

February 18, 1969

Miss Margaret F. Harker, Head
The Polytechnic School of Photography
309 Regent Street
London, W. 1
England

Dear Miss Harker:

I am delighted to hear you will visit Chicago on April 1. If you are here at noon, perhaps we could have lunch at the museum. I do want to talk with you, undisturbed by telephones and browsing visitors.

I hope our small collection will not be too disappointing. Exhibitions were held here in the department of prints and drawings during the 1940s and although they were few, we did introduce some important photographers (Andre Kertess, Alvarez Bravo, Pieterhans, etc.) who had not been shown before in America. From 1951 until his departure in 1957, Peter Pollack conducted a remarkable program of shows (which, however, were not the responsibility of this department). In 1959 the department of prints and drawings made photography one of its activities and I was asked to be curator. I will tell you more of all this while you are here. With this letter I am enclosing the folder of our first exhibition in 1959 because it gives some idea of our beginnings.

We have had continuous exhibitions for ten years. Although our efforts have been small and modest, I prefer them to be this way and believe they have had some influence. I am most interested in gifted young photographers who would not have their first exhibition elsewhere and we have initiated the careers of several very talented ones. The "realistic" photograph raised to a higher plane than the documentary is what I prefer, but I am proud my tastes have not "run away with me".

On Thursday evenings, in the Art Institute's school, I teach a class in the history of photography. This has gone on for three years and the results have been most interesting, the response enthusiastic.

There is much I want to talk with you about (Peter Henry Emerson, John Thompson, The Royal Photographic Society, etc.) and I look forward to your arrival here.

Yours sincerely,

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