



Imogen Cunningham (1883–1976)

Self-Portrait, 1906

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of Imogen Cunningham Trust

Imogen Cunningham, who moved from Seattle to San Francisco in 1917, was an acquaintance of Anne Brigman and active in early pictorial photography circles. She made her first nude self-portrait in a grassy field of dandelions on the University of Washington campus in 1906. This photo was considered by some scholars to be the first nude self-portrait by a female American photographer, however, a handful of Brigman's images from 1905 predate this photograph.



Imogen Cunningham (1883–1976)

Self Portrait with Jane Foster, Lake Tenaya, 1939

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of Imogen Cunningham Trust



Louise Dahl-Wolfe (1895–1989)

Night Bathing, 1939

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of Staley-Wise Gallery

Louise Dahl-Wolfe described meeting Anne Brigman in 1921 as a “wonderful accident.” After their encounter, and on seeing Brigman’s prints, Dahl-Wolfe immediately purchased her own camera. She said she was so “bowled over” by Brigman’s nudes that she engaged a group of friends to “do Anne Brigmans” outdoors in the landscape. Dahl-Wolfe became one of the first women to establish herself in the male-dominated field of fashion photography. Proclaiming that she hated “arty nudes in daisy fields,” Dahl-Wolfe’s images such as *Night Bathing* provoked conversation about what constituted idealized feminine beauty in the modern era.



Francesca Woodman (1958-1981)

Self Deceit #1, Rome, Italy, 1978

Estate gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York

Francesca Woodman made this photograph in an abandoned building in Rome, Italy, while studying abroad as an art student at the Rhode Island School of Design. While crawling naked on the floor, Woodman peers into a mirror—a prop often used by artists to investigate the process of viewing and being viewed. Woodman’s role as both artist and nude subject subverts photographic conventions in which men exclusively photographed nude models.



Francesca Woodman (1958-1981)

Untitled, 1972

Untitled, Boulder, Colorado, 1976

Estate gelatin silver prints

Courtesy of the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York



Judy Dater (born 1941)

Imogen and Twinka at Yosemite, 1974

Archival pigment print

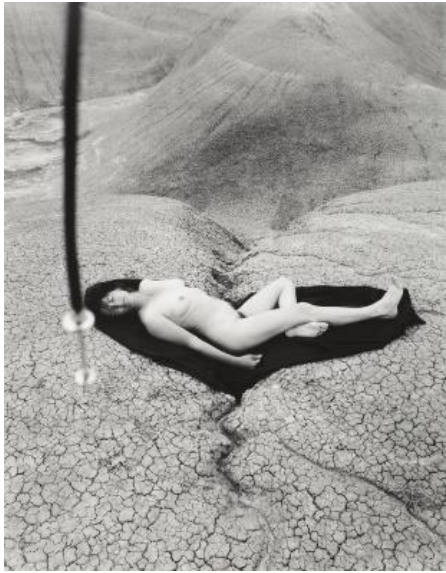
Courtesy of the artist and Modernism, San Francisco

This image by Judy Dater shows photographer Imogen Cunningham in an encounter with nude female model Twinka Thiebaud, the daughter of painter Wayne Thiebaud. Dater's photograph has been described as a parody of male voyeurism in Western art, and she compared it to Thomas Hart Benton's painting *Persephone*, which depicts a man gazing upon a nude woman who reclines in the landscape.

The appearance of Dater's photograph in a 1976 issue of *Life* magazine was the first time the publication ever included a full-frontal female nude. In April 2017, Instagram censored Dater's photograph saying it violated decency standards after the Museum of Fine Arts Boston used it to publicize an exhibition.



Thomas Hart Benton, *Persephone*, 1938–39



Judy Dater (born 1941)

Self Portrait with Cable Release, 1981

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the artist and Modernism, San Francisco



Judy Dater (born 1941)

Self Portrait with Stone, 1981

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the artist and Modernism, San Francisco

In a series of black-and-white images from the early 1980s, Judy Dater photographed her nude body among isolated rocky outcroppings in the deserts of the American Southwest.

