

# Alec Soth's Archived Blog

June 8, 2007

## Friday Poem

Filed under: [poetry](#) — alecsothblog @ 3:41 am

### **Kissing Stieglitz Good-Bye**

by [Gerald Stern](#)

Every city in America is approached  
through a work of art, usually a bridge  
but sometimes a road that curves underneath  
or drops down from the sky. Pittsburgh has a tunnel—

you don't know it—that takes you through the rivers  
and under the burning hills. I went there to cry  
in the woods or carry my heavy bicycle  
through fire and flood. Some have little parks—

San Francisco has a park. Albuquerque  
is beautiful from a distance; it is purple  
at five in the evening. New York is Egyptian,  
especially from the little rise on the hill

at 14-C; it has twelve entrances  
like the body of Jesus, and Easton, where I lived,  
has two small floating bridges in front of it  
that brought me in and out. I said good-bye

to them both when I was 57. I'm reading  
Joseph Wood Krutch again—the second time.  
I love how he lived in the desert. I'm looking at the skull  
of Georgia O'Keeffe. I'm kissing Stieglitz good-bye.

He was a city, Stieglitz was truly a city  
in every sense of the word; he wore a library  
across his chest; he had a church on his knees.  
I'm kissing him good-bye; he was, for me,

the last true city; after him there were  
only overpasses and shopping centers,  
little enclaves here and there, a skyscraper  
with nothing near it, maybe a meaningless turf

where whores couldn't even walk, where nobody sits,  
where nobody either lies or runs; either that  
or some pure desert: a lizard under a boojum,  
a flower sucking the water out of a rock.

What is the life of sadness worth, the bookstores  
lost, the drugstores buried, a man with a stick  
turning the bricks up, numbering the shards,  
dream twenty-one, dream twenty-two. I left

with a glass of tears, a little artistic vial.

I put it in my leather pockets next  
to my flask of Scotch, my golden knife and my keys,  
my joyful poems and my T-shirts. Stieglitz is there

beside his famous number; there is smoke  
and fire above his head; some bowlegged painter  
is whispering in his ear; some lady-in-waiting  
is taking down his words. I'm kissing Stieglitz

good-bye, my arms are wrapped around him, his photos  
are making me cry; we're walking down Fifth Avenue;  
we're looking for a pencil; there is a girl  
standing against the wall—I'm shaking now

when I think of her; there are two buildings, one  
is in blackness, there is a dying poplar;  
there is a light on the meadow; there is a man  
on a sagging porch. I would have believed in everything.

## 8 Comments

1. dear alec,

farewell to stieglitz and have a good weekend.

since you are so interested in photography books, i thought you might like to see this one that i just published:

<http://www.danielblaufuks.com/webmac/uss/index.htm>

suprisingly (to me, at least), it was chosen as the international book of the year at photoespaña last week.

best  
daniel

*Comment by [daniel blaufuks](#) — June 8, 2007 @ [11:29 am](#)*

2. Hi Mr. Soth,  
thank you for posting that poem. it is beautiful. I have have been a big fan of your work for a while and I just discovered your blog. I have really enjoyed looking through it the last few days. The friday poems are a nice touch. It's interesting to see how you incorporate other subjects like poetry into your blog. I am an incoming freshman at the University of Dayton this fall, a photography major, and am right now on vacation. These past weeks have been killing me, not having a dark room. I've started taking advantage of my dad's flatbed scanner. But it's been amazing looking through your blog for different concepts and photographers you recommend. I have a feeling your blog is going to be one of the things pulling me through, photography-wise, this summer. thanks so much!

*Comment by [Christine](#) — June 8, 2007 @ [1:51 pm](#)*

3. Last week, you posted on the question "why blog?" I think Christine's comment provides one of the better responses to that question. And I second what she's saying; I really appreciate your photography, thoughts about photography (and life), and your voice and honesty.

*Comment by [mark](#) — June 8, 2007 @ [2:34 pm](#)*

4. Another excellent poem, Alec. Tx.

*Comment by [Jen Bekman](#) — June 8, 2007 @ [5:39 pm](#)*

5. I have to agree with my namesake on this. great poem.

*Comment by [Mark Page](#) — June 9, 2007 @ [4:19 am](#)*

6. Great one! Where do you find them?

*Comment by [John Sarsgard](#) — June 9, 2007 @ [5:41 am](#)*

7. FYI: I love Alec Soth.

*Comment by [Zoe Strauss](#) — June 10, 2007 @ [11:59 pm](#)*

8. Thanks Zoe. Looking forward to breaking pancakes with you next week.

*Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — June 11, 2007 @ [8:10 am](#)*

