga died. Buell says:

Consuelo Kanaga's husband was a painter and he was extremely threatened by her. When she had no money to take pictures, no money for papers or chemicals or anything she would get up in the middle of the night...and I'll show you some of these paintings that she did of [the image] she wasn't able to photograph. When she died he dumped all of this stuff off at the Brooklyn Museum...At least he didn't burn it. I'm sure a lot of that's happened too. An artist and a painter both of them and there was a lot of conflict in that relationship. I don't know what Dorothea's problems were with Maynard Dixon, but I know there were a lot of them. A lot of them with kids and stuff. And it was what you would expect being threatened by the fact that your spouse wasn't there for you in the way that they would be if they weren't so there for their own expression in the family. So, it was complicated. But, Consuelo Kanaga, I just love that she'd get up in the night and paint these paintings and then hide them. And when he found them he dumped them all.³²

Thus, within Buell's collections there are stories of creative relationships and the struggles inherent to them. Buell has one room dedicated to Kanaga's paintings. Her

³¹ Bal, 97.

³² Susie Tompkins Buell Interview Transcript, 133.

Lange photographs are more prominently displayed in the living room. One doesn't immediately think of the relationships connected to the objects in the collections, but Buell does and she is vocal about it. Perhaps the collections represent what the women were able to accomplish in spite of their troubled relationships, a familiar concept to Buell.

Because the collector's point of view influences interpretations, it follows that the collection says something about the collector. Bal suggests that each reason Pearce gives for the desire to collect is based in Freudian and Marxist fetishism. With Freud it is somewhat simple: one thing comes to stand for or symbolize another. Often the subject lacks that which he or she is striving to symbolize through their collection. On the one hand, Buell has arguably proven herself to be one concerned with social change and aiding those who are less fortunate, as Modotti was. Thus, the photographs in her collection may be used as a symbol of social awareness and thereby strengthen the public's perception of her in this regard. Moreover, there is some evidence that Buell has not always acted to benefit those who are less fortunate. In 1994 *The Nation* printed a story detailing Esprit's use of sweatshops while owned by Doug Tompkins and Buell (then Susie Tompkins).³³ At the time, Esprit was indeed trying to make a difference in other areas of society such as creating awareness about AIDS and was even given a

³³ Laurie Udesky, "Esprit: Sweatshops Behind the Labels," *The Nation* (May 16, 1994). http://foundsf.org/index.php?title=ESPRIT:_Sweatshops_Behind_the_Labels (accessed on 5/14/12).

Corporate Conscience Award by The Council on Economic Priorities.³⁴ The following appeared in the article:

Esprit's affable spokesman Dan Imhoff says that garment workers should be paid a wage that "allows them a reasonable life style." But asked specifically about what Esprit could do to insure this, he shifts the responsibility back to the contractor. "The bottom line is Esprit has to pay its own workers a fair wage. Do you think a socially responsible business would survive if it would pay twice as much to its contractor? How can a company stay in business?...Perhaps," he continues. "Esprit isn't the shining example that you want . . . [Esprit] can only change so many things at one time."³⁵

Per Pearce, the Modotti photographs in her collection may compensate for the social consciousness that Buell may partially lack. Also, it is known that Modotti worked for a period of time in a silk factory in Italy and again as a seamstress in San Francisco. Part of Modotti's own social consciousness surely came from the work conditions she experienced firsthand.³⁶ Thus, perhaps Buell is attempting to atone or compensate for any activities, which may not have been entirely socially conscious through her collection of Modotti's work. As with Greenberg and Steinhäuser, one again thinks of Pearce's discussion regarding the prestige of collecting:

Prestige is, of course, a major collecting motive here [if collecting is thought of as a game], especially where the collection can serve to give public legitimacy to fortunes amassed in trade and commerce ... Many modern collectors, however, cherish the hope that their collections will eventually achieve this kind of honour when their contributions are 'recognized': another way of hoping that the world will one day come to share the collectors' view of his own material, and so of himself. Collecting is seen, or at the very least aspires to be seen, as a moral activity which, like games and love, ennobles the player.³⁷

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Andreas Hirsch and Reinhard Schultz, eds. *Tina Modotti: Photographer and Revolutionary* (Germany: Kunst Haus Wien, 2010), 165; Sarah M. Lowe, *Tina Modotti and Edward Weston: The Mexico Years* (London and New York: Merrell, 2004), 11.

³⁷ Pearce, 51.

What is important here is the concept of giving “legitimacy to fortunes amassed in trade or commerce,” in this case giving legitimacy to Buell’s fortune, one the *Nation* asserts was amassed at least in part at the expense of San Francisco garment workers. That her first husband was seen as complicit in taking advantage of local garment workers adds an interesting tangent to Buell’s story. Buell sees disharmony between the artists whose works she collects and their significant others. One wonders if she is seeking to conflate the disharmony of her own first marriage with those of the women artists in her collection, while at the same time showing that with the dissolution of that marriage she changed and became more socially aware and active thus aligning herself with the social activist identity of Modotti.

While the Buell collection does not serve to eliminate the view of Modotti as defined by passion and relationships with men, it may serve to focus more attention on her social and political beliefs due to Buell’s own progressive socio-political beliefs. Perhaps Buell may have been able to do this without collecting Weston. What, one is compelled to ask, is the function of including Weston in the story of Tina Modotti to such a large extent? A look at a public exhibition may shed some light on this.

The exhibition *Mexico as Muse: Tina Modotti and Edward Weston* at the SFMOMA (San Francisco Museum of Modern Art) was on display from September 2006 through January 2007. It showcased works by Modotti and Weston taken between 1923 and 1929 when they lived and worked together in Mexico. There were nearly eighty photographs in the two-room exhibition of which approximately two thirds were Modotti’s. Other documents were also included, the majority of which related more to

Modotti's life than to Weston's. The story the exhibition portrayed invites a discussion of the exhibition and the ways in which the SFMOMA constructed a traditional message of gender and the Other.

Edward Weston remains a highly regarded American modern artist and is considered a master in his field. The lesser-known Modotti was an Italian-American photographer whose most significant works were created almost entirely during the six-year period the two spent in Mexico. Modotti met Weston most likely in 1919 in California through mutual friends, and included his works in the 1922 exhibition *Pictorialist and Modernist Art from America*, which she staged at the National Academy of Fine Arts in Mexico City.³⁸ Partly due to the success of the exhibition, the two moved to Mexico together and Modotti began her own practice of photography, having acquired her photography skills from Weston. By 1923, Weston had largely veered away from pictorial images to work in a modernist style initially influenced by Cubism.³⁹ Modotti's early work at this time demonstrates a modernist influence as well. Her *Experiment in Related Form* or *Glasses* from 1924 is a flattened image of clear glasses exposed in such a way that the mouths of the glasses become abstracted and appear to overlap. The image reminds one of modernist works such as Sonia Delaunay's painting *Prismé électrique* (1913), a composition incorporating dynamic overlapping circles and the play of light to

³⁸ Lowe, 15.

³⁹ Patricia Albers, *Shadows, Fire, Snow: The Life of Tina Modotti* (New York: Clarkson Potter Publishers, 1999), 74.

replicate the rhythms of modern urban life.⁴⁰ *Glasses* is representative of Modotti's early modernist concerns with composition, form, and light.

Shortly after the two arrived in Mexico, Modotti's style began to diverge from Weston's and she took photographs after the manner of the Estridentistas, a group of artists in Mexico who modeled themselves formally after the Italian Futurists. The Estridentistas were interested in portraying a Mexico struggling to be technologically modern.⁴¹ Modotti's Estridentista works convey her interest in the progress of Mexico, such as *Telegraph Wires* (1925), which documents the electrification of rural Mexico and mark the beginning of her transformation into a photographer with a social agenda. Modotti was also involved in organizations that had a special interest in improving the lives of workers in Mexico such as Red Aid and she joined the Communist Party in 1927.⁴² Modotti published photographs as well as editorial work in *El Machete*, the Communist periodical dedicated to improving the lives of workers and peasants.⁴³ Modotti saw photography as a way to objectively and graphically describe social injustice and she depicted working class Mexicans in two veins. One referenced *Mexicanidad*, the celebration of Mexican cultural renewal that began after the revolution of 1910, while the other depicted Mexicans in an ethnographic yet pictorial manner to initiate social change for the poor.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Whitney Chadwick, *Women, Art, and Society*, Third Edition (London: Thames and Hudson, 2002), 260-261.

⁴¹ Lowe, 26.

⁴² Ibid., 33. Modotti officially joined the Communist Party in Mexico in 1927.

⁴³ Ibid., 26.

⁴⁴ Sam Stourd, Patricia Albers and Karen Cordero Reiman, *Tina Modotti: the Mexican Renaissance* (Paris: Jean-Michel Place Editions, 2000), 12-17.

Hands Washing (owned by Buell) is an example of the photographs Modotti took of members of the working class poor. Modotti said of these images:

I consider myself a photographer, nothing more. I try to produce not art but honest photographs, without distortions or manipulations. Photography takes its place as the most satisfactory medium for registering objective life and from this comes its documental value. If to this is added sensibility and understanding and, above all, a clear orientation as to the place it should have in the field of historical development, I believe the result is something worthy of a place in social production, to which we should all contribute.⁴⁵

While the SFMOMA exhibition included statements about Modotti that reflected her concerns regarding social injustice, the curator, Sandra Phillips, fell into the common trap of distorting Modotti's history with the use of gendered language and of portraying her photographic output as an extension of Weston's. Indeed, it is a convention secured in Weston's account of Mexico in his *Daybooks*, parts of which were published as two volumes in 1927. As Carol Armstrong points out in her essay, *This Photography Which Is Not One* (2001), these journals "construct the myth of Weston as Grand Master of the Photographic Beautiful" and of Modotti as "the voice of ... all that is sublimated in his photography: the Oracle of the Other".⁴⁶ Describing Modotti's work not in terms of her political views but through her relationship with Weston and under her "passionate personality" is a view initiated by Weston and perpetuated with few exceptions by curators and writers thereafter, as previously mentioned.⁴⁷

What, one is compelled to ask, is the function of including Weston in the

⁴⁵ Amy Stark, *The Archive: The Letters From Tina Modotti to Edward Weston*, Arizona Center For Creative Photography, University of Arizona, Research Series, No. 22, (Arizona: Arizona Board of Regents, January 1986), 62.

⁴⁶ Armstrong, 20.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 19-52.

exhibition to such a large extent? In the spring of 1926, Diego Rivera contributed an article to the bilingual Mexican journal *Mexican Folkways*, praising photographs by Weston and Modotti, whom Rivera describes as Weston's pupil.⁴⁸ Sixty-six years later a Sotheby's catalogue quoted Rivera's endorsement, but omitted all reference to Weston: "Tina Modotti has done marvels in sensibility on plane, perhaps more abstract, perhaps more aerial, even more intellectual, as is natural for an Italian temperament. Her work flowers perfectly in Mexico and harmonizes with our passion."⁴⁹ As is indicated by its more recent usage, this statement is illustrative of the descriptions of Modotti that privilege her passion over her photographic skills. In her book *Tina Modotti: Image, Texture, Photography*, Andrea Noble points out the layers of problems that arise from omitting Weston as well as Modotti's North American connections and background from Rivera's quote. Noble argues the omission of Weston may appear to be liberating from a feminist perspective because "his presence problematizes any critical approach to Modotti's photographs informed by an interest in issues of gender."⁵⁰ She further argues the omission aligns Modotti not only with Rivera, but also with the Otherness of the mythical and exotic space of Mexico as it was described at the time.⁵¹ This persistent description of Mexico and Modotti along with the *inclusion* of Weston and a traditionally gendered description of Modotti complicate and invite a critical viewing of the exhibition. While the exhibition curators attempted to show Modotti as independent from Weston and portrayed her photographs within a semblance of their original context, they

⁴⁸ Margaret Hooks, *Tina Modotti: Radical Photographer* (New York: Perseus Books, 2000), 120.

⁴⁹ Noble, 38.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 38.

ultimately included stereotyping modes of description and display.

As stated on its website, The SFMOMA's overall mission is to "engage and inspire a diverse range of audiences by pursuing an innovative program of exhibitions, education, publications, and collections activities." The museum also aims to address the "larger issues and personalities that define modern and contemporary art."⁵² Thus, the curators of the *Mexico as Muse* exhibition may have been exploring the personal aspects of Modotti's life to define her art. However, it is then important to analyze how the SFMOMA explained her personality and how that affects viewers' interpretations of her photographs.

The exhibition began in the mezzanine just outside of the entrance to the third floor galleries that housed the photographs. A desk stood in the mezzanine with two computer monitors set to the interactive program in which a museum patron could choose to watch two movies, one on Weston, the other on Modotti. The Weston film made no mention of Modotti or Mexico, but instead discussed how Weston was inspired by nature. The second film was narrated by Patricia Albers, an important biographer of Modotti, who discussed Modotti and Weston's relationship in Mexico as one in which she was his assistant, muse and pupil. Albers also said that the two often worked together and inspired one another, as is often the case when two artists choose to develop something in tandem, a phenomenon that has been exemplified by the collaborations of Georges Braque and Pablo Picasso, Henri Matisse and André Derain in addition to many others.

⁵² San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Information Page, *San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Website*, http://www.sfmoma.org/info/director_overview.html, (Accessed December 4, 2006)

But the overall result of the films was that Modotti appeared to have had a minimal effect on Weston's creative life, while he was shown as central to hers.

Directly behind the table with computer monitors was a wall marking the entrance to the galleries. Here, two signature photographs were displayed that summed up the first portion of the exhibition. To the left was Weston's *Portrait of Tina Modotti* (1921).⁵³ She is visible from the neck up and faces out of the picture plane but does not confront the viewer. Her hands are raised with her fingers gently grazing her jaw. Her eyes are closed and her lips are slightly parted suggesting the anticipation of a kiss: an expression that implied a sexualized invitation to enter the gallery space. To the right was Modotti's *Portrait of Edward Weston* (1924). He does not look at the viewer but rather is engaged with his camera. Buell says Weston didn't like to be photographed, but what registers to the viewer is more. His form is turned toward his own camera, which he appears to be preparing to use. He is working and creating. The placement of the portrait of Modotti figured her as a passive sexually accessible body, whereas Weston was portrayed as "physically and mentally active."⁵⁴ While one must acknowledge the presence of Weston taking the portrait of Modotti through her responsive expression, the portrait of Weston served to negate Modotti's presence as a photographer. Weston's nudes, portraits, and images of Modotti on another wall inside the gallery compounded this negation. None of the exhibition images presented Modotti as an active creator.

⁵³ *Portrait of Tina Modotti* by Weston is not owned by Buell.

⁵⁴ Carol Duncan, "The MoMA's Hot Mamas," *Art Journal: Images of Rule: Issues of Interpretation*, Vol. 48, No. 2 (Summer, 1989), 171-178.

