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TARA BOGART: MODERN HAIR STUDIES

by

Kathleen Tousignant

A Thesis Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in Art History

at

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May 2016

ABSTRACT

TARA BOGART: MODERN HAIR STUDIES

by

Kathleen Tousignant

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2016
Under the Supervision of Professor Jennifer Johung

This exhibition and accompanying catalogue explore Tara Bogart's modern hair study photographs. Compiled of 28 photographs from 3 different series, *Modern Hair Studies* examines the correlation between hair and identity. The faceless portraits from her series *A Modern Hair Study* and *Un Capillaire Modern Etude* showcase the ways in which millennial women use hair colors, hairstyles, and body art as a form of self-expression. When viewed as a group, the portraits serve as a visual and demographic representation of women in their 20's. However, when viewed individually, each woman's uniqueness can be seen in the intimate details of hair and skin. Meanwhile, the photographs from Bogart's *Locks* series present fragments of hair given to the artist by women with whom she is closely connected. Devoid of bodies, these works demonstrate the ability of disembodied hair to serve as a surrogate for the person to whom it once belonged.

The intimate, yet obscured female portraits included in *Modern Hair Studies* ask the viewer to analyze the different historical, sentimental, and scientific significance of hair in order to interpret the women that it adorns. By analyzing the cultural, societal, and fashion conventions surrounding hair, this catalogue introduces ways in which women's

hair has functioned as a means of individual identification, whether it be through its length, color, or style. This will help the viewer navigate the ambiguous portraits as they investigate the corporeal elements that distinguish each of the 28 women from one another.

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Biography

Tara Bogart was born in Milwaukee on February 9, 1968. As the daughter of two artists, she was exposed to art from an early age. Her mother studied photography under Steven Foster at UWM, and Tara credits her mom with her interest in photography. Her mother built darkrooms in many of their homes growing up, where Tara remembers spending much of her time watching her mother work. From an early age, Tara began working with her as a model. She and her friends would dress up in vintage clothes and costumes and go out to the valley for photo-shoots with her.

Her mother always had an inkling that Tara would be a photographer, and she gave her a Polaroid camera to practice on when she was young. Though she enjoyed taking pictures, Tara fought the idea. "I didn't want to be an artist. I didn't want to be just like my parents."¹ Instead, she explored other interests – ballet and theater, and took on other jobs – interning at Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance, working as a flight attendant, and in the pharmacy at Columbia Saint Mary's Hospital.

During these years, she was still making photos and taking portraits, but they were only for herself, and she viewed it as nothing more than a hobby. However, her hobby turned into a job when she began attending motorcycle races with a friend and taking photographs of the racers. Immediately, people loved the pictures and wanted to buy them. Soon after, magazines saw her work and asked her to shoot for them. She became a frequent contributor to *Super Moto Racer* magazine and her work was published in multiple issues.

¹ Bogart, Tara. "Skype Interview." Online interview by author. November 27, 2015.

She began a small business called *Ginger Snaps* (her hair was dyed red at the time) and traveled the country photographing races. She felt like she was living a double-life, “doing this macho, masculine racing stuff, and being one of the only women there.”² When she asked the men at *Super Moto Racer* why they were drawn to her photographs, they told her that it was because her representations of the racers and bikes were more conceptual and artistic than most others. Thus, Tara began to realize that fighting a creative career was pointless – she *is* an artist.

After spending so much time photographing men, Tara decided she wanted to try taking pictures of women. She began getting female models and putting them in costumes (just as her mother had done with her) and photographing them in the studio. As soon as she started, she knew that she wanted to speak about women and about the female experience. She explains that she is interested in “what it means to be a woman in this world – our histories and our present – how we change or don’t change.”

She began working at the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design (MIAD) in 2007 as their photo lab technician. Her self-identification as an artist finally came to fruition there, as she suddenly had a new community of people that she related to, including students, colleagues, and artists. She left MIAD in the summer of 2015 and is currently in France, working as an artist and teaching at the Paris College of Art.

² Bogart, Tara. "Skype Interview." Online interview by author. November 27, 2015.

A Modern Hair Study & Un Capillaire Modern Etude

“These two series consist of portraits of young women photographed from behind. By focusing on the back, the viewer is forced to contend with all of the peripheral things that make each woman unique. In these intimate portraits I am a voyeur concentrating on a generation that is not mine. While certain ideals are often relevant to different generations, the ways in which women adorn and modify themselves often indicate the struggles of a young adult with their own ideology and individuality.”³



Figure 1. Clemence



Figure 2. Quetress



Figure 3. Marjo

³ Bogart, Tara. "TARABOGART.COM." TARABOGART.COM. 2013. Accessed December 17, 2015. <http://www.tarabogart.com/>.



