

16 July 1963

Dear Hugh,

Thank you for the statements and the mailing piece. However there were two mistakes in the wall statement I would like to correct for the record. I was one of two photographers to get Suggenheim Fellowships this year. Diane Arbus was the other one and so I am a great respector of her work & am somewhat disconcerted at this oversight. The other mistake was inconsequential and derived from a misinterpretation of the word "studies." I have studied with Gene but have never done a study of him.

I thought the last paragraph dealing with the book was beautifully done. I do not know if my book merits equation with the works of Baldwin and Genet (I have not read Kechy's book) but my life, I think, would have been more than justified and my debt to society in part repaid if "new beliefs... more lasting than our lost illusions" may be

derived from it. I do not believe this will be so. I feel my work is but a questioning and a searching and out of this no new or reaffirmed beliefs can be had. Incidentally, it is because of this thought and the slight vagueness of the last sentence in the dust jacket quote that I took the liberty to write it thus: "A Dialogue With Solitude is his portrait of the artist as a young man in these times. It is a search for belief in life through a varied and revealing Odyssey as pictured by him." I hope you concur with this rephrasing. I am gratified that you take the affirmative in saying the work establishes beliefs but I feel the truth to be, on my part, that it is a searching and a questioning ~~never ending~~ without end.

The one line in the wall statement that I found very insightful reads: "It is a solitude crowded with human beings, all of whom he recognizes and understands, but with whom he can make no exchange

other than the gestures of an almost mechanical ritual."

It is a frighteningly true statement, frightening in that I am always disturbed by this mechanical and ritualistic exchange or contact with fellow human beings. Could I only achieve a more human and warm confrontation with others! My fear is much too great.

I will be looking forward to your visit to the city and would very much like to show you the material you mentioned. I am sure that I would be pleased with your judgement in editing the show and must again thank you for the opportunity in having the show.

Sincerely,
Dave Heath

If you read John Rechy, I wonder what you will think. Perhaps his book was better in the previously published extracts and maybe the publishers wanted it to be a certain length. He rewrote most of it about ten times and often this is a good way to get far removed from the starting point. Aside from the question (always tiresome) of whether or not it is a work of art, I think it is a great thing and hope the tough treatment it has received will not hurt him up

July 20, 1963.

Mr. Dave Heath,
483 Columbus Avenue,
New York City, 24, New York.

Dear Dave:

Thank you for your letter. The confusion about the Guggenheim fellowships has a long story behind it. At the time the awards were made, I was told by two New York authorities that yours was the only one and when I went away for a month I had neglected my Popular Photography studies. Right after sending off the wall label copy, I read about two awards and the text was corrected. The statement about Eugene Smith is also cleared up. So I believe everything is fixed now.

I wish there had been more amplification of the last paragraph, but the object was to hang as many pictures as possible, so written developments had to be sacrificed. Because I have always felt pessimism is a healthier state of mind than optimism, I have hopes that new ideas and beliefs - and more consistent, honest ones - will be derived from what is called our "philosophy of despair". Maybe this is a kind of inverted optimism. Montaigne's statement that the reason for living is to be alive means more to me than our later elaborate constructions (Freud, Marx, Sartre) which are all suspicious in that they seem directed towards the perpetuation of the old absurd and accepted morality against which we should die fighting. I did not infer we are to come to reaffirmed beliefs, but new ones. About all we can have faith in is contradiction and it is the work of a lifetime to accept that. Questioning and searching should be the objects of life and not satisfaction for if you ever find satisfaction, you will have no decent reason for making photographs. Also, the greatest value of any work is not in its being the personal expression of the one who does it, but what it arouses in others. All this need not advocate indifference and passivity - far from it. The best thing about any desire is the desire itself, not its extinction in consummation. Italian writers, all the way from Leopardi through Moravia, Pratolini and Calvino realize this unflinchingly: the French (Camus, Sartre - but not Genet) have adopted such ideas, cultivating and shaping them to what would end in the old, dishonest brand of ethics. We have junked the past and are either ashamed of what we have done or unwilling to admit this new condition in which we find ourselves. As someone wrote of Antonioni, we are living in the post-Marx, post-Sartre, post-Freud age and have barely started to define it. So you are right when you say "it is a searching and a questioning without end" - there you have the belief of which I was speaking.

