

THOMAS PETER BENNETT, Ph.D.
PRESIDENT

May 13, 1983

Mr. Eliot F. Porter
Rt. 4, Box 33
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87501

Dear Mr. Porter:

I hope you have received my mailgram of yesterday, informing you of your selection as the 1983 recipient of the Academy's Gold Medal for Distinction in Natural History Art.

Since its founding in 1812, the Academy of Natural Sciences has been intimately involved with the development of natural history art. From the meticulous scientific illustrations of Alexander Wilson, Titian Ramsay Peale and Lucy Say, to the more romantic and flamboyant work of John James Audubon, Ernest Thompson Seton and Louis Agassiz Fuertes, the Academy's collections include original paintings and drawings by a representative cross-section of America's most important natural history artists. Our photographic holdings include the work of William Henry Jackson, Timothy O'Sullivan, C. E. Watkins and A. J. Russell, taken on Academy-sponsored and other expeditions to the West; Eadweard Muybridge's studies of animal locomotion, made under the supervision of the Academy President Joseph Leidy. Recently photographs by Crawford Greenewalt, John Dunning, Roger Tory Peterson and others, including duplicates of your own, have been assembled as part of the Academy's new VIREO collection.

In view of its long involvement with the interface of science and art, in 1980 the Academy of Natural Sciences initiated the first Gold Medal for distinction in this field. The medal is awarded periodically to an artist "whose artistic endeavors and life's work have contributed to mankind's better understanding and appreciation of living things." Certainly there is no person to whom this description could apply more directly than yourself. Through your photography you have interpreted and recorded the beauty of the natural world in a unique and distinctive way, speaking eloquently of the need for the earth's care and protection. At the same time you have established new standards of artistic excellence. The Academy wishes to recognize these outstanding achievements by presenting you its Gold Medal for Distinction in Natural History Art. The Academy's first members spoke, in their founding documents, of science and the world of nature as a world of mysterious power and beauty, increasingly revealed to our gaze but never totally explained. Your work also seems to express this concept.

Mr. Eliot F. Porter
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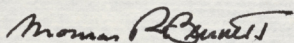
We hope that you will come to Philadelphia as our guest sometime later this fall or winter.

To further acquaint you with the Academy, the first institution devoted to the study of Natural History in the Western Hemisphere, I enclose some background information for your review.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience and to meeting you in the not-too-distant future.

With sincere congratulations and warm personal regards, I remain

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Thomas P. Bennett". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized initial "T".

Thomas Peter Bennett
President

TPB:RFK

Enclosures