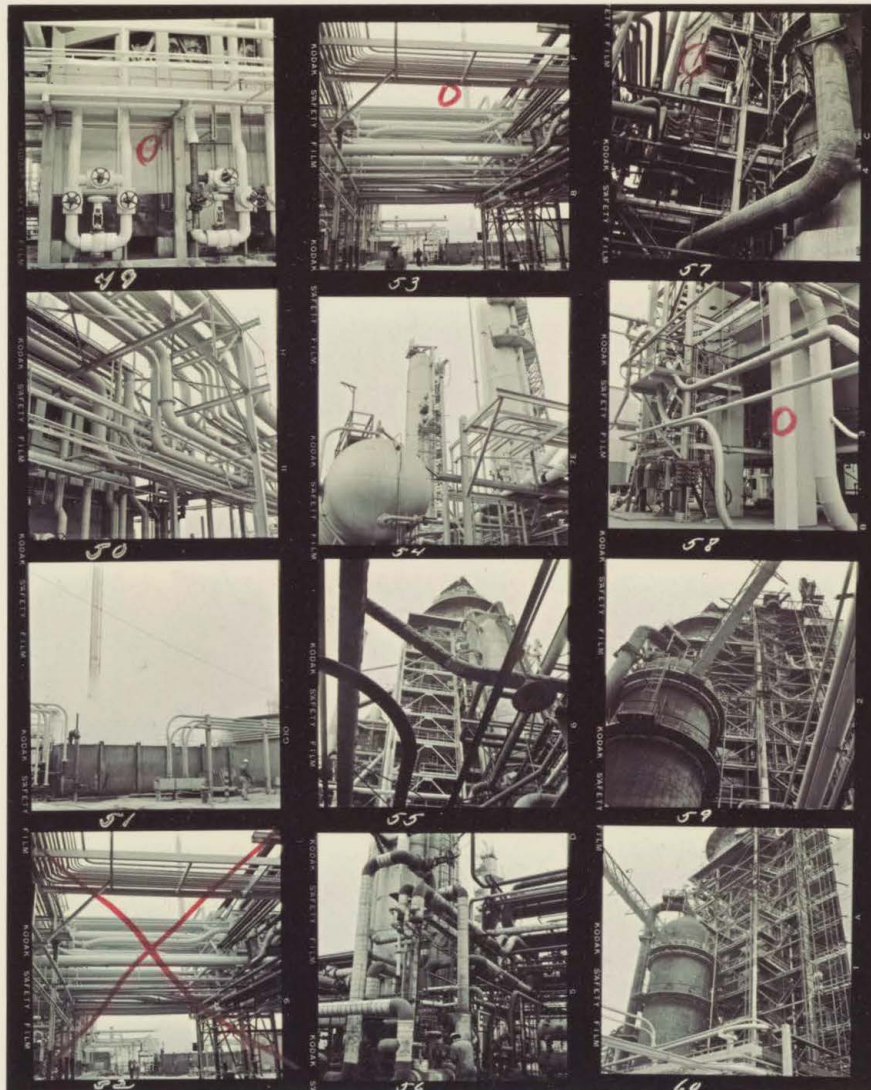


# *The Archive*

CENTER FOR CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY • UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA  
RESEARCH SERIES NUMBER 23 JUNE 1986



LABYRINTHS: ESSAYS  
ON USING ARCHIVES



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The Center for Creative Photography is a research museum devoted to twentieth-century photography. Among its extensive collections are complete archives of photographers who have made significant and creative contributions to the field. Each issue of the Center's research series, *The Archive*, is drawn from its extensive collections of photographs, manuscripts, and negatives; most issues include a plate section of facsimile reproductions. Subscribers to *The Archive* also receive announcements of coming exhibitions and copies of the Center's collection guide series as they appear. Subscriptions mailed within the United States are \$25 for four issues of *The Archive*; foreign mailings are \$35. This represents a substantial discount from single copy rates, usually one-third to one-half price. To subscribe, send your check or money order to: Subscriptions, Center for Creative Photography, University of Arizona, 843 E. University Blvd., Tucson, Arizona 85719.

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH: Garry Winogrand: Esso Standard Oil Company, Baltimore Refinery, ca. 1955,  
© 1986 The Estate of Garry Winogrand. This contact sheet is part of  
the Garry Winogrand Collection donated to the Center in 1983 by Winogrand.  
The collection includes close to 400 contact sheets, 2700 fine prints,  
13,000 work prints, and over 100 color prints and tear sheets from commercial assignments.

# Director's Statement

---

by JAMES ENYEART

THE COLLECTIONS OF THE CENTER FOR CREATIVE PHOTOGRAPHY are divided into two categories: works of art that we refer to as master prints and the archives, which contain study prints, proof prints, contact sheets, negatives, correspondence, manuscripts, memorabilia, and any material considered germane to an artist's life and method of working. The audience and patrons that utilize both aspects of the Center's collections include artists, historians, critics, students, collectors, and the general public. Each of these groups brings to the Center unique perspectives and interpretations according to its own background; yet all are subject to the same basic set of motivations and inspiration. They desire first-hand experience with art objects and wish to enhance their appreciation through study.

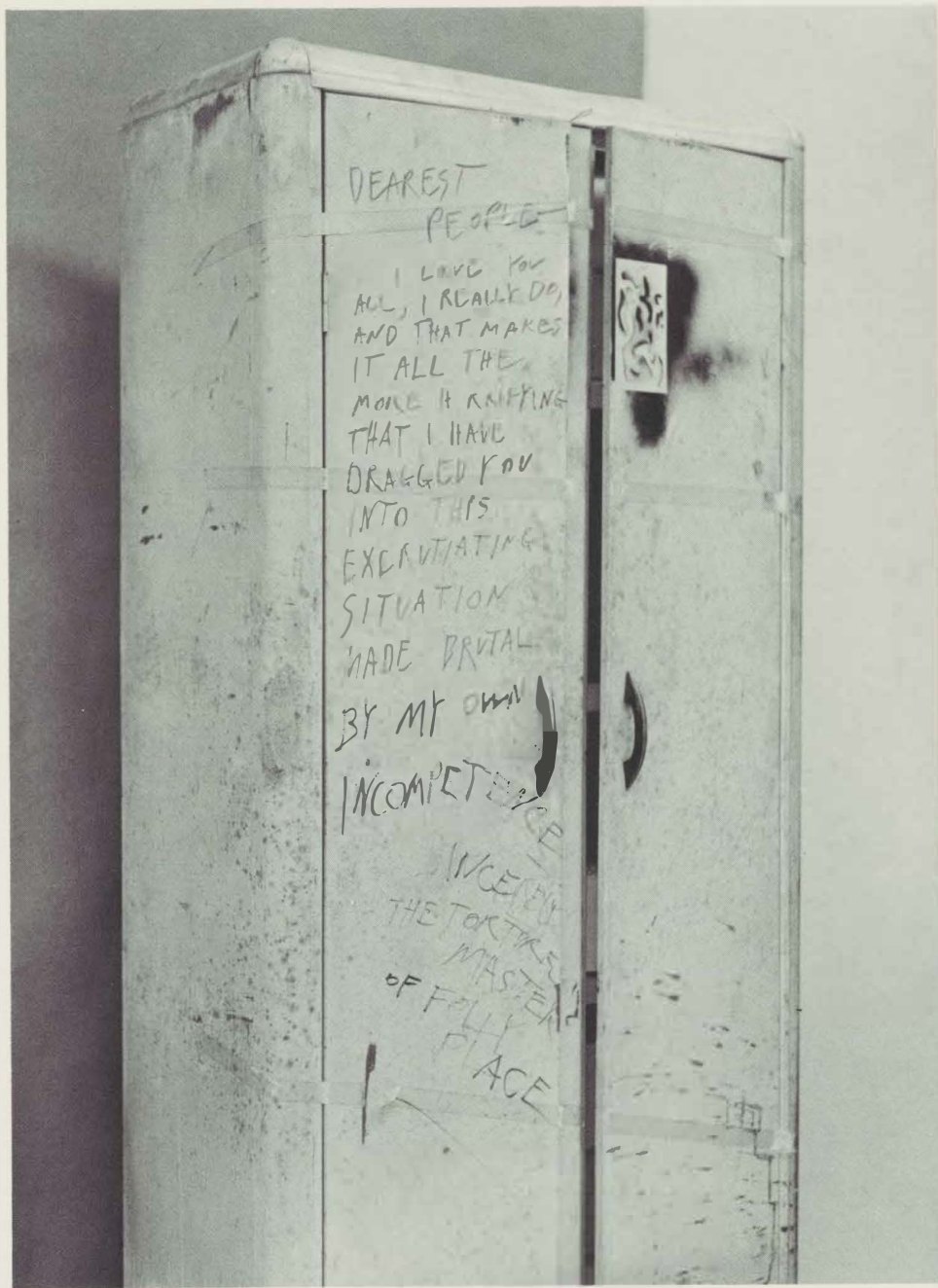
While it may be possible to appreciate works of art solely on the basis of intuition and an empirical sense of quality, it is not likely that such appreciation will expand beyond a personal level without in-depth study of history and biography. Such study represents an additional desire to synthesize life's experience with

feelings and aesthetic responses evoked by works of art. There is probably a greater risk of misunderstanding an artist by only studying the archives than by only experiencing his or her work. Full appreciation demands contact with both resources.

Goethe expressed it well in *Faust* when he wrote "He who wishes to understand or describe anything first tries to expel the life. Then he has got the parts in his hand. The only thing lacking is the spiritual bond." In this case, the spiritual bond is the work of art, which over time gains a history of its own without respect to the history and biography of the artist. The value of "taking the parts in one's hand" is in the opportunity to provide a contextual environment that will follow the work of art throughout its history.

We are pleased to present in this issue of *The Archive* an essay by Dr. David Jacobs on the rewards and frustrations of exploring archives from the researcher's point of view. We are equally pleased to present Amy Stark's essay on the same subject from her point of view as the head archivist at the Center for Creative Photography.





Enamel wall cabinet (66 x 12 x 26") with writing by W. Eugene Smith: "Dearest People—  
I love you all, I really do, and that makes it all the more horrifying that I have dragged  
you into this excruciating [sic] situation made brutal by my own incompetence.  
Sincerely, the torture master of folly place."  
W. Eugene Smith Archive

# The Smoking Gun and Other Archival Fallacies

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by AMY STARK

ON THE OCCASION OF THE TENTH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION of the Witkin Gallery, Lee Witkin wrote,

Looking at the early Stieglitz, the handsome, romantic youth about to embark upon the long life which is now history, I find myself reflecting on how much of a life is forgotten; on moments we never recognized as thresholds; on the fallacy of *summation*, on how the final frozen frames of a life cheat us all.<sup>1</sup>

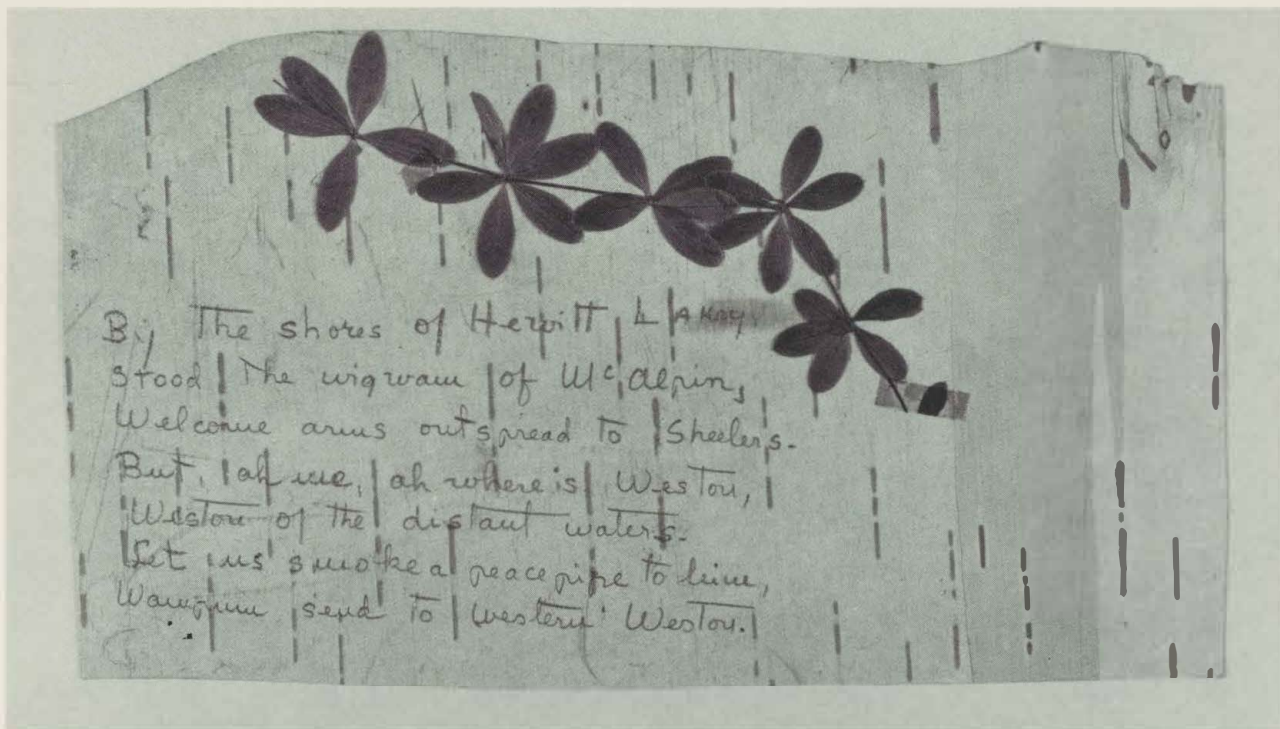
Witkin would not have called himself an archivist, but he was a collector and a student of history and art, which involved him in some of an archivist's activities. I have quoted him here because his words, gaining a self-prophetic poignancy since Witkin's death last year, are a sensitive meditation on what one learns in archives work; that objects or words fail to breathe life back into an event or person of the past. When Witkin speaks of the "fallacy of summation" and how we are cheated by the "final frozen frames," I believe he meant that the silent and incorruptible data we expect to use as tickets for a trip along a reconstructed passage of a life, are really wooden nickels.

It may seem strange to draw attention to this in an issue of a publication dedicated to research and an explication of the past. But the truth of what Witkin was saying does not cancel out the very real information that can come from archives. Reading Nancy Newhall's original letters, I hear the cadence of her voice and sense the vitality of her imagination. Seeing a ravaged page of W. Eugene Smith's writing plunges me into the tortured passion he felt. Holding in my hands a letter to Edward Weston written on birch bark by his friends the Sheelers and McAlpins trans-

ports me to the woods of rural New York. This is the paradox of archival materials. As the material residue of the past, it functions like theatrical scrim; now opaque, but in the right light, opening up to our understanding and interpretation.

The archivist who spends uncounted hours ordering and providing for the physical well-being of archival materials has intimate knowledge of the fragmentary and deceptive nature of these bits of evidence. Such an understanding is required, in fact, to fully develop the role of the archivist as an interpreter. As an interpreter—not policeman or magician—the archivist must be able to reveal the hidden lacunae, false façades, concealed linkages, and atmospheric distortions as well as the rich treasures inherent in the many kinds of evidence. This interpretation begins during the organizing and cataloging of materials; "invisible work" to the researcher, but the crucial process that takes papers and documents out of the category of unstructured raw data and gives them an intellectual framework on which we can base access.

Gaining access to the archives begins with an interview with the archivist during which the preparation and expectations of the researcher are discussed. This step is more important than most researchers realize, for the archivist must lead the user to materials in the collection through heuristic tools such as inventories, calendars, and indexes that if used alone can deceive. Archivist and researcher must come to terms with language and preconceptions and agree on how to exchange the information each has and each needs from the other. The vocabulary and ground rules of the archive on one side of this exchange are unique and no more or less crucial to the success of the researcher than an understanding of the other side



Fragment of birch bark with poem in Sally McAlpin's handwriting sent to Edward Weston, August 1947  
Edward Weston Archive

of the exchange; the "dependence of questions on context, the dependence of causal explanations on standpoint, and the dependence of interpretative models on theory."<sup>2</sup>

Much of the time, such theoretical issues never get discussed, of course. The research question may be quite simple—"May I see the original page of Edward Weston's daybook for July 7, 1927?"—in which case, the document is produced and read, and the researcher goes away happy. But if the verbalized research question does not coincide with the user's true and perhaps incompletely formulated need for information, then no quantity of boxes or files brought out will satisfy the researcher. It becomes the familiar standoff, with the researcher saying, "Is this all there is?"

Sometimes this impasse is the result of the illusion many users have that they will eventually find the *one* piece of evidence, preferably in a single document, to incontrovertibly prove their theory. We have all read of cases like the recent discovery of a letter by Mark Twain that is being used to disprove the idea that the author of *Huckleberry Finn* was a racist.<sup>3</sup> In general, however, archival materials contain very few smoking guns. The single page of Weston's daybook from

1927 will probably not prove the researcher's theory that the photographer saw or did not see erotic content in his shell photographs. This theory will have to be tested against many suggestive documents creatively extracted from quantities of irrelevant files.

Earlier, I mentioned that the archivist should not function as a policeman. By this I meant that, although we have a very real obligation to protect the privacy of the donor and other vulnerable parties, the focus of our task is access. The truism that "the desire to worship and the desire for intimate knowledge oppose one another,"<sup>4</sup> means that it is ultimately in the interest of unbiased scholarship to lead the researcher to the greatest variety of evidence. The records of the past provide abundant evidence of human frailties; evidence with a high potential for misuse especially when the tendency in modern archives is toward more and more current records and toward greater public access. We are far from the days when archives research meant access for a privileged few to the dusty manuscript collection of the reclusive private collector: days when privacy and access were in equilibrium. Now these are critically sensitive issues, near the surface of every transaction with a researcher.



(51) than the hand Rodin made.  
It is the one that has made  
everybody, including myself  
think of the sexual act."

From the above quotations  
it will be seen that I have  
created a definite impression,  
but from an angle which  
surprised me!

Why were all these persons  
so profoundly affected on the  
physical side?

For I can say with absolute  
honesty that I not once  
while working with the shells  
did I have any physical  
reaction to them: nor did  
I try to record erotic sym-  
bolism. I am not sick

and I was never so free from  
sexual suppression, - which if  
I had, might easily enter into  
my work, as it does in  
Henri painting.

I am not blind to the sensu-  
ous quality in shells, with  
which they combine the deepest  
spiritual significance: indeed  
it is this very combination  
of the physical and spiritual  
in a shell like the chambered  
nautilus, which makes it  
such an important abstract  
of life.

No! I had no physical  
thoughts, - never had. I  
worked with clearer vision  
of sheer aesthetic form.  
I knew that I was recording

(41) from within, my feeling for  
life as I never had before.  
Or better, when the negatives  
were actually developed, I  
realized what I had felt;  
- for when I worked, I was  
never more unconscious of  
what I was doing.

No! The shells are too much  
a sublimation of all my  
work and life to be a  
pigeon-hole. Others must  
get from them what they  
bring to them: evidently they  
do!

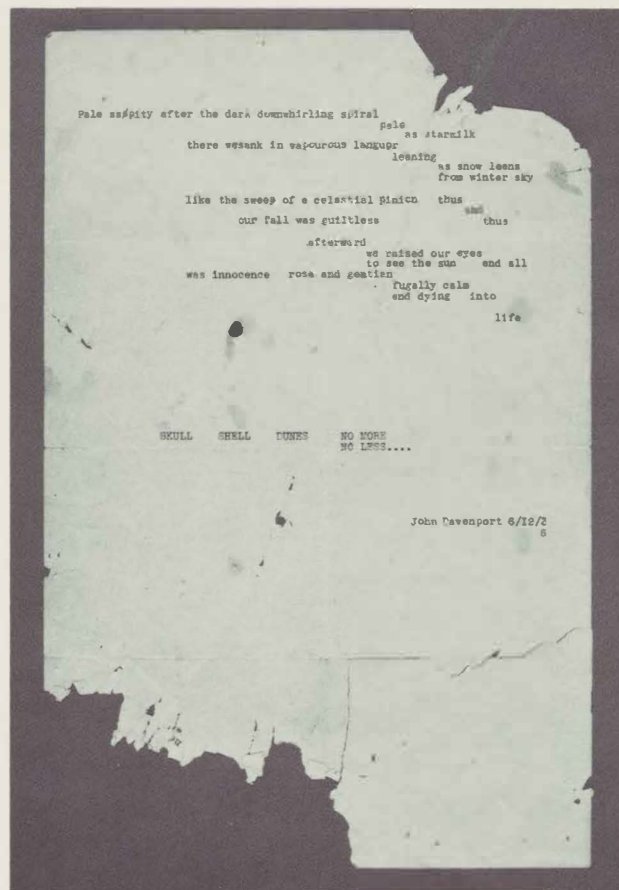
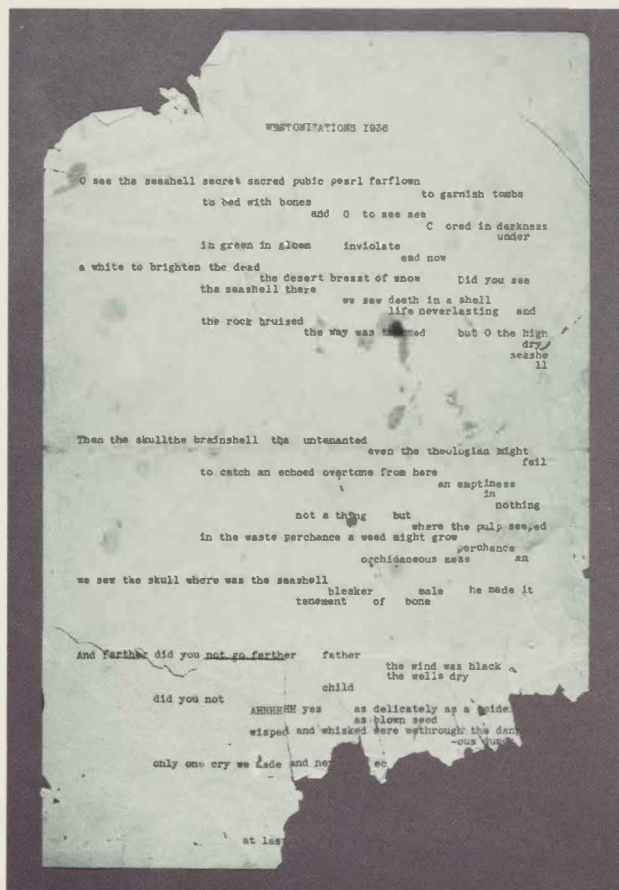
July 27 -

Gyina Stojana happened in:  
I can't say that I was happy,  
- for I dislike unannounced  
calls, even from friends, unless

except they be in the evenings.

