Shifting the frame

Book of Abstracts

Women's Photographic Practices (1840–1960)

Porto
5–7 March 2026

womenphot.fba.up.pt

The abstracts in this volume retain the spelling, referencing style, and formatting conventions chosen by each individual author.

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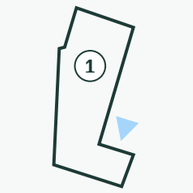
2. Tait House
3. Romantic Museum
4. Accoustic Shell
5. Camões Grotto
6. Carlos Alberto Chapel
7. Gargoyle Fountain
8. Roseiral House
9. Garden of Feelings

CONFERENCE VENUE



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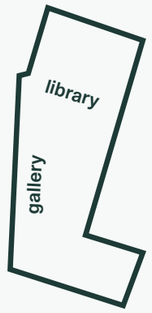

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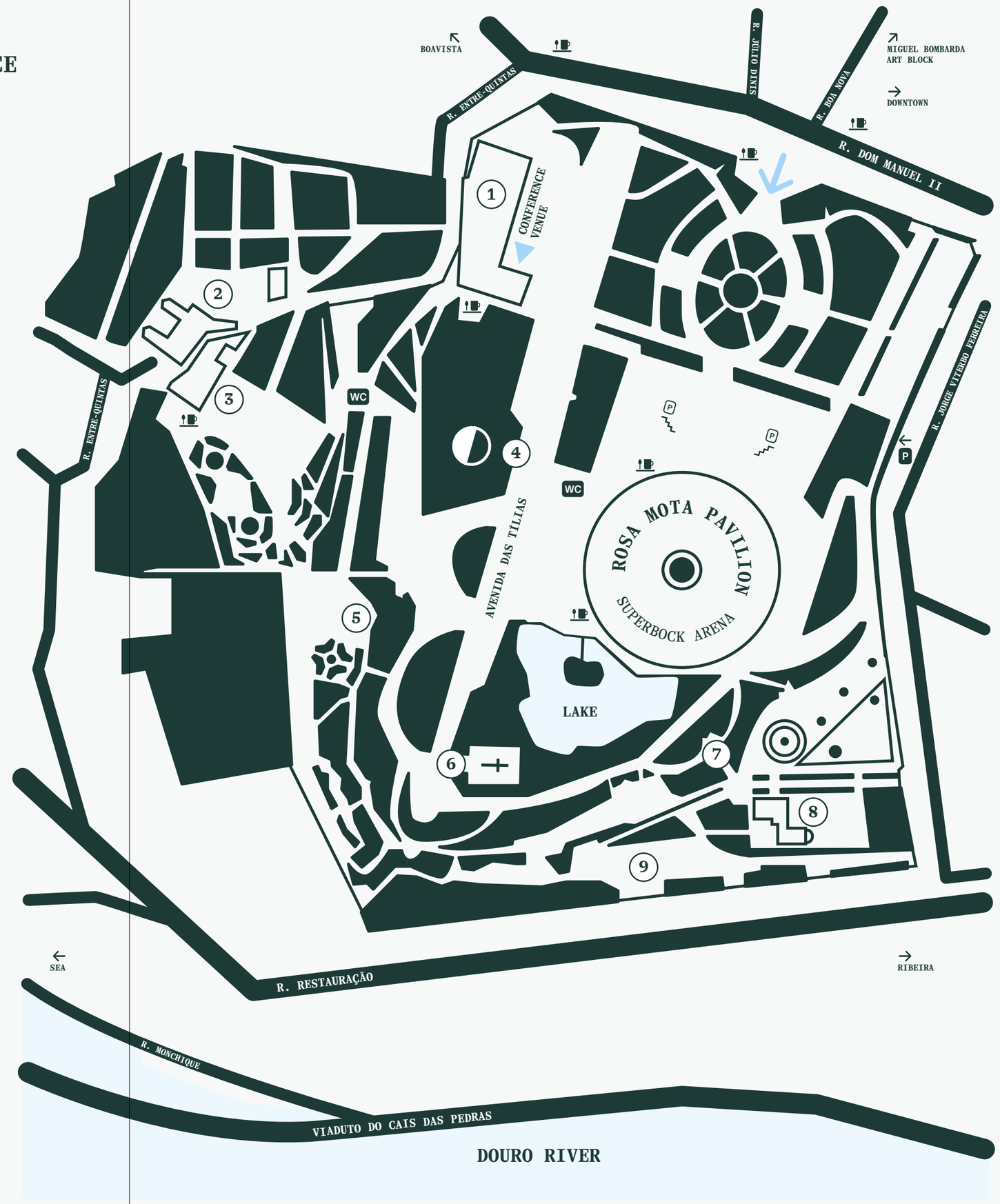

programme

thrusday 05

09h00 Reception and registration of participants

09h30 **Opening and presentation of the WomenPhot.PT research project,** with **Dr Jorge Sobrado** Councillor for Culture, Porto Municipality — **Susana Lourenço Marques**

10h00 **"A Room of One's Own": *Retratadas* and Subrogated Self-Representation in 19th-Century Spain** — keynote **Stéphany Onfray**, chair Emília Tavares

11h20 Coffee Break

11h40 Panel 1 **Professional Pioneer Women Photographers: independence and emancipation** — chair Susana Lourenço Marques

1. Who was Madame Fritz? A female itinerant daguerreotypist in Lisbon in 1844 — **M. García Felguera** and **Gregorio Escalada**
2. Chained to Light: Reconnecting with Finnish Photographer Julia Widgrén (1842–1917) — **Heta Kaisto**
3. Isabel Agnes Cowper: Official Museum Photographer — **Erika Lederman**
4. Louise Engen: Making Women Visible — in Photography and Politics — **Sigrid Lien**
5. Ordinary studios, extraordinary legacies. Rethinking women's photography through a local "no-name" story from interwar Poland — **Katarzyna Gębarowska**

13h15 Lunch

14h30 Panel 2 **Rethinking Photographic Canons: Women, Networks and Practice** — chair Susana S. Martins

1. Her designated Place: Re-canonising Bauhaus Women Photographers through the Lens of Access — **Carla Huttenloher**
2. The creative challenge of Stern and Auerbach's Ringl + Pit studio: a model of female emancipation in German Advertising photography (1930–1933) — **Arianna Novaga**
3. Photo-press, photomontage, photobook: Denise Bellon and the circulation of images (1934–39) — **Bridget Hardiman**
4. Cut Out: Feminist Photographic Collage and Women's Visual Practices, 1840–1960 — **Fiona Rogers**

15h50 Coffee Break

16h00 Panel 3 **Class, Gender and Amateur Photography** — chair Ana Gandum

1. "A Photographic Lab of One's Own": Maria Pia Fecit — A case study unveiling the class-gender [and racial] biases of the official (His)story of photography — **Teresa Mendes Flores**
2. Women Competitors at the International Salon of Photographic Art (1937–1958): presence, networks and (in)visibility — **Nuno Resende**
3. Visual dialogues between Barcelona and São Paulo: The Work of Palmira Puig (1937–1980) — **Nayara Fernandes Coelho**
4. Bringing Rosalie into Focus — An unexplored amateur photographer at Arlington Court, Devon, UK — **Jess McKenzie** and **Barbara Wood**

17h30 Round-table **Women Photographic Archive: Methods, Conservation and Access** with: **Paula Figueiredo** and **Sofia Castro**; **Alexandra Encarnação** and **Élia Roldão** — chair Nuno Borges de Araújo

18h20 **Correcting the record: making female presences visible in early photography** — chair Susana S. Martins

Constance Talbot: revisiting her 1839 'favourite view' — **Rose Teanby**

Breaking the archival silence: Tracking first Texas photographer, 'Mrs. Davis' — **Kris Belden-Adams**

friday 06

10h00 Panel 4 **Archives, Vernacular Images and Colonial Contexts** — chair Afonso Dias Ramos

1. Dawn's long gone, fields torn bare Within the earth, lain unmarked there What happened here, by no means right Same's fate befalls, on this night — **Azura Silberschmidt**
2. Mary L. Booth and the Monuments of Western India: two albums — **Suryanandini Narain**
3. Framing empire: girls, photography, and scrapbooks in the British Colonial World, c. 1930s — **Elizabeth Dillenburg**
4. Photographic Archive of Dona Palmira Coutinho — **vinit agarwal**

11h20 Coffee Break

11h40 Panel 5 **Framing Empire and Conflict: Women, Photography and Power** — chair Luís Camanho

1. Diana Powell-Cotton and Antoinette Powell-Cotton: snapshots from Angola (1936–1937) — **Inês Vieira Gomes**
2. High Country, Wild Country: a feminist retelling of the visual culture of Mt. Buffalo — **Clare McCracken**
3. Women photographers and photo interpreters during WW2 — **Denis Pellerin**
4. Photographic Invisibility and Archival Recovery: The Case of Martha Rocher (1920–1990) — **Raffaella Perna**

13h00 Lunch

14h30 Panel 6 **Women, Documentary Photography and Social Engagement** — chair Mário Moura

1. The invisible legacy of Kati Horna: photographic experimentation, social documentation, and architectural photography in Mexico — **Eunice Miranda Tapia**
2. From the Studio to the Street: Re-interpreting Nelly's Documentary Practice — **Alexandra Moschovi**
3. Chiara Samugheo: The Neorealist Spirit of Italian Photography — **Michela Frontino**
4. Reactivating the archive: Portuguese paratrooper nurses between imagery and memory — **Margarida Correia**

15h50 Coffee Break

16h00 Panel 7 **Working with Fragments: Women, Photography and the Archive** — chair Emília Tavares

1. Elsbeth Gropp — Reconstruction and Exhibition of an almost forgotten oeuvre — **Volker Hille**
2. *Fotografiste*. Archives, Feminism, and Fragments of Women's Work in Photography — **Linda Bertelli** and **Agnese Ghezzi**
3. Rediscovering Andalusian Women Photographers: Gender, region, and photography in 19th and early 20th century — **Azahara Lozano Dorado**
4. Archival Fragmentation and Gendered Erasures: Reconstructing the Photographic Legacy of Laura Pons (1889–1975) — **Giorgia Ravaioli**
5. Silver Girls as a Curatorial Platform for Recovering Early Women Photographers' Histories Through Open-Ended Research — **Šelda Puķīte**

18h00 **Italian Women Photographers at the beginning of the 20th century between Avant-garde experiences and identity performance. Reflections from a research project and a digital collection** — keynote **Federica Muzzarelli**, chair Susana Lourenço Marques

20h30 Conference Dinner → **T.B.A.**

saturday 07

9h30 Panel 8 **Inventing Images: Women and Photographic Technologies** — chair Ana Pereira

1. Tangled up in Blue: The Cyanotype, Needlework, and Women's Labor in Julia Herschel's *A Handbook for Greek and Roman Lace Making* — **Beth Saunders**
2. Florence M. Warner: Inventor and Entrepreneur — **Mariana W. von Hartenthal**
3. Between Name and Image: Mildred Cossart and the Construction of a Photographic Gaze on Madeira (1909–1928) — **Ana Gandum** and **Martinho Mendes**
4. A Flash in Time: Gioconda Rizzo (1897–2004) and Early Brazilian Photography — **Ingrid Telino**

10h50 Coffee Break

11h00 Panel 9 **Performing the Self: Women, Photography and Authorship** — chair Lúcia Almeida Matos

1. Between Subject and Author: Sarah Bernhardt and the Photographic Portrait as Performative Self-Portrait — **Nicole Langrová**
2. "Private" — Marie Høeg & Bolette Berg: Non-cathartis as an ethics of opacity — **Amy Schuessler**
3. Mirrors and viewpoints: photo albums and women's practices of the self — **Katarzyna Adamska** and **Monika Michałowicz**

12h15 **Women & Photography @ Musée d'Orsay (Paris). The Ten Years Itch** — keynote **Marie Robert**, chair Afonso Dias Ramos

Women photographers have been systematically written out of the history of photography. Despite their active, diverse, and sustained engagement with the medium since its inception, scholarly recognition of their contributions remains limited. From the 1840s onward, women across different geographies — whether as professionals, amateurs, technicians, or artists — opened studios, undertook specialised work in photographic laboratories, and used photography as a powerful means of self-representation and social visibility. Yet, their stories have often been forgotten, underrepresented, or subsumed within dominant narratives that privilege male authorship and institutional frameworks.

This international conference aims to bring long-overdue visibility to women photographers active between 1840 and 1960 by uncovering their identities, practices, and visual legacies. It invites contributions that reframe photographic history through the lens of women's history and gender studies, with particular attention to figures and practices that have been overlooked or insufficiently studied. By revisiting archival materials and questioning established historiographies, the conference aims to foster a more inclusive and critical understanding of Photography's past.

Women's Photographic Practices (1840–1960)

Grounded in feminist visual studies and decolonial approaches, the conference acknowledges that those historically marginalised have often faced obstacles in bearing witness to their contributions. It also draws on recent scholarship that intersects gender history, labour history, and visual culture, offering methodological tools to examine photography not only as artistic expression, but also as a form of cultural work shaped by class, gender, race, and power.

A central challenge addressed by this conference is the identification, preservation, and attribution of photographic works by women. Many of these images remain scattered in archives, family collections, and institutional holdings, often without proper identification. This fragmentation continues to hinder scholarly research and limits the visibility and recognition of women's photographic contributions, both nationally and internationally.

The conference brings together scholars, curators, artists, and archivists whose contributions engage with these themes through case studies, theoretical reflections, and comparative approaches. By mapping and reactivating these overlooked photographic legacies, it seeks to spark new dialogues, contribute to historiographical renewal, and expand the frameworks through which we understand the global history of photography.

Porto 5–7.03 2026

Keynote Speaker

“A Room of One’s Own”: *Retratadas* and Subrogated Self-Representation in 19th-Century Spain

Stéphany Onfray
PhD in Art History, Complutense University of Madrid / independent researcher and Curator

Drawing on the publication *Retratadas. Photography, Gender and Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Spain* (2025) and the exhibition Retratadas. Studies of Women (Museo Nacional del Romanticismo, Madrid), this talk proposes a re-examination of the nineteenth-century photographic studio and the so-called “dressing rooms” (cuartos-tocadores) as spaces comparable to a room of one’s own. These environments are understood here as sites of agency from which numerous women began to intervene in the emerging visual culture and, crucially, in the construction of their own image.

Through an analysis of the feminine iconography produced by commercial portrait photography of the period, and in dialogue with Joan Rivière’s concept of masquerade, the paper explores how the women portrayed mobilized specific visual codes as protective strategies within a highly regulatory social framework. At the same time, it examines how their underlying intentions were articulated through the capitalization of their own bodies as expressive devices and, consequently, as works in their own right.

Particular emphasis is placed on the concept of subrogated self-representation, which underpins both the book and the exhibition. From this perspective, the paper analyses how these women negotiated, challenged, and re-signified visual models imposed by the patriarchal gaze. By transforming their likenesses into forms of symbolic and material investment, they contributed to the expressive and artistic development of photography while simultaneously opening new pathways of professional and economic participation for women within the photographic field.

Retratadas, Stéphany Onfray, Ediciones Cátedra, 2025 — book cover

Bio

Stéphany Onfray holds a PhD in Art History and works as an exhibition curator, editorial researcher, lecturer, and independent scholar, specializing in the history of photography from a gender perspective. Her research examines the relationship between women and photography in nineteenth-century Spain, focusing on their roles as photographers, sitters, and consumers, and on the ways in which they transformed photography—an inherently political medium—into a space for self-affirmation and personal expression.

Her doctoral dissertation, defended at the Complutense University of Madrid in 2022, resulted in the book *Retratadas. Photography, Gender and Modernity in Nineteenth-Century Spain* (Cátedra, 2025), which also served as the conceptual foundation for an exhibition at the Museo Nacional del Romanticismo in Madrid. More recently, she was invited to teach on the pioneering Master’s Degree in Photography at the Polytechnic University of Valencia, where she delivered a seminar on the history of photography from a feminist point of view —an unprecedented course offering in Spain at the time.

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Keynote Speaker

Italian Women Photographers at the beginning of the 20th century between Avant-garde experiences and identity performance. Reflections from a Research Project and a Digital Collection

Carlo Wulz, Wanda and Marion Wulz, Trieste, 1927.
Courtesy Firenze, Archivio Alinari-Archivio Studio Wulz.

Federica Muzzarelli
University of Bologna / Fotografia Arte Femminismi International Research Centre

In my presentation I would like to discuss how, as Principal Investigator of the *Italian Feminist Photography* project *and together* with other scholars, young researchers and PhD students from different Italian Universities, in 2022 we started to analyze the contribution of women to the history of Italian photography through a feminist perspective. The research has been divided among three different channels: magazines and periodicals (starting from specialist art and photography publications, which promoted the works and fostered critical and interpretative readings); the catalogues and materials tracing their presence in national exhibitions, events and shows; private and public archives, as well as collections and museums, which over time have kept and structured these works. The research of documentary sources (articles and essays), and the mapping of public and private institutions that have safeguarded these contributions, will lead to an understanding, by comparison, of which photographic models and paradigms dominated feminist photography in Italy, also exploiting digital languages and competences based on the most recent digital humanities experiments with the aim of building a digital collection and a website specifically dedicated to make research and consultation. Within this theoretical and methodological framework, I propose to deal with the case study of the work of the Wulz sisters treasured in an important institution for the conservation and the valorization of the photographic heritage such as the *Alinari Foundation for Photography* of Florence. As far as the two sisters Marion and Wanda Wulz are concerned and focusing their connection with the Futurist Avant-garde, we may have an open look at the role of photography that they developed together both as a tool of social and identity emancipation and as a means of performative and conceptual experimentation. All this was clearly showcased in the professional photographic work of Studio Wulz in Trieste they inherited (from 1928 to 1981) and led by Wanda and Marion alone, where a preference for female portraiture was quantitatively significant. In this, their ability to depict the image of a modern, emancipated and independent woman – reflecting their own identities – is striking. This was also clear in portraits and self-portraits they realized

for their private photo album, together with her friend Anita Pittoni, with whom they invented a sort of collective photographic performances and free use of the body, fashion projects, theatrical experiments and textile creations. But this was particularly clear in the six photographs Wanda realized when, between 1 and 17 April 1932, she was invited to participate in the Mostra Nazionale di Fotografia Futurista in Trieste. The exhibition catalogue listed Wanda Wulz as the creator of six photographs: *Colazione futurista, Ritratto, Jazz-band, Io + gatto, Esercizio, 'Wenn die Elisabeth nicht so schöne Beine hätt' (da 'Wunder-Bar')*. Thanks to the active and fundamental collaboration of Marion, who will always be the faithful companion with whom to share work and experiences throughout life, the Wulz Sisters exploited the Futurist Exhibition in 1932 to negotiate the female identity; and the six photographs, upon closer examination, proves to be an original homage to their being both women and artists. Using Futurism as a set of useful techniques and imaginaries but then, in making a revolutionary contribution, bends it to a feminist narrative, aiming to propose an alternate vision and content to the prevailing male-dominated world's thought, practices, ideas and dynamics. Wanda Wulz's solitary foray as an artist and photographer into Italian Futurism, a movement more male-dominated and misogynistic by its very nature than by ideology, as many scholars have argued, is an incredibly unique experience. My goal is to show how their artistic praxis is capable of concretely visualizing the changes in women's identity in the first decades of the 20th century: the reappropriation of their own bodies and those of other women, is a way not merely to introduce new subjects, but also to promote new perspectives and new gazes. As women, they used photography as a tool of power, a tool capable of advancing a political project which, starting from an individual and private perspective, came to reflect shared historical and social needs.

Bio

Since 2019 Federica Muzzarelli is Full Professor of Photography and Visual Culture at the University of Bologna for the Department of the Arts. She is Coordinator of the *Photography Art Feminisms* Research Centre, Co-Editor-in-Chief of the scientific Journal "Pianob. Arti e culture visive" and Co-editor-in-Chief of the scientific series "Fashion, Media and Culture: Perspectives on Global Lifestyle" (Bloomsbury). As Principal Investigator she coordinated a three-years Project funded by the Italian Ministry of University and Research on *Feminist Italian Photography*, one of her main research focuses together with the role and identity of the women photographic experiences between XIX and XX century. In September 2025 she coordinated the International Conference titled "Photography and Feminist Aesthetics: Italian and Transnational Perspectives" at the University of Bologna. She is the author of monographs, essays and scientific articles on her research topics, which also feature in conference presentations, lectures and curated exhibitions in public and private institutions. Among her books and papers: *Femmes Photographes. Emancipation et performance 1850-1940* (Paris 2009); *The Photo Booth and the Automatic Photographic Portrait. From Criminal and Psychiatric Certification to Imaginary Escape* (Milan 2016); *Women Photographers: Annemarie Schwarzenbach, New Dandy and Lesbian Chic Icon* ("Visual Resources" 2018); *Feminism and Italian Photography: Notes on the Inheritance of New Generations from the 1970s* (with C. Casero) ("Journal of Asia-Pacific Pop Culture" 2022); *Photography and Modern Icons: The Visual Planning of Myth* (Newcastle 2023); *Women Photographers in Italy: The Work of Edith Arnaldi* (with L. Hanstein) ("Journal of Asia-Pacific Pop Culture" 2024); *Wanda and Marion Wulz: Photographers and Sisters* (Milan 2024); *Elio Luxardo and the Italian Homofascist Photography: Performing Masculinity during the Fascist Era* (New York 2025); *Photography and Feminism between the XIX and XX Century: Albums, Diaries and Scrapbooks* (Newcastle 2026).

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Keynote Speaker

Women & Photography @ Musée d'Orsay (Paris). The Ten Years Itch

Marie Robert
Chief Curator of Photography and Cinema at the Musée d'Orsay

In 2015, the Musée d'Orsay and the Musée de l'Orangerie simultaneously presented 'Who's Afraid of Women Photographers? (1839-1945)' in Paris. By examining the impact of gender identity on the practice of photography, the exhibition highlighted more than 150 women who were active in Europe and North America during the first century of photography. In doing so, it re-evaluated the contribution of women photographers to the history of photography, as part of a broader collective movement that questioned the place of women in the fields of creation, science and thought.

In 2020, Luce Lebart and I edited A World History of Women Photographers (Textuel, Paris & Thames, London). This collaborative and international work, conceived as an invitation to massively broaden the field of historical investigation, noted that, although systematically invisible—representing a minor gender (being women) within a minor art (photography)— women photographers have played a central role in the invention, development, institutionalization and criticism of the medium for two centuries throughout the world. As photography underwent technical and aesthetic transformations, and as the social and political status of women evolved, varying according to cultural areas, the territories of photography continued to expand, for them and thanks to them.

In 2025 at the Musée d'Orsay, the monograph 'Gabrielle Hébert, Amour fou à la Villa Médicis' revealed the many snapshots taken in the 1890s by Gabrielle Hébert, a German aristocrat. By unearthing her archives, which were destined for destruction and which some might describe as 'minor' (albums, diaries, trunks of negatives and prints abandoned in an attic), I set out to embody the seemingly ordinary life of a woman who remained in the shadow of her husband, the painter Ernest Hébert. Through this exhibition, the aim was to consider the conditions of a woman's birth as an author within an exclusively male artistic phalanstery, the Académie de France in Rome. It was also to observe what photography did to a woman at the end of the last century.

Alexis Axilette,
Ernest et Gabrielle Hébert et leurs chiens sur la terrasse du *bosco*, 1888
Aristotype à la gélatine, 8.7 × 12.2 cm
Paris, Musée national Ernest Hébert

I wonder: over the course of this decade devoted to enriching, contextualizing and highlighting the collection of the institution that employs me, what have been my motivation and perspective? Certainly, from my perspective as a woman (and in line with a course I taught at the École du Louvre from 2014 to 2017), it is a question of giving female authors a visibility that they did not have in the grand narrative of the history of photography. But isn't it more a question of placing at the heart of a fine arts museum (which, incidentally, does not give photography its rightful place among the disciplines it covers for the period 1848-1914) to broaden the social dimensions of photography's uses, which, far from being reduced to an artistic or authorial perspective, question the various functions of the photographic images produced and viewed?

Bio

Marie Robert is Chief Curator of Heritage at the Musée d'Orsay, responsible for photography and cinema. At the crossroads of art history and social sciences, her work brings together early photography and contemporary creation, cultural and social issues, photography and fine arts. She has curated some twenty exhibitions, often thematic and multidisciplinary, including *'Misia, Queen of Paris'* (2011), *'Who's Afraid of Women Photographers?'* (2015), *'Finally, Cinema!'* (2021), *'The Happy Years: Denise Photographed by Her Father, Émile Zola'* (2022), *'A Model and Her Images: The Albums of Lili Grenier'* (2023) and *'Gabrielle Hébert: Mad Love at the Villa Medici'* (2025).

She has edited collective reference works on art history, cinema and photography. After teaching the history of photography through the lens of gender at the École du Louvre, she collaborated with Luce Lebart to create *A World History of Women Photographers* (Textuel, 2020). In 2023, she was in residence in art history at the Académie de France in Rome (Villa Medici). In order to build a virtual collection of photographs intended to enrich the visual memory of the place and its occupants, she oversaw the launch of the participatory digital platform 'L'Album de la Villa'. Her work now focuses on the sentimental uses of photography.

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Panel 1.

Professional Pioneer Women Photographers:

independence and emancipation

Image: Madame Fritz, *Portrait of a woman*, daguerreotype, 1843–1846, Barecona, Jordi Baron collection.

Who was Madame Fritz? A female itinerant daguerreotypist in Lisbon in 1844

María de los Santos García Felguera
Pompeu Fabra University

Gregorio Escalada
independent researcher

Research on women who have worked in the field of photography is recent and has developed mostly in the 21st century. The exhibitions *O que elas viram o que nós vemos* (Susana Lourenço Marques e Emília Tavare, Lisboa, Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea do Chiado, 2026, inside the research project WomenPhot.PT.) and *Retratadas. Estudios de Mujeres* (Stéphany Onfray, Madrid, Museo del Romanticismo, 2025) demonstrate the importance and the need for this kind of studies. As other iniciatives such as *Women of Photography*, *24- Hour Coference-A-Thon*, which will celebrate its second edition this year 2026, or our conference *Shifting the Frame – Women's Photographic Practices (1840–1960)* (Porto, March 2026).

If we go to the beginning, in Portugal, as far as we know, the first woman who made portraits with the daguerreotype camera was a so-called Madame Fritz. It's possible to find her in the Lisbon newspapers in Juny 1844. She arrived from south Spain (Cádiz) and came back there (to Valencia) after a short stay in the capital of Portugal. She is also the first woman daguerreotypist we know in Spain (before her we only have a name, Madame Valpery). Her trail in Portugal, as in Spain, can be traced in the advertisements.

After the pass of *L'Oriental* by Portugal in October 1839, and the daguerreotypes Comte made there with the presence of the queen Maria II, the first daguerreotypes taken in the country were scenic and were made two years later, in 1841, by José María Baptista Coelho as basis for gravures, and by William Barclay Blackwood (the English painter), as basis for lithographies.

As for the daguerreotype portrait, during the spring of 1843, one year before the arrival of Mme. Fritz, three daguerreotypists arrived to Lisbon and advertised portraits with the camera: the first one without a name (as it was usual between the first practitioners of this art, letting open the possibility of a woman also), working at the Rua de San Roque, during the months of May and June. The second, a Mr. Gilles, on May and Juny, and the third at the end of the year, in November 1843, in Rua de San Francisco. The same year that Mme. Fritz visited Lisbon, 1844, only some days before her, at the end of May, advertises another photographer without a name, working at San Sabastiao das Taipas.

In Portuguese bibliography Mme. Fritz appeared really early, in a book from 1940, but the research stopped there. During some years (in the 1990s) she was considered the head of a photographic saga -the "Fritz" and then Biel- in the times of the *carte-de-visite*, but that proved to be a mistake. This Fritz was Joachim Friedrich Martin Fritz, a German from Hamburg, who opened a photographic atelier in Porto in 1857 and then in Lisbon and died (he committed suicide) in 1891.

Now, after an international research, made in different countries of Europe and Asia, we know who was this Madame Fritz and can show some daguerreotypes made by her during her travels around the Iberian Peninsula.

Now we know Mme Fritz was a French woman who doesn't fit into the rules of her time: Marie-Agnèse-Anastasie Clemandot (Le Puy-en-Velay, Haute-Loire, 1807 – Paris, 1876). Born in a bookseller family, she married to a Swiss bookseller (Friedrich Traschler) and was also a bookseller in Zurich. Divorced and then widowed, a single mother for fourteen years, she was a ribbon merchant in Paris, a travelling daguerreotypist in France, Spain and Portugal and seller of leather for surgical instruments in the same places. Later she had a girls' school with her daughter Leontine in Madrid. When she was fifty-eight years old, as Veuve Traschler, she travelled to Hong Kong and the Philippine Islands, accompanying her daughter who got married there. Then, she returned to Paris, where she died as a "proprietor".

Mme. Fritz' trip as a portrait photographer took her from Perpignan (in the South of France) throughout the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal), working in different cities at the beginning of the photographic profession, from the winter of 1842 until the summer of 1846. At the time she came to Portugal, Mme. Fritz probably saw in itinerant photography a way to make an independent living and a tool of emancipation.

She is an example that not all women stayed at home in the 19th century. Some changed countries and undertook solo trips to do business.

One of those businesses was photography, and in an activity that until a few years ago was considered eminently masculine, Mme. Fritz is an example of an early and itinerant daguerreotype portrait professional from the first generation of practitioners -when men and women worked at the same time- and who made known the photography and contributed to its development and institutionalization.

Our proposal for this Conference is to present Madame Fritz in Portugal, her life, activities, other business, travels and relationships, her role in early photography, as one of the first female and itinerant daguerreotypists.

With this research, we would like also encourage archivists, scholars and collectors to look again at their daguerreotypes trying to find works made by Madame Fritz during her stay in Lisbon.

Bios

María de los Santos García Felguera received her Ph. D. in Art History from the Complutense University in Madrid (Spain) in 1987. She has been Professor at this university and at the Pompeu Fabra in Barcelona, and she is now retired. Author of *Cabañas de cristal: galerías de retrato y estudios de fotografía en España* (Santa Cruz de la Palma, 2020), co author of Historia general de la fotografía (Madrid, 2006, coordinated by M. Loup Sougez). Part of my research is devoted to women photographers working in Spain (professional and amateur), from the beginning to the Spanish Civil War: Mme. Fritz (2024); Ana M. Martínez Sagi & Ruth von Wild (2025); Remei Rahola (2022); Aurora Bertrana (2021); Mme. Senges (2021); Eulalia Abaitua (2009); Jeanne-Catherine Esperon, "señora Ludovisi" (2008); Anaïs Tiffon (2007); Sabina Muchart (2004).

