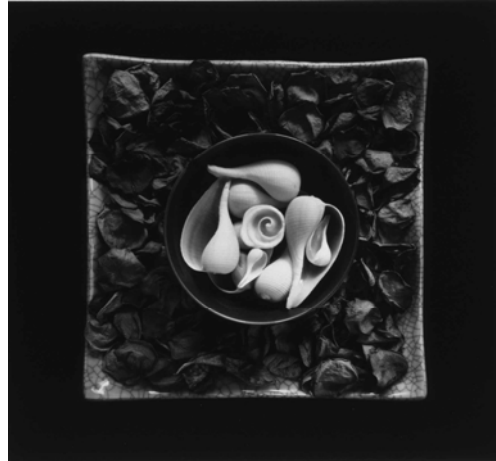




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Meditations in Silver

Paul Caponigro Photography at SBMA Focuses on the Intimate Beauty of Nature

On View January 26 – April 6, 2008

November 28, 2007 - Residing as close neighbors in an adjacent gallery, but very much in contrast to the large scale aerial views in David Maisel's ***Oblivion*** exhibition, are approximately 25 prints that focus on the very small and intimate beauty of nature. ***Meditations in Silver: Photographic Studies by Paul Caponigro*** concentrates on the still life, with the photographer crafting his pictures from artifacts collected over 40 years. His images are not the spectacular, grand scale views that immediately claim attention, but rather quiet contemplations that reveal themselves over time.

In the 1960s, following a move to New York City, Paul Caponigro focused his attention on still lifes, or the depictions of inanimate subject matter or groupings of commonplace objects. His iconic image ***Apple New York City***, 1964, in the words of David Stroud, "sums up Caponigro's exploration of still life at that time as it looks forward to his later work." Those words were truly prophetic. In 1999, thirty-five years later and after a hiatus of six years from all things photographic, Caponigro stated simply, "Objects collected from nature started to wink at me."



Paul Caponigro, *Leaf Mosaic* 2001. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of the artist.



Paul Caponigro, *Two Pears* 1999. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of the artist.

A lifelong gatherer of fragments and traces - humble seeds and shells, rocks and stones, leaves, fruits, and flowers—he listens in silence and simply lets the objects speak. These objects fill Caponigro’s home, companions in his quotidian reality along with his grand piano.

Clearing space and creating silence, the artist began his photographic meditations within the confines of his airy home in the Maine woods. “It’s as if I’m an excavator, neither imagining nor trying to shape what I find, but allowing objects to reveal themselves. . .sometimes it’s difficult to know how deep the hole has to be, but you keep digging until you find the treasure chest.” Like an archaeologist, he knows that his purpose is neither to arrange nor to push, but rather to uncover and to understand. His still life compositions sometimes require several days to realize their final form.

In these exquisite images there is evidence of the artist’s refined Italian hand. They are black and white prints of surpassing elegance, created in the darkroom by the master himself. Caponigro belongs to the elite generation of fine art photographers who thrive in and inhabit the dark to capture the light radiating from the finished works.



If there is an iconic image that captures the flash of recognition, the moment of knowing that one has found the treasure chest, it is *Inner Night Sky*. Straight-backed, stately stalks of unremarkable-looking flowers, in a patterned ceramic vase, stand juxtaposed to a thin, transparent vase of roses. An abalone shell casually leans in, revealing its translucent core. Strange bedfellows, it would seem, but they are graced by a visit of whimsical, shape-shifting highlights on the wall above. The light probably danced over the composition for just a moment or two, but in that passing—captured by the photographer who waited in patient silence—lies the essence of Caponigro’s quest, one that invites the view into contemplation.

Paul Caponigro, *Inner Night Sky* 1999. Gelatin silver print. Courtesy of the artist.

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