

A Free Course on the History of Western Art

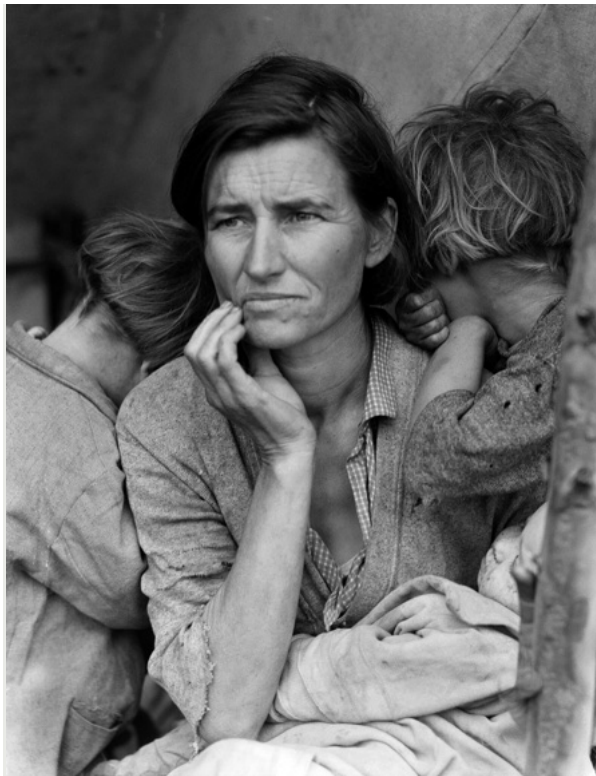
Dr Laurence Shafe www.shafe.uk



- Welcome. This is one of over 200 talks on the history of Western Art. I have arranged the talks chronologically starting with cave art through to art produced in the last few years.

GENERAL REFERENCES AND COPYRIGHT

- My talks and notes are produced with the assistance of AI systems such as Perplexity, ChatGPT, Google Gemini and Microsoft CoPilot.
- They are also based on information found on public websites such as Wikipedia, Tate, National Gallery, Louvre, The Met, Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Khan Academy and the Art Story.
- If they use information from specific books, websites or articles these are referenced at the beginning of each talk and in the 'References' section of the relevant page. The talks that are inspired by an exhibition may use the booklets and books associated with the exhibition as a source of information.
- Where possible images and information are taken from Wikipedia under an [Attribution-Share Alike Creative Commons License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/).
- If I have forgotten to reference your work then please let me know and I will add a reference or delete the information.



24-04 STRAIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

DR. LAURENCE SHAFE

WWW.SHAPE.UK

Dorothea Lange
(1895-1965),
Migrant Mother,
Nipomo, California,
6 March 1936,
Library of Congress

- This is Section 24 on Photography and this is talk 4 on Straight Photography. The term "straight" means photographs that have not been manipulated in the darkroom. Straight Photography was a reaction against Pictorialism where the photographer combined and manipulated photographs to create a work of art. Straight photography involves no manipulation, it is what the camera took and the aim was to create a work of art through the direct and honest portrayal of the world.
- Before I start I must declare a bias, at an early age I fell in love with photography and when I was younger the photographs I talk about today were some of my favourites. I had my own darkroom and although I was a poor student I had what I considered excellent cameras, a Mamiya C330 and a Pentax Spotmatic. However, I must confess that in the last few years I have stopped using my Canon SLR and now only use my iPhone Pro Max.

NOTES

Pictorialism (Late 19th Century–c.1910)

- Alfred Stieglitz — "The Flatiron" (1903). An example showing Pictorialism's soft focus and painterly composition, before his shift to Straight Photography.
- Gertrude Käsebier — "The Manger" (1899). Representative soft-focus, emotive Pictorialist portraiture.

Transition to Straight Photography (1907–1915)

- Alfred Stieglitz — "The Steerage" (1907). Marking Stieglitz's move toward

modernist and Straight Photography aesthetics with sharp focus and social content.

- Paul Strand — "Abstraction, Twin Lakes, Connecticut" (1916). One of the first photographs exemplifying pure straight photography — sharp, abstract, and direct.

Development and Establishment (1915–1930)

- Paul Strand — "Wall Street" (1915). Documentary and modernist element combined with sharp clarity.
- Edward Weston — "Nautilus" (1927). Demonstrates emphasis on natural form and texture with precise focus.
- Imogen Cunningham — "Magnolia Blossom" (1925). Sharp botanical studies showing detail and clarity.
- Berenice Abbott — "Nightview, New York" (1932). Urban landscapes with a focus on geometric form and detail.

Group f/64 and the Height of Straight Photography (1932-1940)

- Ansel Adams — "Monolith, The Face of Half Dome" (1927). Exemplifies tonal range, sharpness, and clarity characteristic of f/64.
- Edward Weston — "Pepper No. 30" (1930). Iconic still life, intensely detailed and formalist.
- Imogen Cunningham — "Fossil Fig Leaf" (1929). Study of form and texture with stark detail.
- Sonya Noskowiak — "Cabbage Leaf" (c. 1930s). Another f/64 member emphasizing natural textures.
- Willard Van Dyke — "Untitled (Portrait)" (1930s). Human subjects with straightforward, non-manipulated realism.
- Edward Weston — "Dunes, Oceano" (1936). Landscape emphasizing abstract forms and clarity.

Later Developments and Transition Toward Street Photography (Mid 1930s-1940)

- Dorothea Lange — "Migrant Mother" (1936). Documentary social realism using Straight Photography principles.
- Walker Evans — "Alabama Tenant Farmer's Wife" (1936). Engaged, clear documentary style.
- Henri Cartier-Bresson — "Behind the Gare Saint-Lazare" (1932). Early Street

Photography capturing the "decisive moment."

- Henri Cartier-Bresson — "Rue Mouffetard, Paris" (1954). Representative later work of street photography with spontaneous composition and sharpness.

MAIN ART PHOTOGRAPHY STYLE (20TH CENTURY TO PRESENT)

- The evolution of art photography from the 20th century to the present day reflects a dynamic interplay between technology, artistic movements, cultural shifts, and philosophical exploration. Below is a list and description of the main art photography styles across this period, grouped broadly by era and influence. The list is not comprehensive, for example, it excludes feminist photography, environmental photography and AI in photography.
- **1. Pictorialism (late 19th century – 1910s)**
 - Overview: Early art photographers sought to emulate painting and drawing, focusing on beauty, tonality, and composition.
 - Characteristics: Soft focus, romantic or idealised scenes, elaborate printing techniques (e.g., gum bichromate, platinum).
- **2. Straight Photography (1910s – 1940s)**
 - *Overview: A move away from pictorialism, emphasising photography's unique qualities—clarity, detail, and realism.
 - Characteristics: Sharp focus, high contrast, no manipulation; subjects often everyday objects or landscapes.
 - Notable Photographers: Paul Strand, Edward Weston, Ansel Adams (f/64 Group).
- **3. Documentary Photography (1930s – present)**
 - Overview: Focused on social issues, war, and human condition; sometimes overlaps with photojournalism.
 - Characteristics: Realistic, often black-and-white; aims to inform or inspire change.
 - Notable Photographers: Dorothea Lange, Walker Evans, Gordon Parks, Sebastião Salgado.
- **4. Modernist Photography (1920s – 1950s)**
 - *Overview: Influenced by Modernist movements (e.g., Bauhaus, Constructivism); embraced abstraction and new perspectives.
 - Characteristics: Geometric compositions, unusual angles, experimentation

with light and form.

