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	MoMA Exhs.	220.1

BIRDS IN COLOR: (Continued) -----2

BIRDS IN COLOR: Flashlight Photographs by Eliot Porter

1939 he decided to become a fulltime photographer <sup>single space</sup> ~~stereo~~ photographing  
Eliot Porter is both artist and scientist. In these brilliant photographs of birds, high achievements in the technical fields of natural history and color photography, <sup>Dr. Porter</sup> he brings us not only living documents, but a profound insight into the beauty and diabolism of nature. From delicate nests among the palms and cacti of Arizona, the spruces of Maine, and the grasses of Illinois, the uncanny and repulsive beaks of the still-embryonic young sprout like incarnate greed. With tireless devotion the sleek, bright parents bring worms and berries glowing like jewels.

All the photographs in this exhibition are the gift of the photographer.  
Subtly Dr. Porter uses color to accent one particular quality, and black and white for another. The cormorants dance in black velvet; the eye of the phainopepla shines like an ember in the darkness. In a black and white photograph, the young of the meadowlark would be lost in flickering shadows. In color they wait in the grasses like winged demons. Sometimes different aspects of the same bird are thus emphasized. In harsh greys, the road runner emerging from the tortuous cactus is stony, Gothic, and menacing. In color, the bird with the pale ~~human~~ legs of a lizard dangling from its beak is transformed into the gigantic symbol of a world nightmare. <sup>11</sup>

Dr. Porter, was born in Winnetka, Illinois, in 1901. He holds degrees from the Harvard Engineering School and the Harvard Medical School. For several years he was engaged in teaching and in research, first in bacteriology and then in biological chemistry. His approach to photography was crystalized by the ideals and influence of Alfred Stieglitz and Ansel Adams. In 1937 he began applying these severe standards to his life-long interest in birds. He insisted on attaining three things: a clear and characteristic portrait of the bird, a technically good photograph, and an emotionally satisfying picture. By using flash, he could stop the motion of small swift birds and still retain definition in their surroundings. He developed an ingenious method for overcoming the physical and technical difficulties involved.

In 1938 ~~an~~ one-man exhibition of his work was held at An American Place, New York. In

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BIRDS IN COLOR: (Continued) -----2

TECHNICAL DATA

1939 he decided to become a fulltime photographer. In 1940 he started photographing birds in color. He found Daylight Type Kodachrome best for field conditions, afterwards making color separation negatives and printing them by the washoff relief process. In 1941 he received a Guggenheim award to aid him in completing his project. In 1942 his work was exhibited at the Katharine Kuh Gallery in Chicago and his series on birds was shown by the New York Zoological Society. At present he is engaged in war work at the Radiation Laboratory, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

All the photographs in this exhibition are the gift of the photographer.

For color, 2 G.E.s, 213 flashbulbs 22 reflectors were set about 18 inches from the subject. Average exposure: 1/500 second at F/11. Daylight Type Kodachrome film. At first, the single bulb was ignited by a 3 volt battery operated by a Reliant electronic synchronizer fitted with a special remote control mechanical trigger. Later, when two were used, a 45 volt radio battery and a Heland Research Corporation synchronizer with electrical remote control were found more satisfactory and reliable.

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For Porter Label

TECHNICAL DATA:

At first Dr Porter used a 9 x 12 cm Linhof camera, later a 4 x 5 Graphic View Camera, with long bellows and an F/7 Zeiss double P~~o~~star lens in a Compur shutter. Found the swingback and rising and falling front valuable in difficult compositions.

For medium heights, used a 15-foot tripod, one leg of which was a ladder. Erected scaffoldings for higher nests. Became able, by using remote control operation, to dispense with blinds except when photographing larger birds.

For black and white, 1 G.E. no. 21 flashbulb was set in an 11-inch aluminum Victor reflector about 3 feet from the subject, approximating the natural lighting as far as possible. Average exposure: 1/200 second at F/45. Eastman Super-XX sheet film.

For color, 2 G.E. no. 21B flashbulbs in reflectors were set about 18 inches from the subject. Average exposure: 1/200 second at F/22. Daylight Type Kodachrome film.

At first, the single bulb was ignited by a 9 volt battery operated by a Kalart Micromatic synchronizer fitted with a special remote control mechanical trigger.

Later, when two <sup>bulbs</sup> were used, a 45 volt radio battery and a Heiland Research Corporation synchronizer with electrical remote control were found more satisfactory and reliable.