

Group f/64

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Introduction

When you talk about landscape photography, sooner or later you'll come across a group called f/64. While not solely about landscape photography, this group still played a big role in (changing) the way landscape was (and still is) portrayed.

Getting tired of the then popular *pictorial* type of photography, Ansel Adams and Willard van Dyke decided to organise a group of like-thinking photographers. This resulted in the founding of Group f/64 in 1932 by Ansel Adams, Imogen Cunningham, Willard van Dyke, John Paul Edwards, Sonya Noskowiak, Henry Swift, and Edward Weston. Preston Holder, Consuelo Kanaga, Alma Lavenson, and Brett Weston were invited as members. Their goal was to fight the "tide of oppressive pictorialism" and promote their own common aesthetic principle, also referred to as *straight* photography.

Emphasis was placed on pure and unmanipulated photography, sharp images, maximum depth-of-field, smooth glossy printing paper, emphasizing the unique qualities of the photographic process. The name refers to the smallest aperture (and thus the greatest depth of field) on the lens of a large-format (view) camera.

The group's manifesto words it as follows:

Group f/64 Manifesto

The name of this Group is derived from a diaphragm number of the photographic lens. It signifies to a large extent the qualities of clearness and definition of the photographic image which is an important element in the work of members of this Group.

The chief object of the Group is to present in frequent shows what it considers the best contemporary photography of the West; in addition to the showing of the work of its members, it will include prints from other photographers who evidence tendencies in their work similar to that of the Group.

Group f/64 is not pretending to cover the entire of photography or to indicate through its selection of members any deprecating opinion of the photographers who are not included in its shows. There are great number of serious workers in photography whose style and technique does not relate to the metier of the Group.

Group f/64 limits its members and invitational names to those workers who are striving to define photography as an art form by simple and direct presentation through purely photographic methods. The Group will show no work at any time that does not conform to its standards of pure photography. Pure photography is defined as possessing no qualities of technique, composition or idea, derivative of any other art form. The production of the "Pictorialist," on the other hand, indicates a devotion to principles of art which are directly related to painting and the graphic arts.

The members of Group f/64 believe that photography, as an art form, must develop along lines defined by the actualities and limitations of the photographic medium, and must always remain independent of ideological conventions of art and aesthetics that are reminiscent of a period and culture antedating the growth of the medium itself.

The Group will appreciate information regarding any serious work in photography that has escaped its attention, and is favourable towards establishing itself as a Forum of Modern Photography.

After only a few years, the group dissolved in 1935, having had a great impact on photography nevertheless!

Founding Members

Seven photographers together founded group *f/64*. Of each of them a little bit of background info and some sample (landscape) photography is given.

Ansel Adams

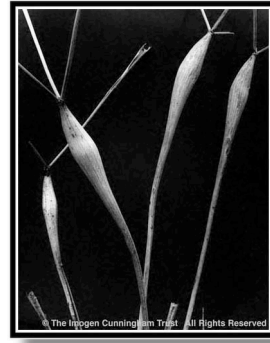
Probably the most famous of the group, Ansel Adams is, by many, seen as *the* landscape photographer of all times. Adams is also known for the “zone system,” a system to help getting the right exposure for a certain scene.



Imogen Cunningham

One of the founders of *f/64*, Cunningham photographed many different genres, ranging from plants to people and from nudes to more industrial. Pattern and detail is what seems to have interested her most.





Willard van Dyke

Not only a photographer, but also a film maker, Willard van Dyke saw photography as having a huge influence on the world. Because of his documentary films, his name became synonymous with social documentary. As the rest of the group, he strongly believed in sharp focus.



