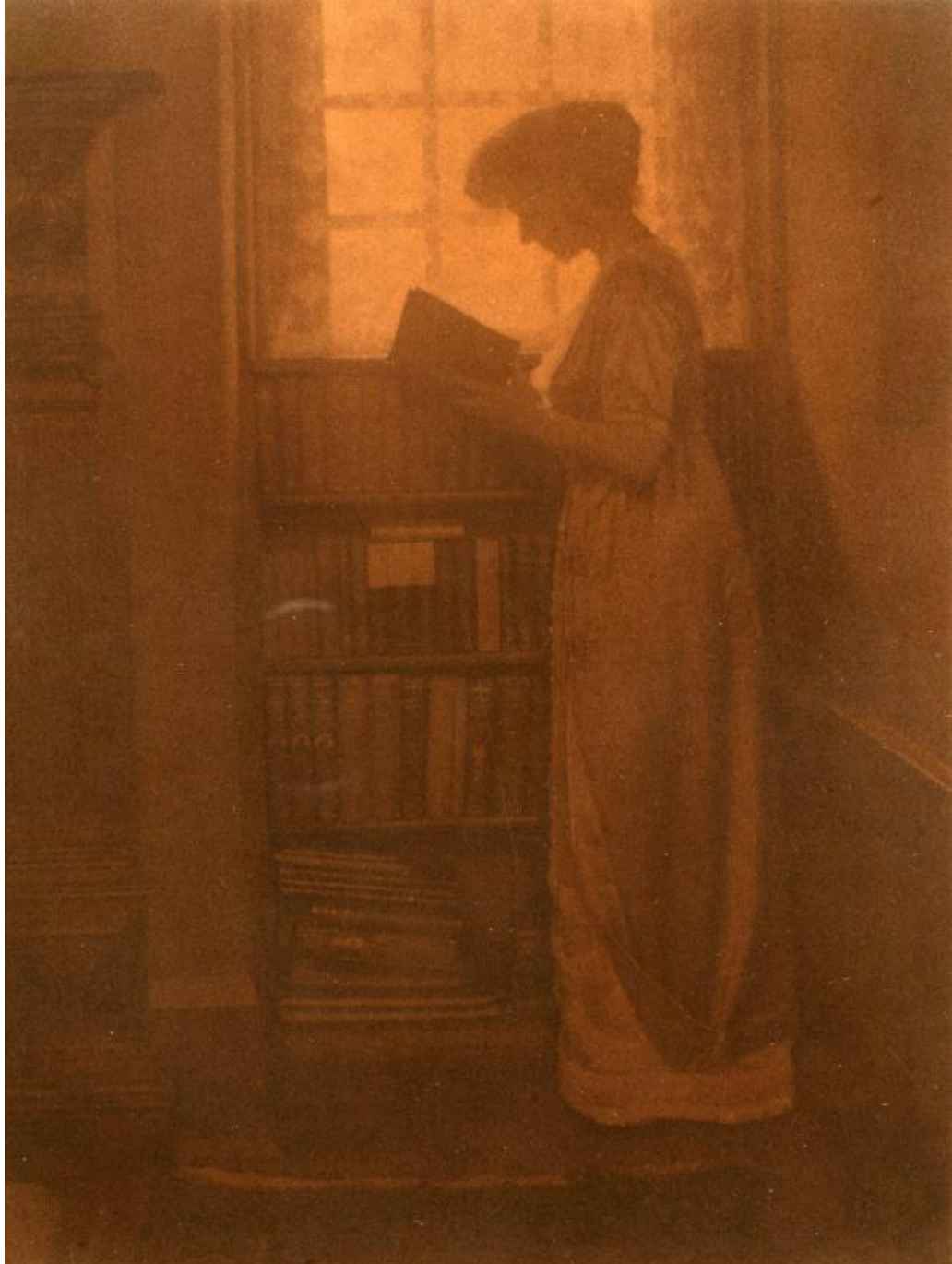


# Basic Detail Report



# Basic Detail Report

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## **Title: Louise Grace**

Date: c. 1919

Primary Maker: com.gallerysystems.emuseum.core.entities.RecordXPerson@3e5fc

Medium: Sepia photograph

Description: Louise Grace was the daughter of a prominent New York City family that made its wealth in international shipping. The portrait's interior setting, with its overflowing bookcase and gently worn rug, suggests gentility rather than ostentatious display. Her profile is outlined by sunlight flooding through the window behind her. Louise Grace epitomizes early twentieth-century standards of female grace and beauty, with her upswept hair, slender form, and delicate facial features. This impression is reinforced by the subtle tonalities and soft focus of Käsebier's style. She often depicted women in loose (and corsetless) white gowns that evoke associations with purity but also function as reminders of Käsebier's own advocacy of the need to reform women's dress.(3) Käsebier was never a suffragist, but she did desire greater educational, professional, and economic opportunities for women.(4) "Louise Grace" offers a tantalizing glimpse into early twentieth-century shifts in American women's identity and stands apart from Käsebier's better-known images of mothers or women in nature. By posing the young woman reading, Käsebier rejects centuries of Western portrait traditions that associated men with intellectual life and women with emotion, nature, and fertility. Louise Grace is completely self-contained, absorbed in her activity, and not distracted by her surroundings in or outside the room. Käsebier said of her portrait strategy, "I have longed unceasingly to make pictures of people . . . to make likenesses that are biographies."(5) The well-worn books stuffed into the case behind Louise Grace suggest that she is not merely posing but engaged in an activity integral to her being. She is a version of the "New Woman" who emerged in the late nineteenth century: not confined to the domestic sphere as daughter, wife, or mother, she is engaged with the outside world through education or work, demanding suffrage and other women's rights. Caricatures from this period reveal conservatives' fears regarding the New Woman's place in society. The caricatures depicted them as so preoccupied with new activities that they became like men in both action and appearance; they have abandoned traditional roles within the family, and as a result America suffers an inevitable decline. "Louise Grace" is a gentle, even reassuring version of the new American woman: a statement of woman as intellectual being, fully deserving the power of the vote and other basic rights yet still appealingly feminine and situated in the home-she has not rejected the biological role of daughter or wife, and she is not a threat to American men or society. N.N. NOTES: 3 . Kathleen Pyne, "Modernism and the Feminine Voice: O'Keeffe and the Women of the Stieglitz Circle" (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007), p. 27; and Meister, "Crossing the Line," p. 132. 4 . Pyne, "Modernism and the Feminine Voice", p. 17. 5 . Quoted in William Innes Homer, Gertrude Käsebier, and Deborah Jane Marshall, "A Pictorial Heritage: The

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Photographs of Gertrude Käsebier" (Wilmington: Delaware Art Museum, 1979), p.  
17.  
Dimensions: 9 x 11 in.