Where Weston is presented through the tropes of the virile creator, Modotti is shown as a sexualized but passive object. The impression generated by the display is reinforced by the SFMOMA's reuse of the exhibition catalogue from a different exhibition titled *Tina Modotti and Edward Weston: The Mexico Years*. In the catalogue there is a discussion regarding unspecified portraits and nudes by Weston of Modotti. One nude, *Tina on the Azotea* (1924), from the *Mexico as Muse* exhibition also appears in the catalogue. In the image, Modotti lies diagonally across the picture plane on a blanket with her arms raised and her hands placed behind her head. Her head is turned away and her eyes are closed. Her legs are loosely crossed at the calves. Sarah Lowe, author of the catalogue, says these are neither nudes nor portraits and that Modotti is not passive, but rather disengaged.⁵⁵ However, art historian Carol Duncan's seminal feminist essay, *The MOMA's Hot Mamas*, points out that the male artist is often seen as the actively engaged creator especially when depicting the female nude.⁵⁶ It is a comparison that explicitly continues the conflation of artistic work and a specifically masculine power or force. Indeed, Weston frequently conflated sexual and photographic conquests in his *Daybooks*.⁵⁷ The result is a traditionally gendered message of engaged masculine and disengaged feminine. Other nudes and portraits of Modotti within the exhibition similarly position her as disengaged. Conceptually, the exhibition's placement of photographs posture Weston as creator not only of the portraits and nudes, but of Modotti as an artist as well. Noble posits that, "the female body represents the territory where the

⁵⁵ Lowe, 24.

⁵⁶ Duncan, 171-178.

⁵⁷ Armstrong, 19-52, and see notes, 26.

male artists jostle to occupy the valorized term of the original”⁵⁸ Thus, the images of Modotti were Weston’s originals. The placement of any of her work after these insinuates that her own photographs are also his originals. Let it be said that the absence of nudes of Modotti in Buell’s collection is a trait that portrays Modotti more as and active creator.

While at first it appears that the exhibition’s focus on Modotti was a way to continue the discourse of Weston, something different was happening. Albers originally labeled Modotti as Weston’s muse, but emphasized that they inspired one another, and implied that the actual space they occupied together in Mexico was what jointly stimulated them. Thus, the title: *Mexico as Muse*. In this sense, Mexico is not an objectified other but rather the space of interaction between two artists. However, the juxtaposition of Modotti and Weston’s photographs presents a more complex meaning. Kenneth Baker of the *San Francisco Chronicle* wrote that what came across is a sort of game. He wrote, “The relative sizes of the prints and their labels make it difficult, and a signature here and there gives the game away, but try guessing who took which pictures in “Mexico as Muse”.”⁵⁹ This game of comparisons reinforces the flaws in the curators’ gendered language illustrated visually and verbally in the beginning of the exhibition. Baker described the exhibition as a game that built on the curator’s opening wall-text descriptions of Modotti’s work as “tactile”, “personal” and “socially sensitive” and Weston’s work as “monumental”, “spiky” and “abstract”. Yet, the works are often

⁵⁸ Noble, 59.

⁵⁹ Kenneth Baker, “Southern Exposure: SFMOMA show captures Mexico in differing lights,” *San Francisco Chronicle*, September 2, 2006, E-1.

virtually interchangeable. Indeed, their similarities support Buell's view that the two inspired one another. *Circus Tent* (1924) by Weston and *Stairs, Mexico City* (1924-26) by Modotti can both be classified as abstract as they depict objects in a flattened manner that emphasizes the geometric shapes created by form and angle of perspective. Modotti's *Roses* (c.1924) and Weston's *Chayotes, Mexico* (1924) are both tactile. Finally, Modotti's *Flor de Manita* (Hand Flower) from 1924 [Figure 4] and Weston's *Maguey Cactus* also from 1924 [Figure 5] are both images of plants that highlight their spiky quality.

4. Tina Modotti
Flor de Manita, 1924
Collection Center for Creative
Photography, The University of
Arizona

5. Edward Weston
Maguey Cactus, Mexico, 1926
gelatin silver print, 7 3/8 in. x 9 5/16 in.
(18.73 cm x 23.65 cm)
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Purchase;
© 1981 Center for Creative Photography, Arizona
Board of Regents

The curatorial insistence on gendered language to distinguish Modotti's photographs from Weston's can actually be used interchangeably to describe both artists' work. Further, in the same opening wall text the curators told us Mexico was Weston's Paris and he was not yet the "important modern artist he would later become." Wouldn't

Mexico qualify as Modotti's Paris as well? After all, the inclusion of her work at the SFMOMA insinuated that she was also an important modern artist. However, in the same wall text the curators chose instead to describe Modotti as "young", "beautiful" and "intelligent". One wonders if Weston was young, beautiful and intelligent as well. But more importantly, one wonders how this sort of description helps us to understand an artist's work. Phillips cannot be entirely blamed for perpetuating this typecasting; indeed, most scholarly and popular writings on Modotti draw attention to her striking good looks. But, again, Weston and Modotti's relationship might be viewed more fully and appropriately as a collaboration. As Albers pointed out, Modotti and Weston inspired and influenced one another and Weston began doing still lifes as a result of working side by side with Modotti.⁶⁰ To be sure, Carol Armstrong even suggests a kind of appropriation of Modotti's techniques occurred in her discussion of Weston's shell prints, which she says were "produced and received three years after Modotti opened up this close-up vein [with *Roses*] and Weston began to mine it."⁶¹ Thus, there are rather compelling reasons to curate an exhibition which portrays a collaborative spirit between two important modern artists, rather than one in which Modotti is seen as a product of Weston.

It is true that an exhibition such as this may serve to springboard Modotti into her own space as an important artist. However, a less obvious motive of the SFMOMA may

⁶⁰ Patricia Albers, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art September 2006 SFMOMA Artcast, *San Francisco Museum of Modern Art* website, http://www.sfmoma.org/exhibitions/exhib_detail.asp?id=240, (Accessed December 4, 2006).

⁶¹ Armstrong, 24.

have been to court local collectors,⁶² especially Buell, as she owns ten of the photographs by Modotti and Weston in the show.⁶³ Admittedly, Buell's ownership may not have preceded the idea to exhibit the two artists together, but it certainly may have strengthened any reasons the curators may have had for exhibiting the joint show. Yet, one still wishes the museum had paid more attention to its descriptions and what they could convey to the viewing public, as it has been pointed out that museums tend to supply a dominant master narrative that affect individual's perspectives of the world. Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago state, "It is our contention that the institution of the museum has for some time been essential to the fabrication and sustenance of this system of beliefs [centered on] the nature of meaningful relationships between subjects and objects, between individuals and communities and the worlds they weave about themselves." Thus, the master narrative provided by the museum is on some level responsible for the ways in which the viewer perceives of themselves in relation to the rest of the world.⁶⁴

The second half of the SFMOMA exhibition was dedicated to Modotti's photographs of the people of Mexico. According to Albers, these photographs demonstrate that Modotti turned "her back on photographic traditions that viewed Indians as specimens to be catalogued or as accessories to a bucolic landscape, [and] took a keen interest in how indigenous Mexico dressed and worked, what it created, and how it

⁶² Patricia Albers made this statement in an email correspondence with me on December 2, 2006.

⁶³ Lowe, 153-157.

⁶⁴ Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, "General Introduction: What are Museums For?" *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum*, Donald Preziosi and Claire Farago, eds. (London: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), 1.

lived.”⁶⁵ The SFMOMA handled their descriptions of these works slightly differently. The curators wrote that Mexican artists usually portrayed the women of Tehuantepec, a region of Mexico where Modotti photographed, in an idealistic fashion but go on to say that Modotti acknowledges their “physical reality” while celebrating their “monumental grace.”⁶⁶ The phrase “monumental grace” conflicts with the phrase “physical reality”. It seems the curators wanted us to view the photographs in the way that Modotti intended as social documentation, but were unable to divorce themselves completely from the persistent romantic concept of the noble savage. In other words, the term monumental grace suggested a god-like, mythic and normally unattainable quality far from physical reality and further served to stereotype each Mexican individual. Preziosi and Farago say it is assumed museums frame “historical truth or consensus.”⁶⁷ This assumption in combination with the museum visitors who are largely unprepared to analyze the framework of the museum leads to the perpetuation of intended and unintended stereotypes alike.⁶⁸ One can easily see the danger of this perpetuation resulting from the SFMOMA curators’ language.

Many of Modotti’s other photographs in the room were more explicit in their depictions of the working poor, yet there was still difficulty in seeing these as she originally intended them. One of the effects the museum has on photographs created for documentary purposes is to alter one’s perception of them so that they are seen predominantly or only as aesthetic objects. For example, the homogeneous display

⁶⁵ Stourdzé, Albers and Cordero Reiman, 16.

⁶⁶ This appeared on a wall didactic in the second gallery of the exhibition at the SFMOMA.

⁶⁷ Preziosi and Farago, 2.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 2.

tactics employed by museums like the SFMOMA contribute to a uniform and aesthetic interpretation.⁶⁹ However, because this is a symptom of museums in general, the SFMOMA has perhaps done as well as it could in representing some of Modotti's political photographs.

Other factors contribute to an exhibition as well. Noble, who raised the problematic of Sotheby's omission of Weston, also says the identification between Modotti's works and Buell should not be overlooked. We know Buell's current values are resonate with Modotti's stated social concerns for the working poor in Mexico, and many Bay Area exhibition visitors would have been aware of Buell's dedication to social causes when they read the display labels identifying her as a collector of some of the works. *The San Francisco Bay Guardian* review of the exhibition focused predominantly on Modotti's political views recorded in her photographs of the working poor. It stated,

Additionally, "Mexico as Muse" documents Modotti's growing political views — her images are particularly preoccupied with the work of hands. Dark hands washing white linens against a frothing riverbed show her fascination with and appreciation for the working poor. Phantom hands controlling a crudely fashioned marionette demonstrate the artist's developing views on government. Modotti became a photographer for the revolutionary paper *el Machete* and a communist spy and was ultimately found dead in the back of a Mexican taxi. The lady has a story. "Mexico as Muse" will leave you captivated with Modotti. The curators must have expected this...⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Allan Sekula presents a nice discussion of this phenomenon. Allan Sekula, "Photography Between Labor and Capital," *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures: A Selection of the Negative Archives of Shedd Studio, Glace Bay, Cape Breton. 1948-1968*, Benjamin H.D. Buchloh and Robert Wilkie eds. (Nova Scotia: Canada, The Press of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), 193-202.

⁷⁰ San Francisco Bay Guardian, "Review of 'Mexico as Muse Exhibition'," *San Francisco Bay Guardian Website*, www.sfbg.com/printable_entry.php?entry_id=1621, (Accessed November 24, 2006).

The review is significant in omitting most of Weston's work and doing what the SFMOMA exhibition largely did not. Namely, discussing the photographs as the honest and objective documents Modotti intended them to be. Here, the captivation arises not from Modotti but from the beauty and intelligence of her photography. Additionally, the review indicated what an exhibition of Modotti's photos as she fully intended *could* be: One separate from the attention to her love life.

Patricia Albers and Sam Stourd curated the Modotti show *Tina Modotti: The Mexican Renaissance*, which ran in Stockholm, Arles, and Helsinki in the Spring and Summer of 2000. Albers stated that they saw no need to include Weston⁷¹ as one of their objectives was to allow Modotti's work to stand alone. Further, the book published in conjunction with this exhibition addressed the established gendered approach of exhibiting Modotti's work, noting:

While Modotti's romantic life has become something of a myth, one fed by portraits of her as much as by her own images, her reputation as a photographer must stand or fall by the intrinsic quality of her work, nothing else. We have therefore avoided entering into the vicissitudes of her life. Similarly, we have tried to bring her out of the shadow of Weston, notably by excluding his nude photographs of Modotti.⁷²

Thus, Albers and Stourd saw the importance of curating a show in which the story of Modotti was portrayed in a manner that did not highlight her passionate personality or portray her photography as an extension of Weston.

It is time that Tina Modotti is viewed as a significant artist in her own right. This includes being viewed as a creator actively engaged in political and social issues that she

⁷¹ Patricia Albers made this statement in an email correspondence with me on December 2, 2006.

⁷² Stourd, Albers and Cordero Reiman, 15.

clearly and honestly depicted, and the importance long given to Edward Weston ideally receding into the background of her history. It is the responsibility of institutions to refrain from representing narratives distorted by stereotypes as they have historically done and continue to do. Taking on this responsibility will enable museums to better present the objective histories and larger issues of women in the arts. In Buell's case there exists a personal importance in including Weston, as she is interested in the story of their relationship as it relates to their creative output. One wonders if there is a way to reconfigure Buell's collection so that it tells her story but also increases the importance of Modotti as a photographer rather than as an adjunct to Weston. Indeed such an act might serve Buell's interest in strengthening the role of women in politics and society in general.

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, Susie Tompkins Buell, Susan Steinhauser, and Daniel Greenberg have a keen interest in making a difference in the world around them. Steinhauser and Greenberg's philanthropic concerns are broad, but they essentially strive to help people less fortunate than they are. One way they do this is by donating their money to a range of educational causes. Collecting art is a passion of theirs and falls under this educational heading as they see art as a way to educate people about other cultures. For her part, Buell is invested in helping young women in a variety of ways but also of giving women in general a more powerful voice in politics. Her values in this regard are perceptible in her collecting practices as well. The Greenberg/Steinhauser collection and Buell collection both represent aspects of their own histories and values, which strengthen the meaning of their identities and how their identities are perceived by themselves as well as the public. Indeed, the identities of the collectors themselves also influence the perception of the works in the collections as well as the artists who created them. Susan Pearce says, "We have seen that collections are the extended selves of their collectors, and with life goes the hope of immortality. Collections, being material, can outlive us, but through them we too can be turned into enduring things. The arena where this translation takes place is the established museum."¹ In light of this view, a final look at a museum exhibition and the possibilities of what they might say about a collector seems fitting, particularly an exhibition in which works by Modotti and Iturbide were included.

¹ Pearce, 88.

In March of 2012 the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art launched the exhibition *Photography in Mexico: Selected Works from the Collections of SFMOMA and Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser*. The exhibition presented photographs taken in Mexico from the 1920s to the present. The SFMOMA's website says this about the exhibition:

Presenting a complex synthesis of art and politics, this exhibition explores Mexico's distinctively rich and diverse photography tradition from the 1920s to the present. It begins in the period following the Mexican Revolution, when international artists such as Tina Modotti and Edward Weston found creative inspiration in Mexico and, in turn, helped to inspire Mexican photographers like Lola Álvarez Bravo and Manuel Álvarez Bravo. Including photographs made for the illustrated press at midcentury and documentary investigations from the 1970s and 1980s, the exhibition concludes with contemporary examinations of social, environmental, and economic concerns both within Mexico and along its northern border. The selection of more than 150 photographs showcases works by Manuel Carrillo, Graciela Iturbide, Elsa Medina, Pablo Ortiz Monasterio, Mariana Yampolsky, and many more, drawing from SFMOMA's photography collection and a recent major gift from Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser.²

The exhibition was largely satisfying because it covered such a wide range from Mexico's history of photography. Not all of the photographs came from the Greenberg-Steinhauser collection or from the SFMOMA, but from other collectors as well.