Figure 4. Jeanette



Figure 5. Alyssa



Figure 6. Devon



Figure 7. Marta



Figure 8. Kat



Figure 9. Tegan



Figure 10. Alexis



Figure 11. Adeline



Figure 12. Lexie

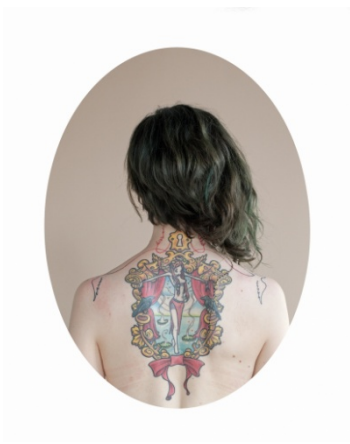


Figure 13. Candice



Figure 14. Cha



Figure 15. Georgia



Figure 16. Rachel



Figure 17. Sinead



Figure 18. Anna

Bogart began her *Modern Hair Study* series in 2012 with female MIAD students. All of the women depicted are in their 20's, and all are photographed from behind with bare backs. While some wear jewelry or have their hair tied, the primary focus in the portraits is each woman's hair and skin. With her subjects unclothed, Bogart invites the viewer to take a closer look at the intimate physical characteristics that make each woman unique. We are allowed a close glimpse of the intricacies of each woman's body that are usually concealed to the public eye – freckles, indentations from bra straps, tan lines, folds in the skin, and the distinct edges and curves of each woman's bone structure underneath.

The portraits in Bogart's *A Modern Hair Study* series and its Parisian counterpart series, *Un Capillaire Modern Etude* highlight the juxtaposition of the largest area of hair on most women (the head) against the smooth, hairless surface of their back and shoulders. Geraldine Biddle-Perry, an Associate Lecturer at London College of Fashion/University of the Arts, London explains,

“Hair on the body and the head is part of a vital system of gender identification and representation that makes cultural and social distinctions between the sexes, but in ways that do not equivocally make one either male or female. All human bodies are, after all, hairy bodies, but hair’s visible absence or presence operates to make clear the boundaries of normative gender at any one time.”⁴

Because Bogart's subjects are photographed from behind with only the upper-half of their bodies inside the frame, we can use the visual presence of their head hair alongside the visual absence of their body hair to identify each figure as female. This gendered designation serves as our first impression of each subject and allows us to focus on female-specific societal, cultural, and fashion conventions as we explore the obscured identities in Bogart's portraits.

As viewers encountering the *Hair Study* portraits, we are given fewer visual clues than we are used to when encountering a woman in either a front-facing portrait, or in a real-life situation. Human faces are capable of a vast range of expressability. When we recall a person that we know, we most commonly envision their face. By taking that ability away, Bogart forces us to analyze our understanding of hairstyles as a societal practice, as well as the overall notion of hair as a cultural symbol.

In regards to societal practices, hairstyles can conform to or resist social conventions (i.e. the Afro, the long hair of the Hippies, the Mohawk, or the shaved style

⁴ Biddle-Perry, Geraldine. “Hair, Gender and Looking.” *Hair: Styling, Culture and Fashion*. Oxford: Berg, 2008. 98-99.

worn by the Skinheads). When thinking about hair as a cultural symbol, Alison Ferris, a curator at the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, explains,

One representation can simultaneously signify both the similarities and differences between culturally determined positions such as male/female, natural/artificial, moral/immoral, virile/impotent, pure/impure, strong/weak, beautiful/homely, public/private, human/animal, normal/abnormal, civilized/wild, clean/dirty.⁵

When considering the cultural symbols of hair as dichotomies, we come to understand the faceless women in Bogart's portraits by means of our physical and societal relation to them. In other words, we can either consciously or subconsciously ascribe identities to them based on our familiarity with other people we know or have seen that look like them. Similarly, if their appearance is unfamiliar to us, we might understand them as the "other" – not based on who they are, but instead on who they are *not*. Therefore, we are likely to identify more closely with the ambiguous women in Bogart's portraits whose appearances we are more familiar, and therefore more comfortable, with.

