



Behind the Eye
PAUL CAPONIGRO

Pucker Gallery • Boston



DETAIL, STONEHENGE, WILTSHIRE, ENGLAND, 1972 | 13.5 x 9.5" | PC194



ROCKWALL, CT, 1958 | 10 x 12.5" | PC15

Behind the Eye

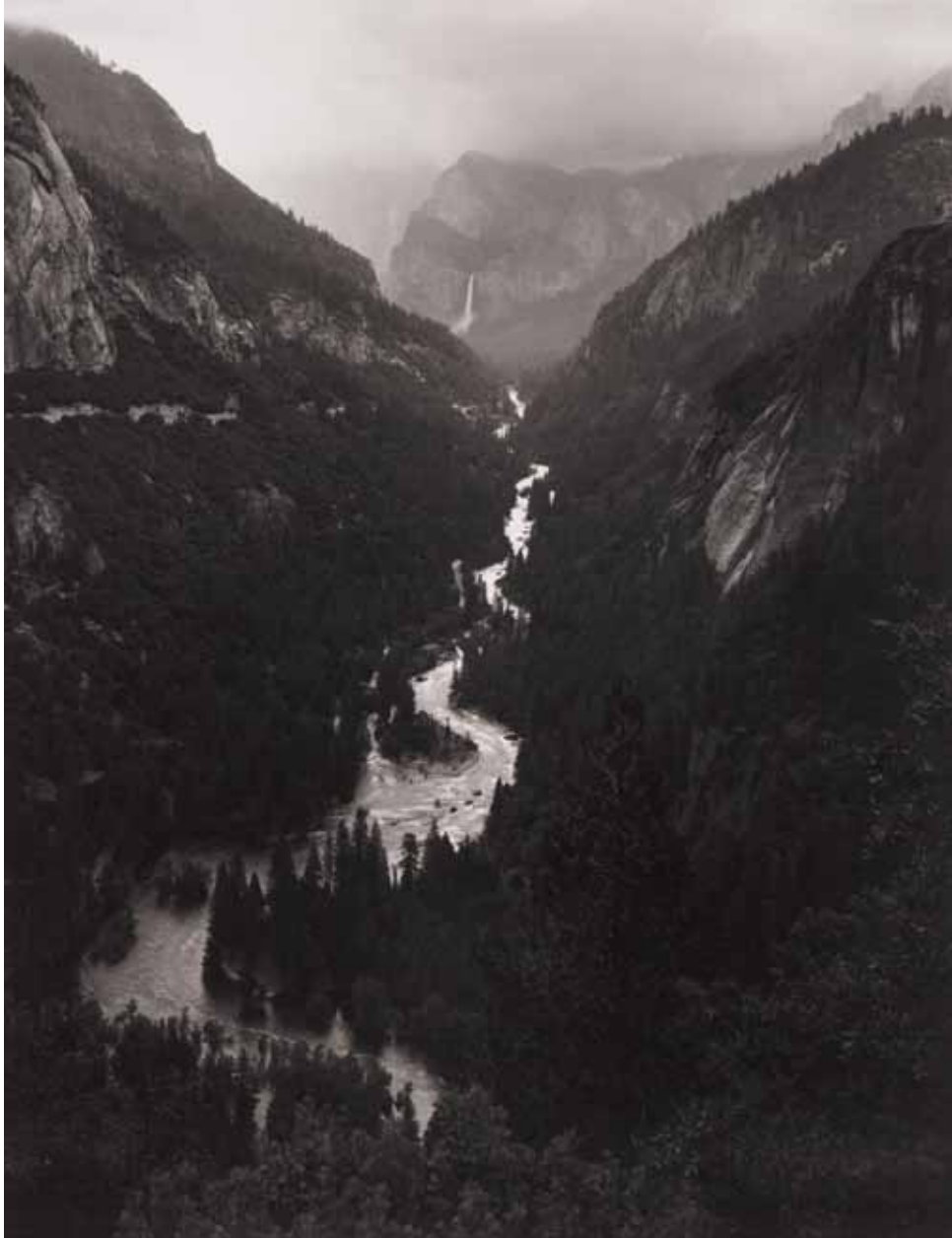
PAUL CAPONIGRO

The visual art of photography requires several sets of eyes: the vision of the photographer, the mechanisms of a camera, and the perceptions of a viewer. Although the gateways for the enabling light are eyes or a lens, what lies behind these entry points determines any resulting aesthetic satisfaction. Paul Caponigro has created many distinctively exquisite black and white photographs which express uniquely engaging cerebral characteristics. Certainly, it is a combination of personal sensitivity and exceptional professional skill which provides the genesis of these images.