However, no photographs belonging to Susie Tompkins Buell were present. This was unfortunate in some ways because the museum chose to exhibit only three works by Modotti as well as a nude of her by Edward Weston. And yet, Jessica S. McDonald, the assistant curator who wrote the wall text, refreshingly credited Modotti with new approaches to photography that influenced generations of Mexican artists with an early

² San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Exhibition page, *San Francisco Museum of Modern Art Website*, http://www.sfmoma.org/exhib_events/exhibitions/447#ixzz29OF1kx2i (Accessed on October 20, 2012).

indebtedness to Weston but a later “intense political critique ... and deep commitment to the Mexican people.”³

The works in the exhibition owned by Greenberg and Steinhauser, and many of them subsequently gifted to the SFMOMA, were by Modotti, Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Lola Álvarez Bravo, Manuel Carrillo, Héctor García, Mariana Yampolsky, Graciela Iturbide, and Pablo Ortiz Monasterio. All of these are black and white photographs, the latest dating to 1994. There are many color photographs in the exhibition as well. Like the black and white, these are striking, but more so in that they sometimes act to erase a distancing that can occur when viewing black and white images. The color works are more current, some from 2010, by artists such as Alejandro Cartagena and Victoria Sambunaris. Of these works McDonald says, “Contemporary Mexican photographers have moved away from the picturesque views that drew the attention of so many twentieth-century artists, often turning instead to the country’s sprawling cities and suburbs to offer a critical look at where and how Mexicans live.”⁴ Like their predecessors, the contemporary photographers are looking at how the people of Mexico live, and yet there is something more recognizable to an outsider’s eye. In particular, Cartagena’s *Negocio en un suburbio recién construido de Juarez* [*Business in a Newly Built Suburb in Juarez*] from 2009 shows two-story dwellings next to a corner store with neon lights. Above are telephone and electrical wires and in the distance one can see mountains all underneath a darkening sky. The image looks like it could be somewhere

³ Jessica S. McDonald, *Mexico: Selected Works from the Collections of SFMOMA and Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser*. Brochure from Exhibition with all wall text, 4.

⁴ Ibid., 11.

in South San Francisco or Los Angeles. Thus, there is a sense of familiarity with the scene. This familiarity is largely absent from the twentieth century images giving one the false impression that perhaps living conditions have improved in Mexico. But, truly, we are all under the same sky and experiencing phenomena like the “effects of rapid urbanization on the landscape.”⁵ This sensation alters one’s viewing of the photographs from the twentieth century. It is at first disorienting but positive in that it creates a greater sense of identification with the entire subject on view.

Graciela Iturbide’s works are a part of this evolution exhibited at the SFMOMA. McDonald says after the Tlatelolco student demonstrations and massacre in 1968 photographers recreated documentary photography into a form of political critique. In particular Mariana Yampolsky and Graciela Iturbide “created extended photographic studies of indigenous communities that illuminate the challenges of maintaining cultural traditions in an increasingly globalized world.”⁶ Although Modotti had already used photography as a form of political critique, Iturbide was indeed part of a new wave of photographers who were reinventing photography to reinterpret the indigenous people of Mexico. And, one can say about all of the photographs on view what Folgarait said about the Mexican murals: “What is viewed is loaded with purpose, its form/ subject matter being the effective enabler of newly constituting the viewer, thus making the viewer into someone different than she was before the viewing experience.”⁷ Indeed, this is what Greenberg and Steinhauser are after. They expressed their view that art changes the way

⁵ Ibid., 11.

⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁷ Folgarait, 11.

one sees the world and at the same time it is important to them that people in an exhibition setting are given the chance to be transformed once the photographs are expertly displayed by a curator. Not only does an exhibition such as this act to transform viewers, but it also continues to reinforce a perspective of Greenberg and Steinhauser as people who have an interest in helping those who are perhaps less fortunate by supporting art work, which aims to do the same.

One is reminded of Greenberg and Steinhauser's use of Iturbide's image as a Christmas card as well as their possible lack of understanding of how these photographs might be viewed as images of the Other. Both issues are problematic but especially the latter as it affects broader populations of people. Once again, the museum's actions become highly important here. *Photography in Mexico: Selected Works from the Collections of SFMOMA and Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser* is decidedly a departure from the *Mexico as Muse Exhibition* earlier in the decade. For example McDonald uses a distinctly different approach to her descriptions of earlier photographs of indigenous people and does not infuse the language with terms like "monumental grace". Modotti is briefly presented as Weston's pupil but one feels McDonald is intent on presenting them as different but equal in that they both offered new insight into how photography might be used. All of this reflects positively on Greenberg and Steinhauser. Their values of helping those less fortunate and to educate through art resonate.

As for Susie Tompkins Buell, another exhibition of her collection is called for. In a time when the strength of women's voices and freedoms are being challenged, Buell is likely to be a fervent voice. In February of 2012 Buell was photographed on her sofa

underneath three photographs by Dorothea Lange in her living room in San Francisco. The photographs appeared two days later in SFGate (*San Francisco Chronicle's* website) along with an article explaining why she wasn't giving money to President Barack Obama's reelection campaign. The same article revealed she was, however, donating money to Senate hopeful Elizabeth Warren.⁸ Because of Buell's political actions and her careful positioning under her photographs for the image printed with the article, she reinforces her identity as a socio-political advocate for women. Her collection may also stand as a voice and be a visual reminder of women's strength. Not only does she own key photographs by Tina Modotti, but also by Dorothea Lange and paintings by Consuelo Kanaga. Buell's collection could be used to create an exciting exhibition of works by women, but also by women who strove to make a difference in the lives of others through their photographs. Indeed, it would be a chance for her to reinforce her own identity as one who endeavors to make a difference as well.

⁸ Carla Marinucci and Joe Garofoli, "Obama Losing Financial Backing of Big S.F. Donor," *San Francisco Chronicle* (February 16, 2012). <http://www.sfgate.com/politics/article/Obama-losing-financial-backing-of-big-S-F-donor-3334655.php#page-1>.

APPENDIX A: GREENBERG/ STEINHAUSER INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interview with Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser on January 30, 2009
Transcription from audiotape

When a blank space _____ appears in the document the audiotape was indecipherable.
Any notations in brackets [] are notes made during transcription.

CAMILLE PORTER: When did you begin collecting?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Well, I started the process of thinking about collecting when I was ten or eleven and at that time my brother and I saved up our money for two years and bought our parents – we didn't give them anything for the holidays, anything for mother's day or father's day – saved up our money, we got about two hundred dollars between the two of us and we bought three ceramic pieces by a local potter.

CAMILLE PORTER: Okay. Where did you live at the time?

DANIEL GREENBERG: We lived in Hollywood.

CAMILLE PORTER: Okay. So, here.

DANIEL GREENBERG: They were neighbors of ours. They lived down the block. So, we could go down and watch kiln _____. They became very famous actually.

CAMILLE PORTER: Who were they?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Otto and Gertrude Natzler. So, essentially they were real pioneers of what I call art ceramics. They escaped Nazi threat in Austria.

CAMILLE PORTER: Did you purchase more items from them or did you move on to different kinds of objects?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Well, the next thing that we sort of put a number on was in college. My brother and I were looking at things by Escher and we ended up buying about ten Eschers between my mother, my brother and myself from the Volper Gallery.

CAMILLE PORTER: And why Escher?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Because we were really interested in the way he filled all the space. I was sort of transfixed by the arithmetic progression that allowed him to...I mean a great one that he did was on the cover of "Scientific American", *Night and Day* - it was transfixing as a matter of fact.

CAMILLE PORTER: They are transfixing. So, your parents are collectors too then?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Um...yes. They're both dead now. I think my Mom was much more of a collector. She was an artist herself. If you take a look at the front door of the house you see it's woodcut blocks.

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah! It's beautiful.

DANIEL GREENBERG: It's all of her woodcut blocks.

CAMILLE PORTER: Oh! That's wonderful!

DANIEL GREENBERG: It was a gift that she gave Susan and me when we moved into this house. So, she essentially collected primarily objects of wood.

CAMILLE PORTER: Ok. Which perhaps led you into the wood vessels that you collect?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Yes.

CAMILLE PORTER: And you just sold all of those?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Not all. We gave away two hundred and nine.

CAMILLE PORTER: Oh right. You don't sell your collections.

DANIEL GREENBERG: No. We never sold anything.

CAMILLE PORTER: Ok. My next question is, "Why did you begin collecting?" So, it sounds like it was initially a gift idea.

DANIEL GREENBERG: No. Not at the age of eleven or twelve when we were collecting things for my parents. Not at the age of twenty-one when we just loved looking at Escher's material. Not even when in fact probably I was thirty-three or thirty-four, which is when you've got to next take a look in fact at what I did. That was to start collecting contemporary art glass and the notion of essentially giving it away was farthest from my mind. I get sort of enormously excited by the inherent beauty of what I'm looking at. And if you take a look at - if I gave you everything that we've sort of been doing - it's more of indigenous peoples dealing with their culture by making beautiful objects that they use in their everyday life. But if you take a look at the objects like the glass or ceramics, which is where we started, this is more deriving from the craft shop. Then if you looked at all the stuff by Escher, which is sort of a mathematical kind of miracle - so essentially that was there. The glass was something that craftspeople did - you know functional objects but then watching the transformation to something that was more art-like. But, if you take a look at the two jade collections, what are they? They are indigenous objects by peoples who you know sort of have them as part of their lives. This is slightly different than Picasso. It derives from maybe a start where they were functional objects and over time they turned into artistic objects. But, you can say that about ceramics and glass.

CAMILLE PORTER: Right, that's true.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Then you take a look at photography as an art form. It wasn't considered an art form until the last maybe twenty-five years in all seriousness. Although, you know, the Met or MOMA had their exhibitions back in the fifties. Julian Levy did stuff over in New York in the thirties and Stieglitz. But, essentially photography was a way of looking at our lives, marking important moments historically, culturally, morally and ethically.

CAMILLE PORTER: Right. And supposedly objectively.

DANIEL GREENBERG: That's right. I haven't really concentrated on classical artistic objects. The only place where that's happened a little bit is I'm really interested in drawing and so some of the things that we have collected in the way of prints ... This is my wife Susan.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Hi.

CAMILLE PORTER: Hi.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: I wasn't quite ready when you came. How are you Camille?

CAMILLE PORTER: I'm fine. How are you?

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: I'm fine. How's your work coming?

CAMILLE PORTER: It's coming along well.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Great. Thank you for coming down and visiting with us.

CAMILLE PORTER: Sure. Thank you for having me.

DANIEL GREENBERG: At any rate, I've just been interested in sort of – I won't say "primitive" – more fundamental kinds of ways which people can express themselves and the transformation of something functional to something that has inherent beauty. You know, the wood bowl collection, if you think about it – that I'd go over to Hawaii where the wood bowls were carved out of the taro root _____ and everything else, at any rate, they just become beautiful. And then when technology moves in that sort of helped them do it. A lot of the wooden bowls we gave away were turned on lathes. And then you began to see some people trying to take a piece of wood and find the heart and soul of the wood. It's inner core, by pulling out innards of that piece of wood and making it into a beautiful object. So, I mean, that's a little bit as far as I can go in spinning you a web of what I think today. We go back to your original question and that is, when we started with all of this, I had no idea that in the end what would happen is that Susan and I would essentially try to accumulate bodies of material that would then be given away to institutions. We didn't have any high flying ideas that our eye was so good or that we would have the money available to us to accumulate a body of work that meant something. That of course has come about as we've grown older and greyer and wiser and maybe more foolish. But, this has been a latter day kind of event. That is that other people have appreciated what our eye told us to do – that there's something of value here. We started talking to museums about doing things. But that came much later in the game. Let's say in my forties, fifties, and sixties and her thirties, forties, and fifties. Oh we could tell that story. If you'd like to know how it all started from that perspective. In 1983 or 1984...

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: That's not when it was.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Ruth [?] took over the gallery in 1981. So, at any rate, we started collecting contemporary glass. My brother had basically bought this piece of glass. We were buying old René Lalique pieces from the 1920s. We had almost no money and we were suffering, but we started looking at beautiful glass and we were going to collect the old stuff and my brother was going to collect all the modern stuff. He ended up not collecting more than that one piece. We started looking at the modern stuff and decided it was a lot less expensive than old René Lalique. So, we studied glass for about two or three years, Susan and me, and we didn't buy anything over one hundred and thirty dollars for the first three years. We looked at a lot of stuff; we'd talk with people.

CAMILLE PORTER: Why one hundred and thirty?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Because I didn't want to spend over a hundred dollars, but I remember one time I broke the rules and spent one hundred and thirty. In any event, we were learning what was going on and then about three years in, which would have been about 1981, which was when...

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: It wasn't 1983 it was 1986.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Pardon? Oh no. We started in '75. We didn't buy anything of value and then we bought something for....

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Seven hundred.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Seven hundred. Right. And then we bought...I'll show you the piece that we bought for twenty-seven hundred dollars. We got a discount of ten percent. This object right here is our first serious piece of glass. If you put this on a _____ you know like they have in a Chinese restaurant with a light on it, all of the shadows makes you pick up every shape.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: You put it on a mirrored surface. It turns and then you have a light coming from above and then you get the reflection of the work on the glass.

DANIEL GREENBERG: The shadows of all the images. This led to something kind of unusual. This is certainly the beginning of our relationship with museums. And that is that the gallery owner had brought in an important body of work from Czechoslovakia. It was there for quite a long time and nobody bought the material including us. And, the gallery owner lamented that this was really museum quality material and that she was _____ no one was interested but she said, people who are interested in this are the curators over at LA County Art Museum [LACMA]. Now, because it's glass and they're not supposed to be looking at modern material like this in a new field, they can't say anything professionally, but they really like the material. Susan and I sat there because we loved the material ourselves. We said, "Jiminy! Maybe we can do something to help LA County pick up some of these pieces." So, we called up a friend of ours who was a curator at LA County. It was one of the secret voyeurs of this work. So, we went to breakfast. Susan was almost as quiet as she is today. At eleven o'clock at night my wife begins to wake up. If you want a real great conversation get her then. At any rate we basically had a breakfast and we had one guy by the name of Peter Fusco who went on to the Getty and then a gal by the name of Tina Oldino who was really interested in old glass and antiquities and we worked out a deal that morning where the gallery owner at the museum and we would all collaborate with us putting in the money to buy pieces, the gallery owner showing us a lot of work, and the museum making some judgments about what to do. We started a program in giving to LA County. That's how this really began. Now Tina is one of the chief curators at the Corning Museum.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Of The Contemporary.

DANIEL GREENBERG. Of The Contemporary. She sort of moved from old Roman glass to contemporary work and we taught each other. It was an adventure - an artistic expedition for us where we traveled a lot and learned a lot together and argued with each other and began to develop what I call "the artistic eye". That's what it's all about, getting to have a clarity of what you're doing. Sometimes, I can't tell you exactly what it is, but it's a point of view - the specific perspective. The only way to describe how that works, I have not asked Susan this question, but if you give me a hundred photographs to look at today and then took them away and hid them for eighteen months and brought them back, I'd pick out almost exactly the same pictures as the ones I liked _____. I've seen this happen several times where I've gone back and looked at material

a year or two later and I say, “Well, do I have this one? Yes. Is this one that I liked a year and a half ago? Yes.” So, my artistic eye is well developed.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: But that makes it sound like _____.

DANIEL GREENBERG: My Mom said that I have an artistic eye, that is, I collect photography from my perspective. Susan’s is different and maybe she’ll talk a little bit if she wakes up. I collect only from the strength of the image. I don’t care about social significance. I don’t care about moral or ethical character. I don’t care if it is part of history. I don’t care if in fact it’s political, emotional, sexual, you know – all of the stuff. I look at the strength of the image across a crowded room. That drives me to begin with. Now, later on as you begin to collect somebody you understand their iconic images that maybe didn’t catch my eye – you know it’s an acquired taste that you start really getting into the eye of an artist. And then, you begin to basically respond to much greater subtleties, but what starts me always is the strength of an image when I look at it.

