

December 27, 1961

Dear Fredrick,

Best wishes for a fine 1962!

We have dates set for the Aperture monograph. When I was in Chicago this fall, Hugh Edwards informed me that you were considering an exhibition so we thought it a good idea to have the monograph appear at the same time. This way it can be used as a catalog for the exhibition. We have set the date, at this point, for Feb. 1, 1963 as the date for the exhibition to open. So I would like to have all the copy and all the photographs by Oct. 1, 1962.

I envision the monograph in a certain kind of way, but there is only one point that I probably need to stress at this time. That is, if necessary, you should go back and reprint significant pictures of your past. I know that you hate to reprint, and I don't blame you, but this should not stand in the way of the pictures that illustrate turning points or stages of achievement.

You will probably have to reprint for the exhibition anyway and, if the photographs are here by Oct. 1, the cuts could be made and the same photographs used in the exhibition. That's about all I can think of at the moment on the monograph. I do hope to stop by and see you sometime during the summer, probably around July 10.

The most important things that have happened in my teaching program is the further refinements of the use of concentration, both individually and in classes. I keep paralleling the growing techniques, with hypnosis. An Australian psychiatrist gave a recent report in this country on inducing the hypnotic deep trance without the use of words nor any use of suggestion for potential cure, which is a fascinating idea and may have a bearing on what happens when concentration is coached during long periods of silence.

That's all for now. Again, best wishes to you and Frances for a happy new year.

Minor White

Fredrick Sommer
Box 262
Prescott, Arizona

January 3, 1962.

Mr. Frederick Sommer,
Box 262,
Prescott,
Arizona.

Dear Mr. Sommer:

While Minor White was here, on his way back to Rochester, he mentioned his plans for an issue of Aperture which is to be devoted to you and your work. I told him that for sometime I had considered approaching you in regard to an exhibition at the Art Institute. I thought, if you were interested, it would be best to schedule the showing of your prints to coincide with the appearance of the number of Aperture.

Now I have received a letter from Minor White enclosing a copy of one he has sent you in which he says you were considering an exhibition in this gallery. As this must have been entirely unknown to you, you undoubtedly feel both confused and exasperated. I hope you will accept my apologies for not having written sooner. I was waiting for a specific date for the Aperture publication and as - in any event - this would not be before sometime a year away, it has been necessary to make plans for the shows which would precede it. Then there have been the many and complicated distractions of this department's busiest season, very few of them, I regret to say, involving photography.

Minor White writes me he plans the Sommer number of his periodical for February 1963 and since this is now made definite I have wondered if you would care to have an exhibition during the period from February 16 through March 17, 1963. Although the stronger emphasis in our exhibitions has been on new and unknown talent, I have tried to present variety (so necessary with a large public like the one here), with quality as the dictator behind that. I have been pleased with the exhibitions, the public has liked them, and the program has been highly successful. An average attendance of 250 visits the gallery daily. In addition to this we are consistently building up (without - as in most museums - any permanent funds) the permanent collection of photography so that visitors and students may look at prints at any time in the study room for prints and drawings.

I hope we have a favorable answer from you. I have always regretted I did not know you and see more of your work while you were in Chicago. There is always some small incident - perhaps apparently insignificant - which fixes a human being in one's memory, although many larger things may support and conceal it. With you it is the short preface you wrote for the Institute of Design's Student Independent 3 and the felicity of finding there a quotation from Apollinaire.

With every good wish and hoping to hear from you soon,

Sincerely yours,

Hugh Edwards, Curator of Photography; Associate
Curator of Prints and Drawings.

August 8, 1962.

Mr. Frederick Sommer,
Box 262,
Prescott,
Arizona.

Dear Mr. Sommer:

I am sorry not to have written sooner. With the many affairs of the department of prints and drawings, the photographic exhibitions and an exhausting effort made for a better location of the gallery, a complicated family situation arose (the modern old-age problem with all its hopeless entanglements), necessitating my being away from Chicago for more than a month. The result of all this has been that I have almost disappeared.