Technically, Paul, like his friends and mentors, uses a large format camera, darkroom negative development and silver gelatin paper printing. He was schooled in the Zone system by Ansel Adams and the “what-do-you-see” reading analysis techniques by Minor White. However, Paul

developed his own singular approach to photography as he expressed, “My goal was to keep techniques in the service of the meditative attitudes that allowed a deeper emotional participation. Rules, systems, and zones arranged neatly on a two-dimensional surface would not suffice.”

Behind the eye of a camera lens is a plethora of objects and processes requiring immeasurable choices to optically transform materials into an experience. Which film? Which paper? Which chemicals for developing both negative and print? What exposure time for capturing and recreating an image? These are just a few of the many decisions a photographer must make in pursuit of the print they envision. Understanding and controlling these tools is critical, but for Paul, there is something of equal, if not greater, importance. “In my own work, I make a distinction between my physical



MERCED RIVER, YOSEMITE, CA, 1969 | 12 x 9.5" | PC55

techniques and a deeper craft; I see the latter as my “inner” technique.”

To understand and appreciate the true beauty of Paul’s prints, we need to look behind the eye of this miraculous photographer. His ability to evoke an expression of human emotion from such simple natural objects as a megalith at Stonehenge, a tidal pool on Revere Beach, or a single apple in his NYC studio stems from his search for meaning and connection to something beyond the obvious. Perhaps, in the best sense of the phrase, he is a spiritual photographer. Although early in his career, Paul discussed Zen Buddhism with Minor White and was introduced to the philosophy of George Gurdjieff by Walter Chappell, he ultimately identified and followed his own internal metaphysical path, something

he felt had been within him since early childhood. He acknowledges the importance of accepting and nourishing this inner process for creating his photographs. “The most important aspect of the process of making negatives or prints is maintaining enough distance and stillness to allow a pristine experience to pass through the instruments to the inner eye.” Somewhere in the beautiful complexity of the brain, the seen can take on meaning beyond mere recognition. It is the essence of that process which Paul captures within his remarkably uncomplicated photos of nature’s world.

For the viewer, it may be helpful to understand how and perhaps why Paul creates, as they encounter any one of his images. Behind the eye of each viewer is another unique “inner eye,” the result of that individual’s life experience.



SCOTTISH THISTLE, ROCHESTER, NY, 1958 | 13.5 x 10.75" | PC62

If the goal of photographically capturing and conveying something more than the literal picture is successful, it provides an opportunity to share something “inner eye” to “inner eye.” Such an exchange may be the ineffable basis for what we call the aesthetic experience. There seems to necessarily be a sharing between artist and appreciator, at least to some degree, of attitudes, approaches and value systems for optimal transference to occur. The biological model might describe a viewer as having receptors for the artistic ligands they encounter. Without those receptors and ligands there is very little response. Metaphorically, those receptors and ligands are products of the “inner eye.”

Paul’s process for making photographs is quiet, contemplative, and internal with a penetrating perception of

the emotional elements found in the true beauty of nature. A viewer can most intimately connect with Paul’s photographs by replicating his methodology. Take time to engage; use quiet contemplation; allow distant memories and contemporary emotions to participate; feel the picture. As the accomplished ceramic artist, Brother Thomas Bezanson, once noted, “It is amazing how much art depends on ‘seeing’. There are people who look but do not see, people who listen but do not hear....” Paul similarly described one of the tasks of a photographer (and equally a task for the viewer) “to use the eye as an ear would hear music; and try to grasp the silver voice of the print.” You are invited to engage with Paul’s prints, go behind the eye into that special psychic space where you can resonate with and joyfully celebrate the awaiting clarity.



