

WOMEN IN PHOTOGRAPHY: PRACTITIONERS, LABOURERS, ENTREPRENEURS IN A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE (1839-1939)

Final conference of PRIN 2022 PNRR NextGenerationEU funded project
Fotografiste: Women in Photography from Italian Archives, 1839-1939

Milan, Brera Academy of Fine Arts / Sala Napoleonica, November 20-21, 2025

Why are there so few women in the history of photography? Scholarly contributions have highlighted the obstacles that hindered women's success in photography, as well as the ideological foundations of photographic history that have kept them invisible within dominant narratives. Despite this, the role of women in photography remains under-researched, particularly on those practitioners active between the invention of the medium around 1839 and the outbreak of World War II in 1939. This international conference aims to give visibility to women in photography during the first century of its history by uncovering their identities and stories through the lens of women's history and gender studies, revitalising forgotten or overlooked female figures, and revising dominant historical accounts which centre prominent male photographers and photographic businesses.

The conference draws on the methodological approach of decolonial feminist studies, which acknowledges that individuals and social groups who have been (and continue to be) marginalised face the greatest difficulties and obstacles in bearing witness to their own exclusion. Recent contributions that merge gender history, labor history, and feminist critical theory provide an additional methodological framework. This dialogue has led to the rediscovery of previously overlooked forms of women's labor, both within and beyond the domestic sphere. Following feminist economic perspectives, we understand domestic labor as a central component of productive labor. As a result, the very concept of work has been broadened, shifting the focus to the diverse forms, modalities, and qualities of women's labor.





CONFERENCE PROGRAM

*Women in Photography: Practitioners, Labourers, Entrepreneurs
in a Global Perspective (1839-1939)*

Milan, Brera Academy of Fine Arts / Sala Napoleonica, November 20-21, 2025

November 20, 2025, Thursday

9:00-9:30 Registration

9:30-9:45 Welcome Remarks

9:45-10:00 Welcome and Opening from Principal Investigators

10:00-11:30 Round Table: PRIN Project Presentation

Chair: Mette Sandbye, University of Copenhagen (DK)

Linda Bertelli, IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca (IT)

Nicoletta Leonardi, Brera Academy of Fine Arts, Milan (IT)

Marta Equi Pierazzini, Bocconi University, Milan (IT)

11:30-12:00 Coffee Break

PANEL 1 (12.00-13:30)

TRAINING, EDUCATION, AND PROFESSIONAL PATHWAYS

Chair: Fiona Rogers, Victoria and Albert Museum, London (UK)

12:00-12:20 Annebella Pollen, University of Brighton (UK)

*'The hobby of the quieter sisterhood?': Realities and fantasies of
photography for girls in Britain, 1885-1939*

12:20-12:40 Anne McCauley, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ (US)

*Training Professional Women Photographers in the Clarence White
School: Measuring Career Success in Progressive-Era America*

12:40-13:00 Kelly Midori McCormick, University of British Columbia,
Vancouver (CA)

*New Approaches to Histories of Japanese Women Photographers:
Wartime Photography Clubs, All-Women Photo Studios, and Feminist
Digital Humanities*

13:00-13:30 Discussion

13:30-15:00 Lunch Break





PANEL 2 (15:00-16:50)

ARCHIVAL SILENCES AND HIDDEN HISTORIES

Chair: Nicoletta Leonardi, Brera Academy of Fine Arts, Milan (IT)

- 15:00-15:20** Franziska Lampe, Zentralinstitut für Kunstgeschichte in Munich (DE)
Half the Picture: Tracing Women's Invisible Labor in the Photographic Industry
- 15:20-15:40** Erika Lederman, Victoria and Albert Museum, London (UK)
Nineteenth-Century Women Institutional Photographers
- 15:40-16:00** Kris Belden-Adams, Texas A&M University, College Station (US)
Tracking First Texas Photographer, 'Mrs. Davis': On the Frontiers of the U.S. West, Daguerreotypy
- 16:00-16:20** Chanelle Pickens, Independent researcher (US)
The Silent Partner: Unearthing Mamie Scurlock's Undocumented Contributions to a Black D.C. Photographic Legacy
- 16:20-16:50** Discussion
- 16:50-17:10** Coffee Break

PANEL 3 (17:10-18:40)

LABOUR, INDUSTRIES, AND UNCREDITED CONTRIBUTIONS

Chair: Linda Bertelli, IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca (IT)

- 17:10-17:30** Clara Bolin, Independent historian and curator (DE)
From the Factory Floor to Court Photographer: Women's Visibility in German Photography
- 17:30-17:50** Audrey Leblanc, EHESS - École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris (FR)
Women behind the scenes in photojournalism Rapho and Keystone before WWII: invisible hands or shapers of Western visual culture?
- 17:50-18:10** Jessica Williams Stark, Vision & Justice, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (US)
Invisible Labours: South African Architectural Photography and the Forgotten Work of Etel Mittag-Fodor
- 18:10-18:40** Discussion

SOCIAL DINNER (19:30)

at Libreria delle donne di Milano





November 21, 2025, Friday

PANEL 4 (10:00-11:50)

