

cole thompson photography newsletter

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Grain Silo No. 54

My Friend!

I'm in a quandary and need your opinion!

Please read the article "Artist or Activist...or both" and let me know what you think.

Thanks, I'd appreciate it.

Cole

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- Artist or Activist...or both?
- New Images
- Damn You Paul Caponigro!
- Creating Honest Work
- The Story Behind the Image
- Print Drawing

Quotes

"Creativity takes courage."

Henri Matisse

"I would rather die of passion than of boredom."

Vincent van Gogh

"If I create from the heart, nearly everything works;
if from the head, almost nothing."

Marc Chagall

"Don't think. Thinking is the enemy of creativity... You simply must do things."

Ray Bradbury

"The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward
significance."

Aristotle

"I found I could say things with color and shapes that I couldn't say any other way—
things I had no words for."

Georgia O'Keeffe

"Painting is just another way of keeping a diary."

Pablo Picasso

"Art is the most intense mode of individualism that the world has known."

Oscar Wilde

"When I paint, I never think of selling. People fail to understand that we paint in order to experiment and to develop ourselves as we strive for greater heights."

Edvard Munch

"Whoever wants to know something about me, they should look attentively at my pictures and there seek to recognize what I am and what I want."

Gustav Klimt

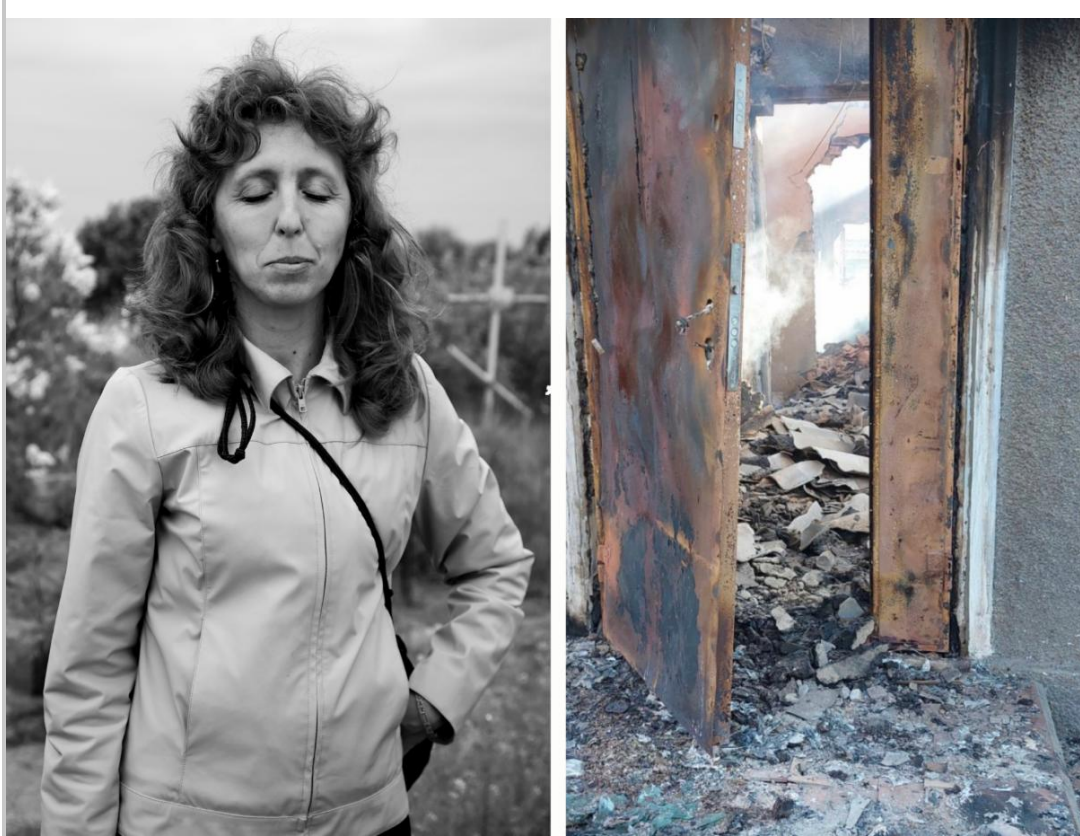
Artist or Activist...or both?



