

Mexican photographer Graciela Iturbide wins Spain's Princess of Asturias Arts Award



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In her long artistic career, Iturbide documented scenes of everyday life in Mexico with a "profound, respectful and evocative gaze." (Mario Jasso/Cuartoscuro)

Mexican photographer Graciela Iturbide, renowned for her haunting black-and-white images that bridge documentary realism and poetic symbolism, has been awarded the 2025 Princess of Asturias Award for the Arts.

The prestigious honor recognizes her five-decade career capturing Mexico's cultural essence and global human experiences through a lens that jurors called "a profound, respectful and evocative gaze."

Iturbide, 83, learned of the award Friday in a predawn call to her Mexico City home. "I'm very happy and very pleased for photography in Mexico," she told the newspaper *El Universal*, emphasizing that the win celebrates all of the country's "incredible" photographers.

Despite the accolade, she kept to her routine on Friday: finalizing images for a book and hosting friends for lunch.

“Nothing special. That’s how I celebrate,” said Iturbide, [who also won the prestigious William Klein Prize](#) from the French Academy of Fine Arts two years ago.

Her new award is one of eight bestowed annually for the past 45 years by the [Princess of Asturias Foundation](#), a nonprofit based in Spain. The awards recognize outstanding achievements in artistic, scientific, technical, cultural, social and humanitarian fields at an international level.



Graciela Iturbide has won international acclaim for her evocative documentary photography. (Mario Jasso/Cuartoscuro)

In recent years, recipients of the Arts award have included American actress Meryl Streep, Spanish singer Carmen Linares, Serbian performance artist Marina Abramović, Spanish dancer María Pagés, Italian musician Ennio Morricone, American composer John Williams, British theater director Peter Brook, American filmmaker Martin Scorsese and South African artist William Kentridge.

The awards will be presented in October at a ceremony in Oviedo, the capital of the Principality of Asturias, an autonomous community and historic region in northwest Spain.

Spain's King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia will present the awards at the 133-year-old [Campoamor Theatre](#), with 19-year-old [Princess Leonor](#) presiding.

Jurors praised Iturbide's "innovative perspective" and "hypnotic world" blending harsh realities with "spontaneous magic."

Born in 1942, Iturbide abandoned film studies in 1969 to train with her photography mentor [Manuel Álvarez Bravo](#), becoming his assistant. The Mexican, who died at 100 in 2002, was one of the most important figures in 20th century Latin American photography.

Iturbide went on to take photographs in many countries — including in Cuba, Germany, India, Madagascar, Hungary, France and the U.S. — but has always remained deeply rooted in Mexico's cultural landscape.

A late 1970s project documenting Mexico's Seri and Juchitán communities in the Sonoran desert yielded her seminal 1989 book "Juchitán de las Mujeres," showcasing matriarchal Zapotec life.



Iturbide documented life in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in her celebrated book, "Juchitán de las Mujeres." (Toluca Ediciones)

She is also recognized for her series depicting Frida Kahlo's bathroom, shot 20 years ago at the Casa Azul (Frida Kahlo Museum) in [Coyoacán](#). Some of her photos of Kahlo's prosthetic leg, corsets and other medical objects (needed after she suffered [traumatic injuries](#) in a 1925 bus-streetcar collision) were shown in the 2023 exhibit "[Kahlo Without Borders](#)."

Exhibitions at the Centre George Pompidou in Paris, San Francisco's Museum of Modern Art and the Hokkaido Museum of Photography in Japan cemented her global stature.

"Photography is a ritual," Iturbide said. "To photograph the most mythological aspects of people, then step into darkness to develop, to select the most symbolic images."

The jury highlighted her "transcendental vision" of landscapes and objects, noting her evolution from portraiture to capturing "the primitive and contemporary" alike.

The Asturias Foundation called her oeuvre "essential for understanding Latin American photography," a sentiment echoed by art critic Aline Ordaz.

"Her images aren't just seen — they're felt," Ordaz wrote, citing their power to spark dialogue on "identity, gender, and resilience."

Iturbide's nomination was submitted by Spain's ambassador to Mexico, Juan Duarte Cuadrado. She was selected unanimously from 49 candidates across 19 nations. The arts prize includes 50,000 euros (962,000 pesos) and a "trophy" designed by the late Spanish abstract artist Joan Miró.

Other 2025 Princess of Asturias awards announced so far are the Communications and Humanities Award to South Korean-born philosopher Byung-Chul Han, the Literature Award to Spanish novelist and playwright Eduardo Mendoza, and the Social Sciences Award to the Princeton University sociologist and demographer Douglas Massey.

The categories yet to be announced are Sports, International Cooperation, Concordia (issues of humanity, peace and progress), and Scientific and Technical Research.

With reports from [EFE](#), [El Debate](#) and [El Universal](#)