

The Museum of Modern Art

11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019 Tel. 245-3200 Cable: Modernart

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The great structure of Stonehenge, ancient stone monuments of England, Ireland, and Brittany, and pure landscape--these are the subjects for the American photographer Paul Caponigro, whose work will be on view in the Edward Steichen Photography Center of The Museum of Modern Art from October 8 through December 8. About 35 photographs from the past three years are presented in this exhibition selected by Peter C. Bunnell, Associate Curator of Photography.

Caponigro approaches his subjects in a straightforward way, and he renders with great care the substance of the visual world in the service of poetic and emotional ends. "His work marks a conception of nature that has not been so purely expressed by a photographer since Alfred Stieglitz four decades ago," says Mr. Bunnell. "Like Stieglitz, Caponigro holds the poetic conviction that the emotional forces generated by a place or an object can be made visible. Thus the subjects of his photographs are not these awesome stone constructions, erected nearly four thousand years ago, but the acts of those men who built them in an effort to measure and to symbolize their relationship to the powers of nature. Various of these megaliths, dolmens, and circles impress one with different feelings--of awe, calm, or joy--and the photographs do also."

The unfolding of spiritual insights also takes place in his landscapes. "He discloses in these photographs not geography or architecture but the eternal contest between man and nature. These pictures succeed because of the depth of the artist's inspiration, the dignity of his seeing, and the lucidity of his craftsmanship."

The process is a conscious one. Writing for a monograph of his work published in 1967 by Aperture, Caponigro observed, "Photography's potential as a great image-maker and communicator is really no different from the same potential in the best poetry where familiar, everyday words, placed within a special context, can soar above the intellect and touch subtle reality in a unique way." Thus Caponigro's work belongs to the tradition of straightforward photographers such as Minor White, with whom he studied, Edward Weston,

(more)

Paul Strand, or Stieglitz.

His work is highly personal and intense: "Photography is a medium, a language, through which I might come to experience directly, live more closely with, the interaction between myself and nature," he has written.

In 1966 Caponigro was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship which allowed him to spend a year in Ireland, where he made the majority of the photographs exhibited here. He was born in 1932 and first studied piano before turning to photography. Since 1960 he has devoted much time to teaching and is currently conducting private workshops in Connecticut, where he lives.

The work of Paul Caponigro has been shown in several exhibitions at The Museum of Modern Art, including The Sense of Abstraction in Contemporary Photography in 1960 and The Photographer's Eye in 1964.

Paul Caponigro: Recent Photographs is one in a continuing series of small one-man exhibitions in the Museum's Edward Steichen Photography Center, where an historical selection of about 150 prints is always on view.

Photographs and additional information available from Elizabeth Shaw, Director, Department of Public Information, and Patricia Bauman, Coordinator of Press Services, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, N.Y. 10019. 245-3200.

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PAUL CAPONIGRO: RECENT PHOTOGRAPHS

October 8 - December 8, 1968

Wall Label

Paul Caponigro is concerned with the heroic aspiration of man. This ambition, recreated in these photographs, is the reconciliation of our primitive beliefs with our more developed notions of religion and morality. His work marks a conception of nature that has not been so purely expressed by a photographer since Alfred Stieglitz four decades ago.

Like Stieglitz, Caponigro holds the poetic conviction that the emotional forces generated by a place or an object can be made visible. Thus the subjects of his photographs are not these awesome stone constructions, erected nearly four thousand years ago, but the acts of those men who built them in an effort to measure and to symbolize their relationship to the powers of nature. The intensity of their effort and the eloquence of their creations rival the monumental proportions of the earth and sky to which these assemblies are inextricably linked. Various of these megaliths, dolmens, and circles impress one with different feelings - of awe, calm, or joy - and the photographs do also. In the presence of these monuments our vision is raised up from the earth, and through these photographs our universal and primitive spirit is stirred and raised.

The pure landscape is seen to be no less alive. Sensuous and lush, the earth embodies its own freedom; a freedom unlike that of man. Caponigro turns to the landscape to seek other truths and to reveal to us man's first gesture of life - the taking of space. He discloses in these photographs not geography or architecture but the eternal contest between man and nature. These pictures succeed because of the depth of the artist's inspiration, the dignity of his seeing and the lucidity of his craftsmanship.

Peter C. Bunnell

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Biography

Paul Caponigro was born in Boston on December 7, 1932. He first studied piano but in 1952 and 1953, while in Boston and San Francisco, he recognized the creative potential in photography. He has studied with Benjamin Chin, Alfred Richter and Minor White. Since 1960 he has devoted considerable time to teaching and to conducting private workshops. In 1966 he was awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship which allowed him to reside for one year in Ireland where he made the majority of the photographs exhibited here. His earlier work was published in the monograph Paul Caponigro (1967). Today he resides with his wife and son in Connecticut.

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PAUL CAPONIGRO

Recent Photographs October 8 - December 8, 1968

CHECKLIST

Right from Wall Label

1. Detail of Stone Circle. County Wicklow, Ireland. 1967 (68.1389)
2. Stonehenge. Wiltshire, England. 1967 (68.1363)
3. Near Deer Park. County Sligo, Ireland. 1967 (68.1365)
4. Landscape. Poolaphuca, County Wicklow, Ireland. 1967 (68.1372)
5. Carnac. Brittany, France. 1967 (68.1383)
6. Stone Alignment. Carrowmore, County Sligo, Ireland. 1966 (68.1380)
7. Stonehenge. Wiltshire, England. 1967 (68.1361)
8. Near Creevykeel. County Sligo, Ireland. 1967 (68.1374)
9. Glencar Falls. County Sligo, Ireland. 1967 (68.1366)
10. Garden. Awghrim, County Galway, Ireland. 1966 (68.1371)
11. Stonehenge. Wiltshire, England. 1967 (68.1382)
12. Ruined Dolmen. County Sligo, Ireland. 1967 (68.1390)
13. Avebury Stone Circle. Avebury, Wiltshire, England. 1967 (68.1386)
14. Ardara Dolmen. County Donegal, Ireland. 1967 (68.1388)
15. Carnac. Brittany, France. 1967 (68.1387)
16. Awghrim. County Galway, Ireland. 1966 (68.1394)
17. Carnac. Brittany, France. 1967 (68.1364)
18. From Deer Park. County Sligo, Ireland. 1966 (68.1396)
19. Carnac. Brittany, France. 1967 (68.1385)
20. Avebury Stone Circle (detail), Avebury, Wiltshire, England. 1967 (68.1384)
21. Kiltiernan Dolmen. County Dublin, Ireland. 1966 (68.1375)
22. Knocknarea. County Sligo, Ireland. 1967 (68.1373)
23. Landscape. County Donegal, Ireland. 1967 (68.1379)
24. Druids' Altar. County Wicklow, Ireland. 1967 (68.1362)
25. Proleek Dolmen. County Louth, Ireland. 1966 (68.1376)
26. Landscape. County Sligo, Ireland. 1967 (68.1378)
27. Gorst. Glenda Loch, County Wicklow, Ireland. 1967 (68.1392)
28. Detail of Stone Circle. County Wicklow, Ireland. 1967 (68.1389)
29. Stonehenge. Wiltshire, England. 1967 (68.1381)
30. Awghrim. County Galway, Ireland. 1966 (68.1368)
31. Sheep. County Wicklow, Ireland. 1967 (68.1370)