Ferris goes on to explain that, "these dichotomies reinforce and create cultural definitions, meanings, and categories, i.e., boys' hair is short, girls' long, thus differentiating male and female."⁶ While none of the subjects featured in *A Modern Hair Study* or *Un Capillaire Modern Etude* are male, some of the women have short hair. A woman donning a short, and therefore traditionally "male" hairstyle, is an example of what Ferris calls an "interstitial space" – a gap between the aforementioned dichotomies wherein, "the contradictions of these definitions become apparent, revealing that the discourses and representations are neither secure nor absolute; they are constantly

⁵ Ferris, Alison. "Hair and Cultural Meanings." In *Hair: John Michael Kohler Arts Center, Sheboygan, Wisconsin*, 13. Sheboygan, Wisconsin: John Michael Kohler Arts Center, 1993.

⁶ *Ibid.* 13-14.

shifting, slipping, and being constructed both by powers implemented to reinforce the hegemonic order and those employed to challenge or alter it.”⁷ The short hair donned by *Kat*, *Rachel*, and *Anna* exemplifies the unreliable paradigm of hair length as an indicator of gender – especially in the modern era.

⁷ Ferris. 14.

Social History of Hair(styles)

A short examination of the history of hair (specifically of hairstyles) shows how the alteration of one's hair has been utilized by men and women throughout history as a way to either conform to or oppose societal norms. Biddle-Perry believes that this is because hair is "one of the first visible markers of who we perceive others to be and triggers an immediate and fundamental either/or response: male or female, friend or foe, good or bad, danger or safety".⁸ This explanation goes back to the discussion of identification understood through dichotomies – that is, we can define ourselves both by what we *are* as well as what we are *not*. Since the work being discussed here is that of a *modern* hair study, I will limit the discussion of the history of Western hairstyles to the past 50 years.

THE AFRO

The Afro rose to popularity in the 1960s and is an example of a hairstyle playing a political role. The Afro was, for African Americans, a reaction against centuries of racial and cultural oppression imposed during transatlantic slavery. Prior to this subjugation, many West African cultures used hairstyles and adornment not only as a means of identity, but also as an indicator of tribal affiliation, social, and marital status.⁹ Once the slave trade began in the 16th century, traders frequently shaved their captives'

⁸ Biddle-Perry. 97.

⁹ Curry-Evans, Kim. "Black Hair and Art: Collective Consciousness." In *HairStories*, 11. Scottsdale, Arizona: Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, 2003.

heads, “[fully] aware that their hair held symbolic importance.”¹⁰ Because of this, African American slaves began to invent methods of hair care in their quarters.¹¹

In the early 20th century, Madam C.J. Walker perfected these methods, becoming America’s first black female millionaire.¹² These methods included shampoos, pomades, brushes, and hot-ironing techniques. While Walker maintained that her motivation stemmed from wanting to improve the hygienic standards for African Americans, Kim Curry-Evans, former collections manager at the Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, explains that, “cultural assimilation was easier if one could ‘blend in’ by adopting the superficial characteristics of the dominant class”¹³ – in this case, the straighter and smoother hair of Whites.

The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s ignited a desire in many African Americans to restore a connection to their African heritage. Many began to embrace their dark skin and natural hair, which “now expressed defiance rather than eliciting shame.”¹⁴ Curry-Evans explains that, “for Whites, the Afro was synonymous with black militancy.”¹⁵ While the Afro hairstyle formed a dichotomy between Blacks and Whites – who could not naturally grow the type of hair required for such a style – it is one of the first examples of a hairstyle that was worn simultaneously by both genders.

THE HIPPIES

¹⁰ Ibid. 12.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Curry-Evans. 12.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

The Hippies of the 1960s adopted the use of their hair as an ideological symbol. The social movement created by the Hippies advocated for Civil Rights and nuclear disarmament, and reacted against the Vietnam War, the Protestant work ethic, and the Puritan sexual ethic.¹⁶ In his book, *The Body Social: Symbolism, Self, and Identity*, Anthony Synnott, Professor of Sociology at Concordia University, explains, “The most powerful and evocative symbol of [the Hippies’] protest was hair: long, straight, [and] natural.”¹⁷ Unlike the Afro, which distinguished African Americans from other races, the long hair of the Hippies distinguished them from Americans who didn’t support their same cause. However, similar to the Afro, the Hippies’ long, natural hair was simultaneously worn by both men and women. Synnott explains, “This long hair signified men and women’s (ideological) opposition to the majority and their (gender) opposition from each other...and the longer their hair, either male or female, the greater the commitment symbolized – because the commitment had lasted longer.”¹⁸

