

DANZIGER

On Madison

TOD PAPAGEORGE

Press Release -

One of the most notable photographers of our time, Papageorge is known for both the originality and quality of his work as well as his influence on the generation of students he mentored while the Director of the Yale MFA photography program from 1979 to 2013.

An early participant in the seminal American school of street photography practiced by his contemporaries and friends Robert Frank, Garry Winogrand, and Joel Meyerowitz, Papageorge's path through photography has taken him from the streets of New York to the capitals of Europe, from black and white to color, from small to mid-sized cameras, but always towards describing in his work an increasing clarity and luminosity. Central to this project (if not his life) is the question of what makes a photograph extraordinary, even as he uses nothing more than direct observation of our common, physical world in his efforts to trace on film a revelatory or transcendent moment.

Papageorge's Acropolis photographs are poetic demonstrations of this photographic interrogation, weaving the ancient and modern, monument and tourist, resonantly together. In his own words:

"I made these photographs in the summers of 1983-84, a month each year of dry heat and biting light. To my eyes, their often shallow, plate-like space calls up Greek vase painting and the low relief sculpture (collected/connected here like a frieze). Not to mention that their 'characters' tend to burn with vitality or charged solemnity of myth. But that's just me, remembering how the immemorial procession up to Athena's temples set me buzzing every time I joined it, thrilled to be near the great place."

In singles, couples, triples, and groups, Papageorge's visitors to the Acropolis unselfconsciously compose themselves into a distinct world. A young man tanned and shirtless sits on the ground like Hermes using the fallen top of an Ionic column as a writing table. A sturdy man who we see from the back hoists his girlfriend onto his shoulders to better take in the view down towards the city of Athens, echoing in their form the columns of a small temple in the background. A group of young ballet dancers arrange themselves like cheerleaders to pose for a picture, ignoring that the Parthenon is behind the photographer and will not be in that picture. Young couples recline, embrace, and kiss while an older couple turns two fallen blocks into a seat from which to take in the majesty of the Parthenon at dusk.

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In these lightstruck black and white silver gelatin prints we are transported to another time and place, delighted by the singular vision that has brought us there.

The recipient of two Guggenheim Fellowships and two National Endowment for the Arts grants, Papageorge's work is represented in the collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, and the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris, as well as numerous other collections. He is the author of seven books, including "Passing Through Eden: Photographs of Central Park", "American Sports, 1970, or How We Spent the War in Vietnam", "Studio 54", and "Dr. Blankman's New York".