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If you read John Rechy, I wonder what you will think. Perhaps his book was better in the previously published extracts and maybe the publishers wanted it to be a certain length. He rewrote most of it about ten times and often this is a good way to get far removed from the starting point. Aside from the question (always tiresome) of whether or not it is a work of art, I think it is a great thing and hope the tough treatment it has received will not shut him up entirely. He says he is coming here this summer - right now he is sitting back home in El Paso, stunned by the popular success he is. I like the way he told almost nothing about himself and yet made his book such a clear narrative of the modern tragedy of someone who wants to be involved to the point of being willing to destroy himself - yet does not make it. I have great admiration for him and am impatient to have some long talks with him. I'll always be grateful for his consideration in describing what he did - there are none of those wornout, clinical descriptions of the mechanics of actions between people which have become more tiresome and useless than old-fashioned evasions.

Forgive all this. I wish I could talk with you.

I am sending a copy of the news release sent out by The Art Institute. Miss Schutt has become so enthusiastic about your pictures she wants to do an article and have Chicago Scene publish it. I hope the newspapers will do something. The gallery is filled with people this afternoon and each one spends a long time with each photograph.

I'll write again soon. There is still the question of individual prints are to be had and for how much. And before I forget it, if Ralph Hattersley is there, tell him I have not written because it would take five hundred pages and I am too lazy. He will have a personal explanation someday. I have heard nothing from Rudy and Joanna since I wrote from Kentucky.

All good wishes now. I hope to be in New York the last part of October and trust you will be there.

Sincerely,
 if you ever find satirical... Also, the greatest value of any work is not in its being the personal expression of the one who does it, but what it arouses in others. All this need not advocate indifference and passivity - far from it. The best thing about any desire is the desire itself, not its extinction in consummation. Italian writers, all the way from Leopardi through Moravia, Pratolini and Calvino (the latter two the French) (Camus, Sartre - but not Genet) have adopted such ideas, cultivating and shaping them to what would end in the old, dishonest brand of ethics. We have junked the past and are either ashamed of what we have done or unwilling to admit this new condition in which we find ourselves. As someone wrote of Antiquity, we are living in the post-Marx, post-Sartre, post-Freud age and have barely started to define it. So you are right when you say "it is a searching and a questioning without end" - there you have the belief of which I was speaking.

31 July 1963

Dear Hugh,

Sorry I have not answered your letter of the 20th sooner than this but I have been down in Culpeper, Virginia with Lee Lockwood to watch them get out the next issue of Contemporary Photographer. Since returning I have been proofing what I shot down there and am feeling somewhat dejected at my lack of meaningful seeing. I have been generally feeling this way about my work all year.

Apropos Contemporary Photographer: I am sure you know of the magazine so will not bother to describe it to you. Lee Lockwood who is the new editor asked me to write a few words to you in request. The fall issue is to be based on the theme of the photographer and his audience and he would very much like to have you write about 1000 or 2000 words (more if you would feel the

necessity) on the museum as a bridge between
photographer and audience by way of shows, purchases,
etc. If you are amenable please inform Lee right
away (240 West 15th Street N.Y.). His deadline for
the material is Sept. 1st. He read the last paragraph
of your letter (more about that in a moment) and
is very taken by your style of writing. It would certainly
be a fine thing to have an article by you in the
magazine and I hope you will be inclined to write
it.

The magazine is desperate for subscribers. It
now has 560 but the break even point is 1000.
So far the only way to add subscribers is by the tedious
process of personal contact and sales to friends.
More subscribers and better methods for reaching
potential ones are needed quickly or the magazine
may fold before it becomes full grown. Have you any
suggestions?