THE SKINHEADS

The Skinhead subculture emerged in Britain in 1967 as a reaction against the Hippies.¹⁹ Like the Hippies, the Skinheads opposed the Establishment, but for different reasons. Where the Hippies were associated with the young middle-class, Skinheads were more often members of the young working-class.²⁰ Their opposition to the Hippies,

¹⁶ Synnott, Anthony. *The Body Social: Symbolism, Self, and Society*, 115. London, GBR: Routledge, 1993. Accessed December 17, 2015. ProQuest ebrary.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* 116.

¹⁸ Synnott. 116.

¹⁹ Cooper, Wendy. “Wigs, Badges, and Disguises.” In *Hair: Sex, Society, Symbolism*, 138. New York: Stein and Day, 1971.

²⁰ Synnott. 115.

as well as to the Establishment, was symbolized by very short or shaved hair.²¹ The Skinheads opposed the decadent, long locks of the Hippies, who they felt “sponged off the state.”²² In her book, *Hair: Sex, Society, Symbolism*, Wendy Cooper states, “In contrast, the Skinheads adopted an aggressively puritanical [sic] image, and in both their cropped heads and attitudes there was a distant echo of the short-haired apprentices who were part of the Puritan scene of Cromwell’s day.”²³ While the Skinhead movement was short-lived, its inclusion in this essay is warranted by what it meant for the next revolutionary hairstyle – that of the Punks.

THE PUNKS

Punk Rockers emerged in Britain in 1976, originally as followers of the English punk rock band, the Sex Pistols.²⁴ Punks embraced the vices of society: “hence the safety pins through the ears and the cheeks, chains, dog collars and leads, bondage, swastikas, crosses, torn clothes, on-stage vomit, and obscene lyrics.”²⁵ To visually distance themselves from other subcultures of the time (i.e. the long hair of the Hippies and the short hair of the Skinheads), they had to think of hairstyles beyond those solely characterized by their length. They developed new styles such as spikes and mohawks, set with gel or egg whites.²⁶ In addition to these eye-catching styles, Punks expressed themselves with color, adopting new Technicolor dyes.

²¹ Synnott. 116.

²² Cooper. 140.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Synnott. 117.

²⁵ Ibid. 116.

²⁶ Sherrow, Victoria. “Punk”. In *Encyclopedia of Hair: A Cultural History*, 318. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2006.

The previous examples of subcultures – 1960s African Americans, Hippies, Skinheads, and Punks – all share a common thread: the hairstyles of each movement were worn by men and women. Synnott explains, “Perhaps it can be best understood as ideological opposition symbolically over-riding gender opposition.”²⁷ When thinking about hairstyling as a societal practice, it must be remembered that hairstyles are transient, and therefore have been a successful visual vehicle to convey the ideologies of the one who wears it. While the hairstyles mentioned here originated in the latter half of the 20th century, they remain helpful as visual examples of subcultures that young women continue to share an ideological connection with. Some of Bogart’s subjects, such as *Sinead* – with her neon blue hair and tattooed back – illustrate a shared fashion aesthetic with an earlier subculture, in this case the Punks.

²⁷ Synnott. 117.

Social Conventions of Hair Color

One of the most immediately noticeable characteristics of Bogart's subjects is the vast array of natural and artificial hair colors worn by the women. Before the discovery of DNA, anthropologists attempted to use hair color to associate certain colors with certain diseases. They argued that, "dark-haired people were more likely to have cancer, whilst people with red hair were less likely to be lunatics."²⁸ These claims have since been proven false; In fact, red hair is more commonly associated with skin cancer risk.²⁹ Cheang and Biddle-Perry explain,

On the one hand, hair colour is treated as just one manifestation of a particular genetic make-up that is imagined to affect the individual in a number of ways. On the other hand, people can adopt a particular colour to change their persona as participants in a postmodern consumer culture that encourages body modification and maintenance as an essential part of self-expression.³⁰

Color is an important characteristic of hair, but our understanding of the social conventions regarding it is limited. A 2000 study conducted by Shriver and Parra reported "low variability in the hair color of individuals of non-European ancestry."³¹ The findings of this study remind us of the correlation between higher percentages of darker (brown-black) hair and higher percentages of earlier civilizations residing in high-ultraviolet receptive lands near the equator. (This will be discussed further in the next section.)