- Notable Photographers: László Moholy-Nagy, Alexander Rodchenko, Berenice Abbott.
- **5. Surrealist and Experimental Photography (1920s – 1950s, revived later)**
 - Overview: Influenced by Surrealism and Dada; focused on the unconscious, dreams, and abstraction.
 - Characteristics: Photomontage, double exposure, solarization, manipulated imagery.
 - Notable Photographers: Man Ray, Hans Bellmer, Dora Maar, Jerry Uelsmann (later revival).
- **6. Street Photography (1950s – present)**
 - Overview: Candid scenes in public places, capturing fleeting moments and everyday life.
 - Characteristics: Spontaneity, unposed subjects, often black-and-white, strong compositional elements.
 - Notable Photographers: Henri Cartier-Bresson, Garry Winogrand, Vivian Maier, Joel Meyerowitz.
- **7. Colour Photography (1960s – present)**
 - Overview: Once seen as less serious, colour photography gained recognition as fine art in the mid-20th century.
 - Characteristics: Emphasis on colour relationships, mood, and realism.
 - Notable Photographers: William Eggleston, Stephen Shore, Nan Goldin, Alex Webb.
- **8. Conceptual Photography (1960s – present)**
 - Overview: Photography as an idea-driven practice, often influenced by Conceptual Art.
 - Characteristics: Staged or constructed images, text integration, seriality, emphasis on meaning over aesthetics.
 - Notable Photographers: John Baldessari, Cindy Sherman, Barbara Kruger, Sophie Calle.
- **9. New Topographics (1970s)**
 - Overview: A reaction to romantic landscape traditions; focused on man-altered landscapes.

- Characteristics: Deadpan style, neutral tone, suburban and industrial scenes.
- Notable Photographers: Robert Adams, Lewis Baltz, Stephen Shore.
- **10. Postmodern Photography (1980s – 2000s)**
- Overview: Critique of originality, authorship, and traditional aesthetics.
- Characteristics: Irony, appropriation, simulation, pastiche, identity politics.
- Notable Photographers: Cindy Sherman, Richard Prince, Sherrie Levine, Jeff Wall.
- **11. Digital & Manipulated Photography (1990s – present)**
- Overview: With digital tools, manipulation became more accessible, expanding creative possibilities.
- Characteristics: Heavily edited or digitally constructed images; hyperreal or fantastical.
- Notable Photographers: Andreas Gursky, Loretta Lux, Erik Johansson.
- **12. Contemporary & Hybrid Styles (2000s – present)**
- Overview: Blending of genres, media, and disciplines; exploration of identity, ecology, globalization.
- Characteristics: Mixed media, installation, video integration, AI-generated elements, social commentary.
- Notable Photographers/Artists: Zanele Muholi, LaToya Ruby Frazier, Thomas Ruff, Trevor Paglen.
- **13. Social Media & Mobile Photography (2010s – present)**
- Overview: Democratisation of photography; new aesthetic movements emerging from platforms like Instagram.
- Characteristics: Casual, filtered, often influenced by vernacular or visual trends ("Instagram aesthetic").
- Notable Influences: Hashtag art communities, VSCO culture, influencer photography.

- **Summary**

Style	Era	Focus
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
Pictorialism	~1890s–1910s	Painterly, romantic

• Straight Photography	1910s–1940s	Clarity, realism
• Documentary	1930s–present	Social/political truth
• Modernist	1920s–1950s	Form, abstraction
• Surrealist/Experimental manipulation	1920s–1950s+, revived	Dreams,
• Street Photography	1950s–present	Candid, urban life
• Colour Photography exploration	1960s–present	Chromatic
• Conceptual	1960s–present	Idea over image
• New Topographics neutrality	1970s	Landscapes,
• Postmodern	1980s–2000s	Irony, appropriation
• Digital Manipulation realities	1990s–present	Constructed
• Contemporary/Hybrid identity, global	2000s–present	Mixed media,
• Mobile/Social Media aestheticised, fast	2010s–present	Everyday,

REFERENCES



Gertrude Käsebier (1852-1934), *The Manger*, 1899

Gertrude Käsebier (1852-1934), *The Manger*, 1899

Pictorialism (Late 19th Century–c.1910)

- This is an example of Pictorialism and I have already recorded a talk, number 24-02, on Pictorialism. Straight photography developed around 1907 as a rejection of Pictorialism.
- Gertrude Käsebier (1852–1934, pronounced "KAY-zerr-beer") was one of the most influential photographers of the early 20th century known for her soft images of mothers and children and she was a leading figure of the Pictorialist movement, which sought to establish photography as a fine art.
- Käsebier and other Pictorialists manipulated images through soft focus, dramatic lighting, and alternative printing processes to create unique, painterly photographs that emphasized mood and composition over sharp detail. Her work was featured prominently in Stieglitz's influential journal, *Camera Work*.
- This 1899 photograph *The Manger* is a quintessential example of Pictorialism. Created in a stable at her summer home, the staged image features her friend, illustrator Frances Delehanty, dressed in flowing, luminous drapery and cradling a bundle of blankets.
- The photograph's Pictorialist qualities are evident in several ways:
 - **Symbolic Subject Matter:** By obscuring the model's face in shadow and replacing the baby with swaddling clothes, Käsebier abstracts the subjects into archetypal figures rather than specific individuals.

This moves the photograph beyond a mere likeness to represent the profound, spiritual theme of motherhood.

- **Painterly Effects:** The soft focus, veiled figures, and subtle tonality created by the platinum print process give the image a delicate, ethereal quality reminiscent of an Old Master painting. The use of rich tonal variations, a key Pictorialist technique, avoids the harshness of straight photography.
- **Manual Intervention:** Käsebier's darkroom work and controlled printing techniques were essential to achieving the photograph's artistic effect. As seen in comparisons with the original negative, the soft focus and vignetting, that is the darkening of the corners, were added during the printing process to create a dreamy, romantic mood. This manual manipulation was central to the Pictorialist ethos of asserting the photographer's hand in the final artwork.
- *The Manger* was highly praised upon its exhibition and remains one of Käsebier's most famous works.

REFERENCES

<https://www.artic.edu/artworks/43908/the-manger>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gertrude_Käsebier



Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946), *The Flatiron*, 1903

Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946), *The Flatiron*, 1903

Pictorialism (Late 19th Century–c.1910)

- This is *The Flatiron* by Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946), a pioneering American photographer and art promoter whose career spanned the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
- It is an important example of Pictorialism, the dominant photographic style of the time. In this image, Stieglitz captures the newly constructed Flatiron Building in New York City on a snowy winter day, presenting it with a soft, atmospheric effect typical of Pictorialism. The photograph employs photogravure printing with a matte surface and warmer tones that soften the architectural sharpness, evoking the painterly, almost impressionistic sensibility Pictorialists prized. This approach aimed to **elevate photography as a fine art by** emphasizing mood, subtle tonal gradations, and composition, akin to painting rather than mere documentation.[2][4][9] Photogravure is a technique involving transferring a photograph to a metal plate and then etching the image and then printing from the metal plate.
- Stieglitz's life and outlook were central to his evolving photographic style. Born in Hoboken (pronounced "HOE-bow-ken"), New Jersey, he **studied art in Europe** before embracing photography as his primary medium. He was an important figure in introducing modern art to America through his galleries and the journal **Camera Work**. Early in his career, he embraced the Pictorialist ethos to **assert photography's artistic legitimacy**. But by the 1910s, Stieglitz grew

increasingly **critical of Pictorialism's decorative softness**, which he felt **obscured photography's unique ability to capture the world with clarity and precision**.