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Antti Rannanjärvi
and Antti Isotalo (1869),
by Julia Widgrén

Chained to Light: Reconnecting with Finnish Photographer Julia Widgrén (1842–1917)

Heta Kaisto
Aalto University

This paper introduces *Chained to Light*, a multidisciplinary project (2017–2025) that intertwines artistic practice and archival research around the Finnish photographer **Julia Widgrén (1842–1917)**. The working group consists of graphic designer and visual artist **Anne-Mari Ahonen**, art historian **Heta Kaisto**, photographic artist **Hanna Koikkalainen**, visual artist **Hanneriina Moisseinen**, and journalist **Anne Puumala**.

Julia Widgrén was among the pioneers of professional photography in Finland. The first women in Finland took up the camera in the 1850s. When Widgrén established her studio in 1866, only a handful of women were working as professional photographers. She received her initial training in Stockholm and worked as a photographer and entrepreneur for nearly forty years. Although she grew up in a poor family, her career brought her financial success: she never married and bequeathed most of her property to charity and to women in her close circle. No written documents in her own voice are known to survive —no letters, invoices, or receipts— apart from the will she drafted herself.

The majority of Widgrén's surviving oeuvre consists of studio portraits and group photographs. She also photographed urban views and architectural subjects, and documented interiors and rural communities along the western coast of Ostrobothnia. In addition, she produced identification photographs of prisoners for the Vaasa prison from the 1860s until the 1890s. Her 1869 portrait of two chained knife fighters, **Antti Isotalo** and **Antti Rannanjärvi**, has become one of the most iconic photographs in Finland, strongly associated with narratives of masculine bravado. More than 150 years later, the image remains widely reproduced and familiar to many. The photographer, however, is still frequently left unnamed.

The scope of Widgrén's professional activity and the longevity of her career distinguish her from most women who began working in photography in the 1860s. In this respect, her career is more readily comparable to that of her male contemporaries or to women photographers who established their practices later, in the 1880s and beyond. Despite her professional success, Widgrén has remained historically fragile. There were no descendants to safeguard her legacy. Her archival materials became dispersed across museum and private collections in Finland, and most of her photographic production has been lost over time. When we began our research, her grave at the old cemetery in Vaasa was covered with lichen.

The project *Chained to Light* was initiated in 2019. We sought to honour Widgrén as a maker of images and asked: How can the photographer who captured one of Finland's most famous images be forgotten? What are the possibilities of art, research, and curatorial practice in presenting a woman who died more than a century ago, and whose life and work have been largely erased by history?

For five years, our working group followed in Widgrén's footsteps: visiting the sites of her life and photographic practice, travelling across Finland in search of dispersed archival materials, and collaboratively comparing and reconstructing fragments of knowledge. The multidisciplinary collaboration enabled a sustained and attentive engagement with Widgrén's images. In particular, the sensory and experiential observations of the visual artists generated insights into the physicality of photographic labour and the material conditions of image-making that might otherwise have remained unnoticed. This process involved an attempt to relate to Widgrén's craftsmanship and to recognise attentiveness, physical endurance, mobility, and social interaction as integral to her professional skill.

By combining exhibition-making, visual and photographic art, writing, and publishing, the project sought to connect historical image archives with contemporary audiences and to question the mechanisms of remembering and forgetting in cultural history. The exhibition featured contemporary artworks by Ahonen, Koikkalainen, and Moisseinen, including photographs produced using historical printing techniques, reworked archival images, drawings, object-based installations, textile works, and an animated short film. It also included exhibition texts and essays by Kaisto and Puumala, which formed an integral part of the exhibition's conceptual framework. Widgrén's photographs were given a dedicated space within the exhibition. The selection included digital prints of photographs from an ethnographic expedition in 1876, as well as several portraits of Widgrén herself at different stages of her life. The display also featured urban views, original carte-de-visite studio portraits and prisoner identification photographs.

Within the project, we examined thousands of photographs taken by Widgrén —both collectively and individually. Her photographs revealed themselves as layered and complex. They contain disruptions, contradictions, interruptions, and absences —elements for which artistic methods proved especially valuable to address. Alongside historical research, our observations of light, movement, human encounters, vulnerability, silence, and distance sustained our inquiry, particularly when archival materials felt fragmentary and precise information was unavailable. We thus found ourselves working within what **Carolyn Steedman** has termed "after the archive": a form of labour that begins where the documents end. Interwoven with this afterlife of the archive is the domain of imagination.

Bio

Heta Kaisto (b. 1984) is an art historian, writer, and curator whose research and curatorial practice explore sensory historiography, the poetics of destruction, and forgotten histories. She is currently a doctoral candidate at the Department of Art and Media, Aalto University, where her dissertation examines the poetics of disaster in contemporary art practices grounded in archival research. She holds MA in Art history (University of Helsinki, 2012) and MA in Writing (University of Arts, 2025).Kaisto's work often moves between the fields of art history, museology, and artistic research. Her writing has appeared in exhibition catalogues, academic journals, and art publications, where she reflects on issues such as memory, affect, and materiality in visual culture. Alongside her academic work, Kaisto has an extensive professional background in the museum sector. She has curated exhibitions that combine historical materials and contemporary perspectives, with a focus on rethinking visibility and representation within art institutions. She currently serves as Director of the Kirpilä Art Collection in Helsinki, a museum dedicated to modern and contemporary Finnish art. Through her work as a curator, writer, and researcher, Kaisto seeks to bridge the boundaries between academic inquiry and artistic experimentation, fostering new dialogues between history and the present.

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Image Caption: Isabel Agnes Cowper
Carved Walnut Wood Frame with Glass Mirror, Italian, 16th Century
Albumen print
ca. 1891
PH.113A-1891 ©Victoria and Albert Museum

Isabel Agnes Cowper: Official Museum Photographer at the South Kensington Museum

Erika Lederman
V&A, London

This paper examines the life, work, and legacy of Isabel Agnes Cowper (1826–1911), Official Photographer at the South Kensington Museum (SKM), now the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), and situates her practice within the broader histories of museum photography, women's labour, and nineteenth-century visual culture. Cowper held her post for twenty-three years, from 1868 to 1891, producing thousands of photographs that shaped how V&A collections, exhibitions, and museum architecture were recorded, disseminated, and understood. Yet, despite her central role, her name was largely erased from institutional memory until it was recovered through archival research in the twenty-first century.

Cowper entered the museum's photographic service following the sudden death of her brother, Charles Thurston Thompson, the museum's first Official Photographer. Her appointment responded to an immediate institutional need, but it was also exceptional: a woman occupying a skilled professional role within a government-funded institution at a time when women were formally excluded from the civil service. Trained initially as a wood engraver in a household deeply embedded in Victorian visual culture, Cowper brought to the role a deep understanding of the professional and artistic responsibilities, honed through years of experience working with reproductions. Her early career included engraving work for figures such as John Ruskin, Richard Doyle, Henry Cole and Julia Margaret Cameron. Later, she worked alongside her brother while in his role as Official Museum Photographer. By the time she took on the role at the SKM, she was well-situated at the intersection of Victorian visual and intellectual culture, institutional systems, and emerging photographic technologies.

The paper traces Cowper's responsibilities at the SKM, demonstrating that her work extended far beyond mechanical documentation. She photographed decorative arts, architecture, plaster casts, and exhibitions; supervised assistants; maintained registers; ordered photographic materials; and produced prints for the museum's Art Library, for sale to the public, and for circulation to art schools and international institutions. Her photographs were integral to the Museum's pedagogical mission, which sought to improve public taste and industrial design through the wide dissemination of exemplary objects. Assembled in the Art Library for artists and scholars, sold to the public, mounted as illustrations in photographically illustrated books, projected as lantern slides, and reproduced in the popular press, Cowper's images transformed museum objects into tools of national education. Her authorship though was routinely suppressed, with credit either omitted through institutional practices or implicitly assigned to male colleagues.

Close visual analysis reveals the aesthetic intelligence of Cowper's photographic practice. Her handling of light allowed complex materials—silver, glass, lace, textiles—to remain legible and visually compelling, while her architectural views articulate a clear sense of space and proportion. Working initially with the wet-collodion process, she mastered a physically demanding and technically exacting medium, producing negatives of remarkable scale and consistency. On many glass plates she scratched her initials, or even her full signature, into the emulsion—an administrative gesture that also functions as a rare assertion of authorship within an institutional system organised by object rather than maker.

The paper further situates Cowper within transnational networks of image circulation. Her photographs featured in ambitious museum publications such as Examples of Art Workmanship, which were globally circulated and were reproduced as engravings in the illustrated press. Through these channels, Cowper's work helped construct the visual identity of the museum as a modern, ordered, and authoritative institution, a model that would inspire and shape institutions around the world.

The rediscovery of Cowper's career emerged from my cataloguing work at the Museum beginning in the early 2000s, which revealed her to have worked as an embedded member of the SKM's ecosystem for 23 years. To this point, this paper defines Cowper's relationships with key players in London's nineteenth-century artistic circles. Uncovering these relationships enriches not only our understanding of nineteenth-century visual culture networks of influence but also demonstrates how women negotiated access to these networks.

Cowper's erasure is shown to be symptomatic rather than exceptional. By placing her alongside other women photographers working in nineteenth-century institutions—including the Louvre, the Prado, the Natural History Museum, and the Smithsonian, and others—this paper argues that women were active participants in the visual infrastructure of modern knowledge while remaining largely invisible within historical narratives. Their labour was absorbed into bureaucratic systems that privileged institutional authority over individual authorship.

Ultimately, this paper argues that Isabel Agnes Cowper made the museum visible—both literally, through her photographs, and conceptually, by shaping how collections were seen, taught, and valued. Her work challenges distinctions between art and documentation, domestic and professional labour, and anonymity and authorship. By foregrounding archival recovery as a critical method, the paper also reflects on how museums construct historical authority and how acts of cataloguing, digitisation, and attribution can radically alter our understanding of the past. In doing so, it contributes to feminist historiographies of photography and museums, demonstrating how sustained attention to overlooked practitioners can reshape canonical narratives. To see Cowper anew is therefore to recognise museums not only as spaces of preservation and display, but also as sites of omission, negotiation, and historical repair.

Bio

Dr Erika Lederman is a cataloguer of photographs at the V&A. She recently completed a PhD through the Arts and Humanities Research Council's collaborative doctoral partnership scheme. Her thesis, 'Armour and Lace: Women Photographers in Nineteenth-Century Institutions,' focused on women photographers working in nineteenth-century institutions and was co-supervised by the Photographic History Research Centre at De Montfort University and the V&A.

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Arnt Engen: *Portrait of Louise Engen*, ca. 1904.

Louise Engen: Making Women Visible — in Photography and Politics

Professor Sigrid Lien
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This paper on Louise Engen is based on a chapter in the forthcoming book: *Striving for Independence, Nordic Women Studio Photographers 1860-1920)* — editors: Sigrid Lien and Mette Sandbye, D eGruyter, 2026

Some years ago, during a visit to the city museum of Bodø, a coastal town in Northern Norway, an old, sepia-coloured photograph mounted on the museum wall caught my attention. Studying the image closer, a head-and--shoulder portrait of a young, elegantly dressed woman, with dark hair and large brown eyes, I noticed how she, while gazing firmly towards the camera, seemed to radiate calm integrity and strength. The young woman, Louise Engen (1873-1947), was active in Bodø as a local photographer for almost half a century. In the museum space, her portrait forms part of an exhibition commemorating the devastating effects of The Second World War in the region, and on Bodø in particular. In 1940 large parts of this town, situated just above the Arctic circle in the municipality of Nordland, was destroyed in German air raids, and quickly set on fire. Most people survived, but thousands were left homeless. The dramatic event made an everlasting mark on the town and its inhabitants.

Louise Engen, only twenty years old, boldly established her own studio in 1893 in Bodø among already well-established senior male competitors and managed to keep it successfully going until the fatal days in 1940. Who then was she, the radiant woman whose portrait currently is displayed in the local museum? What kinds of images did she produce, and who were her customers?

Notably, besides running a photographic studio, Engen was politically active throughout her life, not only in her local community, but also on a broader, national, and even international scale. She was above all invested in causes such as the political representation of women, women and children's welfare, and the temperance movement. She was a member of Bodø's city council for ten years, elected even before women were given the right to vote in Norway in 1913. Engen was several times appointed as the Liberal Party's and the Temperance Party's candidate for the National Assembly. Furthermore, she was the driving force in the establishment of an orphanage in her hometown and served as head of its board from 1918 until her death. To this list of achievements, it can be added that Engen was one of the National Norwegian delegates at the International Council of Women's meetings in Washington and London in 1925. Today, there is a street named in her honor in Bodø, and more than hundred years later the orphanage that she funded still exists, now serving as a nursery.

Engen's life is in itself an argument for the necessity of questioning and breaking down what Colleen Denney, in her study of the work of the British Suffrage photographer Lena Connell, has termed "the strict, largely mythical binary of the public male world versus the private domestic, female one". Even though domestic space and family life were immensely important for the unmarried women's rights activist Louise Engen, her private and public personas were closely intersected. She worked to make women visible, both as a photographer and as a politician. Her presence in the world included movements in a wider social sphere, as she circulated between her home, her studio, political gatherings, and public performances. She was also highly visible through her travels between urban centers in Norway and abroad, and by her extensive network-building.

As I will argue in the paper, photography, or doing photography, was the very foundation on which her economic, personal, and political freedom was built. Nevertheless, it is pertinent to ask about the nature of the connections between Engen's "two lives", the professional one as a photographer and her "other" life as a political activist: Did her social and political engagement have an impact of her photographic work, and if so, in what sense? What was the importance of photography in her total "life project"?

The paper will address these questions through a study of the archival material that she left behind. Whereas her archive of glass plate-negatives sadly is lost, there is still available photographs (positives), albums, postcards, letters, documents etc. that survived the bombing of Bodø. This material can broadly be divided into two categories; first, photographic images kept by a public archive; and secondly a relatively large private archive held by Engen's living relatives. This material offers glimpses into Louise Engen's photographic production as well as her everyday life, her values, dreams, and close circle of family and friends. But as photography was her chosen medium, I will importantly explore some of the work she did as a professional studio photographer. Do the images she produced, and their aesthetics, indicate any connections to the values she fronted as an activist?

Bio

Sigrid Lien, Professor of Art History and Photography Studies, at the Department of Linguistic, Literary and Aesthetic Studies, University of Bergen. Lien has published extensively on nineteenth century as well as modern and contemporary photography and headed several large research projects. Recent books include: *Pictures of Longing* (2018); *Contact Zones: Photography, Migration and America*, 2021 (co-edited with Justin Carville); and Adjusting the Lens, Indigenous Activism, Colonial Legacies, and Photographic Heritage, 2021 (co-edited with Hilde Wallem Nielssen). Latest work: the edited volume *Striving for Independence. Women Pioneers in Early Nordic Studio Photography, 1860-1920* (co-edited with Mette Sandbye) to be published early spring 2026 (De Gryuter).

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Jadwiga Krygier (Szopieraj),
Self-portrait with
a cigarette, c. 1928,
Bydgoszcz, Poland.
Courtesy of the author.

Ordinary studios, extraordinary legacies. Rethinking women's photography through a local "no-name" story from interwar Poland

Katarzyna Gębarowska
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From the 1840s onward, women across different geographies actively participated in photographic culture as professionals, amateurs, technicians, and entrepreneurs. They opened studios, worked in photographic laboratories, and used photography as a means of economic independence, self-representation, and social visibility. Despite this sustained engagement, their contributions have often been marginalized, anonymized, or absorbed into male-centered narratives of photographic history. This is especially true in Central and Eastern Europe, where local practitioners have until recently remained largely absent from international scholarship. Recent feminist and decolonial scholarship have challenged these exclusions, calling for a rethinking of photographic historiography that attends not only to celebrated figures and metropolitan centers, but also to everyday practices, local contexts, and overlooked careers.

This paper contributes to these debates through a case study of Jadwiga Szopieraj (née Krygier, 1907–1975), a professional female photographer who ran a photographic studio in Bydgoszcz, a medium-sized city in interwar Poland. Szopieraj was not a canonical figure, nor did she operate within avant-garde circles or major artistic centers. Yet her professional practice offers a valuable lens through which to examine how women's photographic labor functioned outside dominant institutional and historiographical frameworks.

The Polish context adds an important dimension to this discussion. At the moment of photography's invention in 1839, Poland did not exist as an independent state, having been erased from the map of Europe as a result of the partitions between the Russian, Prussian, and Austro-Hungarian empires. For over 150 years (1795–1918), Polish society functioned under conditions of foreign rule, which profoundly shaped social structures, educational opportunities, and women's access to professional life. While feminist movements intensified across Europe at the turn of the twentieth century, the situation of Polish women was distinctive: their struggle for women's rights was inseparable from the broader fight for national independence.

The year 1918 marked a decisive turning point. With the restoration of Polish independence after World War I, women in Poland were granted full political rights, including suffrage, placing Poland among the earliest countries worldwide to do so. This rapid recognition of women's citizenship was widely understood as a direct acknowledgment of their active participation in the struggle for independence and in sustaining social, educational, and economic life under partition. The coincidence of political emancipation and new professional opportunities created conditions in which women could more visibly enter public and professional spheres, including photography.

It is within this historical moment that Jadwiga Szopieraj's career should be situated. Trained in the 1920s, she consciously prepared to take over and run a photographic studio, positioning herself not only as a skilled craftswoman but also as an entrepreneur operating within the newly redefined social and political landscape of interwar Poland. Szopieraj ran her studio for several decades at Świętojańska Street in Bydgoszcz. Yet, in earlier historiography of local photography, "J. Szopieraj" was assumed to be a male photographer. This misrecognition exemplifies broader mechanisms through which women's professional photographic practices were often rendered invisible.

The reconstruction of Jadwiga Szopieraj's photographic practice is based on a residual archive comprising press references, a small number of surviving studio photographs, and a small set of personal photographic albums. The destruction of her professional output—thousands of glass negatives and prints—around 2000 has resulted in a structural asymmetry between public, commercial production and private photographic records. Consequently, the vernacular albums constitute the primary analytical source for reconstructing Szopieraj's self-representation as a modern woman, wife, mother, and entrepreneur working through the political ruptures of mid-twentieth-century Poland – encompassing the interwar period, World War II, and the early years of the communist regime.

Drawing on feminist visual theory and recent scholarship on photographic albums and vernacular practices, the paper analyses these albums as a form of visual autobiography. Alongside self-portraits from the late 1920s, which can be read as acts of self-fashioning that challenge normative representations of women in interwar visual culture, the albums contain post-mortem photographs of Szopieraj's daughters and images documenting the funerals of her husband and son, executed by Soviet forces. These materials situate photography as a medium through which personal biography intersects with twentieth-century political history, demonstrating the methodological value of micro historical analysis for women's photographic practices.

The paper also reflects on the afterlives of such local histories. In recent years, Szopieraj and other Bydgoszcz-based women photographers have been reintroduced into scholarly and public discourse through the exhibition *Eros and Thanatos: Women Pioneers of Professional Photography in Bydgoszcz, 1888–1945* (2019) curated by Katarzyna Gębarowska. The exhibition became a reference point in Poland for how local herstories of photography can be researched and presented. Its impact extended beyond academia: a commemorative mural dedicated to Szopieraj was created in Bydgoszcz, and her biography was published in the award-winning volume *Zawód: Fotografistka*.

By foregrounding an "ordinary" studio and a "no-name" photographic practice, this paper *shifts the frame* of women's photographic history away from canonical hierarchies and exceptional figures that dominate Western-centric historiographical narratives. Jadwiga Szopieraj is not an important female figure in the history of photography—and yet her life and practice reveal how much remains hidden when we look beyond the canon. Through her modest studio work, self-portraits, and family albums, Szopieraj exemplifies the everyday strategies through which women used photography as livelihood, memory, and self-expression. Her story demonstrates that ordinary practices can leave extraordinary legacies, while also calling for new methodological pathways for integrating women's professional labor into more inclusive, global histories of photography.

Bio

Dr Katarzyna Gębarowska is a historian of photography, curator, and publisher. She holds a PhD in art history from the Institute of Art of the Polish Academy of Sciences and an MA in Gender Studies from Humboldt University in Berlin. She currently works as an assistant at the Faculty of Fine Arts, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń, Poland.

Her research focuses on the early history of photography and women's contributions to photographic culture, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. She is especially interested in feminist reinterpretations of photographic history, the recovery of forgotten female practitioners, and the intersections of gender, labour, and visual culture.

She is a contributor to the international research project *Fotografiste: Histories of Women, Work and Photography in Europe (1839–1939)*, conducted by the IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca and the Brera Academy of Fine Arts Milan (2025), as well as to the collaborative volume *Une histoire mondiale des femmes photographes* (Textuel, 2021), edited by Luce Lebart and Marie Robert. She is also the co-organiser of the 6th edition of the Fast Forward: Women in Photography conference, to be held in Toruń, Poland, in October 2025.

Beyond academia, she is the founder and director of the Vintage Photo Festival (est. 2015), one of the longest-running photography festivals dedicated to analogue photography. She is a two-time recipient of the Visual Arts Scholarship awarded by the Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.

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Panel 2.

Rethinking Photographic Canons:

Women, Networks and Practice

Grit Kallin-Fischer, Self-portrait with cigarette, around 1928, Bauhaus-Archiv Berlin

Her designated Place: Re-canonising Bauhaus Women Photographers through the Lens of Access

Carla Huttenloher
Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung, Berlin

The development of photography in Germany was paralleled by the emergence of the "New Woman" at the turn of the nineteenth century. For these modern women–those who possessed the means to be more educated and less confined by tradition–the camera served as a tool for emancipation and self-determination. The Weimar Republic saw this ideal converge with the aesthetic approaches of the "New Vision" (*Neues Sehen*) as well as the "New Objectivity" (*Neue Sachlichkeit*). The Bauhaus offers a striking site for this convergence: during its brief existence, numerous women enrolled in its photography courses, studying under Walter Peterhans, experimenting within László Moholy-Nagy's lectures, or practicing independently.

The forthcoming exhibition *New Woman, New Vision: Women Photographers of the Bauhaus*, set to open in April 2026 in Berlin, will be the first to focus on the range of women who learned photography at the famed school. While some figures–Lucia Moholy, Marianne Brandt, or Gertrud Arndt–are known, many remain almost entirely confined to archives such as the Bauhaus–Archiv, where the overlaps and distinctions in their careers and bodies of work remain unexplored. This belated recognition and visibility, taking shape in the exhibition project, confronts us–the curatorial team–with a problem: with the show seemingly overdue, does it now risk being outdated before it opens?

Female photographers who achieved professional success in the Weimar era have routinely been marginalized through retrospective canonization. Despite long having claimed authorship, women's visual practices today still risk being placed firmly within frameworks of female identity, thus limiting their agency and reinforcing their historical role as the object of the gaze rather than being analyzed as autonomous visual practices shaped by access, intention, and context. This re-inscription of the inherently "female" fails to challenge contemporary gender discourse and prevents a critical evaluation of the work, reducing women's visual practices to negotiations of identity and thereby perpetuating their designated place as forever the object-even within their own authorship. This is the a conundrum of our project: the urgent need for recognition must not come at the cost of re--essentializing the work of these women photographers. By interrogating access as both a historical condition and a critical metaphor, this paper confronts the paradox of belated recognition and highlights individual agency and access over narrative essentialism.

Economic Conditions and Educational Access

Education has always been an expensive undertaking. The first section of the paper examines the economic prerequisites of attending the Bauhaus and their implications for women photographers' participation. Although the Bauhaus was relatively inexpensive compared to other photography training institutions, it was by no means common for women in Germany to learn a profession-let alone to pursue education in the (applied) arts-not least for economic reasons. Tuition fees, living costs, and the absence of guaranteed professional outcomes shaped who could study photography at the Bauhaus and under what circumstances. In 1929, the year in which the photography class was established, the admission fee was 10 Reichsmarks, while the semester fee was 60 Reichsmarks (reduced to 50 Reichsmarks the following year). By way of comparison, photographic training through the Lette-Society cost between 250 and 300 Reichsmarks per semester in 1931. Despite these comparatively low costs, the majority of Bauhaus women photographers came from financially secure backgrounds. Rather than framing Bauhaus women as resident aliens in a male-dominated field, this paper situates them within broader socio-economic patterns that enabled or foreclosed professional and artistic trajectories.

Access to Instruction, Exchange, and Informal Learning

As the 20th century progressed, photography was gaining popularity as a profession for women. Photographic training in Germany was still mainly conducted in private studios, while institutions such as the Photographic School of the Lette-Society (founded in 1890 to promote women's education) offered a more formalized path. Beginning in 1929, the Bauhaus also offered photographic training. Based on our latest findings, at least 23 women were enrolled in or temporarily attended Walter Peterhans's photography class at the Bauhaus, constituting roughly 50% of its total student body[1]. Prior to the establishment of the department, several Bauhäusler had already been involved in photography, including Lucia Moholy and her then-husband László Moholy-Nagy, who were instrumental in early developments of the medium at the school.

Women photographers often navigated educational environments accessible specifically to them, resulting in multifaceted forms of learning both within and beyond institutional frameworks. They drew on prior experience, external training, and peer exchange. By examining who learned what from whom, the paper resists canonizing linear trajectories and instead emphasizes photography shaped by institutional access, personal initiative, and networks of opportunity. This approach allows the exhibition to present Bauhaus photography not as a unified style but as a constellation of practices emerging from uneven conditions of instruction and active authorship.

1 Back in 1994, Ute Eskildsen counted around 11 female students attending the photography class at the Bauhaus. With discoveries in the Bauhaus-Archiv and in re-examining individual biographies and taking into account newer research and publications, the number has now grown to at least 23 female students. For approximately half of these women, no further information is available at this time, other than their names.

What to See and What to Capture - Access to Motifs

From quiet self-perception, portraiture and the photographic still-life, the Bauhaus Women Photographers' works often far surpassed the limits of the Bauhaus grounds. This third section turns to photographic motifs as indicators of access to spaces, subjects, and modes of seeing. Rather than interpreting recurring themes as expressions of solely gendered sensibility, the paper links them to material and social conditions. Access to buildings, equipment, commissions, private space, societal upheaval, and political persecution shaped what could be photographed and how images circulated and remained visible through time.

This framework informs the exhibition design and curation of *New Woman, New Vision*:

Women Photographers of the Bauhaus, which foregrounds photographic motifs as evidence and results of opportunity structures. By aligning curatorial decisions with the concept of access, the exhibition proposes a reading of women's photography that refers to structural conditions while preserving individual specificity through motifs.

Considering Women Photographers: Retrospective analysis and current discourse

The final section reflects on the implications of this approach for both retrospective analysis and contemporary exhibition practice based off of *New Woman, New Vision: Women Photographers of the Bauhaus*. By foregrounding access, the exhibition advances a model of presenting women photographers that avoids both heroic recovery narratives and reductive identity frameworks. Instead, it proposes an exhibition logic that makes historical constraints visible while allowing for heterogeneous forms of agency and artistry. In doing so, the project contributes to current debates on how to exhibit women's photographic practices without re-inscribing the very exclusions such projects seek to overcome. The paper concludes by suggesting that access–understood as a historically contingent and critically productive category–offers a viable pathway for rethinking photography as a democratic visual medium in the present.

Bio

Carla Maria Huttenloher is an art and image scholar specializing in photographic media, research-based art, and digital imagery. After earning a Master of Arts in Art History and Visual Studies from Humboldt-University in Berlin, she completed a master's thesis on the spatial-visual affinities between John Heartfield's photomontages and digital memes, influenced by Walter Benjamin's writings on reproducibility and remembrance.

She began her career at the Bauhaus-Archiv / Museum für Gestaltung in Berlin with a curatorial and academic traineeship, where she co-curated an exhibition on Nail Art and co-initiated the event series Haltung üben. The series links historical foundations with contemporary political questions. After completing her traineeship, she remained at the Bauhaus-Archiv. Currently, she serves as assistant curator for the upcoming exhibition New Woman, New Vision: Women Photographers of the Bauhaus, scheduled to open in April 2026 at the Museum of Photography in Berlin.

Her research explores the reproducibility of images and image fragments, politically motivated art in the Weimar Republic, and the circulation of photographic media in digital spaces. Her work is guided by the belief that museums are political spaces that hold social responsibility.

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Ringl + Pit (Grete Stern and Ellen Auerbach)
Pétrole Hahn, Berlin 1931
Gelatin silver print
9.25 × 11 inches
© Ringl + Pit
Courtesy Robert Mann Gallery, New York

The creative challenge of Stern and Auerbach's Ringl + Pit studio: a model of female emancipation in German Advertising photography (1930–1933)

Arianna Novaga
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The Ringl + Pit photography studio, founded in Berlin in 1930 by Grete Stern and Ellen Auerbach, stands as an emblematic and transdisciplinary case study in the visual landscape of the Weimar Republic. It was a brief but original, all-female venture that took place in a historical and cultural context defined by intense creative effervescence, but also by the political, social, and economic instability peculiar to Europe at that time.

Photography geared towards commercial communication was experiencing unprecedented growth inthose years thanks to the increasing spread of mass media and the echo of consumerist models coming from the United States, where, between the 1920s and 1930s, a true genre had been born, Advertising Photography. It quickly became an autonomous discipline, linked to the growth of the industrial economy and in line with the logic of capitalism, consumer culture, market massification, and the need to construct a visual imagery capable of seducing consumers. From its origins, it was characterized by an approach inclined toward the dissemination of values such as modernity, well-being, efficiency, and individual affirmation within a mercantile dimension.

In Germany in particular, the evolution of this photographic genre followed a specific trajectory: while sharing with its US counterparts the same drive towards progress and visual innovation, the typical spectacular and captivating emphasis of commercial photography from across the Atlantic, was soon surpassed by the need for total formal clarity, compositional rigor, and the search for greater functionality, capable of integrating product promotion within a broader cultural and social purpose. The Bauhaus approach, with its ideal synthesis of art, technology, and industry, promoted a conception of Advertising Photography as a conscious visual project, in which form and function had to coincide. Similarly, *Neue Sachlichkeit* (New Objectivity) promoted a detached and anti-sentimental gaze, rejecting rhetorical emphasis in favor of a direct, neutral representation that was deeply ideological in its appeal to efficiency and order in modern society.

