

Alec Soth's Archived Blog

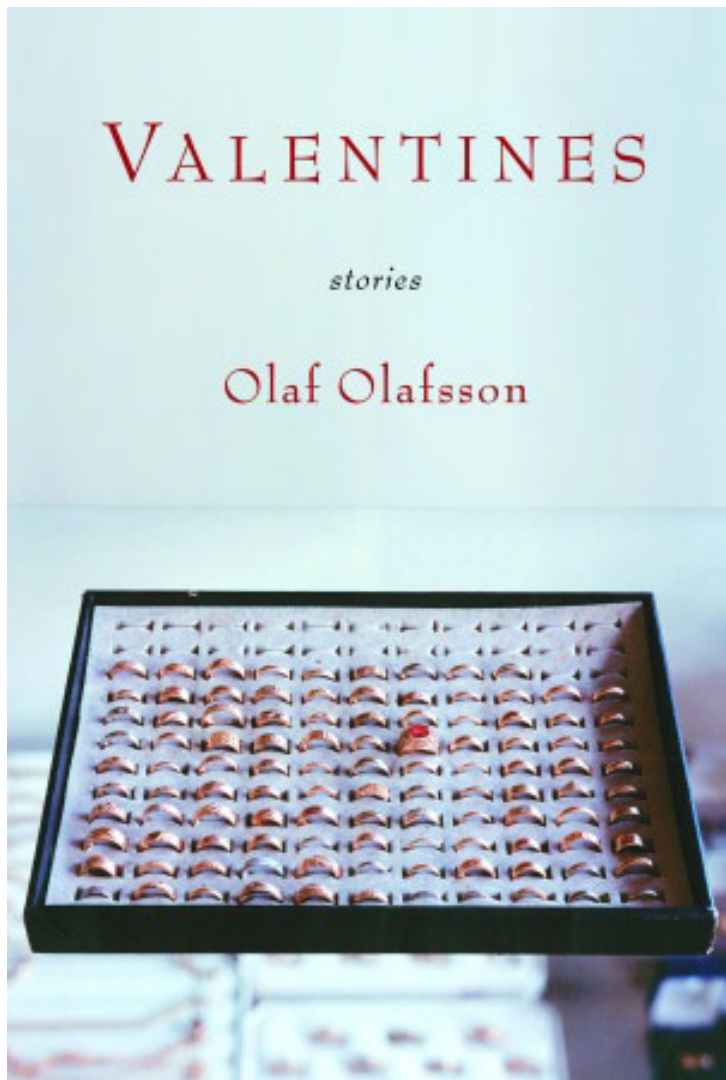
February 11, 2007

Valentines

Filed under: [books](#), [photographs \(mine\)](#) — alecsothblog @ 9:01 pm

In a [previous post](#) I discussed book covers. Today's [New York Times Book Review](#) had an article on the current 'big book look': large author name, large title, small icon.

While it doesn't fit this profile, the Book Review has a full-page ad for Olaf Olafsson's *Valentines*. I was surprised to see that this book features one of my pictures:



- See the original picture [here](#).
- Karl Baden's great site on book cover photography [here](#)
- A good site on book cover design [here](#)

9 Comments

1. suprised as in , like, you had no idea and did not get paid suprised?

Comment by pds — February 11, 2007 @ [10:03 pm](#)

2. My agency probably sold the image and failed to mention it to me.

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — February 11, 2007 @ [10:48 pm](#)

3. kind of messed with that picture more than a bit.

Comment by j zorn — February 11, 2007 @ [11:28 pm](#)

4. I actually liked what they did to it. It's a nice cover. What really puzzles me is the crazy, winding method of arriving at what they need. They search the archives of a well-known documentary photographer, find a picture which works perfectly well (and needs no cropping or photoshopping, god forbid) WITHIN the documentary-artsy context in which it was originally produced and published (the excellent Niagara series) but which clearly doesn't work as elegantly if used as a bookcover. They then isolate the element they chose the picture for in the first place, erasing distracting background, altering color, and cropping to fit a vertical cover. I like the end result, kind of sober and minimalistic. But did they really need an Alec Soth original to end up with a cover of that quality? Good for Alec, if he doesn't mind the messing and receives some money for it. But I think that an equal result, in terms of design quality, could have been achieved with an amateur image.

It would be a different case if the original image had been used. As in the case of the famous pic of Cartier Bresson, of four people eating and drinking wine near the river Marne, used for a book of recipes, as we can see in Karl Baden's site. But if just the hand of the man serving the wine had been cropped and used -I'm exaggerating my point-, even if in the end they happened to produce with it an exquisite bookcover, I would be asking myself the same question: Was that really necessary?

Comment by Federico — February 12, 2007 @ [11:36 am](#)

5. I had already visited Covering Photography, but had not noticed it was Karl Baden's project. Karl was my photo teacher at college. In fact, he's practically the only formal teacher I've had. You made my day.

Comment by [alfredo](#) — February 12, 2007 @ [1:25 pm](#)

6. since we're revisiting old subject may I digress to a previous discussion "shit week" and the lack of photography on the subject. Don't know if anyone has stumbled across this site before but its photography and I think pretty funny, though my humour isn't that high brow.

<http://sprinklebrigade.com/>

Comment by pj — February 12, 2007 @ [6:04 pm](#)

7. welcome back Alec.

tragic book related story...local photographer, and friend, Charles Mason recently had an image commissioned from Getty for the cover of "Water for Elephants" - they printed the entire first run giving credit to Charles Manson. oops.

Comment by [ben](#) — February 12, 2007 @ [6:24 pm](#)

8. Hi Alec, I just wondered, when you referred to your agent, did you mean Magnum, or do you have another agent distributing your work in this market?
By the way, I enjoyed your coverage in 'Blackbook' last issue.
Dave.

Comment by [Dave Greenwood](#) — February 18, 2007 @ [3:19 am](#)

9. Yes, Magnum. As it turns out, they did indeed sell the image.

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — February 18, 2007 @ [8:02 am](#)