A visit from George, (I revert  
continually to his old name) is  
not what it once was. He ~~has~~  
becomes more <sup>and more</sup> querulous and  
combative. I ~~am~~ must be  
always alert to avoid an  
argument. He started on my  
Kandinsky print, - God knows  
if there is anything he really  
admires, - he didn't like it,  
and was all primed for a  
windy wrangle. I simply  
stated that Kandinsky stimulated  
me, and put a record on  
the phonograph!

Gyina brought a loaf of his  
famous bread, but it was too  
salty: all his arts are failing.  
But I do feel kindly towards



"Westonizations 1936," a poem by John Davenport (1908–1966), British critic and editor  
Original manuscript is torn and stained  
Edward Weston Archive

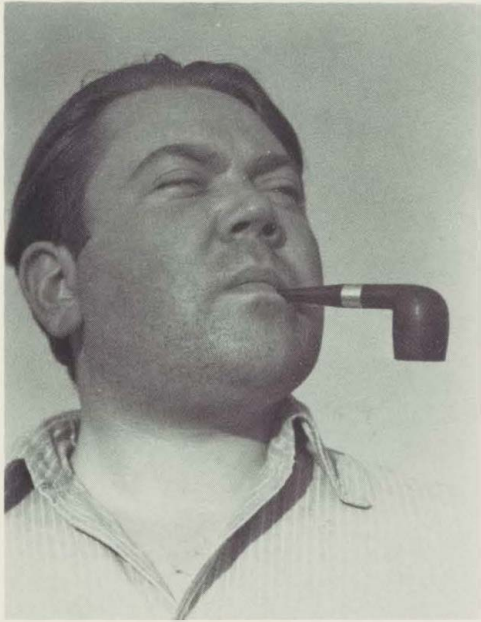
Guiding the researcher toward his or her goals has the advantage of placing the archivist near the flash point of understanding. As I suggested, it is like watching the lighting change on a scrim. A mute scrap of paper changes into a bit of exciting gossip with unproved significance, and then with luck and the right questions it opens into a document richly loaded with associations, revelations, and the energy to change other documents around it. I can think of numerous occasions on which I have seen this, but one which comes to mind first began with fragments of a cat-damaged poem in the Edward Weston Archive.

I had been intrigued by these lines of free verse signed by John Davenport but had been unable to connect them to any more information until a researcher asked me what I knew about the name. Out of a mutual process of picking up clues and following leads, the researcher and I eventually compiled two

Davenports. John L. Davenport emerged as a British chemical engineer who corresponded with William Mortensen and who wrote for American photography magazines. Ansel Adams stated that his first formulation of the zone system was born out of "articles by John L. Davenport that appeared in *U.S. Camera* in the autumn and winter editions of 1940."<sup>5</sup>

Another very different Davenport wrote the poem to Weston which ends, "SKULL SHELL DUNES NO MORE/ NO LESS. . . ." John Davenport (1908–1966) the editor, critic, and writer was a friend of Malcolm Lowry and Dylan Thomas. He was in Hollywood writing a screenplay in 1936 when he met Edward Weston and Charis Wilson. He described a visit to Weston's studio in *Lilliput* magazine in 1942. Earlier, he gave Charis a carved pipe, which she described receiving in *California and the West*. Weston photographed him with his own pipe and as a monumental head against the sky.





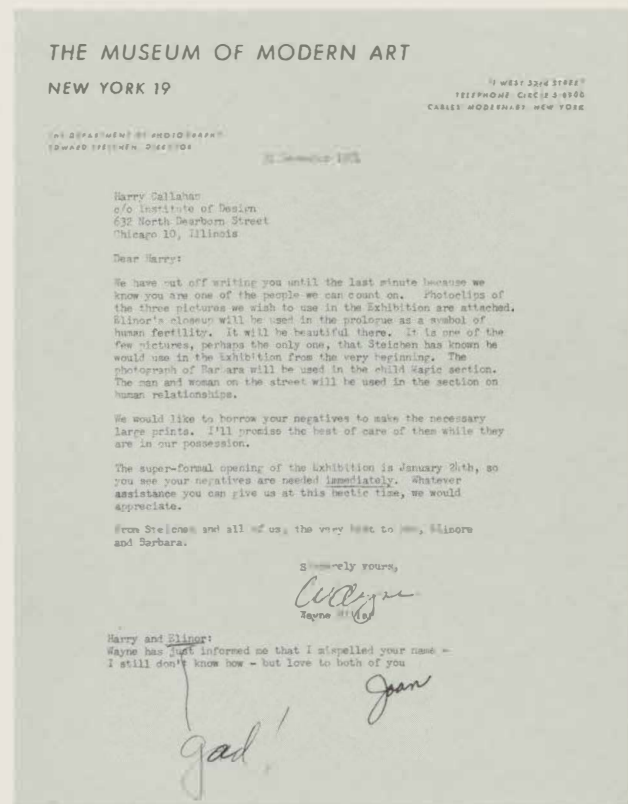
Edward Weston:  
Portrait of John Davenport, 1937  
Modern print from original negative  
Edward Weston Archive

As the interpreter of archival materials, I try to break down questions into parts by placing events in time and space and identifying a cast of characters. This analysis helps in thinking of what documentation might exist to throw light on the question posed by the researcher. For example, if I were asked to research the *Family of Man* exhibition held at the Museum of Modern Art in 1955, the cast of characters would include Edward Steichen, who curated the show, and the photographers who participated. The time coordinates would extend from 1954 to 1956 to encompass planning and traveling the exhibition, and publishing the book that accompanied it. The obvious place to begin looking is the archives of W. Eugene Smith, Harry Callahan, Marion Palfi, Wynn Bullock, and other photographers whose work was shown. Each of these photographers kept material about the *Family of Man*, but the most suggestive documents are the letters the Museum of Modern Art sent out in late 1954. In introducing the exhibition and requesting the participation of the photographer, Edward Steichen tailored the letters to fit the individual photographer. To Marion Palfi he sent an impersonal, printed, form letter requesting one negative from which to make an enlargement. W. Eugene Smith was sent the same form letter, slightly modified to ask for four

negatives and mysteriously signed "W. Eugene Steichen." The letter to Harry Callahan on the last day of December 1954 is the most personal. It reveals how Steichen built the exhibition around concepts represented by key images. Wayne Miller writes,

Elinor's closeup will be used in the prologue as a symbol of human fertility. It will be beautiful there. It is one of the few pictures, perhaps the only one, that Steichen has known he would use in the Exhibition from the very beginning. [Wayne Miller for the Museum of Modern Art to Harry Callahan, 31 December 1954, Harry Callahan Archive, Center for Creative Photography]

These letters provided new information, but they were found precisely where logical deduction would lead one to look. This deductive process is helped



Letter from Wayne Miller at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, to Harry Callahan, 31 December 1954, requesting three negatives to use in the *Family of Man* exhibition  
Harry Callahan Archive

1-2-54  
11-19-54

THE MUSEUM OF  
NEW YORK 19

THE DEPARTMENT OF PHOTOGRAPHY  
EDWARD STEICHEN, DIRECTOR

Mr. W. Eugene Smith  
134 Old Post Road North  
Croton-On-The Hudson  
New York

Dear Eugene Smith:

The selection of photographs that will make up the Family of Man Exhibition has been completed. The inclusion of some of these prints still depends upon their relationship to the design of the installation, but among the prints that have been definitely selected as key material in the various categories of the show are your photographs, which you can identify by the enclosed small photoclips. For easy reference in corresponding with us, please use the numbers we have indicated on the back of each photoclip. If, in addition to these photographs, any of your other prints are later selected, you will be so informed.

PICTURE  
STUDY  
- LINE

I am sure you realize the many complex problems that come up in weaving the selected photographs into their associated sequences for this Exhibition. Not the least of the problems will be the visual determining of the exact size of the enlargements for the several editions of the show, those going to different countries as well as the major Exhibition here at the Museum.

I hope you will cooperate with us by lending the Museum your negatives, or if they are not in your possession, authorizing your agent to do so. I fully realize that I am asking a great deal in making this request, but I hope you will recognize the necessity for it.

The enlargements will be made under my supervision, and the Museum will, of course, take the same care of your negatives while in our custody that is taken of all works of art. And they will be insured at your valuation.

The negatives will, naturally, be returned to you. We are now much behind schedule, and your prompt cooperation will be a great help.

Will you please give us some brief biographical data on the enclosed form, and the permission to reproduce your photographs in connection with Museum publicity about the Exhibition? I hope you will return the information sheet at your earliest convenience.

With all good wishes.

Sincerely yours,

*W. Eugene Steichen*

Edward Steichen

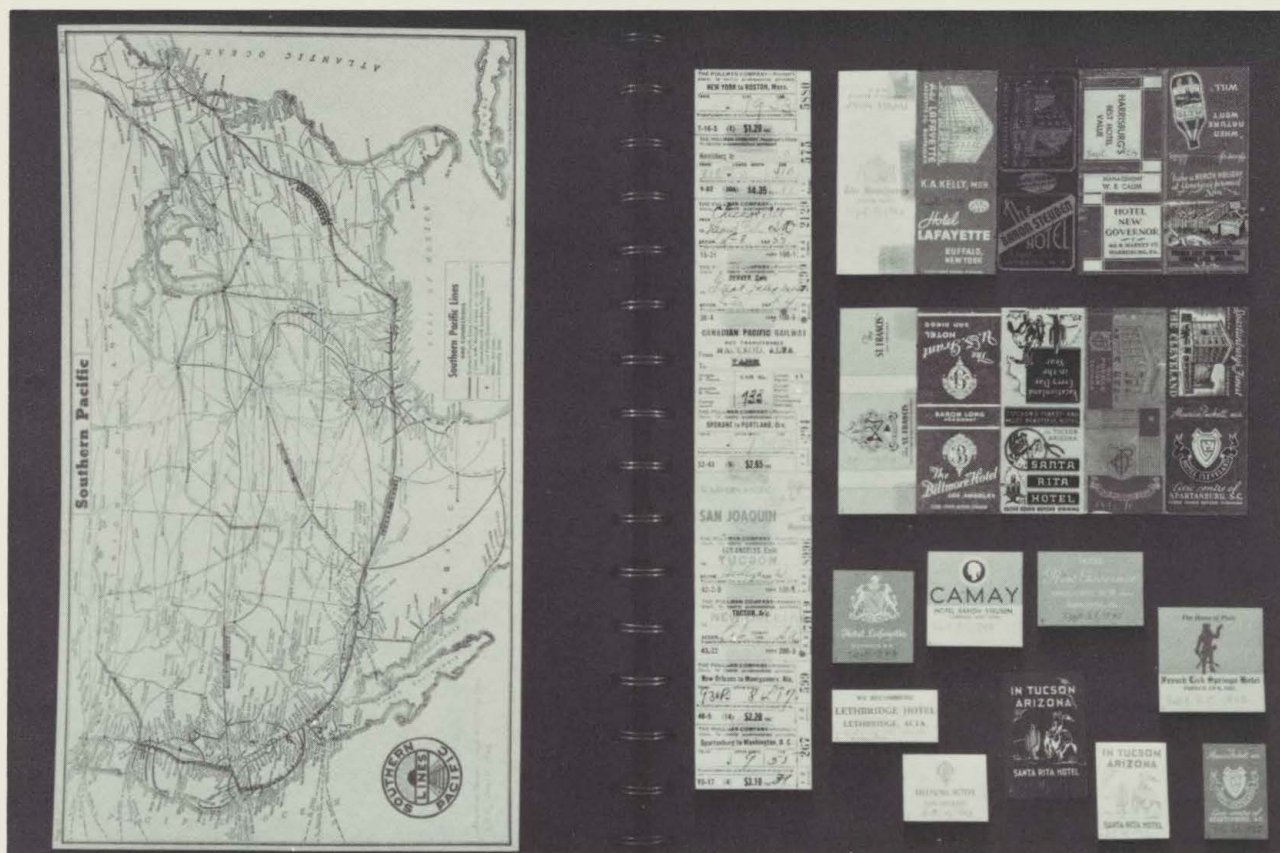
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Letter from Edward Steichen at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, to W. Eugene Smith,  
19 November 1954, requesting four negatives to use in the Family of Man exhibition  
W. Eugene Smith Archive





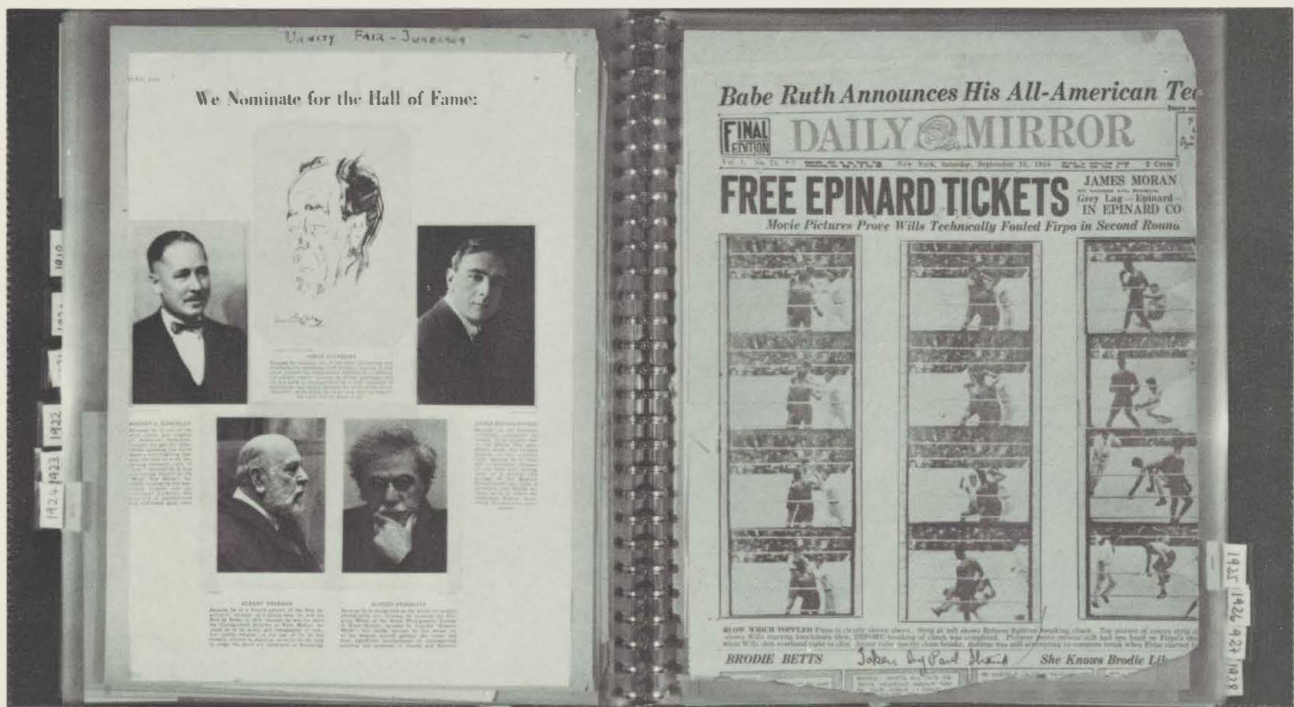


Pages in scrapbook made by Andreas Feininger. Left: Map of United States tracing Feininger's travel for "American Names" published in *Life*, 31 January 1944. Right: Train tickets and match book covers from travel for "American Names" project  
Andreas Feininger Archive

ing and after an artist's life. I am reminded of what Gore Vidal recently wrote about Tennessee Williams's habit of revising short stories that had already been published. When Vidal asked Williams why he did it, the response was, "Well, obviously it's not finished."<sup>7</sup> In the same way, photographers with a sense of history often exercise the impulse to control the documentation of their life. This can be seen in Edward Weston's habit of destroying original correspondence after copying selected parts into his daybook or instructing correspondents to "Destroy!" his letters after reading them. This impulse is obvious in the meticulous and highly personal way Andreas Feininger assembled scrapbooks documenting his travel on assignment and in the less structured scrapbooks of Paul Strand, which juxtapose his own work with other photographers' and events.

In attempting to describe a third invisible element, the poetic presence of objects, I come full circle to the paradox with which I began. Letters, records, and artifacts cannot make the past fully dimensional, yet their presence alone transmits intensely convincing information. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., has described working in the manuscript division of the Library of Congress during the summer of 1941 and losing himself in the events and personalities of the past. "At five o'clock, when the library closed, I would come out into the sunlight and heat of the Washington of Franklin Roosevelt. While I was entangled in the nineteenth century, the twentieth century world was exploding around me."<sup>8</sup> Similar emotional entanglements affect researchers who look at the enamel wall cabinets W. Eugene Smith covered with jagged aphorisms of humor, self-hate, and pleas for help. It is the same with





Pages from Paul Strand scrapbook, copyright © Paul Strand Archive and Library, Aperture Foundation, Millerton, N. Y. Left: Page from *Vanity Fair*, June 1924. Right: Strand's boxing photographs as published in the *Daily Mirror*, 13 September 1924 Paul Strand Archive



Cigars with photographic bands by Jerry Uelsmann, ca. 1975. Paper cigar bands show Uelsmann, alligators, and angels  
Jerry Uelsmann Archive

EDWARD WESTON  
PHOTOGRAPHER  
CARMEL-BY-THE-SEA  
CALIFORNIA

*Your condition  
was the immediate cause  
of my printing this. Though  
I had long considered  
doing it.*

*I have had to come to this!  
I am not going to work for  
nothing any longer - or wait  
six months!*

BEGINNING May 1, 1930, all portraits will be made and prints sold, on the following terms:

The charge for a sitting and two prints—the minimum order—is \$ \_\_\_\_\_; duplicate prints, \$ \_\_\_\_\_ each. A payment of \$ \_\_\_\_\_ is due at time of sitting, the balance upon delivery of the finished work. Prints will be shipped C. O. D., or, if preferred, a check may be mailed in advance.

If necessary, a re-sitting will be made, either at my request or the sitter's, but when an order is once given from proofs, acceptance of prints is understood. It is further understood that prints are to be finished according to my personal judgment.

EDWARD WESTON

May I have permission to exhibit or publish your portrait? \_\_\_\_\_

Above conditions are understood and accepted.

[SIGNATURE] \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

RECEIVED ON ACCOUNT from \_\_\_\_\_

the sum of \_\_\_\_\_ (\$ \_\_\_\_\_)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Portrait order form used by Edward Weston in the 1930s. Sent in letter to Johan Hagemeyer  
Johan Hagemeyer Archive



less sensational objects like envelopes, address books, grocery lists, and the cropping marks on contact sheets. These also impart an almost physical shock of immediacy from the vanished personality.

The fallacy of summation, the fallacy of the smoking gun, the fallacy of thinking evidence speaks for itself, and the fallacy of forming conclusions too hastily are potential traps in the path of research. If I have pointed them out here, it is only because skepticism is a healthy attitude for archivist and researcher alike. How else, but with the tools of skepticism, energy, passion, wit, and patience, could we hope to unravel mysteries of historical evidence like the following remarkable lines in a letter from Edward Weston to Ansel Adams,

Stieglitz liked baseball and Beethoven;  
I like football and Bach.<sup>9</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Lee Witkin, *A Ten Year Salute: A Selection of Photographs in Celebration. The Witkin Gallery, 1969-1979* (Danbury, N.H.: Addison House, 1979), p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>Martin Kemp, "The Taking and Use of Evidence: With a Botticellian Case Study," *Art Journal* 44:3 (Fall 1984), p. 208.

<sup>3</sup>Mark Twain's letter, written in 1885, recommended that Yale Law School admit a young black student and offered to pay his expenses. After lengthy authentication by Twain scholars, the private collectors who had acquired the letter made it public specifically to revise public opinion of *Huckleberry Finn*. The novel in recent years has been removed from high school reading lists in the United States in response to an interpretation of Twain's portrayal of blacks.

<sup>4</sup>Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Gossip* (New York: Knopf, 1985), p. 101.

