

Welcome to Female in Focus, a guide celebrating women in photography, brought to you by 1854 Media. Get ahead with valuable advice from some of the leading voices in the industry.



female in focus

A celebration of women in photography



**British Journal  
of Photography**



## Contents

### Welcome to the 1854 Media guide for women in photography

- 5 Introduction
- 6 About us
- 8 Why do we need to  
get women more involved  
in photography?
- 10 How things are changing

### Hear from women in the industry

- 12 Introduction
- 14 The need for different  
perspectives
- 16 Why are young female  
photographers becoming  
disengaged?
- 18 Institutional change

### Meet the female photographers inspiring change

- 20 Introduction
- 22 Getting started in the industry
- 24 What you should know
- 26 Important projects by  
female artists

### 38 How you can move things forward

### Get involved in our awards

- 40 Introduction
- 42 Previous winners
- 56 About Female in Focus



Image from the series *Middle of  
Fucking Nowhere* © Kourtney Roy.



# Welcome

The aim of this guide is to highlight the exceptional quality of work by female photographers around the world, and to demonstrate how the photography industry is working to achieve gender equality.

Only 15 per cent of professional photographers are women. How can we hope to see an accurate depiction of our world if the people photographing it are homogeneous? We want to see new perspectives. We want to see a wide spectrum of ideas. We want to ensure that photographers are representative of all strata of society.

This guide is the first of its kind, and it seeks to provide valuable insights into gender disparity in the photography industry, as well as to offer solutions that can move things forward. By giving female photographers the resources and platforms to succeed, we can tackle the gender imbalance.

We have compiled the advice of pioneering photographers and industry leaders from across the globe who are all actively taking steps towards making the photography industry more equal and diverse. From Adenrele Sonariwo, founder of [Rele Art Gallery](#) in Lagos, Nigeria, to Daniella Zalcman, the founder

of [Women Photograph](#), each contributor to this guide offers a valuable insight into the photography industry, and how it can improve.

This guide is brought to you by 1854 Media and *British Journal of Photography*, two of photography's leading voices. Our role within the industry, as the world's longest-running photography title, positions us at the forefront of photography, and it is our responsibility to make sure the industry is a fair and equal one.

"There is still an imbalance when it comes to women photographers being represented, and that is not due to a lack of talent out there," explains Izabela Radwanska Zhang, assistant editor at *British Journal of Photography*. "Men have dominated the history of photography as we know it. And if there is ever an opportunity to create a platform to celebrate women in photography, we should always take it."

[Female in Focus](#) is centred around female photographers and those who are interested in their stories. We believe that gender is a spectrum, and are inclusive of a multitude of feminine voices, including those who are trans and non-binary.

Image from the series *Drummies*  
© Alice Mann/  
Institute Artist.





## 1854 Media and *British Journal of Photography* are two of the world's leading sources for photography

### 1854 Media

1854 Media is an award-winning digital media organisation with a global audience, including millions of photographers, arts lovers and industry leaders.

At 1854's core is [British Journal of Photography](#), the world's longest running photography title, which has been showcasing pioneers of the art form since 1854. It has also created an internationally renowned photography awards programme, which includes [Open Walls](#), [BJP International Photography Award](#), [Portrait of Britain](#), [Portrait of Humanity](#), all of which aim to discover and promote new talent.

Our visual content agency, Studio 1854, helps brands use the power of photography and video to cultivate and engage larger audiences, by leveraging our relationships with the world's top photographic influencers and our understanding of the visual content that engages them.

Image from the series  
*Exodus: The Climate Migration Crises*  
© Yagazie Emezi.

### British Journal of Photography

"We've come a long way since I studied history of art in the late 1980s, and a lecturer asked the class how many female artists we could name. Collectively, we came up with just three. Our teachers set about correcting our ignorance over the next three years, revealing the forgotten stories of artists, designers and filmmakers who hadn't just fallen through the cracks – they'd been written out of history.

I'd like to think that 30 years later, when a similar class was asked the same question, there would be a flood of answers. I'd also like to think that many of the barriers women faced as artists are gone. But the figures don't add up. In our own field, there's still a huge mismatch between the number of women studying photography and the number that are working as professionals or getting representation in agencies and galleries. And as recent allegations revealed by the #MeToo movement have shown, we haven't come as far as we might have thought. The immediate legacy of the movement is momentum: women are no longer prepared to wait for change, they are demanding it now.

