Shifting the Frame (Porto, 5-7 Mar 26)

Biblioteca Municipal Almeida Garrett, Porto, Portugal, Mar 5–07, 2026
Deadline: Oct 4, 2025

Luis Camanho

Shifting the Frame – Women's Photographic Practices (1840–1960).

Women photographers have been systematically written out of the history of photography. Despite their active, diverse, and sustained engagement with the medium since its inception, scholarly recognition of their contributions remains limited. From the 1840s onward, women across different geographies — whether as professionals, amateurs, technicians, or artists — opened studios, undertook specialised work in photographic laboratories, and used photography as a powerful means of self-representation and social visibility. Yet, their stories have often been forgotten, underrepresented, or subsumed within dominant narratives that privilege male authorship and institutional frameworks.

This international conference aims to bring long-overdue visibility to women photographers active between 1840 and 1960 by uncovering their identities, practices, and visual legacies. It invites contributions that reframe photographic history through the lens of women's history and gender studies, with particular attention to figures and practices that have been overlooked or insufficiently studied. By revisiting archival materials and questioning established historiographies, the conference aims to foster a more inclusive and critical understanding of Photography's past.

Grounded in feminist visual studies and decolonial approaches, the conference acknowledges that those historically marginalised have often faced obstacles in bearing witness to their contributions. It also draws on recent scholarship that intersects gender history, labour history, and visual culture, offering methodological tools to examine photography not only as artistic expression, but also as a form of cultural work shaped by class, gender, race, and power.

A central challenge addressed by this conference is the identification, preservation, and attribution of photographic works by women. Many of these images remain scattered in archives, family collections, and institutional holdings, often without proper identification. This fragmentation continues to hinder scholarly research and limits the visibility and recognition of women's photographic contributions, both nationally and internationally.

We welcome proposals from scholars, curators, artists, and archivists that engage with these themes through case studies, theoretical reflections, or comparative approaches. By mapping and reactivating these overlooked photographic legacies, the conference aims to spark new dialogues, contribute to historiographical renewal, and expand the frameworks through which we understand the global history of photography.

CONFERENCE OBJECTIVES

The conference is structured around WOMENPHOT.PT's main research goals:

Reframing Portuguese photographic history by building a more inclusive and transdisciplinary narrative, capable of recognising the often hidden roles of women as practitioners, entrepreneurs, and cultural agents across different sectors of photographic production;

Enhancing archival accessibility by developing new research methodologies — like curatorial and updating existing scholarship in order to integrate comprehensive information about women's roles in photography, with special attention to scattered or undocumented materials preserved in public archives, private collections, and family albums;

Fostering international dialogue by establishing comparative frameworks with similar initiatives developed in other countries and promoting transnational research collaborations that expand and diversify the historiographical field.

CALL FOR PAPERS

We invite proposals from researchers, curators, artists, archivists, and doctoral students that engage with women's photographic practices from diverse perspectives and geographies. Contributions exploring archival case studies, transnational comparisons, methodological innovations, or critical reflections on historiographical revision will be particularly encouraged. We welcome submissions that focus on the period between 1840 and 1960 and that:

Reframe dominant, male-centred photographic historiographies through feminist, decolonial, and transdisciplinary approaches;
Explore women's roles in photography across studios, industry, archives, and domestic spheres, using underexplored sources and archival materials;
Analyse photographs as part of broader media, technological, and social networks, rather than solely as authorial works;
Examine women's participation in exhibitions, press, books or albums, and other modes of visual circulation;
Investigate how archival structures and dominant narratives have shaped the visibility (or erasure) of women photographers, and propose gender-informed archival practices;
Develop new methodologies—especially through digital humanities—for mapping networks, careers, and transnational connections among women photographers;
Situate women's photographic practices within broader sociopolitical, cultural, and economic contexts, and promote public access to photographic heritage.
SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Please submit an abstract (300–400 words) along with a short biography (200–300 words) via email to womenphot@gmail.com by October 4, 2025.

Applicants will be notified of acceptance by November 6, 2025.

Each speaker will have 20 minutes for their presentation.

The conference language is English.

Following the event, selected papers will be considered for inclusion in a peer-reviewed publication.

KEYNOTES

To be announced.

PRACTICAL INFORMATION

No registration fee.

Attendance-only is free, but registration is required.

CONTACT

For any queries, please contact: womenphot@gmail.com
Website: http://womenphot.fba.up.pt

ORGANISATION

Instituto de Investigação em Arte, Design e Sociedade (i2ADS) FBAUP
Instituto de História da Arte (IHA/NOVA-FCSH/IN2PAST)

International Conference Shifting the Frame – Women's Photographic Practices (1840-1960) is funded by the research project WOMENPHOT.PT: What They Saw/What We See, Women Photographers in Portugal 1860-1920 (FCT/PeX – 2023.11306.PEX). The conference is aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the 2030 Agenda, specifically SDG 5: Gender Equality.

Reference:
CFP: Shifting the Frame (Porto, 5-7 Mar 26). In: ArtHist.net, Sep 18, 2025 (accessed Nov 23, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/50495>.