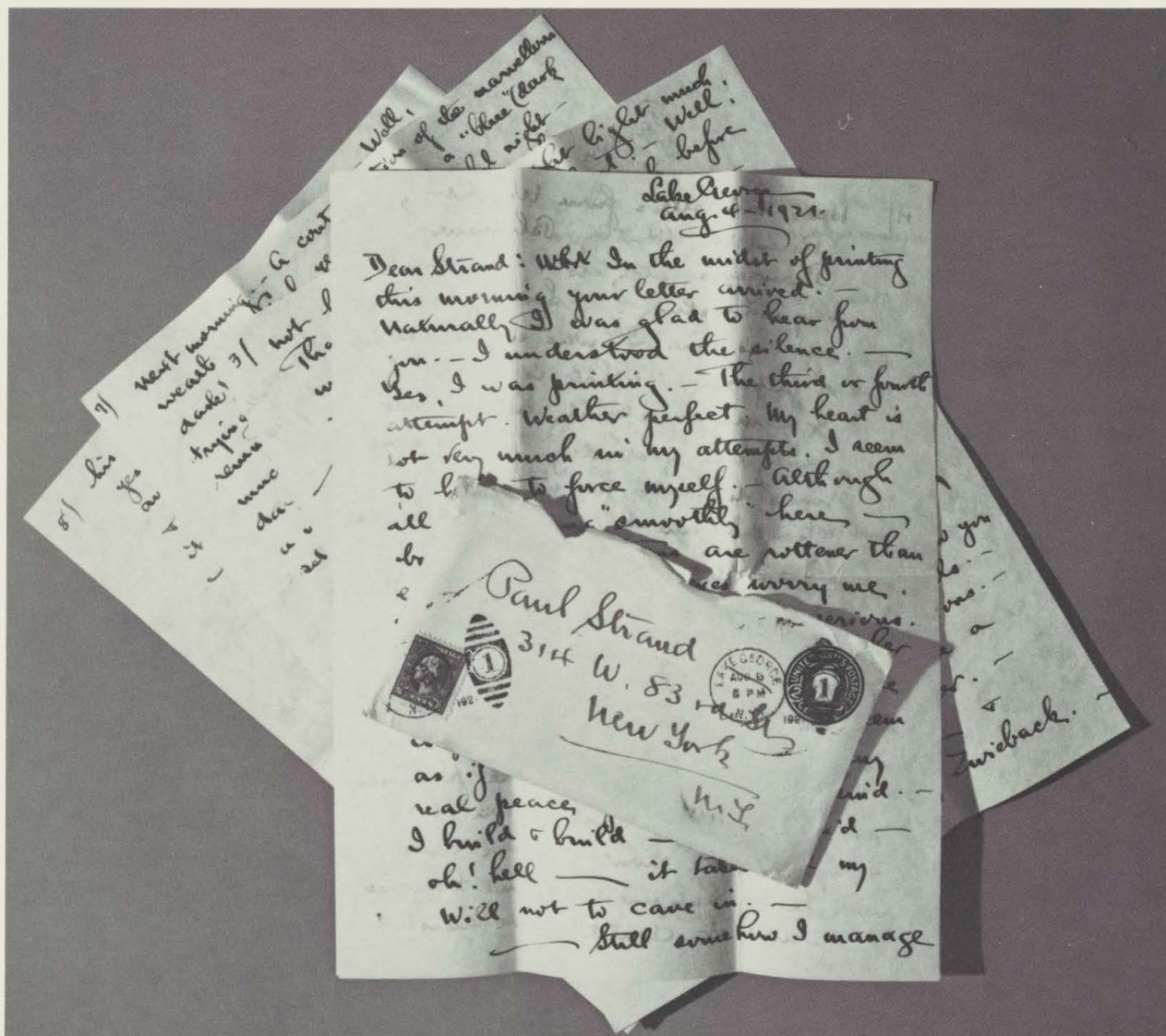
<sup>5</sup>Ansel Adams, *The Negative* (Boston: New York Graphic Society, 1981), p. xi.

<sup>6</sup>Steve Lerner, "The Gansevoort Papers," *Connoisseur* (May 1985), pp. 130, 132, 134, 136.

<sup>7</sup>Gore Vidal, "Immortal Bird," *New York Review of Books* (June 13, 1985), p. 9.

<sup>8</sup>Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "'Prich': A New Deal Memoir," *New York Review of Books* (March 28, 1985), p. 21.

<sup>9</sup>Edward Weston to Ansel Adams, 9 November 1946, Ansel Adams Correspondence, Center for Creative Photography.



Letter and envelope handwritten in ink from Alfred Stieglitz to Paul Strand, 4 August 1921. Letter is ten pages, with sheets numbered one to twelve  
Paul Strand Archive

# *Labyrinths*

---

by DAVID L. JACOBS

WORKING IN AN ARCHIVE IS NOT UNLIKE ENTERING A labyrinth. To be sure, most scholars emerge from the stacks with limbs intact, and very few researchers perish at the horns of raging Minotaurs. But such wanderers are no less subject to disorientation than in bygone Cretan days. Truth, like the bull, is elusive, multi-faceted, and potentially lethal. It lives, if it lives at all, within a maze of false starts and dead ends. Every wall looks like every other, right and left are indistinguishable, and blank walls loom where one hoped for a passageway.

Such uncertainty evokes a broad range of responses. One is simultaneously attracted to and repulsed by the prospect of the bull: arms are extended as anxious feet tread backwards. When the labyrinth exhilarates one can feel kinship with the women in Minoan frescoes who grabbed the beast by the horns and leapt high over its haunches. At other times there is dread at the kinds of truth the bull may reveal. Sometimes the bull seems to have no substance whatsoever, except in the imagination of the searcher. And when ambiguities prevail, the bull, the truth, the maze, the exhilaration, the anxiety—all seem pointless, futile.

Adrift in a manuscript world, the search for the bull is coextensive with the knowledge of self. The labyrinth is one with the folds of the cerebral cortex, knower and known are inseparable and irreducible. The researcher casts one eye toward the quarry, while the other looks at itself looking.

IN 1982 AND 1983 I HAD THE GOOD FORTUNE TO spend a lengthy sabbatical conducting research in the archives of the Center for Creative Photography. I decided to explore the Center's manuscript collections in particular since the letters, journals, and notebooks

of the photographers were especially relevant to my sabbatical project. For some time I had been working on a book that analyzes what, following Michel Foucault, I call the "archaeology of photographic knowledge." As much as any technology, photography has enacted changes in knowledge and world view with its images of things as they once, fleetingly, appeared. The photographer, studying the flat, inverted image on the ground glass; the viewer, teased by an image's incomplete information; the family, gathered about an album gazing upon its own abstracted history; the magazine browser, skipping texts for pictures—all represent states of consciousness that are unique to and constitutive of our age. Photography comprises a set of modern epistemological conditions and paradoxes that reflect larger patterns of how our culture knows and evaluates itself.

Seen in such broad terms, it is little wonder that the quality of photographic discourse has been so uneven during the last 150 years. Few minds are capable of grasping, much less articulating, such a complex of connections. But even when discussing photography as if it were a subject unto itself, photographic writing has generally been disappointing. Photographers have long confronted nettlesome problems when analyzing their medium. In the nineteenth century, P. H. Emerson twisted himself into a pretzel as he tried to discover a theoretical base for his work; he finally escaped his labyrinth only by quitting photography altogether. Henry Peach Robinson tried a simpler tack by proposing a handful of painterly formulae for producing arty pictures. Others, like Timothy O'Sullivan, apparently wrote little or nothing about their chosen craft, omissions that could suggest wisdom as well as reticence. In our own day most photographers



steer clear of theoretical analysis. "Slide lectures" are replete with muttered evasions and platitudes about the sources and meaning of photographs. "The pictures talk best for me" is a familiar refrain in such presentations; most audiences don't dispute the claim.

But the formidable problems of making verbal sense of photographic experience transcend the idiosyncrasies of photographers' psyches, as is amply demonstrated by the paucity of insightful photographic criticism. Whether the subject is the origin of a particular photographer's vision, or the meaning of a given photograph or body of work, or the connections between photographic practice and social or economic contexts, most photographic critics circle rather than penetrate their subject. More often than not, the words simply fall short of doing justice to the images and the issues they raise. Nor, I should hasten to add, am I exempt. Indeed, a major reason for my long-standing interest in photographic theory is the problems I have confronted but by no means resolved in my own thinking about photography. Not all of those mumbling photographers standing before slide-bound audiences are being purposefully evasive or coy. Rather, their false starts and halting conclusions point, with ironic eloquence, to the problem of expressing what may well be the inexpressible.

At first glance, the theoretical problems photography poses seem fairly easy to resolve. Most photographs appear to be relatively straightforward representations of the events set before the lens. The transformation of a chromatic, three-dimensional, fluid world into a monochromatic, two-dimensional, static image presents problems in terms of what and how a given image means and the kinds of interpretative operations a viewer should perform. Although these difficulties hardly seem insurmountable, they have proven to be remarkably resistant to theoretical formulation. Writers like Susan Sontag, Rudolf Arnheim, Janet Malcolm, Roland Barthes, Marx Wartofsky, and Owen Barfield, all of whom have made major contributions in other fields, have discovered at first hand the subtle complexities involved in theorizing photography. The sheer ubiquity of photography significantly contributes to the medium's theoretical dilemmas. Few Americans pass a day without experiencing a multitude of photographs, most of which enter into consciousness without being consciously registered. Subway stations and freeway billboards, TV and magazines vie for our attention and pocketbooks as they inundate us with images.<sup>1</sup> The

ease with which acceptable snapshots can be made only increases the feeling that there is nothing especially subtle about the production or meaning of these images. We take photographs for granted, a posture which makes us especially susceptible to their persuasive powers. As Walter Benjamin suggested, "the public is an examiner, but an absent-minded one."<sup>2</sup>

Generally speaking, the more pervasive a phenomenon, the more it resists theoretical analysis. Those activities that seem most natural, that we most take for granted, are often unyielding. In the sciences what we might term "paradoxes of ubiquity" are pervasive. Healthy human children, for example, easily learn grammar and syntax, yet linguists are hard pressed to explain how this takes place, to say nothing of the neurological conditions that allow human beings to speak such a multitude of languages. Physicists, who only a few decades ago boasted that they had discovered in atoms the basic building block of the universe, are now adrift in a sea of quarks and snarks that constitute octopus tentacles, fingernails, redwood fences, and everything else. On a more mundane level, Lewis Thomas has suggested, with characteristic terseness and humor, that if and when we understand the sense of smell we may well have reached the outer limits of science. And most anthropologists investigate societies vastly different from their own because it is so difficult to penetrate the covert terms and logic of one's native milieu.

The paradox of ubiquity is also a central problem in photographic theorizing. The sheer pervasiveness of photography seems to preclude our ordering it. Being immersed in photographs from birth, we are unable to perceive with much clarity the contours of the subject. The search for the crux of photographic practices and meanings is delimited by our own simultaneous participation in same. We need to jump out of ourselves as members of a photographic culture, and observe ourselves as we make and experience photographs. However, such bifurcative vision is notoriously difficult to achieve and sustain.

Problems like these conditioned many of my hopes and expectations as I began work at the Center. I planned to read through the personal papers of some of our greatest photographers to see how they talked about the creation and meaning of their images in the privacy of their notebooks, journals, and letters. I wanted to see whether such publicly strident and self-assured figures as Stieglitz, Strand, and Adams privately questioned their own photographic prac-



Lake George  
Aug. 4 - 1921

Dear Strand: Well in the midst of printing  
this morning your letter arrived. —  
Naturally I was glad to hear from  
you. — I understood the silence. —  
Yes, I was printing. — The third or fourth  
attempt. Weather perfect. My heart is  
not very much in my attempts. I seem  
to have to force myself. — Although  
all is running "smoothly" here —  
basically conditions are rottenner than  
ever — and G.'s eyes worry me.  
Not that the trouble is very serious.  
But it is painful. And it robs her  
of the freedom to work. — And she  
is full of paint. — It does seem  
as if there never would be any  
real peace for one of my kind. —  
I build & build — only to find —  
oh! hell — it takes all my  
Will not to come in. —  
Still somehow I manage

21 to pull together — to set my jaws —  
& become very silent — uncommuni-  
cative. G. is lovely. —  
I have made a few very fine prints.  
There is the dent to pay with  
abrasions in the paper — cracks —  
etc. — It's expensive trying. — But I  
have such a load of paper I  
shoot away as if I were  
~~Rockefeller~~ Rockefeller —  
Am experimenting on various  
types of negatives — trying to  
find out all about Palladium  
printing — its elasticity.

— I've made no new negatives. —  
I have no real desire to. — Am  
not straight enough in my mind  
to begin. — May later on. — Have  
the tree subject still up my  
sleeve. May stay there for a  
long while. — You see G. may

Pages one and two of letter from Alfred Stieglitz to Paul Strand, 4 August 1921  
Paul Strand Archive

tice and the rhetoric that accompanied it. And, most pervasively, if most amorphously, I sought any available means for transcending the problems and paradoxes that have long beset thinking and writing about photography.

THE CENTER'S HOLDINGS CONTAINED MUCH THAT WAS relevant to my project on photographic theory, and I soon found myself working through papers, journals, notebooks, proof sheets, and photographs. At first I was preoccupied with the mechanics of archival research: learning to decipher scrawled handwriting and private abbreviations as well as devising an efficient note-taking system. The archivists were especially crucial at this stage. Not only did they explain the Center's policies and restrictions for reading and writing about the documents, but their intimate knowledge of the organization and contents of the collections proved invaluable. In many instances Charles Lamb and Amy Stark, the archivists I worked most closely with, steered me toward important materials

that otherwise would have been overlooked. As we will presently see, whatever labyrinths I discovered were wholly a function of the problems inherent in scholarship itself.

I felt some initial discomfort at reading the private papers of famous people: W. Eugene Smith's bills, Wynn Bullock's journals in his final months, the irrelevant marginalia in Ansel Adams's letters. My preconceptions about these men and women, and about the history of photography in general, were often countered by an aside in a journal, a postscript in a letter, or a reference to some long-forgotten photograph. The unexpected and unknown piqued my curiosity, and I quickly realized that off-handed comments could be more revealing than self-consciously somber pronouncements upon art and life.

I didn't abandon my theoretical project, but I didn't stick to it with single-minded attention either. Had I had only one or two weeks at the Center, and a very specific project in mind (theory is seldom discrete, alas), I would not have been as prone to wandering.

3/ not be out in the bright light much. That prevents getting about. - Well, we'll see. - I never did much before having been here 4-6 weeks. - It was fine to have Seligman here, although I was not good company. ~~man~~ - Your Movie idea is Capital. I do hope something will come of it. It is tantalizing to not to connect. - Still something must come from all your work & patience. - You failed to enclose what you had written (or printed) about the New York film.

It is good to know you & Beck such good pals. - No I'm not much on onions. - G's is. So you can have a chance to cook for her. - I'll be an Onlooker - & will bring along my Zurichback. -

5/ in concrete form for so many years. I wonder will I ever really grow up. I'm making a mad stab in trying to achieve the result - Grow - up! - Ye gods - what does it mean? - Distrust the word? Everybody except oneself? - No, I guess I'll never quite grow up. It's too much like a business venture.

A smash Greengard says. - Will let it come. - The greater the better. - But let it be one that will echo & reach the world over. - I fear that won't happen. And anything else will be of no value. -

Special news there is none whatever. -

4/ I have had letters from Wright, Rosenfeld, Hartley, Blumner, Burgers, etc., etc. - Also Frank. - Very interesting. - Seven years ago at this time I was in the midst of preparing "What is 291?" - It seems an eternity ago. - Still as if only yesterday. - It is sometimes difficult for me to believe that I am living. - Mrs. Sheridan. Yes, she's a great person - for she is genuine. - I often think of her. - And always with keen pleasure. She was one of the rare gifts of 291. - Yes, 291. - It was clean. - Very clean. - An incredible performance. When I look back upon it I don't see how it ever could have happened. - And happening how it could have existed.

6/ Pardon this hodge-podge. - Yes, it's awful that George Bousquet is still jobless. - It's going exactly as I feared. - Remember do not have any kids in these days -

G. joins me in my heartiest greetings to you & B.

your old friend  
A.S.

Now I'll go & see what my prints look like. Also to see whether the negatives I intensified are minus water-stains!

Remember me to Shadr. Do say so too if you see him. -

Too bad about Baasch's wife. I do hope it is nothing very serious. Remember me to B. I like him - & her.



7) Next morning. - A continuation of the marvellous weather. - Gosh, yesterday was a "blue (dark dark) day for me. - And a wakeful night - trying (endeavouring) to straighten out the remnants left so that they do not get too much in my way - on my nerves. Every day, I seem to have to readjust myself to a new big loss (shrinkage) & some new set of aches - mine or G's - or both's.

— But the morning is here. - No new hopes - no illusions. But no prisons. - ~~It is simply as it is~~ because it could not be otherwise - I being the fool I am. - I can "control" "palladium" much better than I can "control" myself. - I can't overcome the cracks in the paper - & still I'm trying to see whether I can't detect the imperfections before printing & use them!! - Probably an impossible problem - but every one according to his delights - every one has

8) his little game of solitaire. - Well, yesterday was yesterday - to-day is another day. - Camus is still dead - & the sun does n't seem to weep over it - & the flies are just as numerous - some trees gnawing - some under silently hungering dying - the sky intangible. - Am preparing myself for Heaven. - Am having it cleaned out. I'll be the only one there. - God of course there to receive me. If I don't think he's fit company I'll have to get rid of him. I shall try the seven day (or six day) myself -

— G. wants to know whether she is n't to be with me. I said she is to take care of the other place. Between us we'll have complete control. - Be thoroughly modern.

— This all apropos a remarkably Anne Garland (14 years) (Hamlin Garland's daughter) who asked me

Pages seven and eight

But with the luxury of two years before me and the evident richness of the archives, I succumbed to temptation. The change in focus was disconcerting. Here I was with enough time, finally, to research a book on issues of long-standing interest, but instead of pursuing it with dogged attention, I strayed. For a time I thought that blue skies in January (we had the good sense to leave Michigan in December) precluded the gray realms usually associated with theoretical musings. On the tennis court, fellow Sybarites and I developed elaborate explanations for why theorizing was impossible during balmy Arizona winters. For whatever reason, I gave myself over to the papers, allowing them to take me where they would. What follows is a brief recounting of that journey.

Early in my research I studied the Paul Strand materials with the hope of better understanding Strand's somewhat mystifying combination of aesthete and political activist. After going through Strand's scrapbooks, which consist of hundreds of clippings, reviews, and other memorabilia documenting his long

career, I turned to the correspondence between Strand and Stieglitz (1917 through 1931).<sup>3</sup> When reading through these letters my interest in Strand began to wane (his letters, truth to say, were not among his finest achievements), while Stieglitz's epistolary style and substance were of considerable interest. Upon completing the Stieglitz-Strand correspondence, I began to study the other Stieglitz materials that were on hand at the Center. Soon after I began reading the correspondence between Stieglitz and Ansel Adams (1933 through 1946) it became clear that Strand and Adams brought out different sides of Stieglitz. As is often the case among close friends, their unique interpersonal histories determined the kinds of things each correspondent did and did not discuss with one another, as well as the style and tone of their communications. Implicit in these shifts are serious problems of how a scholar or biographer comes to know a subject, issues that we will return to later.

Adams and Stieglitz corresponded at length about the role of photography at the Museum of Modern

101 Last night why I never joined the crowd in playing the nightly gambling game they play — they, meaning about 7-8 young & old. —

— The Monkey-House. Well, I suppose, it's that, only a good deal more so. This Earth of ours with its creeping crawling springing things. — Still somehow all that does n't seem to disturb me for more than moments (relative) —

What you see about critics is undoubtedly true. — And what you say about Resenfeld & Rank true too. — Still I hope the latter two will develop into what I feel is best in them — & that is very good. — Always remember you tried to make gum prints at one time! — Development is a slow process. — Did I tell you I read *The Dark Mother* & *Poor White*. As a "thing".

12) "Poor White" is the better. — As a promise "*The Dark Mother*" is the more interesting. — It was an extraordinary experience for me to read novels — & two within two weeks!!

— It's good you get your swim. And it's great that Rank & you are equally at home in the water.

And now I'll be off & see how much more paper I can ruin. — I want to try out some of the intensified negatives. These are negatives I print in one minute in the sun — & others take 30 & even 40 minutes (the latter are usually somewhat faded!).

Once more heartiest greetings to you both

— The Shades of  
"29"

Pages nine (numbered "10") and ten (numbered "12")

Art. Stieglitz had long been hostile to the Modern, and when asked by Adams if he would show his work in *Photography 1839-1937*, he refused. Responding to Ansel Adams's request for advice about the exhibition, Stieglitz wrote:

As for sending anything to the Museum of Modern Art Show I think you should be represented. . . . No I haven't anything to do with the show. Of course "the man" was to see me last spring & a few days ago again. A nice person. I forget his name. I refused to show my own work. There are many solid reasons. I haven't the time, energy, money or interest to get my things ready. Besides I hate the exhibition passion as evidenced in our country.<sup>4</sup>

"The man" was Beaumont Newhall, who a few days before had written Stieglitz asking him to participate in the exhibition.<sup>5</sup> I began to read the correspondence

between Adams and the Newhalls collaterally with the Adams-Stieglitz correspondence, since all were discussing matters in common.

The Adams-Newhall correspondence began to interest me for its own sake as well. Though Beaumont and Adams corresponded frequently, the majority of the correspondence on file at the Center is between Adams and Nancy, both of whom were fine and prolific letter writers. Their correspondence covered many of the key events of mid-century American photography,<sup>6</sup> which they discussed with the sort of candor possible only between old and good friends. Reading through this copious correspondence, I felt the pleasure of observing, through primary documents, important historical episodes as they were lived, complete with the false starts and dead ends that all of us experience as we try to make sense of and act within our lives.

Their correspondence concerning the Photo League is a case in point. Adams and the Newhalls had joined



the Photo League after the war, and many members hoped that their presence would help broaden the membership and expand the agenda of the organization. When the League was named as a Communist front in 1947, its members were shocked and outraged. Adams joined Leo Hurwitz, Edward Weston, Ben Shahn, Dorothea Lange, and others in denouncing the charges and urged the membership "not [to] feed the wrath of the stupid [but to] bring shame to them through images of the truth."<sup>7</sup> But in the privacy of their letters, Adams and Nancy Newhall expressed reservations about the Photo League, questioned how their association with the organization could affect their careers, and pondered when and how to tender their resignations. In 1949, when a former member of the Photo League, Angela Calomiris, testified that she had been a FBI plant in the Photo League,<sup>8</sup> Adams and Newhall exchanged lengthy, soul-searching letters, and both promptly wrote Walter Rosenblum, then the president of the League. In these letters Adams, Newhall, and Rosenblum pondered the problems before them and possible solutions. Newhall and Adams subsequently discussed Rosenblum's ideas between themselves, while Rosenblum rehashed these same letters with Paul Strand, who was in France at the time, and who was a close friend of all three. The labyrinth is further complicated by Barbara Morgan, who believed that the League was in fact a Communist front, and that Strand, not Sid Grossman, was at the bottom of it. Unlike Newhall and Adams, Morgan promptly resigned,<sup>9</sup> and her resignation in turn became the subject of discussion and criticism among these various correspondents.

