

LETTERS BETWEEN US

Photography is the area of my life where I am totally independent and self-directed, from the moment I see a picture in my camera to the time of solitude in my darkroom. As I fight for control over my own life, as many other women are now doing, I find that photography, the creative process of photography, is a liberated zone.

But I wonder, if I tried to use my hobby as a professional, whether I wouldn't find the doors a little harder to open because I am a woman.

Margaret Bald

I think my approach to photography is very much tied in to the fact that I am a woman. It is nearly impossible, for example, for me to view the female face or form as an abstraction, although I do occasionally find a male photographer's photos of an isolated breast or hip interesting in their restatement of the universality of forms, i.e., breast equals sand dune equals mountain. I could never approach the female body in that way. To me, a woman as a subject is not so much an aesthetic object as a human being with a consciousness I want to discover and explore.

Jane Ciabattari

I can't say that being a woman and a photographer has been difficult professionally, but trying to balance being a wife and a mother and a photographer is rather hard at times—there is just never enough time for everything!

Louise Witkin

I find my own experiences to be good examples of what women are up against in photography and the art world in general. If you deal with feminine imagery, it is called "housewife art." If you deal with imagery that is perhaps threatening to others, or something which people do not deal with themselves, they often dismiss it as inferior to the concerns with which they are dealing.

I am now trying to over-ride, in my own mind, the drive to have men stamp the mark of approval on my work. I am trying to reach the point where I will be more confident in my work, even if my audience consists largely of women. I am beginning to accept my own feelings and womanly inspirations as valid and equal to those of men.

Fern Helfand



Received by Laura Jones

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Kathy Louis, Age 13, Burnt Church, New Brunswick

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. . . Photography is for me my way of reconciling myself to the strange hostile world — to the human condition. By giving visible form to my terrors, hallucinations, beliefs, as well as my desires, I am able to seize the power and come out from under. My pictures are made in the most primitive way, from a direct and immediate response to life involving no perception — only “becoming” the object/emotion . . .

Judith Eglington

When I was a field worker for Canadian University Press in the Maritimes I was amazed at the hostility and laughter which greeted a woman with a camera (even more so if I wanted access to a darkroom). Let’s go into the darkroom and see what develops.

Support between women photographers is so crucial. At one point with little of this encouragement and no friendly darkroom, I simply didn’t take pictures for over a year.

Recently, I have put together my own darkroom (an ex-pantry, with room enough to suffocate comfortably). The support, discussion and debate is still largely missing.

However, taking pics and working in the darkroom became one of my main priorities (more accurately a wonderful addiction). With a full time job and other commitments, I’m constantly frustrated but always squeeze in time for photography. I love it.

Susan Perly

