

PHOTO BOOTH

# THE WANDERING SPIRIT

By Rodrigo Canedo Gattegno

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The photographer [Alec Soth](#) and the writer Brad Zellar have undertaken a long-term project, born out of simple pleasure, that captures both the humanity and banality of the American continent. Their self-described “North American ramblings” are presented in an irregularly published newspaper titled *The LBM Dispatch*, which recalls the documentary-style photography of days long gone. Soth describes it as “being in the style of both newspaper journalism and the Walker Evans/James Agee approach in ‘Let Us Now Praise Famous Men.’” The project began with Soth asking Zellar to indulge him with an imaginary newspaper assignment for his birthday. They ended up covering a story about a stray cat living under a suburban freeway interchange. “Freed from the conventions of working for a real paper, Brad and I were able to get at the poignancy behind the somewhat trivial story,” Soth told me.

Exhilarated by working on their own, the friends made their adventure into a more serious undertaking. After they published projects documenting Ohio, Michigan, and upstate New York, they foresaw a more Western future. Last summer, they traveled throughout Colorado for a few weeks, meeting hundreds of people and detailing the trivial, riveting moments of their lives. The images bring us face to face with the treasures (and terrors) of the fleeting moment. The photographs document more than the place where they were taken; together, they form a study of the North American soul and the wandering spirit.

Soth and Zellar are currently working on an upcoming issue, "Texas." You can obtain "Colorado" or preorder "Texas" on the [Dispatch](#) blog. \_

Courtesy of Alec Soth/Magnum.

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