

# AMON CARTER MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART ARCHIVES COLLECTION GUIDE

## Collection Summary

- Title:** Eliot Porter/Ansel Adams Correspondence
- Date:** 1943–1980
- Creator(s):** Porter, Eliot (1901–1990), and Adams, Ansel (1902–1984)
- Extent:** .21 linear feet
- Code:** AAC
- Repository:** Amon Carter Museum of American Art Archives and the Center for Creative Photography
- Abstract:** Eliot Porter (1901–1990) set the standard for color nature photography. Porter’s contemporary and friend, Ansel Adams (1902–1984), did the same for black–and–white nature photography. These photocopies were acquired from the Center for Creative Photography in October 2000 to supplement the Eliot Porter Papers held by the Amon Carter Museum of American Art Archives.

This guide describes only the materials from Porter's archives housed in the Amon Carter Museum of American Art Archives. Other materials are in the Photography Collection and the Library.

## Information for Researchers

### Access Restrictions

The collection is open to qualified researchers.

### Use Restrictions

The Eliot Porter/Ansel Adams Correspondence collection is the physical property of the Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona. Copies were supplied to the Amon Carter Museum of American Art. The Amon Carter Museum of American Art acquired copyright to Porter's materials; however, rights to materials produced by others were not acquired. Permission to publish the correspondence written by Ansel Adams must be obtained from the Ansel Adams Publishing Rights Trust. The Amon Carter Museum of American Art assumes no responsibility for infringement of literary property rights or copyrights or for liability to any person for defamation or invasion of privacy.

## **Preferred Citation**

Ansel Adams Archive, [item identification], Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona.

## **Related Collections in the Amon Carter Museum of American Art Archives**

Dr. W. Powell Cottrille Collection of Eliot Porter Papers  
Eliot Porter Papers  
Patrick E. Porter Collection of Eliot Porter Papers  
Porter Family Collection of Eliot Porter Papers  
Stephen Porter Collection of Eliot Porter Papers

## **Related Collections in the Amon Carter Museum of American Art**

Over 10,000 prints and 88,000 transparencies and negatives in the Photography Collection.

Contact the museum archivist at [archivist@cartermuseum.org](mailto:archivist@cartermuseum.org) or 817.989.5077 for additional information.

## **Administrative Information**

### **Acquisition and Custody Information**

Gift of copies by the Center for Creative Photography, 2000

### **Processed By**

Paula Stewart and Jonathan Frembling

## **Biographical Note**

Eliot Porter (1901–1990) set the standard for contemporary color nature photography. In 1939, he forsook a burgeoning career in biochemistry to turn full-time to artistic photography, spurred on by a successful one-person exhibition of his work at Alfred Stieglitz's renowned An American Place gallery. Initially, Porter concentrated mainly on photographing birds in close-up, seeking to improve by example the quality of ornithological photography. When his highly regarded bird photographs were turned down for publication because they were not in color, making the birds sometimes difficult to distinguish, he taught himself the new dye transfer color printing process, becoming one of the first artist photographers to devote himself full time to color. Quickly, he gained two Guggenheim Foundation grants in support of that pioneering work.

Through the 1940s and 1950s, Porter was best known as a bird photographer. However, he had never given up his interest in depicting his broader surroundings, and by the mid-fifties he was focusing increasingly on nature's colorful details, taking advantage of the dye transfer process's exceptional color control to explore the nuance and emotional resonance of the natural world. That work came to fruition in 1962 with the Sierra Club's publication of his immensely

successful book, *In Wildness Is the Preservation of the World*. Porter astutely built on that success, going on to publish a book of his photographs almost every year through the rest of his life. Many of these books, comprised of Porter's finely printed images intermixed with texts by Porter himself or his associates, provided ecologically informed portraits of threatened places. Late in his career Porter increasingly focused on broader issues of human history and culture through studies of Greece, Iceland, Africa, and China.

His work also has been published in numerous portfolios and a retrospective catalogue, *Eliot Porter*, published by the Amon Carter Museum of American Art in 1987.

Eliot Porter met Ansel Adams at a dinner party in the late 1920s. Porter credited Adams' photography with influencing his own work, and despite their differing opinions on color photography, the two men were good friends.

