

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EXHIBITION:

# Hannah Barrett: Transitions

January 9, 2020 – March 8, 2020



*Monsters: Cocktail Hour, 2018*  
Oil on canvas, 42 x 34 inches

BOSTON, MA – *Hannah Barrett: Transitions* is a retrospective mélange of works from the artist’s various series – from *Secret Society* to *Monsters* – that traces Barrett’s development as she progresses from collage to imagination as the source of her portraiture.

Barrett has previously described her paintings as “invented portraits based on collage: copies of photos or in some cases, copies of paintings are cut apart and reassembled into figures of ambiguous gender. Fusing the features of both sexes creates a range of androgynous characters that may be straight, queer, hermaphroditic or just cross-dressing.” Her aim is to create portraiture that deviates from the conventional male or female, and to explore the resulting pictorial and conceptual possibilities in a fun and unexpected way.

In her latest series *Monsters*, Barrett has created creatures that are fully of her own imagination, with no singular reference to reality. In this way her *Monsters* are entirely fictional, and the viewer can project their own character onto the portraits.

The progression of Barrett’s artwork reflects how gender expectations have changed since she began painting her first series, *The Secret Society*, in 2006. In her early portraiture, Barrett felt an



*Secret Society: Dutchess D'Badminton,*  
2006  
Oil on canvas, 20 x 16 inches

urgency to make gender fluidity more visible. Creating portraits from collaged elements of photographs and paintings thus tied her ambiguous characters to reality, making them more of-this-world than an entirely imaginary figure.

Barrett's transition in source material has happened alongside a cultural shift in gender perception. A broader awareness of gender as a construct and an expansion of vocabulary for gender have thus been a driving force in her new work. The visibility of trans culture and other LGBTQ identities prompted a move away from collaged figures, as Barrett became more invested in completely made-up worlds, accessible directly by drawing. Where her paintings previously began by making collage prototypes, she now works from line drawings made in sketchbooks. Her new characters, still playfully androgynous, non-binary, or anthropomorphic, come together through a process like automatic drawing, wherein Barrett selects heads, costumes, and settings from references studied over the past twenty years.



*Detectives: Sherlock Inside,* 2015  
Acrylic on canvas, 70 x 70 inches

*Transitions* observes this artistic shift in Barrett's work from reality-adjacent to entirely-imaginary through a rousing journey within her amusingly eclectic world. Her artistic progression is inextricably tied to larger cultural shifts and proves a humorous proxy to a more serious conversation about gender identity. Drawing from her numerous series including *The Secret Society*, *Family Jewels*, *Tales of the House of Gibson*, *Hunters' Picnic*, *Rustics*, *Detectives*, *Fire Island*, and *Monsters*, *Transitions* presents Barrett's boldly absurd works as a viewable timeline of both artistic and societal progression. Her pastiched characters, whether collaged from bits and pieces or drawn from pure imagination, make for perplexingly charming guides throughout this retrospective.

The artist will be present at the opening reception, held Thursday, January 9, from 6 to 8pm.



*Rustics: Winter Hunting Lodge, 2014*  
Oil and acrylic on canvas, 78 x 78 inches

**About Childs Gallery:** Established in 1937 on Newbury Street in Boston's Back Bay, Childs Gallery holds one of the largest inventories of oil paintings, drawings, watercolors, prints and sculpture in the United States. We actively service collectors, artists, estates and corporate clients throughout the country in the buying and selling of fine art, and have placed exceptional works in major museums nationwide. Our extensive holdings – including prints and drawings that range from Old Masters to 20th century notables to 21st century contemporaries, along with superb paintings and sculpture from the past 200 years – are particularly appealing to the eclectic tastes of today's art lovers, as it's the collector's eye, not the historic period or medium, that makes for a cohesive and personally satisfying collection.

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