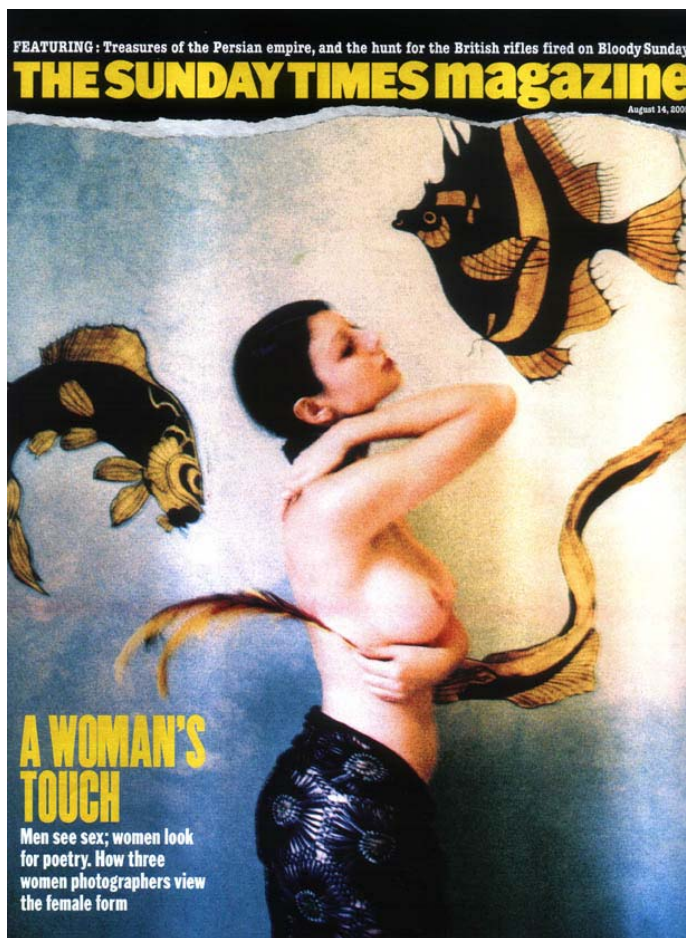


Extraordinary things can happen when women take pictures of other women. The subjects are often freer to act out their erotic fantasies and to reveal their true selves. Three photographers give a rare glimpse into a secret feminine world. Katharine Hibbert reports



## RENEE FALCKE

Born in Berlin, Falcke has worked in Paris since 1980. She is now freelance, having spent more than two decades with United Press International and Gruner + Jahr

"I took these photos [left and below] when I was living in Paris in the 1960s. It was an amazing time for me and for everyone who was young then. I was a fashion photographer, and these are from a shoot I did for Jardin des Modes, a French style magazine. I never wanted just to display the clothes; in these pictures, I was trying to show how I felt as a woman in the world. The model, Marielle, understood that. We met soon after I moved to Paris, and she will always be the definition of a Parisienne in my mind. I loved how she looked, so feminine, so soft. I often photographed her, and we became friends. I found this scrapheap (left) on the edge of Paris. I wanted to show

the contrast between Marielle's beauty and that brutal destruction, her vulnerability and those motorcycle clothes. She could act, so I asked her to cry. Her face was lovely when she wept. When we worked together, it was collaboration."

## JOSEPHINE SACABO

Texas-born Sacabo — who cites Henri Cartier-Bresson as an influence — studied in New York before starting a career in photojournalism. She lives in New Orleans. Her images (above, left and below) exude a ghostly, luminous quality "I find my models incredibly beautiful. I try to create photos of them alone with themselves, as if I'm not there, or as if I'm a child looking at something I don't understand and am not part of. I find myself responding sympathetically to the feelings they express, whether they're erotic, sad or ecstatic. They move me. I want anyone who looks at the images — man or woman — to share that."

## VEE SPEERS

The Australian Vee Speers has lived and worked in Paris for the past 14 years. The images here and on the magazine cover are taken from Bordello — a series inspired by the brothels of between-the-wars Paris. Speers's photographs are hand-rendered using a 19th-century technique that gives them a painterly quality "The art of seduction fascinates me. I love the game — you can dress yourself up and act out a role, and that sets you free to create your own stories, your own mysteries. And it gives you power. I try to capture all that when I photograph women. I try to show them in the way I'd like

to be looked at. These pictures were inspired by the Parisian bordellos of the 1920s and 30s. I wasn't trying to re-create the era, but I used it as a starting point for building a fantasy world. I found some bordellos where the decor had survived intact to use as locations. They were so lavish and decadent. Most of the clothes are from that era. The girls in the pictures aren't models as such. I wanted to find real women who were rounder and more sensual than a fashion model, maybe older. So they are friends or girls I talked to when I saw them in the street or in a cafe. Most of them had never modelled before. I'd ask the girls to do their make-up

themselves; I'd show them photos of girls from the 1930s, and girls with blackened smudgy eyes, as if they'd been out all night. I would have a pile of clothes and wigs, and it was a matter of whoever felt good in whatever. I'd ask them to imagine they were seducing me, or that they were waiting for a lover. As women together, we were complicit in creating a story. It felt safe — we could push it as far as we wanted." ■

The exhibition Women Photographing Women is at the Stephanie Hoppen gallery, London SW3, from September 13 to October 8. Tel: 020 7589 3678; visit [www.stephaniehoppen.com](http://www.stephaniehoppen.com)