

February 12, 1969

Mrs. Carl E. Salze
Box 233
Saint Elmo, Illinois, 62458

Dear Mrs. Salze: I hope this does not come to you too late. It was a great pleasure to read your letter and learn of your interest in our efforts. However, due to illness, I was away from the museum and it has been impossible to write you. I wish I might be able to attend the meeting of your club, hear your paper, and say a few words about what I believe we have accomplished with our exhibitions and growth of the collection of photography.

In 1959 a small group of photographs which had been accumulated by Peter Pollack from the exhibitions he held during 1951 through 1957 was placed in the custody of the Department of Prints and Drawings. Before this, the Alfred Stieglitz Collection, given by Georgia O'Keeffe in 1949, had always been kept in this department. Regular exhibitions of photography, which had been discontinued in 1957, were resumed in 1959, and since that time have been held continuously. Other than The Museum of Modern Art in New York, The Art Institute of Chicago is the only major museum in the United States which has continuous shows of photography. The purposes of these shows have been to present a historical survey of photography's history and the work of masters of both the past and present who exemplify certain traditions which grant photography rights to claim as a medium of individual expression. An effort has also been made to establish an intermittent series of show of the work of contemporary photographers, mostly young and unknown to the public, who illustrate the continuation of these traditions. Since 1959, 65 exhibitions have been presented and public response, warm and enthusiastic, has been gratifying.

The collection has grown until it consists of more than 6,000 original photographic prints. These form a survey - far from complete, of course - of photography's history from the earliest negative-positive photographs by Fox Talbot, to the most recent practitioners. The collection is made available to visitors and students and attracts many to the museum. The study room of the department of prints and drawings, where the collection is kept, is open every day except Sundays and Mondays, from 1:00 until 4:00 P. M.

I am sending you the catalogue list of the first exhibition and if you are at the Institute at any time, I hope you will come to see me. Then we may talk more about photography which is too large a subject to be covered in a letter. Be assured I am most appreciative of your interest and wish you all success with this large, fascinating, and difficult subject.

Yours sincerely,

Hugh Edwards, Curator of Photography.