



Quiet resilience

Elia Mervi



I find the world of 'female creativity' a warm, powerful womb to get inspired. A place that still is half hidden, we cannot find it in most history books or hear about it in ordinary conversation: It's not part of most of our conversations. Creativity feature by women is tucked between small words and vague references. It's not a mainstream, it's another kind of stream: A quiet, enthusiastic and inexhaustible strength.

There are so many women in our history who have escaped the cage where the woman was 'tamed' long centuries ago. Creative women who followed something very simple and real, something that now we have almost forgotten: Their instinct.

I feel totally inspired and enlightened by these women and I want to find and share all their lives, and contribute with my work to find equality, to stabilize the creative equilibrium.

Some of these women are known, some are not. There are others that will be unknown forever. But all did dedicated their entire lives to work, to freedom, others have dedicated their lives to art, others have suffered long and painful births to bring their children to the world, and many of them have fostered peace and beauty. And all of them had lighten from inside and created their own strength.

Virginia Woolf

"There is no barrier, lock or bolt that you can impose on the freedom of my mind"





Valentina Tereshkova

Valentina was born in Maslennikovo, Russia, in a very humble family. She worked by day and studied at night. One day she was selected for the space program at the club where she practiced skydiving. In 1963, at the age of 26 and after years of very hard work and special training, Valentina went into space on the spaceship Vostok 6. Valentina became the first woman to go to the space, and also setting a record time in space staying three days orbiting the earth (48 times).

"You cannot possibly imagine how beautiful it is. Anyone who sees the Earth from outer space, even only once, cannot fail to be assailed by a sense of reverence and love for this planet that is our home."

Josefina Manresa

Born in southern Spain Josefina had to leave school at age 13 and began working as a seamstress.

Wife of the Spanish poet Miguel Hernández, killed during the Spanish Civil War. She lost their first child and had the second one alone while her husband was in the jail. Josefina watched Miguel die after being mistreated in jail because of his poetry and ideals. During the civil war Josefina kept his manuscripts, photographs and poetry in a trunk, hiding them for years, constantly changing its location from house to house, so that fire or censorship couldn't destroy the legacy of the poet.





Vivian Maier

American photographer, Vivian moved in 1951 at the age of 25 to NY and then to Chicago where she worked all her life as a nanny for a different families. She walked the streets of New York and Chicago photographing the city, people, cement, buildings, and herself... but she could not afford to reveal the films.

In 2007 more than 100,000 films, most undeveloped, were found on an old warehouse by John Maloof.

Today Vivian is considered one of the best photographers of the twentieth century. Exhibitions and documentaries are made with her name.

She died in 2009, almost ruined and in condition of anonymity, without knowing recognition of her photographs. Maybe that is what she have wanted it.

Camile Claudel

Parisian sculptor of the twentieth century. A woman with liberal ideas, when she was 20 years old, Camile became independent and move out from her family home to live alone. Her way of living was not approved by her family, except by her brother. Brave and passionate, she worked obsessively in her work. Camile was under the shadow of Rodin, who was her mentor and also her mistress: Besides the constant comparation between their work, Camile's sculptures showed her passion in a personal way.

She was confined the last thirty years of her life in a mental hospital, where she had no contact with anyone, conscious of her confinement and without recognition.





Wisława Szymborska

Podział na ziemię i niebo
to nie jest właściwy sposób
myślenia o tej całości.
Pozwala tylko przeżyć
pod dokładniejszym adresem,
szybszym do znalezienia do znalezienia,
jeśli bym była szukana.
Moje znaki szczególne
to zachwyty i rozpacz

*To divide earth and sky
is not the correct way
to consider this whole.
It merely allows survival
under a more precise address,
quicker to be found
if I were to be looked up.
My call words
are delight and despair*

Paula Becker

Dresde, 1876.

Contrary to the wishes of her family, Paula pursued her impulse for art, creation and painting.

She surrounded herself with an artistic circle in Worpswede, where a deep friendship was born with the sculptor Clara Rilke-Westhoff.

In Paris Paula had her own studio, where she was able to work while attending drawing classes. Also she had a **room of her own** on the house where she lived with Otto Morderson after wedding, and spent all day dedicated to her work. Her paintings, colors and portraits had a personal style and are full of energy and expressionism.