“After the first wave feminist revolution more women felt empowered, or were looking for their inner power, wanting to take charge of their own body image,” she explains. “It was a way of testing your self, testing your strength and courage. I think that was true for me. I wanted control over the portrayal of my own body. I stopped letting men photograph me or use me as a model, at least in the nude.”



Judy Dater (born 1941)

Self Portrait Throwing Rope Like Lightning, 1983

Self Portrait with Sparkler, 1982

Archival pigment prints

Courtesy of the artist and Modernism, San Francisco



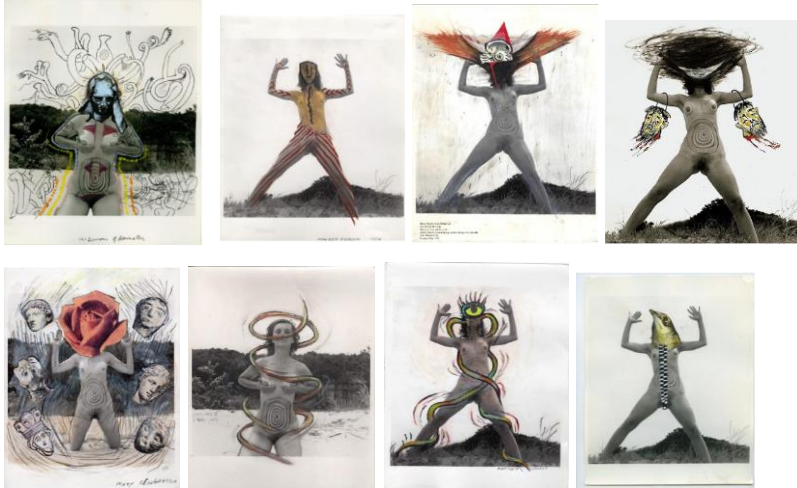
Judy Dater (born 1941)

Self Portrait with Snake Petroglyph, 1981

Archival pigment print

Courtesy of the artist and Modernism, San Francisco

While on a photography trip to the American Southwest in 1981, Judy Dater overlaid her nude body onto an ancient indigenous mark etched onto a large rock. While we cannot be certain of the ancient symbol's meaning, the position of Dater's body establishes her as a life-giving force, linking her to the earth and primordial creation stories.



Mary Beth Edelson (born 1933)

[top row, left to right]

Zippy Trickster (Bird)

Patriarchal Piss: Blurish Beard

Write By The Tail/Bite The Tail/Belly Snakes

Beams Up

[bottom row, left to right]

Fashion Plate 500 B.C. Series III: Carnival

Demons of Demeter #1

Totem Series: Goddess via Metropolis

Sophia of Wisdom

Oil, ink, china marker and collage on gelatin silver prints, from the 1973 series, ***Woman Rising***

Courtesy of the artist and David Lewis, New York

Woman Rising was feminist artist Mary Beth Edelson's earliest performance series, which she acted out in private on North Carolina's Outer Banks and photographed. Her painted body and assertive pose is adopted from ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian statuary. After printing her photographs, Edelson hand-altered each one with paint, markers, and collaged

elements to suggest personal transformation, assuming a new identity in each image. In doing so, her series represents a “performance of the self” and prefigures the work of photographer Cindy Sherman (born 1954), who aims to subvert stereotypes of women.



Left: Egyptian female figurine, 3500-3400 BCE

Right: Mesopotamian Goddess statue, 3900 BCE



Mary Beth Edelson (born 1933)

Goddess Head (Calling Series), 1975

Grapceva Neolithic Cave: See for Yourself, 1977

Silver gelatin prints

Courtesy of the artist and David Lewis, New York

Mary Beth Edelson frequently ventured to isolated outdoor places like caves and ruins to perform rituals and other solo performances that she documented using time-lapse photography. By interweaving her body with artifacts from nature, she effectively evoked female goddess archetypes. In *Goddess Head*, Edelson photographed herself in a rocky canyon with her arms outstretched to convey a sense of power and strength. In her final print she overlaid a shell onto her head, alluding to primeval creation myths and female interconnectedness with nature.