The Angel Gabriel

Does an artist have an obligation to speak out on subjects that they feel strongly about?

After my encounter with Gabriel Stan (The Angel Gabriel), working with the homeless became a personal calling, and I voice my opinions on homelessness whenever I can.



Natasha 2008 - Natasha's home 2026 after two drone strikes

When I visited my son in Ukraine and created the portfolio "Ukrainians, With Eyes Shut," I made several friends with whom I have remained in contact throughout the war, and I have been outspoken about their plight and the evils of Putin and Russia.

But what if I feel strongly about something more political, something closer to home, and something divisive... should I risk speaking up?

My father taught me that I ought not to discuss politics or religion with friends. People are passionate about both subjects, and you wouldn't want to jeopardize a friendship over a disagreement.

I remember going to a Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young concert when they stopped to disparage the military, and I had two active-duty Marine sons. I had gone to listen to their music, not their political opinions, and I left the concert upset.

But then I think about the quote from John Stuart Mill:

*"The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil,
is for good men to do nothing."*

I feel a moral responsibility to speak up as an individual, but does that responsibility extend to me as an artist as well? Does having an audience increase my duty to speak up?

But what will voicing my opinion accomplish? It's been my experience that offering an unsolicited opinion rarely changes someone else's mind. What if I speak up and lose friends or damage relationships?

And yet, what if I don't speak up? How will I feel about myself if I remain silent?

I've been thinking about this for some time now and don't have an answer.

What would you do, and why?

New Images



Harbinger No. 71



Harbinger No. 72



The Sierra No. 1



Road to Nowhere No. 22



Dunes of Nude No. 350



Ancient Stones No. 108



Ceiling Lamp, Bellagio

Damn You Paul Caponigro!



Cloud, Paul Caponigro 1980

I just learned about this single cloud image created by Paul Caponigro.

Now look at the image below, my first Harbinger image.

I cannot believe Paul stole my idea!



Harbinger No. 1, 2008

Creating Honest Work



Auschwitz No. 4

I have many photographic philosophies that I live by, but if I had to choose just one that best summarizes my approach to photography, it would be "Creating Honest Work."

Here's how I define it:

- It is work that I have created from my Vision
- The idea was mine, not borrowed or stolen.
- It is work that I created for myself with no thought of pleasing others.
- It is work that I love regardless of how others feel about it.

"Honest work" has become my most important standard. It is a test I apply to myself and my work to ensure I am staying true to my Vision.

When I create work where the ideas and Vision are mine, then I have confidence in my creations. But when I am imitating, creating to win awards and likes... then the satisfaction is hollow and fleeting. Each "like" must be followed by another and another for me to remain convinced that my work is good.

Creating honest work is the only way that I choose to work because it assures internal satisfaction. Others may not like my work; it may not win awards, and it may not

sell... but when I create an image that I love, that is enough.