- *The Flatiron* captures a moment at the intersection of **Old and New artistic philosophies**, embodying Pictorialism's romanticism while foreshadowing Stieglitz's decisive move into the modernist Straight Photography movement.

BIOGRAPHY

- Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946) was a pioneering American photographer and modern art advocate whose career shaped the course of 20th-century photography and avant-garde art in the United States. Born in Hoboken, he studied engineering in Germany, where he discovered photography, and returned to New York devoted to elevating the medium's status. As leader of the Photo-Secession and founder of the famed "291" gallery, he introduced American audiences to modernist European artists and promoted talented Americans.
- A defining episode in Stieglitz's life was his relationship with **Georgia O'Keeffe**, whom he discovered and exhibited in 1916, soon becoming her mentor, lover, and ultimately her husband in 1924. Their passionate and sometimes tumultuous partnership, revealed in thousands of letters, resulted in O'Keeffe becoming a central muse for Stieglitz, who created over 300 photographs of her. While O'Keeffe's independent spirit and extended stays in New Mexico caused strains, their artistic exchange consistently shaped both of their careers. Stieglitz's legacy rests on his visionary leadership in art and photography and his influential union with O'Keeffe, making them an iconic couple in art history.

REFERENCES

<https://www.masters-of-photography.com/photograph/flatiron-building-alfred-stieglitz-1903/>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alfred_Stieglitz

- [1]([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Flatiron_\(photograph\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Flatiron_(photograph)))
- [2](https://archive.artic.edu/stieglitz/portfolio_page/the-flatiron-1903/)
- [3](<https://www.masters-of-photography.com/photograph/flatiron-building-alfred-stieglitz-1903/>)
- [4](<https://ephemeralnewyork.wordpress.com/tag/alfred-stieglitz-flatiron->

[building/](#))

- [5](<https://www.artic.edu/artworks/66315/the-flatiron>)
- [6]([https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1457436/1/Berger PhD Thesis copyright material removed.pdf](https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/1457436/1/Berger_PhD_Thesis_copyright_material_removed.pdf))
- [7](<https://www.theartstory.org/movement/pictorialism/>)
- [8](<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/on-and-off-the-walls-its-a-wonderful-town>)
- [9](<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/269284>)



Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946), *The Steerage*, 1907, 15.72 x 19.69 cm, Minneapolis Institute of Art

Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946), *The Steerage*, 1907, 15.72 x 19.69 cm, Minneapolis Institute of Art

Transition to Straight Photography (1907–1915)

- *The Steerage* marked Stieglitz's move toward modernist and **Straight Photography** aesthetics with sharp focus and social content.
- His **shift** was motivated by a belief that photography's strength lay in its capacity to reveal reality with sharpness and truthfulness, without softening or manipulation. We see clear lines and social reality replace the painterly mood of *The Flatiron*. His change reflected broader modernist ideals of honesty and directness.
- He took the photograph while on a voyage from New York to Europe aboard the steamship Kaiser Wilhelm II. This photograph captures passengers in the ship's steerage—the lowest class accommodations—and is often considered Stieglitz's **earliest and best-known example of Straight Photography**. Unlike his earlier pictorialist work, "The Steerage" emphasizes sharp focus, geometric composition, and the interplay of shapes and human figures, marking his transition away from soft, painterly effects toward the direct, unmanipulated reality championed by Straight Photography.
- Stieglitz described the moment as spontaneous: he was drawn by the structural shapes—the stairway, funnel, gangway—and the varied human figures, who formed a balanced and dynamic composition. He raced to get his camera and capture the scene before it changed, emphasizing the formal artistic elements

alongside the human subject matter. In his later reflections, Stieglitz stated, **"If all my photographs were lost and I'd be represented only by *The Steerage*, that would be quite all right,"** underscoring its pivotal role in his career.

NOTES

- While often interpreted politically as documenting immigrant life—especially because steerage was associated with immigrants—the photograph was actually taken on a voyage from America to Europe. Some subjects were likely immigrants returning home or workers temporarily in the U.S. The image has social resonance due to its depiction of working-class people, but Stieglitz foregrounded its artistic, formal qualities, focusing on lines, shapes, and light rather than documentary commentary.
- Thus, "The Steerage" stands as a landmark of artistic modernism in photography: it captures everyday life with clarity and abstraction, embodying Stieglitz's belief that photography could be both documentary and a fine art. Its political and social significance is secondary to its innovation in photographic form and expression, making it a foundational image of Straight Photography.[1][2][3][4][6]

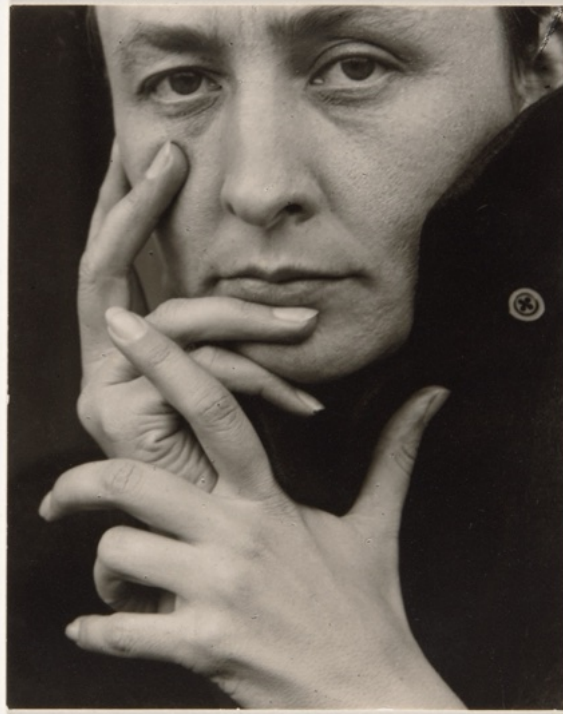
REFERENCES

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Steerage

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/267836>

- [1](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Steerage)
- [2](<https://umma.umich.edu/objects/the-steerage-1995-2-23/>)
- [3](<https://whitney.org/collection/works/5139>)
- [4](<https://smarthistory.org/stieglitz-the-steerage/>)
- [5](<https://study.com/learn/lesson/the-steerage-stieglitz-background-significance.html>)
- [6](<https://thejewishmuseum.org/exhibitions/masterpieces-curiosities-alfred-stieglitzs-the-steerage/>)
- [7](<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/ap-art-history/late-europe-and-americas/modernity-ap/a/stieglitz-the-steerage>)
- [8](<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/267836>)
- [9](<https://artandarchaeology.princeton.edu/research/faculty->

[bookshelf/steerage-and-alfred-stieglitz](#))



Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946), *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 1918, Art Institute Chicago

Alfred Stieglitz (1864–1946), *Georgia O'Keeffe*, 1918, Art Institute Chicago

- I couldn't leave Stieglitz without mentioning his relationship with **Georgia O'Keeffe**, a defining episode in his life. He discovered and exhibited her in 1916, soon becoming her mentor, lover, and ultimately her husband in 1924.
- Their passionate and sometimes tumultuous partnership, revealed in thousands of letters, resulted in O'Keeffe becoming a central muse for Stieglitz, who created over 300 photographs of her.
- He photographed portraits and nude studies but I think the many photographs he took of her hands say more about her. He regarded her hands as the symbol of her creativity. Her independent spirit and extended stays in New Mexico caused strains on their relationship but their artistic exchanges consistently shaped both of their careers.

