

Alec Soth's Archived Blog

May 21, 2007

back online?

Filed under: [on blogging](#) — alecsothblog @ 10:27 pm

I'm home from a couple of weeks of shooting and have almost nothing to say. I saw two shows ([Tim Davis](#) and [Candida Höfer](#) at the Knoxville Museum of Art), listened to two audio books ([Black Dahlia](#) and [The Hoax](#)) and watched most of Season 3 of [The Wire](#).

Nothing to say.

After 4,000 miles alone in the van I've forgotten how to spiel. And I'm not sure this is a bad thing. My friend [Eric](#) recently linked to an article called ***Surviving a Month Without Internet*** (Interestingly, the author Stephen Elliot also mentions that he spent time watching The Wire):

I wasn't just breaking the Internet habit, I was breaking the habits I had learned on the Internet: that addiction to continual bursts of small information.

I started reading a lot more books, which is good for me since I'm a person who writes books. And I read more challenging books...I could feel my attention span lengthening...

I made some decisions for my own Internet usage when I got back online. The first thing I did was replace my blog with [an advertisement](#) for my books. Why did I think I needed a blog?

Hmmm.

23 Comments

1. you wouldn't!

good to have you back Alec. and, i agree, breaks are necessary. when i find myself telling my wife "yep..aha...um...i'll be to bed in a minute" because i'm regurgitating the same old rhetoric, it's time to step away from the machine.

i'm planning a trip north in a week – no internet, phone, fast food, traffic, rules... tundra and limitless horizons...

Comment by [ben](#) — May 22, 2007 @ [12:03 am](#)

2. the internet is over. go play outside.

Comment by [kevin](#) — May 22, 2007 @ [12:07 am](#)

3. It's more fun to make photographs than write about them. I like to persuade myself that a blog post is as much an art form as a picture, but being a conveyor belt hammers the nail in the coffin until, then, I awake from the dead, tired of being my own audience.

Comment by [Philip](#) — May 22, 2007 @ [1:16 am](#)

4. Welcome back Alec. It's OK, we'll do the talking for you.

I like your blog because it makes me pause and think, and follow up leads and ideas. Things connect, rather than being shards of disconnected bytes of info.

What's the 'Fashion v.3' by Alec Soth that's on pre-order at Amazon.co.uk?

Comment by [guybatey](#) — May 22, 2007 @ [2:36 am](#)

5. "that addiction to continual bursts of small information" – I don't only get it from the Internet though. There are long periods when I become obsessed with reading the daily newspaper, and all other "reading time" gets blotted out as a result. Then when I realise I'm overdosing on news and snippets of opinion, I sit back, read a book, try not to think of newspapers, and am always amazed by how enriching the experience is.

Comment by [Dan Sumption](#) — May 22, 2007 @ [8:32 am](#)

6. regarding tim davis:

<http://www.anhava.com/?http://www.anhava.com/exhibitions/puranen/index-a.html>

Comment by [just](#) — May 22, 2007 @ [9:55 am](#)

7. "Why did I think I needed a blog?"

That man is a genius. Every person on the internet should ask themselves that question.

Comment by [Nolan](#) — May 22, 2007 @ [10:26 am](#)

8. I've kept a journal for my whole adult life, and blogging is a way to share some of this type of writing. I think the greatest advantage of the Internet is that we can share our ideas with people who may be actively interested in the subject, instead of limiting ourselves to who is nearby or answering their phone. That said, I feel addicted to the Internet and feel like my attention span is

shortening, so — the way it is with problem drinkers — I feel like I have to learn to somehow regular my time on here, and soon, so that I won't have to walk away from it entirely.

Comment by Eric Z. — May 22, 2007 @ [10:40 am](#)

9. I meant "regulate" instead of regular.

I'm glad you've got your blog, Alec. Remember when the only way to read about an artist's tastes and opinions was the Top Ten in Artforum?

Comment by Eric Z. — May 22, 2007 @ [10:43 am](#)

10. He returns! Nice to see you posting again. I agree with Eric Z. your blog has a certain amount of presence and authority, and has become a place for coherent discussion relating to the art world, photography, and family. I remember when you first started this blog I thought how great it was going to be for people to hear your voice, and for me to be able to take advantage of your insight once again. Take care.

Comment by [Justin](#) — May 22, 2007 @ [11:16 am](#)

11. Guy, fashion #1 was by Martin Parr, #2 by Bruce Gilden. Both very good, and nice to see magnum continuing the series. They are an economical way to get your hands on a small signed print (prints for some editions), though pre-ordering anything amazon is a bad idea.

