



KARSH

WOMEN

Yousuf KARSH

December 23, 1908 – July 13, 2002

Yousuf Karsh was an Armenian-Canadian photographer known for his portraits of notable individuals. He has been described as one of the greatest portrait photographers of the 20th century.

An Armenian Genocide survivor, Karsh migrated to Canada as a refugee. By the 1930s he established himself as a significant photographer in Ottawa, where he lived most of his adult life, though he traveled extensively for work.

His iconic 1941 photograph of Winston Churchill was a breakthrough point in his 60-year career, through which he took numerous photos of known political leaders, men and women of arts and sciences.

Over 20 photos by Karsh appeared on the cover of Life magazine, until he retired in 1992.

Karsh was born to Armenian parents - Amsih Karsh, a merchant, and Bahai Nakash, on December 23, 1908 in Mardin, Diyarbekir Vilayet, Ottoman Empire. The city’s Armenian population was largely Arabic-speaking. His Armenian name Hovsep, is a variant of Joseph, while Yousuf is the Arabic version of the same name.

He grew up during the Armenian Genocide, during which some of his family were murdered Karsh and his family escaped to a refugee camp in Aleppo, Syria in 1922 in a month-long journey with a Kurdish caravan. The Economist noted in their obituary of Karsh that he “thought of himself as an Armenian” and, according to Vartan Gregorian, “Although he was proud to be



Photo of Yousuf Karsh

Canadian, Karsh was equally proud to be Armenian.”

Karsh in 1938 was sent to Canada by his family. He arrived in Halifax, Nova Scotia on December 31, 1923 by ship from Beirut. He immediately moved to Sherbrooke, Quebec to live with his maternal uncle George Nakashian (Nakash), a portrait photographer. Karsh worked for, and was taught photography by his uncle. He gave Karsh a Box Brownie camera.

From 1928 - 1931, Karsh apprenticed in Boston, Massachusetts for John H. Garo, the most prominent Armenian photographer in America at the time who had made a name for himself photographing Boston celebrities.

Karsh retired following surgery. A private funeral was held in Ottawa. He was interred in Notre Dame Cemetery in Ottawa.



Self Portrait of Yousuf Karsh

THERE IS A BRIEF MOMENT WHEN ALL THERE IS IN A MAN’S MIND AND SOUL AND SPIRIT IS REFLECTED THROUGH THE EYES, HIS HANDS, HIS ATTITUDE. THIS IS THE MOMENT TO RECORD.



Cover Photo: Brigitte Bardot
Photo on next page: Sophia Loren
All quotes noted are in light gray.



MY CHIEF JOY IS
TO PHOTOGRAPH
THE GREAT IN
HEART, IN MIND
AND IN SPIRIT,
WHETHER THEY
BE FAMOUS
OR HUMBLE.



THE PROBLEM WITH
PHOTOGRAPHING
WOMEN IS THAT
YOU NEVER GET
INTO THE DARK
ROOM UNTIL
AFTER THEY
HAVE GONE.



*Photo on Row 1: Grace Kelly:
Photo on Row 2: Angela Lansbury, Joan Crawford
Photo on Row 3: Audrey Hepburn, Elizabeth Taylor, Judy Garland
Photo on next page: Lauren Bacall
All quotes noted in light gray uppercase.*



LOOK AND THINK BEFORE
OPENING THE SHUTTER.
THE HEART AND MIND
ARE THE TRUE LENS
OF THE CAMERA.