REFERENCES

<https://www.artic.edu/artworks/66434/georgia-o-keeffe-hands-and-thimble>



Paul Strand (1890–1976), *Wall Street, New York*, 1915, photogravure, 25.2 × 32.2 cm, private collection

Paul Strand (1890–1976), *Wall Street, New York*, 1915, photogravure, 25.2 × 32.2 cm, private collection

- Paul Strand is considered one of the pioneers of the straight photography movement, he advocated for sharp focus and realistic representation.
- He took this photograph from the **steps of the New York Federal Hall** during morning rush hour. The recently completed building of white marble at 23 Wall Street (on the southeast corner of Wall and Broad Streets) was located in one of the most expensive areas of real estate in New York City. A symbol of financial power, it was the **new headquarters of J.P. Morgan and Company**.
- The photograph grew out of what the artist described as an attempt to capture a "**kind of movement**" that was at once "**abstract and controlled**." The long horizontal shadows of the figures counterpose the yawning dark verticals of the Morgan Bank's windows, and the dynamism of their movement plays off of the building's solidity.
- While this image is important for its abstract formal patterns and structures well as the uneasy relationship between early twentieth-century Americans and their new cities. Here the people are seen not as individuals but as abstract silhouettes trailing long shadows down the chasms of commerce.
- In this and his other early photographs of New York, Strand helped set the trend toward pure photography of the subject and away from the "pictorialist" imitation of painting.

NOTES

- Paul Strand (1890–1976) was an American photographer and filmmaker whose innovations helped to define modern art photography in the 20th century. First exposed to photography through Lewis Hine at the Ethical Culture School in New York, Strand was deeply influenced by Hine's commitment to social reform and Alfred Stieglitz's modernist ideals. His early work featured sharply focused urban scenes, street portraits, and geometric studies, helping to pioneer "straight photography," which emphasized directness over pictorialist manipulation.
- Strand's supportive relationship with Stieglitz provided early critical exposure, exhibitions, and inclusion in *Camera Work* magazine, forging his artistic identity. Key collaborations included the experimental film *Manhatta* (1921) with Charles Sheeler, and documentary efforts such as *Redes* (1936) in Mexico and *Native Land* (1942) for Frontier Films, reflecting his socialist and humanitarian beliefs. Strand's marriage to fellow photographer Rebecca Salsbury provided personal and creative companionship, but he later relocated to France in 1951 due to discomfort with McCarthy-era politics, living there until his death.
- Throughout his six-decade career, Strand's celebrated books and images captured people, landscapes, and architecture with clarity, empathy, and quiet radicalism. His commitment to both aesthetic innovation and social engagement remains influential.

REFERENCES

<https://whitney.org/collection/works/7841>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wall_Street_\(photograph\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wall_Street_(photograph))



Paul Strand (1890-1976),
Abstraction, Porch Shadows
also known as *Abstraction,*
Twin Lakes, Connecticut,
1916, silver-platinum print,
The Met

Paul Strand (1890-1976), *Abstraction, Porch Shadows* also known as *Abstraction, Twin Lakes, Connecticut*, 1916, silver-platinum print, The Met

Transition to Straight Photography (1907–1915)

- This is one of the first photographs of pure straight photography — abstract, sharp and direct.
- The photograph is commonly known as *Abstraction, Twin Lakes, Connecticut*, but is also more accurately called ***Abstraction, Porch Shadows***. This title better describes the image's content: abstract shadows cast by the diagonal slats of a porch railing on a round garden table, creating powerful geometric forms such as triangles and parallelograms.
- The name "Twin Lakes" refers to the location of Strand's family cottage near Twin Lakes in Salisbury, Connecticut, where he spent the summer of 1916 and took this photograph. The reference to Twin Lakes is geographical, pointing to the two neighbouring lakes in that area, but the image itself captures details of the porch at his cottage rather than the lakes directly.
- He was a central figure in American modernist photography, influenced by Alfred Stieglitz and other pioneers. He embraced photography as both an artistic and documentary medium, often exploring everyday scenes and abstract details with directness, precision, and an eye for abstract form, marking a significant shift in photographic aesthetics the time.

REFERENCES

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abstraction, Porch Shadows](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abstraction,_Porch_Shadows)

[https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/38/Paul Strand. Abstraction, Twin Lakes, Connecticut. 1916.jpg](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/3/38/Paul_Strand._Abstraction,_Twin_Lakes,_Connecticut._1916.jpg)

<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/265133>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul Strand](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_Strand)



Edward Weston (1886-1958),
Nautilus, 1927, published 1927

Edward Weston (1886-1958), *Nautilus*, 1927, published 1927

- We now come to **Edward Weston** who has been called "**one of the most innovative and influential American photographers**"[1] and "**one of the masters of 20th century photography.**"
- He was a key figure in the Group f/64. A collective of San Francisco Bay Area photographers founded in 1932, featuring members like Weston, Ansel Adams, and Imogen Cunningham. They promoted "straight photography" with an ultimate emphasis on sharp focus and technical precision
- The Group f/64 is named after the smallest aperture on a large-format camera that produces a deep depth of field, and the ultimate in sharp focus so using the camera's ability to be a clear, unadulterated observer of the world.

NOTES

- Group f/64 was an American collective of San Francisco Bay Area photographers founded in 1932, featuring members like Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, and Imogen Cunningham. They promoted "straight photography" which emphasized sharp focus and technical precision, a direct contrast to the softer, more painterly Pictorialism style. The group met and organized exhibitions to advance this modernist aesthetic, but officially disbanded by 1935 due to the members drifting apart and pursuing their own projects.
- the name referencing the f/64 aperture setting on large format cameras that produced maximum depth of field and sharpness.

- They formed to promote a new, modernist aesthetic in photography that rejected Pictorialism and embraced the camera's ability to capture the world with clarity and accuracy. They aimed to establish photography as a fine art in its own right, distinct from painting.
- The group held meetings and organized exhibitions, including their first museum show in 1932.
- They actively promoted their style through gallery shows in Oakland and San Francisco, outside exhibitions, workshops, and articles in publications like Camera Craft.

NOTES

- F/64 was founded by: Ansel Adams, Edward Weston, Imogen Cunningham, Willard Van Dyke, Henry Swift, John Paul Edwards, Brett Weston, Consuelo Kanaga, Alma Lavenson, Sonya Noskowiak, and Preston Holder. Dorothea Lange was also a member.