²⁸ Cheang, Sarah. "Roots: Hair and Race.", 27. In *Hair: Styling, Culture and Fashion*. Oxford: Berg, 2008.

²⁹ Vaughn, Michelle, Roland Van Oorschot, and Swati Baindur-Hudson. "Hair Color Measurement and Variation." *American Journal of Physical Anthropology*, 137 (2008):91. Accessed December 18, 2015. doi:10.1002/ajpa.20849.

³⁰ Cheang, Sarah and Biddle-Perry, Geraldine. "Conclusion: Hair and Identity." In *Hair: Styling, Culture and Fashion*. 248.

³¹ Vaughn, et. al. 91.

Light-colored hair is more rare, as dark hair has more dominant genes.³² Throughout the world, brown or black is the most common natural hair color.³³ Perhaps this is the reason that medium-dark colored hair hasn't been properly researched, or researched as in-depth as light-colored hair. When we think back on the dichotomies used to define identity, it seems that dark (brown-black) hair is the norm and light (blonde-red) hair is the exception. If this is true, hair color presents a unique example: light hair – that is, a color most common of Whites, is the exception or the “other” in terms of the biological norm.

BLONDE

Because of its rarity, light-colored hair has been a popular topic in scholarly research. Examples of this fascination with light hair date back to ancient Greece, where the notion “a beautiful body meant a beautiful soul...was manifested by the god Apollo and the goddess Artemis, both blonds.”³⁴ Margaret Loftus goes on to state, “thanks to conquerors from the North, Romans also associated blondness with aristocracy.”³⁵

Blonde is the second rarest hair color (red is the most rare). Less than 25% of women born with blonde hair remain naturally blonde past their teen years.³⁶ However, an estimated 80% of women who color their hair use a shade of blonde.³⁷ Wendy Cooper explains that, historically, fair hair has been thought to symbolize purity, citing that “Dr.

³² Sherrow. 149.

³³ Ibid. 150.

³⁴ Vaughn, et. al. 92.

³⁵ Loftus, Margaret. “The Roots of Being Blond.” U.S. News & World Report 128, no. 10 (2000):52. Accessed December 18, 2015. EBSCOhost.

³⁶ Sherrow. 149.

³⁷ Ibid. 159.

[Charles] Berg relates it to the fact that fine, fair hair is less nearly related to pubic hair than any other and so is further removed from any sexual association."³⁸ However, she goes on to discredit this notion by stating that there is "a strong sexual attraction [that] blonde hair has always exerted."³⁹ This concept has been researched in regards to popular culture by many scholars.

Pamela Church Gibson explains, "The three best-known 'blondes' of the cinema – Jean Harlow, Marilyn Monroe and Bridgette Bardot – were all born with dark hair and only achieved screen stardom when 'peroxided [sic] within an inch of their lives'."⁴⁰ Marilyn Monroe, the quintessential modern female sex symbol once stated, "I like to feel blonde all over."⁴¹ Because darker hair can easily be (and 80% of the time is) altered with a bottle of bleach, Wendy Cooper explains that, "blondes have a reputation for being natural deceivers."⁴² She substantiates this claim by stating, "A psychologist quoted by the *London Daily Mail* in November 1969 said, '...Generally speaking a man prefers a blonde for a mistress and a brunette for a wife. Brunettes have more integrity'."⁴³

This assessment can be paired with the 20th century phenomenon of the "dumb blonde" stereotype. Cooper explains that this association likely stemmed from "the frenetic post-World War I period, when the most frivolous of the flappers were also the most likely to experiment with the new platinum bleaches."⁴⁴ The stereotype can also be

³⁸ Cooper. 76.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Church Gibson, Pamela. "Concerning Blondenness: Gender, Ethnicity, Spectacle and Footballers' Waves." In *Hair: Styling Culture and Fashion*, 143.

⁴¹ Cooper. 77.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid. 76-7.

linked back to the notion that blonde hair symbolizes purity. Cooper states, “it is possible to argue that purity implies innocence, innocence may mean ignorance, and ignorance denotes stupidity.”⁴⁵ While there isn’t scientific evidence to support the claim that blonde-haired people are less intelligent than those with darker-hair, the “dumb blonde” stereotype continues to be perpetuated.