In this constellation of correspondence, a fair amount of stumbling and agonizing is apparent. None of these men and women emerged without having reconsidered his or her own politics and values, as well as the general tenor of the times. For everyone it was a singularly painful set of musings. Armed with forty years of historical hindsight, it is easy to adopt a pat stance on this episode and engage in a fair amount of *ex post facto* second-guessing. But to read the correspondence of those directly involved, and to observe at close hand how they struggled with a disturbing set of events and issues, is to glimpse history as it was lived rather than subsequently reconstructed and simplified. To understand such historical moments we must begin to experience, vicariously, the anxiety and confusion that they evoked; but it is dif-

ficult to achieve such empathy when we know the outcome of these episodes (the dissolution of the League, McCarthyism, blacklists, etc.) and have already adopted a stance toward them.

I found these documents invigorating and educational, in part because their fragmentary nature contrasted so sharply with the narrative framework of most histories. When reading history we are usually encouraged to regard the account we hold in our hands as a reliable index of the historical actuality. The mere presence of a Gibbon or a Toynbee, binding everything together with a voice of coherence, lets us think that we've got the goods at last, in much the same way that Fielding's narrator in *Tom Jones* becomes as significant as the people and events he describes. But now I was the historian, and as I read through correspondence and notebooks, studied proof sheets and exposure records, there was no consoling, omniscient voice to tell me what went where and why. There is no overstating the difference that mediation makes. At first I felt a sense of power when reading these documents, derived in equal parts from the voyeurism inherent in the enterprise and because now I could try my hand at playing God. But after the first flush of power came persistent and nagging doubts. All too often, these materials defied my attempts to categorize, order, and rationalize. Good modern to the end, I was soon as excited by the limits that such materials represent as I was by the knowledge I was gaining as I studied them.

The more I read, the more the horizon marking some mythical completion of my project receded. I moved on to the papers of W. Eugene Smith, Wynn Bullock, and Minor White. I spent most of my residency reading materials that, though not wholly unrelated to my book on photographic theory, extended considerably beyond its terms. I soon learned to stop worrying about the research necessarily leading to an article or book and instead went where the materials took me, however directionless the passageways might prove to be.

While reading through so many papers, I became increasingly interested in the methodological and theoretical problems involved in writing history and biography. One recurrent problem was the tension between the public and private sides of individuals. Such tensions are especially important in America, where being a public figure can neutralize the subversive, if not revolutionary energy that often lies behind

a new vision or synthesis. As James Baldwin has recently noted, an artist in America is

... either a success or a failure and there's nothing in between. And if you are a success, you run the risk that Norman [Mailer] has run and that I run, too, of becoming a kind of show business personality. Then the legend becomes far more important than the work. It's as though you're living in an echo chamber. You hear only your own voice. And, when you become a celebrity, that voice is magnified by multitudes and you begin to drown in this endless duplication of what looks like yourself.<sup>10</sup>

Artists who have achieved celebrity status often flee from the public eye in order to sustain their creative energies and avoid the "duplication of what looks like yourself," a uniquely modern maze born of communications technology. Such problems also affect how artists regard the trailings of their creative life: the drafts, sketches, negatives, letters, journals, and notebooks that are burned in the fireplace, or bequeathed to heirs, or donated to archives. An artist's way of handling such materials is obviously a function of how he or she wishes to be remembered by posterity. T. S. Eliot vigorously opposed artists' biographies, to the extent that he destroyed many of his personal papers while instructing his heirs to discourage posthumous biographies. Eliot felt that only an artist's published work was important and that the history and inner workings of the artist were largely irrelevant. These positions, as well as Eliot's insistence that the work of art should stand on its own, independent of the cultural or historical contexts that surrounded its making, became canonical in New Critical theory.

Others adopt a less extreme position. Edward Weston, for example, recorded his mundane daily activities as well as his aesthetic manifestos in "day-books" that he wanted to become part of his public self. His efforts to have them published during his lifetime were unsuccessful, but he continued to preserve the diaries along with large files of correspondence and other personal papers. Just as he censored his past in excising certain passages and names from his daybook manuscript, Weston declined any public access to parts of his history by destroying many letters. He later spoke of "last rites over a flaming pile of love notes" in a fragment from his early daybook.

On the other hand, seemingly everything W. Eugene Smith ever owned or borrowed was sent *en masse* to the Center while Smith was still alive. In Smith's case, the enormity of his archives was not so much a function of Proustian egoism, in which everything is deemed interesting and relevant, as a casual indifference to such matters.

Clearly, artists vary greatly with respect to how they dispense with their personal effects. Eliot's position can be defended on the grounds that artists reveal more about their inner states than the great majority of people and that they should not be obligated to share everything with future historians. At the same time, scholars are thankful for the extensive archives that Adams, Smith, and others have left behind, since they greatly facilitate our understanding of these photographers and their times. The question of how much we are entitled to know about public personages is a subtle and open-ended one. But it is imperative for the researcher to determine how a particular archive was assembled, arranged, and edited, since the genesis of an archive determines in part what a researcher can and cannot know about a given subject.

It is equally important for readers to be aware of the kinds of sources that were and were not available to a writer. For example, in the preface to her biography of Diane Arbus, Patricia Bosworth explains that the executrix of the estate, Arbus's daughter Doon, "told me she could not contribute to any biography that touched on her mother's life—'the work speaks for itself.'"<sup>11</sup> Other central figures in Arbus's life, including ex-husband Alan Arbus and her close friend Marvin Israel, held the same position. Accordingly, *Diane Arbus* is based largely upon hundreds of interviews that Bosworth often takes at face value. Bereft of Arbus's private papers and the testimony of many who knew her best, Bosworth had little choice but to privilege these interviews. Obviously, knowing this kind of information is essential for an informed reading of any biography or history.

The more I read, the more I gravitated toward correspondence. Although we understand intellectually that celebrities, too, are only human, nowhere is this more apparent than in letters and other private papers. When reading letters between close friends like Strand and Stieglitz, or Adams and the Newhalls, one observes the ups and downs of the relationship, their gripes about this or that photographer, publisher, friend, or enemy, and their evolving attitudes about

W. EUGENE SMITH

CROTON 1-4890

134 Old Post Road North  
Croton-on-Hudson  
New York

October 11, 1953

Dear Beaumont:

The bad manners of my erratic payment of attention to matters important, including correspondence, are an always continuing regret in my life. ~~Intentions, even the constant desire to care for them, and even lovingly~~ I stand, ill at ease, embarrassed before these details of my life--~~I know my~~

intentions, my desire to ~~write~~ give these details a careful, often loving,

care, ~~and I am~~ <sup>AND THEY WEIGH HEAVILY WITHIN MY DEPRESSION</sup> ~~badly~~ weighted, for in my desire to accomplish ~~the~~ <sup>ANY</sup> detail

properly, I make little headway against the ~~task~~ <sup>task</sup> of them, become more ~~and more~~ <sup>AND MORE</sup>

suffocated by them, until it seems that ~~the~~ <sup>THESE USURPATIONS, AND</sup> details drain my creative life

away. This is a somewhat complicated, and probably not a very clear way to

express my embarrassment, and my sincere apologies, for leaving ~~you~~ <sup>you</sup> of

~~thousands~~ too many notes ~~from~~ <sup>since</sup> you, unreplied to. I ~~have~~ <sup>have</sup> wanted

to reply carefully, and I am a slow, not necessarily methodical worker, ~~and~~ <sup>ALWAYS</sup> ~~with~~ <sup>these</sup>

~~thousands~~ <sup>PREJUDICE</sup> with a lack of time, I have postponed ~~to~~ <sup>THIS ANSWER</sup>

many times, ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> even now, with this letter, I am postponing again, hoping ~~that~~

you will understand ~~that~~ <sup>REF</sup> that when I do not ~~answer~~ <sup>REF</sup> it is ~~not~~ <sup>not</sup> an

omission caused ~~by~~ <sup>NOTHING OF AKAHANT</sup> ~~me~~ <sup>THIS NEGLIGENCE</sup> ~~but~~ <sup>in I REPLY</sup> rather is ~~caused~~ <sup>caused</sup> by a humble

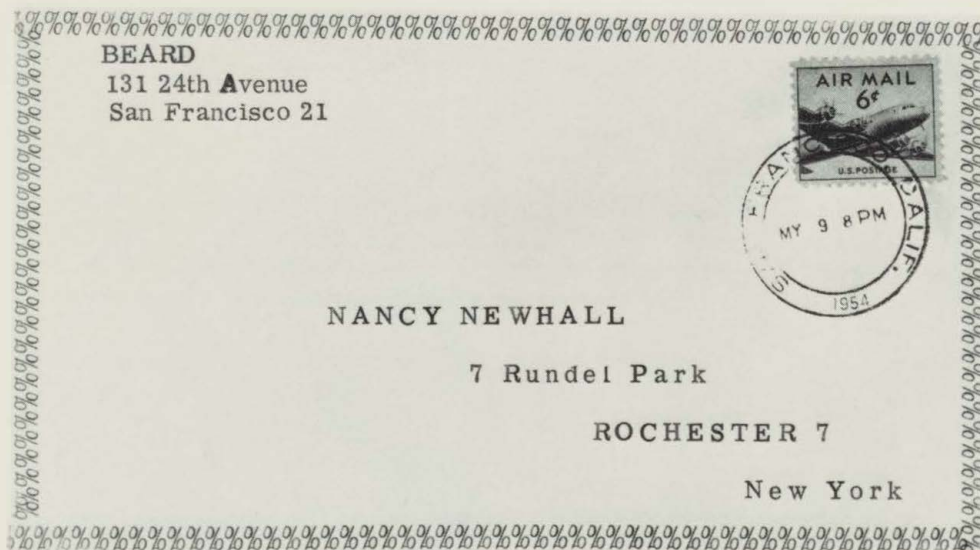
~~respect~~ <sup>REY</sup> respect that makes me wish to ~~reply~~ <sup>reply</sup> with the ~~full~~ <sup>full</sup> consideration

~~that~~ I feel is yours, by right. ~~thousands~~

So please be patient with me, and accept my warmest personal regards,

Typed draft of letter with pencil notes from W. Eugene Smith to Beaumont Newhall,  
11 October 1953  
W. Eugene Smith Archive





Typed, stamped envelope from Ansel Adams to Nancy Newhall, 9 May 1954  
Beaumont and Nancy Newhall Papers

photography and life in general. Letters, with their kaleidoscopic changes in subject and tone, often mime the convoluted passageways of a mind at work, and it was this homology that most attracted me to correspondence.

For example, Stieglitz was capable of great shifts within a single, brief letter. He could begin by complaining about the instability of developing baths, rave about O'Keeffe's latest painting, complain about aching joints, and conclude with some well-turned nastiness about a friend or foe. I was especially drawn to Stieglitz's wit, introspection, and self-criticism, since these qualities are seldom present in published accounts. The correspondence reveals a man who was all too aware of his fallibility and who shared his foibles with others, casting them in a humorous, self-deprecatory light. Most photographers will take solace in hearing Stieglitz's lament to Strand.

Took a wonderful photo early this morning—rising mists—No plate in holder!! The 3rd time I've lost a certain masterpiece this summer in that way. . . . I decided yesterday that I hadn't produced 40 good prints out of the 400 I made this summer!—And it made me feel pretty sick. Of course, I could blame the often really stupid paper or the bad printing weather or the lack of facilities—the unrest—But I don't.—There is no excuse for many of the failures. Just simply not

enough *thought*—concentration—at the time of working.<sup>12</sup>

In a different vein, Stieglitz writes longingly about his defunct gallery, 291, but leavens his sentimentality with humor.

Seven years ago at this time<sup>13</sup> I was in the midst of preparing "What is 291?"—It seems an eternity ago—Still as if only yesterday—It is sometimes difficult for me to believe that I am living. . . . [291] was clean.—Very clean.—An incredible performance. When I look back upon it I don't see how it ever could have happened.—And happening, how it could have existed in concrete form for so many years. I wonder will I ever grow up. I'm making a mad stab in trying to achieve the result—Grow Up!—Ye Gods—what does it mean? Distrust the world? Everybody except oneself?—no, I guess I'll never quite grow up. It's too much like a business venture.<sup>14</sup>

Later in the same letter, Stieglitz indulges in a self-parodic meditation upon death and transfiguration.

Well, yesterday was yesterday—today is another day.—Caruso is still dead—and the sun doesn't seem to weep over it—and the flies are just as

numerous—some trees growing—some others silently lingeringly dying—the sky intangible.—Am preparing myself for heaven.—Am having it cleaned out. I'll be the only one there.—God of course there to receive me. If I don't think he's fit company I'll have to get rid of him. I shall try the seven day (or six day) myself—G[eorgia O'Keeffe] wants to know whether she isn't to be with me. I said she is to take care of the other Place. Between us we'll have complete control—Be thoroughly modern.<sup>15</sup>

Some of Stieglitz's contemporaries, as well as several present-day critics, have charged Stieglitz with being egotistical, autocratic, vain, pretentious, and worse. Passages like those quoted above do not in themselves invalidate such claims. They do, however, introduce sides of Stieglitz's character and personality that are often absent from the public versions of the man. As in photography, so too in scholarship: selection is the key. The materials in the archive are inert until the researcher brings them to life, just as the visual world can remain unperceived until the photographer sees and frames it. If there are a sufficient number of letters in an archive (and there are thousands of letters to Stieglitz at Yale), numerous conflicting portraits can be created. The same letters can be used to portray Stieglitz as saint or sinner, progressive or reactionary. Archival documents are unquestionably revealing, but *what* they reveal is largely a function of the researcher's methods and aims. Scholarly portraits of historical personages can be every bit as reductive as photographic portraits, disclosing some traits while obscuring others. In either case, incompleteness should be assumed as a given.

Too often biographical and scholarly accounts subtract the vital spirit that made a man like Stieglitz so compelling, if problematic, to those who knew him. When reading current revisionist writing on Stieglitz, for example, I am sometimes hard-pressed to understand how such a man could have influenced so many of his contemporaries. This kind of reductionism only increases with time: since fewer and fewer people are alive who knew Stieglitz directly, researchers can construct versions of his life that never would have been accepted twenty or thirty years ago. At the same time, they can also say *true* things about him that could not have been said twenty or thirty years ago.

Such reductionism has obvious advantages for writers and readers. As in so many American institutions,

success in the university and the publishing world is measured by the supposed newness of a point of view. Articles and books are published according to whether they make "original" contributions to a field, and the same criteria are used in granting academic tenure and promotion. But too often new viewpoints are achieved by analyzing a small amount of carefully chosen data through a narrowly conceived, polemical point of view. My point is not to indict the mixed motives of scholars, though plenty could be said on that subject, but rather that career pressures within the Academy and the publishing world often breed reductive writing and thinking. Moreover, in treating complicated men and women as if they were ciphers battling on some oversimplified, yes/no battlefield, readers and writers alike believe that they "have a handle" on this or that person. The mass psychology that makes *People* magazine popular at the supermarket is all too often at work in the realms of biography and historical writing. We want to believe that complicated people can be held in the palm of our hand, much as a 2x2" snapshot of the Grand Canyon provides the consoling if illusory impression that we can possess and comprehend its enormity.

Adrift in the archival labyrinth, I became increasingly committed to writing about the materials as unreductively as possible. While historians cannot know certain things that an eyewitness participant takes for granted, they nonetheless have access to a much broader array of materials and perspectives than the eyewitness. In many cases, the scholar's most challenging task lies in remaining open to the mazes born of too much information. I believe an ideal biography of a personage like Stieglitz would transcend any single, monofocal approach and instead frame the man and his times in the broadest possible terms. The biographer would have to escape from the highly polemical climate that surrounded Stieglitz when he was alive and that continues to follow him even forty years after his death. Finally, a relatively unreductive portrait would take into account the full range of Stieglitz's complexities and contradictions. Few of us, whether famous or unknown, manage to resolve the confusions and problems of our lives. We know one another through our contradictions, not in spite of them, and conscientious analysis should reflect, rather than implicitly deny, such troublesome truths.

But a desire to write unreductively is more easily stated than accomplished. Among other things, when studying private documents it is all too easy to lose

perspective and objectivity. One begins to empathize with the life and mind of the subject, and it is a small step from such empathy to an uncritical embrace. Leon Edel, who spent over twenty years researching Henry James for his multivolume biography, has suggested that

Biographers must struggle constantly not to be taken over by their subjects, or to fall in love with them. The secret of this struggle is to learn to be a participant observer.<sup>16</sup>

This is all too evident in the great bulk of photographic scholarship, both because researchers do indeed fall in love with their subjects and because much photographic scholarship, past and present, is undertaken with the hidden agenda of furthering photography's status as art, and the photographer's status as *artiste*. The prominence of this motive in photographic writing too often militates against tough-minded questioning; instead, it breeds the kind of hagiography evidenced in Dorothy Norman's *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer* or *Minor White: A Living Remembrance*, both of which are devoted to the apotheosis of their respective subjects. As Edel suggests, the best scholars manage simultaneously to participate in and observe their subject, but such postures remain all too rare in photographic literature.

Other epistemological issues surfaced in my effort to know the archives as unreductively as possible. Perhaps the best way to demonstrate these labyrinthine loops is through the following example of photographers discussing with one another topics of mutual concern.

DURING THE FALL OF 1952 BEAUMONT AND NANCY Newhall travelled in Europe for two months to collect photographs for the Eastman House. In the course of their travels, they met with many leading photographers, including Coburn, Strand, and Cartier-Bresson. The journey resulted in an article in *Aperture*, "Controversy and the Creative Concepts," in which Nancy Newhall addressed what she perceived to be the divergent approaches of European and American photographers. She begins:

Last fall, in Paris, I found myself involved in hot defense of the ideals and methods of photographers in the West; this spring, in San Francisco,

I found myself involved in equally hot defense of the photographers in Paris.<sup>17</sup>

The representative figures of these "ideals and methods" were Henri Cartier-Bresson, whose *The Decisive Moment* had just been published, and Edward Weston.

Newhall's portrait of Cartier-Bresson, among the first to appear in an American publication, was largely based upon her visits with him in Paris. Her description of Cartier-Bresson's working methods has long since entered into common photographic lore.

I am sure Henri Cartier-Bresson puts on his Leica as automatically as he puts on his shoes. He is never without it. He carries no parcels ever, so that he may always be instantly ready. At any moment the worn case may appear open; without looking down, without haste, he sets the shutter and the stop. With a slow flow of a hunter anxious not to attract the gaze of his wild game, he raises the camera to his eye, clicks, and as slowly lowers it. No one has noticed so quiet and natural a motion. . . . He can vanish from your side in a street only moderately crowded; you can scan it carefully and not see him. Then, just as suddenly, his camera back under his arm, he reappears smiling, at your elbow. . . . In a busy restaurant he will stand up and sit down again; he has made a portrait of a man at another table.<sup>18</sup>

But Newhall quickly moves from anecdotes to more ideological concerns. Europeans, she claims, are interested mainly in "people, and the places and events they create around themselves," and are indifferent, if not hostile to the aesthetics and politics of many west coast photographers.

The merely pretty horrifies [Cartier-Bresson]: "Now, in this moment, this crisis, with the world maybe going to pieces—to photograph a *landscape*!" He has no doubt of the sincerity or the stature of Weston or Adams or Strand, but, although he feels closer to Weston, they mystify him; looking at their work: "Magnificent!—But I can't understand these men. It is a world of stone." To the explanation that through images of what is as familiar to all men as stone, water, grass, cloud, photographers can make visual



poetry and express thought beyond translation into other media: "Do they think that by photographing what is eternal they make their work eternal?" The further idea that, in the American West, man appears trivial and civilization a transient litter: "It is, I think, philosophically unsound." Man to Europe and to many in the American East, is still the proper study of man. The earth, the universe, eternity?—"They are too big, too far away. What can we do about them?"<sup>19</sup>

Newhall then turns briefly to American photojournalism, which she equates largely with *Life* magazine photographers. She discovers points in common between American and European photojournalists: the troubled relations between editors and photographers, the exigencies of deadlines and space limitations, the often rootless life-styles. She claims, however, that "The American is much more versatile than his European colleague. . . . He is a much better technician than the European. . . ." <sup>20</sup> Newhall suggests that this superiority is the result of "the so called purists"—Stieglitz, Strand, Weston, Adams—who provided the

standards unmatched elsewhere for precision of technique and intensity of statement, standards that never fail to stagger and upset the European who is required to conform to them.<sup>21</sup>

The concluding section, comprising one-half of the article, is a sketch of Edward Weston, whose *Daybooks* Newhall knew intimately since she had been editing them for publication for several years. Like her portrait of Cartier-Bresson, Newhall's account played a large role in establishing the public image of Weston that is still dominant today. She recounts Weston's first box camera, his affection for cheap lenses and simple equipment, his self-consciously spartan life-style, his insistence upon view-camera precision and natural lighting, his reverence of the fine print. She balances Cartier-Bresson's credo—"Man to Europe and to many in the American East, is still the proper study of man"—with the Weston equivalent—"The proper study of man in the West is the powers and functions of the earth, and how he may live with them during his brief tenancy."<sup>22</sup>

Newhall concludes the article with a discussion of Weston's character and influence.

