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LET'S GO GET STONE(HENGE)D**SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT SOME VERY OLD, MYSTERIOUS ROCKS**

Recently, a Paris-based artist friend who in recent years has been making some gently contoured, abstract stone sculptures sent us a postcard showing a photo of Stonehenge, the prehistoric site that is one of Britain's most iconic cultural properties. The photo that appeared on the card was several years old but certainly not as antique as Stonehenge itself.

The photo got us thinking about this most mysterious assemblage of big rocks that were neatly shaped and purposefully installed on the Salisbury Plain in what is now the county of Wiltshire in southwestern England. Archaeologists believe that Stonehenge was constructed from between 3000 years and 2000 years before the Common Era. Their research has shown that the site was used for cremation burials prior to the establishment of the now well-known monument. Some of the stones that were used to make it were transported from some 150 miles away in what is now Wales.

With the autumnal equinox occurring in late September, and the focus on nature and its indomitable forces that the effects of global climate change has brought to mind, that postcard image of old Stonehenge made us think about the confluence of themes and reference points this remarkable, still enigmatic expression of ancient human imagination represents. Among them: our long-ago ancestors' engineering prowess; the character of Stonehenge as both an artistic and a once-functional creation; the use of the monument by its makers for spiritual-ritual purposes; and the many ways in which its unknowable mysteries, locked forever in the silence of its stones, have long intrigued artists and scientists alike.



We heard from Jeffrey Vallance, an artist based in Los Angeles who has traveled widely in search of ancient monuments; Martha Bayless, a professor of English and folklore, specializing in the medieval era, at the University of Oregon in Eugene; and Wendy Snyder, the New York-based director of the Sam Glankoff Collection, an archive of the work of the American modern artist Sam Glankoff (1894-1982), whose abstract "print-paintings," a genre he originated, strongly evoke what she calls "the primordial spirit" that is often associated with sites like Stonehenge. We also heard from David Bjerklie, a science writer and editor, and former science reporter for *TIME* magazine, who is based in New Jersey and Minnesota. — Edward M. Gómez

Wendy Snyder

As far as I know, the subject of Stonehenge never came up during my many conversations with Sam Glankoff that took place over a period of three years toward the end of the artist's life. However, as I look at **brutjournal's** postcard image of Stonehenge, I'm struck by the monumental power of those blocks of stone, and the term "monumental quiet," which I sometimes use when describing the primordial spirit inherent in Glankoff's work and its impact, comes to mind.



Sam Glankoff, *Untitled (PP 2103)*, 1974, water-soluble printer's ink and casein on washi (handmade Japanese paper), 28 1/8 x 38 7/16 inches. Photo courtesy of the Sam Glankoff Collection, New York

The affinities between Glankoff's work and the form and spirit of Stonehenge are evident when one considers, for example, the subject matter of such books as *The Eternal Present: The Beginnings of Art*, which contained Sigfried Giedion's 1957 A.W. Mellon Lectures about primeval art and was published in 1962. This book was one of Glankoff's main references in his personal library, and the ideas it presented lay at the center of his late works.

Glankoff's forms evoked carvings in stone dating back millennia or the prehistoric drawings found in the caves of Lascaux and Pech Merle, in southwestern France. His modern, abstract works, like those ancient images, remain timeless and resonant today. He was also influenced by the American art historian Lucy R. Lippard's 1983 book, *Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory*, which he also owned.

As for myself, I've long been fascinated by Stonehenge but after all of my trips to England, a visit to the site still has eluded me. Thinking about it now rekindles my interest, and seeing that compelling photograph draws me into the vortex of Stonehenge's enduring mystery.