CAMILLE PORTER: Like patterns.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Patterns is part of it. For sure. But, it is something that appears striking from a distance. But, I don’t care what the subject matter is. I might not even know what the picture’s about. The placement of light and dark in a picture draws me in.

CAMILLE PORTER: Is that all kind of work or just photography that you’re talking about?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Well, take a look at all of that stuff over there. [Points to some glass bowls in a case] You see the patterns three down?

CAMILLE PORTER: Yes.

DANIEL GREENBERG: That kind of stuff really gets to me. So, I think there is a serious element of ... yeah, I don’t collect work because it’s by men or women or dwarfs or anybody else. It’s just that someone has found a way of expressing themselves in a way that visually is very exciting.

If I am just babbling on for too long, just tell me.

CAMILLE PORTER: No this is great. Ok, you pretty much have covered how your collection has developed I think. Although, I don’t really know how you started to get into Graciela. So, maybe you could tell me a little bit about that.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Ok. So, we’d been collecting glass for thirty years. That’s from ’75 to about ’94. Okay. Sometime in that period of time something really dramatic and unusual happened for us. I didn’t think it would ever happen but it did. And that is, we started looking at all the new glass that was being produced by all of the glass artists and we began to get discouraged and unhappy because the work that was being produced wasn’t, in our judgment, as beautiful as the work we had. You know people hit dead ends, they moved in a different direction. I loved the vessel form in the glass. That is the classic form – the form that had been there. When they started to become more structural in nature responding to classical traditions about what art ought to be and should be. Just a simple vessel – that’s a craftsman doing that. You ought to do art and art means more structural forms and so on. Any rate, I looked at all of this stuff and I said, “It isn’t as nice as the stuff I have.” So, subtly, we began to slow down

our purchasing, which had been pretty prodigious during a period of time. Prices had gone up quite dramatically as contemporary glass warranted more recognition.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: It wasn't a hundred and thirty-four dollars anymore.

DANIEL GREENBERG: No. It was a hundred and thirty-four thousand dollars. You had to think for an entire year or two about what the heck you were doing. The way in which I described it is, if you start "here" [points to a point in a square on placemat] let's say as the core of our glass collecting and we expand it out over a period of time, somewhere as I'm standing out here I could sort of see the edge of our collection – you know sort of the fence or the perimeter. And that what we had was an integrated whole from my perspective, from my peculiar eye and that we didn't need very much more of x, y, and z. So, maybe in that filling of the hole would basically take care of this part here. But, I could see that there was an end generally to our collecting glass - because we had done what we wanted to do. And for two years I'd been going to this restaurant with a good friend of mine down in Santa Monica. We'd get there in the morning and we'd eat. Sometimes Susan would join us sometimes not. But anyway, right in this little area in Santa Monica we go over to this photography gallery and I go look at all of the photographs. And, of course, I ridicule all of it. You know, this is not art. This is people taking pictures with their camera. You can produce thousands of pictures! Every piece of glass is a unique thing. Here is the empire state building built in a piece of glass. You know there's only one. How can you possibly think about collecting photography, even though it's stunningly beautiful, because there are multiples?
[Some dialogue I can't make out from the tape]

DANIEL GREENBERG: The primary thing was, the glass was unique – this singular event, and this, you know, why should we buy all this? At any rate, we looked for a couple of years and I didn't do a single thing. But, at some point, because glass was becoming very expensive to buy and every single decision about the glass artists that we liked were becoming very important economically because their prices had gone up so dramatically, we started looking at photography and we could buy an image for several hundred dollars instead of seven thousand dollars. So, at any rate, I looked for a year or two and I finally decided that I would buy something. So, there was a show that I really liked - and probably without telling Susan; it was a stealth act - I went and bought ten. That was my first fore. That was McDuff. Then the gal moved her gallery over to Bergamot Station. So, she had her first show – it was called the Gallery of Contemporary Photography, now the Rose Gallery. She basically had a picture by Graciela sitting out there. There were a bunch of pictures up and I picked my picture. My picture turned out to be of this gal walking across the desert with a boom box.

CAMILLE PORTER: Oh. I love that one.

DANIEL GREENBERG: I can't tell you how excited I was. You know, this is a marriage of the old traditional – you know the uh, not a babushka, but a classical hairpiece - here's this old woman – or at least I felt that way – and here she is carrying this boom-box. I bought the picture and I felt all-powerful until Monday when I went back in the gallery and they had put up another picture of the same thing. I said, "I bought it. It's my picture. I made the choice. It's beautiful. How could there be another one?" So, in collecting photography, always, there was the notion that there were

multiples. You couldn't own an object, you owned one particular rendition of it and there were others. And in fact what I learned over time was that early renditions, that is pictures taken at the time the negative is created, are worth a lot more money than later on, which I have always thought is one of the greatest myths ever perpetrated upon mankind. My view is, a twenty year old taking a picture may have seen something, but the way that picture gets translated into a wonderful black and white image, maybe when he's fifty or sixty is much better than what it was when he was twenty. And so, the first place we really started collecting in depth, even though the first picture we bought was Graciela's, the second one was that picture there with the fish. You see patterns and the way across a crowded room you see all those fish and that arm hanging down there just knocks your socks off even if you don't know what it is. So, we started collecting Manuel Alvarez Bravo. And instead of going out and spending all of our money for one year on one vintage print from 1920, we went out and bought all of the contemporary prints. An old timer, you know, he's in his eighties and his nineties at the time. When we collect, what I discovered was that my eye naturally went to individual artists. And that is, I didn't want a survey. "Oh! This is a nice picture of this person or we need to get pictorialism, we need to get modernism." You know... I don't read any of the books. I don't have an intellectual antecedent with respect to all of this. That is, I eschew it in that regard and that is, I let my eye and my intellect and my mother's teaching and my experience do all the walking and essentially we ended up getting a huge body of work of Manuel Alvarez Bravo. It was the first real collection that we had in photography. That actually came from my Mom. The only time I took her up to see photography, we were sitting up at Rose's. Rose had a little alcove. You know, you always go in the back room to look at stuff. So, anyway, my Mom's sitting there. We both see these odd couple of pictures on top of the table. Can we look at those? So, they brought it over and my Mom said, "That's really good stuff. You ought to think about buying some pictures from that person." I said, "You're right Mom." And, we bought our first four Bravos that day. So, that went on and...

CAMILLE PORTER: Which ones were they?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Well, they were a boat with palm fronds on the beach; they were a bunch of pieces of coconut on a table. The third one was salt pourers pouring salt into piles. I can't remember what the fourth one was. But, not bad, huh, in terms of my memory?

CAMILLE PORTER: Not bad at all.

DANIEL GREENBERG: At any rate. So, Rose was really interested in Mexican work. So, essentially Graciela was a student of Manuel Alvarez Bravo. So, therefore – you know – Rose says, "Well, if you like Manuel, why don't you take a look at other people?" So, in the end we collected about five people and then I added just a couple of examples.

PAUSE TO TURN TAPE OVER

DANIEL GREENBERG: So then there was a whole group of people that we sort of got interested in. That is, not only Manuel, Graciela, and behind Graciela, Mariana

Yampolsky, and behind her Manuel Ortiz Monestario, and behind that Flor Garduño - early work – I don't like her later work, and although I couldn't afford it, Tina Modotti.

CAMILLE PORTER: But, you do have some Tina Modottis?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Well, we bought a serious amount of work, but not signed by her – done by the estate, by actually I guess the Museum Nacional in Mexico and a really great expert print of her portfolio. We got all the famous images.

CAMILLE PORTER: Now when...?

DANIEL GREENBERG: We have two real Tina Modottis and then we have this portfolio.

CAMILLE PORTER: Now when did the photography begin? What year about?

DANIEL GREENBERG: '94.

CAMILLE PORTER: And which Modottis do you have?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Well, let me show you what we have.

PAUSE

DANIEL GREENBERG: I got the picture that I liked the most. It's a great picture. There are only six of them in the world. It breaks my rule. I don't like buying very expensive pictures, it sort of screws up my ability to buy a body of work. But, I did end up buying this. Now when you look at this picture, Susan said patterns, remember something you can see across a crowded room? I didn't care if these were workers participating in a labor parade and stuff like that. I looked at all those hats and I said, "There's something magical, there's something strong, there's something really unusual and she's caught something there." Because these two rows of hats are very straight, you know, in a sort of land of chaotic fashion. Anyway, I looked at it and something happened with that picture. I said, "That is a great picture!" So, I got that and I got the cheap look-a-likes of everything else, you know. You know, I've got these pictures, I've got the picture of the guy with the...holding the...at any rate...you know a lot of the good stuff. So, this one, you know, because the portfolio had about ten or fifteen of the great pictures.

CAMILLE PORTER: How many do you have of hers?

DANIEL GREENBERG: I've got two or three originals by Tina Modotti, that's all.

CAMILLE PORTER: Right, but then you have....

DANIEL GREENBERG: Then I have the portfolio, which is about ten or twelve. We probably have about thirty Mariana Yampolskies, and we have the early work of Flor Garduño. So, you know, when we collect we commit to a photography artist. So, we've committed to...we have a pretty extensive collection. I sort of asked how many people we committed to and I went through the listing of everyone we've got. We've got forty-eight artists. So when somebody says, "Why don't you get a new picture? Here's somebody new." I say, "Our commitment to our existing children is so great that I don't know." Making a commitment to buy a picture is much more than a singular picture because it may be the first step to really collecting a serious body of work. So, that first picture sometimes turns out to be much tougher to buy than people at first imagine.

CAMILLE PORTER: You have to really think about it and think about all of their work.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Yes. When I start buying an artist I say, "Bring me everything in print that ever has been done by this person." I go through every extant print that's public that I can get my hands on. And I go over it again and again and again. Then I begin to reduce down the number from one hundred and twenty eight down to sixty down to forty down to thirty and maybe down to ten or twelve prints.

CAMILLE PORTER: And that's all based on what's visually pleasing to you.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Yes. I'm sorry. I am not the person that reads up on all the books about why I ought to buy this picture over something else.

CAMILLE PORTER: It doesn't matter. It still is a completely valid reason.

DANIEL GREENBERG: That's sort of my view. It's probably different than a lot of other people.

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah. Maybe.

DANIEL GREENBERG: I like pictures of Frida by the way. I'd do that. Frida and Georgia O'Keefe are the most photographed women I've seen in my life. You could have an entire life spent just collecting pictures of them.

CAMILLE PORTER: Well, they knew how to be photographed.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Oh, they loved it. Must have, because they made themselves available all the time. Okay. So, let's see if I can find the picture. God, Tina was so beautiful too.

CAMILLE PORTER: Oh, I know!

DANIEL GREENBERG: And, she liked to flaunt it. She enjoyed her life. We don't have the *Aperture*.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: I think maybe some of them are in Santa Fe.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Could be. You know, you might be right.

[Some dialogue I can't understand from audiotapes.]

DANIEL GREENBERG: I will tell you about the seven pictures that Susan [?] has, and that is this picture of two children and they look totally forewarned and lost in the world and at a Christie's auction I saw a different picture and that picture had five children in it. And the fact of the matter is that it wasn't as strong as the picture of the two kids. And Tina, whose affect was very political in nature, had cropped the other three kids out. So, we had the original picture of five not the two that she had considered her finished work.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: That's right.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Page seventy-one, I think, of the "Aperture" book shows the two kids.

CAMILLE PORTER: Okay. So, you first purchased that one and then you went back and you were mortified that the same one was up the next day.

DANIEL GREENBERG: I couldn't believe it. And then we just started collecting one at a time. We started slow. We always start slow. I mean, part of it is about learning and sort of understanding what's going on. But, I like to see everything somebody's done. In the case of a lot of the Japanese photographers, forget it. They did

thousands of images and they printed them in huge books and so on. It's tough sort of figuring out the weak from the _____. Also a problem with Aaron Siskind. There's so much work that he did. How do you basically make judgments about what constitutes the core of his material? So, at any rate, it's all a process of a step forward, two steps back, and two steps forward, you know.

CAMILLE PORTER: What do you mean by the core?

DANIEL GREENBERG: In my view, in the end there are going to be a number of pictures, which in my judgment really define an artist. If you want me to show you what I think those pictures are of Graciela's, they're different than what other people may think. But, from my eye there maybe are about fifteen or twenty pictures that I think are her very best pictures. And you know you can decide, that to me is what's really important in the core in which a lot of stuff emanates. But, it's those pictures that sort of get you. If you want me to do it with Graciela, I'd be glad to do it; I'll show you the twenty pictures I think are great pictures.

CAMILLE PORTER: I would love to know which ones you think are the best ones.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Ok. So, I'll do that. When do you want to do that? Do you want to do it now or later?

CAMILLE PORTER: We could do it now.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Let me go get the book.

CAMILLE PORTER: Okay.

PAUSE

DANIEL GREENBERG: Okay. So, I'll just do it upside down. This is a key picture of hers from my view. Here is the first picture, right. This is done lighter than in fact, I got. Susan and I liked a much darker version. So, here's Bravo down here. So, then we go through all of these and I'm going to show you what I think are important. Should I skip over most of them? This one. This one is the great iconic one here. This one right here – big timer. This one. East LA – this is really unusual. It's one of the only East LA ones. This one's great. There's a Susan Visalis [?] print of shadows of people being held at gunpoint by police down in one of the Central American countries. This one. This one. This one is one of my favorites. It doesn't show up anywhere, but I think it's a great picture. This one. Another one of my favorites that doesn't show up is this one.

CAMILLE PORTER: Oh yeah. I've never seen that one before.

DANIEL GREENBERG: And then this one right here. And then this one here. Okay.

CAMILLE PORTER: Oh. The goats.

DANIEL GREENBERG: The goats. And let's see.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Maybe you can write them down for Camille.

DANIEL GREENBERG: I'm just giving her a sort of, I mean if you want to do it I can go back over and I'll show you the same pictures, but essentially just...So, here is...this is a great self-portrait here that I think is really nice. And, let's see, this is her

picks. So, we'd have to go through here. Everybody thinks this is a great important shot.

CAMILLE PORTER: You don't like that one though?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Well, it doesn't hit the top because it doesn't have that sort of view from afar. That's more intellectual. You sort of understand that she's doing the hard work of killing the animals. This is stunning.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Oh that's wonderful. I love that one.

DANIEL GREENBERG: This is great. This is great. Let's see if I can do this. This is good. What else? This one is very very _____. And this one, this is my all time favorite.

CAMILLE PORTER: That's beautiful.

DANIEL GREENBERG: This is...

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Which one is that?

DANIEL GREENBERG: The dogs. This is my all time favorite. It's pretty unbelievable. And then what I wanted to show you was – I'll show you I guess three of them. I just have to go find something. I'll show you what they are.

CAMILLE PORTER: Now, do you own all of these ones that you think are strong?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Yes.

CAMILLE PORTER: Okay.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Maybe not now, because we gave sixty away.

CAMILLE PORTER: Right. To the Getty?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Yeah. This is a great picture. See how strong that is visually? And I do like these two, which is sort of this trans-gendered guy.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Was that the one from the cover?

DANIEL GREENBERG: That's the one from the Getty book. And, I just want to see if I can find a couple of pictures of the birds because the birds – some of the pictures of the birds are just unbelievable.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: That one's great.

DANIEL GREENBERG: We know about one. We know about one of those two there.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: [Says something I can't understand on tape, but in my notes it says Susan is pointing to Toledo Holding Dog.]