The Story Behind the Image

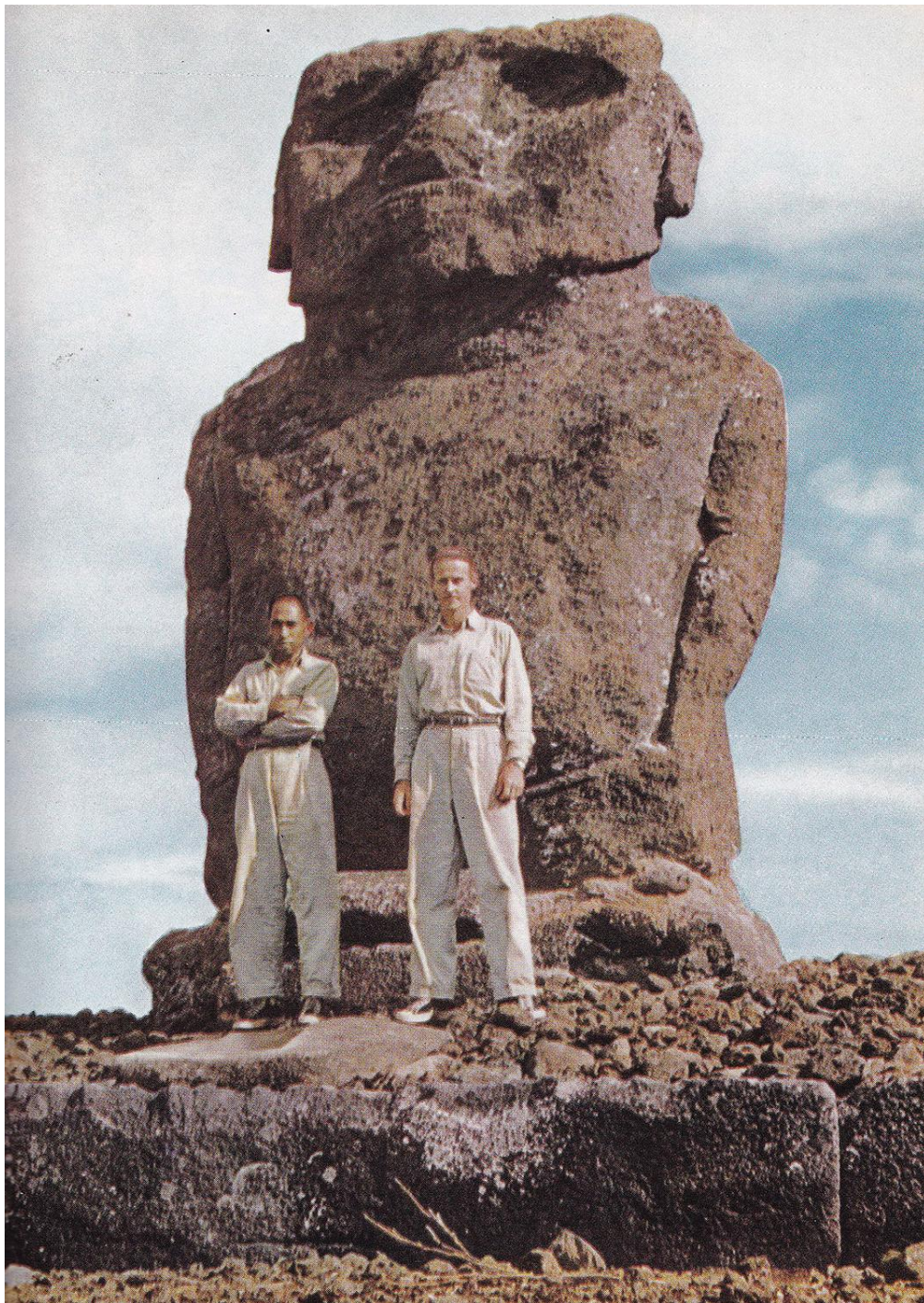


Moai, Sitting for Portrait No. 27

I want to tell you the story behind this image, Moai, Sitting for Portrait No. 27.