OLSON HOUSE, CUSHING, ME, 1990 | 9.5 x 13" | PC58



DOORWAY, OLSON HOUSE, CUSHING, ME, 1991 | 9.25 x 13.25" | PC192



LIGHT SHAFT, NAHANT SEASHORE, 1964 | 10 x 13.25" | PC199



EGRET FEATHER, CUSHING, ME, 2012
13.5 x 7.5" | PC111



FUNGUS ON MARBLE TABLE, IPSWICH, MA, 1962
13 x 10.5" | PC49



SAND GARDEN #2, TOFUKUJI TEMPLE, KYOTO, JAPAN, 1976 | 13.25 x 19.25" | PC93



RUNNING WHITE DEER, COUNTY WICKLOW, IRELAND, 1967 | 7.5 x 19" | PC51



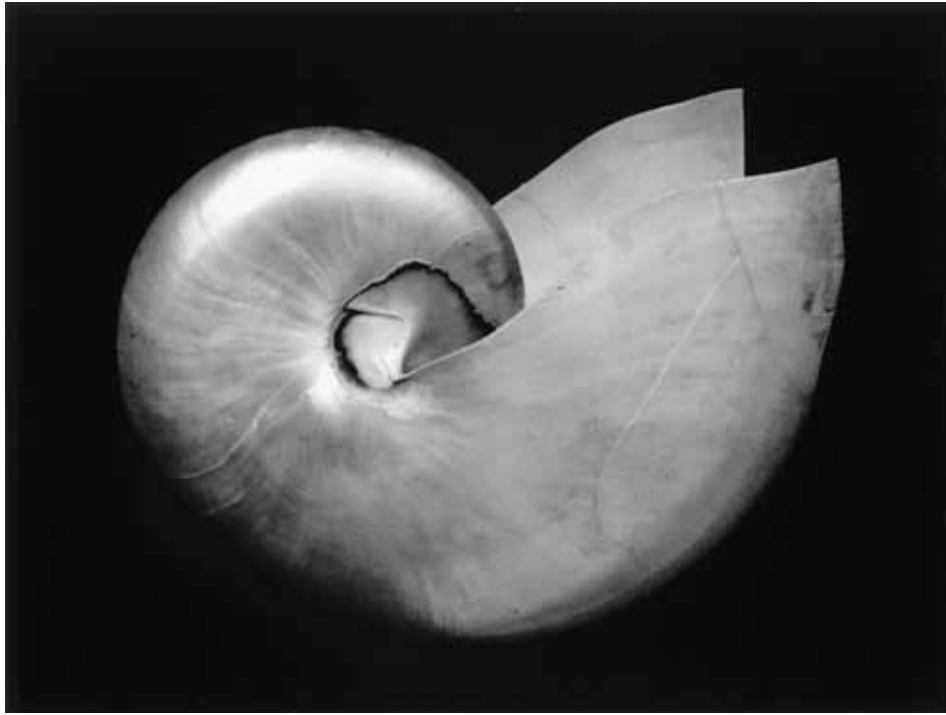
LITTLE RIVER #2, REDDING, CT, 1970
12.5 x 10" | PC150



NEGATIVE PRINT, BREWSTER, NY, 1963
13.25 x 10" | PC13



REFLECTING STREAM, REDDING, CT, 1968 | 13.25 x 18.25" | PC14



SHELL, IPSWICH, MA, 1960 | 10 x 13.25" | PC196



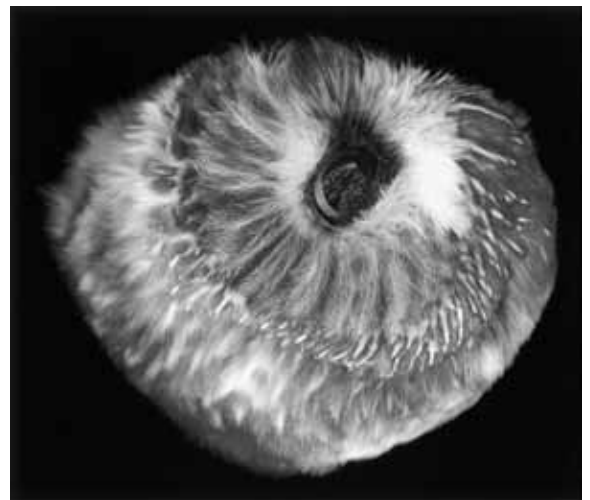
ANCIENT STANDING STONES AT STENNESS, ORKNEY ISLES,
SCOTLAND, 1972 | 13.25 x 9.5" | PC132



