

Dear Hugh Edwards:

Just to tell you your piece in Contemporary Photographer was a pleasure, and thanks. You've taken a viewpoint in which I almost thought I was alone and expressed it well. More important, you are doing concrete things with it. Keep it up, & all best.

Dan Vestal

January 23, 1965

Mr. Hugh Edwards
The Art Institute of Chicago
Michigan Avenue at Adams Street
Chicago, Illinois

Dear Hugh Edwards:

You know, my anxiety about those celebrated 40 prints has quite a bit worn off, now, so it seems fair enough to say, what the hell, keep them! One thing, though; a few are marked on the back, "reject print." They were meant to serve as indications of approximately what a good print might be to knowledgeable gents like Ansel Adams, who would not miss their shortcomings. They were efforts at good prints, like tapes made at recording sessions that aren't released because somebody blew a clinker. Just let them be clearly identified as prints on which I knew I had goofed!

I've heard good things about the Walker Evans show; and remembering the prints I saw last summer, I'm inclined to believe them. Good going.

Do you know Bruce Davidson, by the way? I've run into him now a few times, and like what I see & hear from him more and more. Started as a totally green Top Pro and seems to have outgrown it nicely, without undue fuss. Now he works without illusions but with a nice lively involvement in what he's seeing.

2 items for fun & profit. One: I've unofficially formed the World's Smallest Photo Agency, minim. Works out of a closet at MAGNUM, unbeknownst to Magnoids. Only photographer, me: no assignments accepted, all rights reserved. You Pay More, Get Less, with minim.

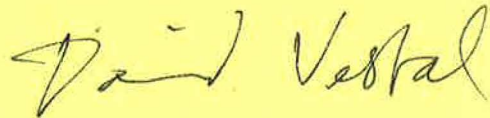
Other: I'm establishing the Mantel Sized Award to be known as the "Eddie," (for the blinded Oedipus.) The annual Tin Cup and White Cane for Outstanding Art Director of

The Year. Anyone who gets it twice in a row gets dark glasses, too, like Palms on the Legion of Honor. All I have to do now is think of a name for the benevolent organization that gives the honors.

Ah, Got it.

The Federation of the Handicapped! Contributions Tax Exempt.

Bitterly and Morosely Yours,



PS

Just heard Eine Kleine Nachtmusik by the Swingle Singers. Hm. I wish Culture Vultures would take the hint -- enjoyed the whole thing more than for years, and the NY jazz audience is being bombarded with Mozart for the first time ever.

One of these days they'll get frightfully up to date and discover Tommy Ladnier.

Did you see, by the way, that Dover has reissued Taft, Phphy & the American Scene?

Next, P.H. Emerson?? I'd like that.... He was a dirty dog! I mean a good man.

January 28, 1965.

Mr. David Vestal,
133 West 22nd Street,
New York City,
New York.

Dear David:

I have treated you badly (which is a poor statement for pleading guilty) - if you only knew how many companions you have in neglect. First, there was that "official receipt" which startled you. It had to be made and some reason was required for the appearance of the prints here, so I wrote down "consideration as a gift", not realizing these presumptuous words would be communicated to you. Now the wrong has been done, but I assure you that even my greed is not going to rob you of forty prints.

The next meeting of the Committee on Prints and Drawings is scheduled for February 10th. May I submit about twelve of the prints as a possible gift? There are more which I like but it might be better to wait until I come to New York to see some of your earlier work. I feel flagrant disadvantage is being taken of your generosity, so if none of this is agreeable with you, please let me know. I have enjoyed seeing the photographs and am enthusiastic about them, so I hope we are able to obtain some. If we do, they will be entered in the records as an anonymous gift.

A few days before your letter came, we opened a Bruce Davidson show of which I enclose a news release I did not write. I have liked Bruce Davidson's work ever since he started and am very fond of him. His exhibition is in our new gallery (which has turned out to be most satisfactory) where Walker Evans was the first photographer to be shown. I wish you could see it. Bruce was here Friday night and Saturday and he seemed pleased. I had a great time with him.

The digressions in your letter were good to read. After having lived through jazz at its best, Duke Ellington is still the sum total of it and I find modern efforts (a college subject now) tiresome and dull. Just as with films, I have gone back to what is left of the Americans after their murder by the highbrows, and my preferred director is Vincente Minnelli. Of contemporary music I like the popular best. Swingle Singers are as awful to me as Barbra Streisand and The Beatles ("America must be the best country still because everything we do is imitated although it is inimitable and what we get back are things like The Beatles") - all the Swingle lilting sounds like a clarification of Eastern Seaboard suburbanites as they wonder if they can afford another baby. I love Elvis and the Everly Brothers, originals with good honest commercial country music. And God make Bob Dylan, Joan Baez, Peter, Paul and Mary with their Civil Rights odes all die real soon.

Sincerely,

September 8, 1969

Mr. David Vestal
735 Carroll Street
Brooklyn
New York

Dear David:

The list of exhibitions I am sending is of all Art Institute photography shows beginning with 1943. From 1943 until 1951 these were held in the Department of Prints and Drawings of which Carl O. Schniewind was curator and I had a large part in the organization of these shows. From 1951 through 1957 the exhibitions were directed by Peter Pollack. Shows ~~were~~ resumed in 1959 and have been continued since as part of the activities of the Department of Prints and Drawings.

I am trying to get away for ten days in Kentucky. Right now it seems impossible - so please forgive this hurried note. I did enjoy seeing both of you so much and hope it will not be long before we can have another talk.

Sincerely,