I am writing at last, hoping an exhibition of your work is agreeable with you. In your letter you expressed an apprehension concerning the handling of the prints. I assure you that photographs are given the same careful treatment (for which this department of the museum has become famous) as our rare prints and drawings. We have never had an accident with a photograph, although we have suffered damages to prints from the collection which we have lent others. So much so, in fact, that I have become reluctant about lending at all. However, if you still have fears and believe you may be taking a risk, please let me know. There will be no touching of print surfaces and no drymounting will be done here. We prefer to do mounting, however, as we are compelled to employ four standard sizes for exhibitions unless photographs are shown flush or sent on heavy mats by photographers. These sizes are 11 x 14", 14 x 18", 18 x 22", 22 x 28". Photographs will be shown on white, all-rag board, hinged to the mount and no adhesive will be used that is injurious to the paper or cause it to be skinned when the hinge is removed before returning photographs to the photographer. Of course, where such large crowds attend exhibitions, it is necessary to protect prints with glass when they are exhibited.

The dates set for your show are February 15 through March 17 and it is likely we will need about seventy-five prints. However, by that time, we will have our new gallery. As soon as more specific plans have been made and I know more of how much wall space there will be, I shall write you.

Apologies again for not having sent this letter sooner and with best regards,
I am

Yours sincerely,

Hugh Edwards, Curator of Photography;
Associate Curator of Prints & Drawings.

February 14, 1963.

Mr. Frederick Sommer,
c/o Richard Nickel,
1508 Grove Avenue,
Park Ridge, Illinois.

Dear Fred Sommer: Yesterday was a great day for me and you have made me happy for a long time. I am proud and satisfied we are to have the exhibition; impatient for it to open. Although one period of conversation with you has stimulated me, I hope to rob you of as much of your company as possible while you are here.

All of this is in haste and I shall try to make a fuller expression of my gratitude sometime later. I have just received your telephone message and am sending the copies of the Quarterly where you will find the show announced on page 75. The text of the announcement should be:

Photographs by Frederick Sommer

The Art Institute of Chicago
Gallery of Photography I
March 9 - April 7, 1963.

Of course you may arrange these words any way you wish. If possible, it would be convenient to have the announcement fit one of the two sizes of Art Institute envelopes of which I send samples as we have a mailing list of about 500 which I should like to receive the cards. Please let me know about the printing costs, etc. If it is not too much, we will assume the entire expense; otherwise we will divide it so that it will not amount to too much for you. I hate this scrounging around with things like this, but I'll explain it more fully when I see you.

I talked with Minor White this morning and he was happy we had met. He says they should be through with the photographs by Wednesday, February 20 (a week from yesterday). He tells me they will be shipped immediately after that. I'll leave instructions that in the event they arrive before my return on February 26, no one here is to open them. I'll notify you when they are here and you might come down and be witness to the unpacking. If possible, it would be best not to start cutting glass until we have all prints here and decide what is to be shown (we will have plenty of time). I should like to include every one, but I am afraid we will not have room for all.

I'll try to reach you by telephone before I leave on Sunday. I'll tell you then about the publicity release which is to be prepared.

All good wishes to you and remember me to Richard Nickel.

Sincerely,

Sommer

March 2, 1963.

Mr. Minor White,
72 North Union Street,
Rochester, 7,
New York.

Dear Minor:

This will be only a short letter to let you know the two shipments of photographs arrived from the printers. I believe there was an error in sending one of these as it contains the proof of a photograph by Ansel Adams which is evidently intended for the back cover of Aperture. Would you like to have this returned to you or sent to Ansel?

We have made the layout for the Sommer show which will open next Friday, the first exhibition in our new gallery. It will include 40 photographs and makes a handsome showing of which I am very proud. I wish you could be here.

