

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Women Photographers

Elisa Leonelli · Wednesday, January 16th, 2019

As a photo-journalist who traveled all over the world to visually document foreign cultures in the 1980s, I was very intrigued to explore the photo exhibit “Women of Vision, National Geographic Photographers on Assignment,” currently at the Forest Lawn Museum (December 11, 2018-April 7, 2019). So I drove to Glendale on a rainy weekend and was not disappointed. I found many of the 16×20 color prints, displayed in white frames, both exciting and heart-breaking, and the B&W video of interviews with the photographers echoed some familiar themes from my own experiences.



Child Marriage in Yemen © Stephanie Sinclair/National Geographic

Stephanie Sinclair said that her focus is “to bring attention and change to the emotional and physical abuse faced by young girls” in countries like Yemen, Iraq and Lebanon. She devoted 10 years to her project on forced child marriage, “Too Young to Wed”.

The photo above depicts a 10-year-old girl in Yemen, married to an older man against her will, who took a taxi to the courthouse to seek a divorce from her husband, and obtained it. Marriage of adult men to prepubescent girls is so common in Yemen that these men were proud to be photographed with their child brides.



Child brides, Yemen © Stephanie Sinclair/National Geographic

Sinclair said: “I lived for 6 years in the Middle East, and I had access to half the population, women, that my male colleagues did not have.” See more photos on [her website](#)



Afghan policewomen © Lynsey Addario/National Geographic

Lynsey Addario, who photographed conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, Sudan, and the Congo, said “It’s really important to cover the plight of civilians, women and families, who are affected by conflict involuntarily, I feel very strongly that these stories need to be seen by the American public.” She photographed Afghan police women, mostly widows, training to shoot rifles at a firing range near Kabul.



Darfur, Sudan © Lynsey Addario/National Geographic

Addario chose this photo from Darfur, Sudan, as the cover of her latest book, *Of Love & War*. See many more photos on [her website](#).

Jodi Cobb said that human trafficking is under reported. One of her many photo essays for National Geographic is “21st-Century Slaves.” In this photo she catches prostitutes, who are often sex slaves, displaying themselves in the doorways of their cages in Mumbai, India.



Mumbai, India © Jodi Cobb/National Geographic

Cobb was able to penetrate the geisha world in Japan and the hidden lives of women in Saudi Arabia. She said, “When you get to a place, you have an idea in your mind of what you want, but then you let the story speak to you.” Explore her work on [her website](#).



Sweden © Erika Larsen/National Geographic

Erika Larsen set out to “learn about traditions that have strong connections with nature.” She photographed the Sami reindeer herding culture in Northern Scandinavia and their connection to their ancestral roots. This is a print of two Sami women wearing their Gahkti outfits. See more photos from “[Walking with Reindeer](#).”



Washington USA © Erika Larsen/National Geographic

Larsen wanted “to learn about the significance of the Horse in Native American culture.” She photographed this Wanapum girl with her horse in Warm Springs, Washington State. American Indians feel a spiritual connection with nature and animals, the horse is a symbol of their traditions. See more photos from “[People of the Horse](#).”

Larsen uses a 4×5 large format view camera, says she likes the fact that she’s not hiding behind the viewfinder, but can relate to her subjects while clicking the shutter.



Puerto Rico © Amy Toensing/National Geographic

Amy Toensing photographed the Maori people of New Zealand and the Aboriginals in Australia. In this photo she was attracted to the colors of the children dresses hung up to dry in Puerto Rico. She said: “We need all kinds of voices to be telling stories with photography, men, women, older, younger, different races. We all have a different energy.” Explore more photos on [her website](#).

To see the faces of these 11 photographers and hear them speak, watch this video, recorded in 2013 when the exhibit first opened in Washington DC: [Women of Vision-Nat Geo Live](#).



Guilin, China © Elisa Leonelli 1981

And if you are curious about my own work, you may click on [Elisa Leonelli, Photo-Journalist](#), and peruse the series about China, India, Nepal, Japan, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Brazil, etc.

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