

Alec Soth's Archived Blog

June 3, 2007

Jeffrey Ladd & Peter Fraser

Filed under: [artists](#) — alecsothblog @ 2:23 pm

I recently discovered an absolutely fantastic new blog. Unlike my rambling entries, [5B4](#) focuses on a single subject – photography books. None other than [John Gossage](#) has called it “the best Photobook blog on the web.”

Overwhelmed by the quantity and quality of the posts, I wanted to know more about the author. But apparently he doesn't want to be known. He doesn't offer a profile and usually refers to himself as 'Mr Whiskets.'

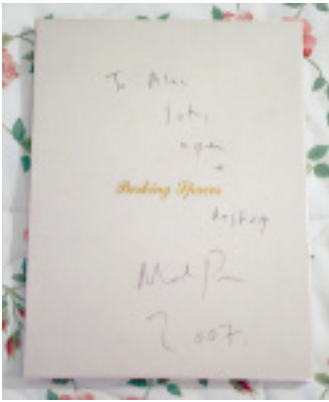
But after poking around I figured out that 5B4 is written by the photographer [Jeffrey Ladd](#). I first came across Ladd's work a few years ago. He is an artist of depth, sophistication and restraint. This last quality, I suspect, is why Ladd isn't better known. Mr. Whiskets doesn't beg for attention.

Though his work hasn't found a publisher, Ladd channels his love of photography books into the production of his own artist books:



Ladd's [first post](#) on 5B4 was on Martin Parr and Gerry Badger's two-volume [History of the Photobook](#). Ladd notes the way in which this recent attention has intensified the photobook as commercial collectible.

Martin Parr recently gave me a copy of his new book, [Parking Spaces](#). By signing the book on the cellophane wrapper, Parr forces a quandary: Which is more valuable, the signed collectible or the book itself?



A couple of nights ago I had dinner with Parr and his fellow arbiter of history, Gerry Badger. Sitting next to Gerry was the terrific photographer [Peter Fraser](#):



Like Ladd, Fraser strikes me as a photographer of patience and modesty. His [recent monograph](#) (by Nazraeli press, with an essay by Gerry Badger) is complex, refined and understated.



My recommendation is to buy two copies. Enjoy one and keep the other in the cellophane.

6 Comments

1. Hmmmm..... I recognise that signed cellophane book somehow. It seems to be mingling with memories of being drunk, too talkative and far too boring. Sincere apologies if this rings a bell, and I hope that you enjoyed your brief spell in London nonetheless.

Don't open the book !

Robert

Comment by [Robert Phillips](#) — June 3, 2007 @ [5:29 pm](#)

2. Your comment about the wrapped book reminded me of the Polaroid book (was it Taschen? – can't remember), which came in what looked like the aluminum cover of 600 film. I mean it's a nice gimmick, but then if you can't open it – otherwise, you'd destroy the value – wouldn't it be better to have a book that comes without the gimmick and then a pouch like the one that holds the book but that does contain only an empty book dummy? I mean if the book has no value after destroying the cover why not replace it with something that has no value in itself? Or is this too Žižek a comment? (like he'd argue that if there's a package of stuff that says "20%" free then why can't you just take the 20% that is free and leave the rest in the store?)

Comment by [JM Colberg](#) — June 4, 2007 @ [8:54 am](#)

3. Phaidon played with this idea with their "Cream" series. Fresh Cream was distributed in an "incredible inflated clear plastic pillow"

<http://www.powells.com/cgi-bin/biblio?inkey=17-0714839248-0>

you get both the gimmick and the object (it could be re-inflated after you looked at the book).

I like the rambling on this blog—it's actually why i come back.

Comment by [jennifer](#) — June 4, 2007 @ [9:57 am](#)

4. 54b seems great. excellent tip! does jeffery ladd know he has been outed though?

Comment by [stewart](#) — June 4, 2007 @ [1:54 pm](#)

5. ^^^^He's about to know in a hot second....

Alec,

Really though man, you get extra points from me with this one. Jeff Ladd was a teacher of mine, and is one of those unsung, slept on photographers who I'm sure is destined for success in the long run. His work has always reflected the humble and honest intent with which he photographs, and his work ethic is impressive. He would always be on me about not shooting enough, and truth be told, he was and is right. I still don't.

And Fraser!

My favorite Christmas/hannukah present of 2006. That is a truly beautiful book. One of those that just feels good in your hand, and peels open fresh every time. I Like it's oversized vinyl feel...reminds me of a classic double album full of quiet gems.

Anyway you slice it, I'm glad to see this pair getting the recognition they deserve

Comment by [Sam Logan](#) — June 4, 2007 @ [2:13 pm](#)

6. Hi Alec, Really nice to see you last Friday, although only brief it was a pleasure as always. You are absolutely right on two accounts, 5B4 is a brilliant blog and one I find myself checking on a daily basis. Also, as you say, Jeff is an un-sung hero and someone who deserves a good book publisher now!

Comment by Matt Stuart — June 4, 2007 @ [3:09 pm](#)