

light and dark triangles, falling on the left of the beggar woman's face but squarely from the opposite direction to light the profile and forehead of Mussolini. The sky was in fact the last section of the picture to have been painted, and the values of lighting had largely been determined when it was added. Mention of the lighting reminds us that the picture as a whole was inspired by the curious illumination which flooded the Forum as Blume stood amid its ruins. Here his own words are

more than pertinent: "There always seems to me to be a curious process or alchemy by which a number of diverse ideas out of the accumulation of images and experiences are suddenly brought together into a unified picture. The keystone of the whole structure may be quite incidental and external, such as the peculiar light which flooded the Forum that afternoon."

JAMES THRALL SOBY
Assistant Director

Eliot Porter: BIRDS IN COLOR

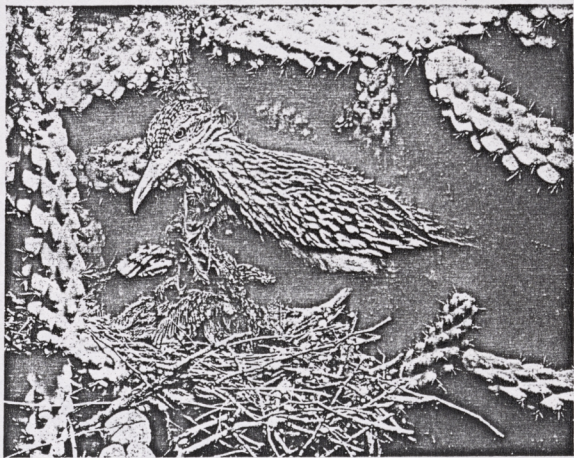
Eliot Porter is both artist and scientist. In these brilliant photographs of birds, high achievements in the technical fields of natural history and color photography, he brings us not only living documents but a profound insight into the beauty and diabolism of nature. From delicate nests among the palms and cacti of Arizona, the spruces of Maine, and the grasses of Illinois, the uncanny and repulsive beaks of the still-embryonic young sprout like incarnate greed. With tireless patience the sleek, bright parents bring worms and berries glowing like jewels.

Subtly Dr. Porter uses color to accent one particular quality, and black and white for another. The cormorants dance in black velvet; the eye of the phainopepla shines like an ember in the darkness. In a black and white photograph, the young of the meadowlark would be lost in flickering shadows. In color they wait in the grasses like winged demons. Sometimes different aspects of the same bird are thus emphasized. In harsh grays, the roadrunner emerging from the tortuous cactus is stony, Gothic, and menacing. In color, this bird with the pale human legs of a lizard dangling from its beak is transformed into the gigantic symbol of a nightmare.

Dr. Porter was born in Winnetka, Illinois, in 1901. He holds degrees from the Harvard Engineering School and the Harvard Medical School. For several years he was engaged in teaching and in research, first in bacteriology and then in biological chemistry. His approach to photography was crystallized by the ideals and influence of Alfred Stieglitz and Ansel Adams. In 1937 he began applying these severe standards to his lifelong interest in birds. He insisted on attaining three things: a clear and characteristic portrait of the bird, a technically good photograph, and an emotionally satisfying picture. By using flash, he could stop the motion of small swift birds and still retain definition in their surroundings. In 1940 he started photographing birds in color. He found Daylight Type Kodachrome best for field conditions, afterwards making color separation negatives and printing them by the washoff relief process. In 1941 he received a Guggenheim award to aid him in completing his project.

All the photographs in the exhibition, which closes April 18, are the gift of the photographer.

NANCY NEWHALL
Acting Curator, Department of Photography



Road runner, Arizona, 1941.

Hooded oriole, Arizona, 1941.