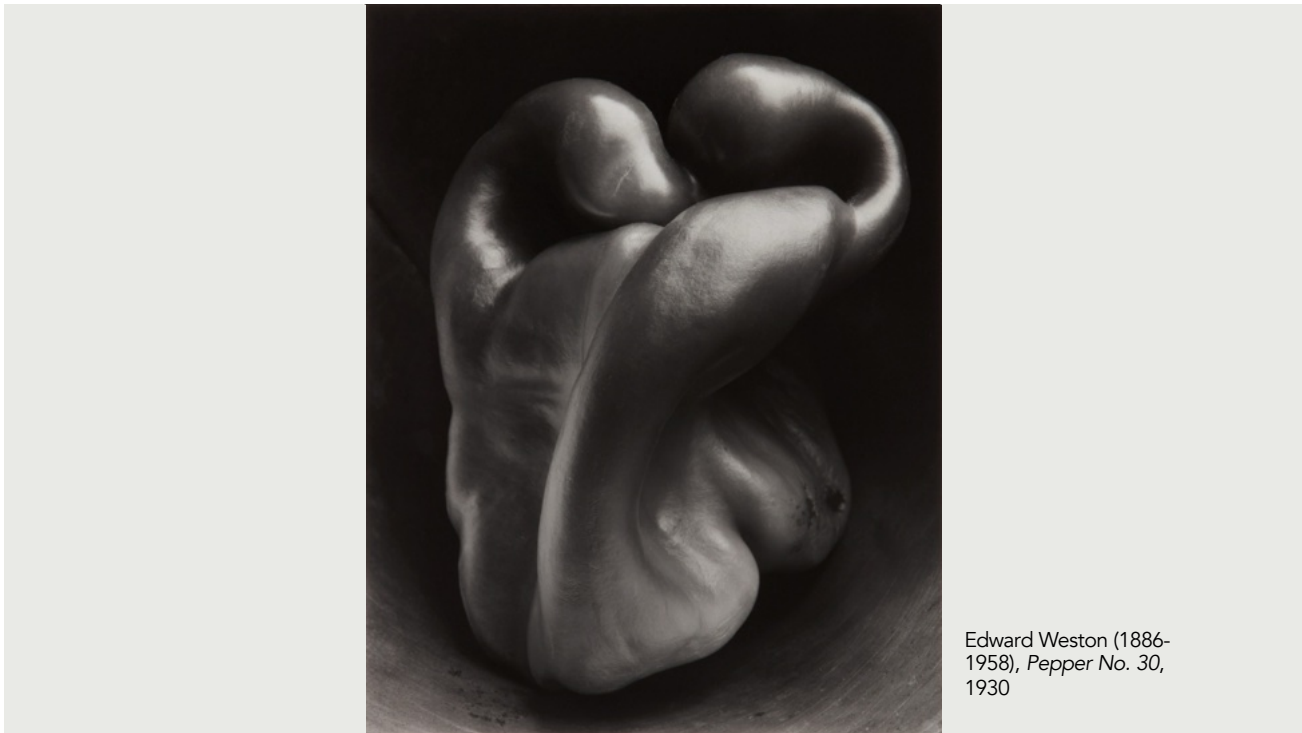
BIOGRAPHY

- Edward Weston (1886–1958) was an influential American photographer renowned for his precise, sharply focused images of natural forms, nudes, and landscapes. Born in Chicago, he began photographing as a teenager, later moving to California where he opened his own portrait studio and initially worked in the soft-focus pictorialist style. A key early relationship was with Margrethe Mather, his assistant and model, who significantly influenced both his creative direction and personal life.
- In the 1920s, Weston's partnership with photographer and activist Tina Modotti led him to Mexico City, where he produced pivotal portraits and nudes and engaged with prominent Mexican artists like Diego Rivera. Returning to California, Weston became a leader of the West Coast modernist movement, famously co-founding Group f/64 with Ansel Adams and others, advocating for a straight photographic approach using large-format cameras and small apertures for maximum detail.
- He was the first photographer to receive a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1937, traveling widely with his later partner, Charis Wilson, who became his wife in 1939. Diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 1947, Weston ceased photographing but worked closely with his sons to print and preserve his work until his death. His career was marked by innovation and key personal collaborations.

REFERENCES

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Weston

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nautilus_\(photograph\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nautilus_(photograph))



Edward Weston (1886-1958), *Pepper No. 30*, 1930

Edward Weston (1886-1958), *Pepper No. 30*, 1930, photograph of a green pepper by Edward Weston, printed by his son, Cole Weston.

Group f/64 and the Height of Straight Photography (1932-1940)

- This perhaps his most famous work *Pepper No. 30*. By placing an ordinary bell pepper inside a tin funnel and using careful lighting, Weston transformed the vegetable into an abstract, three-dimensional form. The image transcends its subject matter and invites viewers to focus on the interplay of light and shadow, texture, and shape.
- The pepper's smooth, flowing curves are often compared to the contours of the human body, possibly a female nude or perhaps a couple embracing. Weston acknowledged these interpretations but insisted the image was "just a pepper" and dismissed those who focused on its sexual aspects.
- Weston took the photo using his 8 X 10 Ansco view camera with a Zeiss 21 cm lens. Like all of his photos, he made a single exposure of the image. Because of the extreme contrast between the bright sun on skin and the dark shadows of the doorway, prints from this negative required both burning and dodging. Burning is allowing more light onto an area of the print while it is under the enlarger. This can be done by holding an opaque or semi-opaque material with a hole cut in it between the enlarger head and the print paper. Dodging is preventing light from reaching an area of the print by using, for example, a shape on the end of a wire. It is necessary because the ratio of light to dark in nature is higher than a negative can capture and the ratio a negative can

capture is higher than a print can reproduce. I said earlier that Straight Photography involves no manipulation in the darkroom. More accurately it involves no manipulation of the negative but burning and dodging were used extensively in order to reproduce as closely as possible what was captured on the negative.

NOTES

REFERENCES

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pepper_No._30

<https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2022/photographs-3/pepper-no-30>



Edward Weston (1886-1958),
Nude (Charis, Santa Monica),
1936, 24 × 19 cm, printed by
Cole Weston

Edward Weston (1886-1958), *Nude (Charis, Santa Monica)*, 1936, 24 × 19 cm, printed by Cole Weston

- He did also take many photographs of the female nude. This is one of his most iconic nudes, it shows his muse and future wife, Charis (pronounced "CARE-iss") Wilson. She is shown sitting with her knees drawn up, creating a complex, anonymous study of human form and negative space. A combination of abstract geometric shapes and a soft human body.
- This was taken during the Great Depression which, although he was relatively well known he still struggled to make ends meet and had to close his studio and move to a modest two-bedroom bungalow with his three sons and later Charis Wilson.
- This photograph was taken on the porch outside their bedroom and the blanket was put down as the decking was too hot. She dropped her head as the sun was too bright and he said, "Just keep it that way". Although he was never happy with the shadow on her right arm the photograph has become one of his most published photographs and one of the icons of 20th century photography
- One amusing anecdote is told by Charis in her book ***Edward Weston: Nudes***, she wrote **"I remember most vividly Edward examining the print with a magnifying glass to decide if the few visible pubic hairs would prevent him from shipping it through the mails."** He was not being too careful, the Comstock Act of 1873 was rigorously enforced by Anthony Comstock who boasted he had seized over 3 million pictures and sentenced over 3,000 people

to nearly 600 years in goal.

REFERENCES

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nude_\(Charis,_Santa_Monica\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nude_(Charis,_Santa_Monica))

<https://www.anothermag.com/art-photography/10115/the-edward-weston-nude-that-took-photography-to-new-heights>

<https://www.clevelandart.org/exhibitions/kelli-connell-pictures-charis>

Amy Werbel, *The Crime of the Nude: Anthony Comstock, the Art Students League of New York, and the Origins of Modern American Obscenity*, Winterthur Portfolio, Vol. 48, No. 4 (Winter 2014), pp. 249-282 (34 pages)

<https://doi.org/10.1086/679370> <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/679370>



Imogen Cunningham (1883-1976),
Roi Partridge on Mt. Rai, 1914,
24.1 × 19.1 cm

Imogen Cunningham (1883-1976), *Roi Partridge on Mt. Rai*, 1914, 24.1 × 19.1 cm

- Imogen Cunningham (1883–1976) was a major American photographer renowned for her botanical studies, nudes, and incisive portraits.
- This is an example of one of her male nude studies that she photographed in 1914-15 on Mount Rainier with her husband Roi Partridge as the model.
- The series created controversy because female photographers rarely depicted men nude at the time. The prevailing social norm accepted male photographers taking female nude photographs, but Cunningham inverted expectations. As Seattle art dealer Gail Gibson rightfully noted: **"Women were portrayed nude, whether it be painting, drawing or photography ... [but] women were not photographing men nude. She did work that others weren't doing and she felt good about doing it and wasn't afraid to do it"**.
- Critics in the press denounced the images as **immoral**. A Seattle newspaper called for those involved in the shoot to be arrested for **"participating in an orgie,"** and other reviewers condemned Cunningham's work as **"very vulgar,"** claiming she was **"an immoral woman"**. Despite the scandal, Cunningham asserted, **"It didn't make a single bit of difference in my business. Nobody thought worse of me"**. However, she reportedly avoided further public display of male nudes for nearly 20 years. The episode highlighted the double standard in gender representation and deepened Cunningham's reputation for challenging artistic and social boundaries.
- The photographs are recognized for their delicate use of light, composition,

and the pioneering way they asserted a female gaze in the depiction of the male form.

