

Alec Soth's Archived Blog

December 8, 2006

Friday Poem

Filed under: [poetry](#) — alecsothblog @ 2:45 am



Untitled (Michael in front of deteriorating wall), 1960, ©Ralph Eugene Meatyard

Thanks to Raabia for sending me this poem from James Baker Hall, the Poet Laureate of Kentucky. It was written in memory of the legendary photographer Ralph Eugene Meatyard:

That First Kite

That first kite was made of newspaper and strung
with fish line. I was lying next to it, alone. Sunlight

in the bright shape of a window, X-ed once
with the shadow of the sash, moved

slowly across the floor toward
me. A way had to be found

to make it work. We were trying. All this
took place in the attic where the cat brought
the birds.

My mother was downstairs
or out back in the cornfield
with a gun.

I didn't move. Who knew
where my father was.

Nothing ever worked.

I kept my eyes closed

whenever I thought

I was asleep

or flying. I awoke

when I felt the light touch

my feet, perfect, still

I didn't move. When it touched

my eyes I opened. The crosshairs

were on my chest, breathing. I saw

my heart. A cold wind rattled

the kite.

5 Comments

1. This is in reference to a post a few weeks ago: the NY Times' Roberta Smith comments on the same situation you did earlier: <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/08/arts/design/08curr.html>

Comment by zbs — December 8, 2006 @ [11:02 am](#)

2. Woops, justified txt.

I wonder, though, the general recognition: is this going to be an Ingres / Delacroix situation ?

Comment by zbs — December 8, 2006 @ [11:04 am](#)

3. My hat's off to you Alec, no-one to my knowledge has mined such a rich vein of photographic interest on a blog in one week – Colberg, Bill Jay, Luc Delahaye, Martin Parr, Brian Ulrich, Shulman, and finally a mention of that most important US photographer, Meatyard.

From a UK perspective, I'm gratified that Parr's entry attracted such a phenomenal response. It was nice to see such a turn-out in support of the unsung UK stars of photography on a US blog – and respect to the man himself for joining in!

Comment by [Roy](#) — December 8, 2006 @ [6:17 pm](#)

4. Friday poems are one of my favorite features on the blog, and this one is beautiful. Speaking of poets inspired by photographers, I recently came across two poems in Larry Levis' book Winter Stars that were inspired by Josef Koudelka's photographs—"The Assimilation of the Gypsies" and "Sensationalism." So, for those interested, here's some recommended reading to supplement this week's poem.

Comment by [Aaron](#) — December 9, 2006 @ [8:41 pm](#)

5. There is nothing more beautiful than poetry about the south and literature for that matter (particularly Faulkner). It takes on a strange mythical tone that I do not think is present in other parts of the country. Thanks for the poem.

Comment by [Catharine](#) — December 10, 2006 @ [12:52 pm](#)