

February 2023



Dear Club Members,

This month is one where I very strongly recommend you explore the further links listed below, we're celebrating a woman whose work in photography will feel extraordinarily familiar. She captured images of the last century that have been reused and reprinted on many occasions. Margaret Bourke-White was born in 1904, in New York. She was the first to do many things, in February 1930 she joined Fortune magazine as a staff photographer. It's 80 years since she captured images of US bombing missions in World War II, many of them from the air, there's a fabulous image of her in an over-large sheepskin flying suit, with her camera, ready to capture images that now serve as a reminder of the devastation caused by war.

Her photograph of Fort Peck Dam was used on the first cover story of LIFE magazine in 1936, and she became the magazines first female staff photographer. She was the first woman allowed to work in combat zones in World War II, and the first foreign photographer allowed to take photos of Soviet industry.

Her black and white images are striking, and manage to capture humanity and its impact on the planet in ways that are utterly captivating. She often had a knack of being in the right place at the right time, she was the only foreign photographer in Moscow when it was captured by the Germans. In the final days of World War II she photographed scenes at the newly liberated Buchenwald death camp.

Afterwards she continued to seek out conflict, capturing violence during the partition of India as it navigated towards independence from the British Empire, and in the process also photographed Gandhi at his spinning wheel (Khadi was the subject of the October 2019 Time Travellers Club), and was the last person to interview him just 6 hours before he was killed.

Before the war she had collaborated with Erskine Caldwell, a novelist, to create the book "You Have Seen Their Faces". This book attacked the Jim Crow laws of the American deep South. She was also a member of the American Artists' Congress. This group supported state funding of the arts, and fought against discrimination faced by African American Artists. The book was published in 1937, and they married in 1939, but divorced in 1942, she never remarried.

By 1953 she began developing symptoms of Parkinsons Disease, and her last photo essay for LIFE was made in 1957. Her biography, Portrait of Myself was released in 1963, and was a bestseller, but despite her successful career she still struggled to cover the costs of health care, she wasn't frugal with money, leasing space in the Chrysler Building as her studio. She died in 1971, leaving behind a body of work that is held in many major museums, and the collections of the Library of Congress. In 1989 a film was made of her life.

Your fibre this month is an homage to the many photographs she took in her life, periodically I like to give you a nice neutral as they have so many possibilities.

Happy Spinning

Katie

Fibre Content- In case your parcel is missing the label

25% Suri Alpaca

25% Pineapple Fibre

50% Corriedale

Further Reading-

First image- Margaret Bourke-White at the ready, standing by an airplane propeller and fully garbed in a leather fleece-lined flight suit, camera in hand. 1943

<https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2019/08/photography-of-margaret-bourke-white/596980/#img16>

Life Magazine, Fort Peck Dam cover story- <https://www.life.com/history/lifes-first-ever-cover-story-building-the-fort-peck-dam-1936/>

<https://www.npr.org/sections/pictureshow/2011/11/04/141885401/at-75-life-revisits-its-first-cover-story>

Double Exposure- Film starring Farah Fawcett, The story of Margaret Bourke-White

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hjG8r5HSaHs>

Socialist views, and working to bring awareness of inequality-

<https://thechannelhouse.org/2015/12/16/margaret-bourke-white-in-the-ussr-1931/>

Biography and Images-

<https://www.icp.org/browse/archive/constituents/margaret-bourke-white?all/all/all/all/0>

<https://theglindafactor.com/margaret-bourke-white/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hw4D1U5u0-E>

Talking about her time as a war photographer-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TbLytLCZroc&t=35s>

Buchenwald Camp

<https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/buchenwald>