DANIEL GREENBERG: Well, you can show all the ones you like, honey. Let's see. I'm just checking to see if a couple of the bird pictures are in here. And they are not, but some of them...

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Oh! That's the one we used for a Christmas card.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Well, that's pretty good. Yeah. So, this one. We see this one.

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah. We saw that one. Which one did you use for a Christmas card?

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: The couple. Honey, show her.

DANIEL GREENBERG: This is the latest picture I bought. This is Francisco Toledo in the field. It's beautiful. I had never seen that one before; this is a pretty early picture she took.

CAMILLE PORTER: Okay. What is that one called?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Couple, Panama 1974.

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah. Very early.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Almost none of the great bird pictures are in here, Susan. None of the great bird pictures are in here that I think are part and parcel of her strong work.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: We have _____.

DANIEL GREENBERG: I'm just going to take a minute to think. We've looked at all of those. This is still early work.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: You know those ones she did where the plants were transplanted in the garden and they were put on I.V.'s? I just think it's wonderful because it's a tree with I.V. being fed. I feel like it's a prescription for the world. I love that picture. It was in the show.

DANIEL GREENBERG: This one. With the four fishes. This one.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: We have that one up.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Let's see if I can find this one. Well, I'm sorry. You know, we're just doing this sort of catch as catch can. This is a stunning shot.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Oh yes. The older woman with – is that the older woman with the hand?

DANIEL GREENBERG: No, this is the kids. Look at the kids in the double truck. It's even better. That doesn't show up anywhere. But, that's something that I think is just beautiful. I think this is a great shot. At any rate, if you take me through all of her work, I'll show you...Well, then this one right here.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: What is that?

DANIEL GREENBERG: It's another one of the goat pictures. A lot of them are killing the goats and all of the bodies and everything else. I love all the goats running.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Isn't that a little bit like the Campo Negra [?]?

DANIEL GREENBERG: It reminds me a little bit of the Campo Negra [?] running deer, which is his most famous picture. So, at any rate that's a start. I'm sorry I don't have other books here. If you wanted to go look and see if there are bird ones with the birds, I'd show you three or four more bird ones, but essentially I know which ones I like a lot and the ones that really resonate with me.

CAMILLE PORTER: So, do the two of you often decide together what to purchase or...I mean you said you went out and bought ten photographs on your own?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Here's the way it really worked. Susan's interest really started in glass and a lot of her spiritual self I think remains with glass. She's been up until this past year for fourteen years a trustee at the Pilchuck Glass School. When we were collecting glass it was something that we did together. Almost every single object we made a decision on together. One could exercise veto power if one of us really disliked something. And on occasion one could exercise the self and say, "I like that so much if you have no objection." Which is different than somebody saying, "I love that, we ought to get it." But, we could buy by ourselves.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: And two that I bought were used on the cover of books; that I bought over veto power.

DANIEL GREENBERG: That's right.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: I'll just have it said.

DANIEL GREENBERG: What I discovered with Susan is that she exercised unique powers to go buy something. Almost always, that person became much more well-known. Her eye was pretty good. I'd say that I've exercised much more individual judgment with respect to photography. And that leads us into another large area. And that is, by the time we got to glass unlike ceramics – or not glass, by the time we got to photography, unlike almost everything else we collected, the point of the matter is that by then we'd already had pieces in museums, we began to understand that what we were doing was different. We never sold anything. We only gave work away. And giving away the work has been almost as important as acquiring it. That's the tradition that's built up over this last thirty-five years that we've been together. By the time we got to photography, I'd have to say with all candor, besides looking at the beauty of wanting to acquire objects of work there was already a notion that we were going to spend really significant amounts of money. And so one other element crept into all of this besides an image that was really good looking and you know all of the stuff that I told you that sounds so great and transcendental and eloquent and spiritual, money came into the picture. We were collecting bodies of work and by this time we knew that a number of museums were interested in what we'd done. They'd looked at our wood; they'd looked at our ceramic. The County had promised us an exhibition with our glass being the key center point of it. So, when we got to photography I had to think about investing because we ended up spending millions of dollars. So, figuring out which work will endure, which work at least would not go down in value – the first thing was always to try to figure out if you had to sell it, could you get your money out of it. Well that, I'd never thought about with glass. By the time we got to photography I was thinking about that. So, I've made more of the choices with photography than Susan has. We've gotten through a fair amount.

CAMILLE PORTER: We've gotten through a lot. Yeah. How do you sort of organize the objects in your home? Are they catalogued in any way or do you just have them?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Well, do you notice something funny here?

CAMILLE PORTER: Well, I see that everything is displayed.

DANIEL GREENBERG: It's not true. Not true. There's a storage room. The really funny thing here is there are only four or five photographs in this house. This house was bought because we saw a lot of horizontal space to show our glass objects, our ceramic objects. So that almost none of the photography collection is here.

CAMILLE PORTER: How do you feel about that? Would you like to have more of it up?

DANIEL GREENBERG: I'd have to buy a 28,000-foot house. I mean, we have thousands of images. So, the way I feel about it is that there is a much greater pressure to begin thinking about giving it away and doing the kinds of things we've done with the Getty and which I hope to do with other institutions.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: [Says something I can't hear on the tape]

DANIEL GREENBERG: Well, she was saying, “How do you feel about not having any of the photography up?” And I said, “That leads to a much more fundamental greater impetus on our part to figure out ways of working with museums to give it away so that the body of work we’ve collected will have a much broader audience than people just visiting our home. We don’t have the ability to show key elements of our photography at home anyway because our house isn’t built for it.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: The Santa Fe house has some _____.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Well, the Santa Fe house is a two thousand foot house, so we have about fifteen or twenty pictures up there.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: My thinking is, as we give away more we’ll have more room.

DANIEL GREENBERG: This is where the jade’s going to go. I’m saying there’s a much more public place for all the jade.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: But, I wouldn’t do that. I would bring these over. Then you’d have more room for photographs.

DANIEL GREENBERG: I think I probably know who will win this one. I know who wins them. Just so you understand the pecking order here. It’s very clear.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: I would rather have fewer larger objects than some of these small pieces.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Yes dear. Yes dear. Okay. So....

CAMILLE PORTER: Okay. So, you have everything stowed away basically in drawers.

DANIEL GREENBERG: About fifty percent of our glass is out, maybe forty right now. No, maybe fifty. I guess fifty. But a lot of stuff that’s gone out to exhibitions has come back and we haven’t opened up the crates.

CAMILLE PORTER: Oh yeah. Well, that’s a lot of work.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Yeah.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Do you know that picture?

CAMILLE PORTER: Oh my god, no. I love that.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Isn’t that beautiful? I need to be looking for the birds for you.

DANIEL GREENBERG: It’s okay, sweetheart.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Doesn’t that look like the world, the world on I.V.?

CAMILLE PORTER: Oh yeah. That’s great.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: They do a lot for me. Okay. I’m looking for birds.

DANIEL GREENBERG: That’s a good picture. Just show her the one picture, Susan.

CAMILLE PORTER: Oh yeah. That’s beautiful.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: I mean she’s so....

DANIEL GREENBERG: There’s a picture by Weston and there’s a picture by Modotti that was up at that show that Sandy Phillips put on.

CAMILLE PORTER: The circus tents.

DANIEL GREENBERG: You remember? The circus tents. At any rate, so we're over there with Sandy looking at all that stuff and I'm thinking this picture, you know, from this book of hers fits in with those.

CAMILLE PORTER: It does.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: These are all plants that I think are transplanted and in need of help. See how they're all packaged up with newspaper around them to give them support? And then she makes them so dramatic and they look almost totemic. I mean she really has a way of making them look very dramatic.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Here are the birds. We'll show you our bird pictures.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Is this all birds? Yeah. There are a lot of bird pictures in there.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Yeah. There are all the good bird pictures. I'll show you the good bird pictures and then we'll be done with Graciela.

PAUSE TO TURN TAPE OVER

CAMILLE PORTER: Oh that one's great.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Isn't it great? Peter _____.

CAMILLE PORTER: Did you guys see "Slumdog Millionaire"? It reminds me of the train station in that movie.

DANIEL GREENBERG: It's true. It is the train station.

CAMILLE PORTER: Is that the train station?

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Well, yeah. We think it is. Oh, what a difficult movie that was. What they really should be doing is mobilizing people to do something about helping the children.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Okay. So, I'm going to start with the first half here so you can see...

CAMILLE PORTER: Is that a...that's a _____.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Okay. I'm only going to show you some of the ones I think are big timers to me.

CAMILLE PORTER: Okay. Oh yeah. That's wonderful.

DANIEL GREENBERG: This is a great one. Susan likes this one. It's really interesting. This is more like something Don Manuel did a long time ago. But, let me see if I can...let me see if the big one is in here. We have this one too. This is great.

CAMILLE PORTER: Night scene.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Well, the big one is not in here, Susan. But, a lot of them are. _____.

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah, that is nice.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Graciela's been very sweet to us. We visited her in Mexico when we went down for the Manuel Bravo exhibition. We had dinner over at her house and had a good time. I have a rule normally of never talking with or having relationships with any of the artists.

CAMILLE PORTER: Really? Why not?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Well, it's probably psychoanalytical in its origin. And that is my Dad made friends with a number of artists and he enjoyed their company and he then bought their work and when he died I ended up with the most god-awful collection of stuff. It was so bad. Because he liked them he bought their work when their work, in my judgment, did not have artistic validity. So, my view is that artists can say, "This is my best picture. You ought to buy it." But, I think it's worth didily squat. Forget it. So, I want total objectivity. What I like to do with artists is, I like to eat dinner with them and I like to drink wine with them and I like to talk about everything else but their work. Which normally is what they don't like doing either. But, I do operate differently. A lot of collectors especially glass collectors love to know the artists and be involved in the process – you know, become part of a movement. There's proselytizing that goes on in glass. It doesn't happen the same way in photography because photography is a much larger medium, it's more immediate, it's universal, everybody sees pictures all the time. But, I don't like to know any of the photographers. So, we don't go to any of the openings. Whenever the artist's there, I try to avoid it. Graciela's different. She's such a wonderful person. But, we knew her long after we collected a lot of her work.

CAMILLE PORTER: Right, that relationship came later.

DANIEL GREENBERG: That's right.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Have you talked at all about how important the gallerist is in building a collection?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Well, I thought maybe I'd quit pretty soon and let you spend a little time with her.

CAMILLE PORTER: So, The Rose Gallery was interested in having you collect Graciela's work. Is that what you're saying?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Well we don't normally collect directly from artists. We really believe in the role of the gallery owner being there to help you understand the context, to see the way somebody else's eye looks at stuff. You know, I love arguing with Rose, because Rose is much more of a minimalist. I like a lot in a picture. She likes the simplicity of just one element really reigning supreme. So, we argue all the time about stuff. But, the point of the matter is, that sharpens your skill set to understand what you like and don't like, what's valid and what's invalid. So, we buy almost all of our stuff from two sources: gallerists and public auction. And that's that. Susan and I...I honed my skills buying wine for twenty years at auction. I think we're much more active in the auction market than a lot of other collectors. And it helps me understand the economic value. I keep track of what everything sells for.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Tell her a little bit about our relationships with museums and curators.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Would you like to know a little bit about that?

CAMILLE PORTER: Sure.

DANIEL GREENBERG: I'm glad this isn't going into publication in a newspaper. I don't want to sound like an asshole.

CAMILLE PORTER: I'm not going to make you sound like that.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Because he's been in the papers before and it's been extraordinarily unpleasant.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Only once. I learned my lesson very quickly. But anyway, what I will tell you is that starting with glass, where museums began to have a real interest in it and starting with our experience if you remember back in the early '80's where we really helped build a serious collection at LA County over a period of twenty years – we've been involved in museums, we've given pieces to museums because there's been a special desire for a piece. We've given pieces in honor of other people who are our friends giving pieces to museums. So, we give pieces in honor of other people. We love to basically have our work going out, so other people can see what's happening. At LA County, the contemporary curator basically took a look at a lot of mainstream people using glass like Sherrie Levine, like...what's the name of that gal that does bow ties out of glass? Linda Benglis. Kiki Smith. You know, all of those people that normally don't work in glass. At any rate, she found examples of their work in glass and we helped the museum by helping them buy pieces like that. So, you know, all of that's been there. The two, by the way, the two photographers that really stimulated my interest in photography to begin with were not Graciela, I mean I looked, I saw, I _____ and we bought some stuff. The two that had a part of my life early, you'll recognize these names easily, were Dorothea Lange and a guy by the name of Eliot Porter. The most beautiful color photography I've ever seen in my life. That was part of the environmental movement. We've been involved in the environment and key issues for a long time. And we ended up having really strong collections of Eliot's work and of Dorothea's work. But, that comes from, you know, my childhood and sort of having a way of finding expression as an adult to collect that work. The stuff from Mexico happened because Rose kept exposing us to the material and forcing us to think about it and we responding.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: But there have been other photographers and other galleries _____.

DANIEL GREENBERG: I agree. Part of it was the passion of the people talking about it and getting you to really think about what you're doing. I don't think I'd buy work from the Fraenkel Gallery very easily because they're so remote. They only want people who will spend a quarter of a million or half a million dollars on very fancy things. You know, I mean, that's not the way we start.

CAMILLE PORTER: So, when you give your items to a museum do you want them to all stay together or do you care if they're are separated?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Well, for a dedicated collector who is obsessive compulsive and neurotic like I am the thing that you want is that you want the curators at a museum to have respect for your eye. So, the best way that gets translated when you give is for the work to be shown. So, remember that's the fundamental thing that all collectors want. And that is that what they've done with their lives, what's been so important to them will find expression or intellectually calibrated perhaps by a curator who will essentially take all of that material and put it in time and space and you know in an orientation that sort of places it in context in the history of the country and everything else. Everything that I eschew, say that is not really important to me, they have a sense

of importance about where it fits in. And so when you marry an eye with the history and the ability to sort of synthesize a lot of intellectual currents that makes a really interesting exhibition. So, that's what I'd say is first. You know, we're going to give a serious body of work, show it. I'm going to tell you two different kinds of ways of thinking about divesting yourself of material. Okay? Just from one aspect only, and that is with respect to glass it takes...it's heavy. You've got to put it into crates; it takes up a lot of space. Most museums do not want to have the responsibility of having three or four hundred objects that they've got to store against earthquake and everything else. So, with respect to those wooden bowls, which have the same characteristics: large, they break and with glass, we made a fundamental decision to break up our collection.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Are we breaking up the photographs?

DANIEL GREENBERG: I'm only talking about the other mediums. We had about six or eight museums that got our wood collection because somebody doesn't want thirty bowls by the same artist. They want maybe four, five or six, but not thirty. It's going to be the same way with glass in my judgment. Nobody wants thirty Michael Clancies; nobody wants thirty this and that. So, we will when we sort of divest ourselves of the glass just – we're on a path over the next ten years to get rid of everything except the ten or fifteen wood pieces we really like that are sentimental, they may not be the most valuable. Same thing with glass – we're going to pick out some things we really love that makes our heart throb, that we sort of smile when we see it because it brings back a great memory of a part of our lives.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: I think it's part of a very smart divestiture plan or plan to find homes for something because you get to a certain point in your life where if you don't take care of these things now and plan them out these decisions are made for you _____ and you won't have any control over what happens to them.