Part of that is visibility, which is why it's the right time for platforms like [Female in Focus](#). But it's also the right time because there is a generation of women photographers whose talent you just can't ignore. In my time at *BJP*, the emerging photographers who have most impressed me have largely been women – people such as Rinko Kawauchi, Taryn Simon, Viviane Sassen, Dana Lixenberg, Zanele Muholi, and a wave of newer names, including Cristina de Middel, Laia Abril, Diana Markosian, Sim Chi Yin and Sanne de Wilde. This, I'm sure we'll soon find out, is just the tip of the iceberg.

**Simon Bainbridge**, editorial director,  
*British Journal of Photography*



# Why do we need to get women more involved in photography?

So what exactly is the current state of gender equality in the photography industry? The data speaks for itself. Here are some of our most revealing discoveries

# 5%

In the art world overall, very little has changed. In 1985, less than 5% of artists in the Metropolitan Museum of Art were female, but 80% of nudes were female. In 2012, less than 4% of artists in the Metropolitan Museum of Art were female and 76% of nudes are female!

The facts and figures

# 80%

80% of photography students are female.<sup>2</sup>

# 15%

15% of professional photographers are female.<sup>3</sup>

# 13.7%

In 2017, 153 magazine covers from the 10 leading US fashion publications were shot by men. Only 13.7% of them were shot by women.<sup>6</sup>

# 1 in 9

Only 1 in 9 photography award winners are women.<sup>4</sup>

The average salary for female photographers is £26,217.  
The average salary for male photographers is £45,487.<sup>5</sup>

# £26,217

# £45,487

# 96%

Male photographers made up between 89% and 96% of those working commercially between 2013 and 2017.<sup>7</sup>

## What steps are being made towards change in the industry?

Although the data looks bleak, there are in fact many ways in which the industry is progressing with a great number of organisations, publications and individuals working to improve equality. One of these is Verónica Sanchis Bencomo, whose organisation, Foto Féminas, promotes the work of female photographers in Latin America and the Caribbean, through monthly online features.

Bencomo believes that social media has played a large part in speeding up the march towards equality in the industry, partly due to its power to build communities. “There are definitely more online platforms now than there were when we began Foto Féminas in 2005,” she explains. “I think Instagram in particular has been a really big help.”

Not only has social media helped to create collectives and communities for women photographers around the globe, but many also attribute accelerated change in the industry to the

conversations sparked online, including Sarah Leen, director of photography at National Geographic. National Geographic has recently created a diversity and inclusion team, who meet once a month to look for new voices, increase the diversity of their photographers, and to monitor equality in its magazine.

Recent statistics also show that the gender divide is narrowing in terms of grants and awards. For example, in 2017, 47 per cent of photographic grants from the National Geographic Society were awarded to women. And in our own awards, 38 per cent of last year’s winners were women – a great improvement on industry averages of one in nine, but not yet at the equality mark. To improve this, we are implementing real and lasting changes. Female in Focus is an award committed to increasing these numbers, by elevating the work of women photographers to festivals and galleries. Most recently, nominees for this year’s World Press Photo were announced. The contest saw 4738 entrants from 129 countries, who entered a total of 78,801 images. Out of the 43 nominated photographers, 14 are female. While this is a 20 per cent rise from 2018, it reveals much of what we already know about the current state of affairs; it is improving, but not nearly quickly enough.

### So what will drive us forward?

Ngadi Smart, a West African multidisciplinary artist whose work combines photography with illustrative techniques, believes that, “willingness for change, and honesty will lead to gender equality in the photography industry.” We hope to carry these values through this guide.





# The photography industry has a long way to go towards equality. These women are helping it get there

Image from the series *Paredes que hablan* © Wara Vargas Lara.



This section of the guide will introduce you to some of the women driving the industry forward; from **Fiona Shields**, head of photography at *The Guardian*, to **Fariba Farshad**, founding director at Photo London, and a champion of works by Iranian artists. They will seek to address some of the main questions women face when entering the photography industry; why is there such a gap between the number of female photography graduates and the number of women who become professional photographers? Which platforms for female photographers are worth looking into? And why is it so important that representation is varied and diverse?



## Why is it so important that we see work from varied perspectives?

“Seeing photography from a multitude of perspectives really helps us to make sense of the world around us, to be more sensitive, sympathetic and understanding to the different outlooks that exist alongside our own,” explains Adenrele Sonariwo, an entrepreneur and curator. Sonariwo was the lead curator of the first Nigerian pavilion at the 57th Venice Biennale in 2017, and is the founder of the Rele Art Gallery in Lagos, Nigeria. The gallery’s mission since its inception has been to encourage new audiences to engage with and appreciate art by Nigerian artists.

