Women in Photography 1839-1939 (Milan/online, 20–21 Nov 25)

Brera Academy of Fine Arts, Milan / Online, Nov 20–21, 2025

Derya Acuner

Practitioners, Labourers, Entrepreneurs in a Global Perspective.

This event marks the conclusion of the PRIN 2022 PNRR NextGenerationEU project “Fotografiste: Women in Photography from Italian Archives, 1839–1939,” jointly promoted by the IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca and the Brera Academy of Fine Arts.

The initiative brings together scholars from universities and institutions around the world to reflect, from transnational, interdisciplinary, and gender perspectives, on women’s roles in photography, restoring visibility to shadowed figures and redefining the historical narrative in a global context.

Through six thematic sessions, participants will discuss the ways women contributed to shaping photographic practice and culture, often against social and institutional constraints. Alongside the academic sessions, the program will feature a poster session for early-career researchers, and a closing performance, Things that Death Cannot Destroy (Part 11), by artist Linda Fregni Nagler, featuring original magic lantern projections and live readings.

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

DAY 1: Thursday November 20, 2025

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)
Libreria delle donne di Milano

DAY 2: Friday November 21, 2025

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-Marañon 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

Conference program could be found on this link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ENGR6OZVdb-LPoMrftgqjqPDuqyzR7Mg/view

Practical Information
- Language: English
- Admission: Free, with registration for the in-person attendance at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdVpQFPrm6mdLZk4MUD_-pFDGJpC7rdNcl5hJPfEAGohxaeBA/viewform

Registration for the in-person attendance at Linda Fregni's performance at https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdXK2GPWmRvxGfhsrx-G8svW_8V6g0SSi7T3Ydr0aMdBCJjmQ/viewform

The event will also be streamed live on the official channel of the Brera Academy of Fine Arts. The participation link will be announced through the conference's official Instagram account (@fotografiste_) as the event date approaches.

The conference is coordinated by an international scientific committee composed of Linda Bertelli (IMT School for Advanced Studies Lucca), Costanza Caraffa (Kunsthistorisches Institut in Florenz), Patrizia Di Bello (Birkbeck College, London), Malavika Karlekar (Centre for Women's Development Studies, New Delhi), Nicoletta Leonardi (Accademia di Belle Arti di Brera, Milan), Kylie Thomas (University College Cork), and Akram Zaatari (artist and filmmaker).

Reference:
CONF: Women in Photography 1839-1939 (Milan/online, 20-21 Nov 25). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 10, 2025 (accessed Nov 22, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/51117>.