Even so, blonde has remained the most popular artificial hair color among women. Because of this, there are a disproportionate number of blonde women – especially in the entertainment industry. Nearly ½ of the models in *Playboy* calendars are blonde, as well as about 1/3 of Miss America contestants.⁴⁶ Anthony Synnott explains, “in both places, and also in the soap operas, the proportions are six to [ten] times the proportion of blondes in the population.”⁴⁷ While hair color can easily be altered, and is done so commonly – especially among millenials, as documented in the Hair Study portraits – the shape of one’s hair is far less malleable as it is prescribed by genetics.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 76.

⁴⁶ Synnott. 109.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

The Science of Hair

The scientific properties of hair call attention to the biological genetic differences between Bogart's women. These differences are inherent and cannot be transformed by hairstyling or coloring. Human head hair grows about 0.5" per month, growing the fastest on 15-30 year olds, and tending to grow more rapidly in women.⁴⁸ The typical lifespan of a strand of hair is between 4 and 7 years.⁴⁹ The number of hair follicles on a human's head is between 100,000 and 150,000 on average, but can differ for a multitude of reasons.⁵⁰ Those of African descent tend to have the thickest hair, followed by brunettes, blondes, and redheads respectively.⁵¹ In her article, *Roots: Hair and Race*, Sarah Cheang states that "the National History Museum in London holds more than 5,000 samples of human hair from around the world. These specimens are currently used in the study of human DNA to reveal the genetic affiliation of different ethnic groups, patterns of human migration, and genetic change."⁵² Hair offers a unique ability for anthropological and scientific research because, unlike most other parts of the human body, it keeps its color and texture long after the donor is dead.⁵³

SHAPE AND TEXTURE

As mentioned earlier, the character of one's hair is prescribed through genes. The most dominant gene is that found in wooly hair (eg. *Alexis*), followed by the crinkly

⁴⁸ Sherrow. xx.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Cheang. 27.

⁵³ Ibid. 30.

gene (eg. *Cha*), then the curly (eg. *Quetress*), followed by the wavy (eg. *Candice*), with straight (eg. *Georgia*) being the weakest.⁵⁴ By examining the hair shaft, scientists can often tell the race of its donor: African hair shafts are flat, Caucasian shafts are round, and Asian shafts are oblong.⁵⁵ Similarly, the shape of the hair follicle differs among people of different races. Dr. Neal A. Lester explains,

At the hair root [of those of African descent] we find that the follicle is curved and the shaft emerges from the skin in a perpendicular direction. In most Caucasians, the follicle is straight and the hair shaft emerges at an acute angle. The curved follicle and the angle of emergence of the hair shaft create the tight curl that distinguishes [African] hair.⁵⁶

In addition to racial differences in hair, Anthony Synnott states that men and women also have opposite hair due to genetics.⁵⁷ According to the American Medical Association, “Most men eventually show signs of baldness, due to the hormone testosterone: from 12 percent of men aged 25, to 65 percent of men aged 65. Women, however, due to their higher levels of estrogen and fewer androgens lose much less hair over the years.”⁵⁸ Synnott believes that, because of this, women tend to identify more closely with their hair.⁵⁹

COLOR

While the shape and texture of hair strands can tell us about the race of its donor, the science of hair color can tell us about the evolution of human populations.

⁵⁴ Cooper. 33.

⁵⁵ Lester, Neal A. “Hair Today, Yesterday and Beyond: A Personal, Historical and Political Journey.” In *HairStories*, 36. Scottsdale, Arizona: Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art, 2003.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Synnott. 104.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.* 105.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Wendy Cooper explains that, “the geographical distribution of hair color tends to follow that of skin color.”⁶⁰ Those with darker hair and skin color possess higher quantities of melanin, which protects the surface of the skin from excessive ultraviolet radiation.⁶¹ This is beneficial to those who have adapted to survival in areas that receive intense sunlight. In addition, wooly hair is most common to those with darker colored skin and hair, as has been documented in the Bushmen of the Kalahari and the Pigmyes of the African rainforests.⁶²



Figure 19. Alexis



Figure 20. Marjo

Wooly hair, like Alexis', is comprised of tight spirals that clump closely to the scalp, allowing for spaces of bare skin between the clumps. The spaces between wooly clumps of hair leave more exposed skin to let out sweat from hot climates.⁶³ Those with lighter skin tones and lighter colored (blonde and red) hair have historically hailed from temperate lands.⁶⁴ Those with fair skin (especially those with red hair) descend from

⁶⁰ Cooper. 20.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Cooper. 20.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

lands with less sun-exposure, therefore supplying the body with less melanin – “which in the skin is unevenly distributed into islands of freckles.”⁶⁵

