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# Group F.64: Edward Weston, Ansel Adams, Imogen Cunningham, And The Community Of Artists Who Revolutionized American Photography





## **Synopsis**

Group f.64 is perhaps the most famous movement in the history of photography, counting among its members Ansel Adams, Imogen Cunningham, Dorothea Lange, Willard Van Dyke, and Edward Weston. Revolutionary in their day, Group f.64 was one of the first modern art movements equally defined by women. From the San Francisco Bay Area, its influence extended internationally, contributing significantly to the recognition of photography as a fine art. The group-first identified as such in a 1932 exhibition-was comprised of strongly individualist artists, brought together by a common philosophy, and held together in a tangle of dynamic relationships. They shared a conviction that photography must emphasize its unique capabilities-those that distinguished it from other arts-in order to establish the medium's identity. Their name, f.64, they took from a very small lens aperture used with their large format cameras, a pinprick that allowed them to capture the greatest possible depth of field in their lustrous, sharply detailed prints. In today's digital world, these à œstraightà • photography champions are increasingly revered. Mary Alinder is uniquely positioned to write this first group biography. A former assistant to Ansel Adams, she knew most of the artists featured. Just as importantly, she understands the art. Featuring fifty photographs by and of its members, Group f.64 details a transformative period in art with narrative flair.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

à œAlinder pulls together a treasury of assiduously assembled facts and her own personal memories, especially of Adams, for whom she worked as chief assistant, later becoming his

biographer. Alinder is particularly revelatory in her coverage of tough and wily Cunningham, the lesser-known but no less intriguing trailblazers Willard Van Dyke, Sonya Noskowiak, and Consuelo Kanaga, and the bold museum directors and collectors who supported the group. As she chronicles the photographers' friendships, tempestuous love lives, epic parties, scrambles to survive, passionate manifestos, heated public debates, social and environmental concerns, and hard-won exhibitions, Alinder achieves an f.64 degree of crisp and commanding detail in this landmark group portrait of the visionary photographers who succeeded in 'forever changing our way of seeing.'

• Booklist, starred review œThis lively group biography . . . tells a distinctly West Coast story about an ambitious, broad-minded, and unusually diverse movement . . . Alinder, who studied under Adams and later worked as his assistant, smoothly alternates between many individual careers while still maintaining a cohesive group narrative.

• Publishers Weekly œIn her history of Group f.64 Mary Street Alinder traces the formation and impact of the collective in a colorful and heavily researched account that brings to life the characters and ideas whose impacts on photography today . . . Photographers interested in these individuals, the history of the medium and the cultural and economic milieu that shaped photography in the United States in the 20th century will find much to like in her book.

• Photo District News œAlinder's sympathetic history captures the excitement and energy of determined artists who invigorated and redefined the art of photography.

• Kirkus Reviews œA future classic in the history of American photography, here is the gripping story of a group of extraordinarily talented Bay Area photographers who created community for themselves in the midst of the Great Depression and how from that community emerged a body of work stunning to this day in its bold advance of photography as fine art.

• Kevin Starr, University of Southern California œA fascinating and inspiring narrative, Group f.64 reveals both the personal and professional struggles and triumphs of an extraordinary group of photographers who changed the course of twentieth-century photography. This is a groundbreaking, major work of scholarship.

• Peter C. Bunnell, McAlpin Professor of the History of Photography and Modern Art Emeritus, Princeton University œA precise, vivid, and highly readable account that marks Group f.64 as one of the most significant episodes of twentieth-century American visual culture.

• Julian Cox, founding curator of photography and chief curator, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco œGroup f.64 offers a rich tapestry of individuals and institutions, of art and personal politics, of the search for truth, the challenge of change, and maybe even the complex triumph of photographic ideals.

• Roy Flukinger, senior curator, Harry Ransom Center, University of Texas, Austin œMary Alinder presents the key figures as distinct and memorable personalities, while rescuing a host of previously marginalized figures from historical obscurity. The result is a

wonderfully engaging and enlightening new look at one of the most important movements in modern creative photography. • Keith F. Davis, senior curator of Photography, Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art • A fascinating narrative about making revolutionary art in hard times. • Carol McCusker, curator of photography, Harn Museum of Art, University of Florida

Mary Street Alinder is an independent scholar specializing in twentieth-century photography. From 1979 until his death, Alinder was chief assistant to Ansel Adams. She worked closely with him on his bestselling autobiography, which she completed posthumously. She also coedited a volume of his letters and published the definitive biography, recently revised and updated in a new edition. In addition to her writings, Alinder has curated exhibitions worldwide, including the 1987 Adams blockbuster at the de Young Museum and a 2002 Adams Centennial exhibition. Alinder has lectured internationally, from Washington, DC's National Gallery to London's Barbican Centre and China's Shanghai Cultural Center. She lives in Northern California.