The hegemonic aesthetic paradigm, codified by structural links with modernist patterns, was then strongly connoted by the androcentric perspective of a male leadership that competed for productive and discursive authority in the artistic field, dominating the sector.

While the *Neue Frau* (New Woman) was establishing itself as a socio-cultural icon of change - partly in response to the post-war crisis that had opened up unexpected opportunities for women to enter the workforce, including in photography - figures such as László Moholy-Nagy, Walter Peterhans, Albert Renger-Patzsch and August Sander, who had constructed a visual system anchored in a hierarchical perspective and strictly regulated by a male sensibility, marginalizing female creative processes.

Although there was no shortage of female photographers, working practices remained systematically subject to male decision-making authority, confirming a condition of subordination that inhibited and undermined any practical and theoretical autonomy.

In this context, still refractory to complete female self-determination, the creation of a photographic studio run entirely by two women was not only an alternative to the prevailing norms but also a true act of cultural resistance that critically redefined the relationship between gender, image, and consumption, taking on the meaning of an act of professional and expressive empowerment, as well as social emancipation.

The Germans Stern and Auerbach, taking over Walter Peterhans's studio in Berlin to create, in effect, a truly heterotopic space, introduced a radical and unconventional vision through an innovative language based on the systematic use of techniques such as photomontage and collage, capable of overturning the descriptive and functionalist approach used in the traditional representation of products.

Their work was a masterful synthesis of the principles of the historical avant-garde, particularly Surrealism and Dadaism, translating them into iconic visuals that, through a skillful and unprecedented use of irony, gave advertising images a new semantic power.

While German male photographers tended to celebrate structure and order with a detached and sometimes sterile style, female photographers Auerbach and Stern used the product being sold as a pretext for a visual narrative that questioned, often humorously, women's identity and consumer fetishes. Their work succeeded in transforming the universe of commercial objects into a territory ofaesthetic challenge, countering the rigidity of the male vision with an expressive fluidity capable of redeeming women from their historical exclusion from modernism.

Stern and Auerbach's experience can also be interpreted as a critical reflection on the construction ofgender identity and the stereotypes conveyed by visual culture: in contrast to the predominant iconography that reduced the female figure to a passive and decorative object, the two photographers used symbolic elements and metaphorical constructions to refute the artificial and culturally mediated dimension of female subjectivity.

Although set in a commercial context, their images offered an innovative meta-advertising interpretation of gender roles, revealing a proto-feminist awareness capable of infiltrating the visual mainstream of that era. Their collaborative model, although limited to only three years (the advent of Hitler's National Socialism forced them to leave Germany), constituted an implicit challenge to the patriarchal ideology of the male artist as a solitary genius, affirming an idea of shared and participatory female authority, in which the emotional and creative spheres intersected.

The Ringl + Pit legacy not only contributed significantly to reshaping the standards of international advertising aesthetics but also opened up a new space for the professional legitimization of women in a key sector of modern visual culture.

Bio

Arianna Novaga is an Associate Professor of Photography at the IUSVE University in Venice and Verona. Her research lies at the intersection of visual and performing arts, focusing in particular on the relationships between photography and theater, photography and visual-virtual communication, and photography and ecology. She has participated in numerous conferences in Italy and abroad, and has published in national and international academic journals and books for publishers Cambridge Scholar, Castlelvecchi, Bulzoni, Mimesis, Meltemi, Libreria Universitaria, Antigua, DeriveApprodi, and Édition du Septentrion. She is a member of the editorial board of the academic journals «IUSVEducation» and «RSF-Rivista di Studi di Fotografia», and has participated in Italian and international research projects, including the recent Performing the Gaze**, Universidade Lusófona. She is also a photographer, exhibition curator, and visual dramaturg.**

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L'ŒUVRE INIMAGINABLE D'UN FACTEUR RURAL

EN FRANCE, DANS LA DRÔME, EXISTE

UN PALAIS FANTASTIQUE

CHEF-D'ŒUVRE INCONNU CONSTRUIT PAR UN SEUL HOMME

PAR JACQUES BRUNIUS

FERDINAND CHEVAL 1836-1924

Palais Idéal (façades Ouest et Nord).

Nº 449 VU P. 1249

"Un palais fantastique." Article in *Vu*, 21 October 1936, Issue 449, pages 1248-49. Photographs by Denise Bellon, Jacques B. Brunius, Ferdinand Cheval, and an uncredited photographer. Source: Gallica / Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris.

Photo-press, photomontage, photobook: Denise Bellon and the circulation of images (1934–39)

Bridget Hardiman
University of St Andrews

This paper examines of the work of French photographer Denise Bellon through the multiple afterlives of her photographs. It proposes a research approach centred on the circulation of her images, rather than strictly an authorial archive, to reinterpret the career of a woman photographer in this period. Bellon, whose career was most active between 1930 and 1960, was a co-founder and contributing photographer at the Alliance Photo agency. She worked closely with the French surrealist group and her photographs of surrealist exhibitions are frequently reproduced still today. She also often photographed subjects of labour in France, aligning with humanist photographic trends. As such, her photographs intersected with multiple visual categories and appeared in a wide range of publications, yet her work is rarely discussed in scholarship. A diverse photographic portfolio was often necessary for a photographer at a time when the profession expanded rapidly. I argue that the multiplicity of her photographic practice was intentional and maximised the circulation of her work.

However, I also argue that this breadth was a condition of her obscurity in later scholarship on the history of photography. This lack of accreditation was linked, in part, to the organizational and commercial nature of Alliance Photo. There is no systematic record of where Bellon's work was published and Alliance Photo's archives were destroyed at the start of the Second World War. Today, Bellon's published work needs to be actively located, often by following traces rather than starting from a coherent, linear whole. A different kind of historic approach, one that moves away from strict categories, is necessary to revitalize her work.

I analyse two examples from Bellon's early work to demonstrate this approach and to emphasise the circulation capacity of her photography. Both examples rely on the location of images in publications of the period and recent exhibition catalogues focused on other artists. These examples represent two aspects of Bellon's work: the depiction of agricultural labour and the imagery of surrealist architecture. Examining these together underscores the breadth that is characteristic of Bellon's career and her photographic subject matter. These photographs also reflect her extensive political, cultural, and intellectual pursuits.

The first example follows a photograph of agricultural labour in a photomural and a travel photobook. Bellon photographed a farmer spreading fertilizer on his crops in the mid-1930s and, as a part of Alliance Photo's stock images, it featured in various publications in the following decade. I focus on its appearance in a photomural at the 1937 World's Fair in Paris and in a photo-book about international travel, later published in 1941. In both examples, I argue, the farmer's image is interpreted as an icon of agricultural labour that is manipulated for the visual aims of each publication. In the case of the photomural, it is presented alongside other photographs and statistics to spotlight the economic importance of French agriculture to attendees of the fair. In the travel photo-book, it is separated from any connection to France and generalised as an image of the idyllic countryside. In Bellon's archive, the photograph also represents a career-long interest in French labour and artisanal work.

The second example examines Bellon's multiple photographs of the Ideal Palace of Facteur Cheval that were incorporated into surrealist photomontage, film, exhibition walls, and the French photo-press. I first demonstrate the surrealist interpretations of Bellon's photographs and how she photographed the space in her archival records. I discuss how these images circulated in surrealist networks and the French press. I argue that these were documentary images that inspired further surrealist elaborations, including the experience of the found object and the encounter with 'fantastic' architecture. In comparison to the photomural example above, other artists used Bellon's photographs as a basis for photomontage and film montage. Furthermore, the photographs were published in the French press in order to draw attention to the degradation of the site, contributing to its future preservation as a cultural landmark.

These two examples highlight some of the many possible interpretations of Bellon's work, whether as individual photographs or as a series, as it circulated in French visual culture of the late 1930s and beyond. The examples underscore Bellon's photographs as both a product of an individual author and images with various collaborative applications. They also recentre Bellon's name alongside these photographs, some of which were not credited, sometimes intentionally, in their original publication or display. This approach is more inclusive of photographic careers that were characterized by a defiance of categorization and can be utilised to resituate women photographers and other understudied contributors in the history of photography.

Bio

Bridget Hardiman is a doctoral candidate in the School of Art History at the University of St Andrews. Her research concerns the exchanges between the historic avant-garde, photography, and print culture in modern France. Her dissertation project studies the intersection of these exchanges in the work of Denise Bellon (1902-1999). **This research has been supported by the Society for the Study of French History (UK), the Peter E. Palmquist Memorial Fund for Historical Photographic Research (US), and the Institut Giacometti - École des Modernités (France). The latter awarded her a Doctoral Research Residency in 2024.**

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Collage, Ducks with Heads of Women,
attributed to Kate E.Gough (active 1860s-080s).
Print, watercolour and ink. England, c.1870.
V&A, London

Cut Out: Feminist Photographic Collage and Women's Visual Practices, 1840–1960

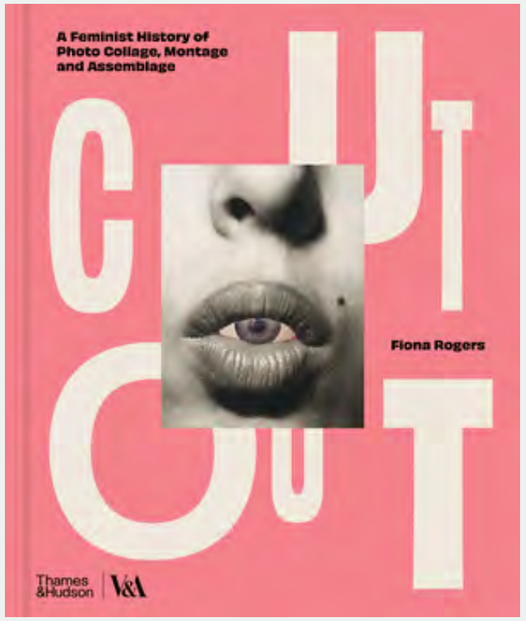
Fiona Rogers
V&A, London

This paper examines the relationship between nineteenth-century women's photographic practices and the genealogy of feminist photomontage and collage, drawing on the critical framework developed in my forthcoming publication *Cut Out: A Feminist History of Photo Collage, Montage and Assemblage*. Female artists have long employed collage to reflect the ways in which identity is often constructed from conflicting, contrasting, and contradictory parts. By situating photography within this lineage, the paper foregrounds femmage as a radical reworking of craft traditions historically associated with women, reframing cutting, pasting, and assemblage as resilient feminist methodologies within political and artistic practice.

The paper offers a critical rethinking of women's contributions to the history of photography and the role of photography in women's lives, challenging hierarchical separations between "photography" and "collage." It traces how practices traditionally relegated to the realm of feminine craft evolved into explicitly feminist strategies, examining how photographic material was cut, reassembled, and repurposed in women's visual work from nineteenth-century albums and domestic image-making to interwar avant-garde networks, leading toward the emergence of second-wave feminist art. Through selected case studies, the paper demonstrates how women mobilised photographic images within collage and montage to negotiate authorship, subjectivity, and representation.

Particular attention is given to photographic materiality, the use of found or discarded images, and the significance of domestic space in shaping women's cultural production. By locating cut-and-paste photographic practices within Victorian women's everyday lives, this research challenges dominant narratives that position collage as a modernist invention of Cubist artists such as Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque in 1912. Instead, it argues for a longer, gendered history of photographic collage rooted in women's vernacular and creative practices.

Responding directly to the aims of *Shifting the Frame*, this paper contributes to feminist historiographies that recover overlooked women's photographic practices and unsettle male-centred accounts of photographic development. By connecting archival evidence with an expanded definition of collage, it highlights how women's historical photographic practices enacted modes of visual fragmentation, reassembly, and critique that anticipate later feminist art interventions and contemporary debates around representation and authorship.



Cut Out. A Feminist History of Photo Collage, Montage and Assemblage, Fiona Rogers, Thames &Hudson, 2026
— book cover

Bio

Fiona Rogers is the V&A Parasol Foundation Curator of Women in Photography, a curatorial programme at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London. Rogers has been involved in photography for the past 20 years and is the founder of Firecracker, a platform supporting female photographers since 2011. She is the co-author of 'Firecrackers: Female Photographers Now' (Thames & Hudson, 2017) and the author of the forthcoming book, 'Cut Out: A Feminist History of Photo Collage, Montage and Assemblage' (V&A, Thames & Hudson, spring 2026).

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Panel 3.

Class, Gender and Amateur Photography

Reproduction of one of Maria Pia's photographs at the First National Exhibition of Amateur Photographs, at the Lisbon Geographical Society, from 31 December 1899 to 22 January 1900. In *Boletim Photographico*, fevereiro de 1900, p. 28.

"A Photographic Lab of One's Own": Maria Pia Fecit — A case study unveiling the class-gender [and racial] biases of the official (His)story of photography

"But, you may say, we asked you to speak about women and fiction — what has that got to do with a room of one's own? (...) A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction."[1]
Virgínia Woolf

Teresa Mendes Flores
ICNOVA – NOVA University of Lisbon

Maria Pia of Savoy (1847–1911)[2] had no shortage of rooms to call her own, where she could dedicate herself to the arts. Her status as queen granted her such quarters, described in great detail in February 1865 by the architect responsible for redecorating the Ajuda Palace, Joaquim Possidónio Narciso da Silva (1806-1896), who was also a photographer. Showcasing Maria Pia's good taste: 'let us admire the most charming, rich and tasteful things, entering the rooms of Her Majesty the Queen' (Silva, 1865). In this passage, the architect does not describe the upstairs painting studio, nor the cupboards and various storage rooms adjacent to these spaces, where her painting and photography materials were stored and mixed. Conversely, a certain economic independence arose from her royal status, with an income allocated to her personal royal household and an administrative manager under her authority. The Torre do Tombo archives include several invoices for the queen's purchases, including costly painting and photography materials (cameras, sensitive plates, films, chemicals, laboratory equipment, etc.), acquired from leading Portuguese and foreign suppliers specialising in these fields (Andrade, 2011; Jardim, 2016).

1 "But, you may ask, we asked you to come and talk about women and fiction – what does that have to do with a room of one's own? (…) A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction," Virginia Woolf (1931). *A Room of One's Own*. First edition 1929. London: Hogarth Press.

Maria Pia was an amateur painter and photographer, like many of her family members, but her images were seldom seen outside the home environment.

Although she fulfilled two of the basic conditions, according to Virginia Woolf, for a woman — or anyone, in fact — to pursue an artistic activity (privacy and financial independence), Maria Pia was never recognised as an "artist queen", something that, despite various constraints, her son, King Carlos, achieved[3]. In the field of photography, Maria Pia gained some notoriety, participating in at least one photographic exhibition where she won a prize (out of competition) and attracted some attention from the press. This was the First National Exhibition of Amateur Photographs, held in the 'Portugal' hall of the Geographical Society in Lisbon from 31 December 1899 to 22 January 1900.

However, it took 116 years from that date for her 'artistic work', as it was recognised and identified, to be displayed in an exhibition[4]. This was *Um Olhar Real* (A Royal View). *The artistic works of Queen Maria Pia — drawing, watercolour, and photography* — took place at the King Luís Painting Gallery in the Ajuda National Palace, between 16 December 2016 and 21 April 2017.

When actively practising painting and photography, as in Maria Pia's case, women tend to face dense layers of invisibility and devaluation, mainly because their work is defined within the private and domestic sphere[5]. The impact of this perception often persists in historical memory itself (Leandro, 2011; Vicente, 2012). It is worth noting that today we acknowledge a substantial collection of drawings, paintings, and photographs by the queen, yet even more than a hundred years after her death in 1911, this aspect remained undervalued.

Made by Maria Pia

'Maria Pia … fecit' or simply 'MP F' is the signature inscribed in pencil on the back of many photographic images in her collection. This care with the signature underscores the value she attributes to photography and shows how important she considers it as an independent art form. This attention extends to her other artistic practices, such as her work as a draughtswoman and painter, especially in watercolour. It also suggests that Maria Pia certainly did not share the famous view of the French poet Baudelaire, who believed photography was just an auxiliary technique, a 'servant of the arts and sciences' (Baudelaire, 1987). Had she thought it merely an auxiliary technique of painting, Maria Pia would likely not have been concerned with asserting her authorship. It appears, therefore, that photography held a separate, autonomous place as a plastic medium within the queen's artistic expressions, which also included sculpture.

There is at least one known photographic laboratory: that of the Royal Chalet in Estoril. While the nature of this relationship with the laboratory is hard to pinpoint, in this paper, we will explore some coeval discourses on women in laboratory practice.

2 Maria Pia of Savoy (1847–1911), fifth daughter of Victor Emmanuel (1820–1878), King of Sardinia, and Maria Adelaide of Habsburg-Lorraine (1822–1855), Archduchess of Austria, was born in Turin on 16 October 1847. She married King Luís I of Portugal by proxy in that city on 27 September 1862. The young queen, aged 14, arrived in Lisbon on 5 October of that year for the religious wedding in the church of São Domingos, near Rossio. She lived in Portugal for 48 years. She left after the establishment of the Republic, precisely on 5 October 1910. She died the following year in Italy.

3 Historians Raquel Henriques da Silva and Maria de Jesus Monge have dedicated a book to the paintings of King Carlos (Silva and Monge, 2007). They refer to his recognition during his lifetime.

4 I am awaiting access to the collection, which contains images, glass negatives, diaries of the Queen's servants, letters, albums, and various documents related to photography (such as purchase invoices, etc.). We are therefore using the material available online at MatrizPix, which essentially corresponds to the images published in the exhibition catalogue and the references concerning image materiality found therein.

5 On the question of separate spheres, see McLaughlin, 2004; Martins, 2005; Camps, 2012; Pateman, 2014.

Bio

Teresa Mendes Flores is an assistant professor in the Department of CommunicaGon Sciences at Universidade Nova de Lisboa and a researcher at the InsGtute of CommunicaGon at Universidade Nova de Lisboa – ICNOVA. She researches the histories and theories of photography and opGcal media from a perspecGve that combines media archaeology, cultural studies, gender studies, and decolonial pracGces. She was the principal invesGgator of the project «O Impulso Fotográfico» on the Portuguese Colonial Visual Archive. She served as one of the curators for the project's final exhibiGon, which has been on display at the Museum of Natural History and Science of Lisbon University since 2022. She is interested in how arGsGc and academic research on visuality contribute to decolonial pracGces and new criGcal theories, parGcularly concerning the legacies of colonialism and patriarchy.

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Cover of the catalogue of the 19th International Salon of Photographic Art (1958)

Women Competitors at the International Salon of Photographic Art (1937–1958): presence, networks and (in)visibility

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University of Porto

The International Salon of Photographic Art, organised annually by the Grémio Português de Fotografia between 1937 and 1958, was one of the most significant platforms for sociability, experimentation and consecration of photography in twentieth-century Portugal. Integrated into the cultural policy of the Estado Novo and linked to international networks that would later converge in the FIAP, the SIAF functioned simultaneously as a meeting place for amateurs and professionals, a showcase for so-called "late pictorialism", and a laboratory in which themes, styles and techniques aligned with official taste were tested – but also, at times, discreetly put under tension.

Drawing on an original database constructed through the systematic cross-referencing of printed catalogues, lists of entrants, prize records and photographic reproductions, this paper examines the presence of women photographers within this competitive circuit. Initial quantification identified fifteen female competitors, originating mainly from Lisbon, Porto, Oeiras and Vila Nova de Gaia, but also from other urban contexts undergoing modernisation. Among them stand out figures such as Antoinette Cazalis, Clarita Hitzemann and Maria Luísa Huet Viana Jorge, who appear more frequently in the catalogues, receive honourable mentions or have their images reproduced as plates, thereby becoming key names for rethinking women's participation in salon photography in Portugal.

The paper is structured around three main axes. The first concerns **presence and visibility**. It presents comparative data on male and female participation (numbers of entries, regularity over the years, accepted works and published photographs), highlighting the statistically minority position of women and, at the same time, the persistence of certain individual trajectories. It seeks to understand the extent to which these authors occupy marginal positions – relegated to genres considered "minor" – or manage to contest the symbolic centre of the Salon through the awarding of prizes, the choice of titles, or the critical valorisation recorded in catalogue texts.

The second axis addresses **networks and sociability**. Starting from their associative links to the Grémio Português de Fotografia and other photo-clubs, the paper discusses how these women photographers moved between the domestic sphere, amateur circles and the international arenas of salon culture. The presence of some of these authors in foreign salons, their participation in women's sections of cultural associations, or their integration into urban elites – through liberal professions, family alliances or diplomatic circuits – makes it possible to relate the SIAF to a broader geography that exceeds the national scale and inscribes Portugal within transnational networks of artistic legitimisation.

The third axis examines **practices and strategies of legitimisation**. Through close analysis of titles, motifs and framing, the study identifies the photographic genres favoured by these women: intimate portraiture, scenes of childhood and bourgeois leisure, still lifes, but also urban views, experiments with light and shadow, and compositions that clearly aspire to artistic status. The ways in which prints are presented (format, technical processes, inclusion within series) and their reception – both in catalogues and in the specialised press – are read as attempts to claim a place within a canon of "artistic photography" still strongly dominated and defined by male actors.

The study is situated within the broader field of women's photographic practices between 1840 and 1960, seeking to connect the Portuguese case to international debates on the historiographical invisibilisation of women photographers, the unequal distribution of opportunities, and the uneven circulation of images and authorship. Rather than simply "adding" fifteen names to an already established gallery, the paper questions the very mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion that structure institutional circuits of photography in Portugal: rules of admission, prize categories, hierarchies between photographic genres, and criteria for selection for reproduction in the catalogue.

By recentering analysis on the experience of these competitors – often reduced to footnotes or erased altogether from the dominant narrative – the paper speaks directly to the aims of the colloquium. It contributes to shifting the focus of the history of Portuguese photography away from a narrow axis of male "masters" towards a wider field of practices, sociabilities and female subjectivities. In doing so, the SIAF emerges not only as a space of official consecration, but also as a privileged archive through which to observe the fissures, negotiations and resistances by which women constructed, asserted and contested their place within the visual culture of the twentieth century.

Bio

Nuno Resende (1978, Cinfães, Portugal) is an Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the University of Porto, where he is a member of the Department of Heritage Sciences and Techniques. He holds a PhD in Portuguese Art History and conducts research in the fields of History of Photography, Heritage and Visual Studies. His work focuses on visual culture and photographic practices in Portugal, with particular emphasis on the relationship between image, territory and memory. He coordinates interdisciplinary projects on the inventory, curation and social uses of photography.

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Palmira Puig photographing her nieces,
Arenys de Mar.
Marcel Giró, 1954.
© Arxiu Marcel Giró–Palmira Puig
/ Toni Ricart Giró

Visual dialogues between Barcelona and São Paulo: The Work of Palmira Puig (1937–1980)

Nayara Fernandes Coelho
University of Barcelona

The life and work of Palmira Puig (1912–1978) are reexamined through the lens of exile, collaboration, and modernist experimentation. A Catalan photographer whose artistic trajectory unfolded across Europe and Latin America, Puig left Spain following the Spanish Civil War and settled in Brazil, where she developed a significant photographic practice in dialogue with the cultural and artistic environment of São Paulo. Together with her partner Marcel Giró, she played a central role in the renewal of modern photography promoted by the Foto Cine Clube Bandeirante during the mid-twentieth century. Her work reveals a sustained engagement with abstraction, formal experimentation, and the transnational circulation of visual languages between Barcelona and São Paulo.

Photography occupied a central place in Puig's artistic formation from an early stage. The photographic practice she developed during the 1930s in Catalonia was rooted in experimentation and collective observation rather than individual authorship. Personal albums from the pre–Civil War period document landscapes, portraits, and scenes of everyday life captured during excursions and informal social encounters. These images demonstrate careful attention to geometry, contrast, texture, and light, situating photography as both an aesthetic and relational practice. The photographs function not merely as private records but as a space of visual inquiry in which lived experience and formal exploration converge.

This early collaborative approach became a foundation for Puig's later work in Brazil. The visual strategies developed in Catalonia, particularly the interest in abstraction, framing, and materiality, resonate with the photographic language cultivated within the modernist milieu of São Paulo. Rather than suggesting a linear stylistic evolution, emphasis is placed on continuity through displacement, highlighting how exile enabled the reconfiguration of visual concerns across different cultural contexts. The dialogue between Barcelona and São Paulo is thus understood as a process of visual negotiation shaped by mobility and exchange.

Recent studies have begun to examine more closely Palmira Puig's role within this shared photographic practice. Research focused on photography and women's memory in Catalonia, particularly by Marina Pallàs Caturla, has been instrumental in expanding the understanding of Puig's participation as an active interlocutor in the construction of images. As Pallàs Caturla has argued, Puig's work opens "a crack in a traditionally androcentric historiography and worldview,"allowing for a reassessment of women's contributions to the formation of modern visual culture. These perspectives do not seek to isolate Puig's work from that of Marcel Giró, but rather to emphasize the collaborative conditions under which their photographic language emerged.

The transnational dimension of Puig's work is inseparable from her biographical and political background. Born in Tàrrega (Lleida) in 1912, Palmira Puig Ximénez grew up in a family deeply committed to republican ideals, secular values, and cultural participation. Her father, Gaietà Puig Piqué, was an influential figure in local republican politics, while her mother, Antònia Ximénez Oliva, was actively involved in social and feminist movements. This environment shaped Puig's political awareness and fostered a strong sense of civic responsibility that informed both her public engagement and her artistic practice.

In 1933, Puig collaborated with her mother in the founding of the *Grup Femení d'Unió Republicana*, serving as its secretary. Through this organization, they promoted a manifesto advocating women's active participation in political life during the Second Spanish Republic. The manifesto framed political engagement as a civic duty and articulated a vision of justice and equality dependent on women's involvement. This political positioning resonates with Puig's photographic practice, particularly in its emphasis on cooperation, dialogue, and shared authorship. The Spanish Civil War marked a decisive rupture in Puig's life and in the cultural environment that had sustained her early photographic activity. In 1936, Marcel Giró volunteered for the *Regiment Pirinenc* of the Generalitat, while Puig experienced the confiscation of her family home and the collapse of public life in Tàrrega. The war brought an abrupt end to the cultural effervescence of the Second Republic and initiated a trajectory of exile and reconstruction that would lead the couple to Brazil.

In São Paulo, Puig became part of a dynamic artistic network shaped by migration, institutional frameworks, and modernist experimentation, particularly through the Foto Cine Clube Bandeirante. Her photographic work during this period reflects an engagement with abstraction, rhythm, and formal structure, while maintaining continuity with earlier visual concerns developed in Catalonia. Photography emerges here as a symbolic space of mediation between memory and innovation, connecting different territories through shared visual languages.

Drawing upon personal albums, specialized magazines, and photographic archives held in São Paulo, Barcelona, and New York, the research analyzes how Puig's exile fostered not only displacement but also the formation of new artistic and professional networks. By foregroundingcollaboration, mobility, and transnational exchange, the relevance of Palmira Puig's work for understanding the cultural dialogues that shaped modern photography across the Atlantic is underscored.

Palmira Puig. Casal (Eivissa),
c. 1953.
© Arxiu Marcel Giró–Palmira Puig
/ Toni Ricart Giró

Bio

Nayara Fernandes Coelho is a Doctoral Researcher in Society and Culture – University of Barcelona, co-supervised by Dr. Núria Peist and Dr. Núria F. Rius. Member of the GRACMON Research Group | FISDUR Fellow. Her research focuses on the intersections between modern photography, exile, and cultural circulation between Spain and Brazil during the 20th century. She has presented her work at international conferences and carried out research stays at institutions such as The Metropolitan Museum of Art (MET) and New York University (NYU), where she investigated photographic archives related to Marcel Giró and Palmira Puig.

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Rosalie Chichester (1865–1949).
Arlington Court archive/National Trust

Bringing Rosalie into Focus — An unexplored amateur photographer at Arlington Court, Devon, UK

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Dr Barbara Wood
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Rosalie Chichester (1865-1949) was born at Arlington Court, Devon in the rural, far southwest of England. A privileged landowner, she was mindful of the duties of her social and local position, a political conservative and supporter of traditional roles. She was in addition an accomplished and technically explorative amateur photographer.

The Chichester family trace their ancestry back to the 11th century, arriving in Devon in the 14th century and settling at Arlington Court in 1534. The current house was commissioned in 1820. Rosalie inherited the estate in 1886 aged 21. On her death in 1949 it was bequeathed, along with associated buildings and collections to the National Trust for England, Wales & Northern Ireland (NT). This paper explores the story of Rosalie Chichester and her photography. Skilful and technically explorative her achievements have often unrecognised and underappreciated, and her work underutilised.

An only child, Rosalie was educated at home and through extended travel on her father's luxury yacht. Although heir to an extensive estate and presented at court in1885, her social station, parental choices and her limited education often left her isolated from those around her. She remained unmarried, but in 1886, aged 21, took on the management of the Arlington estate along with considerable debts left by her father. When these lessened, she was able to return to travelling, visiting Australia and New Zealand in the early 1920's recording the journeys in her diary, through sketches and paintings and in photography. Her albums are a window into a different time and into the life of a woman whose responsibilities were considerable but who equally had time to fill and the funds to support herself.

Rosalie was self-taught, inventive and explorative although she operated within expected categories. Her 52 albums, along with a number of single prints, demonstrate her trials with different exposures, lighting, composition and processes. Her work also covered a variety of subjects including still life plant images, portraiture, landscapes and it recorded elements of the domestic life of her home. Rosalie had her work published and won awards including the Practical Photographers Award.

Rosalie was a talented amateur photographer. Her legacy continues through this work with her photographic collection providing an insight into who she was as a person. She did not leave diaries, so these albums are key to try and understand her. It is fascinating to explore not only the techniques she chose to photograph and print but also the way she compiled and captioned the albums. The moments she chose to capture and why they caught her attention. She made covers for some of the albums as well, embroidering her initials onto the cover.

Rosalie's albums of photographs have survived partly because of limited interest in her craft and her work and partly due to the transfer of collections to the NT. While fundamental requirements of storage and a stable environment have been addressed, visitors and researchers have had little opportunity to explore the material. As with other extensive photographic collections, notably within albums, there are challenges in creating displays that are engaging and that can showcase the range and extent of work while also safeguarding the original photographs.

