

# Time Out New York

## ART

### Review

#### **Janet Biggs, *Girls and Horses***

**Chassie Post Gallery, through Apr 13 (see Soho).**

You don't need to be Freud or Foucault to have noticed the affinity that some young girls show for horses: The elegant equine is one of the few culturally sanctioned avenues that girls have for experiencing and/or fantasizing about power. And then there's the largely discredited theory of penis envy: For how better to compensate for the supposed lack of the phallus than feeling the press of horseflesh between the thighs?

This is the focus of Janet Biggs impressive video installation *Girls and Horses*. Biggs doesn't so much deny or deconstruct the connection between women and horses as amplify and subvert its cultural meaning through visual delirium.

On entering Chassie Post's darkened and cavernous space, one encounters a phalanx of video monitors. The viewer immediately apprehends four channels, each of which shows a little girl playing horsey with her father, then turns the corner to find four more videos of girls with their mothers. Meanwhile, cantering around the gallery walls is a huge video projection of a young woman on horseback, in proper riding attire.

An overall sensation of being in a spin is fostered by the accompanying audio tracks. The parents hoist their daughters—making horsey noises—and one video of three girls on a carousel adds a tootling calliope to the din. Biggs nestles one layer of circular motion into the next: Girls ride in a circle on their parents' shoulders, the merry-go-round makes its circuit and so does the wraithlike horse and rider, sent on its way by video projectors twirling from a rope.

Biggs demolishes the cultural truisms surrounding *Girls and Horses*. And you can't help but get caught up in its ecstasy.—*Howard Halle*



**Janet Biggs, still from video *Amanda Riding Diplomat*, 1996.**