

The Museum of Modern Art

For Immediate Release
July 1990

LADY HAWARDEN, VICTORIAN PHOTOGRAPHER

July 26 - October 9, 1990

The short but prolific photographic career of Clementina, Lady Hawarden, is the subject of an exhibition opening at The Museum of Modern Art on July 26, 1990. LADY HAWARDEN, VICTORIAN PHOTOGRAPHER presents an evocative portrait of upper-class Victorian London. Meticulously composed, the delicate, mysterious photographs depict the artist's daughters posed in a variety of domestic settings.

The exhibition was selected from a larger exhibition organized by Virginia Dodier at the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, and circulated by the British Council. The Museum of Modern Art showing was coordinated by John Szarkowski, director, Department of Photography.

On view until October 9, LADY HAWARDEN, VICTORIAN PHOTOGRAPHER features approximately fifty albumen-silver prints that span the artist's photographic career, from its beginning in 1857 until her untimely death in 1865 at age forty-two. The works are culled from the Victoria and Albert's collection of 775 prints by the photographer.

Lady Hawarden photographed her subjects indoors, often near a window, with natural light filtering in and creating intricate, ambiguous patterns. Taken in the Hawarden family homes in London and Ireland, the photographs are set in sparsely decorated rooms. Wearing various costumes and hairstyles, her daughters often pose in pairs, appearing as reflections of one another. In

- more -

some photographs, a mirror reflects a single figure, enhancing the sense of both narcissism and languor.

Lady Hawarden's photographs are rooted in the tradition of mid-nineteenth-century amateur photography and, as such, embody the Victorian opposites of passion and restraint. Nevertheless, her work departs from that tradition in that it avoids both monumentality and didacticism. The photographs evoke mid-Victorian genre paintings of women reading or daydreaming and, in their use of costume tableaux, recall Pre-Raphaelite painting.

All but forgotten after her death, Lady Hawarden was well known by her contemporaries. Among her associates and admirers were the printmaker Francis Seymour Haden; the first director of the Victoria and Albert Museum, Henry Cole; and the photographers Charles Thurston Thompson and O.G. Rejlander. Lewis Carroll, a fellow amateur photographer, purchased five of her photographs and included them in his album *Professional and Other Photographers*.

Born in 1822 into one of Scotland's most prominent families, Clementina Elphinstone Fleming married Cornwallis Maude, the fourth viscount Hawarden, in 1845. A year later, a daughter was born, followed by nine other children. In 1857 Lady Hawarden took her first photograph in the family's estate in Dundrum, County Tipperary, Ireland, and continued to pursue her vocation there and in London. In 1863 and 1864 she exhibited at the Photographic Society of London, received awards for best amateur contribution and best composition, and was elected as a member of the Society.

* * *

For further information or photographic materials, contact the Department of Public Information, 212/708-9750.