

Press release

Tod Papageorge (*1940) «Passing through Studio 54»

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"This ridiculous-seeming activity of walking along the street and lifting up a little camera is so powerful, so complicated, and so resistant to being mastered. If I had the choice between doing that and sitting in an office somewhere ... Are you kidding?" Tod Papageorge

At the age of 22 Tod Papageorge decided to become a photographer. And this only because, just a short while before he graduated from the University of New Hampshire with a major in English literature, he was confronted with the work of Henri Cartier-Bresson. Just like his role model, ever since he started practicing photography, Papageorge has been searching - for the „decisive moment“ - on the street, in the park or also in clubs.

In 1965 Papageorge moved to New York City and quickly found entry into a group of artists who dared to define the medium of photography anew. Garry Winogrand and Joel Meyerowitz were photographers who belonged to this group. According to Papageorge, Winogrand invited others to his apartment for legendary discussions about photography. "It was unbelievable", recalls Papageorge, „going to Garry's house and listening to him every Sunday evening, discoursing on photography as if he were Socrates". Papageorge was fascinated by Winogrand. He was especially impressed by Winogrand's statement that he photographed in order to see what the world looked like in photographs.

Winogrand, Meyerowitz and Papageorge became inseparable. Several times a week they walked down Fifth Avenue and shot photographs. Such wanderings frequently ended in the MoMA Café, where they drank 25¢ coffee and carried on discussions. "We felt the magnitude of this small medium and Tod had the greatest intellect of us all," reminisces Meyerowitz.

In 1970 Papageorge was awarded two Guggenheim scholarships and began to lecture at the Hayward University, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and later at the Yale University School of Art. In 1979 he received sponsorship from the National Endowment for the Arts. In the same year he became professor of photography and was nominated to the legendary Walker Evans seat. There is hardly a great American photographer who has not been to Yale. Many of his students, such as Collier Schorr, Philip-Lorca diCorcia, Gregory Crewdson and John Pilson are now lecturing at Yale University themselves.

"Your work looks like it was made by someone who has never read a book." Tod Papageorge

The photographer, Tod Papageorge, was and is uncompromising; and many of his students who survived his scathing criticism are reputable photographers today. His strictness and temper seem to be founded in a poetic understanding of what a photograph can do. *"The best poems are those with the proper words in the proper order; so the best photographs are those with the proper objects in the proper position"*, writes Papageorge. He states that he has dedicated himself to photography because he feels much closer to writing and literature than any other form of fine art. Since he first took a camera into his hands, for him photography and poetry belong together, especially because in their abbreviated form, as an unrepeatably moment in time, they lustily confront the present.

Papageorge also publicizes essays on Eugène Atget, Brassai, Robert Frank, Walker Evans, Robert Adams and about his close friend, Garry Winogrand.

In 2012 Papageorge was awarded the long sought-for Lucie Award for Photography. He is very happy to have received this recognition. DiCorcia is convinced: „The new evaluation of those times made it possible to see Tod's career in retrospect."

gallery focus21 is now celebrating the "re-discovery" of Tod Papageorge with over 100 works and he is being shown in Switzerland for the first time. The exhibition, *Passing through Studio 54*, shows highlights of the three most important series, *Passing Through Eden 1966 - 1991 - Photographs of Central Park*, *Studio 54, 1977/78*, and the series critical of society entitled *American Sports, 1970: or How we Spent the War in Vietnam*. For the last series, Papageorge travelled throughout the United States during the Vietnam War and photographed various national sports being played. With *Passing Through Eden* Papageorge captured the picture poetry of Central Park in New York City. Inspired by the Biblical Genesis, these photographs represent the Garden of Eden of the 20th century. *Studio 54* shows, opposite the green lagoon in the middle of the megapolis, photographs of the excessive nights in the legendary Studio 54 night club.

The series, *Studio 54*, will be publicized by the Aperture Foundation in 2014.

All photographs are on loan from the artist and from the Fine Art Invest Fund. www.faif.ch



«Untitled» aus der Serie *Studio 54*, 1977/78
© Tod Papageorge; Courtesy Galerie Thomas Zander, Köln



«Untitled» aus der Serie *Passing through Eden*, 1966 – 1991
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