DANIEL GREENBERG: We'd like to do it while we're alive.

CAMILLE PORTER: Do you have children?

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: No.

DANIEL GREENBERG: We have godchildren, but nobody's expressed an interest and I think our view has been that in the end we collected for public consumption rather than private. We've been willing to let our stuff go out on loan much earlier than a lot of collectors do. They don't want to take the chance that something gets broken. So, you know they have fears about the stuff. My view is, no matter how beautiful an object is, no matter how rare, etcetera – it's an object. It's not like your grandmother. It's not like your family. I don't mind taking risks by sharing the material with others and shipping it around the country. And we've broken a couple of pieces while all this has happened. So what? One thing about glass and one thing about wood objects and even with a lot of the photography – so a piece gets busted or stolen _____. So what?

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: That kind of happened in the earthquake.

CAMILLE PORTER: Did you guys lose some pieces in the earthquake?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Oh yeah! Yep. So, at any rate, that's with wood and with glass and that is, we made a very serious decision that we had to break it all up and basically move it to several institutions. You know, people are not going to want all six of these. They're going to want maybe two to sort of show Michael Clancy's work, the

smaller work as opposed to the larger work. We didn't take you down the hall – you know some of these pieces are hidden. So, essentially that's what's going to happen. The really interesting question I don't have an answer for is with photography you can keep a huge amount of work in a really small space. Therefore, the dynamics and economics are fundamentally different and the real question for us is, in the end will we when we divest ourselves of the collection – I'm not going to talk about if in fact, let's say the National Gallery wanted to do a show on Graciela, would we basically give them forty or fifty pieces like we've given to the Getty in order for them to do a show on Graciela, whether we would do that instead of giving it all to the Getty, although the Getty would like it.

CAMILLE PORTER: They would?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Sure. At any rate, in the end I'm not certain what we'll do. I think we're going to have a choice, and that will be interesting. Part of the way in which you have to think about this thing economically is you can create something pretty special if you want to give a few million dollars in addition to material by essentially endowing a curator, maybe having a room built in the museum that has your name on it and so on...I mean that's one choice about doing it. That's not been where we've been at so far.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Generally they do want money for future acquisitions. They do want money for maintenance. They do want money for_____.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Yeah. I mean, that is one way of approaching an institution. Let me tell you something else we've been doing in the last two years that's fundamentally different, that very few people want to do right now. That is we have taken a lot of money and have been sponsoring exhibitions. We have an exhibition now that we're sponsoring in the Hammer Museum of woodcuts. We sponsored the Constable Show at the Huntington Museum. We sponsored the photography show that was shut down about six months ago at the Huntington Museum. We are sponsoring two shows of glass at the Museum of Art and Design in New York. And then we sponsored the...we were one of the major sponsors at the _____ show of glass. And then we did the Wolfgang Tillerman show at the Hammer where we were sponsors. So, that's transitory money. Now you see it. Now you don't. But, getting money for exhibitions sometimes is very difficult for institutions. So, you know, we've just been putting our money where our mouth is and saying if we really believe the material ought to be shown then we ought to help museums be able to do that.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Also, we did the arts education program in Santa Fe for the glass show.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Yeah. We've held sponsors and teachers institutes at LA County so that teachers of kids...not only do teachers learn about it but then sponsored programs to have the kids come out and learn about it – you've got to hit kids early in life and get them started on a path of appreciating what's going on in the world artistically. So, those are ancillary areas that doesn't [sic] have anything to do with collecting, but it has everything to do with collecting because it is essentially involving a lot of other elements in the community.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: And we were part of that _____.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Susan's been on the board of you know a number of things. We've been on the boards of _____. Susan just finished a stint as the head of the Photography Council at the Getty Museum.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Not until April.

DANIEL GREENBERG: I said just finishing.

CAMILLE PORTER: So, I know this is kind of a difficult question, but why do you see these things...why is art this important that you need to...that it needs to be shown, that you need to get kids involved in it, you know, just in your opinion, because I definitely feel it's important too, but I just want to know why you guys think it's important?

DANIEL GREENBERG: Tough one.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: That is tough.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Well, I start from the position that my Mom was an artist and she just passed away in the last year. I've been exposed to art since I was a kid. My parents valued the medium. Buying cars, buying too much caviar, running around in private jets...every hour on a private jet is one really nice photograph. I mean, you know when I start weighing how one uses money in a way that is not just to make more money or to provide yourself with, you know, a lavish lifestyle, but where money gets put to use in a fundamentally different way. Art rises to the surface of what's immediate. I mean there are a lot of things we do. My wife and I give away thirty percent of our gross income every year to charity of one kind or another: educational institutions, artistic institutions, women's leadership, people who are hungry. You know, you can run the gamut. But, the point of the matter is: a life of service has been drilled into us by our parents and so I think it comes pretty naturally – it's just the way in which it gets expressed. Maybe...I mean Susan went to New Mexico and to Nevada to knock on doors for Obama.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: A lot of people did.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Now that means, you know, we're people who not only think about it, but we DO – we act. You know, we participate. And so, art is one of the key places where we do that. If you take a look at her bio and my bio you see we've got a lot of other stuff we've got a lot of other stuff we're doing with our life. It's important to us. Art, you know, it's one of the key elements of a civilized creature.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: It's hard to think about a life without it _____. What's left of Rome? I mean an aqueduct or an amphora.

DANIEL GREENBERG: At any rate, I don't know...art...it's like...I guess...say, I was on a desert island, what would I want? I'd want wine, women, and song and art and books. You know? And not much more than that.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Art is about expanding the way you see things. I mean you can't look at Bravo's photos or Lange's photos or Iturbide's photos without seeing things in an entirely different way.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Well listen, birds build nests. You know, animals have complex civilizations and even dolphins; I read today, take a lot of time preparing their food.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Were you looking at the New York Times Science section or something?

DANIEL GREENBERG: I'm just telling you that they are artistic in the way that they live their life maybe. But, the point of the matter is art separates us from all other creatures on this Earth and that is an appreciation of the creator...I mean, art is one of the things that separates us from all other creatures on this Earth and whatever that means, because I'm not going to go into some high falutin' intellectual argument about it, but the point of the matter is it's different and so for us, you know, it's important.

CAMILLE PORTER: Okay. Can I ask, Susan, what did your parents do?

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: In terms of what?

CAMILLE PORTER: For a living.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: They were professionals.

CAMILLE PORTER: Okay. I'm just curious because....

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Oh yeah, not artists the way his mother was.

DANIEL GREENBERG: My father was a businessman, my mother was...she ran a gallery. She was one of the great rare seashell experts in the world among other things.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: My father was in business. My mother raised three children, very active in the community always: elections, adult education. But, I think I was very fortunate because my uncle and aunt always collected art and had two different kinds of collections. They had one collection with artists like Dove and Koshka and then they had another collection that was all Californian by artists like Arnaldi and Billy _____ and they were very involved with the Friends of Contemporary Art in Pasadena and with groups that did exhibitions. They put together exhibitions on their own. They did a wonderful Wallace Berman show probably in the '70's or '80's at what was then Otis when it was downtown. And they had another one that was with a British fashion designer, Dander Rose before anyone had ever heard of Dander Rose. And then really my uncle...his aunt collected art and so I think it was a kind of tradition. You're exposed to it.

CAMILLE PORTER: And did you collect anything when you were younger?

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Yes, I collected sterling silver demitasse spoons and then I collected tin boxes and then I collected Russian boxes. What else? Green stones. I mean you all collect something don't you. I mean whether it's stamps or coins or something. But, I don't have the need to amass as much in a single blow as Dan does. I don't think we'd have the kind of collection we do if Dan wasn't in the picture.

DANIEL GREENBERG: If I had Bill Gates' money I'd spend it all on art.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Dan is truly a collector. He has to have it without regard for where it's going to be displayed or how it's going to be displayed. I mean at some point in time the house overtook us and Dan was keen to sell the house so that we could have a house that could accommodate all of the art. And my thinking was; we're two people, no children, no pets, we didn't need a bigger house and I didn't want to be _____. Having objects is a great responsibility and not only brings you great joy, but it's a great amount of responsibility. We actually had one of the gallerists who's no longer in that business come and act as a marriage and art therapist and went through – she had an inventory of most of the work, which at that point in time was mostly glass and she

helped us identify not only what was top quality from lesser quality – because what happens is you build a collection that was of great quality at the time when you’re just starting your life can change a little bit, you know, so your “A” art can become your “C” art. So, she really helped us weed out and acted as a referee. And so I say, it looks great. You know, the essence of the collection wasn’t eliminated, but the fat was and a lot of that got put away because we had storage – we rent space for Dan, and some of those pieces had been given away as gifts or to minor auctions. And then we had to bend and push and we’ve had _____.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Our intellectual view was – we at one point at our life in this house had so many things...

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: We were choking on it! It was living here and we weren’t! It was terrible. It was like science fiction. You know and the art is just going to squeeze the life-blood out of your body. Like vampires.

DANIEL GREENBERG: We were prisoners of our possessions. We had a designer coming in, because I said: either we’re going to make this house better to live in, Susan, or we’re going to get a new house, a bigger house. And she came in and she said: well half of what you’ve got out has got to go. She said, literally half the pieces, you know, you can’t have out. So, imagine this house with twice as many objects in it.

CAMILLE PORTER: It’s...hard to imagine.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: But, it’s been great fun and I think it’s something that either can divide a couple or bring a couple closer together. And clearly Dan and I built a glass collection that was more of a joint effort. The wood he’s pretty much done on his own. The photography, I’ve been more of a willing participant. I really have a love and great affection for the Mexican photography. And Minor White, I really like Minor White’s work. And not so much the color work, I’m not so big on the color work. I like the black and white work. But, Graciela and Manuel – and maybe also again a very personal relationship with Manuel and Collette and when he was a hundred and we were there in his home. And I think that really helped us with the history of that whole Revolution in Mexico from 1910 to 1921 – there was really a hope that Mexico was going to become a utopia and you had Russians coming and Americans coming and it was going to be a new world and that was an exciting era and the way Manuel captured the essence of the people and the folkways and the professionals there. And we went to where Don Manuel lives – we actually went to that apartment, we were on that balcony – you know the *El Sueño* [sic]. I don’t know if you know Don Manuel’s pictures, but there’s one of a young girl on a balcony and she’s like this and all of us went up there and we went like that.

DANIEL GREENBERG: 1924, you know this picture was taken – somewhere in the ‘20’s. So, here it is almost, you know, eighty years later and we go running up to the same place.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: Dan really does have a great eye. His Mom is truly amazing. I mean, she could take driftwood and carve driftwood into _____. She can take a nickel and use it as the base for a basket that she would weave out of vine weeds, which is truly a weed in her back yard and _____ it to soak in her bath tub to soften it up. And I remember, she said: you know, it’s not lying right. What am I going to do

with it? And she incorporated a nickel into the bottom and the whole thing just – it was amazing.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Some of her baskets are in museums.

CAMILLE PORTER: Really? That's wonderful.

DANIEL GREENBERG: She was one of the pioneers of fiber work and modern day baskets. She supported a lot of the Indian basket tradition.

PAUSE TO TURN TAPE OVER

DANIEL GREENBERG: She did an oral history project.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: And paid for it. She said: This needs to be translated. You need someone that will help you with it – not translated, but getting it off the tape into a...

DANIEL GREENBERG: Transcribed.

CAMILLE PORTER: Right.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: It's too important.

CAMILLE PORTER: That's really interesting too. You guys have so much going on.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: With what Dan does – he really throws himself into it. It's not so much scholarly. It's more a gestalt. Like, what we've done with the pre-Colombian jade or we've done with the Chinese jade and I think with both done wonderfully. Art – you know art is not only a way of helping you see differently, but of helping you understand other cultures. When I think about these wonderful objects – I mean some of them are nine thousand years old. _____. You look at these animals and the animism...

DANIEL GREENBERG: See she thinks about animism and religion. I just think: Look at this Chinese stuff from across the, you know, and then look at the stuff from Mesoamerica and there's something there that connects somehow. What is it? You know, so we start collecting both of them because they're both valid in their own respects, but you know, I begin to see some places where they feel similar...

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: There was that one that I swear looks more Chinese than looks Mexican – that pan handle.

DANIEL GREENBERG: That's right. So, you know, there are places that are crossed over and the same thing holds true with some of the other things we've done. I mean ceramics, the glass, you know the vessel form. That's why I like vessel form in glass because I had become really interested and aware of the vessel form from ceramics. And so, all this stuff translates. There are differences and similarities.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: A lot of glass artists were ceramicists first.

DANIEL GREENBERG: So, I'm about ready to go to work.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: She needs a closing comment.

DANIEL GREENBERG: It's been really nice to have you here! We've been so pleased that you've been able to spend at least an hour and a half of your valuable time.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: The other thing I think is – I don't know what's on your checklist, and you're free to be back in touch – I was just thinking: If we had been exclusively works on paper, how I would have felt about that and if I was hearing you talk about the photographs I think just in general I prefer objects because I prefer things you can handle. As much as I like the photographs, and I really do – and some of them you just feel a spark. But, there's something I like about being able to handle things and you really can do that with the jade.

DANIEL GREENBERG: That's true.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: And you can do that with the glass. You can't really touch the paper and I find that off-putting.

DANIEL GREENBERG: That's a good point.

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah.

SUSAN STEINHAUSER: And even the textiles – it's not that I really touch the textiles, but you can touch textiles. You know, just looking at objects – because by their very definition the works on paper are flat. _____. There's something about all this texture. You know, unless you look at like an oil painting that's really built up, but you're not going to put your fingers on it. _____. It's interesting when people like you come because it gives you an opportunity to sit down and – you don't really sit down and dinner at night and say: Hmmm. Thirty years of collecting. What's it really been like? So, when you come – and you never think it's going to get to this point in your life where you're going to have that kind of experience to share with someone – it's interesting - your way of marking where we are.

CAMILLE PORTER: Well, I really thank you for spending so much time talking to me.

DANIEL GREENBERG: Well, I hope we were at least half as amusing as Spencer. He's a great guy. I just have so much respect and admiration for him.

CAMILLE PORTER: I had a wonderful time with both of you guys. It was a different experience.

DANIEL GREENBERG: He is just enthusiastic. I'll show you a couple more things. You can probably turn that sucker off.

APPENDIX B: SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

Interview with Susie Tompkins Buell on April 2, 2009

Transcription from audiotape

When a blank space _____ appears in the document the audiotape was indecipherable.
Any notations in brackets [] are my notes made during transcription.