We have recently secured funding to conserve and digitise Rosalie's photographic albums as well as catalogue them fully for the first time. Alongside, we are developing a programme of research, exhibition and public engagement. We intend to reassess her place as a woman finding expression through an art form that required not only the creative understanding that might be expected of her sex and social position, but also technical and scientific expertise. We want to contextualise her achievements amidst a global perspective on women photographers, and we are keen to connect with colleagues engaged in similar work across this period. Rosalie's legacy is fundamental to our project, inspiring the next generation of photographers through programming and events, and using Rosalie's images and story as the foundation to grow on.

Future ambitions at Arlington are focussed on landscape, ecology and the development of the important picturesque landscape. However, we want Rosalie to be at the heart of any experience at the estate. The opportunity to think about the future of the collection has inspired cross team development including informing wider working practice and the care, maintenance and appearance of all elements of the Estate, not just the House and objects. It is the moment for her personality and her passions to shine and for her skills and her place in late Victorian/Edwardian photography to be recognised.

Bios

Jess McKenzie has ten years' experience in the heritage sector, working in visitor experience, collections care, curator and community engagement. As a Collections and House Manager for the National Trust, she is involved in researching, interpreting and presenting the stories of Arlington Court and the National Trust Carriage Museum for visitors as well as caring for the collection.

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Barbara Wood has an extensive background in heritage, having worked in National, Regional and community museums in the United Kingdom, in Arts, community development, archaeology and historic site development.
As a Cultural Heritage Curator for the National Trust, she is involved with all areas of the operation of historic properties, supporting the research, interpretation and presentation of collections. Her own research interests are focussed on material culture, interpretation and on the interconnectivity and operation of heritage disciplines.

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Panel 4.

Archives, Vernacular Images and Colonial Contexts

Fig. [1] Silberschmidt, A. 2025.
From the *Only When Gone* series.

Dawn’s long gone, fields torn bare
Within the earth, lain unmarked there
What happened here, by no means right
Same’s fate befalls, on this night

Azura Silberschmidt
independent researcher

In the late 90s, in the rural settlement of Halifax in Far North Queensland, Australia, I lived in a house which stood between rows of sugarcane. Several times per year broad spectrum pesticides were released by an overhead plane dispersing toxins into the atmosphere and ecosystem (Boonupara et al., 2023). Today, the combined area of sugarcane fields in Australia makes up a region around 40% of Portugal’s permanent cropland (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2021). The continued use of herbicides to kill broadleaf plants and insecticides to cull the native greyback grub *Dermolepida albohirtum*, permits supply for a global demand (Devlin & Lewis, 2011). In the framework of my Master thesis, at the beginning of 2025, I travelled back to Australia for the first time in nearly 20 years to analyse the colonial imagery of Harriett Brims archived within the State Library of Queensland, Brisbane (Brims, 1890–1930). I then travelled back to the sugarcane fields to make contemporary images from the imagined perspective of different morethan-human actors. Once back in Switzerland, I worked via a peer review process within the infrastructure of the Transversal Design Master program at the Academy of Art and Design Basel FHNW to construct critically fabulated written vignettes for the morethanhuman actors. “Rainbow Serpent, Rustling Wind” is the compilation of the body of contemporary works I exhibited in BelleVue – Ort für Fotografie *place for photography* in Basel, Switzerland in 2025, after my graduation of the Transversal Design Master program.

Harriett Brims, one of the first white settlers to the Herbert River district, operated on a commercial scale between 1898 to 1914 (Lebart & Robert, 2022, p. 66). Her 1890–1930 collection of around 600 glass plate negatives includes domestic family portraits of settlers, ethnographic images of Australian First Nations and documentation of Melanesian Islanders forced to labour the sugarcane fields. While on the surface appearing to be documentary, the images are deeply embedded in hierarchies of race and gender. Brims’ position as both complicit participant and marginalised figure complicates her authorship, prompting a multifacetted questioning of the role women played in the production of colonial era photography. Engaging with the method of Critical Fabulation, articulated by Saidiya Hartman in “Venus in Two Acts” (2008), this work explores the roles of curation and passive viewership on the complicit reproduction of images which embody settler colonial practices (Samudzi, 2020). Contexualised applied field research engages with Brims’ practice asking if and how her images can be reworked to resist voyeurism, erasure and the reinscription of violence.

Analysing and reworking colonial era imagery is a feminist practice confronting image authorship, misrecognition: the false identification of the person portrayed, the obscurity of an image's meaning or its lack of contextualisation (Eileraas, 2003, pp. 809–812). Brims' images document everyday life at the turn of the 20th century, marking the beginning of European settlement in the Northeastern region of Queensland. This period overlaps with the abduction of more than 62,000 Melanesian Islanders forced to work the sugarcane fields between 1863 to 1904 (Haxton, 2017). Lack of explanation about Brims' positionality to the images and her privileged access to production infrastructure leaves the question of why the images were taken unanswered. Around 20 years after the final images from Brims' collection were taken, "Mulheres do Meu País" *The Women of My Country* was published, providing a landmark example of early feminist photographic authorship at the level of editorial framing in which representational power was reclaimed through situated and explicitly contextualised depiction (Lamas, 1948). Maria Lamas, a Portuguese writer, journalist, feminist and activist, asserted editorial control by annotating the images throughout the publication, directing how they were to be read and understood and foregrounding women's lived realities against dominant visual narratives (Cabral, 2017).

I created "Rainbow Serpent, Rustling Wind" (2025) in response to a plurality of perspectives impacted by sugarcane industrialisation between the 1860s to 1940s and today. Four photographic series combine image making with Critical Fabulation: the writing of fictional narratives informed by research in and out of the archive. "Fields To Fables" saw me return to the fields where I was born, where the images of Brims' were taken one century earlier. Five consecutive vignettes situate interwoven relationships of cane toads, sugarcane beetles, pesticides and figures of Australian First Nations cosmology Anjea, the goddess of fertility and the Rainbow Serpent, the giver and taker of life. "Only When Gone" is made up of three reworked historic images taken by Brims where I anonymised the Melanesian labourers leaving behind the blank silhouette of their human forms. My aim being to shift the focus of the viewer to question who these people were and why they were there. "Seen Before" is a standalone image, acknowledging the exploitation of enslaved West Africans in Barbados' 1627 Sugarcane Revolution (Luke, 2023). The "Journey Between" series was made over a tenday road trip tracing the harvested cane's journey from the field, across train tracks, to mills and finally to the terminal in Lucinda, where it enters the global supply chain. This body of work invites reflection on the hidden infrastructure, labour, landscapes and histories underpinning Australia's billion-dollar sugarcane industry.

Positioning Brims' work in dialogue with the "Rainbow Serpent, Rustling Wind" body of work contextualises the complicated and multilayered nature Brims' historic images inherently possess. This work only begins to touch upon the deep problems and complexities which the role women photographers and the settler colonial view has played and plays today in the framing and perception of history. The strength in combining my image making practice with Critical Fabulation afforded me an interface to address the marginalisation of actors without speaking in their place allowing me to actively engage with Brims' work rather than passively reiterating it. The inclusion of more-than-human actors assisted enormously in this repicturing.

Fig. [2] Silberschmidt, A. (2025).
Documentation of entrance to *Rainbow Serpent, Rustling Wind* exhibition.

Fig. [3] Silberschmidt, A. (2025).
Documentation of *Only When Gone* series.

Fig. [4] Silberschmidt, A. (2025).
Documentation of the image and text vignette for the Rainbow Serpent actor from the *Fields To Fables* series.

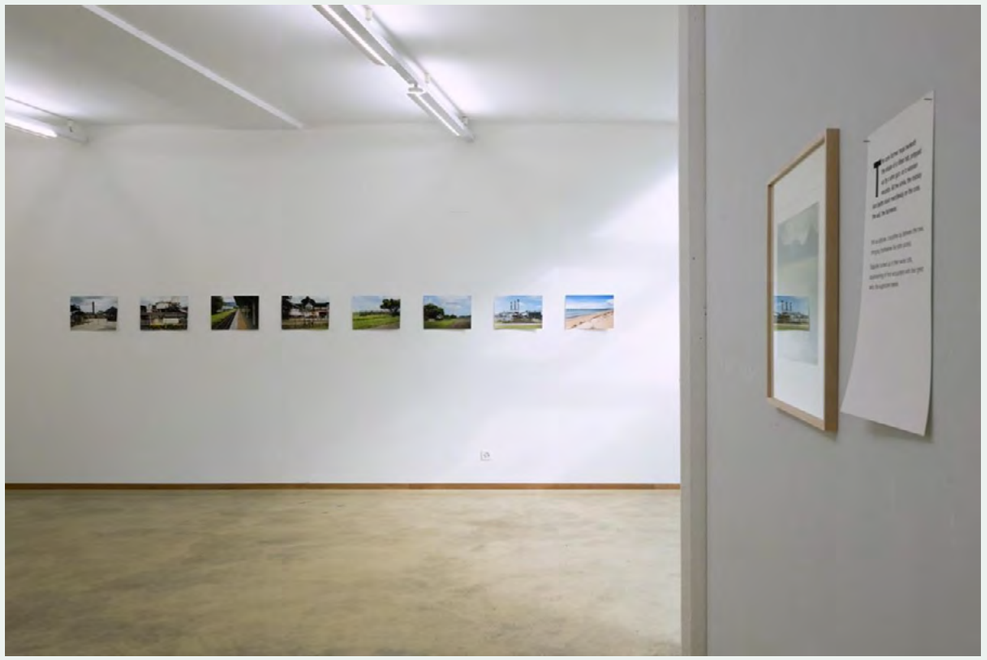

Fig. [5] Silberschmidt, A. (2025).
Documentation of the *Journey Between* series in dialogue with the first vignette from *Fields To Fables*.

Bio

Azura Silberschmidt (b. 1997) is an Australian-born Swiss photographic practitioner raised in Aotearoa, New Zealand. Her work investigates ethical image-making through collaborative, counter-colonial and care-based methodologies, positioning photography as a tool for agency, relationality and the redefinition of dominant visual narratives. Between 2020 and 2023, during her bachelor's studies at the Lab HyperWerk, she founded the Narrative Agency Making Collective, a project appointing experimental self-portraiture to explore themes of identity, heritage and positionality. In 2023, Azura created Bleiben, a participant-led portrait series developed at a refugee community centre in Greece. Centered on mutual consent and representation, the work was exhibited in Basel to reclaim civic visibility. Most recently, as part of her Master's thesis Rainbow Serpent, Rustling Wind (2023–2025), she examined the colonial legacies of sugarcane industrialisation in her birthplace, Far North Queensland. Through archival research, contemporary image making and critically fabulated narratives, she analysed the historic images, investigating how photography can function not only as documentation but also as a means of listening and intervention. Alongside her research, from 2022 to 2025, Azura taught darkroom and studio photography at the Academy of Art and Design FHNW, Basel. She led workshops on cameraless photography, analogue development, lighting and storytelling through images. Drawing from cross-cultural perspectives, she guided students through the politics of self-portraiture, emphasising authorship over performance and encouraged them to critically reexamine their representation on their own terms. Azura Silberschmidt's practice proposes photography as a shared space for reflection, resistance and the creation of more pluralistic and just visual futures.

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Silberschmidt, A. (2025). *Seen Before* [Photographic series].

Silberschmidt, A. (2025). *Journey Between* [Photographic series].

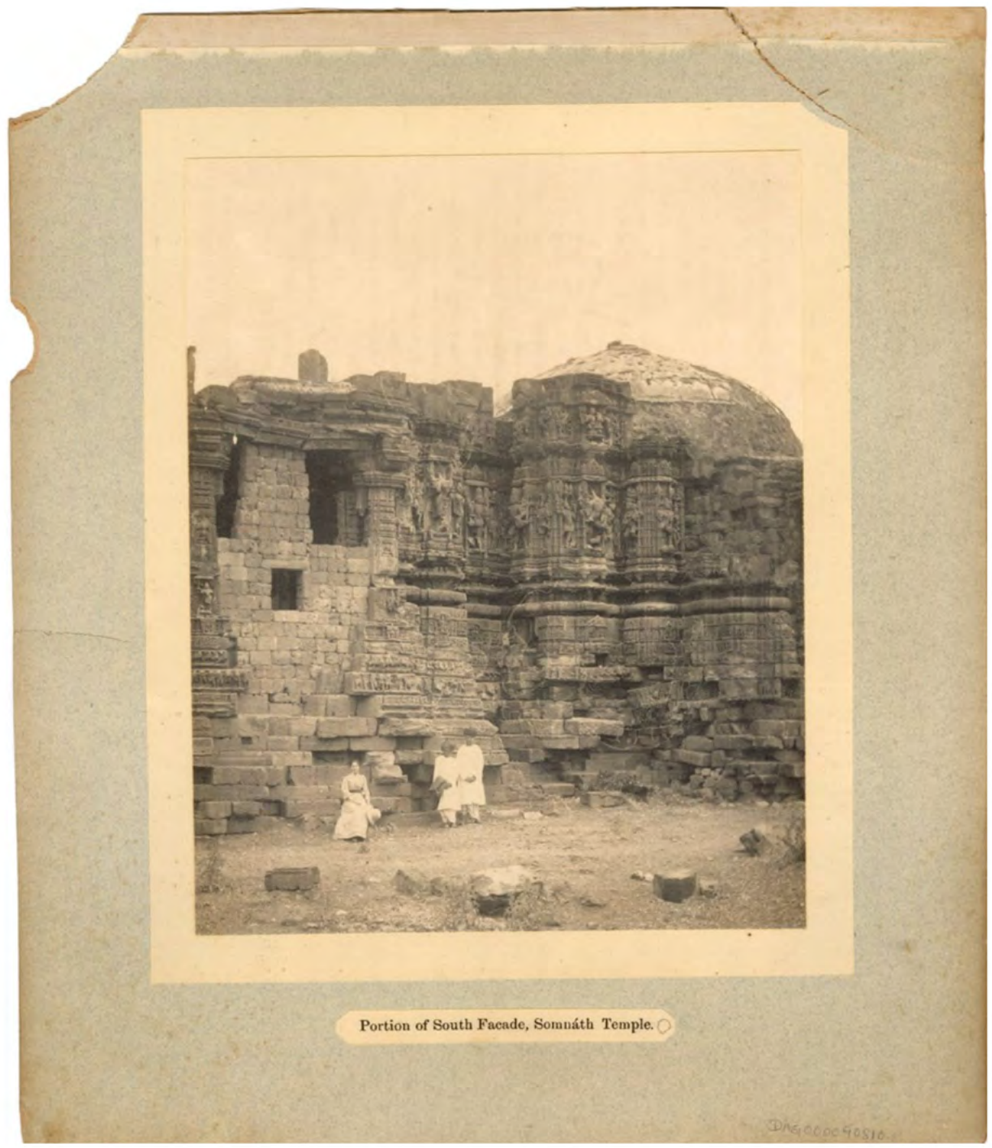

Image possibly showing the photographer, Mary L. Booth, seated at the foot ofSomnath Temple in Gujarat, c. 1890s. Archival Collection, New Delhi.

Mary L. Booth and the Monuments of Western India: two albums

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Two albums of architectural photographs from Rajkot and Kathiawar, reveal a unique enterprise by a Mary L. Booth1, a woman photographer in late 19th century colonial India. From the little that is known about her, Booth was related to Robert Bell Booth, a British civil engineer. She seemed to have accompanied him to document the monuments of Kathiawar, which she published in an album titled the 'Antiquities of Kathiawad' (c. 1890s). She also photographed the Memorial Institute and Watson Museum at Rajkot that Robert Booth helped to build, publishing an album titled 'The Memorial Institute' in 1893. These productions are of professional quality, clearly crediting Mary Booth as the photographer, also possibly as the album designer. At a time when the Archaeological Survey of India was actively documenting the built environment of the Empire, Booth's contribution is significant, more so as she makes keen observations about social practices such as Sati, temple rituals, and memorials in the texts accompanying her photographs. Currently only known for these two albums, Booth is an unusual figure in the history of colonial photography in India, as she does not receive any mention in current writing in the field, rarer still for being a women photographer from the period to have left published albums of such quality. Her deep knowledge of architecture can be attributed to Robert Booth's guidance, but the pedagogical source/s for her photographic skills and access to equipment await further research.

1 For clarification, this is not the Mary L. Booth who during the same time lived in New York as the editor of Harper's Bazaar for nearly two decades. See Tricia Foley, *Mary L. Booth: The Story of an Extraordinary 1Sth Century Woman*, USA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2018

Booth's albums are the visual bridge that chart the transference between field and archive, between site and display, between the intermedial worlds of stone and image. Through her work, we glean the story of the colonial imperative to rescue, restore, collect, and archive in the bid to 'know' Indian culture, where knowledge was indeed power, and where photography played an important role in classification, reconstruction and historicization. Within this macro narrative, one may ask about Mary Booth's own agency, and whether she exercised a choice in composing these otherwise officious looking albums, or if she simply followed the directives given to her.

In her practice, Booth followed the mandate that the British Government had given to official photographers of the Archaeological Survey of India, to the likes of well-known photographers such as Samuel Bourne, William Johnson and Felice Beato. These photographers were instructed to map India's cultural geography through its ruins and monuments, guiding imperial cartographic interests. They travelled with their cameras across the country, documenting the monuments that dotted its landscape, in the mode that Christopher Pinney has called the 'salvage paradigm'. This is how photography tried to rescue its subject before it disappeared due to pillage or decay. In the introduction to the Memorial Institute album, the civil engineer Robert Booth notes the importance of what he calls 'illustrations', especially of the ancient remains of some sites that had not been visualised in any archaeological report. His proposition for encouraging preservation was to relocate archaeological remains to a museum where they may be restored and plans and models could be made to show the monuments in earstwhile glory. In his portrait, we see one of the models he may have proposed. Of the Mata Harsad temple on Koila hill the text says "we can only hope that through the munificence of the educated chiefs of the province, portions at least of these remains may be removed to the principal towns, and to the Archaeological collection now being formed at Rajkot, in connection with the Watson museum, where they can be preserved, and cared for." The transfer of monuments had been the fate of the Amaravati ruins that were sent to the British Museum in the 1880s, or the more famous the Elgin marbles from Athens, setting precedence.

However, the vast photographic documentation of India's monuments through the ASI and others was not politically neutral. As the historian Sudeshna Guha observes, "the camera contributed to archaeology's epistemological concern regarding truth telling... and photographic meanings were renegotiated outside the realms of scholarship, to suit politically driven archaeological narratives". For example, the British interest in proving Banaras as a Buddhist site prior to Hinduism's arrival was to facilitate proselytization in a Hindu dominated area. Hence archaeology's historical narrative, evidenced by photography, was made to follow this larger colonial purpose. This is a paradigmatic association, that archaeology and photography share a common structure, or indeed an ontology. They are homologous to the extent that it is not inappropriate to speak of what Guha calls, archaeography.

For this paper, I will contextualise Booth's identity as a woman photographer amidst the larger history of gender in colonial photography in India, including that of women travelers who responded to photographs by collecting and writing about them. Within the repertoire of the well-known memoirs of British *memsahibs* the period, Booth's cultural observations are reflective of her unique situatedness, setting her apart as a skilled photographer and a meticulous visual historian of vernacular architecture.

Bio

Suryanandini Narain is an Assistant Professor of Visual Studies at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), New Delhi. She has written on photography in India, especially around themes of women, the family, the home and the studio photography. She recently co-edited a book on family photographs titled *Framing Portraits, Binding Albums: Family Photographs in India* for Zubaan Books (2024), supported by the MurthyNayak Foundation and India Foundation for the Arts. At JNU, she teaches courses and supervises research on critical writing, photography history and theory, research methodology and visual culture.

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Caption: "A Typical Farm Scene" from *Girls' Friendly Society South Africa Scrapbook*, c. 1930. Women's Library, London, 5GFS/02/260. No known copyright restrictions.

Framing empire: girls, photography, and scrapbooks in the British Colonial World, c. 1930s

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This paper explores how girls and women used photography to construct ideas of girlhood, race, and empire through an analysis of scrapbooks created by members of the Girls' Friendly Society (GFS), a British youth organization founded in 1875. Girls' scrapbooks provide singular insights into how girls, specifically white girls in the British settler colonies, viewed the empire and their place in it. While many studies of photography often focus on girls as subjects, this study foregrounds girls' active participation in the creation and circulation of photographs and examines how girls appropriated, constructed, and reproduced wider colonial discourses through these photographs and scrapbooks.

Initially a mid-nineteenth-century pastime for middle-class girls, scrapbooking transitioned into a mass cultural form by the early 1900s. This shift was driven by the increased affordability of materials as well as the introduction of Eastman Kodak's Brownie camera in 1900, which moved photography from professional studios into the hands of amateurs, specifically women and children. The GFS, alongside organizations like the Girl Guides, recognized the power of this visual medium and its utility as a vehicle of propaganda and educational tool for the organization and empire.

The GFS organized scrapbook exchanges and competitions to encourage girls to share their perspectives, knowledge, and experiences of colonial life with members in other parts of the empire. Scrapbooks thus served as a rare forum where girls could act as experts about colonial life and instruct others about colonial history and geography. What is particularly significant about the scrapbooks is that they are sources produced not only by girls but for an audience of girls. This paper provides a detailed analysis of two of the scrapbooks produced in the 1930s as part of the GFS's scrapbook exchanges—one by a branch in Port Elizabeth (present-day Gqeberha) and another by different branches in West Australia—to study how GFS members used motifs of family, domesticity, and religion to advance imperial ideology and racial hierarchies. Photographs of girls attending church or sewing outdoors served to demonstrate a continued commitment to traditional English femininity and the "successful" reproduction of Englishness abroad. These images also aimed to showcase that the colonies were not "unrefined backwaters" but modern extensions of England.

However, this presentation of colonial modernity rested upon the perpetuation of settler colonial myths. Images of girls enjoying vast, open landscapes reinforced the concept of *terra nullius*, justifying white sovereignty and the expropriation of Indigenous lands. The scrapbooks further reinforced the "civilizing mission" of imperialism by marginalizing African and Aboriginal peoples. Black, Coloured, and Aboriginal girls were largely excluded from these photographs, perpetuating a notion that these spaces were white and racially pure. When African or Aboriginal peoples did appear, they were used as markers of success for colonial intervention. For instance, the West Australian scrapbook included captions describing Aboriginal men as former "heathens" who had become "good Christians," while Port Elizabeth entries utilized photographs to juxtapose the "passive" and "backward" status of African women against the free-moving, modern white girls. Thus these photographs constructed idealized visions of empire that reinforced racial hierarchies and cast British girls and women as both explorers and moral guardians of the imperial project while framing colonial subjects as objects of curiosity and sympathy in need of British civilizing intervention. Yet the idealized view in these photos came into conflict with the realities of colonial life and reveal deep-seated anxieties regarding race and empire.

This paper concludes by reflecting on both the opportunities and challenges of using photography in the study of colonialism and girlhood. One of the key difficulties of this project is determining the photographer, since most photographs don't indicate who took them. With the scrapbooks more broadly, it is difficult to assess the degree to which adults intervened in their production. It is clear that they were collaborative efforts, involving both adults and girl members. Girls wrote essays, created drawings, and likely took some of the photographs—but the extent of their involvement and the involvement of the women leaders remains difficult to determine.

Another challenge is assessing how girls interpreted and understood the scrapbooks. Did they shape girls' views of the empire and perhaps even encourage girls in England to emigrate to the colonies, as GFS organisers had hoped? Or did girls view the photographs and find the descriptions of colonial life unappealing? The archives provide only glimpses into girls' reactions, and this evidence suggests that the scrapbooks succeeded in presenting an interesting view of colonial life but one that was exotic, unfamiliar, and not necessarily enticing to girls in England. Even if the archives contained more evidence of girls' reactions, each girl who viewed the scrapbooks understood them and was influenced by them in different ways. Consequently, while studying photographs and scrapbooks can help fill in some of the silences and gaps of textual records and enhance the visibility of girls, they also present new challenges and questions.

The GFS scrapbooks reveal that photographs were not merely tools for preserving personal memories but instead powerful instruments of imperial cultural production. These visual records illustrate that girlhood was deeply embedded in the structures and ideologies of empire. By centering girls and women as creators and not just subjects of photographs, we gain a more nuanced understanding of how imperial ideologies were imagined, normalized, and circulated and girls' and women's participation in the shaping and dissemination of imperial narratives.

Bio

Elizabeth Dillenburg is Associate Professor of History at The Ohio State University at Newark. She earned her PhD from the University of Minnesota and her MA and BA from Marquette University. She specializes in the history of modern Europe with a particular focus on the history of Britain and the British Empire and teaches courses on European and global history, gender history, the history of childhood, and the history of colonialism. She has published articles, chapters, and essays on girlhood in the British Empire, the history of cricket, and women's suffrage and co-edited a volume, *Print Culture at the Crossroads: The Book and Central Europe*.

Her book, *Empire's daughters: Girlhood, whiteness, and the colonial project*, was published in 2024 by Manchester University Press and is available as open access. *Empire's daughters* explore the complexities of girls' participation in the British Empire by examining the Girls' Friendly Society, an organization that emerged in late Victorian Britain and developed into a global society with branches throughout the empire. The book charts the society's origins and growth and its later decline in the interwar era. It also considers how, through its multifaceted imperial education and emigration programs, the society constructed ideas of girlhood, race, and empire that then circulated globally. Through this study of the Girls' Friendly Society, *Empire's daughters* explore the micropolitics of colonialism and whiteness and argues that understandings of colonialism remain incomplete without considerations of girls and girlhood.

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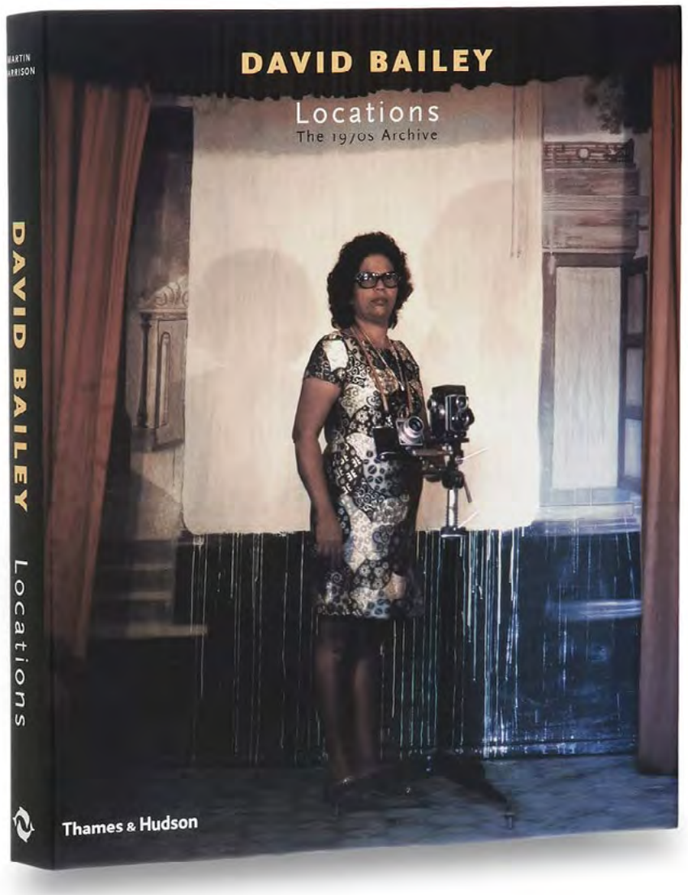

An Image of Dona Palmira Coutinho in Hollywood Studio - Goa, Photograph by David Bailey, Book cover from - Editor: Harrison, M. (2003). *David Bailey: Locations: The 1970s archive*. Publishers: Thames & Hudson.

Photographic Archive of Dona Palmira Coutinho

vinit agarwal
independent researcher

In 2014, some newspapers reported the death of the first woman photographer from Goa, Dona Palmira Coutinho at the age of 89 with a brief biography. Born in 1925, she was a resident of Portuguese Goa and photographed with her Rolleiflex camera various personalities such as previous President of India Zail Singh, Portugal's President Mário Soares and Pope John Paul II. This research presents through transcription of a series of conversations with Thelma Moses, daughter of Palmira Coutinho and tries to reconstruct body of her early photographic work between 1945-1961 which is also a special documentation of Goa during a decolonial transition – intersecting images that navigate architectures of domesticity, inter-personal friendships, journalistic and artistic contours. Throughout her accomplished work as professional photographer she worked at the 'Hollywood' studio in Panjim with her partner Simplicio Coutinho. Yet, like other women photographers, her work is largely erased from academic scholarships and no major exhibitions have been yet organized of her work. Apart from photography, she was also retouching negatives for Roghunath near the Bernardo Guedes garden.

Palmira Coutinho met David Bailey, who developed various photographs in their studio during his tour to Goa in the 1970s, pictured her and later featured this picture on the cover of his archival book - David Bailey: Locations: The 1970s Archive - comprehensive selection of Bailey's work throughout the 1970s. This economy of photographer-photographed, presented as muse instead of her photographic work being featured there is analysed critically in this research. Relationship of her early photographic work from 1945-1961 to her later work is significant here such as that during 1974 during the "Exposition of St. Francis Xavier", a decennial (every 10-year) event in Old Goa, India, where his incorruptible body is put on public display for veneration at the Basilica of Bom Jesus. Utilising my own experience as software engineer and digital archive specialist, I intend to develop a digital archive of her work that has devices such as friendships, intimacies and interconnected geographies to allow multiple-listenings of her work deriving from Tina Campt's Listening to Image as the theoretical framework.

Bio

vinit agarwal is an art researcher and curator. vinit has previously curated various exhibitions such as Till The Sun Rises at the Albertinum of State Museum of Dresden (2023-2024) which is based on the student film by Indian women film directors in East Germany during the 1970s such as Chetna Vora's OYOYO, that recount lives of her friends Carmen Maria Barbosa e Sa from Guinea Bissau amongst others. vinit has also contributed to the Art By Translation exhibition while at artistic residence at AiR351 at the Centro de Artes e Criatividade de Torres Vedras (CAC), Torres Vedras in Portugal (2022). Recent exhibitions include an exhibition on the exchange of art works between two Indigenous communities children, Tharu from Himalayan mountains and Taller de la Chaoyota workshop of the Coca community in Mexico. vinit has previously edited various research volumes such as Till The Sun Rises (Spector Books, 2025) and contributed to various publications of artistic research Das New Alphabet (DNA, Spector Books 2023), An Archaeology of Sound: A Slightly Curving Place (Archive Books, 2021). vinit has worked at Decolonising Socialism: Entangled Internationalism as scientific/artistic collaborator and Vinit currently resides in Jaipur, India and contributes as director to a young initiative working on intersection of digital archives, oral histories at Oralities Research Lab.