For too long, the Western male gaze has dominated our worldview. That does not make this perspective any less valid or interesting, but adding more varied outlooks into the mix certainly makes for a richer, and more diverse visual landscape. “We always have a different understanding of a situation, whether we are a woman, a man, a local or a foreigner,” explains Verónica Sanchis Bencomo. “I think everyone adds to the comprehension of a situation.” This rings particularly true in the field of photojournalism, where images of conflict have historically been taken through a largely homogeneous lens.

If publications are to report fairly and justly on complex global issues, telling the stories of all of humanity, then that cannot be done using only the experiences and cultural references of one group. “We have to break away from the idea that photojournalism is a man’s game,” says Fiona Shields of *The Guardian*. “I think we do this by promoting the work of great female photojournalists, and creating role models to inspire women to consider that this profession could be for them.”

Beyond the realm of photojournalism, Bencomo addresses how outsider perspectives can create stereotypes, which mean we are only able to see places or situations one-dimensionally, and not always truthfully. Her work for Foto Fémimas was born out of the frustration of seeing a very one-sided portrayal of Latin America. She wanted to create space to show many people and stories from the territories, particularly from a largely unseen female perspective. “Mostly, works from Latin America are very political,” she says. “I’m from Venezuela so I know that is true, but I also know it’s not the entire picture.”

Image from the series  
*For Your Eyes Only*  
© Pixy Liao.





# Although 80 per cent of photography graduates are female, only 15 per cent of professional photographers are women

One of the most shocking statistics we found when researching this guide was that while 80 per cent of photography graduates are female, only 15 per cent of professional photographers are women. Clearly the interest is there, so why are young female photographers becoming disengaged at this early stage? And what can be done to re-engage them?

Daniella Zalcmán is a documentary photographer based between London and New York, and the founder of Women Photograph, an initiative working to elevate the voices of female and non-binary visual journalists. Her work has placed her in photography classrooms and lecture theatres in the US and the UK.

“It’s always astonishing to me when I speak to high school and university-level journalism classes that they tend to be a majority of women,” she says. She theorises that young female photographers become disengaged in photography because women are often taken less seriously as photographers, or are treated paternalistically by editors and peers when they want to take on work that could be viewed as dangerous or physically strenuous. Even more saddeningly, women photographers may also experience some form of sexual harassment early on, and realise how

few industry protections are in place for independent photographers. “Whatever it is, we need to make women feel like they belong in news photography, that they’re needed there,” she states.

For Verónica Sanchis Bencomo, founder of Foto Fémimas, the early stages of her own career gave an insight into another prejudice that female photographers might face. When she graduated and began doing assistant jobs, the work was very physical. Although women may be more than capable in this area, the perception that they are not “may have an impact on whether photographers decide to hire a man as an assistant over a woman,” she muses.

Valuing the skill sets of young female photographers and giving them greater opportunities in the earlier stages of their careers could be the first step towards effective and lasting change. And the growing amount of women who are now gatekeepers and leaders in the industry is a very positive sign that the situation could quickly improve. “I am really encouraged by the rising number of women in senior curatorial roles,” says Fariba Farshad, founder of Photo London, “and in turn the rising public attention accorded to the work of women photographers.”

Image from the series  
*Exodus: The Climate  
Migration Crises*  
© Yagazie Emezi.



## Find out how things are changing at an institutional level

Photography institutions across the globe are taking note of their own shortcomings and vowing to do better. Last year, Paris Photo launched their [Elles × Paris Photo](#) initiative, to celebrate and draw attention to women photographers. Fariba Farshad, founder of Photo London, approaches this year's fair with similar awareness, acknowledging that "it's important we find ways to celebrate new voices". Much of her personal work has been in the interest of bringing attention to unknown Iranian photographers. Her exhibition, *Burnt Generation*, "was an attempt to explore the deep well of talented young photographers working in Iran and to bring their stories to public attention."

At *The Guardian*, head of photography Fiona Shields maintains an even gender balance among the photographers on contract. "The picture editors responsible for making commissions all understand the importance of diversity bringing a varied view to our journalism, and the need to challenge unconscious bias," says Shields.