REFERENCES

<https://www.artsy.net/artwork/imogen-cunningham-roi-partridge-on-mt-rai>



Imogen Cunningham (1883-1976), *Magnolia Blossom*, 1925, 17.1 × 21.6 cm

Imogen Cunningham (1883-1976), *Magnolia Blossom*, 1925, 17.1 × 21.6 cm

- This is one of Imogen Cunningham's most well known photographs, it is *Magnolia Blossom* of 1925.
- She was **born in Portland Oregon** and studied chemistry at Washington University before **studying photographic chemistry in Germany**. She opened a portrait studio in Seattle and became known as a Pictorialist.
- After moving to California she was influenced by Stieglitz and shifted her style in the 1920s to these sharply detailed plant studies.
- As a co-founder of Group f/64 alongside Edward Weston and Ansel Adams in 1932, she advocated straight, detailed photography. After her 1934 divorce, Cunningham expanded to street and documentary photography, collaborating notably with Dorothea Lange and teaching at the California School of Fine Arts.
- Her prolific career lasted until her death at 93, earning widespread recognition for both formal rigour and empathetic vision, significantly influencing generations of photographers.

BIOGRAPHY

- Imogen Cunningham (1883–1976) was a major American photographer renowned for her botanical studies, nudes, and incisive portraits. Raised in Seattle, she studied chemistry at the University of Washington, combining science with photography in her early work for Edward S. Curtis and later opening a portrait studio in Seattle in 1910. A grant sent her to study

photographic chemistry in Dresden, Germany, further developing her technical expertise.

- Marrying artist Roi Partridge in 1915, Cunningham moved to San Francisco, where her style shifted from pictorialism to sharply focused modernist photography, particularly with plant forms and nudes—her male nudes were especially unconventional for the period. As a co-founder of Group f/64 alongside Edward Weston and Ansel Adams in 1932, she advocated straight, detailed photography. After her 1934 divorce, Cunningham expanded to street and documentary photography, collaborating notably with Dorothea Lange and teaching at the California School of Fine Arts.
- Her prolific career lasted until her death at 93, earning widespread recognition for both formal rigor and empathetic vision, significantly influencing generations of photographers.

REFERENCES

<https://whitney.org/collection/works/46486>

<https://www.artic.edu/artworks/20777/magnolia-blossom>

<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/44263>

<https://www.historylink.org/File/22935>



Imogen Cunningham (1883-1976), *Leaf Pattern*, before 1929, 23.5 × 18.1 cm

Imogen Cunningham (1883-1976), *Leaf Pattern*, before 1929, 23.5 × 18.1 cm

Group f/64 and the Height of Straight Photography (1932-1940)

- Although her career lasted seven-decades she is best known for her work in the 1920s and 1930s: close, clear, abstract images of organic forms, particularly botanical specimens.
- Edward Weston, who coordinated the American section of the 1929 exhibition *Film und Foto*, a major German survey of international photographic modernism, selected eight of her plant studies to join the landmark exhibition.
- **In 1932 Weston and Cunningham** joined fellow California photographers in **forming Group f/64**. Earlier that year she had sent a set of photographs, including this print to New York gallerist Julien Levy. This print features even tones on a matte-finish paper but later prints of the same image appear on the glossy, high-contrast paper favoured by f/64 members. (Art Institute of Chicago).

REFERENCES

<https://www.artic.edu/artworks/50151/leaf-pattern>

<https://www.moma.org/collection/works/45658>

<https://www.imogencunningham.com/art/leaf-pattern-before-1929-by-imogen-cunningham>

<https://collections.artsmia.org/art/5585/leaf-pattern-imogen-cunningham>



Ansel Adams (1902-1984), *Monolith, The Face of Half Dome*, 1927, gelatine silver print, Library of Congress

Ansel Adams (1902-1984), *Monolith, The Face of Half Dome*, 1927, gelatine silver print, Library of Congress

Group f/64 and the Height of Straight Photography (1932-1940)

- We now come to Ansel Adams who became a world-renowned photographer known for his black-and-white images of the American West like this photograph *Monolith, The Face of Half Dome*.
- In order to capture this iconic image he left early one cold spring morning in 1927 to walk up to an outcrop overlooking the Half Dome.
- Nearly a decade earlier when he was 14 he visited the same place on a family trip. He used his new Kodak Brownie camera to take several pictures of Half Dome
- When he took this picture he was trying to decide between a photographic and a musical career. He was an accomplished pianist but he was beginning to realise that his photographic skills dwarfed his musical ones. So he abandoned his musical career.
- I have been saying that Straight Photography involves no manipulation of the image but there is another way images could be manipulated and that was by the use of filters. Ansel initially made an exposure using a yellow filter, he immediately swapped that for a dark red filter, which darkened the sky and produced the deep shadows and bright light we recognize in the final image.
- **"Today, the image stands as not only one of Adams' finest works, but as a**

lasting and iconic depiction of one of the most unique spots in the American wilderness." (The Ansel Adams Gallery)

- Group f/64 dissolved in 1935 due to the Great Depression and the departure of members like Edward Weston and Willard Van Dyke from San Francisco. Members continued their photographic careers, with many becoming highly influential artists. For example,
- Before I leave this image you might be interested to know that this sheer cliff is over 4,700 feet high and has been climbed and descended many times. Believe it or not the record ascent and descent was a little over two hours in 2025. It has also been climbed without ropes in one hour 22 minutes in 2012 (by Alex Honnold).

BIOGRAPHY

- Ansel Adams (1902–1984) stands as one of the most influential American photographers and environmentalists of the twentieth century, renowned for his technically masterful black-and-white images of the American West. Born in San Francisco, Adams found inspiration in nature following a childhood marked by solitude and illness. His first experience photographing Yosemite at age fourteen sparked a lifelong dedication to capturing wilderness and promoting conservation.
- Initially trained as a pianist, Adams transitioned fully into photography during the late 1920s. A pivotal moment occurred with the production of his first portfolio, "*Parmelian Prints of the High Sierras*," which included the iconic "***Monolith, the Face of Half Dome***". Adams helped found Group f/64, whose members advocated for "pure" photography characterised by sharp focus and tonal clarity. He co-developed the Zone System—a methodical approach to exposure and print making that brought new precision to photographic art.
- Adams's images, especially those depicting Yosemite and other national parks, became synonymous with the American wilderness, serving as powerful tools for environmental advocacy. He worked with the Sierra Club, influenced conservation policy, and received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1980. Adams's legacy persists not only in his photographs but also in his writings, technical manuals, and tireless promotion of photography as a fine art, shaping generations and helping preserve America's wild places for posterity.

