

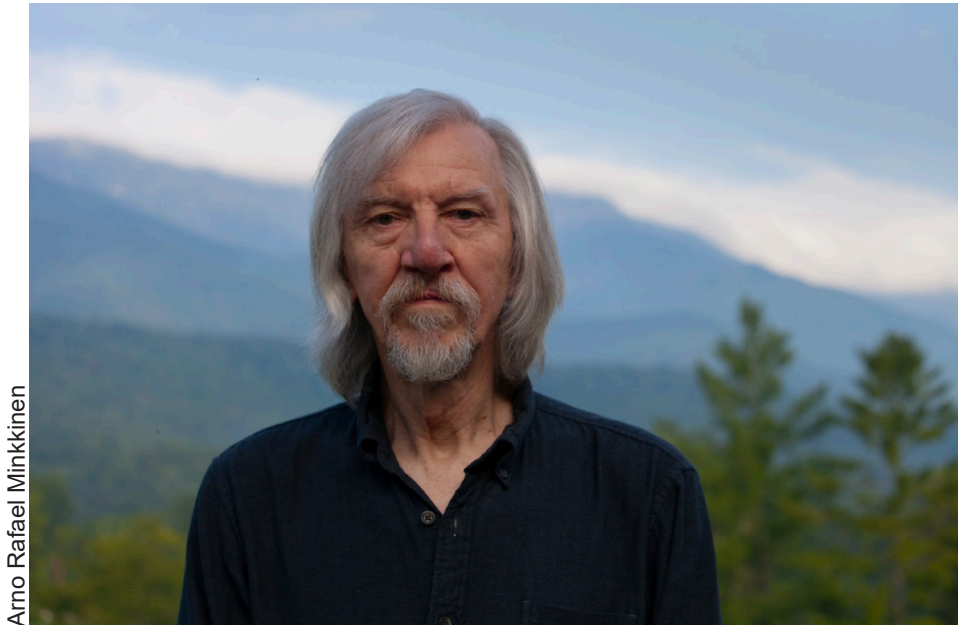


ACADÉMIE
DES BEAUX-ARTS
INSTITUT DE FRANCE

Press release
October 8, 2025

Arno Rafael Minkkinen

**Winner of the 4rd edition of the Académie des beaux-arts
Photography Award - William Klein**



The Académie des beaux-arts Photography Award - William Klein was created in 2019 by the Académie des beaux-arts, with the support of the *Chengdu Contemporary Image Museum*, and pays tribute to the work of William Klein (1926-2022).

A lifetime achievement award, the prize honors a single photographer of any nationality for their body of work and long-term contribution to the field of photography. The laureate is awarded the sum of 120,000 euros. The award is held every two years, alternating with the Prix de Photographie Marc Ladreit de Lacharrière - Académie des beaux-arts, which rewards established photographers working or residing in France.

The prize was thus awarded to Raghu Rai (India) in 2019, to Annie Leibovitz (United States) in 2021, and to Graciela Iturbide (Mexico) in 2023.

In 2025, the prize will be awarded to Arno Rafael Minkkinen.

The Award will be given in the Grande salle des séances of the Palais de l'Institut de France on Friday, November 14, 2025, by the Permanent Secretary Laurent Petitgirard, and the founder of the *Chengdu Contemporary Image Museum*, Zhong Weixing.

The Finnish-American photographer is also the guest of the *Planches Contact Festival*, which will present the results of his residency at *Les Franciscaines* and a retrospective exhibition on the beach of Deauville from October 18, 2025, to January 4, 2026.

An exhibition of the photographer's work will also be held at the *Chengdu Contemporary Image Museum* (China).

