

[This is a pre-print version of the Alberto webtext *The Rhetorics of Retroactivism* published in *Kairos: Rhetoric, Technology, Pedagogy*, 24(2), available at <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/24.2/reviews/alberto>.]

The Female Closet teaser from Barbarahammer.com

[description: The video shows a part of Barbara Hammer's film *The Female Closet*. The selected clips show three interviews in which archivists and scholars ignore the queer aspects of Alice Austen's photography. The interviewed scholars discuss how Austen remained single, how she experimented with photography, and how her photographs are sometimes criticized for being too static. The images cut from video of the interviews to some of Austen's photographs. Some of Austen's photographs depict her staring into the camera challengingly.]

[~transcript begins~]

[dramatic string music plays]

Naomi Rosenblum VO: "Alice Austen plays a rather interesting role in the history of photography, I think because she began to work during a period when a great many women had begun to photograph, and when photography for women was a passport to a more interesting life. Alice Austen, as many people know, was brought up in a fairly well-off family and seemed to be interested in photography from an earlier age. Austen was not the first woman photographer by any means — there were many, many women before her. There were women right from the beginning of photography. For Austen, I think it was especially necessary to have something since she did not marry and had no family duties, so to speak."

Mitchell Grubler VO: "Of course, there never was a husband, so again, that was sort of outside of the norm for Alice's social class during that period. I don't think it was the usual circumstance for a young Victorian woman to be so involved in athletic pursuits, and of course she took a camera with her."

Rosenblum VO: "She was young when she received the camera, but most of the photographs are from the 1890s, and by the 1890s there was already a group of women, a large group of American women, photographing. Austen's work was limited by what she wanted to do."

Grubler VO: "This sense that she's somewhat outside of the norm could have given her the motivation to pursue photography when it wasn't that customary."

Rosenblum VO: "While she made very interesting pictures because of the subject matter she took and the fact that she did frame them rather carefully, to me they don't fly. [laughs] They don't have any real emotional content as far as I'm concerned. They don't have a further resonance."

VO: "What about — I have to disagree. What about the one where she's cross-dressed as a guy and she's smoking the cigarette with Julia Bredt and Julia Martin?"

Rosenblum VO: "I was talking about these images of the city."

Carlotta DeFillo VO: "The best of her work is so clear, and so crisp, and so focused. To me, it gives the appearance of spontaneity even though we know that she posed things. It's just such a wealth of information about life, and people, and houses. It's magnificent."

[~transcript ends~]