REFERENCES

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monolith, the Face of Half Dome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monolith,_the_Face_of_Half_Dome)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ansel Adams](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ansel_Adams)

<https://articles.anseladams.com/new-modern-replica-monolith-face-half-dome/>



Ansel Adams (1902–1984),
Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico, 1941

Ansel Adams (1902–1984) , *Moonrise, Hernandez, New Mexico*, 1941

- Another of Adams' most famous photos.
- He had been commissioned to take photographs of lands owned by the Department of the Interior and one day just after sunset he was driving through new Mexico when he pulled to the side of the road and yelled to his son "**Get this! Get that, for God's sake! We don't have much time!**". Desperate to capture the image in the fading light, they scrambled to set up the tripod and camera, knowing that only moments remained before the light was gone.
- He then couldn't find his exposure meter but he remembered the luminance of the moon and adjusted the camera exposure accordingly. When he released the shutter he realised it was an unusual photograph and wanted to take a second as a duplicate. In the few second it took to reverse the film holder the sunlight
- Photographed on November 1, 1941, 4:49:20 p.m. local time, as subsequently determined through independent analysis by amateur astronomer Dennis di Cicco.

REFERENCES

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moonrise,_Hernandez,_New_Mexico



Dorothea Lange (1895-1965), *Migrant Mother*, Nipomo, California, 6 March 1936, gelatin silver print, subject: Florence Owens Thompson, 5 × 4 cm, Library of Congress

Dorothea Lange (1895-1965), *Migrant Mother*, Nipomo, California, 6 March 1936, gelatin silver print, subject: Florence Owens Thompson, 5 × 4 cm, Library of Congress

Later Developments and Transition Toward Street Photography (Mid 1930s-1940)

- By the mid-1930s and the Great Depression Straight Photography was used for a type of documentary social realism.
- This is Florence Thompson with several of her children in a photograph known as ***Migrant Mother***.
- The Library of Congress caption reads: "**Destitute pea pickers in California. Mother of seven children. Age thirty-two. Nipomo, California.**"
- However, some historians maintain she was not a pea picker but a Dust Bowl migrant although if she was a Dust Bowl migrant, she would probably have left a farm as migrants usually started out working on a farm. So destitute pea picker and Dust Bowl migrant amount to the same thing.
- Lange took this photograph with a Graflex camera on large format (4"x5") negative film and
- (CLICK) the negative was retouched in the 1930s to erase the thumb holding a tent pole which you can see at the lower right hand corner of the original print.
- (CLICK) a faint outline of the thumb can still be seen on the modern print.

NOTES

REFERENCES

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Migrant_Mother

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dorothea_Lange



Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908-2004),
Behind the Gare Saint-Lazare,
1932, 57.63 x 39.05 cm,
Minneapolis Institute of Art

Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908-2004), *Behind the Gare Saint-Lazare*, 1932, image: 57.63 x 39.05 cm, Minneapolis Institute of Art

Later Developments and Transition Toward Street Photography (Mid 1930s-1940)

- This is *Behind the Gare Saint-Lazare* by Henri Cartier-Bresson, a master of candid photography and a pioneer of street photography, known for capturing the "decisive moment".
- He was one of the most influential photographers of the twentieth century, known for transforming photojournalism into an art form with his instinctive and poetic documentary style.
- He was born in Chanteloup, France, and studied literature at Cambridge University before embarking on his photographic career in 1931. He purchased his first Leica camera in 1933, which quickly became his constant companion and enabled him to explore candid, spontaneous photography across Europe and beyond.[1][2][3][9]
- His early work captured the energy of street life and led to his rapid recognition through exhibitions in New York, Mexico, and Madrid by the mid-1930s.
- He collaborated with the filmmaker Jean Renoir, but ultimately returned to photography. He was imprisoned during World War II and, after a dramatic escape, chronicled the resistance efforts and the liberation of France.[2][8]
- He was a co-founder of Magnum Photos in 1947 and traveled extensively,

documenting crucial moments of global history and countless portraits of iconic figures.

- This signature photograph, *Behind the Gare Saint-Lazare* (1932), epitomises his guiding concept of the "decisive moment"—the exact instant where composition and meaning meet, capturing the fleeting significance of daily life. He described this as the simultaneous recognition, in a fraction of a second, of both the import of an event and the image's formal integrity, an approach that has shaped generations of photographers.[6][7][13][14][16][2]

REFERENCES

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Behind_the_Gare_Saint-Lazare

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henri_Cartier-Bresson

- [1](<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Henri-Cartier-Bresson>)
- [2](<https://www.biography.com/artists/henri-cartier-bresson>)
- [3](<https://www.icp.org/browse/archive/constituents/henri-cartier-bresson>)
- [4](<https://www.henricartierbresson.org/en/hcb/biography/>)
- [5](<https://www.theartstory.org/artist/cartier-bresson-henri/>)
- [6](<https://www.yatesweb.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Iconic-Images-PB-Final.pdf>)
- [7](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henri_Cartier-Bresson)
- [8](<https://workersbushtelegraph.com.au/2011/08/18/%E2%80%98decisive-moments%E2%80%99%E2%80%94henri-cartier-bresson/>)
- [9](<https://www.magnumphotos.com/photographer/henri-cartier-bresson/>)
- [10](<https://artblart.com/tag/henri-cartier-bresson/page/2/>)
- [11](<https://aboutphotography.blog/photographer/henri-cartier-bresson>)
- [12](<https://www.softouch.on.ca/kb/data/Four%20Arts%20Of%20Photography.pdf>)
- [13](<https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/museum-life/henri-cartier-bresson>)
- [14](<https://artblart.com/tag/french-artist/>)
- [15](https://www.academia.edu/76012148/A_Study_of_Photography_and_Walking_through_the_City_in_Modern_Postmodern_and_Contemporary_Canadian_Art)
- [16](https://surrealism185.rssing.com/chan-5106507/all_p5.html)



Henri Cartier-Bresson
(1908-2004), *Rue
Mouffetard, Paris, 1954*

Henri Cartier-Bresson (1908-2004), *Rue Mouffetard, Paris, 1954*

Later Developments and Transition Toward Street Photography (Mid 1930s-1940)

