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“Discover the Unsung American Female Photographers of the Past Century”

TIME

BY Caroline Smith and Rachel Lowry

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Untitled, 1996

Eve Fowler (1964-) She was born in New York and received her MFA from Yale University in 1992. Fowler’s work tries to identify what she perceives as male biases in language and culture and reframe them around sex-positive, feminist, and queered images.

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 effects 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.

Correction: The original version of this story misstated Tammy Rae Carland’s position. She is the Provost at the California College of the Arts.

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