

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**VMFA Launches the Aaron Siskind Award for Outstanding Photographic Practice**

Applications for the Aaron Siskind Award for Photography accepted July 1 through September 1, 2025



*Martha's Vineyard Rocks 111B 1954*, 1954, Aaron Siskind (American, 1903–1991), gelatin silver print. Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of the Aaron Siskind Foundation, 2019.1081, © Virginia Museum of Fine Arts

**Richmond, VA** — The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) announced today the establishment of the VMFA Aaron Siskind Award for excellence in contemporary photography. The VMFA Aaron Siskind Award is intended to celebrate Aaron Siskind's (1903–1991) artistic legacy, support the practice of photography as a vital means of creative expression and honor the role that the Aaron Siskind Foundation played in supporting photographers through the Individual Photographer's Fellowship, which was awarded for 28 years.

“Supporting artists is a core part of our mission, and the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is proud to fund photographic artists through the Aaron Siskind Award,” said museum Director and CEO Alex Nyerges. “These extraordinary awards will provide recipients with transformative financial resources so that they can pursue major artistic projects.”

The [VMFA Aaron Siskind Award for Photography](#) is open to U.S. citizens and permanent residents for whom photography is their primary vocation. The award is designed to support early- to mid-career artists as well as established photographers who have demonstrated a sustained commitment to their practice and who may not yet have received significant critical recognition.

The goal of VMFA's Aaron Siskind Award for Photography is to provide material support that enables photographers to complete a meaningful body of work — whether the continuation or finalization of a photographic series, the development of an exhibition, monograph or book project, or another major creative endeavor.

Dr. Sarah Kennel, VMFA's Aaron Siskind Curator of Photography and Director of the Raysor Center, will administer the annual award program. "Aaron Siskind had a profound influence on generations of photographers — not only through his own groundbreaking work, but also as a passionate teacher and advocate for the medium in all its forms. With this new award, VMFA deepens its commitment to photography as a vital and evolving art form. We are honored to support bold, visionary photographers whose work resonates with the spirit of creativity and experimentation that Siskind embodied."

VMFA invites entries from artists working with still photo-based media. Applications will be available online from July 1 through September 1, 2025.

Applications will be evaluated by a panel of distinguished professionals in the field of photography and the visual arts, including Kaitlin Booher, the William and Sarah Ross Soter Associate Curator of Photography at the Columbus Museum of Art; Brendan Embser, senior editor of *Aperture*; and Carla Williams, photographer, archivist and scholar.

The prize winners will be selected based on the strength of their artistic vision, the quality and significance of their proposed projects and their contribution to the broader field of contemporary photography. Two artists will each receive an unrestricted prize of \$25,000 in support of their ongoing creative work. Awards will be announced in November 2025.

For guidelines and a link to the application, visit [www.VMFA.museum](http://www.VMFA.museum).

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#### **About the Aaron Siskind Collection at VMFA**

In 2020, VMFA received an extraordinary gift of more than 8,000 photographs by [Aaron Siskind](#) from the Aaron Siskind Foundation in New York. Established by the artist in 1984, the foundation's mission was to preserve and protect Siskind's artistic legacy, as well as to foster knowledge and appreciation for photography through research, publications, exhibitions and an annual fellowship prize for individual photographers. When the foundation dissolved its operations in 2020, it sought to transfer the collection to an American art museum that would be willing to administer the annual fellowship prize and care for, interpret and display the foundation's core collection of Siskind's photographs. VMFA was awarded this major gift as a result of the museum's demonstrated commitment to photography and its outstanding fellowship program.

#### **About the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts**

The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in Richmond, Virginia, is one of the largest comprehensive art museums in the United States. VMFA, which opened in 1936, is a state agency and privately endowed educational institution. Its purpose is to collect, preserve, exhibit and interpret art, and to encourage the study of the arts. Through the Office of Statewide Partnerships Program, the museum offers curated exhibitions, arts-related audiovisual programs, symposia, lectures, conferences, and workshops by visual and performing artists. In addition to presenting a wide array of special exhibitions, the museum provides visitors with the opportunity to experience a global collection of art that spans more than 6,000 years. VMFA's permanent holdings encompass more than 50,000 artworks, including the largest public collection of Fabergé outside of Russia, the finest collection of Art Nouveau outside of Paris and one of the nation's finest collections of American art. VMFA is also home to important collections of Chinese art, English silver, French Impressionist, Post-Impressionist, British sporting and modern and contemporary art, as well as renowned South Asian, Himalayan and African art. In May 2010, VMFA opened the James W. and Frances G. McGlothlin Wing I after a transformative expansion, previously the largest in its history. A new expansion, the McGlothlin Wing II, is planned to open in 2028. Comprising more than 170,000 square feet, it will be the largest expansion in the museum's history and will make VMFA the fourth largest comprehensive art museum in the United States.

Recently named the 11th best art museum in the U.S. by *The Washington Post*, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is the only art museum in the United States open 365 days a year with free general admission. For additional information, telephone (804) 340-1400 or visit [www.VMFA.museum](http://www.VMFA.museum).

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