

In Pictures

Following the Mississippi's path

20 September 2017



ALEC SOTH / MAGNUM PHOTOS

Photographer Alec Soth has made a series of road trips along the Mississippi River, documenting the people, landscapes and interiors he encountered along the way.

During the slow process of setting up his large-format camera, Soth would sometimes ask his subjects to write down their dreams.

Peter, whose Mississippi River houseboat can be seen above covered in snow, had a simple one. Having lived on the boat for 20 years, he wrote: "My dream is running water."





Kym, seen here in the Polish Palace nightclub, Minneapolis, is a 32-year-old divorced mother of baby twins.

Soth asked Kym about her favourite travel destination. She told him she had travelled only once, with her ex-husband.

"We went to New Orleans," she said. "It was great, we drank on Bourbon Street and toured the cemeteries. The cemeteries there are so amazing. But it was sad, we took all of these pictures and then left our camera on the bus.

"I don't have any pictures from that trip."



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Soth lives at the northern end of the river and deliberately tried to avoid the large cities and centres of industry.

"I see poetry," he says, "as the medium most similar to photography... or at least the photography I pursue."

His upbringing, in the Midwest, makes his photographs more "dark and lonely" than optimistic, he says.



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Religion is often present in Soth's photographs, as it is in the lives of many who live along the Mississippi.

Convicts Terry, Keith, William and Randy were working at a rest stop overlooking the confluence of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers.

They are pictured in front of the Fort Jefferson Memorial Cross in Ballard County, Kentucky.

Keith's dream was to someday own and operate his own pilot school.



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All photos: Courtesy of the artist and MACK

Sleeping by the Mississippi by Alec Soth is published by MACK. An exhibition of the work runs 19 September - 21 October 2017 at Beetles+Huxley, London.