At National Geographic, processes are in place to ensure that photographers are commissioned equally. The visuals team attends portfolio reviews across the world to find new storytelling talent. Sarah Leen, director of photography at National Geographic, ensures that each photo editor puts forward women or people of colour to consider for every job. "We are also keeping track of our own statistics," she says. "Year after year, the number of women and people of colour producing work for the magazine is improving."

National Geographic has also developed resources to reach under-represented photographers at an educational level. Its Second Assistant Grant programme enables women and diverse photographers who have an interest in learning the more technical aspects needed for stories about science, archaeology, natural history, and underwater photography. Those selected go on assignment with a more experienced photographer and their assistant, to learn new skills in the field.

Image from the series  
*The Ideal Woman*  
© Kourtney Roy.





Meet the female photographers inspiring change

# Here are some of the female photographers making headway in the industry

Image from the series *The Time I Have Left* © Constanza Hevia H.



There are hundreds of incredible and well-respected female photographers working in the industry today. This section of the guide will introduce you to some of them, as well as to several of our favourite women-led projects. It is here that you can learn from the photographers who have faced and overcome challenges within the industry, from making that leap between graduating and working professionally, to feeling pigeonholed because of gender, and persevering through criticism.

Of course, the photographers featured here are just a small fraction of those who are inspiring change. There is room in the industry for everyone's perspective, and our worldview can only be enriched by seeing more stories from a growing pool of diverse photographers.



## Advice from photographers themselves on how to get started in the industry

Taking your first steps in the industry can be daunting, and there is no specific formula to get you off to a flying start, but trusting in your own methods and skill is a good place to begin.

Kata Geibl is a photographer who is in the early stages of her career. Last year, she was selected as a winner of the Carte Blanche award, founded by Paris Photo. This award is an opportunity for photography students from across Europe to achieve career-boosting exposure. It is a key platform for emerging photographers, and a great predictor of future success. Geibl was the only woman selected out of four winners last year. As part of her prize, her series *Sisyphus* was shown at the city's Gare du Nord train station, and her portfolio was available to view at Paris Photo during November 2018.

Having recently graduated from Moholy-Nagy University of Art and Design in Budapest, and Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture in Helsinki, Finland, Geibl noted that on both photography courses, more than half of her classmates were women. "I see this pattern, that in every class the amount of women is at the very least half." So she is surprised that this does not translate into the industry.

Despite Geibl's success at Paris Photo, and having exhibited last year as part of Unseen Amsterdam, she has found it tough to break through and achieve real industry recognition. "If you want to start working in

the industry you start small, doing assistant jobs," says Geibl. "But as women, it can even be hard to get an assistant job."

South African photographer Alice Mann is at a later stage in her career; her project *Drummies* was recently awarded the PHmuseum Women Photographers Grant and the Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize. However, she faced similar issues to Geibl when she was starting out, which shows that in many ways not a huge amount has changed over the years. Mann feels as though her feminine attributes afforded her condescension at the start of her career, but these traits have paradoxically been the secret to her success.

"I come across as young and a bit under-confident and I'm quite softly spoken, and I get told a lot that I should be more confident and more assertive," she explains. "But I don't think you have to be a dominant or assertive person to get results." She believes that the key to her success is trusting and accepting herself, and seeing that the things that may be considered weaknesses to some can also become strengths. These are the exact attributes that have meant her subjects trust her to tell their stories and are willing to be photographed. If Mann had followed advice to be a bit more brash at the start of her career, she may not have been able to produce such sensitive and touching work.

Image from the series  
*Sisyphus* © Kata Geibl.



# Here are a few key aspects that female photographers think you should know about the photography industry

A creative journey is subjective, and is different for any photographer, based on the nature of the work they create and the opportunities they may have been afforded early on in their careers.

For Alice Mann, women have been instrumental in launching her career. “All of the significant opportunities that have come to me have been through my partnerships with women,” she explains. “I always find that working with women seems to be much more of a conversation and a dialogue.” Of course, that isn’t to say that Mann has not had good experiences working with men, but what it does show is how women are working together to boost the careers of female photographers who may have historically found it hard to get ahead.

Photographer Pixy Liao’s work is very much rooted in her gender and upbringing. Her ongoing project, *Experimental Relationship*, which we will discuss later in more detail, explores her relationship with her boyfriend, who is five years her junior. Creating such personal work, that subverts traditions and speaks of her own experiences, has generated its own difficulties. “When making artwork, your gender matters,” she explains. “In a male-dominated society and art world,

what you want to express is not necessarily what the majority would like to see.” There are many times that Liao has met with hateful comments about her work. “I just have to brush it off,” she says. “In the end, I’m making the work for myself.”

