Statement About Photography for St. John's College

Exhibition

by Eliot Porter

December 1971

My use of a camera began in earnest at the age of thirteen on an island in Maine where I spent many summers. Making photographs started with birds; broadened in general interest and returned later, on a more serious level, to birds when I was advised that for equivalence with painting they had to be photographed in color. From that time on, by following the natural course of development I was led into a wider range of color photography, but my basic preoccupation with birds never died out.

Interludes in this progression occured, and undoubtedly will continue to occur, since, despite the pleasure I continue to derive from bird photography, it can never provide the complete satisfaction that the unlimited potential of a creative art offers.

One of the interludes involved a project to illustrate the pre-Christian history of Greece with photographs of the physical remnants of that ancient civilization, coordinating with them surviving literary and historical insights into the aspirations, the nobility or baseness, and the emotional frailty of men and women of the Greek period. The photographs shown here are a selection from the results of that interlude.