

CONDENSATION

JOHN PAUL CAPONIGRO



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Light

All photographs are about light. The great majority of photographs record light as a way of describing objects in space. A few photographs are more about spaces they represent than the objects within those spaces. Still fewer photographs are about light itself. Time, space, light. All the things this work is about are ultimately missing from the final product – the print. Put it in a dark room and there will still be no light. Touch it and you'll find it's flat. Consider it for an extended time; you'll change but it won't. Curiously, these conspicuous absences within the print make what's missing more intensely felt. How does absence make something more clearly experienced? Perhaps it's that the gap between representation and reality gives us pause and begs us to more carefully reconsider the world around us and the experiences we have in it, at first as a way of verification but later as a way of celebration.

Minimalism

In my work there is a strong impulse towards reducing things to their bare essentials – to an absolute minimum. The minimum can be defined as the perfection something achieves when it is no longer possible to improve it through subtraction. The omission of inessentials reveals the essential. Simplicity is a recurring ideal for many cultures – all of them looking for a way to live life free from the distractions of trivial excesses and their enervations. Simplicity can be approached philosophically as a liberating path to truth and harmony. Simplicity has a moral dimension, implying a lack of worldliness and a cultivation of selflessness. Simplicity can be used to support spiritual advancement; countless examples abound Confucius' Taoism, The Buddha's asceticism, Bodhidharma's Zen, St Benedict's Catholicism, and Thoreau's Transcendentalism. Simplicity is illuminating.

Abstraction

I often think photography is more about elimination than inclusion. A minimalist impulse has led me to ask, "How much does it take to make a photographic representation?" It's ironic that photography, the most representational medium, has led me deeper into to abstraction.

Abstraction serves a desire to never lose sight of the fact that the literal renderings I create should not be confused with the original things they merely represent. Abstraction serves to heighten sensitivity. In minimal environments small things become more strongly felt. Take color. Color is a powerful physical, biological, and psychological force. When less color and less intense color is present, trace amounts and subtle differences become highly significant and are strongly felt. Abstraction serves to disrupt conventional perceptual patterns and open new possibilities. When images are stripped of denotative conventions, the conscious mind becomes so challenged it must call other aspects of our being into action. Minimalism provides even greater challenges. Visual artists choreograph dances for the eyes, guiding visual journeys in specific ways, but when presented with little or nothing, the journeys of the eyes become erratic and finally still their restless searching. The eye and mind and heart grow quite, come to rest, and begin to understand their own functioning more deeply. Abstraction serves to intensify an awareness of how subjective our individual experience is. If we are self-aware, we come to realize how deeply implicated we are in our interpretations of what's real. How do we know what we know? Less information often leads to more interpretation. Surprisingly, Gestalt psychologists have found that when subjected to Ganz fields (emptiness) for long periods of time, we hallucinate. Can empty fields serve as mirrors, not for our exteriors, but for our interiors? Abstraction serves a spiritual impulse; like many early modernists I search for a universal language to describe fundamental of human experiences, devoid of symbol but charged with essence. The material becomes a gateway to the spiritual.

Invisible

My work is as much about what we can't see as what we can, perhaps more. It probes not just what we don't see habitually, not just what we can't see from a single perspective or a single moment in time, but also what we can't see. I look for the traces unseen forces – waves of energy – leave within the material world. They make us aware of a greater reality. How then do we come in closer contact with it? It is somewhat ironic to make images of what can't be seen. Like a Zen Koan

trying to reconcile the irreconcilable generates many valuable by products. Making images like this tests the limits of my perception and challenges me to expand my horizons.

Inner Journey

These images present a series of transitions, back and forth, through various states; turbulence, calming, clearing, illumination. These are both literal physical states and metaphors for varying states of mind. They present an inner journey that passes from thinking (logical or associative trains of thought), through meditating (one pointed focus), to contemplation (thoughtless devotion). These mysterious spaces cause us to turn inward. Amid a rich upwelling of association we encounter many aspects of ourselves. As we grow still, we come in contact with a unified empty yet full ground of our being. As our consciousness grows more spacious, we find connections between us and the wider world, a shared greater reality. Filled with wonder, an expanding illumination follows.

Ultimately, this work is mystical. Following the stages in a path countless mystics have travelled, including thinking, association, selfreflection, centering, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. It takes us through a cloud of unknowing to the threshold of a greater reality.

Click the images to learn more about them.



Condensation II



Condensation III



Condensation XXXVIII



Condensation I



Condensation IV



Condensation VII



Condensation X



Condensation IX



Condensation XI



Condensation XLII



Condensation XXX

Biography

John Paul Caponigro is one of the most prominent artists working with digital media. His art has been exhibited internationally and purchased by numerous private and public collections including Princeton University, the Estée Lauder collection, and the Smithsonian.

John Paul combines his background in painting with traditional and alternative photographic processes using state-of-the-art digital technology. His life's work is a call to reconnect with nature through conscientious creative interaction with our environment.