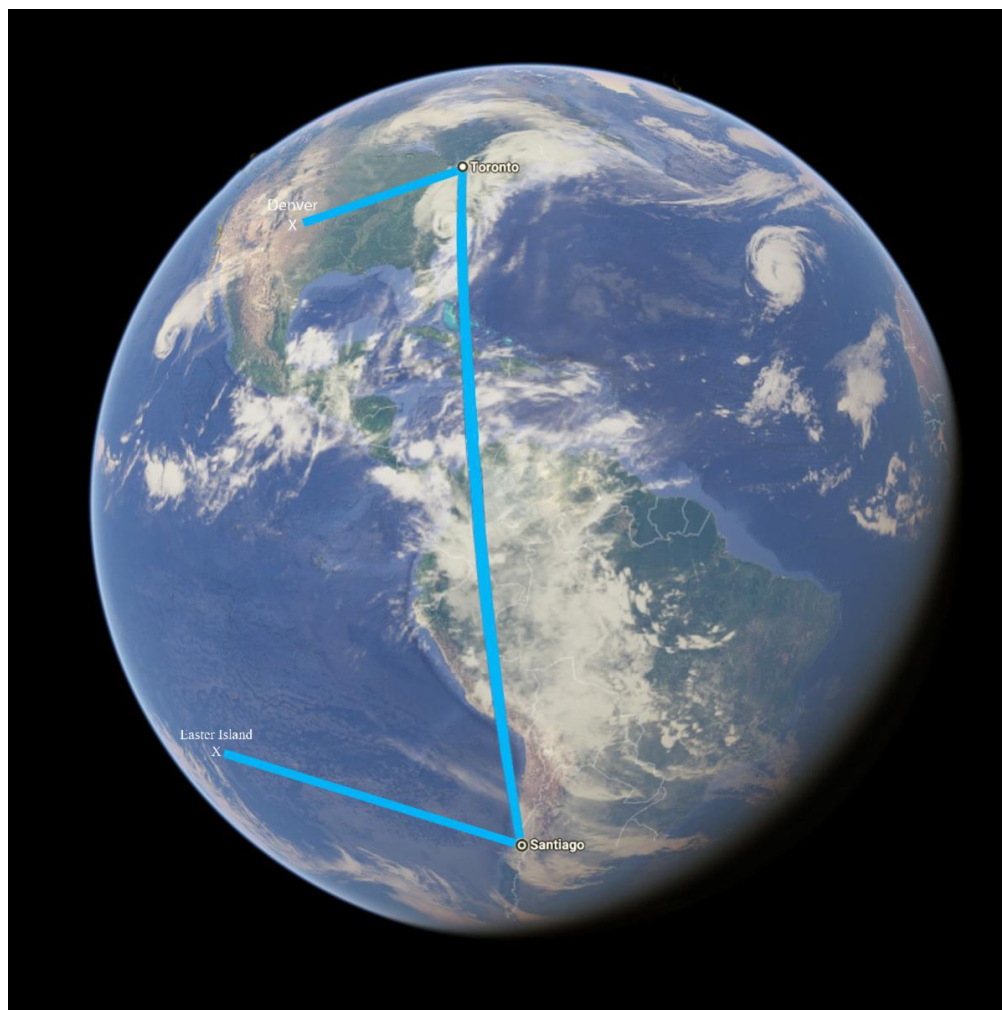
But first, the back story:

When I was 17, I read all of Thor Heyerdahl's adventure books, but the one that really captured my imagination was *Aku Aku*, which documented his 1955 trip to Easter Island.



Thor Heyerdahl, right

He showed photographs of the giant Moai that the Rapa Nui had carved, and through his stories, I fell in love with the Moai of Easter Island.



A few years ago, my wife and I were creating our "bucket list," and I just happened to say out loud, "I'd love to go to Easter Island, but of course that's impossible." And my wife answered, "Why is that impossible?" And so off we went.

Easter Island is called the most isolated inhabited place on earth, and it was quite a journey to get there. We flew from Denver to Toronto, then to Santiago, and finally to Easter Island.

While on the long leg of the journey, I fell asleep and dreamed that the Moai were living beings and I had brought along two stands and a roll of backdrop paper so that I could create an outdoor portrait studio. I then went from Moai to Moai, inviting them to come sit for a portrait.

What I didn't realize was that outsiders had so poorly treated the Moai in the past that most refused. The older Moai said they were too old or too infirm to make the journey, and even the younger ones said they didn't want to run into other clan members with whom they had a dispute.

And so after issuing the invitations, I wasn't sure if anyone would come.



And at first, no one did come, but then slowly some of the younger Moai came and sat for a portrait. And as word of their positive experience spread, more and more of the Moai came.



Moai, Sitting for Portrait No. 36

I woke up from that dream and recounted it to my wife... thought about it for a bit, then said to her, "I'm going to do it, I'm going to invite the Moai to come sit for a portrait."

And I did, and many of the Moai came, both individuals and families.

But the one portrait that really stuck with me was No. 27, at the top of this article.

This gentleman would not let me photograph his face, and instead turned his back to the camera, revealing the bullet holes that early explorers had inflicted.

The Moai had been on my mind for most of my life, and visiting Easter Island was a sacred pilgrimage for me. I had always thought of them as living beings, and I still do.

You can see the full portfolio here: [Moai, Sitting for Portrait](#)

Print Drawing



For this month's print drawing, I'll be giving away "Harbinger No. 57."

To enter: send an email to Cole@ColeThompsonPhotography.com and put "Harbinger 57" in the subject line.

Thanks for entering!

Email Cole and Enter the Drawing!

The winner of my last print drawing is Michael Hill, who will be receiving a print of Dunes of Nude No. 66.

Michael, please email me and arrange to have your print delivered.

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