While for Liao and Mann, embracing their gender in the industry feels natural and inescapable, for photographer Kourtney Roy, it is stunting. She notes that while she has never come across any directly discriminatory practices towards herself, she sees discrimination operating in a much more subtle and pervasive manner. “One example is that most museum collections are dominated by male artists,” she says. However, Roy’s main frustration is in being pigeonholed because of her gender, and that “women are celebrated as ‘women’ artists, instead of just artists in their own right”.

Our aim is to get the photography industry to a point where gender no longer matters, and where photographers are respected all the same, regardless of whether they are male or female, and regardless of where they are from. Once photographers reflect society as a whole, there will be no need to take note of a photographer who is from a minority.





# The photography industry is brimming with exciting projects by female artists. Here are some of the ones on our radar

Image from the series *Experimental Relationship*  
© Pixy Liao.



## Pixy Liao *Experimental Relationship*

“Most of my works are about my experience as a woman,” says Shanghai-born, Brooklyn-based photographer Pixy Liao. Her most recognised work, *Experimental Relationship*, considers her affair with her boyfriend, Moro. His being five years younger than Liao has changed her concept of relationships. “As a woman brought up in China, I used to think I could only love someone older and more mature than me, who could be my protector and mentor,” she says. The photographs explore the alternative possibilities of heterosexual relationships. “The project grows with our relationship,” she explains.





## Jess T Dugan *To Survive on This Shore*

Jess T Dugan is a non-binary portrait photographer who pays homage to the people who have paved the way for her to be where she is. Her work explores issues of identity, gender, sexuality and community, and her photographs are a celebration of transgender and non-binary communities. Her most recognised projects are *Every Breath We Drew* and *To Survive on This Shore*. “I am interested in people who have found a way to embody their authentic selves, often despite and in direct opposition to societal expectations,” she says. *To Survive on This Shore* is made up of a series of portraits and interviews with gender nonconforming and transgender adults.

Image from the series  
*To Survive on This Shore*  
© Jess T Dugan.





## Kourtney Roy *The Ideal Woman*

Kourtney Roy uses photography as a way to express her desires, dreams and illusions. “I want to live out as many parallel lives as possible,” she says. Her series, *The Ideal Woman*, incorporates aspects of cinematic image-making to create photographs that straddle the borders of the real and the fantastic. She uses herself as the principal subject in her work, creating a compelling, intimate universe inhabited by a multitude of diverse characters.

