



# **Tina Barney Photographs: Theater of Manners**

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Tina Barney: Photographs. Theater of Manners.

New York photographer Tina Barney was born to an upper-class East Coast family. Ever since she started to take photographs in 1974 she has documented and examined her family's life. As an intimate observer, the viewer witnesses the intricacies of social rituals--weddings, Christmas dinners, and cocktail parties. Barney captures the tension between the polished surfaces and the intensity of the feelings underneath.

"There is a contradiction in my pictures that says, I feel closed out, distant, unable to enter into that person or place. But as that person or place pulls you into the space, at the same time I want to show my desire and will to approach the inside, to get closer, to contact, communicate to touch the interior. I want to get inside because it's the only thing that's worthwhile. The insignificance of human beings terrifies me, and that feeling of doubt, reason for existence, keeps me on a constant search for substance, depth, validity."

Barney's photographs are brilliantly composed, densely layered tableaux signaling her familiarity with classic painting. The viewer can never be quite sure whether the images are carefully posed arrangements or perfectly captured moments of "real life." Barney's astute play with artifice mirrors social life itself--part artifice, part spontaneity. In this comprehensive monograph Tina Barney is revealed as a rare combination of artist and visual anthropologist.



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