## **Scope and Content Note**

Eliot Porter/Ansel Adams Correspondence is a collection of photocopies of forty–seven pieces of original correspondence to, from, and about Eliot Porter found in the Ansel Adams Archive at the Center for Creative Photography, Tucson, Arizona. Primary correspondents include Ansel Adams, Eliot Porter, and Aline Porter. Subjects include photography, color photography, Polaroid film, the Sierra Club, the Friends of Photography, and Porter's travel and book projects.

## **Inventory**

### **Series I. Correspondence**

Box 1, Folder 1: Correspondence 1943, 1951, 1958–1959

1. Eliot and Aline Porter. March 21, 1943. To Ansel Adams.
2. Ansel Adams. October 15, 1951. To Eliot Porter.
3. Eliot Porter. June 15, 1958. To Ansel Adams.
4. Ansel Adams. July 8, 1958. To Eliot Porter.
5. Eliot Porter. September 18, 1958. To Ansel Adams.
6. Eliot Porter. February 12, 1959. To Ansel and Virginia Adams.

Box 1, Folder 2: Correspondence 1960–1961

1. Aline Porter. January 8, [1960s]. To Ansel Adams.
2. Ansel Adams. April 25, 1960. To Eliot Porter.
3. Ansel Adams. October 4, 1960. To Eliot Porter.

4. David Brower February 3, 1961. To Eliot Porter.
5. Eliot Porter. April 13, 1961. To Ansel Adams.
6. Eliot Porter. July 29, 1961. To Ansel Adams.
7. Ansel Adams. August 10, 1961. To Eliot Porter.
8. Eliot Porter. August 16, 1961. To Ansel Adams.

Box 1, Folder 3: Correspondence 1962, 1964, 1967

1. Eliot Porter. March 28, 1962. To Ansel Adams.
2. Eliot Porter. May 11, 1962. To Virginia Adams.
3. Eliot Porter. October 3, 1962. To Ansel Adams.
4. Ansel Adams. October 8, 1962. To Eliot Porter.
5. Aline Porter. October 10, 1962. To Ansel Adams.
6. Eliot Porter. October 10, 1962. To Ansel Adams.
7. Ansel Adams. November 25, 1962. To Eliot Porter.
8. Ansel Adams. August 22, 1964. To Eliot Porter.
9. Aline Porter. November 30, 1964. To Ansel Adams.
10. Eliot Porter. June 8, 1967. To Ansel Adams.

Box 1, Folder 4: Correspondence 1970–1972

1. Bernd T. Matthias. August 31, 1970. To Ansel Adams.
2. Ansel Adams. September 3, 1970. To Berend [*sic*] T. Matthias.
3. Ansel Adams. November 7, 1971. To Eliot Porter.
4. Eliot Porter. November 10, 1971. To Ansel Adams.
5. Ansel Adams. November 13, 1971. To Eliot Porter.
6. Ansel Adams. February 5, 1972. To Eliot Porter.
7. Eliot Porter. February 12, 1972. To Ansel Adams.

8. Ansel Adams. April 18, 1972. To Eliot Porter.
9. Eliot Porter. April 24, 1972. To Ansel Adams.
10. Eliot Porter. October 20, 1972. To Ansel Adams.

Box 1, Folder 5: Correspondence 1973–1977

1. Ansel Adams. March 11, 1973. To Eliot Porter.
2. Eliot Porter. March 20, 1973. To Ansel Adams.
3. Eliot Porter. November 14, 1974. To Ansel Adams.
4. Eliot Porter. February 11, 1975. To Ansel Adams.
5. Ansel Adams. February 13/14, 1975. To Eliot Porter.
6. Eliot Porter. August 13, 1976. To Ansel Adams.
7. Jim Enyeart. August 20, 1976. To Eliot Porter.
8. Aline Porter. January 21, 1977. To Ansel Adams.

Box 1, Folder 6: Miscellaneous Correspondence and Ephemera

1. Eliot Porter. January 29, 1980. To Hiag Akmakjian.
2. John Irwin. December 11, 1962. To Ansel Adams.
3. Ansel Adams. December 13, 1962. To John Irwin.
4. John Irwin. December 14, 1962. To Ansel Adams.
5. Ansel Adams. January 8, 1963. To John Irwin.
6. Publication information for *Portfolio Two: Iceland, Twelve Dye-transfer Prints by Eliot Porter*.