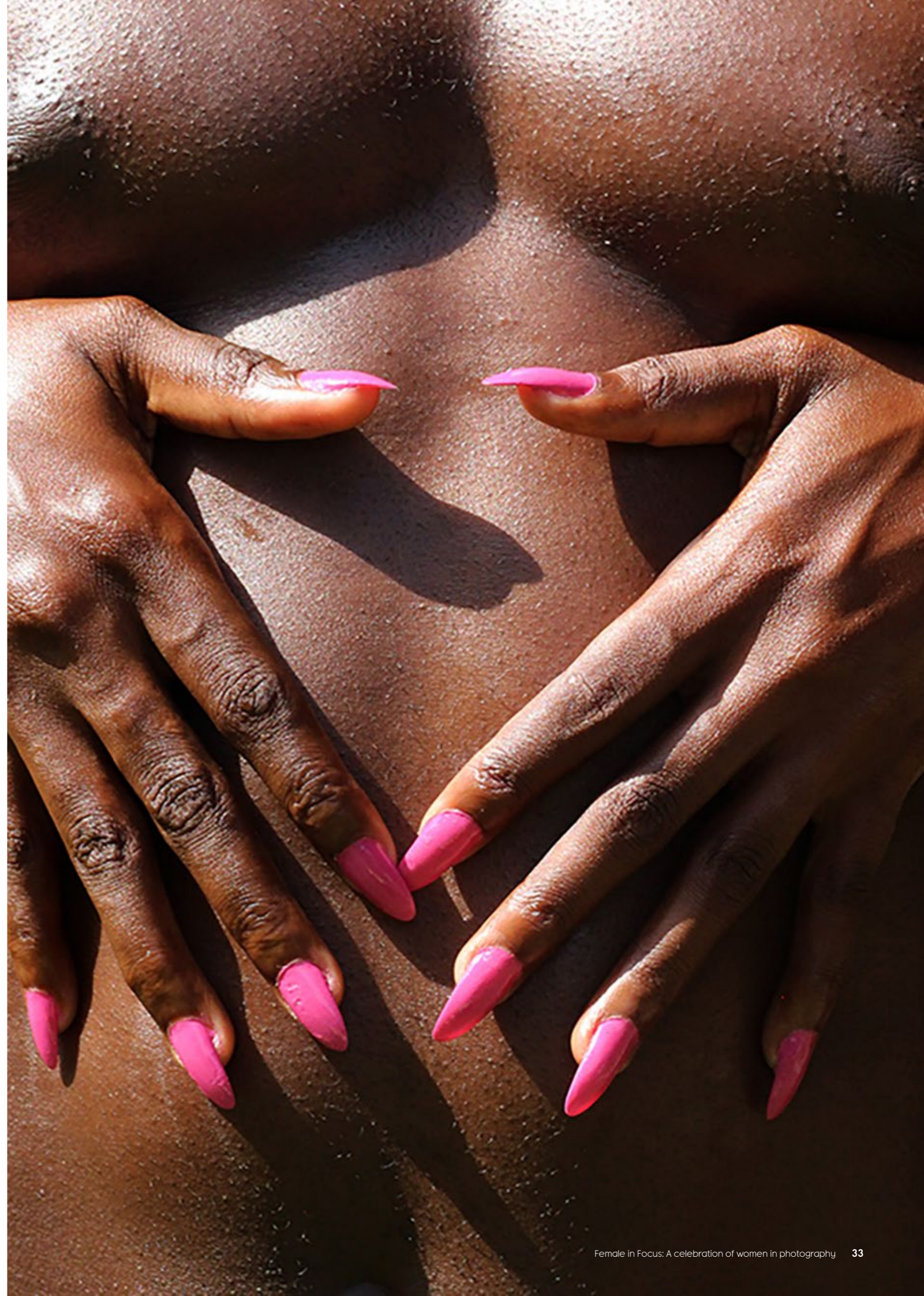
Image from the series  
*The Ideal Woman*  
© Kourtney Roy.



## Ngadi Smart *Amorphophallus Aphyllus*

Ngadi Smart is a West African multidisciplinary artist who incorporates illustration into her photography. Her work explores expressions of identity, most notably self-identity through fashion, and black sensuality from an African lens. She aims to show as many representations of African people, and what it means to be African, as possible. Her project, *Amorphophallus Aphyllus*, explores African masculinity and femininity, and their various interchangeable facets.

Image from the series  
*Amorphophallus*  
*Aphyllus* ©  
Ngadi Smart.





## Yagazie Emezi *Re-learning Bodies*

Much of Yagazie Emezi's work focuses on African women, and aims to subvert tragic stories told about the continent. "Tragedy is a reality and a narrative I am not against," she explains. "I am, however, against the selective and repetitive focus on the tragedies of people of colour in media." Her work is not exclusive to stories of either good fortune or distress. "I simply make the conscious decision not to focus on a single emotive narrative," she says. Her ongoing project, *Re-learning Bodies*, explores how trauma survivors within African communities adapt to their new bodies.

© Yagazie Emezi.  
from the series  
*Re-learning Bodies*.







## Alice Mann *Drummies*

“As a white South African photographer working with subjects of colour, it’s important that I step back, listen and respond to what people are telling me,” says Alice Mann. *Drummies* depicts the subculture surrounding all-female teams of drum majorettes in South Africa. Many of these girls are from some of the country’s most marginalised communities. Mann’s work looks at several aspects of South African culture, and aims to create images that people feel proud of, and which represent them in a positive way. “I critically question a lot of aspects of South African society,” she explains. “It’s a very complex space.”

Image from the series *Drummies*  
© Alice Mann/  
Institute Artist.



# Whether you are a photographer, in the industry, or simply someone who enjoys photography, there are things you can do to help move the photography industry forward

Image from the series *Beautiful*  
© Kourtney Roy.



There are many things that can be done to help push forward the work of women photographers, and to broaden diversity in the industry. For example, Daniella Zalcmán suggests that if you are a photographer and you are commissioned for an assignment, yet you know that there is another photographer who has more of a connection to the story, you should ask the editor to consider that photographer instead. “A huge part of expanding and improving the field is making sure that we collectively make space for image-makers who have been historically marginalised in the industry,” she explains.