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Panel 5.

Framing Empire and Conflict: Women, Photography and Power

"Soba Tchiliwandele", photo by Diana Powell-Cotton, 1937, The Powell Cotton Archive, R22-11, image courtesy The Powell-Cotton Trust.

Diana Powell-Cotton and Antoinette Powell-Cotton: snapshots from Angola (1936–1937)

Inês Vieira Gomes
NOVA University Lisbon

This paper examines the photographic and ethnographic work of two English sisters, Diana Powell-Cotton (1908–1986) and Antoinette Powell-Cotton (1915–1997), whose anthropological expeditions in southern Angola between 1936 and 1937 offer a distinctive perspective on colonial visuality. Working as anthropologists, photographers, and filmmakers, the sisters were based at their family home in Quex Park, Kent, during the late phase of Portuguese colonial rule. Their extensive collections of photographs and films, now held in British museums and archives, provide sustained visual documentation of Angolan communities and cultural practices, establishing them as among the earliest British women to engage in documentary filmmaking and ethnographic photography within an African colonial context. Despite this, their work has received limited scholarly attention and remains marginal in the histories of photography and colonial anthropology. This paper seeks to address this by situating their photographic practice within the broader contexts of anthropological image-making, colonial knowledge production and gendered authorship.

By the late nineteenth century, photography had become central to anthropology, functioning as a scientific tool and a medium for legitimising imperial authority. Typological and racialising photographic conventions dominated the field, seeking to classify human populations through ostensibly objective visual markers. 'Racial type' photographs – frontal or profile poses set against neutral backgrounds – aimed to make colonised subjects measurable, comparable and hierarchically ordered. As scholars such as Christopher Pinney have argued, these images were active instruments of colonial power, producing the realities they purported to document and naturalising inequality through visual regimes.

Against this backdrop, the photographic approach of the Powell-Cotton sisters diverges notably from these conventions. Rather than isolating their subjects for scientific scrutiny, their images often depict Angolan people engaged in everyday life – socialising, working, or moving through familiar landscapes. The subjects frequently smile, laugh, avert their gaze or interact with one another, which is in stark contrast to the rigid, confrontational poses that are typical of typological photography. These qualities align with the "snapshot" mode described in anthropology, emphasising spontaneity, temporal immediacy and responsiveness to lived experience. While elements of staging remain, the informality of their photographs overall disrupts the visual rigidity that is characteristic of much colonial anthropological photography. This suggests a relational, context-sensitive approach to visual documentation.

Drawing on Elizabeth Edwards' conceptualisation of photographs as material and relational objects, this paper treats the Powell-Cotton sisters' images as artefacts embedded within networks of travel, collection, archiving and display, rather than as neutral records. Their meaning emerges from these relational contexts, shaped by institutional frameworks, museum practices and the imperial infrastructures that enabled their expeditions. Photography functioned as both a representational medium and a social practice, intertwined with the creation of ethnographic knowledge and colonial authority. The circulation of these images – from field sites in Angola to archives in Britain – was part of the colonial process of extracting, classifying and legitimising knowledge.

At the same time, the apparent intimacy and informality of the sisters' work should not be read as inherently progressive or anti-colonial. As Pinney argues, these photographs were produced within a colonial environment characterised by inequality. Their access to people, places and resources depended on colonial permissions and networks, which situates their images within broader regimes of power. The photographs occupy an ambivalent space where moments of proximity and engagement coexist with systems of control. The gestures, expressions and interactions captured in the images reveal points of friction in colonial visuality – places where the intentions of the photographer, the agency of the subjects and the practice of documentary photography intersect in unresolved ways.

Ann Laura Stoler's concept of the colonial archive as a fractured formation that exposes the limits of imperial control further illuminates this ambivalence. Within this framework, the photographs taken by the Powell-Cotton sisters can be seen as part of an archival field that is struggling to stabilise colonial differences. Their focus on sociality, everyday life and emotion challenges anthropological classification and emphasises the vulnerability of colonial knowledge production.

Gender played a crucial role in shaping the sisters' photographic practice. Working in a field dominated by male explorers, anthropologists, and colonial officials, the Powell-Cotton sisters occupied a liminal position that both constrained and enabled their work. Excluded from formal institutional authority, they were often perceived as less threatening observers, which facilitated their access to domestic and social spaces that were typically closed to men. Feminist historiography illuminates how this gendered positionality shaped the visual character of their work, producing images that did not fully conform to, nor entirely resist, prevailing colonial norms.

Finally, the paper draws on Ariella Aïsha Azoulay's concept of the civil contract of photography, which considers photography to be an ongoing political relationship between photographer, subject and viewer. From this perspective, the Powell-Cotton sisters' images are not static historical artefacts, but ongoing encounters in which the subjects, who are Angolan, are active participants whose presence continues to engage with contemporary viewers.

By focusing on the work of Diana and Antoinette Powell-Cotton, this paper makes a valuable contribution to the wider re-evaluation of women's roles in producing and circulating colonial visual culture. It sheds light on the transnational dimensions of British colonial photography in Portuguese Angola – a largely overlooked area of African colonial studies – and presents colonial photography as a field of tension rather than ideological coherence. The study sheds light on the power and instability of visual colonial regimes, while acknowledging women photographers as active, albeit frequently overlooked, agents within these historical processes.

Bio

Inês Vieira Gomes holds a PhD in History from the Institute of Social Sciences of the University of Lisbon (ICS-UL, 2022) where she defended a thesis focused on photography in Portuguese Colonial Africa between 1875 and 1940. She has been awarded with a dissertation fellowship at Harry Ransom Center (University of Austin, 2018), a fellowship from the Smithsonian Institution in the National Museum of African Art (Washington DC, 2015), and worked as a research fellow at ICS-UL (Lisbon, 2012-2013). She obtained an MFA (FCSH-UNL, 2011) and a BA (FLUL, 2007) in Art History.

In 2025, co-curated with Catarina Laranjeiro the exhibition "Imaginários da Guiné-Bissau – o espólio de Álvaro de Barros Geraldo (1955–1975)" at Museu Nacional de História Natural e da Ciência, in Lisbon, between May 8–August 31, 2025, and co-edited the publication with the same title (forthcoming).

On the subject of women photographers, she is the author of "Images from Portuguese late colonialism by the lens of women photographers", in *Fotocinema*, 30, 2025; and "Women photographers in Angola and Mozambique (1909-1950): A history of an absence" in Darren Newbury, Lorena Rizzo, and Kylie Thomas (eds.). *Women and Photography in Africa*, London: Routledge, 2020.

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Pulpit Rock, Tubbaluganer (Mount Buffalo).
Photo by Gude Alice 1890-1830.
Courtesy of the State Library of Victoria, Australia.

High Country, Wild Country: from Dezy Freeman to Guide Alice revisioning Tubberlungener (Mount Buffalo)

Clare McCracken
Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology

On 26th August 2025, Dezy Freeman (formerly Despond Freeman), a self-described Sovereign Citizen, shot dead two rural police officers who were on his property to serve a warrant before escaping into the Mount Buffalo National Park in north-eastern Victoria, Australia. The ongoing search for Freeman marks the largest-ever tactical police operation in Australian history. The extreme nature of both the initial crime and the manhunt has attracted ongoing and substantial media attention, including photojournalism. Photos released by Victoria Police show elite police officers searching the mountain in balaclavas and tactical gear, navigating what media commentators have described as the 'treacherous wilderness', which includes deep granite caves, abandoned mines, and freezing, snowy peaks and rivers. Photos, skimmed from social media and published in newspapers, depict the gunman outdoors, holding distressed, highly venomous snakes in the air, scaling cliffs in bare feet and wearing camouflage. He is described as a man with remarkable tactical skills, hardy, resilient and well-trained. These photographic and literary descriptions of Tubberlungener (Mount Buffalo) as a wilderness and a treacherous landscape that only the most hardened, well-trained settler men or police can navigate have a long history in Australia. It is a tactic of the settler colonial state that deliberately erases the relationship between Country and Australia's First Peoples, a relationship rooted in deep ancestral and ontological connection and care, rather than one of hostile takeover.

William Conon (1996) has argued that in the United States, contemporary concepts of wilderness and their protection through the National Park system are rooted in notions of the vanishing frontier. For many Americans, the crucible of the nation was the frontier; as the country urbanised, wilderness areas became a site for white men of means to return to the myth of the country's roots - sleeping under the stars and living off the land through hunting. Wilderness, he argues, "came to embody the national frontier myth, standing for the wild freedom of America's past and seeming to represent a highly attractive natural alternative to the ugliness and artificiality of modern civilisation" (p.15). As Jarrod Hore (2022) has noted through his analysis of landscape photography, white settler relations to land and environment were often transnational. Australia's National Park system began at a similar time to America's, and the High Country, where the Dezy Freeman manhunt took place, is the site of two seminal frontier myths – The Man from Snowy River and Ned Kelly (notably the latter involved the shooting of, and fleeing from, the police). Therefore, both the language and the photography of the manhunt can be seen within a long history of re-enactment, which centres white male land relations. This centring denies the tens of thousands of years of First Peoples' sustainable occupation and female histories.

This paper will examine the photographs of the Dezi Freeman manhunt alongside those of Alice Manfield (Guide Alice), the first settler to live on Tubberlungener (Mount Buffalo) from 1890 to 1930. Guide Alice has attracted critical attention for her role in the development of National Parks, tourism, and bushwalking culture in early colonial Australia, but her extensive archive of photographs has largely eluded academic scrutiny. Often depicting women in long skirts, skiing, climbing and picnicking on and around the distinctive granite tors of the mountain, her photography significantly challenges the idea that the National Park is a place only for tough settler men. By analysing her photography, this paper will develop a counter-narrative to Dezi Freeman's manhunt, charting the vernacular visual culture of the mountain from Guide Alice to contemporary Instagram photography. In doing so, the paper will explore how 'looking with' historical female photographers in the Australian context pay create a more complex critique of settler relationships to the Australian High Country.

Bio

Dr Clare McCracken is a site-responsive artist, early-career researcher and the Program Manager of Honours Photography and Fine Art at RMIT University in Naarm/Melbourne. Her practice-led research sits at the intersection of art, cultural geography and cultural studies. She employs innovative performance and storytelling methods to research how technology – from the car to camera - coproduces space, place and landscape across generations in Australia. In 2019, she won a Vice Chancellor Award in the Higher Degree by Research Impact category. In 2022, she was shortlisted for the Hardie Grant Spark Prize for narrative non-fiction. Recent publications include *Liminality When Grounded: Micro-Mobilities in Contemporary Art Practice during the COVID-19 Pandemic* (2024) and *Killing Snowmen: Big Things and Rural Australia's Existential Crises* (2022). Recent creative practice outcomes include *Wild Country: the Ovens River and its Tributaries* (2024) and *Performing Selves Across Histories* (2024).

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1. Participants to the first ever WAAF photography course at No. 2 School of Photography, Blackpool in August 1941. Dorothy King is standing in the middle row, second from the right. Denis Pellerin's Collection.

Women photographers and photo interpreters during WW2

Denis Pellerin
The Brian May Archive of Stereoscopy

Wars have always been a horrible waste of resources and human lives as well as a continuous source of horrors, sorrow and grief. For a lot of British women, however, WW2 turned out to be the greatest adventure of their lives and they were not afraid to say so in so many words. For the first time they no longer had to blindly obey their fathers' or husbands' orders, but instead acquired independence and freedom, learnt new trades and, for some of them, travelled to far away destinations they could only have dreamed of before the war started.

A large number of women got into photography, as photographers, developers and printers after following a three month course in one of the two Schools of Photography set up in Farnborough, Berkshire, and Blackpool, Lancashire. Their training proved vital when they had to quickly process the thousands of photographs brought back daily by Photo Reconnaissance aircraft so that they could be analysed and important intelligence could be drawn from them.

A smaller number of them went to work as photographic interpreters analysing tens of thousands of images brought back by daring and unarmed reconnaissance pilots flying Spitfires or Mosquitos and printed by the very same women who had followed the Farnborough or Blackpool courses. Gazing for eight to twelve hours on end through the oculars of their stereoscopes, their magnifying glasses or their loupes, these intelligent and determined women – who had been commissioned as officers, worked on an equal footing with their male counterparts and were often heads of sections – extracted as much intelligence as was technically possible with the means at their disposal, and scrutinized every inch of the prints under their eyes, spying on the enemy's every movement whether at sea, on land or in the air, trying to guess their nefarious intentions and purposes and writing reports that could have vital consequences not only for the war effort and the planning of future campaigns, but also for the safety of the bombing crews or of the male and female agents of the SEO (Special Operations Executive) who were dropped in occupied territories to support resistance movements. The position of guns, the presence of anti aircraft artillery in train convoys, the first signs of unusual activites, the appearance of new aircraft models, evertything was patiently and thoroughly scrutinised then analysed.

If most of the female interpreters worked from RAF Medmenham, Oxfordshire, or from its satellite stations in South-Easter and Northern Britain, some of them were sent to Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Italy and India where they helped with the North Africa landings, the invasion of Sicily, Italy, Southern France, and the defeat of the Japanese army. Having all signed the Secrecy Act, they could not reveal anything of their vital work and kept silent for decades, often taking the secret of their war years to the grave, which is why lots of their stories are still very much unknown and so few people are aware of the vital importance of their work.

2. The first contingent of WAAF Photo Interpreters in Algiers showing an Amercian visitor what their work consists in. Hazel Furney is standing at the back, first from the left. Scott family archive.

As soon as the war was over, these admirable women were sent back to their respective homes and "unpaid domestic duties" with barely a thank you. Life in the forces went back to "normal" for many more years and the work of these women photographers and interpreters was soon forgotten. It is more than important to do justice to the vital tasks these women carried out for six long years.

In his presentation photo historian Denis Pellerin, from the Brian May Archive of Stereoscopy, examines the lives of some of the young women who went to the Blackpool School of Photography and of some of the photographic interpreters who either spent all their war years at the Central Intelligence Unit at Medmenhamor were there for a short period before being sent abroad to carry out the same work on different theatres of the war. The presentation focuses mainly on two individuals. The first person is Dorothy Elaline King, who started a photography course at No. 2 School of Photography, Blackpool, England, on 18 August 1841, and stayed on as an instructor after she passed out, eventually becoming a section officer and carrying on as a studio photographer once the war was over. The second young female is Hazel Furney, who joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) on the day she turned eighteen, worked as a waitress then a cook,worked her way up to be a sergeant butcher and was finally talked into getting a commission. She applied for a Photo Interpretation course and spent three difficult weeks at Nuneham Park, trying to cram into her head all the vital information she needed to acquire to become an efficient and self-dependent interpreter. At the end of the course, having passed, she was sent to RAF Mendmenham where she joined the "L" or aircraft section. Under the command of Constance Babington-Smith, Hazel became an expert in aircraft recognition and when she applied to be posted overseas to set up a Medmenham branch there, her application was accepted, despite her young age. She was sent to Algiers, then Tunisia, before following the advance of the Allies into Italy and spending the last years of the war at San Severo. She spent over two years away from her family, her only links with them being the air-letters and airgrams they exchanged. From the day she left Britain Hazel instructed her mother to keep every single letter and photograph she would send, which was duly done. This collection now constitutes an important insight into the daily life, thoughts and interests of a twenty-something photo interpreter during the Second World War.

Bio

Denis Pellerin is a photo-historian with a passion for stereoscopic photography. He has been researching and learning about the history of his pet subject for over 40 years and has written and co-written dozens of articles and books, both in French and in English, on this neglected branch of photography. During his thirtieth year as a teacher, Denis had the good fortune to be hired by Dr. Brian May as the curator of his extensive photographic collection. Over the past decade he has given some 150 in-person or online 3-D talks in several different countries and on various aspects of Victorian stereo photography. Shortly after Covid Denis extended his field of research to photography during WW2 and is working on two books on the subject of Photo Reconnaissance pilots and photo interpreters.

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Martha Rocher, Self-portrait in Yves Klein's studio,
Paris, July 1959, silver gelatin print, 27.3x21 cm.

Photographic Invisibility and Archival Recovery: The Case of Martha Rocher (1920–1990)

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This paper aims to reflect on the recent discovery of the private archive of Martha Rocher, a photographer born in Vienna in 1920 as Marthe Marie Erika Françoise Liebmann, who committed suicide in Milan in 1990, and was active in Paris and Italy in the 1950s and 1960s. Her story is a prime example of the invisibility experienced by women photographers. When I began my research in 2023, her story was shrouded in mystery, and even now, after the exhibition *Martha Rocher: ritratti d'artista* (Martha Rocher: Artist Portraits), which I co-curated in 2024 with Elisa Genovesi at the MLAC — Museum Laboratory of Contemporary Art at Sapienza University of Rome, many obscure points and open questions remain. To date, her name is not included in the histories of Italian or French photography; there is no record of any exhibitions held during her lifetime; in several cases, her images have been published in magazines and catalogues without credit, and re-constructing their circulation is a complex undertaking. Such a scarcity of bibliographic and documentary material is rare for scholars of late twentieth-century art. Her archive contains reportage photographs documenting Paris in the 1950s and a rich corpus of portraits of famous artists and poets such as Yves Klein, Jean Tinguely, André Breton, Alberto Giacometti, Sonia Terk Delaunay, Meret Oppenheim, Emilio Vedova, and William Burroughs, among others.

The paper aims to contextualize Rocher's work in light of the Parisian and Italian artistic scene after World War II, highlighting her connections with artists from Surrealism, Nouveau Réalisme, Spatialism, and Nuclear Art, and outlining the distinctive features of her photographic practice. The figure that emerges is that of an emancipated woman and cosmopolitan photographer, often traveling throughout Europe, fluent in three languages—German, French, and Italian—and documenting exhibitions and leading artists of the European avant-garde.

In 1947, she arrived in Paris to continue her studies in Egyptology at the Sorbonne, but it was thanks to her university education in chemistry, conducted in Vienna during the war, that she approached the world of photography. Between 1952 and 1955, she worked in "the experimental laboratory of Gevacolor", the Belgian company Gevaert, also based in Paris. The first photographs preserved in her archive in the form of negatives, contact sheets, and prints date back to 1956. They offer a significant insight into her photographic interests, which continued even after she moved to Milan, presumably in 1962: ranging from street photography to portraits of cultural figures and self-portraits. In France, Rocher became acquainted with numerous artists and writers. Often these are foreigners, like her, who find fertile ground for their research in Paris, as in the case of the Austrian painter Hundertwasser. Among them are also several protagonists of the historical avant-garde – such as the aforementioned Sonia Terk Delaunay, André Breton, Meret Oppenheim, and Kees van Dongen—but above all representatives of a new generation of experimental artists such as Klein, Tinguely, and Takis, who worked in the circle of Iris Clert's gallery, and the beat writers who gravitated around The English Bookshop, the English-language bookstore run by Gaït Frogé. Twenty self-portraits also date back to these years, showing the face of a proud artist, reflected in the mirror as she holds her Rolleiflex or Leica camera. Almost all of them belong to her Parisian years: the oldest one preserved in the archive dates back to October 1956, while the last two, dated September 1962, are the only ones likely to have been taken in Italy. In this short period of time, Rocher portrayed herself in different ways, styles, and places. For her, the self-portrait is a chosen field for linguistic and existential experimentation, an arena in which to experience the dual condition of being both subject and object of representation and, at the same time, to test new visual solutions. In her self-portraits, Rocher appears more daring and experimental than elsewhere, blending the tradition of humanist photography with the optical-perceptual research of the "New Vision" and, more generally, with the avant-garde photography of the 1920s and 1930s. Only three self-portraits have been preserved as photographic prints, while the rest have come down to us in the form of 6x6 negatives. This suggests that the photographer considered self-portraits to be primarily a personal endeavor: a space of freedom in which to experiment with and on her own image. In my opinion, the same applies to the self-portraits taken on the street, in public spaces, or in the company of artists and writers from her circle. On several occasions, Rocher portrayed herself in the mirrors of Parisian bars and cafés, challenging photographic naturalism through a skilful play of reflections, aimed at testing the limits of the medium, which closely resembles the atmosphere of certain photographs by Robert Doisneau.

The last two self-portraits preserved in her archive were taken with a Leica, in small 35 mm format, and date back to September 1962, when Rocher had recently moved to Milan. In both images, she portrays herself in the bathroom mirror, looking straight ahead and positioning the camera vertically and horizontally, respectively. Taking photos in the bathroom is not a random choice, nor is it without implications for gender identity. Rocher is surrounded by body care products which, on the one hand, reflect the growing attention to personal hygiene and cosmetics that spread after World War II, amplified by advertising aimed primarily at female consumers; on the other hand, they refer to the emergence of a value system that considers the home and the outside world as separate places and as "antithetical spheres of action" with important repercussions on gender relations. Between 1957 and 1963, Italy's "economic miracle" brought with it the mass spread of consumer goods, but also an increase in social inequality, for which women paid the highest price. Retreating into the domesticity of the bathroom, proudly showing off her camera, meant bridging the gap between her personal and professional spheres: it was a choice that demonstrated the urgency of asserting her role as a photographer at a time in Italian history when the field of photography was still permeated by prejudice and misogyny. Martha Rocher's gesture of portraying herself in the bathroom can in fact be interpreted as a way of emphasizing the personal dimension: her attempt to reconcile her private and professional life based on her own subjectivity as a woman.

Bio

Raffaella Perna is Associate Professor for Contemporary History of Art at the University La Sapienza of Rome. In 2023 she obtained the National Scientific Habilitation as Full Professor.

Her studies have focused on the links between art and photography in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, on the connections between art and feminism and on the contribution of women in art, photography and art criticism in Italy and North America. Her monographs include *Piero Manzoni e Roma* (2017), *Arte, fotografia e femminismo in Italia negli anni Settanta* (2013), *Wilhelm von Gloeden* (2013) and *In forma di fotografia* (2009). She has also curated and co-curated exhibitions in museums and foundations, such as: *Martha Rocher. Ritratti d'artista* (MLAC-Museo Laboratorio d'Arte Contemporanea, the University La Sapienza of Rome); *Mario Dondero. La libertà e l'impegno* (Palazzo Reale, Milan); *Ketty La Rocca. Se io fotovivo* (Camera Centro italiano per la fotografia, Turin); *The Unexpected Subject. 1978 Art and Feminism in Italy* (Frigoriferi Milanesi); *L'altro sguardo. Fotografe italiane 1965-2018* (Triennale di Milano and Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome, 2016, 2018); *Ketty La Rocca* (2018, XVII Biennale donna, Ferrara). She is head of unit for two projects of national relevant interest: the PRIN 2020 "Italian Feminist Photography" (led by the University of Bologna) and the PRIN 2022 "Women Writing around the Camera" (led by the University of Sassari). She is a founding member of the Research Centre FAF - Photography, Art, Feminisms.

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Panel 6.

Women, Documentary Photography and Social Engagement

Fig. 1. Kati Horna and José Horna, L'Enfance, París, 1938. Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. Reg.No.: AD07663.

The invisible legacy of Kati Horna: photographic experimentation, social documentation, and architectural photography in Mexico

Eunice Miranda Tapia
University of Seville

This paper analyzes the career of Kati Horna (Hungary, 1912 - Mexico, 2000), a Hungarian-Mexican photographer, focusing in particular on her distinctive and original contribution through the use of architectural photography. Horna went into permanent exile in Mexico in October 1939, arriving in the country with a solid visual and photographic training shaped by the New Vision that was emerging in Europe amid the turbulent interwar period, and after having documented various aspects of the Spanish Civil War. This social and political context undoubtedly left a profound mark on her understanding of photography. Her photo-documentary gaze is inevitably permeated by the influence of the photographic avant-garde, itself infused with a critical and social dimension that would accompany her work in the following decades.

It is important to note that identifying Horna's work within a specific photographic genre has always been a complex task, since the diversity of her production encompasses such varied visual languages that they sometimes obscure the perception of other recurring aspects or themes. From her association with the Surrealist movement—particularly through works produced in Mexico in specific collaborations for a magazine alongside Remedios Varo—to her contributions to propagandistic publications for the Republican side during the Spanish Civil War, Kati Horna developed a photographic language nourished both by thematic concerns and by political positions, especially during her early years in Europe. Yet even these initial and relatively brief years of artistic and professional practice as a photojournalist in Europe (she went into exile in Mexico at only twenty-seven years of age) constituted a powerful creative framework that she carried with her to Mexico City, where she settled and continued her work as a photographer until the end of her life in the country.

In the early years of the 1930s, Kati Horna's formal explorations were enriched by her brief stays in Berlin, where she was able to establish contact with members of the Bauhaus. This conception of photography not as an image confined solely to documentary use, but as a visual, plastic, and flexible structure, allowed Horna to conceive photography from the outset as a free plastic exercise, open to multiple possibilities for developing more diverse visual solutions.

In her early compositions, several interests can be identified. On the one hand, the influence of an avant-garde gaze materialized through practices such as photomontage, oblique photographic compositions, the decontextualization of objects, and the superimposition of negatives. On the other hand, there is also a use of the camera as a tool for recording events, complex social situations, architecture, spaces devastated by war, and architecture as a stage for social life. In other words, Horna's gaze is also shaped by thematic fragments.

Throughout Horna's work, both in Europe and during her exile in Mexico, the use of architectural photography appears frequently, not only as a subject in itself but also as a graphic source that enabled her to produce critical photomontages, editorial photomontages, or architectural documentation for publications, having worked as an architectural photographer for various outlets during her career as an editorial photographer in Mexico.

An example of the use of architectural photography in a photomontage of a critical nature is L'Enfance (1938), in which Horna employs two negatives to create a pessimistic and critical work addressing the dark present of childhood in a Europe at war. In this photomontage, the artist juxtaposes the remains of a building destroyed during the bombings of March 1938 in Barcelona, cutting out the silhouette of the ruined structure and placing it alongside the portrait of a child in rags, photographed during a documentary report she carried out in another Spanish town (Vicién) during the Civil War. Here we find a practice that interprets architectural photography as a critical component that helps to construct a social discourse. By contrast, one of her most recognized photographs, Subida a la catedral (1938), helps us understand the use of architectural photography to generate a new meaning detached from a social component. In this case, Horna merges two photographs—a female face and an image of staircases—aligning the woman's eye with a window and thus producing a new work whose meaning does not point toward documentary representation or social critique, but rather toward a purely aesthetic exploration.

It is this creative freedom forged in Europe that this paper seeks to underscore, by establishing connections between Horna's early works and her later practice in Mexico, where we find experiments with urban space, such as the photomontage produced in 1941 for the magazine Tránsito, undoubtedly one of the earliest examples of photomontage in Mexican editorial practice created by a woman photographer. From her time in Mexico onward, a sustained interest in architectural photography becomes evident—an aspect that until now has been overshadowed by her photographic work driven by other artistic interests and commissioned projects. This paper therefore aims to reassess Kati Horna's architectural photography as a powerful framework in the development of her most significant body of work.

Bio

She holds a PhD in Art History and Cultural Management in the Hispanic World from Pablo de Olavide University in Seville. She completed her studies in Architecture at the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California and obtained aMaster's degree in Visual Arts from the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. She is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Art History at the University of Seville and a member of the research group HUM-1030 (Avant-gardes, Latest Trends, and Artistic Heritage). Her research focuses on photography, identity, and their role as objects of study within contemporary artistic production. She has also participated in digital preservation projects and the management of photographic collections in various public institutions in Mexico.

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Nelly's, from the series *Easter Parade*,
New York, April 1956
Photographic Archives–Benaki Museum

From the Studio to the Street: Re-interpreting Nelly's Documentary Practice

Prof. Alexandra Moschovi
University of Sunderland

Active as a photographer for over 40 years, in Dresden, Athens, and New York, Elli Sougioultzoglou-Seraidari (a.k.a. Nelly's, 1899–1998) occupies a prominent place in the history of Greek photography. Her early-twentieth-century work in Greece attracted renewed curatorial and critical attention in the 1980s, yet the trajectory of her career in the course of her self-imposed exile in New York during and after WWII had remained under-researched for years.

As the number of professional women photographers doubled in North America to 10,000 in wartime, their work gained recognition through state commissions, publications, museum exhibitions, and the booming illustrated press. Although Nelly—often celebrated as "the Grand Lady of Greek Photography"—earned notable critical acclaim for her exhibitions and displays of Greek subjects in cultural institutions across North America in the early 1940s,[1] financial pressures and the anguish of settlement forced her to focus her photographic energies on establishing a sustainable studio practice. Her studio on East 57th Street in New York became a hub for affluent Greek expatriates while she continued to pursue Hellenic-themed projects, often commissioned by prominent Greek industrialists such as Aristotle Onassis.[2]

1 Carol Frink, "Washington: Greek King's Photographer Exhibits Here," *Times Herald*, Wednesday 22 November 1939, press cutting, Nelly's Archive, Photographic Archives-Benaki Museum.

2 Aliki Tsirgialou, "'Nelly's, a Painter Working with her Camera'," in Aliki Tsirgialou (ed.) *Nelly's: The Work of Greek Photographer Elly Sougioultzoglou-Seraidari 1899–1998* (Athens: Benaki Museum, 2023), 26–71.

In 1956, at the age of 57, Nelly attended Alexey Brodovitch's Design Laboratory at the New School for Social Research with a view to exploring documentary photography. The Russian-born photographer, designer, and art director of Harper's Bazaar offered an experimental evening course, which, geared towards the industry, combined design and photography and fostered individuality, creativity, and technical proficiency.[3] A strong advocate of street photography, Brodovitch urged the many attendant photographers to challenge normative camera aesthetics and expand the field of photographic visuality, by embracing technical accidents, surprising juxtapositions, unorthodox perspectives, and creative cropping. His emphasis on "available light" and "active camera" methods encouraged photographers to capture candid streets scenes, blending reportage with fashion photography.[4] In the context of the course assignments, Nelly ventured beyond the comfort zone of her studio and roamed the bustling streets of New York. From a pedestrian's vantage point, she photographed skyscrapers in midtown Manhattan, fascinated by the immense volume and form of those emblematic monuments of modernity. She also documented their construction through the narrative structure of the photo-story.[5]

Assigned to illustrate "Phantasy," Nelly took to Fifth Avenue near her studio during the popular Easter Parade on 1st April 1956. Positioned outside St. Patrick's Cathedral, she waited with two Rolleiflex cameras—one loaded with black-and-white film, the other with colour—for the elite congregation to emerge in their festive attire. Responding to Brodovitch's directive to use an "active camera," Nelly navigated the crowd, photographing ladies in fashionable clothing and spring bonnets alongside their elegant escorts, kids in their Sunday best, even pets adorned with hats and matching outfits, all parading against the vibrant urban backdrop.