CAMILLE PORTER = Camille Porter

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL = Susie Tompkins Buell

CAMILLE PORTER: When did you begin collecting?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: I began collecting in '89 and I'd always been interested in ... I was awakened to photography many years ago – probably 40 years ago, 45 years ago – when I used to go to a printer that printed for *The Family of Man*. He printed amazing photographs. And I remember seeing some Dorothea Lange prints there and they just made a deep deep impression on me. And then in the late '80's I got separated from my husband and he had collected modern art. I had always wanted photographs, but it just didn't work to put the two of them together so – and he had a few – but I didn't really like the ones that he had. And so when I got out on my own I bought this beautiful beautiful apartment and I thought, "What am I going to put on the walls?" And I just thought: I want to do photography. And I had a friend – I had just recently made a friend – and I told him that and he said, "I have somebody that you have to meet." And so I met this woman named Merrily Page. So sadly she died about ten years ago. She was just a magnificent creature who had a deep appreciation and articulation of photography and I learned so much from her and she was sort of beginning her – she was into photography – first she repaired guitars and then she got into photography in some way. She was so smart and so innate and she understood and she was so articulate and so passionate. So, I went to see her and I said, "I think I want to collect photographs." And she had a few and sold a few and she went to book shows here and there – she wasn't a real player yet. And we just hit it off, we just hit it off. She was so right for me at that moment in my life where I was just discovering my passion because I really needed – I wasn't consciously looking, but a new chapter in my life was beginning. I had this apartment, I'd sold my business, you know, what's next? And she just turned me on. Her passion was so beautiful and one thing led to the other. But, I did think at first, "Oh I'll have pretty pictures." So, we started off there and we got some portfolio of Minor White and just started seriously but not deeply. And then one day she showed me a stack of photographs and the magnolia. And a light went off. And I thought, I want to collect really amazing photographs. And so we got some amazing photographs. We got an Edward Weston: *The Nautilus*, we got some Imogene Cunningham, we got Stiken. And there were beautiful beautiful beautiful still lives of flowers. And at the same time I was having a political awakening and I just felt that wasn't enough for me and I wanted to see some Dorothea Lange photographs. And so she got – she found the beautiful ones, the most beautiful ones and I started collecting those and they just – it was a very deepening

kind of experience to be near those photographs. And I met Dorothea Lange's son and I got some photographs from him and a collector in Boston and I really was able to get some of the most amazing ones. And then Merrily helped me understand that I wanted to know about the inspiration of the photographs and what was behind them. It wasn't just might and beauty, which I'm very attracted to also. But, it was more of a documentation of difficulty or passion. And so she just went with me and then these beautiful Modottis came up at auction. And with the Modottis, the *Roses* – that was like the biggest photograph. That was like the beginning of the photo boom. And I had so much confidence in her. She would come over here and she'd be on the phone the next day at the auction and I said, "I trust you Merrily. I do." I was in a position where I could buy the photographs. They weren't that outrageous at that time compared to what they are. And it wasn't that scary because I recognized – I could see, I knew – they were brought along by somebody so knowledgeable and so competent and helping me understand what it was attracting me to them. You know and it wasn't just names. I remember she said to me once, "If the hair on your arms stands up, that's telling you something." And so the hair on my arms would stand up. And then I went from Dorothea and we started looking at the Tina Modotti and the Consuelo Kanaga and there was always so much deep passion behind those pictures – social passion that really attracted me so much. I wasn't really a social activist at the time, but it was something that was coming and I think those photographs really inspired me a lot. Especially the Dorothea Lange ones and Tina Modotti's life. Like I didn't really have the photographs that really represent her social passion.

CAMILLE PORTER: But that one does. (*Worker's Parade*).

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: It does. It does. I'd love to have time to tell you just how they've been grouped just very coincidentally. Like that to me is a triptych of their work, which is like nature and man made and man. And that just came together. You can see sort of how their influence must have been there for them and these two pictures here – his is so masculine (*Palma, Cuernavaca*) and hers is so feminine with those wires and those clouds (*Telegraph Wires*). It's just like lace and it's complex. Isn't that a great pair?

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah. It's wonderful.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: And see that one there of the working woman really inspired me too because the hands and just the form and the composition. It's just inspiring. I have to be moved by things. And Merrily really gave me the go ahead to let that happen. She was wonderful.

CAMILLE PORTER: Ok. So, it seems like with the photographs you were drawn to things that had a kind of social activism behind them – that that was...

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Well, passion. First it was beautiful flowers and masterful photography and then I moved from there and actually I sold some of those to get some more of a reminder...you know beauty is a great reminder too, but these photographs and really my Dorothea Lange photographs – I look at them, I come in here by myself and I look at them. It's just so inspiring to see what has taken place for us how people that have seen it – that have seen that kind of despair and been able to document it so beautifully and so passionately in a way that has endured so amazingly well for so

many years. Like those three people were taken to the Whitney when they did their century ... what was it? I can't remember. They had painting and this and that and then they had photography and those three were chosen. The Dorothea Lange *Stockings*, and _____, and *The Migrant Mother*. They just speak to me – especially now.

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah. Especially now.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: So, about my collecting: this collection is quite different (the Modotti/ Weston collection). This is about maybe about their passion, although I didn't appreciate him the same way I appreciated her but I was fascinated by her as such a strong, powerful, insightful woman – her dedication.

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah, well he wasn't political, but he was definitely passionate about the basics of photography and how things look.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Form. I thought that until – I just say this very out of school, but I think that before he met her it was all about form and light and then he met her and he was just so influenced by her.

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah. I agree.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: I mean she was influenced by him, but I think he was even more influenced by her.

CAMILLE PORTER: Well he taught her how to do it, but I think she influenced the way he went about his work. So, you had a collection of or have a collection of quilts as well.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: I did years ago and I still have some stragglers, but that was years ago when I had my business.

CAMILLE PORTER: And does that relate at all to this collection?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Not really. Originally they were put together because we had so much wall space that we had to do something with. And we were in the textiles – you know we were in the garment business, so I thought: ok let's get quilts. And then my husband went into the whole Amish thing because he's a very graphic driven person and I didn't really like the Amish quilts personally. I didn't think there was enough personal expression in them. I thought they were very dictated and they didn't appeal to me, although, graphically I could appreciate them. After I started collecting some of my own I got sort of much more independent, individual more rebellious quilts. And I still have them in storage, but I...

CAMILLE PORTER: And were most of those done by women?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Yes.

CAMILLE PORTER: And was that...

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: No, I didn't really learn that much from them other than...I saw the difference between the Amish quilts being very controlled and the ones that I ended up being interested in were much more – kind of make-do with whatever was available like using fabrics and colors and they'd express their or themselves with their material.

CAMILLE PORTER: But, did the fact that they were made by women make them more attractive to you?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: I think so. But, most quilts have been made by women. So, I just think about women and quilts kind of in the same category. But, you don't do that with photography.

CAMILLE PORTER: No. Not at all. Ok, so when did you start collecting the Modotti's?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: That's like the mid-nineties. You know, I couldn't tell you exactly when. I can find out from my friend if you really want.

CAMILLE PORTER: Ok.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: My friend who introduced me to Merrily. Because he was in on all this. And if you ever want to get any details from him he loves to talk and he really influenced me a lot. He lives in Berkeley and he loves photography. And he and Merrily were really close and he just influenced me a lot too.

CAMILLE PORTER: So, you bought one piece? What was the first piece that you bought? Was it *Roses*? By Modotti.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Oh Yes. At auction.

CAMILLE PORTER: Ok. And then did you buy one at a time or several at a time?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Oh. Dan will remember everything. He'll remember the dates and how much I paid for them and everything. He and Merrily were so excited about it and I still had my business and was kind of focused on my business and had that going on. I trusted Dan and I trusted Merrily and I was enjoying it. I felt very very confident that between the two of them that if they thought I should buy something I would buy it. But simultaneously I really found the joy and the excitement of discovering and learning. And Merrily was that way.

CAMILLE PORTER: So, that had to do a lot with your relationship with the two of them it sounds like.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Yeah.

CAMILLE PORTER: Ok. Are you still collecting?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: I haven't collected photographs in a long long time because I don't like to keep things in storage. I think that everything should be out and I really don't have any room. I have a home in Bolinas and I really don't have any photographs there. I have a whole kind of different scene going on over there. I really don't feel the need to have anything that I ...

CAMILLE PORTER: You don't want to have anything put away?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: No.

CAMILLE PORTER: So everything you own is displayed.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Yes.

CAMILLE PORTER: Okay. And in Bolinas, do you have collected items there?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: I have photographs ... well photographs that I collected in Cuba. I have some really nice photographs that I had before when (*I can't understand this portion of the tape*) ... one of the top photographers during the revolution and after. He's wonderful.

CAMILLE PORTER: Corta?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: I have a book that they just did about him. But, I was very lucky to get some photographs and have him print them and tell me stories. But, I don't really have...or no I have some local...you know it's just a totally different look out there.

CAMILLE PORTER: Right. Right. Okay. Do you catalogue your work?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Not really. I mean it's all documented. But, I guess I could show you slides of everything I have. What do you mean documented?

CAMILLE PORTER: Do you keep the records anywhere where you can access them for yourself? Just a way to organize it for yourself.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: My accounting keeps a record of what I pay and what's the current value and so with property insurance ... But, I don't follow it. I don't read about it. I've just collected these amazing icons and I enjoy them but I'm not a serious collector where I'm studying what other people are collecting, what the value is right now, how to update something ... that's not how I collect.

CAMILLE PORTER: Right. It's more of a personal kind of a thing. Are any of your relatives collectors?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Sadly no.

CAMILLE PORTER: Did you ever collect when you were younger?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Not really. I have...you know...I think I have little collections of things in my life. When I was working I was building collections every three months when we'd come out with a new collection. So my whole business world was about gathering and presenting and making a story. Because this room is a story and I didn't realize it when I was doing it. But, that's the way I kind of live my life now. I was very conceptual and I think that's how this collection's been put together.

CAMILLE PORTER: Okay. It's interesting that you equate this collection with a collection of clothing that you put together.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Well, just that things lead to a line. Things have to speak to each other. There's got to be a theme, a concept. I just don't go out and...you know...I have a point of view and I appreciate many things. But, the things that are in my point of view are the things that really interest me.

CAMILLE PORTER: And it's not only about the same artist?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: No.

CAMILLE PORTER: Okay. Do you have a special affinity toward any of the objects in your collection? It sounds like maybe the political stuff ...

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: What do you mean objects? You mean the photographs?

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Well I'll tell you what I really love. You can walk down the hall and see things. But, I love the idea of this room. That it's some of their greatest work and that her portrait of him and his portrait of her are looking at each other. He didn't like to have his picture taken so she took that when he wasn't looking or he posed without looking. So, it's very personal and I think it really represents...without having thought it out: I didn't plan it out. It just worked out. Like they were just hanging and I thought, "Oh my god. It's a story." And like those two pictures of these women

working and then his picture that's so modern and graphic and *that* one that's so modern and graphic and their work together where I think you can see each other's influence. I just think it's a concept. It just came together. And I think it's quite remarkable. And with the show in the museum I think it was showcased that way a bit. But not really. But, that's just the way I look at things. I like something to kind of hold me together.

CAMILLE PORTER: Did you go to the show?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Yes.

CAMILLE PORTER: So you were happy with the way that it was displayed.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Oh yeah. It was really good.

CAMILLE PORTER: So you mostly collect photography. But, there is one painting in the living room.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Right and that was done by an unknown artist that disappeared during the twenties here and was part of the WPA program. I got it at a flea market kind of situation. Not a flea market. It wasn't a serious purchase but since then there's been a lot of interest in it. You know I am not a big collector in my life. I am not really like that. You know some people like to collect things. I am not a collector or a gatherer. I more like to get out there and discover things and you know maybe I get them and they come together and it's some sort of story or presentation. I'm a very curious person – I just like to observe things and learn. Honestly when I got this place I needed something to put on the walls. So, then I became interested in photography so that means I needed to have photographs on the wall. It was a great opportunity to collect photographs. And being so privileged to meet Merrily and Dan and have them escort me through the process on such a quality level was really a privilege. Very definitely.

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah. It sounds like it. It sounds like that was a really fun part of it and you learned a lot that way. Did they both know a lot about photography in Mexico?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Merrily knew a lot about photography everywhere. She just did. And Dan learned about it. Mexico, no. But, obviously it became quite an interesting part of photography for a certain period of time. There was such a community of artists. Photography was such a great kind of underground gift that they all offered each other. I mean Merrily knew where every photograph came from, who it was given to and I learned from her that whenever she'd find something she'd find out whose hands it had been through and it was usually all within personal friendships because there wasn't a market for it then. And they had this kind of innate understanding of how to express themselves. And there wasn't a market. There weren't even galleries. It would be under beds.

CAMILLE PORTER: It was interesting how a lot of the Modotti photographs came to be owned by the MoMA in New York too. They were just dropped off there in a brown paper bag.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Yeah. And like the Consuelo Kanaga...do you know her work?

CAMILLE PORTER: No.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Very interesting. And she was married to an artist. She kind of reminds me of Dorothea Lange in a way. You know they really gave up A

LOT for their art, which was to document the human condition and the social conditions of the times. I'm trying to think if they knew each other, but I don't remember any of the stories. But, *her* husband whose name I can't remember, but Consuelo Kanaga's husband was a painter and he was extremely threatened by her. When she had no money to take pictures, no money for papers or chemicals or anything she would get up in the middle of the night...and I'll show you some of these paintings that she did of what the image was of what she wasn't able to photograph. When she died he dumped all of this stuff off at the Brooklyn Museum.

CAMILLE PORTER: Well that's good at least.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Yeah. At least he didn't burn it. I'm sure a lot of that's happened too. An artist and a painter both of them and there was a lot of conflict in that relationship. I don't know what Dorothea's problems were with Maynard Dixon, but I know there were a lot of them. A lot of them with kids and stuff. And it was what you would expect being threatened by the fact that your spouse wasn't there for you in the way that they would be if they weren't so there for their own expression in the family. So, it was complicated. But, Consuelo Kanaga, I just love that she'd get up in the night and paint these paintings and then hide them. And when he found them he dumped them all.

CAMILLE PORTER: You'd think he'd want to keep them.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Probably didn't recognize them – couldn't afford to in his head.

CAMILLE PORTER: So, aside from photography what other kinds of art would you be likely to collect?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: I've collected certain furniture. I've collected Jean Prouve furniture. I discovered it twenty-five years ago in France. Nobody knew what it was and I knew it was something fabulous. It was very very...there's three pieces right there. There was a period of time and Prouve was designing beautiful forms but for institutions and he was really a socialist and I just loved his purpose. But I didn't really know that much about it. When I heard that some of the pieces I liked – like this is one of his – he'd do these school lockers and things and I love that because they weren't decorative. I had quite an extensive collection of his work and I sold quite a bit of it when I didn't have room for it. I believe you should be collecting things you really are using. I don't collect to collect or build up some statement about myself. I don't want things to serve my life.

CAMILLE PORTER: I see. Okay. So that leads me to the next question. What makes you want to add a particular item to your collection?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: You know, I think quite frankly, knowing my personality that when something becomes a credible something to collect it turns me away. I mean I collected photography when it hadn't been considered a very good investment or a place to go. It just was not. I was a real pioneer in that area. Same thing with the furniture. Same thing with some of the beautiful ceramics that I have by this French artist. And then...you know I bought that like in the eighties and seventies and sixties at the flea markets in France and then when it got really like collectable it didn't really interest me anymore. I mean for one thing, you buy things for nothing and then all

of a sudden they're worth twenty times what you paid for them or more. It kind of takes the joy out of it if you pride yourself in being an intuitive person or a person who likes to discover things. I think that's a lot of my collecting. It's the sense of discovering and the joy of being able to put things together. And then, like I say, if it becomes a scene or a thing it doesn't interest me that much anymore. I'm just glad I had the opportunity to do it when it was still - you know - you had that great extensive discovery.

CAMILLE PORTER: I think you already answered this question: Is there any quality about yourself you would like communicated when your objects are placed in the museum setting?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: I think that my collection of things pretty much speaks for themselves, that it's really a social interest of mine. I have so much work from women and it inspires me and it's beautiful at the same time ... and I love seeing beauty in that. That's why the flowers (*Roses*) I think anybody can see beauty in flowers ... not anybody, but most people. You see the beauty and the agony because it's taken with such passion and concern about relaying this ... you know it's really about documenting history. I would love to know who's doing work like that today.