Judy Chicago (born 1939)

Women and Smoke, 1971-72

Archival film

Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art, The Robert S. and Dorothy J. Keyser Foundation Art of the Greater West Collection Fund

While working in the late 1960s, Judy Chicago observed a new movement in American art on the West Coast that became known as Land Art. “I was and am horrified by the masculine built environment and the masculine gesture of knocking down trees and digging holes in the earth,” she once said in response to the work of male Land Artists.

Chicago’s response to the field of Land Art was to “feminize” the landscape and “soften the macho environment.” By the early 1970s, she began choreographing performances with nude women deploying fireworks to release colored smoke. “It softened everything,” she recalls of the tinted hues. “There was a moment when the smoke began to clear, but a haze lingered. And the whole world was feminized—if only for a moment.”



Judy Chicago

Smoke Goddess/Woman with Orange Flares, 1972

Inkjet print on Epson paper

Courtesy of the artist, Salon 94, New York, and Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco

In the early 1970s, Judy Chicago embarked on a series of all-women outdoor performances on the West Coast called *Atmospheres*. In the desert and other outdoor settings, participants stripped off their clothes, painted their bodies in bright colors, and used flares to release colored smoke.

In this self-portrait from the series, Chicago stands in a rocky canyon as bright orange smoke pours into the space around her. Referring to herself as a *Smoke Goddess*, she evoked the practice of ancient fire rituals often associated with creation myths. In doing so, she intended to establish women as agents of creation rather than passive observers of nature.



Ana Mendieta (1948-1985)

Creek, 1974

Super-8mm film transferred to high-definition digital media

Running time 3:11 minutes

Courtesy of The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC and Galerie Lelong & Co., New York

Cuban-born Ana Mendieta began making experimental outdoor work with her body in the early 1970s. In her self-portrait film, *Creek*, Mendieta revised the story of the Shakespearean character Ophelia, an archetypal early modern woman depicted as voiceless, vulnerable, and near death in a pond by the artist John Everett Millais in 1851–52. Mendieta upended Millais' pictorial narrative by placing her own nude body, alive in the water, with her back facing us, as if to deny the viewer the privilege of gazing at her figure.



John Everett Millais, *Ophelia*, 1851–52



Ana Mendieta (1948-1985)

Tree of Life, 1977

Color photograph of earth-body work with tree and mud executed at Old Man's Creek, Iowa City, Iowa

Courtesy of The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC and Galerie Lelong & Co., New York

Ana Mendieta frequently made work incorporating her nude body as a strategy for reclaiming her cultural origins and underscoring her connectedness to the earth. In *Arbol de la Vida* (Tree of Life), a 1976 performance resembling ancient creation rituals, Mendieta covered her nude body in brown mud that seamlessly blended with the trees around her



Ana Mendieta (1948-1985)

**Untitled: Silueta Series, Mexico, From Works in Mexico, 1973-1977, 1973, Estate print
1991**

Estate color photograph

Courtesy of The Estate of Ana Mendieta Collection, LLC and Galerie Lelong & Co., New York

As part of her *Silueta* series, Ana Mendieta crawled into a sunken stone depression and buried her nude body in a field of delicate white flowers, leaving visible only her silhouette. Although the recessed space resembled a shallow grave, Mendieta's physical insertion of her body into the earth established her as an active agent of renewal and regeneration in nature.