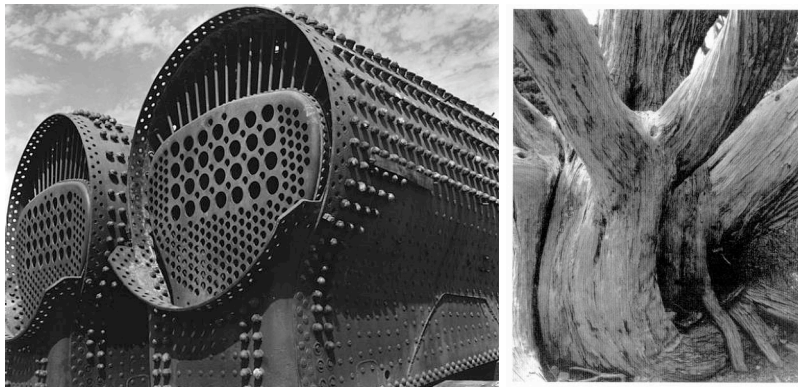
John Paul Edwards

Even though Edwards started off as a pictorialist, he made a rapid switch to straight photography and became one of the founders of f/64.



Sonya Noskowiak

In her early 20's, Noskowiak knew photography was "it". It was until she met Edward Weston, however, her talents really began to blossom. From photographing strong profiles in architecture, she soon began to look for patterns in nature as well.

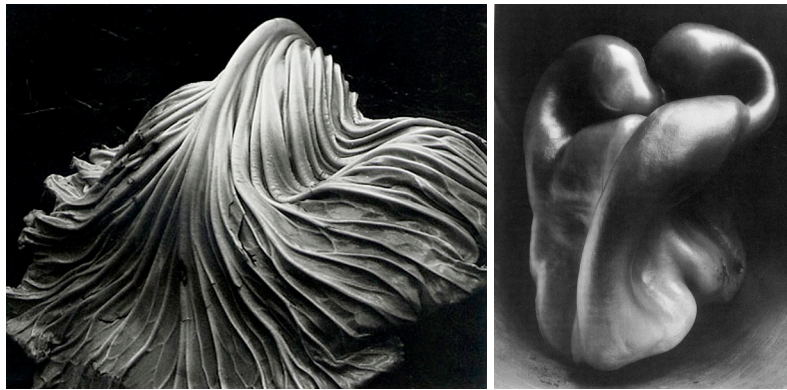
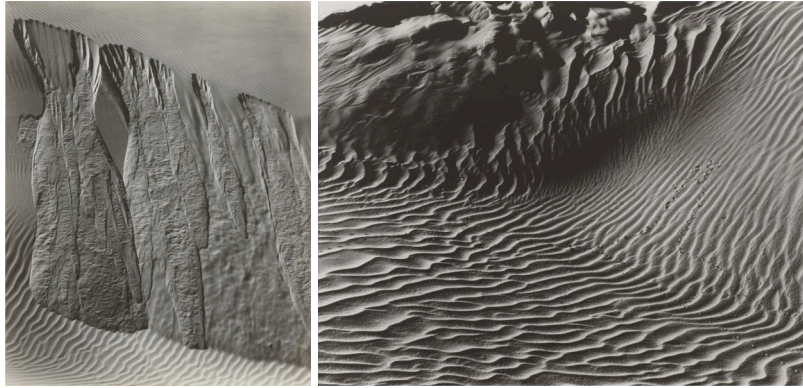


Henry Swift

Stockbroker Swift started photography as a hobby after meeting Edward Weston. He must have been a true proponent of straight photography as he was to be one of the founders of f/64. Strangely enough Weston (and the others) seem to have been Swift's (sole) inspiration to photography; after the group ceased existence in 1935, Swift is not known to have exhibited his images anymore.

Edward Weston

Weston, though maybe less known than Adams, was probably one of the most influential members of the group. Departing from pictorial photography in 1922, he began taking was one of the true pioneers of straight photography. His subjects consisted of nudes, still lifes, and landscapes.



Other Members

Apart from the seven founding member, four other members are known to have been part of group f/64.

Preston Holder

Not much is known of Holder's photography other than that he participated in the groups first exhibition with 4 images. His interest in photography seems to have waned soon after the group disbanded (just as for founding member Swift).

Consuelo Kanaga

Kanaga is mostly known as photographer of African Americans. Even though she herself claims never to have belonged to the group ("I wasn't a believer"). She did participate in the group's first exhibition and was seen to be part of it as well though...

Alma Lavenson

Even though mostly an amateur photographer, Lavenson has been an influence on generations of women photographers.

Brett Weston

Son of founding member Edward Weston. Close follower of his father's style.