Interesting quote from surviving without the internet, particularly "continuous bursts of small information", since that is inherent in the blog format (as opposed to say essay or book format). I am a selfish reader, I wonder if the staccato blog format bleeds dry the potential pool of traditional photographer essayists since we see less of those these days. Some of the 'memes' you explore here (eg, photography and celebrity) would make great essays. But that would be the end of the smoky loft, wouldn't it?

Comment by rob — May 22, 2007 @ [12:35 pm](#)

12. I can't imagine a month without the internet and I think that's an absolute tragedy. Maybe I'll try a week. Or a day. My attention span is dwindling to the span of reading an online cnn article. Jesus Christ, what was I taking about?

Where were you shooting, Alec?

Comment by [Zoe Strauss](#) — May 22, 2007 @ [9:44 pm](#)

13. Zoe, I use Google Reader to look at blog updates. While I was away from the computer, this Reader was absolutely flooded with Zoe-news. You were everywhere. I'm guessing you were also on CNN. If I were you I wouldn't have much of attention span either. It must be hard being a rock star.

As for me, I was on a lonely road trip through the South. I'm doing a commission for the High Museum in Atlanta. It was a tough trip. Photography is always harder than I think it is going to be. But I'm more than happy to keep pushing the rock. (Not in The Wire sort of way).

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — May 22, 2007 @ [10:03 pm](#)

14. Eric, I'm glad you brought up the ArtForum Top 10. It is perfectly analogous to blogs. It is one of the first things I look at in the magazine. It is a piece of candy. But you can only eat so much before you get sick. Books are restaurants; the Internet is a candy store.

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — May 22, 2007 @ [10:19 pm](#)

15. All true about the internet & attention spans. But what blogs — this blog — can do is to not only stimulate but also moderate among differing points of view in a genial, fair-minded way (that would be you, Alec). It's a good place to learn things. You may not want the role but my impression is it leads to a lot of teaching energy being generously dispensed by others too. That's a good thing.

Comment by [Tim Connor](#) — May 22, 2007 @ [11:32 pm](#)

16. u see . u have lots of interested readers .. have a kit kat but always come back..
an hello from the other side of the river

Comment by [meira](#) — May 23, 2007 @ [12:01 am](#)

17. I love this blog for real inspiration and art-friendship. The ideas, questions, poetry, insights—and especially the generous sharing of images and the act of looking and seeing together. Not being a photographer, I am always learning from it—it opens me up to so many new visual and ideological realms. It's gotten me to take a camera along on walks and so forth, just to watch how I see. I wish there were more blogs like this out there. I know it can't go on forever, but please don't go away.

Comment by [Susan](#) — May 23, 2007 @ [12:03 am](#)

18. My internet access got cut off for a nite and i felt like i was missing a finger or something...kept wanting to check on this or that bit of info and couldn't...very very weird...hmmmm.

Comment by [artlife](#) — May 23, 2007 @ [2:34 pm](#)

19. I understand completely what seems like an ambivalence about the blog, or the internet in general. I have had a few other activities outside of what I do as an artist and I am completely aware of the compulsion element of it, but on the other hand, I know that it balances out everything else for me. I have ended projects thinking that I don't know why I am doing it, only to find that they come back again and again in different forms. It is actually a similar energy to what was in my work when I was starting out, a kind of desire to find a way to frame all of my interests. As important as it is to understand your compulsions, it is also just as important to be able to walk away from them, and know that if it is the right thing, you will find another way to approach it which might be better.

For me, being an artist is kind of boring in the end. I need an alternate outlet, not just for perspective and the social elements, but also to keep me from self-destructing. On the other hand, sometimes the best and fastest way to get through something is not to stay away from it, but to go toward it as directly and totally as possible.

Whatever any of that means to anyone but myself, I enjoy your blog immensely and would miss it should you decide to give it a break (the many times a day I check for updates...um I have way too much time on my hands and not much interest in books at the moment)

Comment by [Lisa](#) — May 23, 2007 @ [6:36 pm](#)

20. Lisa, I'm so flattered that you read my blog. And I appreciate your comments. Coming from an artist who created her own gallery, I'm sure you have plenty of advice about extra-curricular activities. Thank you.

I feel bad that you keep checking for updates. Here is the trick. Try [Google Reader](#). It is an easy way to check all of your favorite blogs at once.

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — May 23, 2007 @ [10:24 pm](#)

21. More [good stuff](#) from Eric Z.

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — May 23, 2007 @ [10:51 pm](#)

22. [...] I'm back and, unlike Alec, I'm not thinking of the benefits of staying disconnected. Though, maybe I should be. [...]

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