TOURNOUS ABBEY, FRANCE, 1987 | 13.25 x 9.5" | PC80



PEACH, SANTA FE, NM, 1989 | 7.75 x 10.5" | PC189



OWL FEATHERS, SAN SEBASTIAN, NM, 1982
7.75 x 9" | PC193



BREWSTER, NY, 1963 | 11 x 8.5" | PC198



SUNFLOWERS, NY, 1969 | 12.25 x 10" | PC190



TWO DOLLS ON HOBBYHORSE, BOSTON, MA, 1960 | 9.75 x 12.5" | PC197



MOTH AND BOWL, CUSHING, ME, 2008 | 10 x 10.75" | PC8



GRAPEVINE, TECATE, MEXICO, 1978 | 8.75 x 12.25" | PC167



DETAIL VIEW, LOOKING SOUTH, KERMARIO STONE ALIGNMENTS, 1967 | 9.5 x 13.5" | PC195

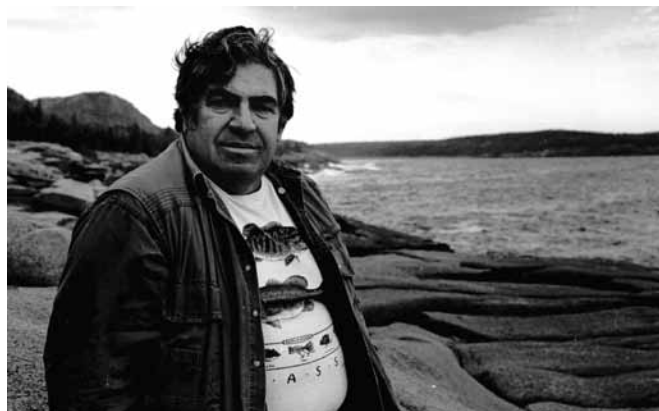
PAUL CAPONIGRO

Born in Boston in 1932, Paul Caponigro is renowned as one of America's most significant photographers. When he was thirteen, he began to explore the world around him with his camera and has subsequently sustained a career spanning seven decades.