On that Easter Sunday, Nelly produced about 150 frames out of which she chose around 20 to present to Brodovitch and her peers. Her eclectic selection is telling of her intention to cautiously exercise her photographic muscles. Street photography offered her the subtext and the creative licence to relinquish the full technical control she exercised in the studio, experiment with composition and cropping beyond commercial briefs, and embrace serendipity as an organic part of her photographs. Nelly reported that Brodovitch and her course peers praised her Easter Parade series and encouraged her to seek publication in Europe. However, the photographs would not be published for 35 years, that is, until the AD Gallery in Athens, Greece organised an exhibition and print portfolio sets in 1991, recognising the series as a significant part of Nelly's oeuvre and her legacy.

3 Kerry William Purcell, *Alexey Brodovitch* (London: Phaidon, 2002), 113.

4 Andy Grundberg, *Brodovitch* (New York: Harry N . Abrams, 1989), 138.

5 Alexandra Moschovi, "From the Studio to the Street," in Tsirgialou (ed.) *Nelly's*, 402.

Drawing on unpublished photographic and archival materials, including personal and family correspondence, and recently rediscovered contact sheets long thought lost since 1991, this paper seeks to re-write the narrative of Nelly's involvement with documentary photography in post-war North America. By recontextualising the 1956 series Easter Parade in the visual cultures of New York and alongside the post-war practice of émigré women photographers and their male counterparts, this research challenges preconceived ideas about Nelly's aesthetic and ideological positioning. It resituates her practice within broader aesthetic trends of the period, interrogates gender stereotypes of metropolitan women and considerations of class and race against a backdrop of political turbulence and civil unrest. Furthermore, the paper offers a female perspective on the operations of Alexey Brodovitch's male-dominated photography workshop that shaped the snapshot vision and storytelling methodologies of the New York School of Photography.

Bio

Prof. Alexandra Moschovi (PhD) is an academic scholar, art critic, and curator who has published widely on modern/contemporary photography and its interface with digital technologies, the museum, and the archive. She co-authored the volume *Greece through Photographs* (Melissa Publishing, 2007/09), co-edited the anthology *The Versatile Image: Photography, Digital Technologies and the Internet* (Leuven University Press, 2013), and authored the monograph *A Gust of Photo-Philia: Photography in the Art Museum* (Leuven University Press, 2020). Moschovi is a Professor of Photography and Curating at the University of Sunderland, UK and the Principal Investigator of Museum Dialogues.

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Chiara Samugheo, cover of the photo documentary *Le invasate*, published in Cinema Nuovo on January 10, 1955

Chiara Samugheo: The Neorealist Spirit of Italian Photography

Michela Frontino
Academy of Fine Arts in Bari

"When I began working as a photographer, it was the 1950s. The Cold War was underway, yet there was still hope: the belief that images, words, and gestures might break the wall separating ordinary people from a better world. I believed my photographs could expose the country's ills and contradictions."[1] With these words, Chiara Paparella (Bari, 1925–2022) recalled the beginning of a career that would profoundly reshape Italian photojournalism. In 1953 she moved from Puglia to Milan against her parents' wishes, who had imagined for her a safer and more conventional profession as a schoolteacher. Milan, however, offered access to an intellectually vibrant environment. She entered circles that included Enzo Biagi, Alberto Moravia, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Giorgio Strehler, and met Pasquale Prunas, founder of the cultural journal *Sud* and her lifelong partner. At his suggestion, she adopted the surname Samugheo, borrowed from a Sardinian town, transforming her identity into a symbolic declaration of independence from her family background and from the social expectations that constrained women of her generation. This change marked an ethical as well as personal stance. Samugheo distanced herself from the conservative conventions of the Italian South, where women were relegated to domestic and maternal roles, while also confronting the contradictions of the North, which, despite its rhetoric of modernity, rarely recognized women as equal participants in cultural and professional life. Working within a predominantly male milieu, she nonetheless asserted a distinct presence and quickly established herself as a serious practitioner of documentary photography. Her early experience with the illustrated magazine *Le Ore* proved decisive. She was the only woman on its editorial staff, and the publication stood out for the importance it accorded to photographs and photographers. Inspired by international models such as *Life* and *Paris Match*, it emphasized visual storytelling and long-form reportage. Photography here functioned as a tool of civic engagement, aligned with the moral and aesthetic principles of Italian Neorealism, which sought to document everyday life, social inequalities, and the lingering wounds of the postwar years with empathy and critical awareness.

1 C. Samugheo, Seguendo la diva, in Renzo Renzi (a cura di), Stelle di carta, Oberon, 1984, p. 15

By the mid-1950s, however, the rapid economic boom began to erode this ethos. Neorealism was increasingly reduced to a formula, preserving the outward signs of social realism while losing its political urgency[2]. Samugheo resisted this normalization. Rather than adopting a depoliticized style, she sought subjects through which photography might still address marginality, collective memory, and embodied experience, maintaining a belief in the documentary image as testimony rather than spectacle. Her response materialized in 1954 with one of the earliest Italian photodocumentaries devoted to Tarantism, a complex cultural and religious phenomenon in Southern Italy traditionally associated with women believed to have been bitten by the tarantula. The afflicted entered states of agitation and trance that were interpreted both as illness and ritual. Samugheo's project, later known as *Le invasate*, intersected with the anthropological research of Ernesto De Martino and the photographs of Franco Pinna, forming part of a broader ethnographic investigation. De Martino challenged the strictly medical explanation of tarantism, proposing instead a symbolic and ritual framework. Music, dance, and color were understood as therapeutic devices capable of restoring psychic and social equilibrium. The symbolism of the taranta came to represent other forms of suffering: poverty, frustration, grief, or unhappy domestic life. Women, in particular, emerged as protagonists of a drama that combined pain and resistance.[3] Samugheo's images embraced this interpretation, portraying the *tarantate* not as exotic curiosities but as historical subjects whose bodies articulated a silent protest against patriarchal constraints. Through this work she established herself as a pioneer of socially committed photojournalism in Italy. Her photographs balanced empathy with analytical distance, combining aesthetic rigor with anthropological sensitivity. They demonstrated that documentary practice could illuminate invisible lives while avoiding voyeurism, and that visual narration could serve both ethical and political purposes.

This commitment remained central even as the broader media landscape changed dramatically.

2 M. Russo, *Storia culturale della fotografia italiana*, Einaudi, 2012, p. 57

3 Ernesto De Martino, *La terra del rimorso*, 1961, pp. 52-53

4 R. Renzi, *Sull' uscio di un rituale, in Renzo Renzi (a cura di), Stelle di carta*, Oberon, 1984, p. 9

5 A. C. Quintavalle, *Le figure dei sentimenti. Ritratti di dive secondo Chiara Samugheo, in Uliano Lucas (a cura di), Chiara Samugheo vicina alle stelle*, Mazzotta, 2006, pp. 11-12

6 M. Russo, *Storia culturale della fotografia italiana*, Einaudi, Torino, 2012, p. 57

By the late 1950s, illustrated magazines increasingly favored color printing, celebrity culture, and consumer imagery. Space for socially oriented reportage diminished. Samugheo herself noted that professional opportunities were shrinking, not because social problems had disappeared, but because the few publications attentive to them were vanishing. Faced with this transformation, she redirected her practice toward cinema, entering the competitive world of film photography without abandoning her documentary ethos. Operating among aggressive paparazzi, she developed an alternative method based on trust and proximity.[4] Rather than pursuing sensational shots, she approached actresses in moments of privacy, seeking collaboration rather than capture. Her portraits rejected the stylized iconography of the 1930s diva, traditionally distant and idealized. Instead, she presented stars as ordinary individuals situated in everyday environments: parks, homes, or public streets. Gesture, expression, and atmosphere replaced theatrical glamour.[5] Actresses such as Gina Lollobrigida, Silvana Mangano, Sophia Loren, Jeanne Moreau, Brigitte Bardot, and Elizabeth Taylor appeared approachable, almost familiar. These images circulated widely in popular magazines and often took the form of domestic portraits intended to be framed or displayed like posters. Despite their commercial context, they preserved an ethical core, resisting the commodification of the female body and restoring to each subject a sense of individuality and lived experience.

Throughout the transition from postwar Neorealism to a consumer-oriented visual culture[6], Samugheo's gaze remained consistent. She explored the social uses of the female body, documented ritual and rebellion, and challenged the gender stereotypes perpetuated by both traditional society and the entertainment industry. Even in her later color work, the spirit of Neorealism endured as an attitude rather than a style: a commitment to proximity, respect, and testimony. Her career thus occupies a singular position at the intersection of documentary practice and popular culture. By navigating both fields without relinquishing ethical responsibility, Samugheo demonstrated that photography could remain socially engaged even within commercial circuits. Her images continue to testify to the possibility of combining aesthetic sophistication with political awareness, offering a nuanced portrait of postwar Italy and affirming the transformative power of looking.

Bio

Michela Frontino is an art historian and professor of Digital Photography at the Academy of Fine Arts in Bari. Her artistic and visual research stems from her studies in art history, which continuously inspire her to connect the images she produces with historical archives and everyday experience. She currently serves as Business Manager for the project on the digitalization of the cultural heritage of the cultural institutions of the Apulia Region, with a focus on photography.

She has been involved in the enhancement of photographic collections of historical and artistic value, also through artistic production, including: the Romualdo Moscioni Collection (Sabap of Bari); the Italo Zannier Archive (Fondazione di Venezia); the Collection of the League of Romagna Cooperatives (at Dismec – University of Bologna); the Salvador Dalí Biographical Collection (Gala Salvador Dalí Theatre-Museum); and the Giuseppe Ceci Photographic Collection (Municipal Library of Andria).

She is co-founder of Of(f) the archive_Photo and Cultural Heritage, a cultural association dedicated to the promotion and valorization of photographic archives.

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Enfermeira Aura Teles, Margarida Correia, 2024
(originais a cores).

Reactivating the archive: Portuguese paratrooper nurses between imagery and memory

Margarida Correia
University of Lisbon

This visual essay was developed as part of a broader artistic and research-based investigation into the photographic archives of Portuguese parachute nurses active during the Colonial War (1961–1974). The project reflects on how their personal photographic collections contribute to a critical re-reading of a conflict that remains insufficiently examined in relation to women's participation, representation, and memory.

The parachute nurses were a group of young women who became the first to be formally integrated into the Portuguese Armed Forces. Deployed in Angola, Mozambique, and Guinea-Bissau, they supported the war effort as military nurses while simultaneously serving as symbols of the regime's propaganda. At the same time, they were pioneers, occupying unprecedented positions within a militarised and colonial context. Their photographs—taken in barracks, hospitals, and during everyday encounters—offer a rare female perspective on the Colonial War, one that has only recently begun to be acknowledged within Portuguese society.

This visual essay explores what these photographs and albums reveal about gendered dynamics within the Armed Forces, relationships between male soldiers and female nurses, and interactions with local populations. It examines photography as operating simultaneously as personal testimony, propaganda, and social practice. The project also raises broader questions of circulation and visibility: how these images moved through albums, correspondence, and the press; how they contributed to shaping colonial imaginaries; and how they continue to inform the contested memory of Portugal's late colonial past.

Central to this inquiry is an examination of photography as a social practice. The project asks what can be gleaned from these images about how photography was used, circulated, and understood at the time. Through interviews with the parachute nurses, I sought to understand their relationship to photography: how they acquired their cameras, where film was purchased and developed, and in which contexts photographs were taken.

Most of the photographs in the albums were taken by the nurses themselves, although some were made by colleagues or professional photographers. This mixture of authorship complicates traditional distinctions between amateur and official imagery, highlighting how personal photographs could coexist with—and at times be absorbed into—public and institutional narratives.

My position as an artist is integral to this research. The process of accessing private archives, carefully documenting fragile materials, and producing new images in dialogue with historical ones has shaped both the methodology and the visual language of the project. This privileged access to personal collections demands an ethical and reflective approach to archival practice—one that acknowledges the affective weight of these materials while critically situating them within broader historical narratives.

The project asks: what do the photographs and albums of the parachute nurses tell us about the front lines, about relationships between men and women in the Armed Forces, and about encounters with local populations? What information emerges from the dynamics between people, from the ways subjects look at the camera or position themselves, from how they are portrayed, from what appears in the foreground and background, and from their awareness—or lack thereof—of the camera and their surrounding environment? What do these photographic archives reveal about how photography was practiced at the time, how images circulated, and their implications for understanding and representing the national past?

By centring the parachute nurses' visual archives, this project highlights the tension between visibility and erasure within Portuguese photographic historiography. It reframes these images not only as private mementos but as critical documents that expose the intersections of gender, colonialism, and war. Drawing on feminist, decolonial, and transdisciplinary approaches, the project engages with questions of archival practice, historiographical revision, and public access to photographic heritage. In doing so, it contributes to expanding the field of women's photographic practices and to rethinking the role of photography in mediating colonial histories.

Bio

Margarida Correia is an artist and researcher based in Lisbon. She holds a Master's degree in Photography from the School of Visual Arts in New York and is currently pursuing a PhD in Multimedia Art at the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Lisbon (FBAUL), where she is an FCT scholarship holder. She also teaches as a guest lecturer at IADE – European University. Her work has been exhibited widely in Portugal and internationally, with solo shows at the Urban Institute for Contemporary Art (Grand Rapids), AIR Gallery (New York), Real Art Ways (Hartford), Texas Woman's University (Denton), the EDP Foundation, São Roque Museum, Gallery 111, the D. Diogo Sousa Museum, and the São João da Madeira Arts Center. She has also participated in group exhibitions at institutions including the Bronx Museum of the Arts, White Columns, Exit Art, the Center for Photography at Woodstock, the Griffin Museum of Photography, The Print Center (Philadelphia), and Gallery 44 (Toronto).

Correia has received grants and awards from the Aaron Siskind Foundation, Puffin Foundation, Gulbenkian Foundation, and the Portuguese Center for Photography, among others. Her current research explores the visual archives of Portuguese parachute nurses during the Colonial War.

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Panel 7.

Working with Fragments:

Women, Photography and the Archive

Elsbeth Gropp,
Portrait of a young Woman
Cologne, around 1960
Gelatin silver print,
38.5 x 28.5 cm
Kölnisches Stadtmuseum,
Inv. Nr. G 15844
Digital Image:
Kölnisches Stadtmuseum

Elsbeth Gropp — Reconstruction and Exhibition of an almost forgotten oeuvre

Volker Hille
Cologne City Museum

The Cologne City Museum (Kölnisches Stadtmuseum) is currently preparing a comprehensive exhibition of the work of Cologne-based photographer Elsbeth Gropp (1885–1974). The starting point of this project is a collection of over 200 portraits from Gropp's studio, which are part of the Museum's collection but have remained unnoticed in the depot until now. These portraits are of exceptionally high quality and will be a key focus of the exhibition.

Gropp established her own studio in Cologne in 1911 and quickly gained an outstanding reputation as a portrait photographer. She was one of the founding members of the elite organisation of professional artistic photographers, the „Gesellschaft Deutscher Lichtbildner“, and one of the first women to be appointed to it. The exhibition will examine Gropp’s economic activity and her work, based on the original photographs, negatives, images printed in publications and magazines and also analyze the order books from her studio preserved in the archive. Active as a photographer for over five decades, Gropp used her success to train young photographers, especially women. Her influence on the younger generation of photographers, both in terms of style and as a form of empowerment, is evident in a selection of works. However, some of her colleagues accused her of employing too many trainees and, in addition to her artistic work, also producing ‘simple’ commissioned photography, such as passport photos. In fact, upon closer inspection, her work appears quite heterogeneous: trained as an academic painter and working at a very high level from the beginning of her photographic career, she took on a wide variety of assignments, working in the field of theater photography, taking portraits of high-ranking politicians and artists, but also numerous portraits of children and families. Contemporary newspaper articles and exhibition reviews were dominated by great admiration for Elsbeth Gropp’s work, from her early career in the 1920s to the 1960s.

Despite her undoubtedly significant impact, Gropp’s oeuvre has been largely forgotten and is overshadowed by the work of male contemporaries based in Cologne at the time such as August Sander, Hugo Erfurth, Werner Mantz and Hugo Schmölz. Tragically, her archives and her studio were destroyed during World War II and most of her work from the first 30 years of her career are lost.

The presentation will address the question how we can reconstruct Gropp’s former significance, her position within the German photography scene, and her visual language, and correct a historiography in which Gropp has been unjustly overlooked. The tension between her work as an ‘artist” and her economic activity as a successful entrepreneur raises questions that go beyond a mere appreciation of Gropp’s artistic achievement. The exhibition project aims to present an objective view on her life and work, focusing not only on her outstanding ‘artistic’ work, but also on her entire output as a photographer. However, this approach raises the ethical dilemma that such a comprehensive presentation based on an explicitly non-heroic view could make her work appear less focused than that of contemporary male photographers. The exhibition seeks to counteract this risk by presenting direct comparisons that demonstrate how commonplace it was for established studio photographers to produce work of varying quality depending on their clients’ demands. Similarly, her biography should not focus exclusively on her undoubtedly significant achievements, but rather explore objectively how she adapted to no less than four political systems during her five-decade career, critically examining her role during the Nazi era as well. Having consulted various archives and collected scattered materials, it is clear that some gaps will remain. However, the case of Elsbeth Gropp clearly shows that this kind of research is worthwhile, as it contributes to a more balanced history of photography, which is still dominated by well-known male ‘heroes’. My paper thus aims to present a promising case study and discuss the methodological challenges in the context of an international network of comparable research projects.

Bio

Volker Hille (b. 1984) has been head of the Graphic Arts and Photography Collection at the Cologne City Museum (Kölnisches Stadtmuseum) since 2024. He studied art history and comparative literature at Goethe University Frankfurt am Main and completed his doctorate in 2019 with a thesis on images of violence in late medieval art. From 2018 to 2020, he was a trainee at the Museum Schnütgen in Cologne, where he worked on a comprehensive exhibition on the late Gothic sculptor Master Arnt of Kalkar. From 2021 to 2023, he was Head of Collection at the Deutsche Börse Photography Foundation where he co-curated several monographic and group exhibitions. In 2025, he curated the exhibition ‘Footprints on the Sands of Time’ with the artist Marta Bogdańska as part of the Photoszene-Festival.

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Sorelle Marsini,
Portrait of a Woman,
pre 1867, carte de visite,
recto, albumen print
90 × 56 mm
glued onto cardboard
102 × 62 mm, inv. IDF 814,
Archivio Fotografico
Lucchese “Arnaldo Fazzi”,
Lucca, Italy.

Fotografiste. Archives, Feminism, and Fragments of Women’s Work in Photography

Linda Bertelli
IMT School
for Advanced
Studies Lucca

Agnese Ghezzi
Free University
of Bozen-
-Bolzano

This paper presents work developed within the PRIN 2022 PNRR project *“Fotografiste. Women in Photography From Italian Archives (1839–1939)”*, promoted by IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca and the Brera Academy of Fine Arts (Milan), which aims to shed light on the histories of women who worked in the photographic field between 1839 and 1939. The project investigates women’s involvement in photography across a wide range of professional roles: employees in studios or businesses directed by men; proprietors of photographic studios; workers in industries producing photographic materials; and, though to a lesser extent, women who practiced photography within the domestic sphere, whether as professionals or amateurs.

Therefore, rather than focusing on authorship or on the recovery of overlooked female photographers alone, Fotografiste shifts attention to photography as a field of work, understood in an expanded sense that also encompasses domestic and informal labor. Its central aim is to investigate the conditions, practices, and cultural frameworks through which women were able to access, negotiate, and construct a professional trajectory – or more simply a working life – within the photographic sector. Photography emerges here not only as a medium of representation, but also as a site of economic activity, technical skill, and social negotiation in which women’s presence, although often marginalized or obscured, was both significant and structurally embedded. On this basis, the project proposes a rereading, and ultimately a rewriting, of early photographic history as a particularly fertile and original chapter in the social history of women’s labor.

The paper addresses a set of key theoretical and methodological questions that arise when attempting to reconstruct these histories from archival sources: what counts as evidence when women's professional lives appear only intermittently in official records? How do we narrate photographic history under conditions of scarcity, fragmentation, and asymmetrical documentation? And how can the "silences" of the archive be approached not as accidental absences, but as effects of social hierarchies and classificatory regimes, requiring interpretive strategies attentive to power, omission, and erasure? These questions lead to a focused reflection on archives – photographic and otherwise - not merely as repositories, but as institutions that organise visibility through description, attribution, and regimes of value.

Central to this discussion are the notions of traces, fragments, margins, voids, and archival silence, understood both as defining features of feminist archival research and as analytical tools for critically rethinking women's presence in the history ofphotography. Building on scholarship in feminist historiography and critical archival studies (e.g., Steedman; Stoler; Caswell and Cifor), the paper reflects on what it means to look at archival practices through a feminist lens, emphasizing both the epistemological and the practical implications of such a perspective and asks how it is possible to recover, at least partially, the voices and perspectives of women who engaged with photography as a form of labor, expression, and economic sustenance, particularly in the nineteenth century.

Two interrelated questions structure its argument. First, how can researchers work within standard archives - often organized according to hierarchical and exclusionary logics that marginalize certain experiences, including those of women – to identify, extract, and render visible data that has been historically overlooked or devalued? Second, what role does feminist historiography play not only in the retrieval of information, but also in the descriptive and interpretive process of emergence? Within this framework, the paper revisits a second body of literature: research on feminist movements' archival practices since the 1970s, where archives have been conceived as tools of self-representation, self-historicisation, and political memory. Rather than treating these practices as relevant only to explicitly feminist collections, the paper uses them methodologically to formulate an intervention in non-feminist and institutional archival settings. In other words, it asks what can be learned from feminist archival ethics and practices – attention to affect, relationality, naming, and the politics of description – when the materials under study are embedded in archival structures that were not designed to preserve women's histories. This move remains deliberately critical: the paper keeps open (and unresolved) the question of whether the archive, as a form, can ever be fully compatible with feminist research, or whether feminist work must necessarily operate through partial, tactical, and situated interventions.

To illustrate how this theoretical and methodological framework takes shape in research practice, the paper examines the case of Emilia and Giuseppina Marsini, sisters and owners of photographic studios active in Lucca, Livorno, and Florence between approximately 1860 and 1890. Despite their significant entrepreneurial activity, reconstructing their professional trajectories is complicated by the fragmentary and dispersed nature of the available sources. Their names appear intermittently across heterogeneous documents: among the predominantly male participants in the Provincial Exhibition of Fine Arts, Arts and Crafts held in Lucca in 1867; on the versos of a small number of cartes de visite preserved in the Lucca Photographic Archive; in population censuses; and in the records of the Florence Commercial Court.

These materials are preserved across different archives, institutional contexts, and documentary regimes, spaces in which the presence of the Marsini sisters becomes momentarily visible while remaining marked by omission, intermittence, and erasure. Although they owned and managed photographic studios in three major Tuscan cities, their careers cannot be reconstructed through a continuous narrative, but only through aconstellation of partial and discontinuous traces. Rather than smoothing over these gaps, the paper deliberately foregrounds them, presenting the case study through the very fragments that shaped the research process itself. In doing so, it seeks to make visible not only the history of the Marsini sisters, but also the methodological conditions under which such a history can be written.

Bios

Linda Bertelli is Associate Professor of Aesthetics at the IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca, where she also serves as Vice-Rector for Gender Policies, Equal Opportunities, and Communication. Her research interests lie at the intersection of aesthetics, visual studies, and the history of photography, with a particular focus on feminist practices and forms of representation and self-representation. She has published essays and monographs on Carla Lonzi, Henri Bergson, Étienne-Jules Marey, and on the aesthetics of labor. She is the Principal Investigator of the PRIN PNRR 2022 project Fotografiste. Women in Photography From Italian Archives (1839–1939), and has directed seasonal schools and international conferences in the field of visual studies. Bertelli holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Pisa and has carried out research at international institutions such as the John D. Calandra Italian American Institute, CUNY Graduate Center (New York City), Bocconi University in Milan, and the Federal University of Espírito Santo in Brazil. She contributes to academic journals and editorial boards in aesthetics and visual studies, and is a member of the editorial board of Feminist Art Practices and Research: Cosmos (Taylor & Francis).

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The Washhouse of Fuenteheridos. Postcard c.1904 by Candelaria Tello Valladares, also known as *The Widow of Rafael Franco*.
Credits: Own collection.

Rediscovering Andalusian Women Photographers: Gender, region, and photography in 19th and early 20th century

Azahara Lozano Dorado
University of Seville

The traditional historiography of Spanish photography has often emphasized two dominant narratives: first, the introduction of photography by traveling male photographers -particularly active in Andalusia within the context of Romantic and Orientalist journeys- and second, the later consolidation of large photographic studios in central cities such as Madrid or Barcelona, led by canonical figures such as Charles Clifford and Jean Laurent. Together, these narratives have produced a centralist and masculinized account that has marginalized peripheral contexts and obscured women's active participation in the early development of photography.

This paper seeks to shift the focus into the opposite direction by recovering the presence of Andalusian women photographers active from the mid-nineteenth century to the early decades of the twentieth century, understood not as exceptional cases but as active cultural agents within the professional and visual culture of photography. As a modern technology not regulated by traditional gremial structures, photography offered women early opportunities for professional practice, allowing them to work as portraitists, studio managers, and entrepreneurs, particularly in portrait photography and, later, in postcard production.

Despite Andalusia's complex economic and social conditions during the nineteenth century, the region sustained an intense and diverse photographic activity from an early date, extending beyond major urban centers. Women photographers such as Madame Traschler Fritz (Córdoba and Cádiz, 1844), Joaquina Mayor Baró Lorichon (Málaga, 1850–1860), the Widow of Luis León Massón (Seville, 1851–1871), Amalia López Cabrera (Jaén, 1862), and the Widow of Enrique Godínez (Seville, 1876–1878) exemplify a continuous female presence in photographic practice. They managed studios, worked as portraitists, participated in exhibitions, and adapted to the technical and commercial transformations of the médium.

The paper also highlights rural and non-metropolitan contexts, challenging the identification of photographic modernity exclusively with Spain's major cities. In this regard, the discovery of a woman photographer working in the rural countryside of the Sierra de Aracena and Picos de Aroche (Huelva) is especially significant.

Candelaria Tello Valladares (1841–1931), professionally known as the Widow of Rafael Franco, was an entrepreneur and photographer whose activity was primarily developed in the town of Aracena, located in the Sierra de Aracena and Picos deAroche, in the north of the province of Huelva. The introduction of photography to this region was shaped by multiple actors, including Portuguese neighbors as well as photographers from Extremadura and the city of Seville.

Within this context, the Widow of Rafael Franco was the first documented local woman photographer in the area and constitutes a paradigmatic example of female agency in a rural environment. Born into a well-off family from Aracena, she was widowed at a young age and subsequently assumed the management of several businesses under the professional signature "Widow of Rafael Franco," a designation that functioned as a strategy of social and professional legitimation within a deeply patriarchal society. This formula was widely adopted by women who took over family businesses after the death of the pater familias; in Candelaria's case, however, the addition of the designation "Widow of" is particularly revealing, as it was applied to a business she herself founded rather than one inherited from her husband.

Beyond her involvement in photography, Candelaria Tello managed a well-established hardware store and leather tannery in the town, as well as a paper factory, for which period advertisements have been preserved. This evidence points to a remarkable entrepreneurial capacity and an active integration into local economic circuits.

In the photographic field, her documented contribution consists of the production of a series of phototype postcards published by Hauser y Menet, the leading postcard publishing house in Spain, founded in 1890. This series comprised ten photographs signed with her professional name. The images depict streets, squares, washhouses, and landscapes from towns such as Aracena, Alájar, and Fuenteheridos, forming a valuable visual archive of the mountainous territory of Huelva at a moment of increasing image circulation and the consolidation of domestic tourism.

The inheritance of her photographs and materials by other family members and the subsequent partial destruction of her photographic archive within the family sphere emphasizes the fragility of sources and the gendered mechanisms of erasure that have specifically ajected women in the history of photography.

From a methodological perspective, the research is based on an interdisciplinary approach combining the history of photography, gender studies, and archival research. It draws on heterogeneous and fragmentary sources, including family albums, advertisements in provincial newspapers, census records, oral interviews, and surviving postcard copies preserved in public and private collections. This methodology highlights the need to expand the traditional documentary corpus andto apply feminist readings capable of reconstructing silenced professional trajectories.

In conclusion, this study contributes to making forgotten women's photographic practices visible, questioning canonical narratives in the history of photography in Spain, and expanding its geography beyond major urban centers. By positioning Andalusia not only as an object of representation but as an active site of image-making–and women as fundamental agents within that process–it proposes a critical rereading that enriches our understanding of photography and cultural heritage. The case of Candelaria Tello Valladares demonstrates that even in rural and peripheral contexts, women played a key role in the construction of visual imaginaries and in the cultural modernization of their territories.

Bio

Azahara Lozano Dorado (Granada, 1998) is a photographic archivist and researcher at the University of Seville specializing in the History of Photography in Andalusia and gender studies. She holds a degree in Art History from the University of Seville (2021) and completed a Master's in Photographic Documentation at the Complutense University of Madrid (2022), which led to a training grant at LOEWE's Historical Archive. She later pursued a Master's in Archives and Documents at the University of Seville (2023). She worked on the project "The Digitizer of Collective Memory" (2022–2023) and on "Entangling Memory" (2024), focused on the history of feminism in Seville. She also has catalogued and digitized the photographic collection of Martín Cartaya at the Heritage and Cultural section of the University of Seville. She has worked with private archives such as those of Tomás Martínez Delgado and the artist Miguel Benlloch. She has given many workshops and lecture on indentifing 19th century photographic processes and on archiving contemporary photographic collections for researchers and photographers.

She is currently pursuing her PhD in the project The Construction of the Image of Andalusia: Photography, Cinema, and Tourism, under a predoctoral contract and is undertaking a research stay at the CRIMIC at Sorbonne Université (Paris, France). During this stay, she has participated in various conferences and study workshops organized by Sorbonne Université, where she presented the progress of her research.

