

Route 4, Box 33
Santa Fe, N. M.

17 December 1963

Mr. John A. Marshall
The Association of Heliographers
859 Lexington Ave.
New York, N. Y.

Dear Mr. Marshall:

The other day I received, along with an assortment of press releases, exhibition notices, and brochures, what I can only interpret as a very indirect invitation to join The Association of Heliographers. Before I accept this invitation to be invited there are a few things I would like to know about the association.

The invitation consisted of a mimeographed sheet, with your invitation written in at the bottom, giving the etymology of the word "Heliography" and a short history of its application to the purposes of your organization, followed by a statement of purposes. The first purpose is stated in a very wordy paragraph which I translate to mean that you seek the participation of photographers with talent whose work is both serious and artistic. I presume you think I fit that category. The second purpose is to exhibit and publish the work of these chosen photographers in order to stimulate public interest in their kind of photography.

What I wonder is: are the Heliographers not just another group of self-conscious, sensitive young photographers who are set on convincing the world that photography is an art? I believe that only history will settle this question; and as for its being a part of our culture that is already apparent. But I am more concerned with the narrowness of the organizations aims. To sponsor only the work of its own members is ungenerous and snobbish and will in the end defeat its purpose. It could too easily degenerate into a self-admiring organization that devotes its energies to confusing the uninitiated with wordy, verbose, and meaningless declarations.

Perhaps you will be able to reassure me on these doubts.

Yours sincerely,

Elliot Porter