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Question 5: From the lens-based image making research strand lectures, choose a theme, movement, or selection of artists that relate to your practice or interest, and construct a 2,500-word essay. Critically assess primary themes, key writers, and relevant practitioners.

In recent years, gender has been a complicated subject for many. Especially in the world of work. Throughout this essay, I will be discussing how photojournalism has been affected, such as how female photojournalists are unheard of in comparison to males. I will also be looking at the partnership between male/female photojournalists and investigating this relationship. Stereotypes will be another point of discussion. Although, through the whole of history there have been many women defying these stereotypes, breaking down boundaries, and doing whatever they can to push photojournalism to expose war-torn countries and do something to make a change. I will be exploring the works of many different female photojournalists-old and new-in order to bring awareness to their works and to highlight how women can produce projects to a standard that is equal to or could even be better than most male photojournalism work. During my time at university, I have always tried to create work that makes a point or has a strong connection to underlying themes. I have also always been inspired to become a photojournalist, but it has been so rare for me to hear about past photojournalists like me as a woman. I know I will not be the first and my impression of the world will not be quite as impactful as others, but who knows what the future will bring, there is nothing stopping me yet.



[Figure 1] The first topic I will be discussing is the partnership between German Jewish war photographer Gerda Taro and Hungarian-American war photographer and photojournalist Robert Capa. Taro was born in Stuttgart Germany, educated in Leipzig,

traveled from Germany to Paris in 1933 as Adolf Hitler became chancellor. Upon meeting Capa, they

became lovers and Capa taught Taro many different photography techniques. After researching, I have found that they did in fact both rely on each other and work together to show right from wrong, they both took the world of photojournalism by storm and had a long journey together as photographers. They collaborated many times, such as the Spanish Civil War in 1936, working in a team made them unstoppable. I found a sense of irony in how they are both considered powerhouse photographers.



[Figure 2] Sadly, Taro was the first female photographer killed in action. The fact that she risked as well as lost her life for her work is very inspiring, to be passionate enough about one's work enough to put your life on the line is in my opinion legendary. I just wish that there were more people who knew of Gerda Taro and her work. I wish that Taro was a leading household name for what she has done and that she is remembered. The fact that she has been overlooked by her partner

Robert Capa saddens me. Many resources have provided me with information that highlights how Taro technically created Robert Capa and built a relationship that was both professional, personal, and iconic. The connection of my question with this argument would be in reference to the overshadowing of Taro (the difference between many being educated on Capa but having little knowledge of the existence of Taro).

My second point of discussion would be John Berger's statement of "Women appear, men act" which paints a picture of (in the terms of photojournalism) that women sit and watch, while men join in on the action and really get involved. I think that the full statement is heavily relevant; "Men act, and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This decides not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed is female. Thus, she turns herself into an object of

vision: a sight.” (“A Quote from Ways of Seeing”) Personally, I disagree with this statement, I think that women are just as capable as men, and if they were open to similar activities and have easily accessible training, etc. Then women will be more than eager to get involved instead of just watching. There is one iconic female photojournalist who made a strong transformation from photography to the photographer. Lee Miller spent many years as a glamour model, but it seems as if she was used for her looks, instead of her brain. This follows along with Berger’s statement. She was just expected to sit there and achieve something, but she was not satisfied. She was not expected to do anything complex and slowly she was sick of it. After a traumatizing childhood that revolved around modeling, she decided that enough was enough, But Lee wasn’t happy as a model. “A sketch



she drew in her journal in 1930 shows a woman standing against a studio backdrop, daggers pinning her into place, as another woman in a hat looks on. No wonder, then, that she was hungry to forge her own identity beyond the camera’s frame – a frame

[Figure 3] that, to a woman who had been looked at by men her entire life, represented an implicit power imbalance.” (Scharer, 2019). She then dove into the world of photography, from the opposite perspective that she was supposedly used to. She came across many famous faces and everyone was eager to be photographed by her due to her experience as the “most photographed woman in Manhattan”. (Scharer, 2019) Once again, she changed her life through her career path, as the First World War broke out in 1914, her peers were supportive but did not expect her work to be what it was, instead of being privatized and clean, Miller’s works were macabre, in-depth and shocking. I like how Miller overcame everyone’s opinions of her and decided to reveal her true self. I cannot begin to imagine the feeling of relief she experienced when she was finally doing something she loved and being able to spend all her time on it, giving herself opportunities and creating a new identity for

herself. Judging a book by its cover is never a good idea, you will always be met with surprises and your expectations are never true, the same reflects with a woman and her face. She does not need to be objectified just because she is considered more attractive than anything else, just because she does not look like the stereotypical photojournalist, does not mean she isn't able to achieve big things through this medium.

