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Paulette Michayluk

I'D LIKE TO SAY "IT'S IN THE BAG" ... BUT IT'S NOT ... IT'S ON THE BAG.

It cannot be said that women have been accepted easily into the photography world. In fact, history shows us that not only have women continually had to fight for their rightful place but even when recognition is achieved there is no guarantee that they are written into history.

Early in 2020, PhotoED Magazine, collaborated with the School of Photographic Art Ottawa, to poll Canadians for a Canadian list of important photographers – specifically a list of women who have made significant contributions to the practice. A public tribute to women who have added to the canon... The list of suggestions collected is impressive and one that is meant to inspire further conversations.

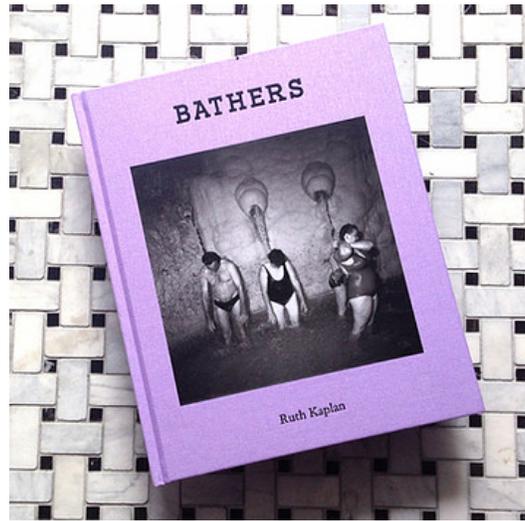
And that brings me back to my bag – it sports the names of the five finalists: "Maynard, Cohen, Kaplan, Astman and Clark." To my mind these women are all remarkable - they have changed not only how we look at photography but at photographers. Each woman is, dare I say it, "mistress" of her craft. They may have worked independently, but they share common traits – they prove limitless in their visions; they are tenacious; and all are driven to explore and create. Moreover, each fought for their place, garnered respect, notoriety and projected their voice UN-apologetically.

DEFEND THE DARKROOM

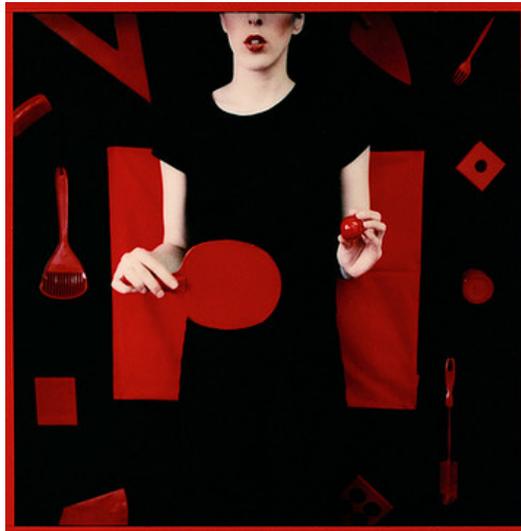
As the host of the [Defend the Darkroom podcast](#), I'm honoured to share their stories. I have been fortunate in having had the opportunity of interviewing Kaplan, Astman and Clark for the podcast. Our conversations confirm that these women are more than visionaries – they are leaders and perhaps most importantly mentors. These did not follow the trodden path, they set their own compass - creating community, supporting and promoting others. Even as they demand rigour they demonstrate thoughtfulness. And in speaking with them, I was truly inspired.



[Ruth Kaplan](#) is based in Toronto; she is an observer, a recorder of moments within communities that she inserts herself into. Her images are thoughtful portrayals of individuals being themselves. They are not posed or influenced. She is looking to understand, to engage with the subject and her images are witness to the respect and connections she has fashioned.



Check out my interview with RUTH KAPLAN - [HERE](#).
She is represented by [Stephen Bulger Gallery](#), Toronto.



[Barbara Astman](#) is a creator and an inspiration to the next generation. In her work she somehow demonstrates an inner dialogue that is so fascinating one can't help but become engaged. What I find staggering is how she remains so involved in all aspects of her life and her community: she has an active studio practice (one that reveals her fascination with new media); is involved in many different boards and committees; all while being a notable professor and past department head at OCAD U.

Check out my interview with BARBARA ASTMAN - [HERE](#).
She is represented by [Corkin Gallery](#), Toronto and [Elan Fine Art](#), Vancouver.

[June Clark](#) is a force – there is no other word to describe her. She uses her photography to document community and while her work is often autobiographical, it is also about history,

social change, and identity. June moved to Toronto in 1968 and connected to her new home through the camera. She has helped build an arts community and continues to evolve her practice to new levels as she connect with others.

Through passion and devotion to their craft, these women have brought us new and unique ways to see our world. They have not sought out entry into or acceptance by the male dominated art cannon – rather they have created exceptional art while serving as mentors and built communities.

Until march 27, 2021 [Daniel Faria Gallery](#) in Toronto presents *Unrequited Love*, a solo exhibition of media media work by June Clark.

See more of June's work at [Elan Fine Art](#), Vancouver.

Check out my interview with JUNE CLARK - [HERE](#).

I can only hope that more of us look at these examples as an opportunity to challenge ourselves and do things in a new way. To take a moment to question and evolve. And let's all hope "It's in the Bag."

The other two celebrated names on the bag are:

Hannah Maynard (1834-1918) was an innovator and creator who spent most of her working life in Victoria B.C. At a time where knowledge was gained through exploration, Hannah forged a unique path for herself. Her industriousness and desire to promote herself as a "photographic artiste" knew no bounds. She pushed studio photography far beyond contemporary expectations.



Lynne Cohen (1944-2014) created environments that provoke the viewer, making us question ourselves and what is occurring around us. Her large format work is often haunting. Yet, she never forced a narrative; instead her work is stark; it seldom includes a human presence, making it both unnerving and *strong* – a word that is seldom used in the positive sense when describing a woman in the arts.



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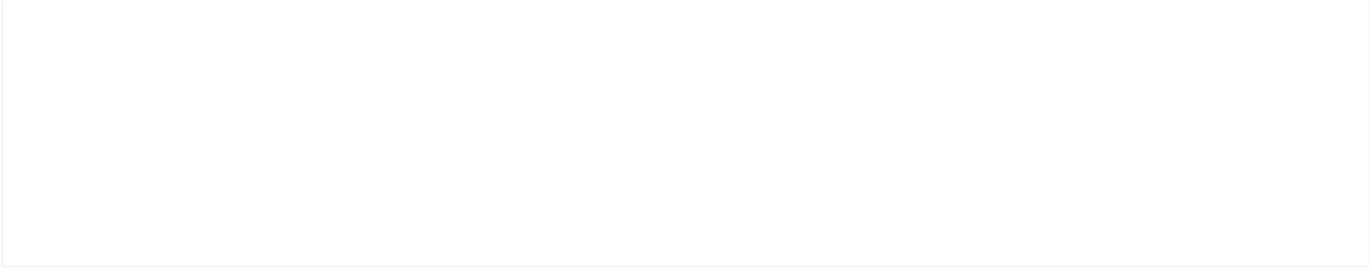
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