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self-portrait of Laura Pons,
shot around 1918

Archival Fragmentation and Gendered Erasures: Reconstructing the Photographic Legacy of Laura Pons (1889–1975)

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This paper examines the work of Laura Matilde Pons (1889–1975), an Italian amateur and, likely, semi-professional photographer whose surviving corpus provides a rare perspective for reassessing the scope and significance of women's photographic practices outside formal professional networks in early twentieth-century north-western Italy. Born in San Terenzo (province of La Spezia) into a longstanding Waldensian family – whose diasporic presence spans multiple countries since the eighteenth century – and trained as a tailor in Florence, Pons began photographing around 1908–1910. While her activity is scarcely documented in institutional archives, her rediscovered body of work includes over 120 6×6 negatives, approximately 80 9×12 negatives, 700 8×10 negatives, alongside a personal album recording a 1917 holiday in Bagnone and a family diary. The sequential numbering of her negatives suggests an original production of over 6,000 images, indicating both a sustained, methodical engagement with photography until 1929 (the year of her marriage to tailor Felice Bonfante, when she presumably ceased photographing) and the fragmentary condition of what survives, which in turn foregrounds the methodological and epistemological challenges involved in reconstructing women's legacies within the early decades of Italian photographic history.

Preserved largely in private collections and only recently attributed to Pons through her monogram (L.P.), the remaining oeuvre encompasses portraits of predominantly female subjects, created in improvised studio settings, often using draped fabrics as backdrops, as well as in the garden of her family villa. It also includes travel scenes and depictions of domestic life, collectively revealing a visual sensibility attentive to pictorialist concerns such as atmosphere, compositional balance, and tonal modulation, while at times experimenting with framing and displaying subtle playfulness in the engagement with sitters.

Following Penny Russell's reading of personal archives as sites "of self-representation and evidence of the cultural narratives amongst which a sense of self may be forged" (2009), Pons's archive can be understood as a lens onto the interplay between private life and the broader cultural, social, and economic expectations that shaped her social position. It reveals deliberate strategies of self-fashioning, relationality, and aesthetic experimentation that function as situated interventions within the photographic discourse of her time. At the same time, it offers insight into a national visual culture shaped by the expansion of photographic amateurism, within which illustrated manuals and specialized periodicals circulated aesthetic models and technical guidance, often promoting a "picturesque" gaze and contributing to the emergence of subjects later central to socially engaged photography.

By closely attending to the materiality of Pons's albums and photographs, and reconstructing their cultural biography (Kopytoff 1986; Edwards and Hart 2004), this study traces the evolution of her photographic practice by examining the trajectories of distinct negative groups. In particular, it interrogates the potential distinction – and occasional overlap – between images intended for private circulation and those produced for semi-public contexts, proposing a reading in which domestic and professional, private and public spheres are understood as structurally intertwined. Drawing on feminist theory and insights from the history of women's work in Italy, the paper situates Pons's activity as a form of cultural production that, by demonstrating technical competence, sustained practice, and social exchange, complicates conventional notions of professional authorship and amateurism.

This study forms part of the three-year national research project *Italian Feminist Photography* (IFP) (P.I. Professor Federica Muzzarelli), which has undertaken the first systematic analysis of women's contributions to Italian photography within the broader context of women's emancipation and feminist cultural practices. Conducted by scholars from the Universities of Bologna, Rome, and Parma, IFP combines archival research, the mapping of institutional and private collections, and the systematic study of periodicals and exhibition catalogues in order to trace the circulation and reception of women's photographic practices in Italy prior to 1980. Its findings have been integrated into a publicly accessible digital repository, providing a tool that facilitates access to materials otherwise difficult to locate and or integrate into research. Within a framework informed by gender and feminist studies, the project examines both explicitly militant photographic practices and those, like Pons's, whose significance lies in shaping imaginaries and strategies of self-assertion within everyday contexts.

Since the late twentieth century, feminist scholarship has emphasized the need to reconceptualize historiography so as to account for women's experiences, including their negotiation of domestic and private spheres. Recovering figures such as Pons therefore entails not only biographical reconstruction but also an examination of the structural conditions – archival fragmentation, institutional neglect, and delayed attribution – that have historically structured the reception, uneven transmission, and frequent obscuration of women's contributions to Italian photographic culture. The contrast with the abundant documentation surrounding male members of her family makes these asymmetries particularly visible. In this light, the study of Laura Pons's photographic legacy functions both as a microhistorical inquiry into a singular, yet representative, case and as an analysis of the archival and institutional frameworks within which women's cultural production has been preserved, classified, or allowed to disappear.

Bio

Giorgia Ravaioli is an adjunct professor of the history and theory of photography at both the University of Turin and ISIA Urbino, where she also serves as research coordinator. She holds a PhD in the history of photography from the University of Bologna. Her research focuses on photography in relation to feminist and archival theory, with a focus on critical aesthetics informed by intellectual history and material analysis. Since 2020, she has been a Fellow at the 'Fotografia Arte Femminismi' (Photography, Art, and Feminisms) Research Centre. In 2022, she joined the Global Art Archive Research Group at the University of Barcelona and is currently part of the research team for the national project 'Italian Feminist Photography', funded by the Italian Ministry of University and Research.

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View from the exhibition Silver Girls. Retouched History of Baltic Photography, 2025
National Gallery of Art, Vilnius
Photo by Gintarė Grigėnaitė

Silver Girls as a Curatorial Platform for Recovering Early Women Photographers' Histories Through Open-Ended Research

Šelda Puķīte
independent researcher

Silver Girls is an evolving curatorial and research platform dedicated to recovering and foregrounding early women photographers in the Baltic States whose work has largely been absent from academic research and exhibition histories. Focusing on practitioners active until the end of the Second World War, the project emerged in response to these historical omissions and has developed organically through exhibitions, publications, festivals, and cross-border collaborations. As new names, works, and archival materials continue to surface, *Silver Girls* remains intentionally open-ended, approaching curating as both a research methodology and a storytelling practice that addresses gaps, silences, and fragmentary evidence in the photographic archive.

Informed by feminist approaches to history-making, the project emphasizes recovery, context, and critical reflection on the processes through which historical narratives are constructed. Rather than producing a definitive archive, it engages with partial records and missing information as integral to the research process. In this way, curating becomes a mode of historical writing, making visible both what is known and the uncertainties that shape our understanding of the past.

The project began with the exhibition *(In)Visible Authors* (Riga, 2020), curated by Šelda Puķīte in collaboration with the Latvian Museum of Photography, historian Guna Ševkina, and the Riga Photography Biennial. Displayed as large-scale reproductions in public transport shelters across Riga, the exhibition made the work of early women photographers accessible to everyday passers-by, replacing commercial imagery with historical photographic practices. It focused on six Latvian women photographers active in the first half of the twentieth century: Lūcija Alutis-Kreicberga, Emīlija Mergupe, Antonija Heniņa, Minna Kaktiņa, Marta Pļaviņa, and Ērika Zariņa. Among them, Alutis-Kreicberga operated a prominent photography salon in Riga, while Mergupe actively participated in the Latvian Photographic Society and collaborated with Mārtiņš Buclers, a founding figure of Latvian photography. Heniņa, Kaktiņa, Pļaviņa, and Zariņa worked in rural regions, documenting communities and local landscapes, with Pļaviņa leaving the most extensive surviving archive of approximately 1,800 glass plate negatives.

The second phase of *Silver Girls* expanded transnationally through collaboration with Estonian curator Indrek Grigor, resulting in the exhibition *Silver Girls. Retouched History of Women Photographers* at the Tartu Art Museum (2020) and an accompanying publication designed by Alexey Murashko and published by Tartu Art Museum and Blind Carbon Copy. This marked the first joint curatorial and editorial project presenting early women photographers from both Latvia and Estonia. Given the shared historical and cultural context of the two countries and the more established research on early women photographers in Estonia, the exhibition adopted a comparative regional approach. Based on the available material at the time, ten photographers were selected: five from Estonia—Olga Dietze, Helene Fendt, Anna Kukk , Hilja Riet, and Lydia Tarem—and five from Latvia.

Rejecting the notion of reconstructing an objective historical truth, the exhibition articulated a clearly situated contemporary perspective. To deepen reflection on processes of loss, recovery, and reinterpretation, three contemporary artists—Nanna Debois Buhl, Elisabeth Tonnard, and Sami van Ingen—contributed works engaging with fragmented histories and cultural memory. Their projects ranged from photo reproductions of destroyed artworks and films to reflections on historically overlooked figures, emphasizing how absence and loss shape collective memory. These interventions highlight the interplay between archival fragment and curatorial speculation, aligning with *Silver Girls*' methodology of research-driven storytelling.

The mirror —central to photographic image-making—emerged as a key metaphor within the project. Materialized through installative displays combining historical photographs and reflective surfaces, the mirror interrogates the perception of reality and highlights how historical narratives are constructed. This metaphor resonates with the parallel development of photography and women's emancipation: as photography became associated with the democratization of art, it also functioned as a medium of social and political agency for women. In the contemporary "post-truth" context, amid the fourth wave of feminism, *Silver Girls* operates as a reflective surface through which past photographic practices inform contemporary reflections on agency, visibility, and historical recognition.

By 2021, the project evolved into a pan-Baltic collaboration with Indrek Girgor and Lithuanian curator Agnė Narušytė, culminating in the exhibition *Silver Girls. Retouched History of Baltic Photography* at the National Gallery of Art, Vilnius (2025), accompanied by a book on women photographers in the region published by NoRoutine Books. The exhibition presented works by twenty-one early women photographers from Latvia, Estonia, and, for the first time, Lithuania. New figures included Emīlija Raguel-Lācīte (Latvia), Emilie Johanson and Marie Keerd (Estonia), and Zinaida Bliumentalienė, Aleksandra Jurašaitytė, Antanina Laucienė, Paulina Mongirdaitė,Veronika Šleivytė, Domicelė Tarabildaitė-Tarabildienė, and Jadvyga Vaitaitienė-Markevičiūtė (Lithuania).

Building on previous methodology, historical images were presented in mirror-based installations alongside works by contemporary Baltic women artists, including Diāna Tamane, Marge Mongo, and Goda Palekaitė. Seven "archival islands" contextualized the material, exploring themes such as nobility as early photography adopters, women's work in salons, artistic practice, sisterhood, memorabilia, personal trajectories, and the phenomenon of "phantom materials" in archives. Complementary screenings of films and video footage enriched the narrative.

Silver Girls embraces curating as an iterative and research-driven practice, emphasizing engagement with fragmentary archives rather than awaiting completeness. The project foregrounds curation as a speculative, story-driven form of historical engagement that invites continuous re-evaluation, dialogue, and expansion.

This presentation offers an overview of six years of curatorial and research practice, focusing on twenty-one photographers selected from a growing archive of over 300 early women practitioners. It examines how their work has been represented in exhibitions and publications, assesses their influence on regional photographic narratives, and outlines future trajectories, including forthcoming monographs, research into underrepresented areas in the Baltics, and ongoing exhibition projects in preparation.

Bio

Šelda Puķīte (b. 1986) is a Latvian curator and researcher based in Estonia. She holds a BA (2010) and MA (2012) in Art History and Theory from the Art Academy of Latvia. Herpractice spans international curatorial work, art publishing, and catalogue production forcontemporary art festivals, including *Survival Kit* and the *Riga Photography Biennial*. Her essays have appeared in a range of Baltic cultural publications.

Puķīte's primary research interest lies in the history of early women photographers in Latvia, which she explores through both scholarly inquiry and curatorial frameworks. She is the project manager and lead curator of *Silver Girls*, an open-ended research initiative dedicated to recovering and promoting the legacy of women photographers active in the Baltics up to the end of the Second World War. She has presented her work at several international conferences, including *Art in a Modern City for a Modern State* (Vilnius Academy of Arts, Kaunas Faculty, 2022), *Artists in Central and Eastern Europe* (Arton Foundation, LCCA Riga, SCCA-Ljubljana, and Office for Photography, Zagreb, 2021) and at the symposium *Searching for Methods and Materials: Heritage of Photography in Culture and Art History Research*, held at the National Library of Latvia in Riga (2021).

Her recent curatorial projects include *Silver Girls. A Case Study of Early Women Photographers* (2025), co-curated with Indrek Grigor at AllArtNow Lab, Stockholm; *Momentary Organisms* (2025), a solo exhibition by Paweł Matyszewski at Kogo Gallery, Tartu; *Silver Girls. Retouched History of Baltic Photography* (2025), co-curated with Agnė Narušytė and Indrek Grigor at the National Gallery of Art, Vilnius; and *White Dwarfs and All Those Beautiful Nebulas* (2024) at Kim? Contemporary Art Centre, Riga.

Since 2020, Puķīte has been part of the curatorial team at Kogo Gallery in Tartu, where she works as international project manager and curator of the exhibition programme.

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Panel 8.

Inventing Images: Women and Photographic Technologies

Julia Herschel, "Part of an old sampler of Roman Lace," 1869. Cyanotype. *A Handbook for Greek and Roman Lace Making*. London: R. Barrett and Sons, 1869. Spencer Collection, New York Public Library.

Tangled up in Blue: The Cyanotype, Needlework, and Women's Labor in Julia Herschel's *A Handbook for Greek and Roman Lace Making*

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This paper delves into the historical relationship of lace to the cyanotype, or blueprint, a method of photography employing light-sensitive iron salts that was invented by the British scientist Sir John Herschel in 1842. Herschel's daughter Julia later made cyanotypes to illustrate a remarkable book, *A Handbook for Greek and Roman lace making*, which she self-published in 1869. Although only ten copies of this handmade book survive, it holds an important place in the long, enmeshed history of cyanotype photography and lace imagery. This paper analyzes Julia Herschel's publication in the context of nineteenth-century photographs of lace, especially those produced by the British inventor of the negative-positive process, William Henry Fox Talbot. It considers how nineteenth-century lace photographs related to contemporary lace pattern books and handbooks. I address how the development of commercial cyanotype papers shortly after Julia Herschel's publication led to the blueprint's adoption within both the machine lace industry and among lace makers to create and distribute their patterns among factories, merchants, and students of lace making.

This feminist reappraisal of a prominent motif from the origins of the medium unravels the interwoven histories of photography and lacemaking to expose the effacement of women's labor in those realms. While scholars Geoffrey Batchen and Douglas Nickel have addressed the relationship of Talbot's lace photographs to the industrialization of labor in nineteenth-century England, laying the groundwork for my research, they merely hint at the impact of mechanization on women or at the gendered visual language of lace.[1] I re-examine nineteenth-century photographs of lace, emphasizing the social and economic forces embedded in these images and argue that the moralistic and gendered discourses surrounding handmade versus mechanical lacemaking mirror those found in early writings on photography. This correspondence exposes the extent to which the conceptualization of photography as a medium has been imbricated in the suppression of female labor.

Perhaps the most well-known lace image Talbot produced is the illustration numbered plate twenty in his 1844 photobook *Pencil of Nature*: an example from Nottingham whose gauze would have been produced by a pusher machine and finished by female embroiderers. The image would thus seem to confirm Nickel's premise that, "behind Talbot's presentation of lace images lay the development of the machine-lace industry in England."[2] In fact, by photography's invention, the transformation of England's lace industry from a predominantly female labor-force producing handmade goods to a male-dominated factory system was basically complete. With the market saturated by cheap machine-made lace, the latter half of the nineteenth-century saw increasing interest in the revival of handmade lace led by female consumers from the upper class. In this context, lace books narrating the history of lace manufacture and decrying the inferior products of mass production proliferated, and Julia Herschel's book must be understood within this context.

The central issue of the handmade—and the moral virtues that accrued to it—is at the heart of nineteenth-century lace books. In this period, figures such as William Morris, John Ruskin, and Charles Eastlake became vocal advocates for the revival of handicraft as a moral antidote to the alienation of the machine age. They prized irregularities found in handmade goods in opposition to the uniformity of those produced by machine. Likewise, the materiality of Herschel's handbook displays the qualities of irregularity, variety, and detail that her contemporaries associated with the handmade. In addition to her text extolling these virtues, each book contains 20 to 22 cyanotypes depicting reproductions of lace patterns from books or drawings by Herschel herself, as well as contact prints of lace. The ten extant copies alone would have required that she produce 200 unique photographs —each one touched, labored over, and valued.

Although Julia Herschel likely chose to use the cyanotype process for this work because of her familial connections, to contemporary viewers the rich blue tones would have seemed appropriate for the subject matter. Lace sample books often included colorful papers that contrasted with the white and black lace fragments to emphasize details, with blue a particular favorite. In addition, white lace was treated with a chemical compound to help keep its color and the material was often wrapped in blue paper for sale as it was thought to keep it white for longer. The cyanotype, however, was not widely used until the latter part of the nineteenth century; Marion and Company of Paris issued the first commercial cyanotype papers beginning in 1872 and it was soon adopted to the lace industry. By the end of the nineteenth century, machine lace sample books frequently included cyanotypes of lace patterns, showing the repeat alongside a physical sample of the material which conveyed the quality of the stitching. The use of cyanotypes in Herschel's *Handbook* thus marks an important development in the visual traditions associated with reproducing lace on the printed page.

As the cyanotype rose in popularity within the machine lace industry, its relationship to the handmade lace revival also flourished. Lace makers around the turn of the century favored it as a tool for training students within lace associations and schools across Europe and the United States. Cyanotypes became a quick and easy method of reproducing and transmitting lace designs across geographies, enabling the industry to keep up with the latest trends and educating lace makers through standard designs. These uses seem to verify the aims of Julia Herschel's *Handbook*. Clearly, she saw the potential of cyanotypes to fulfill a practical function for lace makers—a usage that was widely adopted in the decades following her publication. Julia Herschel's lace photographs make material the invisible work of women that defined the medium of photography in its earliest period.

1 Geoffrey Batchen, "Patterns of Lace," *Huellas de Luz. El Arte y los Experimentos de William Henry Fox Talbot* (Madrid: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 2001), 355-357; Douglas Nickel, "Nature's Supernaturalism: William Henry Fox Talbot and Botanical Illustration," *Intersections: Lithography, Photography, and the Traditions of Printmaking*, Kathleen Howe, ed. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 15-24.

2 Nickel, "Nature's Supernaturalism," 19.

Bio

Dr. Beth Saunders is Associate Director and Curator of Special Collections & Gallery at the Albin O. Kuhn Library and Gallery, University of Maryland Baltimore County. She previously held positions at The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Sotheby's, New York and has taught at Baruch College, Rhode Island College, and the Rhode Island School of Design. Her writing has appeared in exhibition catalogs and journals such as *History of Photography*, *Photography and Culture*, and *Rivista di Studi di Fotografia*, and she is co-author of the exhibition catalogue *Apollo's Muse: The Moon in the Age of Photography* (The Met, 2019.)

A specialist in the history of photography, Beth holds a BFA from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and received a PhD and MPhil in Art History from The CUNY Graduate Center with a dissertation on nineteenth-century Italian photography. Her research has been supported by grants and fellowships from the American Academy in Rome, the Bodleian Libraries at Oxford University, the Bogliasco Foundation, the Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florence, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, and the Peter E. Palmquist Memorial Award.

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Florence Maude Warner in 1905
Strauss Studios
— St Louis Republic Newspapers, December 25, 1905, p. 11

Florence M. Warner: Inventor and Entrepreneur

Mariana W. von Hartenthal, independent researcher[1]

This paper seeks to introduce US inventor Florence M. Warner who, together with John Hutchinson Powrie, developed a process to make color photography in the early 1900s. Photography is a fertile ground for examining the barriers that professional women have encountered because of its technological character, especially during a time when it was as much, or even more, about experimenting with chemistry and physics than it was about art. Perceived as a traditionally "masculine" field, technology has been especially prone to cycles of forgetting and erasure of women's contributions (Oldenziel 1999). Moreover, photography was also a business domain, one that was largely inhospitable to women entrepreneurs such as Warner.

Commentaries among contemporary photography enthusiasts, critics, and professionals reveal the uneasy position Warner occupied in the minds of the predominantly male authors who wrote for photographic magazines and newspapers. Was she truly an inventor, or merely a wealthy assistant? Such accounts position her as marginal in the field of photography, not fully inside nor entirely outside it. Her partner Powrie has also been largely forgotten, yet his status was never questioned: he was consistently recognized as an inventor.

Born in South Dakota in 1878, Florence Maude Warner established a working partnership with Powrie in their youth, an association that continued until her death. They started experimenting in photographic technologies at Warner's house in Milwaukee when they were young. She later founded the Warner Research Laboratories in New York. In 1926, after a brief period of illness, she passed away in New York (*Photo-Era Magazine* 1926).

Towards the end of the 19th century there was still no widely adopted technological solution for color photography. The Autochrome Lumière, which would become the main technology to produce color photographs before the advent of color film in the mid-1930s, was patented in France in 1903 and first marketed in 1907. In the early 1900s, however, its position was not yet secure. The Warner-Powrie process emerged as a serious competitor, even offering certain advantages. Like the Autochrome, it required only one exposure in an ordinary camera on one plate, but unlike the Autochrome, the Warner-Powrie allowed for the printing of an "unrestricted number of positives in the true colors of nature" on glass or paper, an aspect considered "an advance in color-photography" of "the greatest importance" (French 1907).

1. I am grateful for the contributions of Professor James McArdle, who has reexamined the work of Warner and Powrie and wrote about her on his blog, *On this Date in Photography* (onthisdateinphotography.com).

Powrie first filed a patent in 1901 for a "Heliochromic Plate and the Process of Making the Same," which was granted in 1905.[2] The resulting tri-color screen process, known as the Warner-Powrie, improved on the Joly system. Warner's name does not appear in the patent paperwork, which lists Powrie as the sole inventor. However, in the first public announcement of the patent in December 1905 by the *St Louis Republic*, Warner – together with Powrie – is presented as one of the "two scientific enthusiasts" who worked for ten years to "finally make possible photographers' dream to make color images." While Powrie is portrayed as "an expert photo-chemist, an untiring student and a man of scientific attainment," the author of the *St Louis* affirms that he and Warner "[had] worked together in their laboratory" and that "together they performed the work and experiments."

The oscillation between disregard and acknowledgment of Warner's role recurs throughout contemporary accounts of the duo's work, even by Powrie himself. In *Penrose's Pictorial Annual* in 1906, he explains that their photographic plates were named "Florence Chromatic Plates" as a "tribute" to Warner "for her untiring devotion in the promotion and development of the Powrie-Warner process" – notably reversing the order of the names. In a 1907 edition of *Photo-Era* magazine, Phil M. Riley praises the Warner-Powrie system as "an exceedingly practical and simple process possessing advantages which are almost overwhelming." He insists that "Mr. Powrie deserves credit" for all the technical advancements of the process, casting as an assistant and financier. Curiously, Riley (1907) acknowledges that "Miss Warner's association with Mr. Powrie throughout his experiments, her assistance in the laboratory work, her financial aid, and, above all, her untiring interest in the process and faith in its ultimate success form an interesting story" for which he regrettably found "no space here."

A note in *Nature* (C.J. 1982) credits Powrie alone with the invention, stating that he "had been working on the subject for many years." An even more explicit dismissal of Warner's contributions appears in a 1908 article by Dutch physicist Johann George van Deventer. After a technical analysis of the Warner-Powrie process, van Deventer asserts, without clear evidence, that Powrie was the one who truly "tackled the problem," citing his prior work at the Barnes-Crosby Company as proof of Powrie's skills. The author ignores that such professional environments were largely inaccessible to women at the time. Warner, by contrast, is reduced to "a longtime friend of [Powrie's] family" who offered financial and moral support, for which Powrie supposedly insisted on attaching her name to the method, "with her name first".

A markedly different account of Warner's role appears in an unsigned note published in April 1907 in the Brazilian newspaper *O Pharol*. There, Warner is presented as the sole inventor of the process and as the negotiator with prospective business partners. The article reports that Eastman Kodak offered her an advance of 500,000 francs (sic) plus 365,000 francs annually to exploit the process. She allegedly refused the offer because it would have transferred full ownership to the company, an episode that underscores her commitment. A reader relying solely on this account would find no mention of Powrie's involvement, which is misleading. *O Pharol* got this information from the *St. Louis and Canadian Photographer*, a periodical devoted to women photographers: selective omission of facts can be as distorting as uncritical acceptance of their interpretation. Notably, accounts written after Warner's passing appear more generous in acknowledging her role. According to her obituary on *Photo-Era Magazine* (1926), Warner had been "active in the whole of the work" at the Warner Research Laboratories, which she managed.

This brief paper aims to take a first step toward the "rediscovery" of Warner and her partner Powrie. As observers suggested more than a century ago, this is a story that deserves more space.

2. Patent number 802,471.

Bio

Mariana W. von Hartenthal is an art historian, museum professional, and software developer. She studied Architecture and Urban Planning (UFPR, Brazil), has a master's degree in Museum Studies (University of Southampton, UK), a master's degree in Technology and Society (UTFPR, Brazil), and a PhD in Art History (Southern Methodist University, USA). Her doctoral research focused on the history of photography and Latin American art. She completed a postdoctoral research project on graphic and photographic processes in 19th-century Brazil at the Moreira Salles Institute in Rio de Janeiro and later developed a project on contemporary art interventions in museological collections at Universidade Lusófona in Lisbon. She has worked in the Department of Latin American Art at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and on the online database *Documents of 20th-Century Latin American and Latino Art*. She participated in exhibitions such as *Radical Women: Latin American Art* (2017), organized by the Hammer Museum and the Getty Institute, and *Carlos Cruz-Díez: Color in Space and Time* (2011). In addition, she spent three years learning and working as a software developer. She is currently interested in the possibilities that technology offers cultural organizations seeking to expand access to archives, while remaining attentive to the need to critically assess these solutions, particularly in relation to issues of gender and race. She lives in Lisbon.

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Process of photographing in colors is realized at last after work of ten years by two scientific enthusiasts. (1905, December 25). *St. Louis Republic*, 11.

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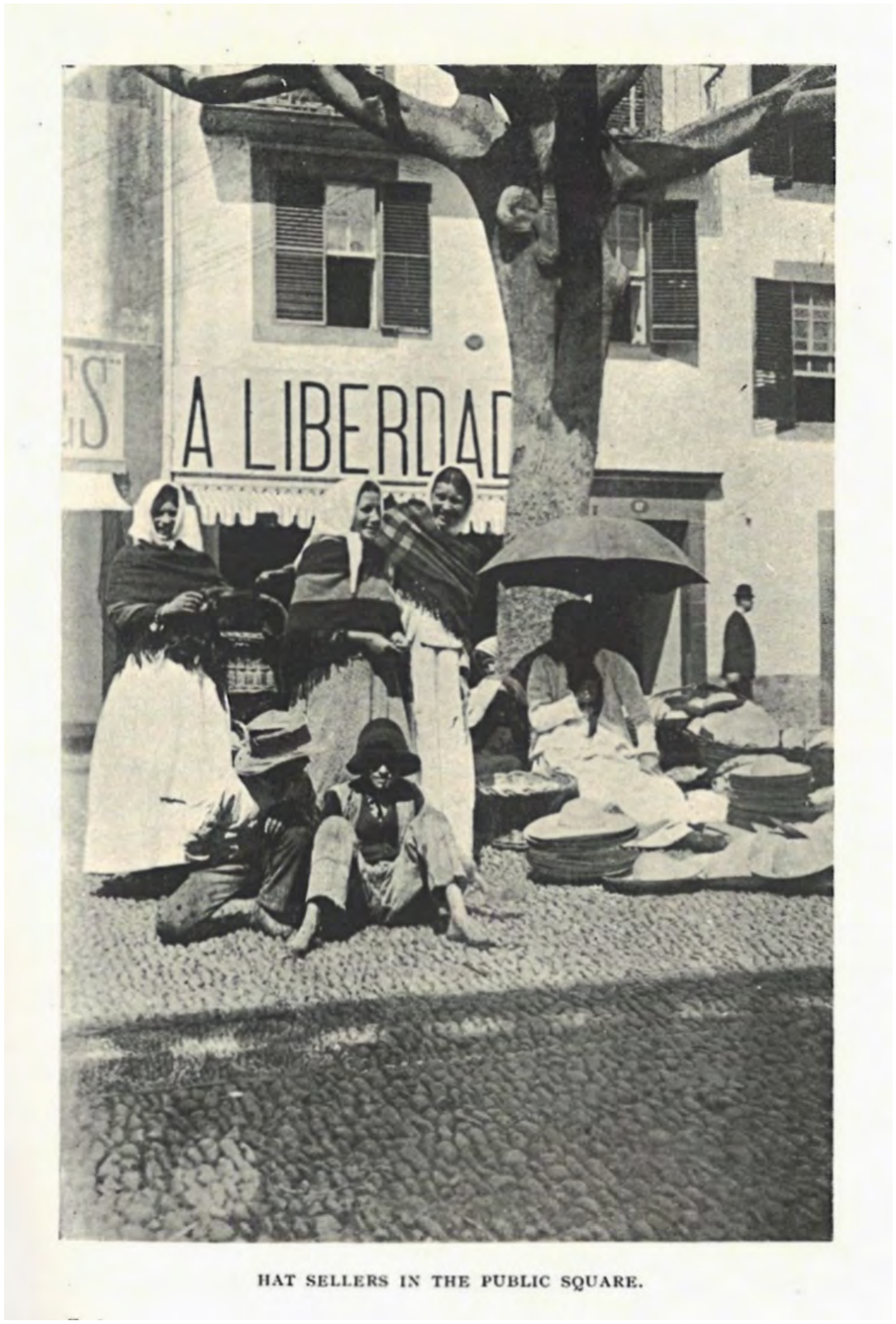

HAT SELLERS IN THE PUBLIC SQUARE.

Authored by Mildred Cossart present in the book *Madeira: Old and New* (1909) by William Henry Koebel.

Between Name and Image: Mildred Cossart and the Construction of a Photographic Gaze on Madeira (1909–1928)

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This communication proposal aims to revisit the photographic work of Mildred Blandy Cossart (1879–1966), a woman belonging to British families residing in Madeira, whose images offer a unique interpretation of the landscape, the island experience, and, as we argue here, provide a distinct perspective on women in this territory in the early 20th century, compared to the regional photographic production of the time.

Our study is based on a pioneering article by Anne Martina Emonts from 2019 and articulates four interconnected documents. Our starting point is a family album from the late 19th century, compiled by Anne Mary Furber Blandy Cossart, Mildred's mother, in which she appears as a child. This album is considered an indicator of her belonging to a family and social environment where drawing (painting) and photography were practices and forms of expression, engaged in by both men and women.