Respected as an authority on creativity and fine art digital printing, he is a highly sought after speaker, lecturing extensively at conferences, universities, and museums, in venues as diverse as TEDx, MIT and Photoshop World. He leads workshops globally.

John Paul's work has been published widely in numerous periodicals and books including Art News and The Ansel Adams Guide. A contributing editor for Digital Photo Pro and a columnist for the Huffington Post, he is the author of Adobe Photoshop Master Class and the DVD series R/Evolution. John Paul is a member of the Photoshop Hall of Fame, Canon's Explorers of Light, Epson's Stylus Pros, and X-Rite's Coloratti. His clients include Adobe, Apple, Kodak, and Sony.

Contact

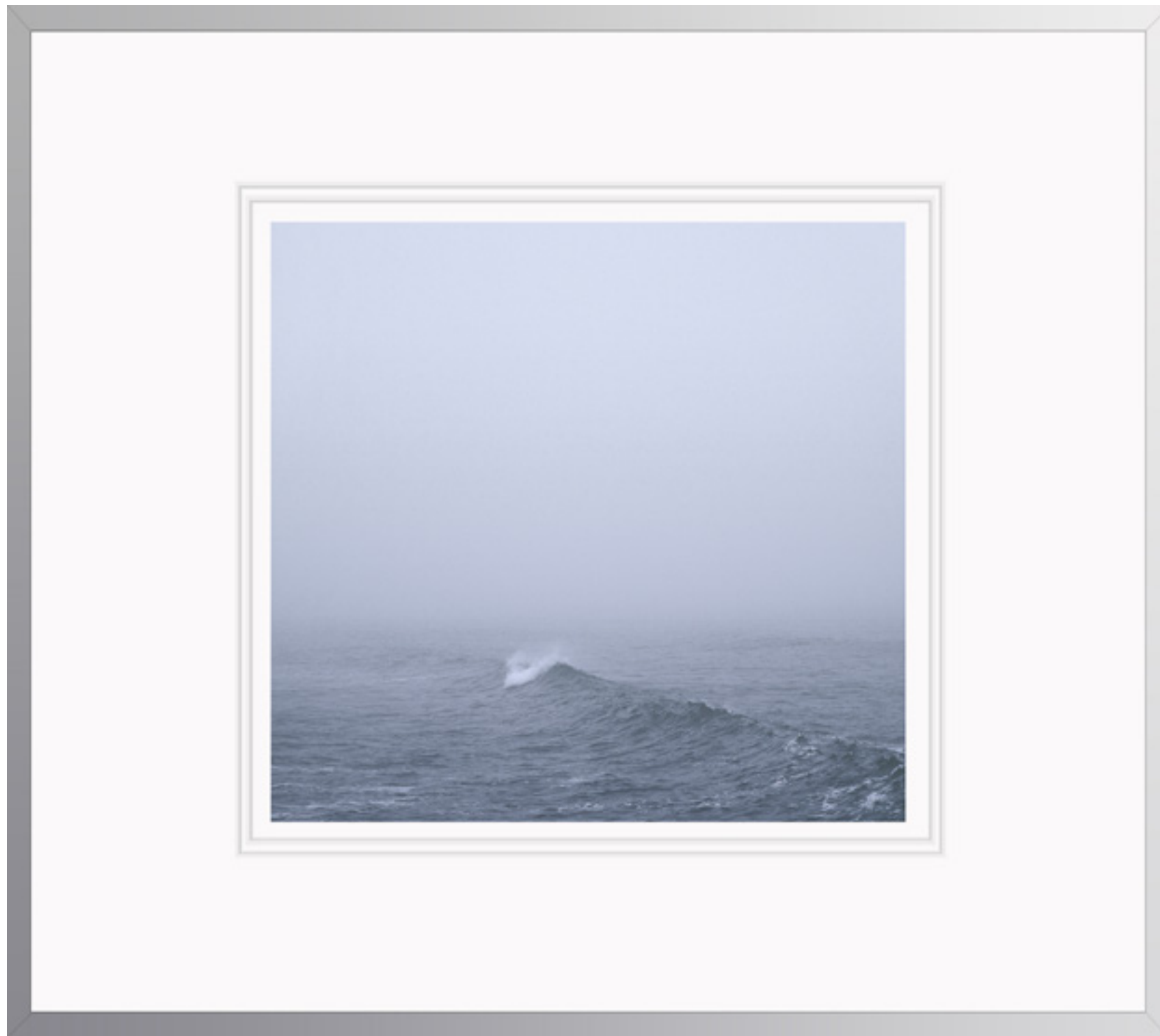
Inquire about prints, commissions, licensing, lectures and exhibits.

Phone 207-354-0578

Email info@johnpaulcaponigro.com

Mail 73 Cross Road, Cushing, ME, 0456t3

Visit www.johnpaulcaponigro.com



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