



ANTHOLOGY

of AMAZING

Women



TRAILBLAZERS WHO
DARED TO BE DIFFERENT



women in...

ART & DESIGN

Who knows who made the first paintings? People always assume it was cave “men” but we just don’t know, and several of those prehistoric handprints on cavern walls are female.

All through the ages women have made art, even when they weren’t supposed to, and sometimes when they were not even allowed to. Today, there are thousands of female artists. Their gender doesn’t matter; all anyone cares about is how good the art is. Thanks to the pioneering women who opted to stand out from the crowd, everyone can make an artistic expression in every area of art and design.



MARY COLTER

USA

Mary was one of the very few female architects in the early twentieth century. Inspired by Native American art, she designed a series of innovative hotels and restaurants for entrepreneur Fred Harvey. Each “Harvey House” is extraordinary, different, and inspiring.



GUNBORG, THE GOOD

Scandinavia

Gunborga is the only recorded female “rune-master” in Viking-Age Scandinavia. Experts are not sure whether or not she actually carved the runes into the massive stone in Jättendals Church in Sweden, but the inscription clearly states that Gunborga coloured it.



ARTEMISIA GENTILESCHI

Italy

One of the most accomplished painters of her time, Artemisia was a talented Baroque-era artist. In a time where women were not easily accepted by the artistic community or patrons, she was the first woman to become a member of the *Accademia delle Arti del Disegno*.



OEI KATSUSHIKA

Japan

Oei Katsushika was the daughter of a famous traditional print artist called Hokusai. Her brand of woodblock printmaking broke the rules – she showed people with their backs to the viewer, and she may have been the first Japanese artist to depict a night scene.



YOKO ONO

Japan

Yoko had been a multimedia artist in her own right for years before she married John Lennon. Often ahead of her time, much of Yoko’s work was – and still is – shocking, but it makes people think. She is still making headlines in her 80s.



MARY QUANT

UK

Before Mary Quant, fashion designers made dresses for older women. Mary created Mod-style clothes for young people. She opened her boutique, Bazaar, in 1955 and named the mini skirt after her favourite car.



LEE MILLER

Lee Miller may have started out as a model, but she was much happier when she was the one taking the pictures. Lee was born in Poughkeepsie, New York, in 1907. Despite having a hard life as a child, she was determined to make a success of herself. During the 1920s, she became a fashion model for *Vogue* and moved to Paris. Lee mixed with famous surrealist artists such as Man Ray and Jean Cocteau and apprenticed with Man Ray while creating her own exciting work as a photographer. She even discovered "solarization", a photography technique that reverses black and white on an image to give a silvery glow.



Back in New York, Lee set up a portrait studio that attracted rich and famous clients, but she wanted to travel the world. She moved to Cairo, where she took photos of desert villages and ruins before moving once again, this time to London as a fashion correspondent for *Vogue* magazine.

The Second World War broke out in 1939. The US Embassy told Americans to return to the United States, but Lee decided to stay. At first her shots of London in the Blitz had a touch of her old, playful surrealism, but war was serious and Lee found a mission. She needed to see life on the front line for herself and she needed to tell the world about it.

Lee Miller, war photographer, followed US troops on D-Day, saw the joyous Liberation of Paris, witnessed fighting in Luxembourg and Alsace, the terrible burning of St. Malo, and perhaps most distressing of all, the liberation of Nazi concentration camps at Buchenwald and Dachau. Wherever she went, her intelligent, inquiring images exposed the horrors of war in ways words could not.

In Munich, she was allowed to photograph Adolf Hitler's abandoned house. Perhaps no other reporter could have gotten away with what Lee Miller did next: she photographed herself having a bath in the dictator's tub.

After the war, she moved back to Britain and returned to photographing fashion and celebrities. She had a child and settled on a farm in Sussex, where she reinvented herself yet again as a surrealist gourmet cook. Sometimes she would "swap" with her fellow artists, even during her time as a chef. She and painter Pablo Picasso modelled for each other. She died in 1977 at Chiddingfold in East Sussex, England. Her photographs remain beautiful, haunting, and shocking today.