CAMILLE PORTER: Well, I think Graciela Iturbide was. But, I think her work has changed quite a bit over the years. But in the seventies and eighties she was definitely doing documentary kind of photography in Mexico and also in India.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: So you really focus on Mexico don't you?

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah. For this. Oh I wanted to go back ... you were saying something about how the photographs speak for themselves when they're displayed as far as the social history that they are...

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Well, because ... I think so ... I've heard people comment on my collection that it's very socially aware. It represents my activities. I'm happy when I hear that. It validates the reason I'm doing this. You know, I want to be attracted to things because it really makes a difference in my life and not just because it's a thing and it's beautiful or everybody's doing it or it's what's happening. That actually turns me off.

CAMILLE PORTER: Can you be more specific about how the photographs reflect what your doing in your life?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Well, I think when I realized I wanted to collect and I was introduced to really beautiful florals and I learned a lot about the different levels of photography and then when I looked at the Dorothea Lange ones that's what really spoke to me. The social aspect, I just think it's so ... and like I said you don't really see that in Tina Modotti's work. But then when you know about her...

PAUSE TO TURN TAPE OVER

CAMILLE PORTER: And then as far as the work being by women....

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Well, I'm such a supporter of women. You know I've worked with women, I have daughters, I just love women, I love being with women, I fight for women right now in politics – that's my whole purpose. I was really close to Hilary Clinton. I thought "Oh god. Finally!" It's just that I think that women are so

underestimated and so underappreciated. So, I felt this way – I think it really developed. You know people used to say to me at work, “God, you know, isn’t it hard being a woman?” And I’d say, “No. You just got to do what you got to do.” But it is hard being a woman and women are not ... all around the world ... it’s getting better, but they are taken for granted and they are not appreciated.

CAMILLE PORTER: Do you think it relates to your foundation and what you’ve been doing with Hilary Clinton’s campaign?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Mhmm. Mhmm. (Yes.)

CAMILLE PORTER: Okay.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: And now, I’d help any woman that wants to run for senate in the Democratic Party. I would probably be there for her and it’s kind of my reputation that the women senators really appreciate me and I try to really work hard for them because it’s such a boys’ network.

CAMILLE PORTER: It really is. I mean when you see the news and who’s making all of the decisions it’s still white men.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: But it’s changing. So when your daughter’s grown up – when she’s twenty years old hopefully it will be fine. There’s only sixteen or seventeen percent now – very unfair. So we’re working on it. But, you know women don’t have the confidence. Women are – they have to be asked, they have to be really really convinced that they should run. They just don’t think, “Oh. I’m going to do this. I should do this.” I bet even Hilary – I should ask her: Like, did you just think you should do this or did it take your friends to say you should do it?

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah. And did she think she deserved it? Because I think that’s a big part of it.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Yeah.

CAMILLE PORTER: Okay. Let’s see. Have you ever sold or given away an item from your collection?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: I sold some photographs when I was evolving my collection. It just didn’t speak to me anymore and others did and I needed the room. I still would do that. But, I’m very satisfied with the way my collection is. I’ll show you the rest of the things and you’ll see – it’s just like a little statement in each area. I just think things support each other.

CAMILLE PORTER: Were any of them Modotti’s or were any of them Dorothea Lange’s or...

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Um. No. I sold an Edward Weston – one of his really beautiful prints of *The Nautilus*. I sold that.

CAMILLE PORTER: It just didn’t work with everything else?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: No. It didn’t work.

CAMILLE PORTER: It doesn’t go with any of these.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: No. No. Like I say I’m conceptual and I like things to ... but that one does and that one does. It’s kind of hard to explain why. I don’t know, maybe if *The Nautilus* was in here it would be ... but I don’t think so.

CAMILLE PORTER: I mean all of these were done in Mexico ... that’s definitely part of it. And during their relationship.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: And I just sort of ended up with this. I wasn't thinking, "Ooh I've got to get..."

CAMILLE PORTER: It wasn't about Mexico.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: No. I don't even think of this as the Mexican collection, I just think about it as when they were together and the beauty they could help each other make.

CAMILLE PORTER: they just happened to be in Mexico.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: I really like that one – as I'm sitting talking to you – that one of the woman washing – the hands and the bubbles. There's so much strength in that picture.

CAMILLE PORTER: It's wonderful. I do love that one too. Okay. Let's see. Is collecting separate from the rest of your life?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Do you mean photography or anything?

CAMILLE PORTER: Well anything.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Collecting is an interesting concept isn't it?

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: I have collected because I've needed to have these things because I had the space, I had the home. I wanted to make beauty or have beauty around me. I wanted to have something significant. But, I'm not consumed by the idea of collecting. I mean, I don't have very many clothes – nobody can believe that I don't have very many clothes. I just don't care that much. But then again, I could get into a mood. I get these beautiful beautiful Pashmina shawls from this place in India and I realize now I have a collection of these. I love all of the colors together, I love the way they feel, I love to just be able to throw them on. And I went to see a friend of mine today who asked if I could order six for her and I said, "Yeah. What colors do you want?" I just like them because they are warm and they're cozy and they're beautiful and they're easy and one makes the other looks better. For me it's kind of going back to building collections when I was in business. Everything kind of supports itself.

CAMILLE PORTER: And it works well with everything else that you have on too. How do you view people who collect the same type of objects you collect?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Well, I don't know.

CAMILLE PORTER: You don't really think about it probably?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: No.

CAMILLE PORTER: How do you think you are perceived by museums, other collectors, or the viewing public? How do you think your collection is perceived?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: I think it's really respected a lot. I think it's considered one of the finest small collections and I'm very proud of that. And it's something that I give Merrily and Dan – you have to meet Dan.

CAMILLE PORTER: I would like to!

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: I love Dan. I met him when I sold my business or I was in the process of selling it or something I don't remember quite when. And he's like this little Bohemian guy and I was coming from this kind of glamorous fashion world where everything had to be so visually ... and everybody had to be so young and happening. I met him and I was like oh my god he was so fun and so smart and he had so

many great ideas and he loved politics and he loved photography and he loved music and he was very Bohemian and I had been living in this very superficial world so I was very attracted to him as a friend and he really got me into politics and into photography – mainly those two things. He is so smart and so passionate. He would be very fun for you to talk to.

CAMILLE PORTER: What's his last name?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Miller. And his phone number is XXX...

CAMILLE PORTER: You can give it to me later.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: You know what's really sad? Because of this (points to cell phone) our memories are not the same.

CAMILLE PORTER: I know. It's awful.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: I used to be able to tell his phone number backwards and forwards. Okay. It's XXX.
XXX.XXXX. It's just that it would be fun. He lives in Berkeley and he's just this critter. He's just smart and wonderful. He knew Merrily really really well. He knows a lot about this collection. I give him a lot of credit. I give Merrily a lot of credit. Without them it would not exist.

CAMILLE PORTER: Okay. I'll have to get in touch with him. I might not do it until after...

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Okay. He could go over ... where do you live in Berkeley.

CAMILLE PORTER: I live on Cragmont off of Euclid.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Okay well he lives in Northern Berkeley right off of Cedar.

CAMILLE PORTER: Oh yeah. Right near me. Okay.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: You just have to keep him focused because...

CAMILLE PORTER: He can go off?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Yeah.

CAMILLE PORTER: Okay. How does it make you feel to think of your collection being split up or sold?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Well I think ... that's a very nice question ... and I think of my collection now as being a collection. I hope it will stay together because I think it speaks ... it's symbiotic you know ... I think it really speaks well as a collection. But I don't know what's going to happen to it. I'm hoping that I'll figure that out before I die.

CAMILLE PORTER: Are any of your children interested in it?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Not really. I mean really not. But that doesn't mean they won't be. I have a few years left.

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah. That's true and maybe your grandchildren will show an interest.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Yeah. My stepdaughter – maybe she will. She works for a modern art gallery and we've talked a little bit about it. But she's sort of in a whole different part of the world right now in terms of modern art ... I don't know ... I don't like that market at all. She's thought about it. I said, "Sabrina help me think about

what I could do with this collection one day.” So maybe she’ll come up with an idea because I would like it to stay together.

CAMILLE PORTER: What about leaving it to a museum?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: That’s a possibility. I don’t like the Museum of Modern Art here because of certain political things that happened. Somebody will pop into my life that will give me good ideas.

Phone rings. Interview pauses.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: I think part of the greatness of this collection is that it’s *really* a collection. I mean if I just collected roses ... I mean I have a _____ in roses that’s pretty magnificent. I mean maybe a whole collection of roses would be ... but if it had a personal part to it – a passion for beautiful beautiful photographs. How did you get focused on Mexico?

CAMILLE PORTER: I was taking a class about gender and display and I went to that exhibition – the *Mexico as Muse* exhibition and it was the perfect thing to write my seminar paper about because it was a man and a woman and I just sort of started writing about that and things just kind of went from there and I got really involved in writing about Mexico and photography. And that’s how I came up with the idea for my thesis.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Good.

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah! So, I just have one more question. Do you see yourself as a custodian of the photographs you own and how do you care for them?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Well, I do. I feel extremely responsible for them and that’s why I think they should stay together because I think that they need to be – people need to enjoy them and they need to learn from them and I think it’s really sad when photographs are in someone’s house in a drawer – photographs that really have something to say to really get people inspired. I don’t know. I do want to see them being an inspirational – and if that means going on tour later – or I don’t know – it’s sort of an open door for me here.

CAMILLE PORTER: And do you have a conservator who takes care of them or anything?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Not really. Merrily and her husband used to. But, I don’t really need that because they’re all framed very carefully, very specifically. They’re all preserved with the glass and the windows. So, I don’t really worry about them. I mean there was the earthquake. I think about that sometimes. What if there was an earthquake? But what can I do?

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah. You can’t do anything about that. I was actually thinking about that when I came into the building – if there were an earthquake what would that be like. But it must be somewhat...

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Dan was here in that big earthquake ... was it ’96?

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: He was here. He was in this room and we used to have speakers here on the floor and it pulled out of the socket and went across the room.

CAMILLE PORTER: Oh my god. I hope you’re in Bolinas when that happens.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: No because my house in Bolinas is right on the fault. But that's not going to happen. But, if it does it does. But, you know what, I could get knocked out on the way to where I'm going tonight. So, I don't really worry about that.

CAMILLE PORTER: Okay!

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: I wish we had more time.

CAMILLE PORTER: Oh well. That's okay.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Maybe after you get into it you can call.

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah. I might have more questions for you.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Yeah. Call Dan. You'd really have fun with him. He's really a sweet man and he's so smart and so passionate and so deep. Like I said this collection wouldn't exist if it hadn't been for him and Merrily.

Some non-interview conversation.

Interview resumes in living room with tour around the apartment.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: This is the little Imogene Cunningham apartment here. I love them. This has a lot of significance. This _____ when he had to leave his chateau because the Germans were coming – that was the last picture he took.

CAMILLE PORTER: Oh! That's really interesting.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: These are the masterpieces that every time I look at them I realize I have to separate them a little bit more. But, I love that _____ one and it's not a very famous image but I think it's SO amazing.

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah. I've never seen it before.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: It's utterly amazing. Look at – she's keeping it together.

CAMILLE PORTER: Yep.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Okay. This is Ansel Adams and this is Consuelo Kanaga, but this is not a strategic placement. This is Consuelo Kanaga's room. This is her. That was taken by ... it's not coming to me. I have some of her pictures in the other room. Okay this is Consuelo Kanaga's room.

CAMILLE PORTER: Oh! These are SO great!

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: These are the ones. There's a book on her. You should get that sometime. But, look at that. Is that not beautiful?

CAMILLE PORTER: That is incredible.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: These were the pictures that she - you know (referring to pieces that Kanaga got up in the middle of the night to paint) - and I'll show you some more of her pictures.

CAMILLE PORTER: It's so inspiring. They're just beautiful.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: And see this one here, with the hands holding – the little white and the black and I'll show you another photograph that reminds me of that. And this is just so beautiful and so graphic. And this is all Dorothea Lange. This is Consuelo Kanaga, Dorothea Lange. Here she is. Didn't she have a great style?

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah. I love that picture.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Yeah. This is one. Look at that. Consuelo Kanaga when she couldn't take pictures anymore she put it in there. So, look at this picture. If you look at these paintings you'll just see that. Aren't they beautiful?

CAMILLE PORTER: Now do ... where did she photograph? In the south or something?

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: On the East Coast.

CAMILLE PORTER: On the East Coast. Huh.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: You should learn about her. I mean if you're interested in female photographers.

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah. I'll have to look her up and find out more about her. Really beautiful stuff. That one's interesting. It reminds me of Modotti stuff.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: Yeah it does doesn't it. And I have another picture of _____ that Alberto Cordo took and I'll tell you this story and then I really do have to go, but when I went to Cuba – and here's a picture of when we met this man ... let's see ... maybe it's ... I don't know if it's in her anymore. Oh yeah! This is it right here. This is him. This is about ten years ago or more. And I bought a book about her and ... about him ... and in it – I looked at this picture and it looked SO much like a Tina Modotti. Oh! I said, this looks so much like a Tina Modotti photograph. And he told me this story. He said, "When I took this picture there was a little poor little girl holding a piece of wood that had a cigarette wrapper wrapped around it like a dress." It was a little girl that had no toys, probably an orphan, and when he came close to her with the camera he said to this piece of wood, "Don't worry I'm going to protect you," because it scared her and he took the picture and he said that grounded him to be committed to Fidel Castro and the Revolution. And he told me this story and I said, "Oh I love Tina Modotti's work." And he said, "How do you know it?" And I said, "Oh I just _____." He said, "There's some woman in San Francisco who's paid a fortune for some of her work." And then, I ordered that photograph from him that night. And he said, "Oh I can have things prepared for you and then I can sign them." And so I gave him the list of the photographs I wanted and then the next day we went to pick them up and that one photograph wasn't there and I was so sad because it was the one I liked the most. And then my husband for my sixtieth birthday – he knows a woman that works in Cuba for the art exchange – they found an original signed old print of that picture.

CAMILLE PORTER: Wow!

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: And I just burst into tears. That was the greatest gift I'd ever had in my life. It means so much to me because he had told me that story and his work was so – I don't know if he'd ever told anybody else that.

CAMILLE PORTER: Right.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: I mean I knew that. I've got to find out where that book is of his. Somebody gave it to me. I don't know where anything is.

CAMILLE PORTER: Well, you seem very organized.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: I take things to Bolinas and then I forget what I've taken there.

CAMILLE PORTER: Oh yeah.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: And then here's Alma Robertson (??? can't understand tape) in here. This is her. I like this idea of her taking pictures and then her pictures. See that's where I kind of get my collection idea.

CAMILLE PORTER: Yeah. There's a story there too.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: It is. Isn't it? I have the portraits of Edward and Tina, I mean...

CAMILLE PORTER: Looking at each other or facing each other.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: He took a picture of her that was kind of contrived – you know she was poetry reading to show her emotion. And then the picture she took of him he was like not into it. He was posing backwards. So, I'll let you do whatever you want.

CAMILLE PORTER: Okay.

SUSIE TOMPKINS BUELL: I'm sorry I don't have more time.

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