

PUBLIC LIVES

# Embracing a Father's Creation, if Not His Tastes

By ROBERT F. WORTH

**J**ULIET HARTFORD has become accustomed to talking about her father.

She grew up, after all, in a world he created, a glittering cocoon of titles and money, presidents and pop stars. As the heir to the A.&P. supermarket fortune, her father, Huntington Hartford, could give his daughter virtually anything she wanted, and did.

So it is hardly surprising that Ms. Hartford, a painter and part-time fashion model, has joined a legal battle to save one of Mr. Hartford's last remaining legacies: the white marble palazzo he built in 1964 at 2 Columbus Circle to house his art collection. Two weeks ago, she added her name to a lawsuit filed by three preservation groups seeking to stop the city from selling the building to a museum that wants to strip off its much-maligned modernist facade.

"I think it's beautiful," said Ms. Hartford, as she flipped her long brown hair over a shoulder and tucked into a breakfast of fried eggs and hash browns at the Carlyle Hotel. "Everyone I've ever met in the art or fashion worlds likes it."

A svelte, dark-eyed woman who allows that she is in her late 20's, Ms. Hartford has the brittle smile of someone who is used to being photographed. She chose the Carlyle as a meeting place because she lived there for several years as a child after her parents' divorce.

As for her father's building, it has inspired a wide range of views over the years, with some architects pronouncing it a masterpiece and others deriding it as a monstrosity of white marble lollipops.

Ms. Hartford never wavered, and began drumming up support as soon as the city announced in 1997 that it would sell the building. She rattles off the names of the illustrious friends she has enlisted to help save her father's creation: Brooke Astor, Prince Rainier III of Monaco, and Erivan Haub, the majority shareholder of the Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company.

"I always thought the building could have been sold to someone cool," she said a little wistfully.

In some ways, Ms. Hartford is an unlikely champion for her father's work. She paints dense, collage-like canvases, and considers them works



Angel Franco/The New York Times

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JULIET HARTFORD

of Abstract Expressionism.

Her father hated modern art, and especially Abstract Expressionism. The gallery at 2 Columbus Circle, designed by Edward Durrell Stone, was intended as a vehicle for his moralistic effort to reform the visual art of his age. Tom Wolfe called Mr. Hartford "the Martin Luther of modern culture," a zealot with "the most flagrantly unfashionable taste anybody in New York had ever heard of."

Mr. Hartford, who at age 92 is in poor health and lives in upstate New York, has seen some of his daughter's paintings, she said. But he has never said anything about them.

Nothing?

"Obviously I don't agree with my father's taste in art," she said. "He was way off base. He was very eccentric."

Despite their differences, Ms. Hartford says she has been visiting her father over the last year, and they have grown closer. She saw little of him during her childhood, she said, especially after he remarried and developed a drug habit.

Yet if her father has been a distant figure, her life clearly revolves around her status as his daughter. Recently, she appeared on the HBO documentary "Born Rich," about the lives of

people born to great wealth.

She liked the movie, in which she appears only briefly and does not say anything particularly obnoxious or self-revealing, unlike some of the other scions on display.

In one scene, she mentions that her father spent or lost nearly all of his \$100 million fortune. Which poses this question: Is she really an heiress?

"Well, I was born rich," she said with an unusually big smile. She has not inherited anything, yet, she said, and does not know how much is coming to her. She does get financial help from her parents, enough to help maintain her comfortable life as an artist in London, Paris and New York.

Growing up, she said, she did not understand how wealthy her family was. Yes, there were constant trips to Europe and the family's Caribbean resort. There were ponies and country estates. There were those years living at the Carlyle. But she went to the Hewitt School (across the street from the hotel), where there were plenty of

other rich kids.

"I didn't get the special conversations" about her inheritance, she said. "But when I got older, there was publicity."

By that time, she was at Le Rosey, a boarding school in Switzerland, along with some other heirs and heiresses, including her good friend Casey Johnson, whose cousin, Jamie Johnson, an heir to the Johnson & Johnson fortune, conceived and directed "Born Rich."

**L**ATER, she took art classes at Marymount College and Columbia University. "They were very lenient in letting me in," she said. "My grades were terrible."

Her social world still centers on people of fabulous wealth, and her conversation sometimes resembles a blizzard of names. Ivanka Trump is a friend. Recently she has begun doing portraits, too, mostly of friends and acquaintances: Alexandra von Furstenburg, Barry Diller, former King Constantine of Greece.

Yet a sadness often creeps into her voice when she discusses her father. "I think he's changed," she said, when asked about his career. "I think he was a visionary."