AMON CARTER MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART ARCHIVES
COLLECTION GUIDE

Collection Summary

Title: Patrick E. Porter Collection of Eliot Porter Papers
Date: 1953–1975, n.d.
Creator(s): Porter, Eliot (1901–1990)
Extent: .21 linear feet
Code: PEP
Repository: 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

This collection is restricted. The collection is open to qualified researchers by special request only.

Use Restrictions

The Patrick E. Porter Collection of Eliot Porter Papers is the physical property of 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. 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

Patrick E. Porter Collection of Eliot Porter Papers, [series information], [item identification], Amon Carter Museum of American Art Archives.
Related Collections in the Amon Carter Museum of American Art Archives

Dr. W. Powell Cottrille Collection of Eliot Porter Papers
Eliot Porter/Ansel Adams Correspondence
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 or 817.989.5077 for additional information.

Administrative Information

Acquisition and Custody Information


Processed By

Paula Stewart

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.

Patrick E. Porter (b. 1946) is the son of Eliot and Aline Porter.

**Scope and Content Note**

The Patrick E. Porter Collection of Eliot Porter Papers contains 127 letters written by Eliot Porter to his son Patrick between 1953 and 1975 (bulk 1960s). Series I [A1977.031] was donated in 1997; Series II [A2003.077] was donated in 2003. While most of these letters were written from Santa Fe, New Mexico, several were written during Porter’s travels to Great Spruce Head Island, Maine; towns in Arizona, California, Massachusetts, Michigan, New Hampshire, and New York; Ecuador; Greece; and Mexico. These personal letters, which focus on Porter’s relationship with his son, also often offer insight into his work.

**Inventory**

**Series I. [A1977.031]**

Box 1, Folder 1: 1953–1957


Box 1, Folder 2: 1958–1959


Box 1, Folder 3: 1960–1961

17. Eliot Porter. 1 p, Santa Fe, New Mexico, November 12, 1961. To Pat Porter.

Box 1, Folder 4: 1962–1964

Box 1, Folder 5: 1965
2. Eliot Porter. 1 p, Santa Fe, New Mexico, January 9, 1965. To Pat Porter.
Box 1, Folder 6: 1966


Box 1, Folder 7: 1967–1971


Series II. [A2003.077]

Box 1, Folder 8: 1966–1975


5. Eliot Porter. Autograph envelope, Quito, Ecuador, [date indiscernible]. To Pat Porter. [empty]


