

Gianfranco Gorgoni: Land Art Photographs Collection CAE1804

Introduction/Abstract

Throughout his career, Gianfranco Gorgoni photographed Land Art works during and after their creation, thus forming one of the most important documents in the history of Land Art. Materials include contact sheets and work prints.

Biographical Note: Gianfranco Gorgoni

Gianfranco Gorgoni was born in Rome in 1940, grew up in Abruzzo and Milan, and by 1965 had decided to devote himself to photography. He arrived in America in 1968 and the next year drove across the country to photograph communes. After selling a series of images documenting the 1969 performance of Jimi Hendrix at Woodstock, he was commissioned by an Italian weekly to photograph the New York art scene. With the help of Leo Castelli, he began by photographing the gallery's stable of artists, including Andy Warhol, Rauschenberg, Johns, Lichtenstein, Oldenburg, Rosenquist and Chamberlain. While frequenting the legendary Max's Kansas City bar in New York, he met Serra, Smithson, Flavin, Morris and Carl Andre. Heizer invited him to photograph his Land Art projects in the desert starting in 1969, which led to his including those works in his book *The New Avant Garde* in 1972.

Gorgoni went on to photograph Chile as the government of Salvador Allende fell, images that were published in *Time*, and soon thereafter he joined the Contact Agency and began a career as an international photo-journalist. He worked for *Time*, *Life*, *Newsweek* and *The New York Times* and had cover stories on many areas of conflict: Iran, Iraq, Nicaragua, Lebanon, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, the Falkland Islands, Japan, and China. He flew fly to Cuba for the celebration of May 1st in 1980, the beginning of many visits that led to the book *Cuba Mi Amor* in 1985 with a preface written by Gabriel Garcia Marquez and text by Fidel Castro.

Throughout his career, Gorgoni continued to photograph Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, and newer Land Art works such as Charles Ross's *Star Axis* in New Mexico. Together with his images from the late 1960s and early 1970s, Gorgoni's photographs form one of the most important documents in the history of Land Art.

Scope and Content

Gorgoni began photographing Land Art projects with Michael Heizer at *Double Negative* in 1969 and then shortly thereafter with Robert Smithson during the construction of *Spiral Jetty* in the Great Salt Lake in early 1970. Later that year he photographed the drawing of *Circular Surface Planar Displacement Drawing* on Jean Dry Lake outside Las Vegas with motorcycles driven by Heizer and a friend. Gorgoni climbed a tower of scaffolding to obtain an elevated viewpoint (as well as flying overhead to take aerial shots). The tower was mounted on wheels and once the work was completed, was moved in eighteen-foot segments for Gorgoni to take the pictures that Heizer then assembled into the large photo collage *Circular Surface Planar Displacement Drawing*. Gorgoni went on to photograph Smithson's *Amarillo Ramp* shortly after the artist died in an airplane crash at the site (Gorgoni was originally slated to be the photographer on that flight). He documented the installation of Christo and Jean-Claude's *Running Fence* in California in 1976, and work on Heizer's *City from Complex One* in 1973 through work on *Complex Two-Three* in the late 1990s. More recently he documented the creation of Ugo Rondinone's *Seven Magic Mountains*, Charles Ross's *Star Axis* in New Mexico, and Nancy Holt's *Sun Tunnels* in Utah. All of these projects are represented in the archive. Materials include contact sheets and work prints.

This archive is currently in process.