

Discover the Unsung American Female Photographers of the Past Century

Caroline Smith | Rachel Lowry | March 22, 2016



Alice Austen (1866-1952)
A self-taught photographer born on Staten Island best known for her documentary images of New York life, her images contain a strong artistic sense.
Trudy and I Masked



Christine Osinski (1948-)
She received a BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago and an MFA from Yale University. She currently teaches at The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science in Art, in New York City.
Young Woman Cutting Grass

This International Women's Month, TIME honors, with this non-exhaustive list, some American female trailblazers who challenged the accepted conventions of the time and paved the way for today's image makers.

The world has not always included women in its narrative. Many female photographers of the past decade remain in the footnotes of history's conversations, their contributions fizzling into relative obscurity while their male counterparts were the stars. They were some of the world's greatest visionaries and strongest image makers, from Alice Austen to Ebet Roberts, Eve Fowler to Deborah Turbeville. Each demonstrated an unprecedented commitment to move the race forward---documenting everything from the Civil Rights Movement to the effect of drought in the African Sahel, 90s male hustlers to Native American issues---sometimes unpaid and off the books.

Now as the movement for women's equality gains momentum, the women's landscape looks increasingly different. Beyond the unpalatable acerbity that defined second and third-wave feminism came the charge to "lean in", secure the right to "have it all" and fly through the glass ceiling. Hillary Clinton's viability as a presidential candidate is a given; A U.S. women's soccer team won the World Cup; Academy Awards are received with equality speeches; and next year, women will be allowed to the front lines of combat in the U.S. military. But the struggle for gender equality across the world is far from being fully realized, as the gender gap in the industry remains, as World Press Photo found when less than 20% women entered this year's contest.