Although her family insisted that she take cooking classes, Paula, as a free and adventurous woman, left her husband's home to pursue her artistic ambitions and went back to Paris, absorbing all the creativity that was born there.

Paula died 20 days after giving birth to her daughter Mathilde.





Miriam García

Brave, enterprising and free woman, Miriam dedicated her life to nature, stars and mountains. Born in the North of Spain, she was pioneered on female climbing in the decade of the 80s. Was the first woman to summit the thousand meters of El Capitan in Yosemite.

In 1990 Miriam died along with her companions, ascending the Meru Peak in the Himalaya, and became forever in snow, stars and freedom.

"El precio de ser pájaro es la esclavitud del viento"

"The price of being a bird is to be a Wind slave"

To my brother...

Emma Goldman

"The important is not the kind of work woman does, but rather the quality of the work she furnishes. She can give suffrage or the ballot no new quality, nor can she receive anything from it that will enhance her own quality. Her development, her freedom, her independence, must come from and through herself. First, by asserting herself as a personality, and not as a sex commodity. Second, by refusing the right to anyone over her body; by refusing to bear children, unless she wants them; by refusing to be a servant to God, the State, society, the husband, the family, etc., by making her life simpler, but deeper and richer. That is, by trying to learn the meaning and substance of life in all its complexities, by freeing herself from the fear of public opinion and public condemnation. Only that, and not the ballot, will set woman free [...]"





Marie Anne Boivin

Anne Marie Victorine Boivin, Paris 1773 - 1841, was a doctor, medical researcher and midwife.

From humble family, she learned medicine in a convent when she was a child. After the French revolution many convents were destroyed. Even so Anne Marie continued learning anatomy and obstetrics. She married and two years after was widowed with a daughter but continued studying and obtained a diploma in obstetrics. Marie was the first doctor to use the stethoscope to hear the baby's heartbeat. She fostered the creation of a school specializing in obstetrics and founded a hospice for single mothers. She resolved difficult cases, wrote several manuals of gynecology and invented the vaginal speculum.

Even though Anne Marie had the recognition in several countries for her hard work and research, she was never accepted into Paris Academy of Medicine.

Marianna Agata Wołowska

Polish virtuous pianist and composer known as Maria Szymanowska.

Her formal training in composition and piano was at home. At 21 years old, in 1810, she gave her first concert in Warsaw. She was very well received. But the same year she married with a Polish aristocrat and her career stalled.

Ten years later Maria divorced him, something very unusual in Poland, due to the desire to resume her musical career. With the custody of her three children, she had to balance between the family and the tours around Europe (Austria, England, Italy, France, Netherlands) and Russia, where she became the first pianist of Russian princesses.

Maria played by memory and introduced forms of concert as etude, mazurka, or nocturne. She was widely acclaimed for her performing capabilities. Among her admirers: F. Chopin, A. Mickiewicz and the poet J. W. Goethe. *"She made the piano speak and sing"* said Mochnecki.

The young Chopin may have attended some performances in Warsaw. Later he inspired his first works in the music of Maria. She spent her last years living in St. Petersburg, where she continued composing and playing in her house where there was always surrounded by musicians and artists.

Maria died of cholera in 1831 at age 42.

After her death her music was neglected and slowly forgotten.





Seraphine Louis

Oise, France 1864.

Seraphine had a very humble childhood. She was orphaned at age seven and started to work as a shepherd and spent her time in the countryside, walking and observing nature and animals. Older, she worked in a convent and in a big house as a maid.

Seraphine lived in a small, messy room. She spent her free time walking, talking trees and plants and observing nature. The most amazing thing about her is that without ever seeing an exhibition or visit a museum, without any kind of artistic education or knowing any artist or artistic movement neither knowing painting techniques, she began painting in her room at night.

Instinctively, primitive, almost in the dark, a pasional Seraphine plunged in her paintings.

Clandestinely and using materials she had, paint, blood, or natural dyes, Seraphine transmitted an ardent and free spirit in her paintings.

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YOUNG ILLUSTRATOR AWARD 2014

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