Joan Myers (born 1944)

The Cave, negative 1977/print 1979

S, negative 1977/print 1979

Sea Wall, negative 1977/print 1978

Toned and hand-colored silver prints, from paper negatives

Courtesy of the artist

When she first began photographing in the 1970s, Joan Myers made these nude portraits in abandoned Los Angeles buildings and structures. Many feminist artists working around this same time incorporated caves and caverns into their work. Such private interior spaces evoke female goddess imagery, the womb, primordial creation stories and feminist power.



Regina Jose Galindo

Isla 1 and Isla 2, 2006

C-print

Documentation of a performance by Leonardo Engel

Courtesy of the artist

These photographs document a performance along a coastal reef by Guatemalan artist Regina Jose Galindo. The title *Isla* (which translates to island) invites viewers to consider the isolation of the figure against the sublime coastal landscape.



Kirsten Justesen (born 1943)

ICE PEDESTAL#1, #2, #3, 2000

C-prints

Courtesy of the artist

Trained as a sculptor at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, Kirsten Justesen's creative practice has always involved an exploration of the human body. A pioneering feminist, Justesen made a series of photographs of her nude body positioned among the icebergs of Greenland in the 1980s. This more recent series of photographs invites viewers to consider what it means to place a nude woman atop a pedestal for viewing. Against the backdrop of an ice cave, Justesen calls attention to the vulnerability nude models endure while posing for an artist.



Laura Aguilar (1959-2018)

Nature Self Portrait #2, 1996

Nature Self Portrait #14, 1996

Gelatin silver prints

Courtesy of UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center

In the 1980s, after seeing photographs by Judy Dater (also on view in this exhibition), Aguilar set out to make her own nude self-portraits in the landscape. Because Aguilar was Latina, lesbian, and large-bodied, however, her work forced new questions about the definition of feminine beauty, gender, and identity in contemporary art. Her work drew widespread critical attention and was lauded by marginalized groups who admired her efforts to acknowledge human resilience and strength.



Laura Aguilar (1959-2018)

Untitled #111, from the series *Grounded*, 2006

Untitled, from the series *Grounded* 2007

Ink jet prints

Courtesy of UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center

Laura Aguilar frequently photographed herself alongside large rocks and boulders that echo the shape of her body. While these images show her figure as continuous with the earth and an embodiment of its natural elements, it has also been suggested that her identification with stones reflects the dehumanizing treatment she endured as a Latina, large-bodied, lesbian woman. Throughout her life, Aguilar struggled with depression, fear, and self-doubt. Nevertheless, her images empowered and encouraged people and communities typically defined as “other” by Western society.



Cara Romero

Kaa, 2017

Archival pigment print

Courtesy of the artist

This portrait by Chemehuevi photographer Cara Romero tells the story of an indigenous clay spirit woman related to the Cochiti people of New Mexico. According to the story, the spirit was soft and inviting to work with, but so powerful and unpredictable that male potters could not master her. Romero personifies the indigenous clay spirit in this portrait of her friend Kaa Folwell, a contemporary clay artist from the Santa Clara Pueblo. Romero painted Folwell's body with a prehistoric design found on Anasazi pottery at Mesa Verde.



Anasazi, Black-on-white mug from Mesa Verde, 1200-1300 AD



Cara Romero

Sheridan (reclining Chemehuevi Woman in White Clay), 2017

Archival pigment print

Courtesy of the artist

For this photograph, Cara Romero asked her niece Sheridan to pose topless wearing a traditional Chemehuevi bark skirt. Her intent was to challenge historical Western representations of Chemehuevi women perpetuated by American artist and ethnologist Edward Curtis, who documented them wearing Western-style calico dresses in the early 1900s. Romero points out that Native women were not traditionally expected to cover their bodies until colonization forced such changes to their way of life.



Edward Curtis, *Chemehuevi mother and child*, 1907



Xavier Simmons (born 1974)

One Day and Back Then (Seated), 2007

Chromira C-print

Courtesy of the artist and David Castillo Gallery

Xavier Simmons uses her body as a tool to examine how American history has been constructed and presented. In her photographs, she transforms herself into characters and stages elaborate scenes that complicate idyllic visions of America.