Harding et. al, a genetic sequence diversity study conducted in 2000, concluded that “there was a positive selection pressure for maintaining dark skin and hair pigmentation in the southern latitudes of Africa and Asia” because the dark pigmentation protected from the sun’s harmful ultraviolet rays.⁶⁶ Once people migrated to more northern latitudes, there was a lesser need to maintain dark pigmentation, and lighter colored skin and hair actually served as a selective advantage to those living in these climates, “(e.g., through the easier synthesis of Vitamin D).”⁶⁷

In addition, “the possibility of sexual selection being a factor in the evolution of pigmentation variation is supported by the presence of sexual dimorphism in skin pigmentation and by evidence suggesting that pigmentation influences mate selection.”⁶⁸ In other words, differences in skin and hair pigmentation *between males and females* is not due to the geographical differences of their ancestors, but instead has become a product of sexual selection. Kenichi Aochi explains,

Available evidence suggests that in each society a lighter-than-average skin colour is preferred in a sexual partner. Such a preference would generate sexual selection that counteracts natural selection for dark skin.⁶⁹

Lastly, persons of any race, with any hair color, will most likely eventually go gray.

Graying hair is a result of de-colorization, which involves hair’s pigment, air content, and

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Vaughn, et. al. 91.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Aoki, Kenichi. “Sexual Selection as a Cause of Human Skin Colour Variation: Darwin’s Hypothesis Revisited.” *Annals of Human Biology* 29, no. 6 (2002): Abstract. Accessed December 18, 2015. EBSCOhost.

oil.⁷⁰ As one ages, these components undergo structural changes, resulting in the growth of gray hairs. It is important to note that existing pigmented hair does not *become* decolorized, rather “as it grows out, the new hair replacing it lacks pigment, and the mixture of this new white hair with the existing dark[er] hair gives the gray effect.”⁷¹



Figure 21. Devon

Bogart’s most popular portrait from her hair study series is *Devon*, one of her former students at MIAD. *Devon* is uniquely compelling because of the pale silver-blue color that she has dyed her hair. Cross-culturally, gray hair is a visual and biological indicator of older age. *Devon*’s grayish tinged hair is a striking contrast to her delicate frame and bone structure. Her skin is much smoother than most people with naturally gray hair, and her hairstyle and jewelry are young and modern.

From the 18 women depicted in the *Modern Hair Study* portraits, we can see the different hair alteration techniques, including haircuts, styles, and coloring, employed by millennial women – both in Milwaukee and Paris – to visually differentiate themselves among their peers. While we can attempt to categorize these women based on the historical, societal, and fashion conventions of hair, our understanding of their identities

⁷⁰ Cooper. 31.

⁷¹ Ibid.

remains obscured by Bogart's framing. Thus, we are left with our own opinions of who Bogart's women might be, based on our familiarity with other women who share a similar resemblance.

Locks

“A lock of hair signifies different things for many cultures. It can be a way to possess someone or be about holding on to the memory of a loved one that has died. Throughout history there have been many examples of the significance of the lock of hair, from jewelry made of hair, to clips of hair attached to a photograph. Today, with science and technology, we can identify one’s traits, genes, and HABITS from the DNA of one strand of hair!

In 2010, a group of students gave me locks of their hair sealed in envelopes; symbols of their existence and time spent with me. Honestly, I accepted the envelopes and put them in a drawer for safekeeping, not being really sure what to do with them. While pursuing ‘A Modern Hair Study’, I came across the locks again. Upon further thought, I became compelled to collect more. I sent a private message to the important people in my life asking them to send me a lock of their hair and they did.

The clean and near scientific approach to presenting the locks, I hope, is detached from sentiment. In an attempt to strip the locks of their presumed meaning, it becomes obvious that we cannot remove the intricate, unique difference of hair to identity; physical evidence of the self!

What is a lock of hair worth?”⁷²

⁷² Bogart, Tara. "TARABOGART.COM." TARABOGART.COM. 2013. Accessed December 17, 2015. <http://www.tarabogart.com/>.



Figure 22. M.S.



Figure 23. L.L.

