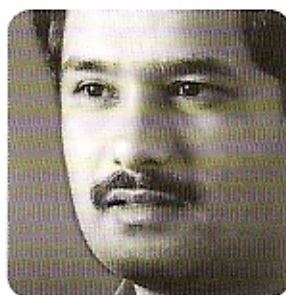


## VIEW FROM THE GALLERY

*Mohammed Arfan Asif on the most significant female photographers of all time.*



The other day a promising young female photographer in the UAE was discussing her plans for an upcoming group exhibition and I wondered why there don't seem to be as many women into photography as men? Is photography a man's world? Here are ten of the most significant women in photography, whose pictures mesmerise me.

1. With her child pictures, **Ann Marie Gripmann of Sweden** captured expression and innocence in a very individualistic style. Some of the originals, which I was fortunate to see, proved that she took great pains to control the tonal gradation of her pictures. High-key photography is not everyone's cup of tea. Not only do we have to have the right subject and the right lighting, but also excellent processing techniques to give the ideal impact. It is most unfortunate that her artistic contribution to photography has not been given its due.

2. Unquestionably the most famous of them all was 19th century photographer **Julia Margaret Cameron (1815-1879)**. Her portrait photography was about emotion and she earnestly attempted to portray the soul of her subject. She may not have had the technical attributes that most people are drowned in today, but they emote, and that probably helped her communicate to the widest audience possible.

3. The most striking aspect of **Gertrude Kasebier's (1852-1934)** photography is her celebration of motherhood. She helped elevate portraiture – with her simple yet emotive pictures – to the status of pictorial art. Her sensitive studies of mothers and children in soft focus and backlighting clearly reveal her belief in the importance of women.

4. Yusuf Karsh's photograph of Albert Einstein is well known, in particular to Karsh buffs like me. But very few know that **Doris Ulmann (1882-1934)** has portrayed the scientist equally well. The New Yorker not only took great pictures of the intellectuals, but also captured on lens the lower echelons of society, the individual citizen and his disappearing cultures.

5. Sophisticated and experimental, **Imogen Cunningham (1883-**

**1976)** inspired by Coburn in London and Stieglitz in America was a devout pictorialist. She was a founding member of Group f/64 along with Ansel Adams and Willard Van Dyke in 1934. She was also one of the first women to make a successful living as a photographer. Imogen's subjects range from landscapes, architectural studies, still life, nudes, botanical forms, and portraiture.

6. When you see the works of **Dorothea Lange (1895-1965)** you feel that she has influenced a generation of photojournalists. *Migrant Mother* (1936) and *White Angel Breadline* (1932) are two classics that reveal the attributes of the compassionate photographer. Enormously talented, she took pictures that were simple and direct. She documented in her own creative approach the social and cultural environment in which she lived.

7. Considered the most fearless photojournalist of the 20th Century, **Margaret Bourke-White (1904-1971)**, proved convincingly that photography is not after all a man's dominion. From covering the dangerous days of the partition of India to hanging out of bombers, Margaret was revolutionary.



Pic: Heather Angel

8. **Heather Angel (left)** is an exemplary natural history photographer of our times. Her work-rate and passion for the subject has kept her in the news for more than two decades. She is a prolific writer and her traveling exhibitions and accompanying books are a never-ending saga of a woman's love for her subject – nature.

9. **Mary Ellen Mark** is a photographer of people, who creates trust and respect to such an extent that she is able to continue to photograph them over many years. Her photography emits empathy and humanity and reveals the extraordinary out of simple, odd and everyday situations.

10. To exhibit at the National Portrait Gallery is probably every portrait photographer's dream. **Annie Leibovitz**, the Rolling Stone Magazine's Chief Photographer, is one of the two living photographers to have achieved that.

From the early days of photographic evolution, when Constance Fox Talbot not only took pictures but developed and printed, to the present National Geographic's Jodi Cobb the feminine eye has revealed a unique perspective. To comprehend what women have done with a camera one would probably have to see the updated version of Dr. Naomi Rosenblum's remarkable book 'A History of Women Photographers' Publisher: Abbeville or 'Women Photographers at National Geographic' National Geographic Books or still 'Mother Earth: Through the Eyes of Women Photographers and Writers', Edited by Judith Boice. ■

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