GEORGIA O'KEEFFE

Georgia O'Keeffe proved that art doesn't have to be "photographic" to be real. Her bold, vibrant painting inspired a whole generation of Modernist artists. Born in 1887, Georgia grew up on a farm in Wisconsin. Between 1905 and 1909, she studied traditional painting in Chicago and New York, learning Realist techniques. Eventually, she had to start working as an illustrator to make money.

In 1912, she became an art teacher, and while attending a summer school, she was taught by Arthur Wesley Dow, who was interested in newer, modern styles. Georgia realized that she didn't have to go down the same "Realist" route as everyone else, and she started experimenting with abstract designs. In 1916, a friend showed some of her sketches to an art dealer and photographer called Alfred Stieglitz. He was so impressed that he mounted an exhibition of her work – without asking Georgia first. She marched into his New York gallery and demanded he take the pictures down. They finally came to an arrangement and the exhibition went ahead. The two would eventually fall in love and get married.

Soon, Georgia's paintings of skyscrapers were the last word in chic in 1920s New York. She also made gigantic pictures of flowers, so close-up that they looked almost abstract. They were simple and elegant and made the viewer think differently about the subject. Always looking for a new style, she took a trip to New Mexico in 1929 where the stark, sun-parched landscape, strange rock formations, and dramatic skies suited her perfectly. She was particularly moved by the abandoned bones and skulls of animals, left to bleach in the sun, which she painted alongside flowers and against flat colours or New Mexican backdrops.



After Alfred died, Georgia moved to New Mexico permanently, but she also travelled around the world, painting the landscapes she saw, including mountains in Peru and Japan. When she was 73, she started a new series around clouds and rivers, and even when she started going blind she was still bursting with creativity. At 90 she was still painting, with the help of assistants.

The "Mother of American Modernism" was awarded the Medal of Freedom in 1977 and the National Medal of Arts in 1985, a year before her death. Georgia O'Keeffe is still one of America's most important painters – her painting *Jimson Weed/White Flower No. 1*, recently became the most expensive painting by a female artist ever sold at auction. Her home in Santa Fe is now a museum, national landmark, and a call-to-arms for creative women everywhere.





FRIDA KAHLO

Frida Kahlo is one of the most recognizable artists of the twentieth century, not least because of her 143 paintings, 55 are self-portraits. "I am so often alone". she once said, "and I am the subject I know best."



Frida was born in 1907 in Coyoacán, a suburb of Mexico City. In 1925 she was nearly killed in a horrific bus crash. She suffered multiple fractures to her spine, collarbone, ribs, pelvis, and shoulder. From that day on, Frida was in constant pain and would endure over thirty operations in her short life. While in the hospital, Frida's father gave her some paints. Her mother made her a special easel so she could work lying down and rigged up a mirror so she had a subject – herself. In art, Frida found her voice, a way of expressing her psychological and physical wounds. She used symbolism to describe her distress: perhaps scissors, surrounded by her own fallen hair, or a broken heart lying at her feet. In other work she depicts herself more than once, showing different aspects of her personality. Some were shocked at the frankness with which she bared her soul; most found it exhilarating.

Oddly, during her lifetime, Frida was often talked of as the wife of the famous mural artist Diego Rivera. Today, he is remembered as Frida's husband! Their relationship was stormy and passionate. They once even divorced but remarried a year later. Everything she felt and experienced was poured into her work. The torment of her broken body after the bus crash became a painting called *The Broken Column*, referring to her own spine. Frida partly wore her colourful, embroidered Tehuana dresses to disguise her limp, but traditional attire was also a way of exploring her place in the history of South America.

Her first solo exhibition, in New York, 1938, was a huge success, and the Louvre in Paris bought one of her paintings the year after. Frida was internationally famous. She became a professor at La Esmeralda school of art but by now she was so sick she had to hold classes at home. She attended the opening of her first and only solo exhibition in Mexico in her bed.

Against the advice of her doctors, Frida, who had always been politically active, attended a demonstration, weakening her beyond repair. She died in 1954, in the house in which she had been born.

"They thought I was a surrealist but I wasn't. I never painted dreams, I painted my own reality."