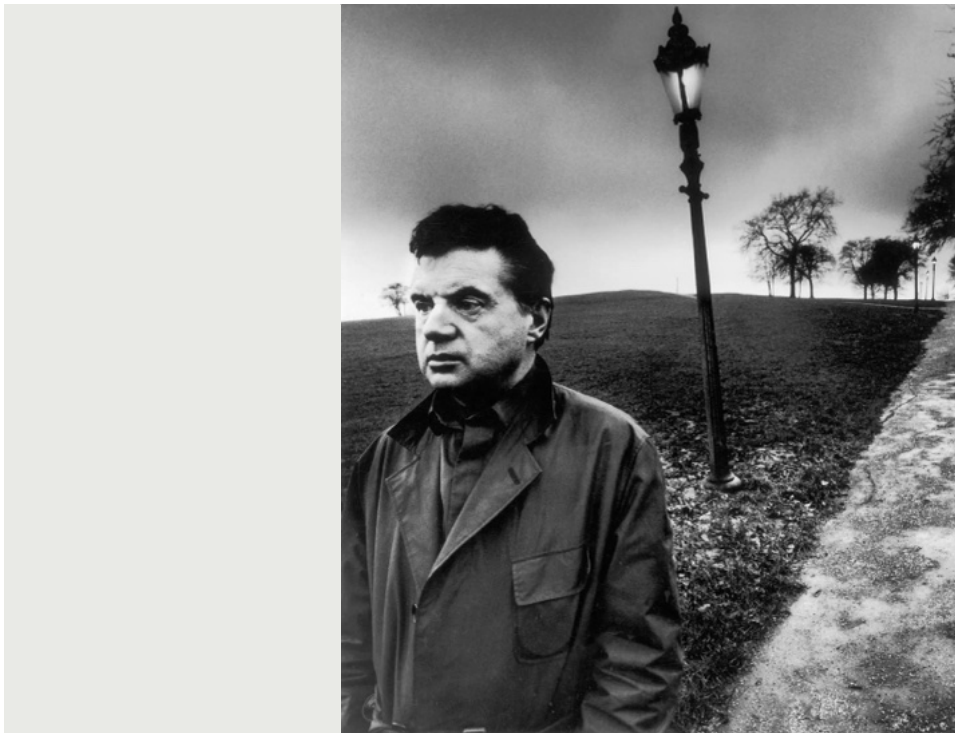
- *Rue Mouffetard* (pronounced "moo-fuh-tard,") was a vibrant market street in Paris, and this photograph by Cartier-Bresson shows a beaming young boy named Michel Gabriel proudly carrying two large bottles of wine in his arms. His expression radiates innocence and joy, while two girls smile in the background and a pair of blurred women add another layer of narrative and everyday authenticity to the scene.
- Rue Mouffetard had long been known for its bustling street life, making it an ideal setting for Cartier-Bresson's unobtrusive, observational style. The photographer, who co-founded Magnum Photos in 1947 and famously valued "**truth, spontaneity, and the poetry of daily life**," described such moments as the instant when meaning and form coalesce in a fleeting yet significant image. This photo typifies his philosophy: the image is not constructed or staged, but rather captured intuitively as it unfolds, preserving a slice of Parisian life in the post-war era.
- It is one of Cartier-Bresson's most loved works and is a universal symbol of childhood exuberance and the extraordinary found within the ordinary. Today, prints are held in major collections, including the Museum of Modern Art.
- Cartier-Bresson resigned from Magnum in 1966, gave up photography in 1973

and went back to drawing and painting. He felt he had achieved all he could in photography and was put off by its increasing commercialisation and he wanted to return to his first love drawing.

REFERENCES

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rue_Mouffetard,_Paris_\(photograph\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rue_Mouffetard,_Paris_(photograph))

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henri_Cartier-Bresson



Bill Brandt (1904-1983). *Francis Bacon on Primrose Hill, London, 1963*

Bill Brandt (1904-1983). *Francis Bacon on Primrose Hill, London, 1963*

- Bill Brandt (1904–1983) was a British photographer and photojournalist and this is a portrait of the artist Francis Bacon taken in 1963..
- Brandt was born in Hamburg, Germany but is best known for his social documentary images of British life, distorted nudes, portraits, and landscapes. Although his work aligns with some principles of straight photography in terms of its clarity and composition.
- His father was English and his mother German and he later disowned his German heritage, claiming to be born in south London. During World War I, Brandt's father was interned as a British citizen living in Germany. As a youth, Brandt suffered tuberculosis and spent time in a sanatorium in Davos, Switzerland, followed by psychoanalytic treatment in Vienna.
- In the late 1920s, Brandt was introduced to surrealist photographer Man Ray in Paris, where he briefly worked, learning technical photographic processes and creative possibilities. He moved to London in 1933 and began documenting British society with a photographic style that combined documentary and poetic sensibilities. Brandt's early work focused on the British class system and everyday life, culminating in two influential books: *The English at Home* (1936) and *A Night in London* (1938).
- This photograph shows another form of distortion brought about by the use of a wide-angle lens. It produces a sense of space distorted in depth, and the chosen moment, just after sunset with the last light of day blending with the

artificial light, give this scene a strange atmosphere

REFERENCES

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bill_Brandt



Bill Brandt (1904-1983), *Nude, Seaford, East Sussex Coast*, April 1957

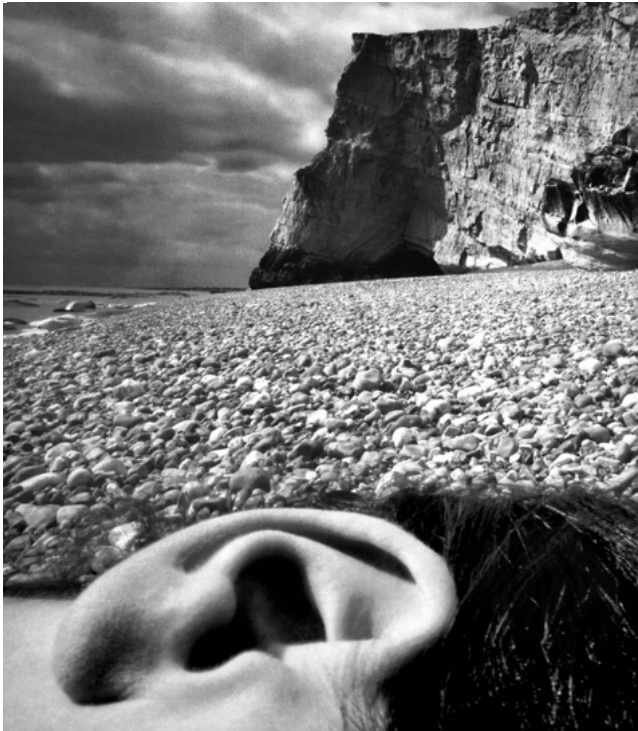
Bill Brandt (1904-1983), *Nude, Seaford, East Sussex Coast*, April 1957

- During World War II, Brandt was commissioned by the British Ministry of Information to document life in London bomb shelters during the Blitz, capturing compelling images of civilian resilience. After the war, he turned his attention to portraits, landscapes, and his celebrated series of distorted nudes, published in works such as *Perspective of Nudes* (1961).
- When I was young, this is one of the pictures I loved from his *Nude* series. The juxtaposition of the soft, rounded form of the ear against the rugged cliffs helps make the picture. There is also a personal angle, it was taken on the beach at Seaford where my parents lived.
- I also include this as it shows what can be done using an aperture of f/64. The aperture opening is so small that everything is in focus from a few inches away to infinity, known as a large depth of field. However, a small aperture means little light reaches the film and so it requires long exposure times and so the use of a tripod to prevent camera shake.
- Brandt was internationally acclaimed as one of the most important British photographers of the 20th century, known for his distinctive use of wide-angle lenses and powerful compositions with social commentary. He passed away in London in 1983, having left a significant legacy in photography.

REFERENCES

<https://www.houkgallery.com/artists/71-bill-brandt/works/46552-bill-brandt-nude->

[seaford-east-sussex-coast-april-1957/](#)



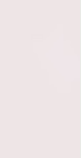
24-04 STRAIGHT PHOTOGRAPHY

DR. LAURENCE SHAFE

WWW.SHAFE.UK

Bill Brandt
(1904-1983),
Nude, Seaford,
East Sussex
Coast, April
1957

- That brings me to the end of today's talk. I fell that each photographer deserves a complete talk of their work, in fact I could give all 250 talks on photography, in some ways an underrated art form.
- That is all for now, thank you for your time and attention and I must get on preparing my talks on the Impressionists Pissarro, Degas and Renoir.



A Free Course on the History of Western Art

Dr Laurence Shafe www.shafe.uk

