

In the 18th century, when history painting ruled and still life was considered minor, the name of **Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio** was forgotten. Today, however, his work is universally popular – and this has a lot to do with the "photographic" qualities of his work.

Caravaggio's painting *A Basket of Fruit* (c 1599) that hangs in the Ambrosiana gallery in Milan is revered as the greatest still life in the world (above). It's said an ancient Greek painter called Zeuxis once depicted a bunch of grapes so realistically that birds came down to peck at the illusory fruit. That painting no longer exists, but Caravaggio's painting makes such miracles seem possible. The basket of moist, shiny, hallucinatory fruit balances on the edge of a table, forever on the brink of tottering over, falling out of the canvas and into our dimension.

A vanitas is a symbolic work of art showing the transience of life, the futility of pleasure, and the certainty of death, often contrasting symbols of wealth and symbols of ephemerality and death. Best-known are vanitas still lifes, a common genre in Netherlandish art of the 16th and 17th centuries; they have also been created at other times and in other media and genres.[1]

Vanitas means 'futility' or 'worthlessness', that is, the pointlessness of earthly goods and pursuits, alluding to Ecclesiastes 1:2; 12:8 Vanitas vanitatum omnia vanitas,

William Henry Fox Talbot

British Photographer and inventor, particularly salted paper with calotype processes. The *Open Door* is from his series *The Pencil of Nature* and shows the influence of Dutch genre on his photography

Roger Fenton –

British – influence by Talbot. Founder of the Photographic Society in 1853. In his still life photos he sought to capture its decaying, temporary beauty

Andre Kertesz

Hungarian born, but lived in Paris before moving to America. Widely acknowledged for his influence on photojournalism, but also for his contributions to photographic compositions, camera angles and style. First photographer to have his own exhibition in Paris in 1927.

Paul Oterbridge –

American - Fashion and commercial photographers. His *Idle Colar* image was torn out of *Vanity Fair* magazine and hang on Marcel Duchamp wall. Prominent for his early use of colour.

Josef Sudek

Sudek and Kertesz are considered among the greatest photographers of the 20th century. Sudek lost his arm in WW1 and lived a lonely life, photographing mainly in Prague and his studio. His work has the stark simplicity

with clean lines. I am reliably told that he was a mentor for my sisters boyfriend. ...

Robert Mapplethorpe

was an American photographer, known for his sensitive yet blunt treatment of controversial subject-matter in the large-scale, highly stylized black and white medium of photography.

Irwing Penn

American of Russian origin, known for his fashion, portraits and Still Lifes. He is one of the most important modern master of photography who turns Still Lifes into fine Art. He collected discarded objects on the street – then depicting them in simple compositions to illustrate modern consumer society; transforming pure detritus into a representation of contemporary culture.

Sharon Core

American, famous for reconstructing early American Painted Still Lives into photographs. With the series Thieband she caused a legal controversy as Wayne Tieband is concerned that her reproductions are largely straightforward versions of his paintings.

Ori Gersht

His still lives investigates the relations between photography, technology and optical perception.

The art of simple observation

(the Guardian - article by Jonothan Jones)

Start with simplicity and profundity will come. The Israel-born artist **Ori Gersht** has created powerful photographic still life images that are eerily precise. *His Blow Up: Untitled 5*, for instance, casts a keen eye on the colours and textures of flowers by freezing them with liquid nitrogen - so that even as he explodes the arrangement and photographs its destruction, shards of red, blue and white petals reveal their natural beauty (left). Simple observation leads to a rich and dark art of **fragility and violence**.

In the still life, the extraordinary is found in the ordinary

The *Pomegranate* is stroboscopic photography (references Juan Sanchez Cotes) when a high velocity bullet flies across the frame and obliterates the fruit. Peaceful image is transformed into bloodshed and dialog is established between stillness and motion, peace and violence.

Martin Parr

British photographer - (born 23 May 1952) is a British documentary photographer,[3] photojournalist and photobook collector. He is known for his highly coloured photographic projects that take an intimate, satirical and anthropological[4] look at aspects of modern life, in particular documenting the social classes of England, and more broadly the wealth of the Western world.

Since 1994, Parr has been a member of Magnum Photos.[4] He has had around 40 solo photobooks

published, and has featured in around 80 exhibitions worldwide – including the international touring exhibition ParrWorld,[5] and a retrospective at the Barbican Arts Centre, London, in 2002.[6]

The Martin Parr Foundation, founded in 2014, opened premises in his hometown of Bristol in 2017. It houses his own archive, his collection of British and Irish photography by other photographers, and a gallery.[7]