I liked very much your last paragraph of the wall statement that I would like your permission to use it as a foreword in my book. See and another kind are of like mind that ~~it~~ it would make a fine foreword. The news release by Miss Schutt was certainly one of the most literate ones I have ever read. Please thank her for me for her enthusiasm and desire to write an article on the pictures.

I packed off the last set of unmounted prints from "Dialogue" - short one print - to Victor Summa for the TV show. This is certainly exciting to me and I regret that I can see neither the Institute's show nor the TV presentation. Incidentally, I suggested to Mr. Summa that he ask the Institute to borrow or have a copy made of the missing picture - the face drawn on the wall (the symbolic self-portrait).

I will close for now as it is getting late and I have those 300 proofs from Culpaper to dry (in the hope that one or two may be passable). May I ~~urge~~ urge you to accept Lee's request? There are certainly few enough people in this field who can write intelligently about photography and you most assuredly are one of them. There are few enough outlets as well for your writings which in themselves should have an audience, so I hope you will take up the challenge. If you have any specific questions write to him (or call AL 5 4232).

Looking forward to your visit in October.

Dave

October 17, 1964.

Mr. Dave Heath,
c/o Jerome Liebling,
Department of Art,
The University of Minnesota,
Minneapolis, 4, Minnesota.

Dear Dave:

I am sending this with a faint hope it will reach you. All week I have wanted to write and tell you how much I enjoyed the days you spent here and I look forward to your return.

The Committee on Prints and Drawings held its meeting on Wednesday of this week and I presented your Portfolio '63 (my copy of which I am so proud). The committee was much impressed by it and agreed to our purchasing a set for \$ 225.00, so I shall appreciate hearing when we may expect to have the one you had while you were here. When you do send it, please enclose an invoice addressed as follows:

Department of Prints and Drawings,
The Art Institute of Chicago,
Michigan Avenue and Adams Street,
Chicago, Illinois. 60603

Attention: Hugh Edwards, Curator of Photography.

Then I shall request the business office to mail you the check in payment for it. To send it by express collect would probably be the simplest way to have it reach us.

To supplement the Albright exhibition which is to be held here, there will be a show demonstrating the difference between realism in painting and photography and there is much interest in using some of the prints from your portfolio. I shall lend them mine until ours arrive. This display is not a "look alike" show, à la Metropolitan, but will emphasize advantages and differences, which I think is a good idea.

I hope you are fine. The Comédie Française was here for four performances this week, so I have had a rather strenuous time attending all of them and will be thankful to go home tonight and get some sleep. I'll try to write again soon. Several people have seen your portfolio during their visits to the print room and it has caused a lot of admiration. Best regards now.

Sincerely,

Hugh Edwards, Curator of Photography.

October 20, 1965.

Mr. Dave Heath,
205 West Grand Avenue, Apartment C30,
Dayton,
Ohio. 45405

Dear Dave:

It was good to hear from you this morning, just after my return from a week at home in Kentucky. I left affairs there very much as I found them, but the trip was wonderful and the view from the window, as I rode back, brought me a satisfaction which I feel will last for many days.

A letter from Rudy has come also and somehow I hope I shall be able to go to New York before long. If I do, I am afraid it will be during the Thanksgiving week for the Museum of Modern Art has recently purchased a copy of Kenneth Anger's Scorpio Rising and announces it will be shown there on November 21st and 24th. For me the big event of the year was meeting Kenneth Anger last May. During the last week of September he stopped here for three days, on his way to Paris, where his films were shown early this month and made a sensation. Knowing him has been a great experience and after seeing his pictures, I felt I had never seen a motion picture before.

However, I am not certain whether or not I shall go and if I am here it will surely be a pleasure to see you. Rudy has given such fine accounts of your work in the last year that I have been impatient to see it. To miss you while you are in Chicago would be a big disappointment.

Finding the portfolio again is still a relief when I think of it. It is now in a safe place from which it cannot stray or be taken. All good wishes now and I look forward to seeing you, if not in November, at least some time before long.

Yours sincerely,

Hugh Edwards, Curator of Photography.