For those in positions of power, it is their responsibility to make sure they stay aware of photographers who may not yet have received the recognition they deserve. Photo London’s Fariba Farshad says that curators, or those who

help the industry’s biggest institutions, must keep working to provide as many platforms as possible for outstanding work by women photographers. This is something that has been improving lately, as gatekeepers put processes in place to ensure equal representation.

Finally, anyone who consumes photography must be mindful of pigeonholing photographers, and expecting them to speak on behalf of their gender or nation. This rings particularly true for some photographers. “It is important to remember that we do not need to specifically focus on changing stereotypes of what being African is through our visual storytelling,” says Ngadi Smart of her role as a photographer who is from the region. “That is an additional burden that other artists from other continents are not expected to subscribe to.”



# Winning or being shortlisted for an award can lead to all kinds of opportunities



Image from the series *Morenada Porteña* © Daiana Valencia and Celeste Alonso/ Rueda Photos Collective.

Photography awards can provide a fast-track route to success. For emerging photographers, winning or being shortlisted for an award is a way of breaking into a notoriously competitive industry. For established photographers, winning an award can be the badge of honour that takes a career from successful to exceptional.

Besides prestige, there's a lot to be gained from winning awards. Many offer generous grants as prizes, which can help photographers pursue projects that might otherwise not be possible. They can also offer inclusion in group shows or solo exhibitions, which not only provides photographers with the experience of having a professionally curated show, but is also the perfect opportunity to display work to curators, picture editors and gallerists searching for upcoming talent at these events.

Many leading contemporary photographers have benefited from winning awards in their careers:

Juno Calypso, who has a number of wins under her belt (including *British Journal of Photography's* International Photography Award in 2015, and Foam Talent Call in 2016) has gone on to have solo shows in Ireland and Milan, and was recently commissioned by fashion house Burberry. Awards seem to have played a significant part in her rise. Another success story is that of Alice Mann, whose name has made headlines since her series *Drummies* scooped the £15,000 first prize in the Taylor Wessing Photographic Portrait Prize 2018. "It's a huge opportunity," says Mann of the award. "I've subsequently been able to meet people that I've looked up to for so long. It's an amazing platform that I'm very grateful for."

"Grants, competitions and awards are all great ways to encourage photographers of both genders to continue to push and create relevant work," says Adenrele Sonariwo, founder of Rele Art Gallery in Lagos, Nigeria. As she says, awards should be inclusive

of all photographers, regardless of gender. However, with most awards still dominated by male winners, more and more institutions are feeling the need to launch female-only awards and grants to elevate work by women. This includes our own Female in Focus award, which is open to women, transgender and non-binary photographers.

This is a great step towards equality, and the responsibility to make sure awards are fair and representative lies with everybody involved – including photographers themselves. When choosing which award to enter, make sure you look at the judging panel; is there somebody representing each gender, race, and background? If you're invited to be part of an award in other ways, the responsibility is even greater. Daniella Zalzman, founder of Women Photograph, says, "If you're asked to speak on a panel, or judge an award, and the group is utterly homogeneous, ask the organisation to reconsider."



If you do enter a photography award and win, you'll need to prepare for what comes next. How do you transform a competition win into a prolific career? What challenges might you face as a woman in the photography industry? In this section of the guide, female award winners give an insight into working life after finding success in some of our awards. They consider how the industry is progressing, and offer advice on how to stand out when entering photography competitions.

# Success Stories



# Danyelle Rolla

## Portrait of Britain 2018

### Winner

#### The challenges I've faced are...

"When I was a photographer in the military I experienced gender discrimination regularly. I learned to use the name Danny instead of Danyelle when communicating with other departments, as I would often be dismissed if they suspected they were going to get a female photographer."

#### The industry is improving because...

"I have noticed that there is a huge shift in the way that influential figures and organisations are engaging with female photographers. There are more open calls and themed exhibitions aimed at promoting women. And agencies are having to question whether they are too male-dominated."

Image © Danyelle Rolla.





## Laura McCluskey Portrait of Britain 2018 Winner

### **The industry is improving because...**

“Although photography is an industry with patriarchal roots, I feel that in recent years it has changed in a way that allows for a female voice to be heard. I’ve noticed a huge change in standards within the fashion photography industry specifically, with the shift towards body positivity, and an open attitude towards sex and age allowing for a feeling of inclusivity.”