A lush and intimate portrait of this vital artistic movement. The author's decades of research and first-hand experience with these iconic artists is evident throughout and brings sharp but endearing focus to the personal and artistic lives of Weston, Adams, Cunningham, and many others, along with their shared vision to advance photography as an art form during the depths of the Great Depression. Compelling read for anyone and a must read for any fan of photography or art history.

Alinder does a good job of humanizing each of these photographers, and places them into the context of their time and their art. We come away with a much better idea of f.64's contribution to the history of expressive photography. The value of this book is diminished, however, by the many redundant descriptions of f.64 exhibitions that clutter its pages. (A complete listing of every f.64 exhibition is presented still again in the back of the book.) I purchased this book hoping to gain new insights into the creative talents of the men and women who, more than a century ago, moved photographic art from style to substance. I did find such insights, but the massive amount of factual information presented in this book made them more difficult to absorb.

This is a reaction to the Kindle version: I'm currently enjoying reading the book (8.9" Kindle), but all the pictures are no larger than 1 square inch on-screen and are therefore all but useless. If one zooms in on a picture, it gets only marginally larger and is pixelated.

I've a collection of photo books by most of the photographers listed in the wonderful book. It has 'fleshed out' these people and increased my appreciation of what they photographed and why. I've studied everything I could find about them from magazines and books but this really filled in all of the missing pieces for me. I purchased it as a Kindle ebook and enjoyed it on my iPad in my Kindle app. For anyone that is interested in the golden age of photography, this book is a must read!

This is an important book in the sense that it offers a detailed account of an important period in American photography, as well as some interesting intimate knowledge about some of its most prominent figures, and others who shared their journeys. It does seem, however, that the author, by placing emphasis in some areas and avoiding others, at times "plays favorites" to the detriment of historical accuracy. Most notable is the attempt to portray this group of Western photographers as pioneers of "straight" photography, the lionization of Ansel Adams, who at the time had not yet earned his stripes as the master we know today, and the rendering of Alfred Stieglitz as the "wicked witch of the east," when it was, in fact, Stieglitz (and his friend Paul Strand) who popularized and advocated for straight photography for nearly two decades(!) before the formation of Group f/64. It is also not mentioned that Ansel Adams was a pictorialist photographer until persuaded to change his ways in the late 1920s. Later, it was Paul Strand who steered Adams toward the printing style which later became his signature look. This happened in a meeting between the two in 1930 - just 2 years before the formation of Group f/64. If it were not for the direct influence of Stieglitz and Strand, Adams may never have decided to become a professional photographer in the first place (Adams himself credited the decision to his meeting with Strand and seeing his prints in New Mexico). In 1932, when the group was formed, it was actually Edward Weston who was the pioneering visionary in the group, and a much more recognized and established artist than the rest. Where Adams tried to imitate Stieglitz's methods, Weston was often at odds with the master and a much more independent and defiant thinker. He was also a reluctant member of Group f/64, and only joined as a favor to Adams. I very much recommend reading this book, but also balancing it with other accounts, such as the one offered in David P. Peeler's "The Illuminating Mind in American Photography."

This book is an absolute joy! As a long time admirer of all the photographic artists within it is refreshing to receive such an excellent volume putting these innovators within the context of their time. The research conducted by the author was undoubtedly horrendous but the result is worth all effort expended. For those who desire an intimate look into the life of those who formed and

breathed a pulsing vibrancy into Group f.64 then do not hesitate in purchasing this volume. For those who are only looking for examples of the art of these master photographers, look elsewhere. This book is not a showcase for their work but it does bring life to those who created so very many masterpieces.

This is an important book about a pivotal time in the development of photography as an art. Even current amateur photographers who are more interested in "taking" photographs than in reading about them will be inspired and stimulated by knowing more about this extraordinary group of visionaries. Centered on the U.S. In the 1930's, the book also provides a very interesting view of the social, political and economic upheavals of that period. A worthwhile read.

A long wait for this book. The author took 16 years gathering the information and writing the book. I have wanted more information about group F.64 and the photographers-Edward Weston, Ansel Adams and a few others for about 40 years since I first got interested in Weston. This is well written and of value to anyone interested in fine Photographic art and the history of modern photography. For those that need more photos there is a book. 4.8 out of 5 stars 5 liked this book. I think it has some photos from all of the members of F.64"Seeing Straight: The F.64 Revolution in Photography" If you have not read Weston's "Day Books" they should be read now.

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