Our aim, initially, is to present this album held at the Madeira Archive and Library (ABM) – a refined artifact, the result of simultaneous bourgeois labour and leisure, where photography, the quintessential mechanical technique, is, in its dimension and sequence of albumen prints mounted on paper, a prized object of visual composition. Photography, coupled with the practice of drawing, the image sequence, and the relationship established between images and text in the form of captions, constructs a broad family narrative – where portraits of 'notable' individuals and images of locations, landscapes, and monuments associated with the family's identity and experiences intertwine, reinforcing the rhythm of the genealogical thread at play.

We will next consider the private album *Desertas* (c. 1910) held in the same institution, which is the main subject of Emonts' aforementioned study, where it is analysed as being authored by Mildred and from the perspective of its artistic and documentary value. This album is symptomatic of a British colonial attitude that subordinates the locals and seeks to tame nature in a heroic gesture; where women participate and are represented, albeit in a secondary role.

The third document will be highlighted in our analysis. It is the book *Madeira: Old and New* (1909) by William Henry Koebel, a travel guide 'illustrated' by Mildred Cossart, in which her authorship is recognised, generally attributed to the majority of the dozens of photographs in the publication. This work truly reflects the plurality and richness of her photographic practice, as well as the elements we believe distinguish her from other photographers of the time working in the territory. Notably, there is a considerable presence of women engaged in various activities, alongside a less stereotypical portrayal of the female subjects depicted. We will also seek to point out that the very possibility of knowledge and, indeed, recognition of her photographic work is linked to the photomechanical reproduction (and illustration) of photographs in the press and publications, which became popular in the early 20th century; an element that is all the more relevant given the apparent absence of negatives authored by Mildred Cossart.

Three of Mildred's images published in *Madeira: Old and New* appear almost twenty years later (along with another of her images) in the guide *Things Seen in Madeira* (1928) by Judith G. Hutcheon. However, authorship is now presented under a different name, her married name, 'Mrs John M. Lee', which reflects a certain subordination of her identity; or at least a devaluation of the importance of her individual recognition as a photographer, as it complicates the immediate understanding that it is the same author.
Based on a brief exploration of these different documents, all of which are held at the ABM, the aim is, first and foremost, to recognise and present Cossart's practice, before contextualising it at the intersection of the family space and the composition of the family album, British editorial circuits, and the visual imagery of Madeira. The aim is to highlight how the gender conventions and cultural dynamics of the time shaped the authorship of her images, revealing underlying dynamics in the construction of the photographer's gaze. Her work is embedded within the visual logics of empire and tourism, but is also shaped by gendered perspectives and tensions that provide a critical distance from these dominant narratives, with a particular focus on the perspective of women in and from the territory of Madeira. These images do not obliterate the photographic apparatus behind them, and convey empathy with the women portrayed.

The aim is, therefore, to contribute to the understanding of Mildred Cossart's photographic corpus and to reflect on its contexts of production and dissemination. Following Emonts' study, we will also try to question the foreign and colonial gaze as a visual structure for the representation of the island and its people. However, our primary aim is to analyse (in)visibilities surrounding authorship and female identity in relation to photographic practice, between the domestic album and the editorial circuit of travel guides.

In addressing these dimensions, it becomes evident how Mildred Cossart's case fits into broader processes of circulation and invisibility surrounding the narratives and perspectives of women in the history of photography in Madeira in the early 20th century. Set within a professional context dominated by photography studios and laboratories where only men worked, her trajectory offers new perspectives on female practices in insular and transnational contexts, while also conveying images that resist the depersonalisation of female bodies, that acknowledge the presence of the one who photographs them.

Bios

Ana Gandum (b. Évora, 1983) is a historian and photograoher whose research focuses on the relationship between photography, memory and history. Her academic career began with a degree in History (Universidade NOVA de Lisboa – Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas 2001-2005), followed by a Master 2 in 'Histories, Powers, Knowledges' (University Paris 8 – Saint-Denis, 2005-2007), and a PhD in Artistic Studies – Art and Mediations (Universidade NOVA de Lisboa – Faculdade de Ciências Sociais e Humanas, 2013 – 2019, with a stint at ECO – UFRJ between 2015-2017). Her practice includes writing essays and chronicles, archival research and a reflection on the concept of archive, photographic exhibitions and authorial publications. She was a lecturer in Visual Culture at the Universidade NOVA de Lisboa – FCSH and the University of Madeira. She is an integrated member of ICNOVA – Nova University Institute of Communication and works at the Regional Direction of Archives Librairies and Book, where she researches photographic collections and photography books.

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Martinho Mendes (Funchal, 1981) holds a Master's degree in Art Education from the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Lisbon and a Bachelor's degree in Visual Arts from the University of Madeira. He is a Visual Arts teacher, visual artist, researcher and curator, developing his work in articulation with fields such as museology, cultural heritage, island studies, geography and the natural sciences. He is currently seconded to the Regional Directorate for Archives, Libraries and Books of Madeira (DRABL) to perform technical and pedagogical duties, focusing on exhibition curatorship based on archival collections and on research into heritage and representations of insular landscapes. He is also a guest researcher at the UNESCO Chair "Ethnobotany – Plants, People, Ethnodiversity and the Safeguarding of Plant Heritage" at the Polytechnic Institute of Beja, and at the Research Centre for Regional and Local Studies of the University of Madeira (CIERL-UMa).

Between 2007 and 2023, he coordinated the Educational Service of the Museum of Sacred Art of Funchal. From 2021 to 2023, he was a member of its executive board, where he served as curator, programmer and exhibition curator. Since 2014, he has collaborated with the University of Madeira as a guest assistant lecturer, teaching undergraduate and master's courses in Education, Design, Visual Arts and Cultural Management.

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Arquivo Gioconda Rizzo
/Acervo Instituto Moreira Salles.

A Flash in Time: Gioconda Rizzo (1897–2004) and Early Brazilian Photography

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This project aims to analyze the trajectory and legacy of Gioconda Rizzo (1897–2004), one of the first professional women photographers to lead a photographic studio in Brazil, the Photo Femina atelier (1914–1918), which specialized in portraits of women and children in São Paulo. The proposal stems from the recognition of the scarcity of documentation and acknowledgment of the contributions made by Brazilian women photographers in the early 20th century, with Gioconda Rizzo serving as a notable example of this historical invisibility.

The research is part of a broader investigation into the presence of women in the history of Brazilian photography. During my undergraduate studies in Media Studies, I developed a growing interest in the documentary, expressive, and aesthetic dimensions of photography between the 19th and 20th centuries, especially in the pioneering production of photographic images in Brazil. The critical analysis of archives such as those at the Instituto Moreira Salles (IMS) revealed not only the richness of historical records but also the gender disparity in professional recognition among photographers. Of the 47 photographers detached in the photography section of the archive, only nine are women, and among them, only two, Dulce Soares and Anna Mariani, are Brazilian. The monograph, titled “Um flash na fotografia brasileira do início do século XX: a fotógrafa paulista Gioconda Rizzo” (2023), was a direct result of this work. This publication has since spurred more research in the field and led to a master’s thesis that will concentrate on the photographic archive of Brazilian women.

While the long-standing scarcity of records regarding Gioconda Rizzo’s work raised significant questions about the criteria for preservation and legitimation in photography history, this landscape is shifting. Currently, the IMS is cataloging her collection in collaboration with her granddaughter, an initiative that, combined with access to previously unpublished photographs by her father and brother, enables a re-evaluation of her legacy. Addressing the historical oversight, this project utilizes these newly accessible materials to recover her contributions.

The research is structured into an overview of photography in Brazil between the late 19th and early 20th centuries, with a focus on the professionalization of portrait studios. Photography arrived in Brazil in January 1840, brought to Rio de Janeiro by Abbot Louis Compte, who presented the daguerreotype to Emperor Pedro II. Rio de Janeiro consolidated itself as the photographic capital of the country, where new technology played a fundamental role in both politics and society. Emperor Pedro II used photographic images to construct and disseminate symbols of modernity and civilization within the Empire. At the same time, the largely illiterate population gained access to a form of knowledge and visual representation more immediate and accessible than painting. Created in 1851 by the Emperor, the title of Photographers of the Imperial House comprised a pioneering list in the world, recognizing the profession of 26 studios and 32 photographers.
In this context, Marc Ferrez stands out, the only one to hold the title of Photographer of the Imperial Navy, in addition to being a Knight of the Imperial Order of the Rose and a member of the Geological Commission of Brazil.
No women were mentioned in this list.

Photographic portraiture quickly became popular, serving as a crucial tool for the rise of the bourgeoisie in the 19th century. Initially imitating the aesthetics of painting, photographers developed their own techniques to idealize their clients' images. Formats such as thecarte-de-visite allowed individuals and families to record status, elegance, and social success. Photography thus became a means of affirming identity, allowing groups that previously had no access to expensive painted portraits to self-represent.

From a technical perspective, photography in Brazil evolved from a purely artisanal process to an industrial phase between the 1850s and 1880s. The sector grew with the emergence of professional workshops and the diversification of services. The replacement of the complex wet collodion process with dry gelatin (silver bromide) plates marked a revolution, enabling mass reproduction through the negative/positive system.
The commercialization of ready-to-use papers and plates reduced the need for individual chemical manipulation, significantly expanding the market.

It is crucial to note that, during the period analyzed, the presence of women in photographic activity was scarce or poorly documented.
The lack of photographs attributed to women in specific collections is due to several factors: the selective valuation of male work, the absence of adequate documentation, and historical erasure, where many women's work was attributed to the men with whom they worked (fathers or husbands).
Many of the women cited in historical surveys, such as those by Boris Kossoy, do not have a confirmed photograph of their authorship for study.

According to Boris Kossoy's survey on Brazilian photography, as documented in the Dicionário histórico-fotográfico brasileiro: fotógrafos e ofício da fotografia no Brasil (1833-1910), only eight women are directly or indirectly linked to photography from the mid-19th century to the first decade of the 20th century. Among them are, in chronological order of activity, Madame Lavenue (1842/1843 - Rio de Janeiro); Maria Brasilina de Magalhães Faria (1876/1878 - Espírito Santo); Madame Reeckell (1875 - Rio Grande do Sul); Hermina de Carvalho Menna da Costa (1883/1895 - Pernambuco); Leocadia Amoretti (1888/1894 - Rio de Janeiro); Rosa Augusta (1892 - Paraíba); Fanny Volk (1904/1918 - Paraná); and Maria Izabel da Rocha (1908/1909 - Sergipe).

However, at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, women began to emerge and leave their mark on the history of Brazilian photography. One figure who stood out in this scenario was Gioconda Rizzo (1897-2004), the focus of this work. Born in São Paulo, Gioconda was the daughter of Michele Rizzo (1869-1929), an Italian photographer who opened the Photographia Central studio in the city in 1892. Her family heritage played a significant role in her career. At the age of 14, she already showed an interest in photography, producing self-portraits that revealed her curiosity in exploring the medium and experimenting with new techniques. The pioneering spirit of Gioconda and her contemporaries paved the way for the professionalization of women in the field.

Bio

Ingrid Telino is a photographer, researcher, and media practitioner from Rio de Janeiro, currently based in Portugal. Her work investigates photography as a cultural and historical tool, with particular focus on its role in shaping memory and identity in Brazil.

She holds a Bachelor's degree in Media Studies from the Fluminense Federal University (UFF Brazil) and is currently pursuing a Master's degree in New Media Management at University Institute of Lisbon (ISCTE). Her academic research explores the development of Brazilian photography in the early 20th century, with an emphasis on the contributions of women photographers and the historical invisibility of their work.Ingrid has engaged in multiple research and artistic initiatives exploring image, media, and cultural memory. She was a member of the extension project #MUSEUDEMEMES and collaborated with research groups such as COLAB (Laboratory for Communication, Political Cultures and Collaborative Economies) on the DDoS Lab, focused on misinformation and digital discourse. As an artist, she participated in the group exhibitions *"Ciclo Modernismo: Olhar Popular"* (Niterói, 2022) and *"MetaTrans Verso"* (Rio de Janeiro, 2023), both of which explored urban identity and popular aesthetics in Brazil.

Her current research aims to recover and critically examine the legacy of women photographers in Brazil, as a way of reframing the history of photography from a feminist and decolonial perspective.

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Panel 9.

Performing the Self:

Women, Photography and Authorship

Sarah Bernhardt in *Pierrot assassin* (1883)
by Richepin, performed at the Théâtre du Trocadéro
(with Réjane in the role of Colombine).
Photograph by Paul Nadar. Bibliothèque nationale
de France, Department of Prints and Photographs.
Presented at the exhibition *Sarah Bernhardt*
at the Petit Palais in Paris
(April–August 2023).

Date
1883
Author
Paul Nadar (1856–1939)

Between Subject and Author: Sarah Bernhardt and the Photographic Portrait as Performative Self-Portrait

Nicole Langrová
University of West Bohemia

This paper argues that many nineteenth-century photographic portraits of women can be re-read as a form of self-portraiture without the camera: not because women were the technical producers of the image, but because they actively authored the portrait's meaning through self-performance. Reframing early photographic portraiture in this way shifts attention from the photographer as sole author to the portrait sitting as a negotiated event: an encounter between apparatus, studio conventions, and a sitter who makes strategic choices about posture, costume, gesture, facial expression, and the conditions of circulation. The central claim is that women's portraits can function as performative self-portraits, in which the sitter's agency complicates traditional accounts of authorship in photographic history.

The project originates in feminist critiques of the canon and the myth of artistic genius. Linda Nochlin's foundational essay *Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?* (1971) demonstrated that women's underrepresentation is structurally produced by institutional barriers, gendered norms of training, and restricted access to professional legitimacy. These structural constraints also shape the genre of self-portraiture. As Frances Borzello has shown, women's self-portraits cannot be treated as a simple parallel to the male tradition: they emerge from a field in which women's visibility, authority, and artistic identity were persistently contested (Borzello 2018). Against this background, the paper asks what happens when "self-portrait" is not defined narrowly as an image made by one's own hand (or camera), but as an image in which the self is *authored* through performative control.

Photography is a particularly productive medium for this shift. While the historiography often describes early photography as relatively open and "democratic" compared to painting, gendered hierarchies nevertheless shaped who could claim authorship and how recognition was distributed (Long 2023). At the same time, portrait photography rapidly became a dominant technology of public identity: reproducible formats and commercial studio systems made portraits widely available, collectible, and socially legible (Doussot 2023). The key methodological wager of this paper is that photographic portraiture reconfigures the relationship between portraitist and portrayed. Whereas painting allows significant revision after the sitting, early photographic portraiture binds the image to the sitter's embodied presence in front of the lens. This does not erase the photographer's role; rather, it makes the sitter's performance an indispensable component of the image's production.

To conceptualize this agency, the paper combines three theoretical lenses. First, Judith Butler's theory of performativity provides a model for understanding identity as enacted rather than revealed, not as a stable essence expressed through the body, but an effect of repeated acts, gestures, and stylizations performed within social norms (Butler 1990).

Second, John Berger's account of the gendered asymmetry of looking in Western visual culture—women positioned as objects of vision, men as bearers of the gaze—clarifies the representational pressures women negotiate when posing for images (Berger 1972). Third, Laura Mulvey's theorization of the "male gaze" names the broader representational framework in which women are structured as image-objects for consumption and control (Mulvey 1975). Importantly, the paper uses these texts not to claim that every portrait is simply a mechanism of domination, but to identify how and where sitterly performance can reproduce, negotiate, or disrupt the gendered logic of the gaze.

These methodological commitments are developed through a single case study: Sarah Bernhardt (1844–1923). Bernhardt is an unusually revealing figure because her career was inseparable from the production of images. She operated as a modern celebrity, as an artist whose public identity depended on reproducible media and whose persona was constructed across stages, studios, printed matter, and circulation networks.
She understood visibility as an instrument of career-making and used images strategically as part of her cultural production (Petit Palais 2023).
Her portraits therefore allow the paper to address authorship not as a legal or technical category, but as a cultural practice distributed across performance, self-fashioning, mediation, and public consumption.

The Bernhardt case study focuses on portraiture as a site where the boundaries between "subject" and "author" become unstable. In this paper, the photographic sitting is treated as a performative scene.
This perspective is particularly relevant in the context of Sarah Bernhardt's portraits produced within the Nadar studio, notably under the direction of Paul Nadar, who approached portrait photography of actors as an extension of their theatrical practice. Nadar actively encouraged sitters to perform in front of his lens as if they were on stage. (Baker 2015; Petit Palais 2023).

In Bernhardt's case, the photographic session thus became a site of conscious self-performance. The resulting images are not passive likenesses imposed by the photographer, but records of a staged encounter in which Bernhardt translated her theatrical persona into the photographic register. While the apparatus, studio conventions, and photographer's framing structured the situation, the expressive and symbolic content of the image depended decisively on what Bernhardt chose to perform at the moment of exposure. This dynamic complicates conventional notions of photographic authorship and supports an understanding of the portrait as a collaboratively produced, performative image rather than a unilateral act of representation.

To sharpen this argument, the paper introduces Art Nouveau poster imagery (associated with Bernhardt's collaborations with Alphonse Mucha) as a comparative representational regime. Here, Bernhardt's body is often monumentalized into an icon: stylized, ornamentalized, and made legible through the visual authority of the artist-designer. In Berger's terms, this mode risks stabilizing the woman as image—an aesthetic object organized for viewing (Berger 1972). The point is not to reduce poster design to "objectification," nor to deny Bernhardt's strategic involvement. Rather, the comparison clarifies a shift in the mode of subjectivity: poster imagery tends to consolidate a timeless emblem, while photographic portraiture—anchored in the sitter's embodied performance—can present identity as contingent, enacted, and transformable.

This is where Mulvey becomes central. Within the framework of the male gaze (Mulvey 1975), the contrast between media becomes significant: while poster imagery tends to stabilize Bernhardt as a muse-like object of vision, photographic portraiture allows her, at times, to inhabit male roles, thereby unsettling the gendered expectations connected to visual pleasure. The photographic portraits may still operate within commercial and patriarchal structures, but Bernhardt's performance can make those structures visible and unstable: the sitter does not simply appear *for* the gaze but actively stages the conditions of being seen. The result is a portrait that can be read as a negotiation of visual power rather than a one-directional capture.

The paper concludes by showing how the notion of performative self-portraiture helps to describe the ways early photographic portraits of women became meaningful and how women—within constrained social and institutional structures—could exercise forms of authorship through performance, self-fashioning, and circulation. Read from this perspective, Sarah Bernhardt's portrait practice emerges as a site where gender, agency, and visibility are actively negotiated, and where authorship appears as a relational process rather than a singular act.

Bio

Nicole Langrová is a curator, researcher, and artist working at the intersection of contemporary art, photography, and intermedial practices, focusing on identity, self-representation, and performative visual strategies. She holds a BA in Photography from *Bath Spa University, UK*, and an MA in Curatorial Studies from the Czech Republic. Nicole is currently pursuing a doctoral program in Interdisciplinary Research through Visual Arts at the *Ladislav Sutnar Faculty of Design and Art, University of West Bohemia*.

Her curatorial and production experience spans international exhibitions and festivals. She has served as assistant curator and producer for the exhibition cycle *Sincerely Making the Heart Smile* (Ústí nad Labem, Czech Republic; Vilnius, Lithuania, 2024–2026), curated the *Risky Household* exhibition series (Galerie Rampa, 2024-2025), and coordinated the Signal Forum at Signal Festival (Prague, 2024–2025). Other projects include curating the exhibition *Soulad* (Galerie Lidice, 2024) and contributing to *GREEN BODY* at Oravská Galerie, Slovakia (2024). Nicole has also led workshops and interactive programs in museum education at the *Museum of Art and Design Benešov* (2022–2023).

Her doctoral research, The Self-Portrait in the Post-medial Era: Self-Presentation of the Digital Native Generation, examines how contemporary artists use intermedial self-portraiture to perform and reflect on identity across digital, physical, and intermedial contexts. By combining participatory workshops, case studies, and curatorial practice, her work explores self-representation as a tool for critical engagement and creative negotiation of identity in contemporary visual culture.

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Berg & Høeg, Marie Høeg and Bolette Berg, 1895–1903.
Preus Museum Collection.

“Private” — Marie Høeg & Bolette Berg: Non-cathartis as an ethics of opacity

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This paper examines the photographic practice of Marie Høeg (1866-1949) and her creative partner Bolette Berg (1872-1944) as exemplifying what I term a *non-cathartic methodology*, an approach to art-making and viewing that refuses the therapeutic imperative dominating Western aesthetic discourse since Aristotle’s *Poetics*. Positioned within my larger investigation of anti-cathartic aesthetics across multiple media, this study argues that Høeg’s sartorial performances, captured in photographs never intended for public circulation, operate according to logics fundamentally at odds with confessional or trauma-processing models of creative practice. Rather than seeking emotional purgation, narrative resolution, or the transformation of suffering into transcendent meaning, these images remain deliberately encrypted, withholding themselves from interpretive mastery while preserving generative contradictions and sustaining productive irresolution.

Between 1895 and 1903, Høeg and Berg operated a commercial photography studio in Horten, Norway, producing conventional portrait work for public consumption. Simultaneously, they created a private archive of experimental photographs, images that would remain hidden for nearly a century. These photographs depict the two women in various states of cross-dressed performance: Høeg in masculine suits and top hats, both women in theatrical costumes, elaborate tableaux staged within staged interiors. The images possess a quality of anarchic joy and deliberate play, yet their most significant characteristic is precisely what they refuse to declare. They do not confess, explain, or resolve into legible political or personal statements. They remain stubbornly opaque.

This opacity, I argue, constitutes the photographs' primary methodology and their most radical gesture. Through close analysis of Høeg's images and her deliberate decision to keep them private, I demonstrate that her creative practice enacts what Édouard Glissant terms "the right to opacity," an ethical refusal of the demand that marginalized subjects render themselves legible within normative frameworks (*Poetics of Relation*, 189-94). This withdrawal from circulation, combined with Høeg and Berg's clandestine collaboration, constitutes a defiant stance against normative visibility politics. Therefore, Høeg's archive should not be read as closeted concealment but rather as a strategic refusal of visibility, a visibility which functions as a disciplinary technology enforcing compulsory gender norms.

The theoretical framework I develop draws on multiple interlocutors to theorize non-catharsis as feminist methodology. Where Aristotelian catharsis prescribes emotional purgation and narrative closure, non-cathartic aesthetics insist upon dwelling with difficulty, refusing resolution, and maintaining productive tension. This approach proves particularly essential for feminist and queer archives that have historically been subjected to recuperative violence, the compulsion to make visible, to interpret, to assimilate into coherent historical accounts. Glissant's concept of opacity provides the decolonial foundation for understanding refusal as active resistance rather than passive absence. Ann Cvetkovich's work on archives of feeling, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *Epistemology of the Closet* further illuminate how privacy, and strategic withdrawal might constitute ethical positions rather than symptoms of repression. Anne Dufourmantelle provides the framework for understanding the ethico-aesthetics that lie in the power of secrets.

My close readings of Høeg's photographs attend to their multiple registers of irresolution. Formally, the images employ costume and performance to create a kind of gender illegibility, or the sustained refusal to cohere into any stable identificatory position. The photographs' temporal dimension proves equally opaque: created for no audience, oriented toward no future circulation, they exist in a perpetual state of becoming that resists integration into linear historical narrative. The studio itself emerges as what Michael Warner terms a "counterpublic", a protected enclave where alternative embodiments remain accountable only to the immediate experiential needs of the makers, refusing orientation toward external validation or political legibility (Warner 56).

This analysis presents a critical methodological intervention in how we recover and interpret women's photographic practices. Høeg's deliberate withholding of her work from public circulation exemplifies precisely the kind of fragmented, scattered, and undocumented archive that feminist historiography must grapple with, yet her case demands that we question our recuperative impulses. The imperative to make visible has long driven feminist scholarship, positioned as corrective to historical erasure and patriarchal exclusion. However, when visibility itself operates as a disciplinary apparatus, when being-seen constitutes a form of violation, the ethics of recovery become considerably more complex.

I propose that non-cathartic feminist photographic historiography must develop frameworks capable of respecting and theorizing refusal, opacity, and strategic withdrawal. This requires distinguishing between that which is *hidden* (concealed by external forces of oppression) and that which is *private* (deliberately kept from circulation by its makers). It necessitates recognizing that some historical erasures may constitute deliberate acts of resistance to the very structures of visibility, legibility, and archival possession that have marginalized women's creative labor. It demands scholarly humility and interpretive restraint, thus the willingness to dwell in not-knowing, to resist the compulsion to explain, to honor gaps and absences as meaningful rather than deficient.

Within my dissertation's larger framework of the "transitive artist", a figure who occupies specific ethical positions in relation to difficult material, Høeg functions simultaneously as artist-preservationist (maintaining irresolution, refusing to metabolize ambiguity into clarity) and artist-destructionist (destroying the possibility of circulation, annihilating the archive's integration into public discourse). Her practice exemplifies how non-cathartic methodology sensitizes rather than sedates viewers, cultivating heightened awareness through sustained discomfort with interpretive uncertainty. The photographs' opacity keeps the wound of witnessing open, refusing the anesthetic comfort of resolution.

By examining Høeg's non-cathartic methodology within decolonial and transdisciplinary frameworks, this paper argues that reframing photographic history requires not only uncovering overlooked women photographers and their archives, but also recognizing that some absences are presences of a different order. This case study thus offers both a concrete example of women's collaborative photographic practice in early twentieth-century Norway, and a methodological provocation for how contemporary scholarship might honor the complexity of women's historical relationship to visibility itself. In a cultural moment saturated with demands for transparency, confession, and legibility, Høeg's deliberate opacity models an alternative ethics, one that insists that some things should, and must, remain unresolved.

This paper emerges from my doctoral dissertation examining non-catharsis as an aesthetic and ethical paradigm across visual art, performance, and literature. It contributes to the conference's mission of expanding the photographic canon by proposing that expansion requires not only addition but transformation of the very frameworks through which we recover, interpret, and value women's creative practices.

Bio

Amy Schuessler is an artist, writer, and scholar living in Columbus, Ohio. She holds a BFA in photography with a minor in art history from Columbus College of Art & Design and an MFA from Image/Text Ithaca, housed within Cornell Department of Fine Art. She is currently a Ph.D. candidate at the Institute for Doctoral Studies in the Visual Arts, studying at the intersection of philosophy and aesthetics. As well as her creative and academic endeavors, Amy is the Executive Gallery Director at ROY G BIV Gallery for Emerging Artists, a non-profit organization. She also teaches philosophy and art history at Columbus College of Art & Design and The Ohio State University.

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Stella Szacherska's album from her stay in Cannes, 1928-1929.
Museum of Warsaw, Szacherski and Rolbieski Collection.

Mirrors and viewpoints: photo albums and women's practices of the self

Katarzyna Adamska
Museum of Warsaw Centre for Photography

Monika Michałowicz
Museum of Warsaw Centre for Photography

In our presentation, we would like to propose a reflection on photo albums as women's identity practices and on approaches to researching them. What inspired us to take up this issue are albums from the collection of the Museum of Warsaw belonging to two women, Stella Szacherska (1911–1997) and Rosemarie Lincke (1917–2001). Stella and Rosemarie were in many ways very different, but both created albums in formative periods of their lives, when they used cameras and photographs as instruments of (self-)discovery and established themselves as individuals.

The albums come from two dissimilar archives; one commemorative, and the other problematic to engage with. Stella's albums are a part of Szacherski and Rolbieski families collection, along with letters, documents, memorabilia, as well as furniture and items of clothing. Rosemarie's albums, negatives and letters were donated to the museum by the kin to free them from a besetting burden. When these albums came to the museum, their status changed from personal souvenirs to museum objects and challenged viewers to consciously position themselves in relation to the albums. Viewing albums involves an exchange of looks, being "looked at" by those whom we make present through the album. In the museum, however, we look at them as someone who was never meant to see them. Our gaze cannot be returned. Still, they move us.

Stella's albums can be seen as a part of the process of self-discovery an self-observation, establishing relationships with herself and others. She created them in the 1920s and 30s as a girl on her first solo journey, then as a fiancée and a young mother. During an educational journey she took a photo of herself in a mirror. In a sense, she used her albums as mirrors. She could see herself from a distance, in various new situations, and put herself together. Where the photo was taken seems secondary to the record of feelings – as if she wanted to be able to come back to them and make sure they were real. After the war, when she established herself as a professional historian and translator, she ceased to make albums.

Rosemarie's albums, in turn, can be read as a narrative of the crucial years of her life spent during the second world war in occupied Warsaw, where she worked as a Deutsches Rotes Kreuz nurse in hospitals for German soldiers. Her albums may seem generic. We can recognize a familiar narrative of war as travel (similar to soldiers' albums) and of a formative journey, during which she became independent and met her future husband. Within this narrative Rosemarie defined herself through the viewpoints from which she photographed Warsaw, a foreign city that horrified her and seemed incomprehensible at first.

For both women, photography was an important part of their lives and self-perception. In their albums, we observe traces of historically determined practices of being onself. It is at this time that new possibilities of individuation and independence emerge for women. Stella and Rosemarie needed to find ways of establishing themselves and the camera played an important part in this proccess.

Neither Stella nor Rosemarie were photographers in the professional or artistic sense. However, we refrain from calling their photographs and albums "amateur" or "vernacular". Moreover, they are problematic as "sources". What unites them as a category is not so much their form but their elusiveness. Such photos (snapshots) are what they are only at a given point in time and lose meaning when they are separated from people meant to hold them. It's impossible to write a "history" of them, as they seem to exist always in the present. They don't "speak" from the past but rather they are reenacted. In these archival encounters it is important to keep in mind that the materials we deal with cannot serve to "reconstruct" a person behind them. We want to understand them primarily as gestures, practices, records of actions – inevitably fragmentary. This requires not only a rethinking of the discourses specific to art history or anthropology, but also a willingness to rethink the researcher's self that interacts with the objects.

Bios

Katarzyna Adamska (b. 1989) works as a curator in the Centre for Photography in Museum of Warsaw in Poland. She holds Master's degrees in Art History and Cultural Studies (University of Warsaw).

Recently she co-curated the exhibition „Lovely is the Youth of Our Age. Photo Albums 1850–1950" in Museum of Warsaw, Ferbruary–May 2024) and co-organised the international conference „Photo Albums. Practice, Metaphor, Context" (8–9.04.2024). With Katarzyna Bojarska and Monika Michałowicz she prepared a special issue dedicated to photo albums in the journal *View. Theories and Practices of Visual Culture* (2025).

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