

Laudation German Photobook Prize 19|20

The German Photobook Prize is a competition in which the best photo books from the German-Speaking countries are selected by a team of jury. Always looking for something “special” and “extraordinary”, the jury honored the achievement of the authors, the photographers, the editors and the producers of the submitted photo books. In their laudations, the members of the jury team provided insight into the reasons for their decisions and at the same time offered inspiring „Reading and Viewing Advice“ for the general public to appreciate the awarded books.



German Photobook Prize 19|20
Category: Photographer



Winner in Gold

Minkkinen

Photographer: Arno Rafael Minkkinen
Text Author: Keith F.Davis, Vicki Goldberg,
Arno Rafael Minkkinen
Design: Kehrer Design and Arno Rafael
Minkkinen



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"I believe in the magic of photography and that reality brings something unexpected to light" Arno Rafael Minkkinen

This year a magnificent 300-page book of photographs about the photographer Arno Rafael Minkkinen has been published. The publication, edited by Kehrer Verlag, provides an impressive overview of the Finnish-American photographer's five decades of artistic work.

Arno Rafael Minkkinen was born in Finland in 1945 and grew up in America, where he still lives and works today. His photographic works are not only published and exhibited worldwide, but are also represented in the collections of important museums such as the MoMA in New York or the Centre Pompidou in Paris.

Arno Rafael Minkkinen finds his very original and independent attitude towards photography and the world through a key experience in 1971: When the workshop leader wants to send the young photographer Minkkinen home because he missed the artistic quality in his photographs of horses and cows, Minkkinen experimented with a found mirror in nature during a break of the seminar. He took off his clothes and photographed the reflection of himself in the mirror. A life theme with reversed roles is found: Minkkinen becomes model and the camera the photographer. And with the self-portrait as a concept, from then on he moves not with the camera but in front of it.

Minkkinen tracks down scenarios that we have never seen before: For example he fits in the trees, pauses in and above the water or in the middle of a snowy landscape. He creates self-portraits in black and white, in which his body is poetically, dramatically and or also reflects in a humorous way the landscape with which he interacts. "When you're alone naked in the woods or on the beach, you get probably the closest to the feeling of creation," says the now 74-year-old, "I love digging my toes into the forest floor or climbing barefoot and bare-assed over the rocks on the lake shore like a monkey.

With his intention to restore the lost relationship to nature through his own body, Minkkinen is rather the exception as a male artist of his generation. In the 1970s, it was predominantly female artists, such as Ana Mendieta, Francesca Woodman, and Birgit Jürgenssen, who, in response to the then developing environmental consciousness, used photography to depict an empathetic identification with nature.



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Today, at a time when we are increasingly feeling the destructive effects of our changing environment, Minkkinen is more relevant than ever. He creates breath-taking images that focus on humanity itself - beyond individualistic self-representation and class affiliation.

His sensual and at the same time exactly composed photographs are carried by the posture, that we interact with the environment around us and are part of nature, which surrounds us. If he exposes himself to the elements that flow through us and carry us, then he stages a physical presence for us in the here and now. In this way he shows us, not least in the truest sense of the word, his own body. That according to the philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, we not only have a body, but are physically present because of it, and can taste, smell and feel our environment through it.

The jury has awarded this magnificent volume not only because Minkkinen's photography is aesthetically and conceptually convincing as a timeless outstanding photographic position, but also because the volume is simply well done in terms of its concept, the essays it contains, its design and in terms of workmanship.

We congratulate the artist Arno Rafael Minkkinen and the Kehrer Verlag on the German Photo Book Award 19|20.

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