Arno Rafael Minkkinen

Arno Rafael Minkkinen is a Finnish American photographer, born in Helsinki in 1945. Six years later his parents immigrated to the United States, settling in Finntown, Brooklyn, New York. Commencing his studies with philosophy and religion at Wagner College, he graduated with a BA in English Literature in 1967. His professional career began as a copywriter on Madison Avenue working on the Minolta camera account among other national brands. A headline he wrote in 1971—“What happens inside your mind can happen inside a camera”—persuaded him to become that photographer by enrolling in a workshop with Diane Arbus, which was cancelled just before it was to begin. John Benson took over and guided Minkkinen to find his own pathway. Accepted to the graduate program at Rhode Island School of Design, he studied under Harry Callahan, obtaining his MFA degree in 1974. Currently Emeritus Professor at the University of Massachusetts Lowell, Minkkinen’s 36-year teaching career began in Finland (1974-76) at the Lahti Institute of Design and at the Taideteolinen Korkeakoulu in Helsinki, today Aalto University. Four years followed as Assistant Professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) where he curated the first comprehensive exhibition of Finnish Photography in America. A second two-year teaching stint at both Finnish schools (1984-86) allowed for an international curation of Finnish photography held in 1986 at the Theater Antique in Arles. In 1992, Minkkinen was appointed deputy consultant for Septembre de la Photo (better known as *Finnice*) with a Riviera-wide exhibition of 28 Finnish photographers. To this day, *Finnice* stands as one of the largest exports of Finnish art to date.

For Minkkinen, photography reveals the invisible and invites us to see the world as a child does. In his work, he explores the relationship between the body and nature, without any subsequent manipulation of any kind. Between reality and fiction, he reinvents the black-and-white self-portrait with graphic compositions in which the body becomes a tool for creating astonishing visual constructions. He works alone and creates his images through visual imagination and physical performance. He is rarely able to see what his camera saw at the moment of exposure. In nearly all his shoots, he is his own assistant.

Minkkinen’s works are included in the collections of MoMA (New York), the Finnish National Gallery, the Centre Pompidou, and The Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography among dozens of other international institutions. He has received numerous awards, including the Order of the Lion First Class in Finland (1992), the Finnish State Art Prize in Photography (2006), the Lucie Award at Carnegie Hall (2013), a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship (2015), the Pro Finlandia medal (2000), and Honored Educator Award (2019) from the Society for Photographic Education (SPE). Minkkinen currently lives with his wife Sandra of 56 years at Fosters Pond in Andover, Massachusetts, with numerous visits to Finland recently as a first-time screenwriter and filmmaker.

Visuals for the press



Aare River, Berne, Switzerland, 1975



Kuusamo, Finland, 1976



Fosters Pond, 1989 II



Hite Utah, 1997



Oulujarvi Afternoon, 2009



Swan Song, 2025

The Jury

- **Mr. Laurent Petitgirard**, secrétaire perpétuel of the Académie des beaux-arts, co-chairman
- **Mr. Zhong Weixing**, fondateur du *Chengdu Contemporary image museum*, co-chairman
- **Mr. Yann Arthus-Bertrand**, member of the photography section of the Académie
- **Ms. Valérie Belin**, member of the photography section of the Académie
- **Mr. Jean Gaumy**, member of the photography section of the Académie
- **Ms. Françoise Huguier**, member of the photography section of the Académie
- **Ms. Dominique Issermann**, member of the photography section of the Académie
- **Ms. Sylvie Hugues**, correspondent of the photography section of the Académie
- **Mr. Eric Karsenty**, correspondent of the photography section of the Académie
- **Mr. Jean-Luc Monterosso**, correspondent of the photography section of the Académie
- **Ms. Florence Bourgeois**, director of Paris Photo
- **Mr. Marin Karmitz**, collector, producer, director, and founder of the *MK2* company




The Académie des beaux-arts

The Académie des beaux-arts (French Academy of Fine Arts) is one of the five academies that make up the Institut de France (Institute of France). Institution under the protection of the President of the Republic, composed of 67 members, 16 foreign associate members and 67 correspondents, it promotes artistic creation through all forms of expression, notably by organizing competitions, awarding annual prizes, funding artist residencies, distributing grants and working to champion France's cultural heritage. A consultative body for the public authorities, it also considers artistic issues. In order to carry out these missions, the Académie des Beaux-Arts manages its heritage, which consists of donations and bequests, as well as important cultural sites such as the Musée Marmottan Monet (Paris), the Villa and Library Marmottan (Boulogne-Billancourt), the House and Gardens of Claude Monet (Giverny), the Villa and Gardens Ephrussi de Rothschild (Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat), the Maison-Atelier Lurçat (Paris), the Villa Dufraine (Chars), the Apartment of Auguste Perret (Paris), and the Galerie Vivienne (Paris), of which she is co-owner and where she has just opened *La Galerie de l'Académie des beaux-arts*, her new exhibition space.

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