My third point of discussion is the subject of women being written out of the education system. Throughout school my art education was slim, I've never properly been taught exactly how to appreciate art especially photojournalism, I just wish that I knew more about this individual, I can see that Margaret Bourke-White is a role model who achieved many things through her work, breaking boundaries that I didn't know existed. I referred to this previously within the works of Gerda Taro, but I will be going more in-depth here. The woman that I will be speaking about is a previously mentioned inspiration to me; Margaret

Bourke-White. [Figure 4] Attending Clarence H. White School of Photography from 1921 and graduating in 1927 she achieved many things, not just opening her own photography studio, Bourke-White is recognised as the "first foreign photographer allowed to take pictures in the Soviet Union, the first female



war correspondent and the first Female photographer for Life magazine." ("Margaret Bourke-White | Photography and Biography"). This long list of firsts is very inspiring for me, and I want to grow with my career of photojournalism and maybe achieve some firsts too. It is such a shame that there is barely any information about her in the school systems. I think that learning about her would be life-changing for many young women around the world just like me. In terms of her work, it was very

interesting, this photograph below is a fine example of the way that America has arguable choices when it comes to their government and support systems.



This piece of photography can be described as upsetting, yet ironic. At the time there was a habit of America's showcasing themselves as people who are accepting, loving, patriotic, with a rich economy and positive atmosphere.

The [Figure 5] propaganda showing "There's no way like the American Way" with the nuclear white family stereotype has very unfortunate placement. "Margaret Bourke-White, the first female photographer for Life/Tim, captured iconic images that painted a vast global political and socio economic landscape. From wars, to industry, the Depression to natural disasters (such as the aftermath of the 1937 Ohio flood, above), her photography resonated with audiences, placing her in high demand." (Fletcher,2018) I like how this photograph is not stating the obvious, when I look at this photograph it makes me want to look into the details to find exactly why it has been used. This is a bread-line from the American Depression, a form of queue for lower class individuals who struggled with making enough money to afford food. When it comes to the "American-Way" I never think of these instances, I just think of the glamorized, commercialised America that we know today, despite it not being the circumstance at all. This is inspiring too, similar to me, at the start of her career she did not have a clear interest within politics. But, she was interested enough to make something grow from it. A lot of her work is iconic but due to how she used it just to support herself and not to exploit or expose anything going on in the world is pretty inspiring, she was just living her life, one photograph at a time. I like that mindset.

To conclude, I think that these women are all very inspirational individuals and I am shocked at the misogyny that seems to emanate from the photojournalism 'community'. There are so many thoughts and feelings regarding the topic of female photojournalists. I feel that my artists each hold a

piece of inspiration for me personally and shows what I would like to achieve in the world. I want to make as much of an impact as Margaret Bourke-White. I want to create a professional relationship that helps me and my partner grow and help each other similar to Gerda Taro. Similarly, I am willing to put my life on the line also. To really get involved and prove people wrong of what they have thought of me over the years. I know that I do not fit the stereotype of a photojournalist but stereotypes are foolish. But I do want to be remembered for making a difference in the world, whether that be politically, environmentally etc. Lastly, I do want to achieve many different things, just like Lee Miller, despite her trauma she overcame what everyone thought of her, she fought people to do what she thought was right and she never let anyone stand in her way. I am eager and excited to start my journey into being a female photojournalist. I know that I will no longer be one of the first but it is still enough for me to gain that title. I know that these few photojournalists' work are thrilling but they are not the only female photojournalists that have been discriminated against. There are hundreds of other people whose life works I could discuss but these few artists really stood out to me the most in a way that I can not begin to explain. I just had this pull to them and their stories, it made me ask questions and educate myself in more ways than I knew I could, uncovering information that I could use in other areas' of studies as well as in my life. To be more daring, to adventure more, to not think about anyone else's opinion and just think of me. This is my life, and I want to live mine how they lived theirs. On the edge. At the start of this essay, I had little-to-no knowledge of female photojournalists/ war correspondents and I really wanted to see what I would uncover, but there is this whole world of people and information that I didn't know existed. As I have educated myself, researched and found my own new opinions of the inequality in the photojournalism industry, I have decided that I am going to need to make a change for the better, impact the world in my way.

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