

Replanting my creative family tree

Getting in touch with overshadowed female artists

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Abstract

In the year 2017, I started my creative family tree – just another name for the list of the people who have creatively influenced you. Once completed, and inspired by the ideas of author Austin Kleon, I started to dig into their lives, not just about their work, but also paying attention to their personal lives. As a street photographer, I could not start with any other than Henri Cartier-Bresson, the French man that made me want to become a photographer. Soon after learning about him, Martine Franck's name popped up. Martine was Henri's second wife and an extremely talented photographer I never heard of. Decided not to take advantage of her husband's fame, nor to disappear in his long shadow, Martine worked her way through the photography world. There is one anecdote of her life that made me want to belong to Martine's lineage: in 1970, she was having her first solo exhibition, however, she canceled the show after realizing the invitations said that her husband would be present during the opening. I could not help but admire her determination, but at the same time feel sad that she had to take such drastic measures. Thanks to that fortuitous encounter with Martine, I realized that my creative family tree did not include women. It is not that there are no elite female artists, and definitely, the situation for them has improved. Still, they are not often exhibited in museums or galleries, their names and artworks are less represented in the pages of art publications, and they do not make it to the slide presentations of many university professors, depriving newer generations of encountering amazing stories of life, both of success and struggle, and beautifully crafted artworks. Since that moment of realization, I have actively searched in the obscure corners of art history, looking for those creative mothers, aunts, and sisters missing from my creative family

tree. Unfortunately, there are many of them. This artistic research looks for female artists – particularly photographers but not exclusively – who have been overshadowed, belittled, or directly erased from art history in an attempt to learn from their lives and oeuvre.

Keywords: art history, female artists, creative family tree, female photographers,
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