### **My most important piece of advice is...**

“For any photographer now, whether female or not, the photography industry can be difficult to get into. However, I would suggest assisting a photographer who inspires you as a route in. I started out assisting Suki Dhandra for three years - I wanted to work with her after seeing her work, and I emailed and called her until I got a job! Alongside this, I began to shoot my own work and enter competitions. Entering competitions allowed me to develop a visual narrative and common themes in my personal work.”

Image © Laura McCluskey.





# Charley Williams

## Portrait of Britain 2018

### Shortlisted

#### **The challenges I've faced are...**

"The work that I do generally doesn't present any challenges based on my gender; I work with people who are smashing gender norms on a daily basis. That said, there is huge inequality and preference for male photographers at the top end of most photographic industries, including fashion photography and photojournalism."

#### **My most important piece of advice is...**

"Never compare your work to other photographers. Take inspiration from those you admire, but don't fall into the trap of thinking you'll never be as good as them. My shortlisted Portrait of Britain submission was taken after a long hiatus from photography because I was so stuck in the mindset that I wasn't good enough. If I hadn't pushed myself to get back out there I wouldn't be where I am today!"

Image © Charley Williams.





# Andrea Zvadova

## Portrait of Britain 2018

### Winner

#### **The industry is improving because...**

“There are more female photographers than ever, and they’re making an impact with their work. Having more female role models helps to get young girls and women interested in fields that were previously male-dominated.”

#### **My most important piece of advice is...**

“Create something for you, not to please others or to follow trends. Be critical of yourself, ask for reviews of your work, learn from professionals in the industry. Try collaborating; teamwork helps you to understand others’ approaches and can spark more creativity.”





## Maryam Wahid Portrait of Britain 2018 Winner

### **The industry is improving because...**

“There is a conversation about gender bias happening across the industry, which I feel is a step closer to improvement. Championing female photographers is very important as it will create a more gender-equal industry and empower women in photography. My image was a winner of Portrait of Britain 2018, and I was invited to the launch party where I met incredible female photographers, such as Natasha Caruana and Lauren Forster, as well as facilitators, editors, writers and various other talented women in photography. Meeting other women in the industry made me feel motivated and inspired as a young female photographer.”

### **My most important piece of advice is...**

“Don't be afraid of new challenges. Always support other women around you, and never forget to acknowledge other women who have helped you on your journey. Enter competitions, apply for prizes, network, and work really, really hard.”

Image © Maryam Wahid.





# Arabelle Zhuang

## Portrait of Britain 2018 Winner

### **The industry is improving because...**

“There are lots of new initiatives and groups in place to support and celebrate female photographers. Being female has actually worked to my advantage. When I interned in a commercial setting in Singapore, I was the only female on set most of the time and it meant that people remembered me. I feel empowered, and I shoot projects that celebrate women, men and the LGBT community.”

### **My most important piece of advice is...**

“When entering competitions and awards, choose work that moves both you and the viewer. Be passionate about what you put out - don't be afraid to let people hear your voice. The industry might be male-dominated, but that means that you are able to stand out. Put in 101 per cent, step out of your comfort zone, and give it your all. Don't be afraid to be creative and to experiment.”

Image © Arabelle Zhuang.





# Female in Focus is a new award from 1854 Media seeking to highlight the exceptional quality of work by female photographers around the world

Image from the series  
*Every Breath We Drew*  
© Jess T Dugan.



Female in Focus was conceived as a way of combating the huge gender imbalance in the photography industry, which we have discussed throughout this guide. We wanted to understand why so many female photographers were becoming disengaged at an early stage of their careers. We wanted to find a way of championing work by female photographers around the world.

For a long time, the male gaze has dominated our worldview. Our mission is to open up the world of photography to diverse talent, and to empower women, transgender and non-binary people to step behind the lens. We want to see new perspectives. We want to see a spectrum of ideas. We want to create gender equality in the industry.

We hope to see more work by women at festivals and in galleries. By valuing women and their

stories, we can start to make photography more fair and more representative. Female in Focus will position exceptional photography by women on an international stage.

The award will be separated into two categories. In the 'Stories Competition', photographers can enter up to two bodies of work. Two winning projects will then be exhibited at United Photo Industries in New York, for a month in October/November 2019. Photographers can also apply to the 'Single Image Competition', where 20 winning images will be exhibited alongside the two winning bodies of work.

Female in Focus aims to elevate the work and careers of female photographers across the globe. We believe that gender is a spectrum. Female in Focus is inclusive of a multitude of feminine voices, including those who are trans and non-binary. [Find out more.](#)



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## The facts and figures

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