Weston is probably the most tolerant of the major photographers; he expects no one to follow his personal concept, knowing that every creator makes his own concept as inevitably as a river makes its own course to the sea. . . . But few of Weston's followers follow him in this, and most of them recoil at the slightest deviation away from the concept. They cannot see an image that is not printed on cool and glossy paper; enlargement distresses them. . . . A miniature camera is a toy, and its results miniscule, inconsequential and a nuisance to look at. People seldom interest the Weston followers as subjects, apart from an occasional portrait. And they would rather earn their living as carpenters or masons than turn their cameras on what does not interest them and sully their delight for mere cash. Yet with the majority of them, this rigidity is a temporary phase; they emerge with a strong discipline from the silent dominance of Weston's vision, and begin to evolve their own approaches. For themselves, there may be fallacies and limitations in his concept, but it still stands monumental in its simplicity, a challenge and a catalyst.<sup>23</sup>

While praising Weston's uniquely American brand of individualism, Newhall also sees in his "tolerance" a possible solution to the controversy between American and European photographers that occasioned her essay.

Despite Newhall's hope that "Controversy and the Creative Concepts" would lead to mutual understanding, at least one reader was moved in another direction. Soon after the publication of the article in *Aperture*, Wynn Bullock wrote a letter to Nancy Newhall that set off a chain reaction of letter-writing involving several central figures of mid-century American photography.

Bullock had never met the Newhalls, although Weston and Adams were mutual friends. Accordingly, he begins the letter expressing respect for Nancy's criticism—"We who love photography take you with deadly seriousness"—and ends it with the hope that the Newhalls might join him "for dinner and an evening of photographic talk and pictures" when they next visit California. But the heart of the letter is Bullock's strong opposition to Cartier-Bresson and his equally ardent defense of Weston's position. Bullock

155 Mar Vista Drive  
Monterey, California  
November 16, 1953.

Mrs. Nancy Newhall  
7 Mendall Place  
Socorro 7, New York

Dear Nancy:

I have wanted to write you many times. Your comments on Edward's color work in *Modern Photography* and your recent article in *Aperture* have spurred me into action.

First I want to repeat how important and influential I think is your role of critic. You're one of the rare ones that eloquently speaks for fine photography and photographers. For that I am your great admirer. We who love photography take you with deadly seriousness.

For myself I agree with most of what you say. Let on certain basic aspects I do not. These include specifically a more precise evaluation of different schools of thought. A point in mind is the *Aperture* article. The purpose of the article is to urge a greater understanding between photographers having different creative concepts. This understanding need not be agreement but it should include respect for strong differing expression. You are so right. We all need more tolerance. Our intense interest in what we are doing gets as a snake screen which hides the sincere purpose and ideals of others.

Returning to the points: True you permit each school of thought to defend itself. Yet the photo-journalists headed by *Life* and many other enormously influential publications, who have economic interest in their work, have for too long waged a relentless fight against those of us who believe in the importance of 8 x 10 contact photography. This fight against us is spear-headed by control of nearly all the channels through which public opinion is molded. The ideas most often set forth to belittle and distort our beliefs are false. Bresson's ideas concerning our work also neatly fit into that category of criticism. Normally such criticism eventually multiplies itself. But coming from so great a photographer as Bresson — and believe me I am a great admirer of his work — the thoughts take on weight far beyond their meaning.

For example you say: "For him, and for most European photo-journalists there is just one uniform subjects, people, and the places and events they create around themselves." I have an argument for him photographs do justice to the subject matter.

Now what I object to most violently is his nose in the air attitude towards those of us who find rocks, water, grass, and the world of nature equally fitting subjects for great photography.

To me this absurd attitude is clearly spelled out when you quote Bresson as saying: "Now, in this moment, this crisis, with the world going to pieces, — to photograph a LANDSCAPE." He sounds like a jittery old woman. I suppose Edward is any less sensitive to the tragedies of the world just because he photographs a landscape.

The spiritual character of his seeing can be his answer to

- 2 -

the non/peace and hatreds that keep fermenting world affairs. I believe such "seeing" is a challenge and defense against confusion and hatreds. It spells out a way of life based on hard work, sacrifice and a search for the good.

Actually all Bresson is doing is bringing up the limp old argument of Art for Propaganda versus Art for Art. I don't mean political propaganda but the more commendable type which points up human joy, tragedy, strength, weakness, etc.

I am firmly convinced that if photography is to endure as a true art medium it should be made indecisibly clear that:

Any type of subject matter is the proper subject of photography. For it is what is done to subject matter that is of prime importance. It limits a photographer's vision to only those things that include people and their influence is to destroy nature, and abstract art, as fit subjects for the camera.

Is a Picasso painting any less great because it deals with a bowl of apples and not with the person who puts it on the table? No. No. No.

As to choice of subject matter the same obvious truth applies with equal force to photography.

For myself I shall photograph all subjects whether with or without people. I have no doubts that my photographs must be justified by visual premonitions.

Many other principles, philosophy, aesthetic and technical, separate the photo-journalist and those who desire to work with the 8 x 10 contact technique. Actually as you say we both can learn something from each other. But I want intelligent criticism if I am to listen.

Speaking of the comments on Edward's pictures in *Modern Photography* I enjoyed both the pictures and your comments. Still I do not think the pictures selected best illustrated thinking in color.

It is my understanding that thinking of color as form means utilizing the principle that warm colors protrude while cool colors recede. It is the proper juxtaposition of warm and cool color that helps create form.

Only Dody's picture seems to illustrate the principle.

In the desert picture, except for the sky, all colors are warm. The same holds true for the sea photograph. Its form could have been equally brought out in black and white.

Concerning the color stability of photographic dyes and inks what you say is a sad fact. But compared to them is relatively permanent. These working in color might be discouraged and confused by your blanket statement.

The great contribution Dick Howard's company has made in the field of manufacturing fine color materials deserves a clarification of your statement. Compared to all other color products his color materials are the most permanent. I am not an expert on the subject, but isn't this common knowledge coming to color

Pages one and two of carbon copy of letter from Wynn Bullock to Nancy Newhall, 16 November 1953  
Wynn Bullock Archive

suggests that photojournalists have "long waged a relentless fight against those of us who believe in the importance of 8x10 contact photography," and regards Cartier-Bresson's views on Weston and other west coast photographers as an especially aggravating case in point.

What I object to most violently is [Cartier-Bresson's] nose in the air attitude towards those of us who find rocks, water, grass, and the world of nature equally fitting subjects for great photography. To me this absurd attitude is clearly spelled out when you quote Bresson as saying, "Now, in this moment, this crisis, with the world going to pieces, — to photograph a LANDSCAPE." He sounds like a jittery old woman. I suppose Edward is any less sensitive to the trag-

edies of the world just because he photographs a landscape.

The spiritual character of [Weston's] seeing can be his answer to the confusion and hatreds that keep fermenting world crisis. I believe such "seeing" is a challenge and defense against confusion and hatreds. It spells out a way of life based on hard work, sacrifice and a search for the good.

Actually all Bresson is doing is bringing up the limp old argument of Art for Propaganda versus Art for Art. I don't mean political propaganda but the more commendable type which points up human joy, tragedy, strength, weakness. . . .

Any type of subject matter is the proper subject of photography. For it is what is done to subject



Page three

*matter that is of prime importance.* To limit a photographer's vision to only those things that include people and their influence is to falsely minimize nature, and abstract art, as fit subjects for the camera.

Is a Cezanne painting any less great because it deals with a bowl of apples and not the person who puts it on the table? No! No! No!<sup>24</sup>

Upon receipt of Bullock's letter, Nancy Newhall, who was in San Francisco at the time, shared the letter with Ansel Adams and sent a copy to Beaumont in Rochester. Adams got off the first salvo, writing to Bullock,

I think it is time for all of us to say less, write less, argue less, and photograph more. Nancy is

potentially a fine photographer; I hope that when she says what she has to say in critical writings she will then do some photography!

The world is very large. C[artier-]B[resson], W[ynn] B[ullock], Adams, Hill, Zilch; all have the potential for some kind of statement. There is not the time for the *bistro* type of arguments. The energy you spent in your letter might well have produced a fine photograph! The energy I have spent in this letter might well have produced a fine photograph! Think of all the fine photographs that might have been done, if only the energies had been directed towards the miraculous revelation of the lens, instead of the often un-miraculous manifestation of the critical spirit! We all need a breath of really fresh air, a flash of confidence in the Thing which resides within each of us. It actually makes no difference at all what C-B says—what Nancy says—What I say, or what you say—in words. That funny unflat thing which peels off the drying racks is what we really say.<sup>25</sup>

Adams sent a copy of his letter to Beaumont Newhall, who also felt obliged to come to Nancy's and Cartier-Bresson's defense. Striking a more moderate tone than Adams, he suggested that Bullock's

reaction to [Nancy's] report of the French attitude toward photography is a tribute to her skill as a writer. She carefully avoided any editorial comment on the various views which she has described. I think it is very important to realize that C-B finds a landscape a sterile yield. Once we understand his conviction on this matter we do not expect to find great landscapes in his work. On the other hand, the fact that Ansel finds his greatest expression in wilderness untouched by man is equally important to realize.<sup>26</sup>

The now well-thumbed Bullock letter was in turn passed on to Minor White, who had recently joined the staff of the George Eastman House. As the editor of *Aperture*, White made no attempt to conceal his irritation.

Dear Ansel,

GRRRRRR

Just read Wynn's letter and your reply.



ANSEL ADAMS 131 24TH AVENUE SAN FRANCISCO 21  
December 1, 1953

Dear Bullock:

Nancy showed me your fine letter. We are all in the family so to speak. The ideas in photography are important to all of us. I know she will write you. I am sending off these thoughts entirely on my own - and I am glad to have established contact with you which will enable me to speak freely with you.

It is not my intention to defend Nancy - she does not need it. Rather, I feel that what she expresses must be clarified.

The reports that Cartier-Bresson says about a French photographer - "The world's (shut) eyes and his photographs (shut) eyes!!!" etc. She also reports elsewhere what the western photographer said about him and his work. I am trying to get at this point:-----

There is no one who has embraced the people to understand ALL aspects of photography as much as Nancy. We must not confuse tolerance with apathy. I have been guilty of all kinds of foolish thinking and statements on photography. As you will remember, I was instrumental in forming the U/64 Group. We did a lot of good in a little way - and thank God we tolerated in good time!

I am deeply concerned over the future of the medium in an inclusive sense. I have a small contribution. I have no desire to magnify this into a cult. Edward has been given with those who desire the cult as the anchor of the world. Edward is - so are all of us - limited to a small field of experience, within that field he has produced a lucid matrix of expression and self-revelation.

People who do not have the divine spark sufficiently, sharply and devotedly, with "fellow" interest in technique and subject, and in subject matter in general. Edward does not really approach in this - neither did I. The threat of mastery of creation, the knowledge of new windows in the world, the faith in the self, and what the self does - these are the things Edward really wants his friends and even those who are not his friends - to experience.

Remember, I think it is time for all of us to say less, write less, argue less, and photograph more. Nancy is potentially a fine photographer; I hope that when she says what she has to say in critical writings she will then do so on photography!

The world is very large. Cartier-Bresson, Bullock, Adams, Hill, Black, all have the potential for some kind of statement. There is not time for the latter type of argument. The energy you spent in your letter might well have produced a fine photograph! The energy I have spent in this letter might well have produced a fine photograph! Think of all the fine photographs that might have been done, if only the energies had been directed towards the miraculous revelation of the lens, instead of the often un-directional manifestation of the critical spirit!

Bullock - 2

We all need a breath of really fresh air, a flash of confidence in the thing which resides within each of us. It actually makes no difference at all what Cartier-Bresson says - what Nancy says - what I say, or what you say --- in words. That funny old thing which picks off the crying pain to what we really say!

Forgive this tirade. I hope to have a chance to talk with you soon.

My best wishes and regards,

ANSEL ADAMS

Pages one and two of carbon copy of letter from Ansel Adams to Wynn Bullock, 1 December 1953  
Ansel Adams Archive

How are we ever going to make *Aperture* a forum for thoughts and ideas if we tell people to stop writing their ideas and go make pictures? I don't get it.<sup>27</sup>

Later in the same letter White scolds Adams for encouraging Nancy to take up photography at the expense of her writing.

[The top level critic] must be able, so far as humanly possible, to see ALL photography as a whole; see where its parts fit; have no blind spots; be sympathetic to any visual image. . . . Nancy is reaching this ideal. And it is an ideal that you as a practicing artist, as a practicing creative photographer can not afford to hold. But, and here is all I ask, give her a chance to grow in HER direction. Give her courage and the help she needs to rise to her own stature.<sup>28</sup>

A few days later White wrote Bullock directly.

Nancy sent us your letter about Cartier, and I want permission to publish the pertinent parts in the next issue of *Aperture*. A defense of Edward's viewpoint is much needed. I hope that Ansel's little letter (of which I saw a copy) only spurred you to write him a nasty one back. How we are to run a forum for photographers if they don't take an hour from the darkroom to pound at the typewriter I'll never understand.<sup>29</sup>

Despite this far-flung correspondence, there is no record of Nancy Newhall herself having responded to Bullock's letter, which is especially noteworthy since she considered it important enough to share with Beaumont, Adams, White, and perhaps others. Of course, a letter could have been written and subsequently misplaced, although Bullock saved most of his correspondence, and Newhall often kept carbon copies of hers. Since she was in San Francisco at this time, she may have spoken directly to the nearby Bullock about it over the telephone, thereby leaving no record of their exchange. Or perhaps she was angered by Bullock's letter and decided against responding.

For the moment, suffice it to say that any explanation we create for Newhall's "lapse" in replying to Bullock's letter must be highly qualified. The "perhaps's" and "maybe's" that such anomalies necessitate

GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE  
900 East Avenue Rochester 7, N. Y.

December 11, 1953

Mr. Wynne Bullock  
155 Mar Vista Drive  
Monterey, California

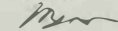
Dear Wynne:

Beaumont handed me a little pile of your prints and told me to make a show of them. It was refreshing and delightful to see them, some new ones, on pristine white mounts, and with the charm and intensity I have learned to look for in your work.

So while Beaumont said he had stuck my neck out, I don't mind. First reaction was to display them along with comment by myself, and offer the public, "one man's opinions to one man's photographs," or some such warning. If I do, I'll be sure to send you a copy of text. Just when I get to the job is another matter, but a fortnight I hope.

Nancy sent us your letter about Cartier, and I want permission to publish the pertinent parts in the next issue of APERTURE. A defense of Edward's viewpoint is much needed. I hope that Ansel's little letter (of which I saw a copy) only spurred you to write him a nasty one back. How we are to run a forum for photographers if they don't take an hour from the darkroom to pound at the typewriter I'll never understand.

Cheerio,



Minor White  
Assistant to Curator

MW/jw

*An Educational Memorial to George Eastman to Show  
the Progress in the Art and Science of Photography*

Original typescript letter from Minor White to Wynne  
Bullock, 11 December 1953  
Wynne Bullock Archive

remind us that in the labyrinth every interpretation is contingent, that every step may be a misstep.

THE RELATIVELY UNDRAMATIC NATURE OF THE FOREGOING documents makes them all the more relevant to a discussion of how scholarly research is undertaken. Were we considering, say, private communiqués between Roosevelt and Churchill on the Yalta conference, the stakes would be infinitely higher, and virtually anything either man had to say would be of interest. Most history, however, is not enacted around such events, but rather around everyday activities which affect the slow germination of ideas, ideologies, and the personalities who espouse them. When reading through an archive, one naturally hopes for high drama, turning points, and "Eureka moments." But instead the scholar, much like the laboratory scientist,

endures large doses of simple drudgery, for which there are no assurances of rainbows, much less pots of gold. Accordingly, I choose to analyze these exchanges in part *because* of their ordinariness, for the problems such exchanges present to researchers are much more representative than events like Yalta.

Although the terms of the preceding letters seem clear and straightforward, underlying them are sub rosa idiosyncrasies, motives, and issues—a labyrinth that is implicitly pointed to by the defensive quality of the documents themselves. The words "defend" and "defensive" recur throughout. Nancy Newhall sets the tone in her first sentence by recounting how in Paris and then in San Francisco she had "heatedly defended" one group of photographers to the other. Bullock attacked Cartier-Bresson by way of defending Weston and abstract art in general. Adams wrote Bullock in defense of Nancy, as did Beaumont. And Minor White, in turn, defended Bullock's right to express himself in words as well as images, while writing Bullock that "a defense of Edward's viewpoint is much needed." The degree of defensiveness suggests that the issues under discussion were of considerable personal and professional importance to all parties and that sensitive nerves had been touched.

In the heat of the moment, none of these men and women may have fully grasped the significance of the issues that animated them. But for us, with the primary materials spread before us, and equipped with thirty years of hindsight, it is relatively easy to distinguish issues from defensive postures. To understand these documents unreductively we must contextualize them as fully as possible. We can view them as products of personal needs, aspirations, and motives or societal imperatives, patterns, and myths. We can know them, for example, through the individualized focus of Freudian theory or the societal emphasis of Marxist theory. Such choices lie at the heart of scholarship, and they are determined by the kinds of documents and issues involved, the aims, proclivities, and background of the researcher, as well as the historical moment during which the research itself is undertaken and written. Let us return, then, to some of the unstated contexts in Nancy Newhall's article and the letters it prompted.

Nancy Newhall introduces "Controversy and the Creative Concepts" by claiming that both the American and European positions were viable "way[s] of living and working" and that "I have tried to present their concepts from the inside out, with justice and

GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE  
900 East Avenue Rochester 7, N. Y.

December 9, 1953

Mr. Wynne Bullock  
155 Mar Vista Drive  
Monterey, California

Dear Wynne Bullock:

Please accept my apologies for the delay in answering your letter about the article on solarization which you have been generous enough to offer to write for Image.

What you have to say about the difference between the Sabattier effect and true solarization is most interesting. I have always understood that the Sabattier effect was due to exposure to light of the sensitive material during development, while true solarization was caused by one exposure so long that the shoulder of the characteristic curve is used. This effect appears in platinum prints and in daguerreotypes.

It was this distinction which I had in mind when I suggested the article.

I should like to take up with Dr. Mees the points which you bring out about the difference between complete reversal and partial reversal, when you have the article written, I will ask him to read it. As you know he is the president of the Eastman House and I automatically submit to him articles of a technical nature which we publish in Image.

Minor White is now working with us. He will put the photographs which you sent me on display a little later on. I hope that you have not been inconvenienced by the length of time we have kept your photographs.

Nancy, who is now in San Francisco, has sent me your most interesting letter about her article. Your reaction to her report of the French attitude toward photography is a tribute to her skill as a writer. She carefully avoided any editorial comment on the various views which she has described. I think it is very important to realize that Cartier-Bresson finds landscape a sterile vista. Once we understand his conviction on this matter we do not expect to find great landscapes in his work. On the other hand, the fact that Ansel finds his greatest expression in wilderness untouched by man is equally important to realize. In literature these different

*An Educational Memorial to George Eastman is Show  
the Progress in the Art and Science of Photography*

Mr. Wynne Bullock

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December 9, 1953

basic concepts are clearly accepted, and we are able to appreciate the completely different writing of, say E. E. Cummings and John Steinbeck.

It is gratifying that Nancy's article has provoked so many reactions similar to yours.

With all best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

*Beaumont Newhall*  
Beaumont Newhall  
Curator

BN/jw

Pages one and two of original typescript letter from Beaumont Newhall to Wynn Bullock, 9 December 1953  
Wynn Bullock Archive

without favoritism."<sup>30</sup> Beaumont Newhall reiterates Nancy's claim of neutrality, writing to Bullock that she "carefully avoided any editorial comment on the various views which she has described."<sup>31</sup> The article, however, clearly reflects Nancy's personal background and professional interests.

As noted earlier, the close relationship between Adams and the Newhalls was forged in part through their mutual regard for Stieglitz. During the war years Nancy Newhall spent hundreds of hours with Stieglitz, helping him with the day-to-day work of 291 and conducting extensive interviews that were to form the basis for a biography of Stieglitz.<sup>32</sup> On many occasions Adams and Newhall wrote of their commitment to carrying on Stieglitz's work and ideas. Adams, for example, wrote to Nancy a few days after Stieglitz's death that

I am subdued by the weight of our obligation.  
We asked for it; we have lived towards it.<sup>33</sup>

And in 1948 Newhall wrote to Adams concerning an idea that they had discussed for some time: starting a new journal to take up the slack of the long-defunct *Camera Work*.

*Camera Work* was monumental in its time; let us make something, independent but related, as monumental in our time; Stieglitz fought for photography as art and for art and artists; let's us go further in our time, as beautifully presented, as intense, of equal quality, taking photography as art for granted in many subtle ways and fighting what to us now are more vital issues—the problems of photography as expression, profession, communication.<sup>34</sup>

Although Newhall establishes a contrast between America and Europe in her article, there is an equally important contrast between photography as it was



practiced on the two American coasts, a theme that can still be found in photographic criticism. Nancy, though a born-and-bred easterner, was increasingly interested in west coast photography. In the late forties and early fifties she worked with Edward Weston editing his *Daybooks*, began researching a biography of Adams (*The Eloquent Light*), and developed close friendships with Dorothea Lange, Cedric Wright, and Brett Weston. During these years her correspondence with Adams often dwelled on schemes that would allow the Newhalls to move permanently to the West Coast. As early as 1945, Nancy regarded living in the east more as a duty than a desire. Referring to the Museum of Modern Art and the city that housed it, Nancy wrote Adams that

If, by expending three or four years more in this joint, this madhouse, these gasoline fume-filled canyons of cement, we establish photography and photographers in several fields with enough momentum so that they will go on gathering force, then you and the school, Edward [Weston] on his hill—everybody is going to benefit. . . . There will be revolutions and counterrevolutions, gorgeous and ridiculous undertakings—the thing will be alive.<sup>35</sup>

By the time she travelled to Europe in 1952, Newhall's personal and professional interests were strongly centered in the West, just as they were for many of Stieglitz's other latter-day disciples.<sup>36</sup>

Newhall's allegiance to west coast photography is evident throughout the essay. American photography is largely equated with landscape photography in the *f/64* mode; even American photojournalism, Newhall suggests, was greatly influenced by "the so-called purists—Stieglitz, Strand, Weston, Adams." The section on Weston takes up the last half of the article, and the fact that the essay concludes by stressing Weston's influence is hardly an accident: like any good writer, Newhall recognized the relationship between the organization of an essay and its rhetorical effectiveness. The length and placement of the Weston section eclipses the much briefer section on Cartier-Bresson, to say nothing of the numerous east coast photographers who were never even mentioned, much less analyzed, in the article.

