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**GETTY MUSEUM PRESENTS A RETROSPECTIVE EXHIBITION  
OF WORKS BY PHOTOGRAPHER MINOR WHITE**

**Retrospective is the first since 1989, and includes  
never-before-seen photographs from the artist's archive**



Minor White (American, 1908 - 1976). 72 N. Union Street, Rochester, 1960. Copyright: Reproduced with permission of the Minor White Archive, Princeton University Art Museum. © Trustees of Princeton University. Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauer

LOS ANGELES – Controversial, misunderstood, and sometimes overlooked, Minor White (American 1908–1976) pursued a life in photography with great energy and ultimately extended the expressive possibilities of the medium. A tireless worker, White's long career as a photographer, teacher, editor, curator, and critic was highly influential and remains central to understanding the history of photographic modernism. ***Minor White: Manifestations of the Spirit*, on view July 8–October 19, 2014 at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Center** is the first major retrospective of his work since 1989.

The exhibition includes never-before-seen photographs from the artist's archive at Princeton University, recent Getty Museum acquisitions, a significant group of loans from the collection of Daniel Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser, alongside loans from the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Portland Art Museum, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Also featured is White's masterly photographic sequence *Sound of One Hand* (1965).

"Minor White had a profound impact on his many students, colleagues, and the photographers who considered him a true innovator, making this retrospective of his work long overdue" says Timothy Potts, director of the J. Paul Getty Museum. "The exhibition brings together a number of loans from private and public collections, and offers a rare opportunity to see some of his greatest work alongside unseen photographs from his extensive archive."

One of White's goals was to photograph objects not only for what they are but also for what they may suggest, and his pictures teem with symbolic and metaphorical allusions. White was a closeted homosexual, and his sexual desire for men was a source of turmoil and frustration. He confided his feelings in the journal he kept throughout his life and sought comfort in a variety of Western and Eastern religious practices. This search for spiritual transcendence continually influenced his artistic philosophy.

### **Early Career, 1937–45**

In 1937, White relocated from Minneapolis, where he was born and educated, to Portland, Oregon. Determined to become a photographer, he read all the photography books he could get his hands on and joined the Oregon Camera Club to gain access to their darkroom. Within five years, he was offered his first solo exhibition at the Portland Art Museum (1942). White's early work exhibits his nascent spiritual awakening while exploring the natural magnificence of Oregon. His *Cabbage Hill, Oregon (Grande Ronde Valley)* (1941) uses a split-rail fence and a coil of barbed wire to demonstrate the hard physical labor required to live off the land as well as the redemption of humankind through Christ's sacrifice on the cross.



Minor White (American, 1908 - 1976). *Cabbage Hill, Oregon (Grande Ronde Valley)*, 1941. © Trustees of Princeton University. The Minor White Archive, Princeton University Art Museum, bequest of Minor White.

During World War II, White served in Army Intelligence in the South Pacific. Upon discharge, rather than return to Oregon, he spent the winter in New York City. There, he studied art history with Meyer Shapiro at Columbia University, museum work with Beaumont Newhall at the Museum of Modern Art, and creative thought in photography with photographer, gallerist, and critic Alfred Stieglitz (American, 1864–1946).

### **Midcareer, 1946–64**

In 1946, famed photographer Ansel Adams (American, 1902–1984) invited White to teach photography at the California School of Fine Arts (CSFA) in San Francisco. The following year, White established himself as head of the program and developed new methods for training students. His own work during this period began to shift toward the metaphorical with the creation of images charged with symbolism and a critical aspect known as “equivalence,” meaning an image may serve as an idea or emotional state beyond the subject pictured. In 1952, White co-founded the seminal photography journal *Aperture* and was its editor until 1975.

In 1953, White accepted a job as an assistant curator at the George Eastman House (GEH) in Rochester, New York, where he organized exhibitions and edited GEH’s magazine *Image*. Coinciding with his move east was an intensification of his study of Christian mysticism, Zen Buddhism, and the I Ching. In 1955, he began teaching a class in photojournalism at the Rochester Institute of Technology and shortly after began to accept one or two live-in students to work on a variety of projects that were alternately practical and spiritually enriching. During the late 1950s and continuing until the mid-1960s, White traveled the United States during the summers, making his own photographs and organizing photographic workshops in various cities across the country.

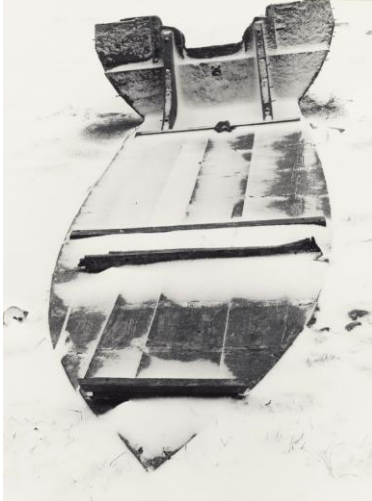
By the late 1950s, at the height of his career, White pushed himself to do the impossible—to make the invisible world of the spirit visible through photography. White’s masterpiece—and the summation of his persistent search for a way to communicate ecstasy—is the sequence *Sound of One Hand*, so named after the Zen koan which asks “What is the sound of one hand clapping?”

“White’s sequences are meant to be viewed from left to right, preferably in a state of relaxation and heightened awareness,” says Paul Martineau, associate curator of photographs at the J. Paul Getty Museum and curator of the exhibition. “White called on the viewer to be an active participant in experiencing the varied moods and associations that come from moving from one photograph to the next.”



Minor White (American, 1908 - 1976). *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*, Pultneyville, New York, negative October 1957; print 1960. Reproduced with permission of the Minor White Archive, Princeton University Art Museum. © Trustees of Princeton University. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles, Purchased in part with funds provided by Daniel Greenberg, Susan Steinhauser, and the Greenberg Foundation

### Late Career, 1965–76



Minor White (American, 1908 - 1976).  
*Essence of Boat*, Lanesville,  
Massachusetts, 1967. Reproduced with  
permission of the Minor White Archive,  
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Greenberg and Susan Steinhauser.

In 1965, White was appointed professor of creative photography at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), where he developed an ambitious program in photographic education. As he aged, he became increasingly concerned with his legacy, and began working on his first monograph, *Mirrors Messages Manifestations*, which was published by *Aperture* in 1969. The following year, White was awarded a Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship, and he was the subject of a major traveling retrospective organized by the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1971.

Beginning in the late 1960s and continuing until the early 1970s, White organized a series of groundbreaking thematic exhibitions at MIT—the first of which served as a springboard for forming the university's photographs collection.

In 1976, White died of heart failure and bequeathed his home to the Aperture Foundation and his photographic archive of more than fifteen thousand objects to Princeton University.

The exhibition will also include work by two of White's students, each celebrated photographers in their own right, Paul Caponigro (American, born 1932) and Carl Chiarenza (American, born 1935).

"An important aspect of Minor White's legacy was his influence on the next generation of photographers," says Martineau. "Over the course of a career that lasted nearly four decades, he managed to maintain personal and professional connections with hundreds of young photographers—an impressive feat for a man dedicated to the continued exploration of photography's possibilities."

***Minor White: Manifestations of the Spirit* is on view July 8–October 19, 2014 at the J. Paul Getty Museum, Getty Center.** The exhibition is curated by Paul Martineau, associate curator of photographs at the Getty Museum. An accompanying publication by Martineau and published by Getty Publications will accompany the exhibition.

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