Unlike the Hair Study portraits, the locks in these photographs are detached from the women to whom they once belonged. This forces the viewer to try to make sense of the *Locks* photographs, recalling the different historical, sentimental, and scientific significance that a fragment of hair holds. Bogart's *Locks* speak to the memorial act of giving and receiving a lock of a loved one's hair as a keepsake. Wendy Cooper states, "[Head hair] has been the chief love token of all ages...used as an amulet, favor, keepsake, and *memento mori*,"⁷³

There are properties of the locks (scent and feel) that the artist is able to experience when working with them that the viewer is not. Therefore, the viewer is required to navigate these intimate, yet obscured female portraits by visual clues in the photograph – such as color, length, texture, and the quantity of hair the participant felt comfortable cutting off for the artist.

⁷³ Cooper. 220-21.

As discussed in prior sections of this essay, hair is a powerful component of one's self-identity. Because hair is so malleable, it is a transient mode of self-expression that can be changed as we undergo biological, societal, or ideological changes. Sarah Cheang explains, "the metonymical relationship between hair, bodies, and identities means that hair makes a good substitute for the whole person,"⁷⁴ This ability for a fragment of hair to function as a surrogate for the person to whom it belonged has inspired the use of locks of hair as memorial keepsakes after the death of a loved one.

The use of hair as a material in mourning jewelry began in Europe in the 14th century.⁷⁵ Some of the earliest examples are locks of hair enclosed in rings. Maureen DeLorme explains, "in contrast to *memento mori*, these souvenirs became *memento illius*, a reminder not of the nearness of death, but an admonition to pray for the dead...[they] substituted for the absence of the *corruptible* body as *incorruptible* fragments,"⁷⁶

Mourning jewelry made from hair became exceedingly popular in the mid-19th century. The four most common types of hairwork were: (1) hair set under glass; (2) table-worked hair, which involved multiple strands of hair woven together to create watch chains, necklaces, and bracelets; (3) open-worked beads made of hair; and (4) palette-worked hair, characterized as designs cut out of hair and then adhered to a base

⁷⁴ Cheang. 34-6.

⁷⁵ DeLorme, Maureen. "Mourning Jewelry." In *Mourning Art & Jewelry*, 66. Atglen, Pennsylvania: Schiffer Pub., 2004.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 14.

of mother-of-pearl, ivory, or glass.⁷⁷ By the mid-19th century, hairwork had become a popular pastime for women.

Additionally, locks of hair were given to loved ones as tokens of affection by soldiers departing for the Civil War. Alison Ferris explains that a lock of hair “serves as a reassurance to both lovers: for the presenter, the cognizance that he or she will be remembered; for the receiver, the understanding that, with the token, the loved one is symbolically present.”⁷⁸ Locks of hair were used as memorial tokens that allowed the receiver to experience the materiality of his or her loved one’s body after death. Because hair keeps its shape and color for over 100 years after its donor’s death, it is a long-lasting souvenir that can survive for at least one generation. However, hair mementos and hair jewelry fell out of favor in the 20th century, due to new concerns about cleanliness and germs.⁷⁹

The sentimental relationship between Bogart and her *Locks* participants is apparent due to the nature of the intimate act represented in the photographs. The locks in these photographs are not examples of memorial tokens. The women that they belonged to are still alive. However, the hair fragments are keepsakes – tangible mementos of women that the artist is intimately connected with.

⁷⁷ Nehama, Sarah, and Anne E. Bentley. “The Antebellum Period.” In *In Death Lamented: The Tradition of Anglo-American Mourning Jewelry*, 73-4. Boston, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Historical Society, 2012.

⁷⁸ Ferris. 11.

⁷⁹ Nehama. 106.

Conclusion

Although hair is intrinsically unique to each individual based on their genetics, it has become one of the primary vehicles for self-expression. Millennials (especially women) have a vast arsenal of hair-alteration tools, techniques, and chemicals at their disposal, and as the *Modern Hair Study* portraits show, young women are easily able to combine different colors and styles to form their own unique fashion.

Bogart uses these young women to examine the self-expression of a generation of which she is not a part. Though these portraits feature contemporary trends in hair and body art, they evoke a sentiment of timelessness due to the oval framing technique that is reminiscent of Victorian era photographs displayed in lockets. The intimate nature of Bogart's approach to her subjects, in both the hair study portraits and the locks photographs, leaves the viewer with an understanding of the personal relationship between the artist and her subjects.

By concealing the faces of the women, and removing the locks from the bodies they once belonged to, Bogart keeps the identity of her subjects as her own special secret. Even though as viewers we acknowledge this concealment, our curiosity encourages us to closely investigate the locks and faceless portraits in order to interpret the women represented in them.

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