In addition to giving pride of place to the west coast axis in photography, Newhall used her article to promote the status of photographs as collectible *objets*

*d'art*. This concern surfaces in a seemingly neutral passage on Edward Weston's current activities.

. . . with the help of his son, Brett, [Edward Weston] is printing the thousand negatives he considers the best. There will be eight prints from each; from albums, museums, collectors and individuals can choose and order by negative number what they wish. Probably no more startling idea was ever proposed to museums, traditionally conditioned to the small output of painters and the high cost of even a slight sketch. For the price of one so-so contemporary piece of painting or sculpture, the entire masterwork of one of the greatest photographers is for sale. And for less than a bad watercolor or scratchy etching, the massive and sculptural images of a man who could write, with a laugh, "The painters have no copyright on modern art!"<sup>37</sup>

The case could be made that the rhetorical vectors in "Controversy and the Creative Concepts" reach their culmination at precisely this point in the essay, a point that obviously would be applauded by virtually all of *Aperture's* readers. However, the passage contradicts the air of neutrality adopted at the beginning of the essay. Not only are the issues raised in it irrelevant to the conflicting stances of "European" and "American" photography, which is the main focus of the article, but also the case in point is the work of an American, Edward Weston, while no similar propositions are made for the collectibility of European photography.

Critical objectivity, and how it is affected by a writer's relationships with artists, is a central issue here. Close associations between critics and photographers were virtually inevitable during the early fifties, when the emerging photographic community was still very small, and even in today's expanded art world such associations are commonplace. Though positive in many ways, these relationships can also contribute to hidden agendas that are unknown to most readers, but that nonetheless shape the tenor and substance of essays or reviews. Critics play a major role in establishing the visibility, value, and marketability of an artist's work. Accordingly, difficult ethical problems arise when the critic and the artist also are close personal friends, or, for that matter, enemies. A conscientious critic can, at least in theory, achieve balance by sorting out personal dimen-

sions from the issues raised in the work itself. And too, a critic can always choose *not* to write if balance is not forthcoming. In any event, the problem of neutrality was one that Nancy Newhall confronted often in her career, since much of her writing concerned photographers who were also close personal friends. Insofar as it is possible to separate the two, her interests lay not so much in promoting individual photographers but rather the status of photography itself. This agenda was wholly consistent with the objectives that led to the creation of *Aperture*, a subject we will return to momentarily.

Despite the strong pro-Weston slant in "Controversy and the Creative Concepts," Wynn Bullock apparently believed that Weston needed more vigorous defense. Bullock had for some time made his living from commercial work and his photographic concession at Fort Ord military base. He had only recently ventured into art photography, and he was interested in his work reaching the broadest possible audience. Although in the early fifties art photographers could not support themselves through print sales, there was clamoring, as always, among younger photographers to get their work shown and recognized. Throughout his career Bullock openly claimed that Weston had exerted the strongest influence on his work and thinking. To Bullock's mind, an attack on Weston was tantamount to an attack on himself and his working philosophy; thus, his letter arose from his personal feelings about Weston as well as from his efforts to further his own career. This is not to gainsay Bullock's genuine regard for Weston, but only to suggest that other motives were involved as well. Indeed, Bullock might have realized that this was a good opportunity to make initial contact with the Newhalls, who were more than a little influential in curatorial and critical circles.

Perhaps surer of himself and of his footing in photography, Ansel Adams didn't mince words in his response to Bullock's letter. But it is amusing to hear Adams, who by 1953 had written several books, dozens of articles, and countless letters, telling Bullock to cut the verbiage and stay in the darkroom. Adams denounced words as irrelevant, yet in writing his letter to Bullock he used them against themselves. In so doing, Adams joined the ever-expanding lists of writers who decry linguistic labyrinths even as they continue to create them.

Adams's gentle chiding of Bullock is ironic for another reason, since Adams himself was hardly

among Cartier-Bresson's biggest fans. In fact, both Newhalls had tried to change Adams's negative opinion of the French photographer, as well as his less-than-positive attitude about Europe in general. While still in Paris, Beaumont wrote to Adams of his high regard for Cartier-Bresson's *The Decisive Moment*, which had just been published:

We think that it is superb; the best presentation of his work. . . . I wish that I could make you see what I see in Cartier.<sup>38</sup>

Nancy wrote on the next day:

There could not be two photographers so fast, so intense, of such integrity and intelligence, so utterly opposite in everything else as you and Henri! If you don't feel his world, no more can he feel yours. . . . A comparison between you and Henri . . . could be very funny and highly illuminating.<sup>39</sup>

Such graphic differences were the driving forces behind Nancy's article. Indeed, she may have had Adams in mind as much as Weston, but focused on the latter out of deference to his seniority and greater influence.

Adams responded:

Believe me, my inability to see what you see in Cartier-Bresson's work is MY fault—not his. It is a whole complex internal pattern and concept; my lack of interest in things unless they do something besides present themselves . . . my lack of interest in photographs which show a world which means little to me (people as just *people*—especially proletariopleople—have no actual existence for me (the camera seems to create a special race of humanoids which [n]ever seems to exist anywhere but in the prints!))<sup>40</sup>

Adams's critique of Cartier-Bresson's pictures is in part a recapitulation of Bullock's position, although his half-serious Red-baiting and misanthropy are touches unique to Adams. Nonetheless, there are significant differences between Adams's exchanges with the Newhalls and with Bullock. Adams admonishes Bullock, stressing the primacy of work over critical patter, while failing to mention his own antipathy to Cartier-Bresson. But to the Newhalls he emphasizes different ways of making and regarding photographs,



and strikes a slightly *self*-admonishing pose in the process. While the issues spurring both letters were remarkably similar, the contexts of the letters were not, and in this instance the contexts seem pivotal. Adams had been a close associate and defender of Edward Weston since the early 1930s, while Bullock, through no fault of his own, was a relative newcomer. In the early 1950s, Adams may well have viewed Bullock as something of an upstart. And too, perhaps Adams had an easier time launching into Bullock than his older friends, the Newhalls. As noted earlier in this essay, different audiences bring out different sides of a correspondent, and nowhere is this clearer than in these two very different letters by Ansel Adams.

In some ways the most interesting relationship implicit in these letters is between Ansel Adams and Minor White. Both men were brought together through the agency of the Newhalls. After the war White came to New York, where he worked under Beaumont Newhall at the Museum of Modern Art. White was something of a coup for the Newhalls, both because he was sympathetic with their views of photography and because they had long lobbied for an assistant at the Modern. But soon after White's arrival, Steichen was appointed director of the Modern's Photography Department, and Newhall, after agonizing over the prospect of working under Steichen, finally resigned. Less than a week later, Nancy Newhall wrote to Adams that

Steichen already is after the one person we've started to train—Minor White. Minor undecided. Wants to continue photographing. . . . think you could use him at the [California School of Fine Arts] if he decided against Steichen?"<sup>41</sup>

White soon realized, as Nancy Newhall put it, that under Steichen "he would not be working with Photography as Art but Photography as Illustration."<sup>42</sup> White turned down the offer to continue at the museum, and soon after he was *en route* to San Francisco to teach with Adams, whom he had never met.

Adams and White, though similar in many respects, were very different individuals in others. They engaged in prolonged debates about various photographic and philosophical issues, frequently finding each other's ideas hard to understand, much less accept. After working together for over three years at the California School of Fine Arts (later to become the San Francisco Art Institute), White still found

Adams's ideas muddled, and kiddingly wrote in one letter that "we are probably going to come to blows" over them.<sup>43</sup> Adams, for his part, found White vague and elusive.

Your thoughts float like gossamer on the breeze of feeling; some snag on the tree of fact, others float and float and float . . .<sup>44</sup>

There were also differences in teaching methods. White, as early as the late forties, approached photographs with unabashed subjectivity, viewing them as expressions of deep inner states in which sexuality was often prominent. Adams was not normally given to metaphysical musings in the classroom and was skeptical of such interpretations. But in the main, neither man let his differences overshadow their mutual interests. Though they were often at odds with one another, both used humor to leaven their differences. As James Baker Hall recounts, "At parties and around school [White] and Adams . . . dealt with their differences at times by baiting one another affectionately, to the students' delight."<sup>45</sup>

Nonetheless, Adams became increasingly pessimistic about White's performance at the school. He wrote to the Newhalls while they were in Paris that

. . . Minor is inflexible. He is now writing a 'manual' on the Zone System, which—honestly—(what I've seen of it) is far more complex than my statement. . . . Minor MUST control *all*. He seems to spend a lot of time *eliminating* influences (including mine) rather than creating them. Most of the students are dissatisfied. The enrollment is alarmingly low. I have grave fears of some catastrophe happening.<sup>46</sup>

The "catastrophe" occurred some months later when White resigned from the school under circumstances that remain obscure. Apparently Adams did not play a direct role in White's dismissal, since he wrote to Nancy:

Confidential until I confirm; *I was told* [my emphasis] that Minor is out of the school; could not adjust to current situations. Am not surprised, but I am sorry.<sup>47</sup>

Later in 1953, White moved to Rochester, where he worked at the George Eastman House under Beau-



mont Newhall. Adams and White parted on amiable but strained terms.

All of this helps to explain the intensity of White's response to Adams's letter to Bullock. Upon reading Adams's letter to Bullock, White believed that Adams was undermining the agenda for *Aperture*: that it be an open forum for serious photography. White's letter to Bullock, in which he asked permission to excerpt part of Bullock's letter to Adams in *Aperture*, functioned not only as "a defense of Edward's viewpoint" but as a rejoinder to Adams himself. However, in the next issue (*Aperture* 2:3) a portfolio of Bullock's work appeared, along with a statement of Bullock's philosophy, but no section of the letter was reproduced after all. Perhaps White thought the statement of Bullock's philosophy was more effective and appropriate than an excerpt from the letter. Or, perhaps White's initial request for printing rights was made in the heat of anger at Adams, and during the intervening months he changed his mind for political reasons.

The larger context for these exchanges lies in the formation and *raison d'être* of *Aperture* itself. Adams, the Newhalls, and White were in touch steadily throughout the fifties, discussing various schemes for furthering art photography.<sup>48</sup> Their letters reveal the inner workings of a group in the process of defining itself and its goals, as well as dramatize how private concerns and public discourse are inextricably connected. While Adams, the Newhalls, and White are presently regarded as highly influential figures, in the early fifties they rightly considered themselves a minority and their cause an unpopular one. They were in many respects different people with divergent goals and priorities, and the same could be said of Dorothea Lange, Paul Strand, Barbara Morgan, Wynn Bullock, and others. What these photographers shared was a strong commitment to the promotion and expansion of art photography. Although they never issued forth manifestos, or called themselves "*f/128*" or "Post-Secessionists," their zeal was nonetheless intense. *Aperture* was to become the principal mechanism for furthering the cause.

Although *Aperture* was founded in 1952,<sup>49</sup> the journal had been discussed in the abstract for many years by Adams and the Newhalls. In 1945, Adams urged Beaumont, recently returned from the Army Air Corps, to "produce the journal that we have talked about so long," one which would espouse the "human, spiritual, and emotional" elements in photog-

raphy.<sup>50</sup> The appearance of the first number was greeted with considerable enthusiasm by all parties. Here, they hoped, was the successor to *Camera Work*. However, the initial euphoria quickly diminished. By June of 1952, before the second issue had even appeared, Nancy and Adams exchanged increasingly anxious letters about *Aperture*. Predictably, the finances of the fledgling journal were a problem. But they were equally concerned about Minor White exercising too much editorial control, a criticism that was to follow him throughout his career as editor, teacher, and curator. Nancy Newhall worried that

all our names are on this; it represents us. It MUST NOT turn into an epicene, thin, esoteric, thin wristed young man avant garde rag. I love Minor but we would be blind if we refused to see he has tendencies in that direction. . . . Tell him *Aperture* has got to have all of life in it. The whole force of creative photography should be behind it.<sup>51</sup>

Adams responded:

*Aperture* is going to be a MESS if you don't step in. Minor has a basic resentment of my 'practicability.' If it isn't obscure and personal it ain't art! We have warm personal feelings but no real sympathy in viewpoint.<sup>52</sup>

That White imposed his own personality and values upon *Aperture* is undeniable, much as the entire run of *Camera Work* bears the stamp of Alfred Stieglitz. It was the degree of White's control that most worried the journal's founders. Their concern was significant enough that in 1954 Adams and Nancy Newhall spearheaded an abortive drive to dissolve the journal. Although White shared with the other founders the goal of promoting photography's status as an expressive and legitimate art, he was more headstrong than some would have liked, and his tastes frequently were radically different from those of the other founders. For example, White supported and published the work of Frederick Sommer in spite of the strong antipathy that Adams and both Newhalls felt toward it.<sup>53</sup> To their minds, Sommer's pictures incorporated neither beauty nor spirit, but instead dwelt in darker, surrealistic realms for which they felt little affinity.<sup>54</sup>

Despite their somewhat rocky history, Adams's and White's disagreements centered more on style than substance, means rather than ends. Theirs was a rivalry built largely on an identical claim, for by the early fifties each viewed himself as heir to the mantle of their common mentor, Stieglitz. The "Equivalents" photographs, and Stieglitz's gnomic comments about them, were especially important to those in the Adams-Newhalls-White axis. Whereas early Stieglitz followers like Strand saw their mission mainly in terms of promoting photography as an art, latter-day disciples like Adams and White were just as attracted to the claims Stieglitz made for the emotional and spiritual potential of the medium. These different but complementary thrusts were the founding principles of *Aperture* and the generation of photographers that it encouraged and published. White took Stieglitz's idea of equivalence into mystical directions, which evolved into a highly personalized amalgam of Zen Buddhism, astrology, and the teachings of Gurdjieff. Adams's sensibility, as reflected both in his aesthetics and his photography, is an extension of mid-nineteenth-century American Transcendentalism wherein God (or Emerson's "Over Soul") is most evident not in man, but in Nature. Both men came to see photography as a means both of expressing inner states and effecting increased emotional and spiritual awareness. Adams often waxed rhapsodic about the spiritual connections between photography and music, while White saw photography as "a way" towards a state of consciousness that transcended photography and physical life itself.<sup>55</sup>

That these ideas took hold in the 1950s was, of course, hardly coincidental. As always, aesthetic issues and styles have a direct relationship to the culture at large, although it is normally difficult to glimpse these connections as they occur, or even, as in the present case, at thirty years removed. The late Arnold Hauser succinctly expressed the interconnections between art and society, as well as the difficulties involved in recognizing them.

The fact on one hand that society influences art, and on the other that art influences society does not mean that a change in one corresponds to a change in the other. Art and society exist as two discrete, though not necessarily isolated, realities side by side with each other. They neither correspond to nor contradict each other; they neither divide nor unite each other, however

deep the traces the one leaves upon the structure of the other. They are, like body and soul, indivisible, but they have no common aim or meaning.<sup>56</sup>

A full analysis of the connections between the documents under discussion and the historical and political realms that framed them is far beyond the reach of this essay. But some of these relationships can be suggested, if only sketchily, by returning again to Bullock's remarks on Cartier-Bresson. Bullock's polemic gives eloquent, if ironic support to Nancy Newhall's depiction of both camps.

Convinced of its own passionate logic, each group refuses to believe the other has any logic at all, and condemns its philosophy, or its subject matter, or its technique, or its motives, or its concepts in toto as full of error and headed for limbo.<sup>57</sup>

Bullock blends two prototypically American attributes, formalism and individualism, as he echoes the thinking of Stieglitz, Weston, and others in the Modernist tradition. The subject matter itself is unimportant; what matters is how it is photographed according to the artist's unique sensibility. For Bullock, whatever political praxis photography possesses is a function of the photographer's "hard work, sacrifice, and a search for the good," a view which depicts the ideal photographer as a cross between Socrates and Ahab. The photographer pits himself against recalcitrant reality and emerges with an individualized, "spiritual" vision that functions as an "answer to the confusion and hatreds" of the world. The answer to social and political ills, then, lies not in action-in-the-world, but in retreat into the inner sanctums of mind and consciousness from which transformative images will emerge.

Cartier-Bresson, as seen through Nancy Newhall, is no less French in his attitudes. Even at this early stage in his career, Cartier-Bresson had witnessed the kind of third-world poverty that had no counterpart on the Monterey peninsula. Like other Europeans, he saw at close hand the ravages of war and its aftermath and experienced the advent of Stalinism and the travails of post-World War II European politics. The fate of humanity, then, preoccupied him, while the contemplative tradition of west coast landscape photog-



raphy seemed unconscionably luxurious, isolationist and apolitical.

Cartier-Bresson's critique may also reflect the general French resentment of their American "liberators," a feeling that grew all the more intense with the advent of the Marshall Plan which, as one American historian recently wrote,

. . . was the master stroke of American diplomacy. Disguising economic imperialism as anti-Communism, the ERP [European Recovery Plan] solidified Western Europe under the American economic umbrella and isolated the Soviet Union and its East European countries.<sup>58</sup>

And too, as he sipped wine with the Newhalls in a Parisian café, perhaps Cartier-Bresson could not resist the time-honored French tradition of poking fun at the earnest Americans.

In 1952, the world was "going to pieces" for many Europeans in ways that were simply incomprehensible to most Americans, with our expanding economy and booming babies. The "exchange" between Bullock and Cartier-Bresson is not just a clash between different individuals, or different kinds of subject matter, or conflicting theories that buttress each photographer's approach to picture-making. Rather, the positions espoused by Cartier-Bresson, Bullock, and the other letter-writers reflect two different historical and cultural realities. This is the case, as well, for the west coast/landscape/metaphoric vs. east coast/urban/metonymic dichotomy implicit throughout Newhall's article and the exchange it provoked.

I HAVE TRIED TO MAKE THE FOREGOING ANALYSIS thorough and responsible; to be fair to the men and women involved; to earn the trust of the reader by marshalling evidence; and to organize a large amount of material into a readable format. I have followed time-honored dictates of academic research and writing, including getting the facts straight, documenting my sources, and correlating different points of view. Various authorities have read this essay, supporting or questioning my observations, and recommending improvements. In short, all of the conventional safeguards have been taken with this essay.

And yet, the primary sources themselves and the stance that any researcher adopts toward them suggest the limitations not only of this analysis, but of any work of scholarship and, by extension, any act of

knowing. Scholarship, particularly when it moves beyond straightforward facts and ponders consciousness, influences, creative sources, and cultural milieu, is an activity rife with guesswork and speculation. As Justin Kaplan, the biographer of Twain and Whitman, suggests

The writer starts off with a number of givens—birth and death, education, ambition, conflict, milieu, work, relationship, accident. He shapes them into a book that has the autonomous vitality of any work of the imagination and at the same time is "true to life" and true to history. In many respects biography is a feat of illusionism, sleight-of-hand, levitation; basic decisions and interpretations that appear to be the results of cautious deliberation are often made instantaneously in, and as part of, the act of writing; and for at least one moment each day the writer may feel like Mark Twain's titled charlatans putting on a performance of "The Royal Nonesuch."<sup>59</sup>

Academic conventions and safeguards can never counterbalance the serendipitous aspects of research and writing. But few writers share these kinds of problems with their readers. Authors usually closet their qualifications in the preface, and whatever humility they invoke has evaporated by the end of the first chapter, replaced by a posture of neutrality, if not indubitable authority. Such postures obviously serve the interests of writers, but readers are left with the impressions that the raw materials somehow arranged and wrote themselves. It is essential to recognize the limits of research and scholarship, not only because too many readers bestow exaggerated authority upon "authorities," but because we must recognize the limits of the particular medium of exchange to understand any act of communication.

The scholar is restricted in part by the limits inherent in the materials. It is easy to lose sight of the fact that personal letters, for example, are rather extraordinary communiqués. A letter is a snapshot of a mind momentarily frozen through and in language, a mind which, upon completion of a thought, moves back into the unarticulated realms of everyday existence. Like a photograph, a letter is made through time, but time is subtracted from its premises. With a photograph, we speculate about what lay beyond the borders of the image; with a letter, we guess at the realities, mundane or otherwise, that went unstated. Some



of these contexts can be partially established through the letter-writer's own testimony and careful scholarship. But, however informed or educated our inferences, the contexts that generated letters remain uncertain, and our interpretations subject to error.

It is often difficult enough to extrapolate reliable information from letters written by my own friends and family. But to deal with letters written decades before my birth, by people whom I never knew, only exacerbated the problems. I read letters chronologically, January through December, year after year. With prolific letter-writers like Adams and Nancy Newhall, I could get through six months in the morning and another six months after lunch: one year's worth of letters, postmarked San Francisco or New York or Paris, dated 1939 or 1946 or 1957, read and consumed in a single Tucson day in 1983, punctuated by a ham sandwich and too many cups of coffee.

When studying archival snippets, one tends to reify them and to grant them more status than is probably warranted. Early in my research, when I found a letter that confirmed some hypothesis or inclination of my own, I would exaggerate its authority and view it as if it were a straightforward, unambiguous index. At such times I equated the papers with their creators, and things proceeded smoothly. But I soon became equally interested in the formative experiences that were not expressed. How to know the people, events, feelings, and ideas that were not included in the documents? How to move behind, between, and beyond the simple words jotted on a scrap of paper thirty or forty years ago? How to bridge the personal, temporal, and historical disjunctions? I could not account for all the days and weeks during which letters weren't written, or for all of the letters that were discarded or lost, or for the realities that never found their way into conscious thought or language.

