

June 29, 2009

PARIS EXHIBITION: 100 WOMEN PHOTOGRAPHING WOMEN



Left to right, from top left: Rita Barros, *Last cigarette #5*, 2005, Courtesy Penté10, Lisbonne; Rebecca Lepkoff, *Child on Lower East Side Street*, 1948, Courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York; Sarah Moon, *L'avant dernière*, 2008, Courtesy Galerie Camera Obscura, Paris; Jeanette Vogt, *Untitled*, c.1910, Courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York; Vee Speers, *Kim*, Paris, 2005; Anne Brigman, *Finis*, 1912, Courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York; Tina Modotti, *Woman with flag*, 1928, Courtesy Throckmorton Fine Art, New York; Dora Maar, *Portrait d'une femme*, Paris, c. 1935, Courtesy Robert Mann Gallery, New York; Wynn Richards, *Before & After*, c.1932, Courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York; Margaret T. Bourke-White, *Dressmaker's forms in Wardrobe Department at 20th Century Fox, Hollywood, CA*, 1937, Courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery, New York; Esther Bubley, *Teenage Fledgling*, c. 1957, Courtesy Howard Greenberg Gallery; Julia Margaret Cameron, *My Favourite Picture of All My Works, My Niece Julia, April 1867*

In 1989, when the Royal Academy in London celebrated the 150th anniversary of the invention of photography with an exhibition entitled "The Art of Photography 1839–1989", out of a total of 97 photographers just four were women. And when the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., launched an even bigger show in the same year, "On The Art of Fixing a Shadow", women made up only ten per cent of the photographers featured.

Yet women have always been pioneers and pivotal figures in the field of photography. The botanist Anna Atkins (1799–1871) self-published her scientific study of algae illustrated with photographs, *British Algae, Cyanotype Impressions*, in 1843, a year before William Fox Talbot's *The Pencil of Nature* appeared. Julia Margaret Cameron (1815–1879) took up photography at the age of 47, and more or less single-handedly invented the photographic portrait.

It would be hard to discuss pictorialism without mentioning Gertrude Käsebier (1852–1934), or photographic modernism without thinking of Imogen Cunningham (1883–1976). And women were also highly influential in the development of documentary photography — think of Dorothea Lange (1895–1965)'s images of the Great Depression — and in the advancement of photographic technology: it was Lee Miller (1907–1977) who discovered solarization by accident, although the technique was more famously utilised by her lover, Man Ray.

And could we talk about modern photography, or indeed, modern art, without mentioning Diane Arbus (1923–1971) and Cindy Sherman (b.1954)? Despite all of this, the imagery of male photographers continues to dominate our idea of what photography was, is, and should be.

The current show at the [Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian](#) in Paris, *Au Féminin*, is "a contribution towards redressing the balance ... entirely devoted to femininity, in both object and subject." These are pictures of women, by women, and this is the first major exhibition to explore the subject in exactly this way. The show brings together the work of more than 100 women photographers from five continents (including Dora Maar, Leni Riefenstahl, Sarah Moon, Anne Brigman and Tina Modotti, along with those mentioned above) and embraces the history of photography in all its genres, from 1850 to the present day. The exhibition explores themes such as portraiture, maternity, work, city life, free time, fashion, the nude, constructions and metaphors.

Au Féminin is intended as an exhibition of wonderful photography, and not as political essay. Nevertheless, it cannot help but contribute to our understanding and appreciation of these extraordinary women, and their vision. All this – and curated by a Portuguese man, Jorge Calado. Recommended.

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Au Féminin: Women Photographing Women is at the **Centre Culturel Calouste Gulbenkian**, 51 Avenue d'Iéna, 75116 Paris from June 24 to September 29

Posted by zoe at 5:10 PM | [Comments \(2\)](#)

2 COMMENTS

Catalina said:

That must be a very interesting collection. I've always found vintage photos mesmerizing for some reason.

July 4, 2009 5:25 PM

Sharon Saw said:

Sounds fascinating.. definitely worth a flight over before September!

July 15, 2009 8:12 AM

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