

Route 1, Box 33
Santa Fe, N. M.

19 February 1959

Dr. Joseph A. Baird, Jr.
Department of History of Art
University of California
Davis, California

Dear Dr. Baird:

Through the intermediacy of Mrs. E. Boyd Hall Dr. Pal Kelemen suggested that I write to you about collaborating in a project that I have been interested in for some time. It involves the folk expression in Mexican church art. I became interested in it from a photographic point of view in 1951. In 1955 I spent 4 months in Mexico traveling extensively throughout the country and photographing the details of the interiors of churches both small and large, naive and sophisticated. During this time I amassed a large collection of color transparencies (about 3000) on all kinds of subjects. Many hundreds of these are of church decoration and statuary. From about 80 of this collection I made color prints which have been exhibited in New York and in the Southwest.

Publication of a selection of these pictures has from the beginning been one of my particular aims, but color reproduction costs has remained until recently a major obstacle. Last year a Japanese friend of mine volunteered to see what he could do for me in Japan and had made by the Fine Arts Publishing Co. of Tokyo a beautiful four-color reproduction at a cost hardly more than a high quality black and white cut costs in this country. I then obtained a quotation of \$8,000 from the same people for the cost of reproducing 50 different subjects in color and printing 5,000 of each. Armed with this evidence that publication costs need not be exorbitant I went to the Princeton University Press. Their reaction was extremely favorable provided that I could obtain an author to write a scholarly text. I myself, a photographer, am not qualified to do this. Through the help of Mrs. Hall, who will be glad to vouch for the competency of the photography and the originality of the pictures my search has led to you. Would you be interested? Of course you should see the photographs before committing yourself and therefore I would like to send you an album of prints which will give you a much clearer idea than words what this project involves.

Earlier this month I was in San Francisco and tried in vain to locate you both in Davis and in Berkeley. You were away for the interterm period. Hoping that we can work something out by correspondence I eagerly await your reply,

Yours sincerely,

Eliot Porter