When reconstructing the relationship between Adams and White, for example, I relied largely upon letters. But when both men were together there was no need for letters: over coffee or wine they could indulge in the meandering conversations that mark any face-to-face friendship. Such moments have more bearing on the heart of a friendship than any packet of letters, however skillful the writers. But, of course, there are no records of these conversations. For all we know, during 1952 White might have begun all of his one-on-one encounters with Adams by intoning a "GRRRRRRRRRR," while Adams responded with a sustained "MEEEEOOOOWWW." Both men are

dead and unable to confirm or deny.

Even someone who knew both men well in 1952 could not finally disclaim the GRRRRRRRRRR/MEEEEOOOOWWW hypothesis, since no one else was present during their one-on-one encounters. First-hand accounts like memoirs and autobiographies often raise as many questions as they resolve. Memories are usually distorted, especially when modified by hindsight. (In 1974 it was hard to find anyone who voted for Richard Nixon in 1972.) And autobiographies, directed as they are toward posterity, are replete with self-justifying strategies. Few memoirists depict themselves as Rosencrantz or Guildenstern, mere accessories to the events on center stage. Rather, one gets the impression that they witnessed all the crucial turning points. Boswell, for example, often gives the impression of omniscience, even though he didn't meet Samuel Johnson until 1763, when Johnson was fifty-four years old, and they were only occasionally together during the remaining twenty-one years of their friendship.

Moreover, when we witness events at first hand we tend to regard our perceptions as the correct ones, believing as we do in the primacy of our own senses, even though the shortcomings of eyewitness accounts are well known to journalists and courtroom attorneys alike. Although scholars rightly privilege first-hand accounts (I have no doubt that Beaumont Newhall could shed invaluable light on the documents discussed in the fourth and fifth sections of this essay), such accounts bring with them their own inherent limits. Proximity in itself assures neither insight nor truth.

Churchill, for example, wrote in his memoirs that relations with Roosevelt were consistently warm and marked with commonality of purpose. But the publication of recently declassified Churchill-Roosevelt letters suggests that there was considerable disagreement between them. In a recent article in the *New York Times*, Warren F. Kimball, the editor of the correspondence, said that, "Stripped of its romanticized myth, the relationship was made of mutual self-interest."<sup>60</sup> Did Churchill simply gloss over the bitter moments when writing his memoirs? Were there political or personal reasons for downplaying their differences, even after so many years had elapsed? Are the letters, published several decades after they were written, misleading? Does the tone suggest discord that in fact was something different? And are we to trust Professor Kimball's assessment? Or that of the *New York*

*Times*? After all, professors and newspapers have much to gain in discovering new angles on old stories. In such cases, how do we decide which version to privilege in order to discover the truth(s) of the matter?

There is the additional problem of the researcher not having access to all of the relevant materials, as we saw earlier in the case of Patricia Bosworth's biography of Diane Arbus. There may exist very revealing papers in White's archives at Princeton and in *Aper-ture's* files, but few researchers and historians have had access to them. Accordingly, I was forced to rely heavily on the Adams–Newhall correspondence, published versions of these issues, and my own recollections of Minor White (which occurred many years after the events under discussion here). Mathematics is not the only domain that has its incompleteness theorems; scholarly research, especially when it concerns controversial people and issues, is always under revision.

Clearly, there are no foolproof or formulaic solutions to problems like these, for the difficulties in knowing an archive are tantamount to the difficulties in knowing any person or event. Confronted with the contradictions of a Churchill or an Adams, the scholar seeks out as many sources as possible, correlates and weighs the various accounts, and sees what if anything emerges. Conundrums are, on occasion, resolved. But more often, the contradictions and inconsistencies of statesmen, photographers, and everyone else are no more solvable in scholarly retrospect than they were to those who lived with and through them. In a field as young and uncharted as photography, everything is subject to revision. No history is ever finished, much less "definitive." When done right, research stirs up as much as it settles.

For all of their inherent limitations, the materials I studied at the Center for Creative Photography were much more complete than what most scholars have at their disposal. This is the case in part because the Center, when possible, collects a photographer's entire archives, including negatives, prints, personal and professional papers, a practice that has obvious value for in-depth study.

However, social historians of virtually any period before 1850 would read my analysis of archival incompleteness with wry amusement, since their materials are much more restricted than mine. Among other things, before 1850 literacy was largely limited to the upper classes, which creates formidable problems for the historian wishing to understand those multitudes

who left no written records of their lives. This is one of many reasons why most history has been of the landed and monied classes. French historians like Philippe Aries, Roy LaDurie, and Fernand Braudel have pioneered more broadly based social histories by introducing nontraditional source materials and methods into their research. For example, Brandeis history professor John Demos unraveled elements of everyday life in the Plymouth Colony by studying public records, artifacts, and "material culture" from which he inferred the texture and tenor of the times.<sup>61</sup> The further back in history we go, the more these problems are compounded. Anthropologists reconstruct entire neolithic cultures from a handful of potsherds, while paleoanthropologists, studying the precursors of man with a sack of bones, consider themselves fortunate in their riches.

The problems rehearsed above are clearly not confined to photographic scholarship, but extend into all forms of scholarship and, more broadly, all forms of knowing. Scholars first divide the world into the relevant and the irrelevant, and proceed to find, in Gregory Bateson's phrase, "patterns that connect" from which "meaning" is generated.<sup>62</sup> Jacob Bronowski has stated the case with admirable conciseness:

I believe that every event in the world is connected to every other event. But you cannot carry on science on the supposition that you are going to be able to connect every event with every other event. . . . We make a cut. We put the experiment, if you like, into a box. Now the moment we do that, we do violence to the connections in the world. . . . I am certainly not going to get the world right, because the basic assumption that I have made about dividing the world into the relevant and the irrelevant is in fact a lie. In the nature of things it is bound to give me only an approximation to what goes inside the fence. . . . Therefore, when we practice science (and this is true of all our experience), we are always decoding a part of nature which is not complete. We simply cannot get out of our own finiteness.<sup>63</sup>

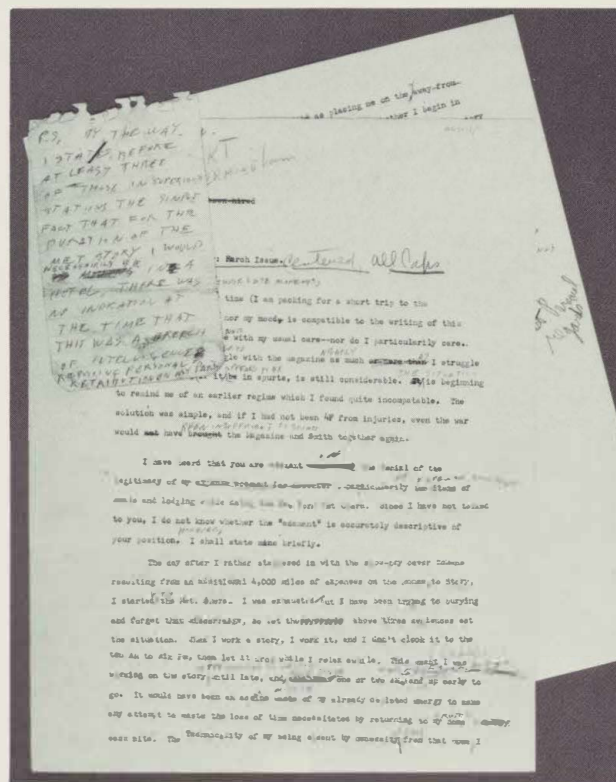
Researchers overlook considerably more than they attend to, much as the photographer frames a finite slice from an infinite set of possibilities. Once I had discovered patterns in the archival materials, they functioned as grids through which other materials



were read and assessed. The more a particular thesis or interest took hold, the more it determined what I found interesting and what I found irrelevant. At times the selections were consciously made; but much more often unconscious criteria and assumptions were operative, as is usually the case in human cognition. The patterns that connected Adams, White, Bullock, the Newhalls, and many other photographers whom I have not even mentioned here, were larger than any conceivable net I could throw over them, and the ideological contexts that shaped them and their discourse were all the more elusive. Earlier, I devoted many pages to a handful of documents, and yet the analysis could easily have run several times longer. As it is, I emerged with a fairly schematic account that would probably seem reductive, if not foreign, to Adams, White, the Newhalls, and Bullock. In making these selections I created an account that was in part fictional—not intentionally, but simply because I had no choice but to make selections. In doing so, I emerged with an “approximation to what goes inside the fence.”

As Allan Sekula has recently suggested, no archive is neutral,<sup>64</sup> and neither is any act of knowing an archive or transmitting this knowledge to an audience. Ten photographers set loose in an Italian piazza will emerge with ten or more distinct visions of the place, and so, too, will ten scholars who have rambled through an archive. The writer, like the photographer, molds and shapes “reality.” A different researcher, working through the identical manuscripts, could come to different but no less demonstrable conclusions than I. And, for that matter, another researcher would doubtless write a quite different essay about his or her experiences at the Center.

While staring at Stieglitz’s flamboyant scrawl, Beaumont Newhall’s meticulous sentences, Wynn Bullock’s last notebooks, the exuberant marginalia in Adams’s letters, the carefully assembled clippings of the Strand scrapbooks, the countless revisions of a letter that Gene Smith wrote to the editors of *Life*, or Nancy Newhall’s enthusiasm upon undertaking a new project—while regarding this and a good deal more, I pondered the mediating presence of my shadow. Could I glimpse truths about Stieglitz through the intervening years and events? Could a thirty-seven-year-old man in Tucson in 1983 understand the letter of a seventy-one-year-old Manhattan man in 1935? What is substantive in that shadowy epistle? And what phantasmic? Is my shadow in unalterable ascendance over these people? (Is your shadow in unalterable



Typed draft of letter with pencil and ballpoint pen notes from W. Eugene Smith to the editor of *Life*, 1952  
W. Eugene Smith Archive

transcendence over this essay?) Does it preclude my seeing any of them with clarity or justice? (Can you see me with clarity or justice?)

And so, in wandering through the archival labyrinth, I return to where I began. I now confront not only the issues of how photography comprises, creates, and problematizes knowledge, but I become an inextricable part of the issues themselves. The shadow I cast cannot be removed, yet it changes everything it touches. As a teacher, a scholar, a would-be knower, I deal not only with the fragmentary and limited evidence before my eyes, but the fragmentary and limited quality of my mind at work. I have to adjust not only to the incompleteness of evidence, but to my own limitations as well. Bronowski’s simple statement echoes through the labyrinth:

We simply cannot get out of our own finiteness.

THOSE ANCIENTS WHO WERE LUCKY ENOUGH TO ESCAPE Minos’s labyrinth did so through the help of friends



or contraptions. After slaying the Minotaur, Theseus got away because his lover, Ariadne, supplied him with a magic ball of yarn. But soon after, Ariadne entered her own emotional labyrinth, for Theseus repaid her kindness by replacing her with her younger sister, Phaedra. Daedalus, who was the architect of the labyrinth, had told its secret to Ariadne, who in turn had passed it along to Theseus. When Minos heard of Daedalus's betrayal, he imprisoned Daedalus in the labyrinth. Trapped in his own trap, Daedalus fashioned wax wings that allowed him and his son Icarus to escape.

As Daedalus may have recognized, a bird's-eye view is essential for perspective and escape alike. But even when airborne, such perspective is hard to achieve, and even if achieved, it is not without risks. Icarus escaped death in the Cretan labyrinth, but he plummeted to earth when he flew too close to the sun and his wax wings melted. The Cretan myth-makers knew that ultimate, maze-penetrating vision lay beyond human faculties.

One labyrinth leads into another. I left Tucson in an airplane, returning to Michigan's wintry gray skies. Nothing melted, but no one escaped either, for the labyrinth had entered my mind. This essay is its initial aftermath. It has turned back upon itself, a fitting conclusion to a prolegomenon on photographic theory.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Susan Cohen and Jan Zita Grover for their careful readings of this essay; and Jan Swearingen, who as always was my first and last editor. This essay was supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts.

## NOTES

- AAA Ansel Adams Archive, Center for Creative Photography  
 WBA Wynn Bullock Archive, Center for Creative Photography  
 BNNP Beaumont and Nancy Newhall Papers, Center for Creative Photography  
 PSA Paul Strand Archive  
 MWC Minor White Collection

<sup>1</sup>In *The Mirror Makers* Stephen Fox cites a study which claims that the average American family is exposed to 1600 advertisements a day, most of which presumably include photographs.

<sup>2</sup>Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken, 1969), pp. 240–241.

<sup>3</sup>Through a reciprocal agreement between Yale's Beinecke Library, which houses most of the Stieglitz papers, and the Center for Creative Photography, which houses the Paul Strand Archives, copies of Strand's letters to Stieglitz are available at Yale, and copies of Stieglitz's letters are at the Center. This allows a researcher to read both sides of the correspondence at one sitting. Unfortunately, such reciprocal agreements between archives are still more the exception than the rule.

<sup>4</sup>Stieglitz to Adams, 17 January 1937, AAA.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. Beaumont Newhall to Ansel Adams, 7 January 1937, AAA. Adams responded positively to Newhall's request on January 12, several days before he would have received Stieglitz's advice. In his letter to Newhall, Adams mentioned an album of Timothy O'Sullivan's photographs that he had recently acquired and recommended that its contents be included in the exhibition, thereby beginning O'Sullivan's rise in current photographic historiography.

<sup>6</sup>Including the formation of the Museum of Modern Art photography department; the writing and revisions of Beaumont Newhall's *History of Photography*; Nancy Newhall's collaborations with Paul Strand on *Time in New England*, Weston on *The Daybooks of Edward Weston*, Adams on *The Eloquent Light*; the Photo League; the formation of the George Eastman House; the beginnings of *Aperture*.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. *Photo Notes*, January 1948; reprinted in *Photo Notes*, December 1934–Spring 1950 (Rochester: Visual Studies Reprint Book, 1977), n.p.

<sup>8</sup>"Girl Aide of FBI Testifies of 7 Years as 'Communist,'" *New York Times*, 27 April 1949, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup>Morgan's resignation letter to the Photo League was undated, but its approximate date is 19 August 1949.

<sup>10</sup>"James Baldwin—Reflections of a Maverick," interview by Julius Lester, *New York Times Book Review*, 27 May 1984, p. 23.

<sup>11</sup>Patricia Bosworth, *Diane Arbus* (New York: Knopf, 1984), p. xi. The estate also denied permission to reproduce any of Arbus's photographs.

<sup>12</sup>Stieglitz to Strand, 25 October 1919, photocopy in Paul Strand Archive, Center for Creative Photography.

<sup>13</sup>Cf. *Camera Work*, 1914–1915, Number 47; reprinted in *Camera Work: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Jonathan Green (Millerton: Aperture, 1973), pp. 283 ff. In the introduction to the issue Stieglitz strikes a tone similar to that in his letter to Strand.

... it suddenly struck me to ask myself, "What is '291'?" Do I know? No one thus far had told the world. No one thus far had suggested its real meaning in CAMERA WORK, and so again it flashed upon me to ask myself, "What is '291'?" I would like to know. How find out? Why not let the people tell me what it is to them. And in telling me, perhaps they will tell each other. Some say 'tis I. I know it is not I. What is it?

Stieglitz asked several people for their views, requesting that they "eliminate, if possible, any reference to myself." The con-

- tributors included Anne Brigman, Francis Bruguière, Djuna Barnes, Marsden Hartley, Arthur Dove, Man Ray, Charles Caffin, Francis Picabia, John Marin, and Edward Steichen.
- <sup>14</sup>Stieglitz to Strand, 4 August 1921, photocopy in Paul Strand Archive, Center for Creative Photography.
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>16</sup>Leon Edel, "The Figure Under the Carpet," in *Telling Lives: the Biographer's Art*, edited by Marc Pachter (Washington: New Republic Books, 1981), pp. 22–23.
- <sup>17</sup>"Controversy and the Creative Concepts," *Aperture* 2:2 (July 1953), p. 3.
- <sup>18</sup>Ibid., pp. 4–5.
- <sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 6.
- <sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 7.
- <sup>21</sup>Ibid., pp. 7–8.
- <sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 6, 13.
- <sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 13.
- <sup>24</sup>Bullock to Nancy Newhall, 16 November 1953, WBA.
- <sup>25</sup>Adams to Bullock, 1 December 1953, AAA.
- <sup>26</sup>Beaumont Newhall to Wynn Bullock, 9 December 1953, WBA.
- <sup>27</sup>Minor White to Ansel Adams, 5 December 1953, AAA.
- <sup>28</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>29</sup>Minor White to Wynn Bullock, 11 December 1953, WBA.
- <sup>30</sup>"Controversy and Creative Concepts," p. 3.
- <sup>31</sup>Beaumont Newhall to Wynn Bullock, 9 December 1953, WBA.
- <sup>32</sup>Unfortunately, the biography was never written, largely out of deference to Dorothy Norman, whose belated *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer* appeared in 1973.
- <sup>33</sup>Ansel Adams to Nancy Newhall, 17 July 1946, BNNP.
- <sup>34</sup>Nancy Newhall to Ansel Adams, 25 June 1948, AAA.
- <sup>35</sup>Nancy Newhall to Ansel Adams, 7 October 1945, AAA.
- <sup>36</sup>Ironically, Stieglitz himself was never much interested in the West, instead preferring Manhattan and, during the summers, his family house at Lake George, New York. He politely but resolutely turned down numerous requests to visit the West from Strand, Adams, and others. Even after Georgia O'Keeffe began spending her summers at Ghost Ranch, New Mexico, Stieglitz never travelled beyond the borders of New York State.
- <sup>37</sup>Ibid., pp. 11–12.
- <sup>38</sup>Beaumont Newhall to Ansel Adams, 17 October 1952, AAA.
- <sup>39</sup>Nancy Newhall to Ansel Adams, 18 & 19 October 1952, AAA.
- <sup>40</sup>Adams to Beaumont Newhall, 24 October 1952, AAA.
- <sup>41</sup>Nancy Newhall to Ansel Adams, 13 March 1946, AAA.
- <sup>42</sup>Nancy Newhall to Ansel Adams, 13 April 1946, AAA.
- <sup>43</sup>White to Adams, 24 January 1950, MWC.
- <sup>44</sup>Adams to White, 3 February 1952, MWC.
- <sup>45</sup>James Baker Hall, "Biographical Essay," *Aperture* #80 (simultaneously published as *Minor White: Rites and Passages*), p. 88.
- <sup>46</sup>Adams to Nancy and Beaumont Newhall, 12 October 1952, BNNP.
- <sup>47</sup>Adams to Nancy Newhall, 1 July 1953, BNNP.
- <sup>48</sup>Nathan Lyons once wryly suggested that the history of mid-century American photography could be deduced by carefully studying the phone bills of Adams, White, and the Newhalls between 1950 and 1960.
- <sup>49</sup>By Ansel Adams, Melton Ferris, Dorothea Lange, Ernest Louie, Barbara Morgan, Beaumont and Nancy Newhall, Dody Warren, and Minor White.
- <sup>50</sup>Adams to Beaumont Newhall, 3 April 1945, BNNP.
- <sup>51</sup>Nancy Newhall to Ansel Adams, 30 June 1952, AAA.
- <sup>52</sup>Adams to Nancy Newhall, 2 July 1952, BNNP.
- <sup>53</sup>Cf. *Aperture* 4:3 (1956).
- <sup>54</sup>Later in the decade Adams and the Newhalls would level similar criticism at the photographs of Robert Frank.
- <sup>55</sup>This credo is a crucial point in Wynn Bullock's philosophy as well, as can be seen in his letter to Nancy Newhall. Later in his career Bullock took pains to distinguish his ideas from Minor White's, insisting that his theoretical bases lay in the sciences rather than in Eastern mysticism. Nonetheless, Bullock was to subtitle his major monograph *Photography: A Way of Life* (1973), a trope that White had used for many years.
- <sup>56</sup>Arnold Hauser, *The Sociology of Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 93.
- <sup>57</sup>Newhall, "Controversy and Creative Concepts," p. 3.
- <sup>58</sup>Marty Jezer, *The Dark Ages: Life in the United States 1945–1960* (Boston: South End Press, 1982), p. 45.
- <sup>59</sup>Justin Kaplan, "The 'Real Life,'" in *Studies in Biography*, ed. Daniel Aaron (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 3.
- <sup>60</sup>"The Knotty Parts of WW II Ties," *New York Times*, 15 July 1984, sec. E, p. 7.
- <sup>61</sup>See John Demos, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony* (New York: Oxford, 1970).
- <sup>62</sup>See especially Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature* (New York: Dutton, 1979).
- <sup>63</sup>Jacob Bronowski, *The Origins of Knowledge and Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 58–59.
- <sup>64</sup>Allan Sekula, "Photography Between Labour and Capital," in *Mining Photographs and Other Pictures*, ed. Benjamin H. D. Buchloh and Robert Wilkie (Halifax: The Press of the College of Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, 1983), p. 197.

# Exhibitions 1982–1985

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by NANCY SOLOMON

EXHIBITIONS HAVE BEEN AN IMPORTANT PROGRAM OF the Center for Creative Photography since it opened in November 1975. A primary goal of the exhibition program is to show work from the Center's own collection, often revealing new material not previously accessible to the public. The Center is also committed to showing new photographs by contemporary artists, as well as taking traveling exhibitions organized by other institutions.

A listing of the exhibitions shown between 1975 and 1981 appeared in *The Archive*, no. 15.