When the shipment of Sommer prints was opened, we discovered that unfortunately someone - in editing illustration proofs - had marked the proofs with a ballpoint pen while they were laid on top of the original photographs. Indentation markings are visible on about half of the prints received. I was in New York when the package reached here, but I had left instructions that nothing was to be opened until I returned and that the packing would take place in the presence of Frederick Sommer. Richard Nickel, David Rowinski, Frederick Sommer and I discovered these markings when David Rowinski opened the box. Frederick Sommer has asked me to enclose one of the proof sheets which will explain how this accident occurred.

I'll write more about the show later. It is a great privilege and pleasure to have Frederick Sommer here in Chicago and I wish I could steal more of his time. We are looking forward to the Aperture monograph and I am sure the show will have much success and be greatly liked.

Best regards to you. I wish I could sit down and have some talks and laughs with you.

Sincerely,

Summer

March 19, 1963.

Miss Mary P. R. Thomas, Associate Editor, Annual,
U. S. Camera,
9 East 40th Street,
New York City, 16, New York.

Dear Miss Thomas:

Thank you for your letter in regard to the exhibition of photographs by Frederick Sommer. Although the exhibition is shown in Chicago, many New Yorkers have seen it and I hope we will be able to assist you in making possible the inclusion of Mr. Sommer's work in the annual.

At present Mr. Sommer is in Chicago and will remain here a few days longer. For the past month he has been conducting Aaron Siskind's classes at The Institute of Design of The Illinois Institute of Technology during Aaron Siskind's absence in Europe. While in Chicago, Mr. Sommer may be reached at the Berkshire Hotel, 15 East Ohio Street; his permanent address is Box 262, Prescott, Arizona. He may come to New York within a few days and if he does, I am sure he will get in touch with you as he was pleased to hear of your letter concerning his work. Photographs of the installation of the show are being made and when they are ready, prints will be sent to you.

In case you have not received a copy as yet, I am mailing herewith the monograph on Frederick Sommer which has just been published by Aperture. Will you be so kind as to show this to Mr. Maloney?

I hope you visit Chicago sometime as I should like to talk with you in regard to what we have done here within the last three years. It has been accomplished with a small exhibition budget, admirable cooperation on the part of photographers and very little for purchases for the permanent collection. One purpose has been to organize our own shows and avoid ready-made, "packaged" assemblies. Also, to show young photographers and newcomers hitherto unexhibited. Despite many restrictions and exigencies, ~~we~~ we have had much success and the response has been warm and more than gratifying.

When I have completed the exhibition schedule for the next year, I shall send a copy to U. S. Camera (will you be so kind as to tell me to whom it should be addressed?) for I wish the shows could be announced, if such a thing is possible. I realize announcements have to be prepared far in advance, but a schedule made a year in advance should take care of this. Chicago's central location and the fact that this museum is in the very center of Chicago, both explain why so many visitors from everywhere come to us and I believe an announcement of photographic activities here would be useful and appreciated.

With best regards,

Sincerely,

Hugh Edwards, Curator of Photography.

Pasadena

March 23, 1963.

Mr. Walter Hopps, Curator,
Pasadena Art Museum,
46 North Hobles Avenue,
Pasadena,
California.

Dear Mr. Hopps:

Mr. Speyer has referred to me your letter in regard to the exhibition of photographs by Frederick Sommer.

The exhibition closes on April 7th and will be shipped back to Mr. Sommer soon after that date. Mr. Sommer has been in Chicago this last month, conducting classes at The Institute of Design of The Illinois Institute of Technology during Aaron Siskind's absence in Europe, and I have spoken to him of your interest in the show. I suggest your writing Mr. Sommer at Box 262, Prescott, Arizona, and hope you make arrangements to exhibit these photographs in Pasadena. Mr. Sommer will return to Arizona then end of next week.

Our exhibition consists of forty prints and I regret we were not able to publish a catalogue. Coinciding with the opening of the show, Aperture has published a handsome monograph on Frederick Sommer's work and you may obtain this from Aperture, 72 North Union Street, Rochester, 7, New York.

When you see Emerson Woelffer again, I should appreciate your remembering me to him.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

Hugh Edwards, Curator of Photography;
Associate Curator of Prints & Drawings.