PHOTOGRAPHIC STUDIOS, CONNECTIONS, AND COLLECTIVE AGENCY

Chair: Patrizia Di Bello, Birkbeck College, University of London (UK)

- 10:00-10:20** Federica Muzzarelli, University of Bologna (IT)
Wanda e Marion Wulz. Mediatization, Globalization, and the gaps in the Women Photographers History
- 10:20-10:40** Melody Davis, Russell Sage College, Troy, NY (US)
The Woman on the Beach: the production, marketing and collection of stereographs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries
- 10:40-11:00** Katarzyna Gębarowska, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (PL)
Poland's first female photographer: Helena Bartkiewicz and the politics of women's emancipatory labour
- 11:00-11:20** Yasmine Nachabe Taan, Lebanese American University in Beirut (LB)
Between Studio and Leisure: Gender, Class, and the Photographic Practices of Karimeh Abboud and Marie el Khazen in Early 20th-Century Palestine and Lebanon
- 11:20-11:50** Discussion
- 11:50-12:10** Coffee Break

POSTER SESSION (12:10-13:10)

- Giulia Frache, Médiathèque du Patrimoine et de la Photographie, Charenton-le-Pont (FR)
Mme Huguet and Pascaline Dubois: Women's Archives at the Turn of the Twentieth Century in the Médiathèque du Patrimoine et de la Photographie Collection
- Beatrice Lattanzi, IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca (IT)
From Family Portraits to Self-Representation: The Evolving Gaze of Maria Spes Bartoli (1888-1981)
- Marianna Pandolfo, University of Turin (IT)
Leonilda Prato (1875-1958): Photography, Marginality, and Female Self-Determination in Early Twentieth-Century Piedmont
- Anna Sephton, University of Brighton (UK) and the Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford (UK)
Seeking 'New Life': excavating queer women in South Africa's early socialist movement
- Mi Zhou, University of St Andrews, SCT (UK)
Forgotten Amateurs: Female Students and Graduation Annuals in China, 1920s-1930s

13:10-14:30 Lunch Break





PANEL 5 (14:30-16:20)

CAREERS, GENDERED CHOICES AND STRATEGIES

Chair: Costanza Caraffa, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz, Florence (IT)

14:30-14:50 Marianna Karali, Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas, Institute of Mediterranean Studies, Rethymno, KR (GR)
The pioneer female professional photographers in Greece and photography as a gender social skill (1890-1910)

14:50-15:10 Indrek Grigor, Tartu Art Museum (EE)
Anna Kukk's Gold Banning Album

15:10-15:30 Marta López-Beriso, University of San Diego and Ortega-Marañón Foundation, Madrid (ES)
Women Photographers and the Rewriting of Spanish Photographic History

15:30-15:50 Carlos Vertanessian, Independent researcher (AR)
Beyond the Frame: Women, the Daguerreotype, and Emancipation in Mid-19th Century Argentina and the Americas

15:50-16:20 Discussion

16:20-16:40 Coffee Break

PANEL 6 (16:40-18:10)

IMPERIAL NARRATIVES, POSTCOLONIAL, AND DECOLONIAL APPROACHES

Chair: Kylie Thomas, University College Cork (IE)

16:40-17:00 Suryanandini Narain, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (IN)
Mary L. Booth and the Monuments of Western India: two albums

17:00-17:20 Sarah Bassnett, Western University in Canada, London, ON (CA)
Colonial Exposures: Professional Women Photographers and the Canadian Settler State

17:20-17:40 Lissa Mitchell, Te Papa Tongarewa Museum, Wellington (NZ)
Unarmed combat – refugee women photographers in Aotearoa New Zealand

17:40-18:10 Discussion

18.30-19.00 and 19.15-19.45 (two slots)

LINDA FREGNI NAGLER

Things that Death Cannot Destroy (Part 11)

Room 38, Theatre

Entrance from Piazzetta di Brera

Reservation: <https://forms.gle/uyxiLvqN5xymGxaFA>





ADVISORY BOARD:

- Linda Bertelli, Scuola IMT Altì Studi Lucca
- Costanza Caraffa, Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz
- Patrizia Di Bello, Birkbeck College, University of London
- Malavika Karlekar, Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi
- Nicoletta Leonardi, Brera Academy of Fine Arts, Milan
- Kylie Thomas, University College Cork
- Akram Zaatari, artist/filmmaker

CO-CURATORS:

- Linda Bertelli, Scuola IMT Altì Studi Lucca
- Nicoletta Leonardi, Brera Academy of Fine Arts, Milan

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE:

- Derya Acuner, Scuola IMT Altì Studi Lucca
- Emanuele Carlenzi, Scuola IMT Altì Studi Lucca
- Vana Filipovski, Scuola IMT Altì Studi Lucca
- Antonia Iurlaro, Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera
- Alessandro Masetti, Scuola IMT Altì Studi Lucca
- Greta Plaitano, Scuola IMT Altì Studi Lucca-Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera
- Livia Torchio, Scuola IMT Altì Studi Lucca
- Beatrice Zanelli, Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera

The conference will be live-streamed for remote viewing. The participation link will be announced on our official Instagram account (@fotografiste_) closer to the event date. In-person attendees are required to register in advance. Please complete your registration via the following link: <https://forms.gle/ZBWGeNmn47sUwqtu6>