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## —1982—

December 20, 1981–January 28, 1982

*Dean Brown*

January 31–March 11

*Moholy-Nagy*  
Main Gallery

*Will Larson*  
Contemporary Gallery

March 14–April 22

*Cubism and American Photography*  
(organized by the  
Sterling and Francine Clark Art Institute)  
Main Gallery

*Linda Connor*  
Contemporary Gallery

April 25–June 3

*Photo-Pictorialists of Buffalo*  
(organized by the Albright-Knox Art Gallery)  
Main Gallery

*Tom Millea*  
Contemporary Gallery

June 6–July 29

*Johan Hagemeyer*  
Main Gallery

*New Acquisitions: Contemporary Photography*  
Contemporary Gallery

August 1–September 9

*Margrethe Mather*  
Main Gallery  
*Harold Jones*  
Contemporary Gallery

September 12–October 14

*Jerry Uelsmann: A Retrospective, 1956–1981*

October 17–December 1

*Ansel Adams: An American Place, 1936*  
Main Gallery

*Ansel Adams Collection: 1925–1940*  
Contemporary Gallery



December 5, 1982–January 13, 1983

*Aaron Siskind: Fifty Years*

(shown at the University of Arizona Museum of Art)

*Work by Former Students of Aaron Siskind*

Main Gallery

*Nancy Rexroth*

Contemporary Gallery

—————1983—————

January 16–February 24

*Ralph Steiner: Works from the Collection*

Main Gallery

*Judith Golden*

Contemporary Gallery

February 23–March 20

*Sewing Space: A Soft Photographic Environment*

*by Catherine Jansen*

(shown at the University of Arizona Museum of Art)

February 27–April 7

*Stefan Moses*

Main Gallery

*Meridel Rubenstein*

Contemporary Gallery

April 10–May 19

*Instant Variations: Selected Artists/Polaroid Collection*

Main Gallery

*John Divola*

Contemporary Gallery

May 22–July 14

*Paul Anderson—William Mortensen*

Main Gallery

*Thomas Joshua Cooper*

Contemporary Gallery

July 17–August 25

*Espejo*

(organized by the Oakland Museum)

Main Gallery

*Stephen Strom*

Contemporary Gallery

August 28–October 6

*Marion Palfi*

Main Gallery

*Robert Fichter*

Contemporary Gallery

October 9–November 17

*Aspects of Family: Photographs from the*

*Permanent Collection*

Main Gallery

*Joe Deal: "The Fault Zone"*

Contemporary Gallery

—————1984—————

November 20, 1983–January 12, 1984

*Brett Weston: Photographs 1927–1983*

Main Gallery

*Graciela Iturbide*

Contemporary Gallery

January 15–March 1

*Two New Archives: Mitchell Payne and Stephen Sprague*

Main Gallery

*Joan Lyons*

Contemporary Gallery

March 4–April 19

*Edward Steichen: Portraits from the*

*Joanna Steichen Bequest*

Main Gallery

*Sandra Haber*

Contemporary Gallery

April 22–June 14

*Edouard Boubat: "Hindsights"*

(organized by the French Cultural Services)

Main Gallery

*Denny Moers*

Contemporary Gallery

June 17–August 16

*Rodchenko, Bauhaus, Umbo*

August 19–September 12  
*Edward Weston in Mexico*  
(organized by the  
San Francisco Museum of Modern Art)

September 23–November 1  
*Joyce Neimanas*  
Main Gallery  
*Man Ray: "Electricite"*  
Contemporary Gallery

November 4–November 28  
*Jay Mather*  
(co-sponsored by the *Arizona Daily Star*)  
Main Gallery

November 4–December 13  
*Cecile Abish: "Say When"*  
Contemporary Gallery

In December 1984 and early January 1985 the galleries were closed for construction of additional storage for the Center's collections. The remaining exhibition space was divided into North and South Galleries.

—————1985—————

January 13–February 14  
*Henri Cartier-Bresson: Photographs from Mexico*  
(organized by the Mexican Cultural Center, Paris)

January 13–February 10  
*Lucas Samaras: Photos Polaroid Photographs 1969–1983*  
(shown at the University of Arizona Museum of Art)

February 17–March 29  
*Lewis Hine: Photographs from the  
National Research Project, 1936–1937*  
(organized by the  
International Center of Photography)

March 31–April 25  
*Eleanor and Barbara: Photographs by Harry Callahan*

April 28–June 20  
*Barbara Kasten*

June 23–August 22  
*Laurie Klingensmith*  
North Gallery  
*New Acquisitions*  
South Gallery

August 25–October 10  
*Robert Buitron and Louis Carlos Bernal*  
(co-sponsored by the Valley National Bank)

October 13–November 21  
*Stephen Shore: "The Montana Suite"*  
South Gallery  
*European Portfolios, I and II*  
North Gallery

November 24, 1985–January 9, 1986  
*Marion Post Wolcott*  
(co-sponsored by the *Arizona Daily Star*)

Each year the Center organized exhibitions that were shown in the Galleria of the Arizona Bank in Phoenix:

December 14, 1982–January 14, 1983  
*Herbert Bayer: Photographic Works*

March 22–May 11, 1984  
*Paul Caponigro: Photographs from the Polaroid Collection*

April 25–May 15, 1985  
*Bradford Washburn*

# Acquisitions: January–June 1984

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Compiled by JUDITH LECKRONE

THE FOLLOWING LIST IS AN ARTIST'S NAME INDEX TO PHOTOGRAPHS acquired by the Center during the first half of 1984. Full descriptions are given for groups of ten prints or less; titles and dates are given for groups of eleven to one hundred prints; and groups over one hundred are summarized. Dates are given as "negative date/printing date" when both are known. An acquisitions list for 1975 to 1977, the Center's first three years of operation, has been published in the Guide Series, Number 4. Copies of this guide may be purchased for \$3.50. Acquisitions for the intervening years can be found in past issues of *The Archive*.

## CURTIS, EDWARD

*For Strength and Vision*, n.d.

Modern gravure from the original copper plate,  
18.7 x 13.4 cm

Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Steven Kern  
84:004:001

Two hundred and ten gravures from *The North American Indian*, 1907–1930, each approximately 12.7 x 19.4 cm  
Gift of Bill and Ann Buckmaster  
84:024:001–210

## GASSER, PETER

*Ansel Adams*, 1979–1984

Gelatin silver print, 32.5 x 24.6 cm  
Gift of Peter Gasser  
84:010:001

## GEE, HELEN

### HELEN GEE ARCHIVE

Four linear feet of manuscript and archive materials including business records; ledgers; mailing lists; correspondence; announcements, statements, press release, menus; newspaper clippings about the Limelight Gallery, ca. 1950–1957  
Gift of Helen Gee  
AG 74

## GILPIN, LAURA

untitled, n.d. [portrait of a Navajo silversmith]  
Gelatin silver print, 23.5 x 16.8 cm  
Gift of Margret Craver  
84:008:001

## ITURBIDE, GRACIELA

*Las Comadres*, 1979

Gelatin silver print, 17.4 x 25.6 cm  
Purchase  
84:011:112

*Lat, Paris*, 1976

Gelatin silver print, 25.5 x 18.5 cm  
Purchase  
84:011:003

*Revelacion, Coyoacan*, 1983

Gelatin silver print, 17.6 x 25.9 cm  
Purchase  
84:011:002

## JONES, HAROLD

*Chair*, 1980

Painted gelatin silver print mounted on masonite,  
1.2 x 1.5 m  
Purchase  
84:025:001

## LOVING, DON

*Frozen Mood*

Gelatin silver print, 23.1 x 17.5 cm  
Gift of Stuart Alexander  
84:007:001



LYON, DANNY

*Conversations with the Dead* (Portfolio)  
New York: RFG Publishing Inc., 1983  
Seventy-six gelatin silver prints of varying sizes  
Purchase  
84:048:001-076

LYONS, JOAN

*Patio Fountain, Pavillion, New York*, 1982  
Vandyke print, 44.5 x 52.2 cm (irregular)  
Purchase  
84:013:001

MALONE, ROXANNE

from the Geometric series

*Kirlian Photogram*, 1983  
Cibachrome print, 34.9 x 27.2 cm  
Gift of Roxanne Malone  
84:022:002

*Kirlian Photogram*, 1983  
Cibachrome print, 34.9 x 27.1 cm  
Gift of Roxanne Malone  
84:022:003

from the Platforms series

*Kirlian Photogram*, 1982  
Cibachrome print, 34.7 x 27.4 cm  
Gift of Roxanne Malone  
84:022:001

MEYER, PEDRO

*La Boda en Coyoacan*, 1983  
Gelatin silver print, 20.5 x 30.4 cm  
Purchase  
84:012:001

*La Señora y sus Sirvientes*  
Gelatin silver print, 23.0 x 29.6 cm  
Purchase  
84:012:002

*Los Zarapes de la Virgen*  
Gelatin silver print, 20.5 x 30.5 cm  
Purchase  
84:012:003

PFAHL, JOHN

from the *Altered Landscapes* portfolio  
New York: RFG Publishing, Inc., 1981  
Fifteen dye-transfer prints, each approximately  
20 x 25 cm  
Gift from the collection of Arthur and Carol Goldberg  
83:117:034-048  
*Big Dipper, Charlotte, North Carolina*, 1976  
83:117:037

*Black Rock Hill with Diagonal Lines, Death Valley, California*, 1976  
83:117:039

*Canyon Point, Zion Canyon National Park, Utah*, 1977  
83:117:040

*Coconut Palm Horizon, Kona Coast, Hawaii*, 1978  
83:117:042

*Great Salt Lake Angles, Great Salt Lake, Utah*, 1977  
83:117:034

*Moonrise over Pie Pan, Capitol Reef National Park, Utah*, 1977  
83:117:038

*Red Rock Repeat, Torrey, Utah*, 1977  
83:117:036

*Red Spring, Monument Valley, Utah*, 1977  
83:117:035

*Tree and Mountain, Cleft, Boulder, Colorado*, 1977  
83:117:041

*Wave, Lace, Pescadero Beach, California*, 1978  
83:117:043

*Wave Theory I, Puna Coast, Hawaii*, 1978  
83:117:044

*Wave Theory II, Puna Coast, Hawaii*, 1978  
83:117:045

*Wave Theory III, Puna Coast, Hawaii*, 1978  
83:117:046

*Wave Theory IV, Puna Coast, Hawaii*, 1978  
83:117:047

*Wave Theory V, Puna Coast, Hawaii*, 1978  
83:117:048

SIMMONS-MYERS, ANN

from the Bikers series

*Chromehead with his Goddaughter*, 1984  
Gelatin silver print, 42.3 x 37.5 cm  
Purchase  
84:023:001

SLAVIN, NEAL

from *Espejo*, 1978 (group exhibition)  
Thirty-nine Polacolor prints, each approximately  
19.0 x 24.0 cm  
Gift of the Mexican American Legal Defense and  
Education Fund  
84:009:001-039  
*Antique Shop Window*  
84:009:004  
*Baptism*  
84:009:003

*Boy at Screen Door*  
84:009:011

*Bride's Maids*  
84:009:002

*Class Portraits*  
84:009:013

*Curandera*  
84:009:014

*Curandera at Window*  
84:009:015

*Double Christ*  
84:009:022

*Family Room*  
84:009:025

*Food Still Life*  
84:009:027

*Girl Looking at Herself in Mirror*  
84:009:018

*Girl with Doll*  
84:009:019

*Grocery Store*  
84:009:007

*Group Portrait*  
84:009:030

*Group Portrait at Sunset*  
84:009:016

*Hair Curlers*  
84:009:035

*House*  
84:009:039

*Main Street*  
84:009:001

*Man Looking into Sky*  
84:009:023

*Man with Shadow on Face*  
84:009:009

*Mayor's Portrait*  
84:009:031

*Nuns*  
84:009:029

*Photos*  
84:009:024

*Pink Wall*  
84:009:032

*Portrait of Older Man*  
84:009:020

*Portrait with Portrait*  
84:009:021

*Portrait with Sheets*  
84:009:036

*Portrait with Sheets*  
84:009:037

*Railroad Car*  
84:009:010

*Sign Painter*  
84:009:005

*Teenagers*  
84:009:017

*Town Men*  
84:009:006

*Two Children*  
84:009:012

untitled, [railroad car man]  
84:009:008

*Window*  
84:009:038

*Woman with Orange Curtain*  
84:009:033

*Woman with Orange Curtain*  
84:009:034

*Young Man with Guitar*  
84:009:026

#### SMITH, KEITH

*Book #81, 1981*

Artist's book of 32 images in various photographic media

Purchase  
84:021:001

#### STRAND, PAUL

One hundred gelatin silver and platinum prints of varying sizes made by Richard Benson from the original negatives

Purchase  
84:028:001-100

*Abstraction, Bails, Twin Lakes, Connecticut, 1915*  
84:028:026

*Abstraction, Porch Shadows, Twin Lakes, Connecticut, 1915*  
84:028:030

*Abstraction, Porch Shadow, Twin Lakes, Connecticut, 1915*  
84:028:031

*Akeley Camera with Butterfly Net, New York, 1923*  
84:028:040

*Apple Orchard in Bloom, New England, 1946*  
84:028:060

*Beach Grass, Maine, 1945*  
84:028:098

*Bell Rope, Massachusetts, 1945*  
84:028:081

*Belle Crowley, New England, 1946*  
84:028:049

*Bowsprit, Whale Ship, Myshe, Connecticut, 1946*  
84:028:084

*Brownstone Flats, Morningside Park, New York, 1916*  
84:028:010

*Bunchberry, New England, 1946*  
84:028:093

*Church Door, New England, 1946*  
84:028:080

*Corn Crib and Snow, West River Valley, Vermont, 1944*  
84:028:071

*Corn, Near Brattleboro, Vermont, 1946*  
84:028:088

*Cows Before Rain, New England, 1946*  
84:028:062

*Dark Forest, Georgetown, Maine, 1928*  
84:028:019

*Dead Tree, Vermont, 1945*  
84:028:092

*"Death the Victor," Tombstone, Vermont, 1946*  
84:028:089

*The Dock, New England, 1945*  
84:028:058

*Downtown, New York, 1915*  
84:028:009

*Dried Seaweed, New England, 1946*  
84:028:099

*Driftwood, Dark Roots, Maine, 1928*  
84:028:024

*Driftwood, New England, 1928*  
84:028:023

*Driftwood, Maine, 1928*  
84:028:022

*Elwin Albee, Prospect Harbor, Maine, 1946*  
84:028:054

*Empty House, New England, 1945*  
84:028:079

*Farmhouse, Window, New England, 1945*  
84:028:077

*Farmhouse, Winter, New England, 1944*  
84:028:070

*Fern, Early Morning Dew, Georgetown, Maine, 1927*  
84:028:014

*Fern, New England, 1928*  
84:028:013

*Figurehead, "Lady with a Medallion," New England, 1946*  
84:028:086

*Figurehead, Samuel Piper, New England, 1946*  
84:028:087

*Fishing Village, Gulf of St. Lawrence, Gaspé, 1929*  
84:028:044

*Forest, Maine, 1928*  
84:028:018

*Frame Houses, New York, 1916*  
84:028:007

*Frank Jordan, Prospect Harbor, Maine, 1946*  
84:028:055

*From the Viaduct, 125th Street, New York, 1915*  
84:028:006

*From the Viaduct (Shadows), 125th Street, New York, 1915*  
84:028:008

*Gaston Lachaise, Maine, 1927*  
84:028:005

*Ghost Town, Red River, New Mexico, 1930*  
84:028:047

*The Harbor, Evening, New England, 1946*  
84:028:057

*Hay, Vermont, 1946*  
84:028:075

*Henry Wass, Cape Split, Maine, 1946*  
84:028:051

*House and Apple Blossoms, New England, 1946*  
84:028:059

*Houses, Locmariaquer, Finistère, Brittany, France, 1950*  
84:028:100

*Iris, Georgetown, Maine, 1928*  
84:028:012

*The Italian, New York, New York, 1916*  
84:028:001

*Jack in the Pulpit, New England, 1946*  
84:028:094

*Jug and Fruit, Twin Lakes, Connecticut, 1915*  
84:028:029

*Latch, Vermont, 1944*  
84:028:076



*Lathe, Akeley Shop, New York, 1923*  
84:028:032

*Lathe, Akeley Shop, New York, 1923*  
84:028:033

*Leo Wass, Cape Split, Maine, 1946*  
84:028:050

*Lighthouse, New England, 1945*  
84:028:074

*Little Dead Tree, New England, 1946*  
84:028:095

*Machine #1, Akeley Shop, New York, 1922*  
84:028:034

*Machine, Akeley Shop, New York, 1922–23*  
84:028:036

*Machine, Akeley Shop, New York, 1923*  
84:028:037

*Machine, Akeley Shop, New York, 1923*  
84:028:038

*Machine #2, Akeley Plant, New York, 1922*  
84:028:035

*Machine #2, Akeley Shop, New York, 1922*  
84:028:039

*Man in Derby, New York, 1916*  
84:028:003

*Meeting House Window, New England, 1945*  
84:028:078

*Merill Spurling, Prospect Harbor, Maine, 1946*  
84:028:053

*Mill Dam, Vermont, 1945*  
84:028:067

*Mullen, Maine, 1928*  
84:028:025

*Old Fisherman, Gaspé, 1936*  
84:028:043

*Old Man, Vermont, 1946*  
84:028:052

*Orange and Bowls, Twin Lakes, Connecticut, 1915*  
84:028:027

*Portrait (Yawning Woman), New York, New York,  
1915–1916*  
84:028:002

*The River, Maine, 1946*  
84:028:063

*Road, Winter, New England, 1944*  
84:028:072

*Rock by the Sea, Georgetown, Maine, 1925*  
84:028:020

*Rock, Port Lorne, Nova Scotia, 1920*  
84:028:021

*Sandwich Man, New York, 1916*  
84:028:004

*Seaweed, New England, 1928*  
84:028:016

*Slide Porch, Vermont, 1947*  
84:028:083

*Spring Thaw, Massachusetts, 1946*  
84:028:061

*Spruce and Lichen, Maine, 1945*  
84:028:097

*Spruce and Rock, New England, 1946*  
84:028:096

*Still Life, Pear and Bowls, Twin Lakes, Connecticut, 1915*  
84:028:028

*Stone Mill, New England, 1946*  
84:028:068

*The Stone Wall, Stockberger's Farm, New England, 1944*  
84:028:065

*The Stove, Prospect Harbor, Maine, 1946*  
84:028:082

*Storm and Sea, Maine, 1946*  
84:028:056

*Susan Thompson, Cape Split, Maine, 1945*  
84:028:048

*Telegraph Poles, Texas, 1915*  
84:028:041

*Textile Mill, New England, 1946*  
84:028:069

*Toadstool and Grasses, Maine, 1920*  
84:028:015

*Tombstone and Sky, New England, 1946*  
84:028:091

*Trawlers, Maine, 1946*  
84:028:085

*The Valley, New England, 1946*  
84:028:064

*Village, Gaspé, 1936*  
84:028:046

*Village on a Salt Marsh, Harrington, Maine, 1946*  
84:028:066

*Washington Heights, New York, 1915*  
84:028:011

*White Shed, Gaspé, 1929*  
84:028:045

*Winged Skull, Tombstone, Vermont*, 1945  
84:028:090

*Woman Carrying Child*, n.d.  
84:028:042

*The Woodpile, New England*, 1946  
84:028:073

*Wreck: Timber and Snails, New England*, 1928  
84:028:017

WESTON, EDWARD

*Point Lobos*, 1939  
Gelatin silver prints, 19.2 x 24.4 cm  
Gift of Esther Tuthill Compton  
84:016:001

WHITE, MINOR

untitled, n.d. [rock formation]  
Gelatin silver print, 7.2 x 11.4 cm  
Edward Weston Collection  
84:017:001







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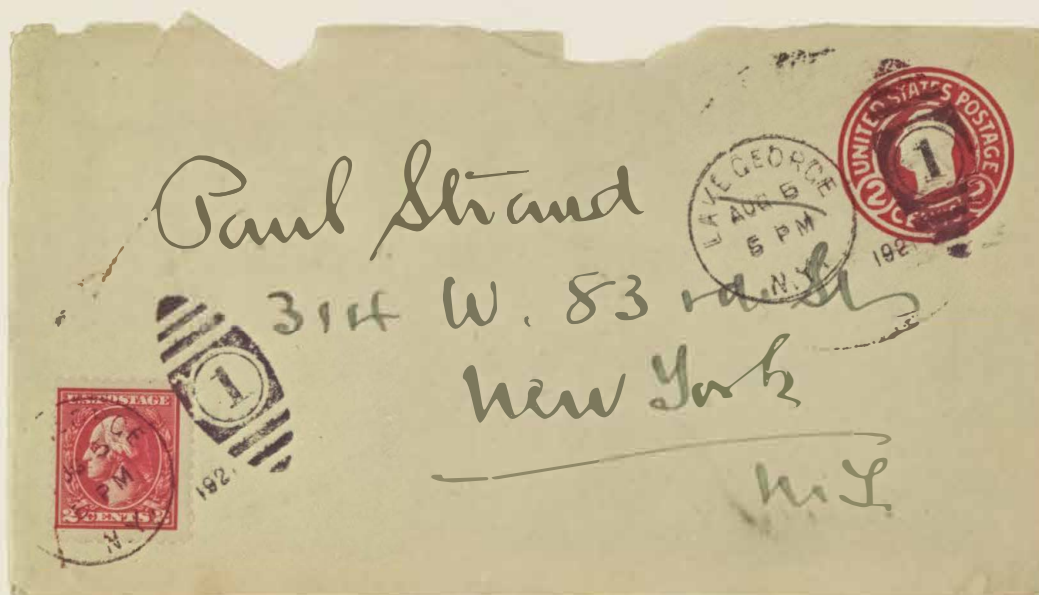
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Envelope handwritten in ink from Alfred Stieglitz to Paul Strand, 4 August 1921; Paul Strand Archive.  
The ten-page letter is reproduced in "Labyrinths," pages 16, 19-21.