In *One Day and Back Then*, Simmons recalls America's history of slavery and racism. Seated in an agricultural field, she appears nude and in blackface with brightly-painted red lips. In past interviews, Simmons has suggested that no matter how exotic and outrageous a black woman's behavior might be, the white American public usually chooses to ignore her altogether—in the same way it chooses to forget our nation's history of racism.



Regina Jose Galindo

Tierra, 2013

Video

Running time: 33:28 minutes

Courtesy of the artist

Guatemalan-born Regina Jose Galindo frequently uses her body as a form of political protest. Galindo made this piece in response to atrocities initiated by a former Guatemalan president accused of murdering innocent civilians and burying them in mass graves. By positioning herself in the path of a powerful machine, Galindo asserts her resistance to the injustices she and the people of her country have endured at the hands of a violent regime.



Jo Spence (1934-1992)

In collaboration with Terry Dennett (1938-2018)

Remodelling Photo History: Industrialization, 1981-1982

Remodelling Photo History: Industrialization, 1981-1982

Gelatin silver prints

Courtesy of Richard Saltoun Gallery

Working in the early 1980s, Jo Spence began a series called *Remodelling Photo History* to critique what she considered the male-dominated field of landscape photography. Her photographs responded to a trend among male landscape photographers of the 1970s and 80s to exclude the human figure in their images of the changing industrial landscape. Spence disrupts their conventional depictions by inserting a nude figure, her friend Terry Dennett, into the foreground of her images.



Carolee Schneemann (born 1939)

Nude on Tracks, Parallel Axis, 1975

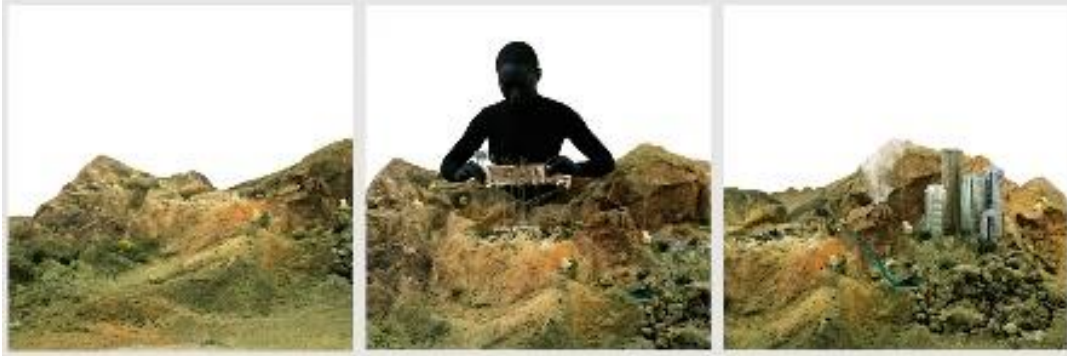
Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the artist and P.P.O.W., New York

Carolee Schneemann catapulted across a pair of receding railroad tracks to symbolically insert herself—and all women—into the history of American photography. Schneemann's double-stacked image recalls the stereo cards of American pioneer photographers, whose pictures of railroad tracks were intended as symbols of American expansion.



Alfred Hart, *Advance of Civilization, 1865-69*



Otobong Nkanga

Alterscape Stories: Uprooting the Past, 2006

C-prints

Collection of the Nevada Museum of Art,

The Altered Landscape Collection, Gift of the Wilhelm Hoppe Family Trust

Nigerian-born Otobong Nkanga considers human impact on the development of the Canary Islands, off the northwestern coast of Africa. Casting herself as both creator and destroyer, Nkanga physically uproots the ruins of historical buildings. While her studio performance using a fabricated landscape model may appear to diverge from the outdoor work of her peers, the intent is similar: to assert a place for women as active agents in the history of landscape alteration and representation.