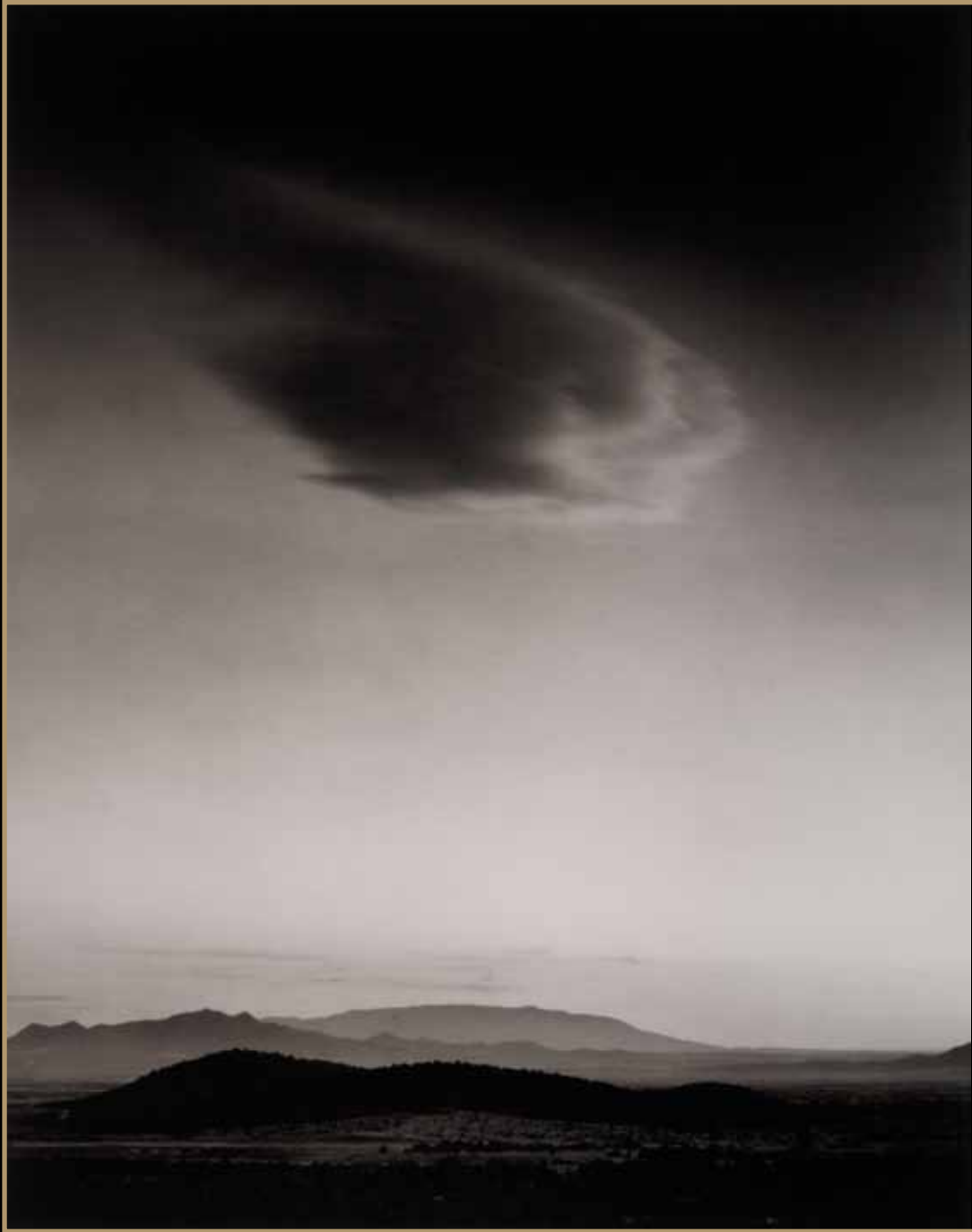
His first solo exhibition opened at the George Eastman House in 1958 and his reputation for uncompromising skill with the large format camera was established. Caponigro was a student of Minor White (1908-1976) and a young contemporary of West Coast photographers Ansel Adams (1902-1984) and Brett Weston (1911-1993). He is currently regarded as one of America's foremost landscape photographers.

Caponigro approaches nature receptively, preferring to utilize an intuitive focus rather than merely arranging or recording forms and surface details. His lasting contribution to photography is not limited to the beauty of his compositions or masterful printing but extends to his unparalleled ability to engage the viewer in the mystical presence concealed in nature.

Paul Caponigro has exhibited and taught throughout the United States and abroad. He is a recipient of two



Guggenheim fellowships and three National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grants, and in 2001 he received the Centenary Medal from the Royal Photographic Society in recognition of his significant contribution to the art of photography. Caponigro's images are included in most history of photography texts and numerous museum collections, including: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, DC; the Art Institute of Chicago; and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.



CLOUD, SAN SEBASTIAN, NM, 1980 | 19.25 x 15.25" | PC45

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DATES:

9 September through 15 October 2023

PUBLIC OPENING RECEPTION:

Saturday 9 September 2023 • 3 to 6 PM

ONLINE EVENTS:

Please visit www.puckergallery.com for a list of virtual gatherings
and events accompanying *Behind the Eye*.



DEVIL'S ARROW, BOROUGHBIDGE, NORTH YORKSHIRE, ENGLAND, 1977 | 9.75 x 13.5" | PC187

Front Cover:

EYE OF HORUS, 2005 | 7.5 x 11" | PC179