

AMON CARTER MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART ARCHIVES COLLECTION GUIDE

Collection Summary

Title: Dr. W. Powell Cottrille Collection of Eliot Porter Papers

Date: 1960–1964, n.d.

Creator(s): Porter, Eliot (1901–1990)

Extent: 1.5 linear feet

Code: WPC

Repository: Amon Carter Museum of American Art Archives

Abstract: Eliot Porter (1901–1990) set the standard for contemporary color nature photography. W. Powell and Betty Cottrille, birders who took off every summer to make still and moving images of birds, were friends of Eliot Porter and frequently had him stay with them.

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 Dr. W. Powell Cottrille Collection of Eliot Porter Papers are 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

Dr. W. Powell Cottrille Collection of Eliot Porter Papers, [item identification], Amon Carter Museum of American Art Archives.

Related Collections in the Amon Carter Museum of American Art Archives

Eliot Porter/Ansel Adams Correspondence
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 or 817.989.5077 for additional information.

Administrative Information

Acquisition and Custody Information

Gift of Dr. W. Powell Cottrille, 1996

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.

W. Powell and Betty Cottrille, birders who took off every summer to make still and moving images of birds, were friends of Eliot Porter and frequently had him stay with them.

Scope and Content Note

This guide describes only the materials that became part of the Archives. Two photographs, *Pond Brook*, *Whiteface*, *Intervale, NH* and *Lazuli Bunting*, were accessioned into the Museum's photography collection.

Inventory

Series I. Realia

Eliot Porter. TLS, December 22, 1964. To Powell and Betty Cottrille.

Portfolio box, *A Few Michigan Birds*, possibly constructed by Eliot Porter; 15" x 11-7/8" x 2-1/8".

Portfolio title page: "A FEW MICHIGAN BIRDS / and / Other Photographs / made with loving care / for / Betty and Powell Cottrille / Christmas 1960"; autographed by Eliot Porter.

Ten 35mm color slides by Betty Cottrille:

1. *Border Road: E.P., 1962*
2. *Olive Sided, n.d.*
3. *Olive Sided, n.d.*
4. *Olive Sided, n.d.*
5. *Porter on Ladder, n.d.*
6. *Spruce Bay, EP and Cape May, n.d.*
7. *Olive Warbler, n.d.*
8. *Vermillion Flycatcher, n.d.*
9. *Vermillion Flycatcher, n.d.*
10. *[Arizona woodpecker], n.d.*

Exhibition announcement with envelope, *Aline Porter Paintings*, April 25–May 13, 1961, Betty Parsons Gallery, New York.