

Alec Soth's Archived Blog

October 17, 2006

Nothing is boring

Filed under: [aesthetics](#) — alecsothblog @ 12:12 pm

When I was in school I was open to everything. I painted like Rauschenberg, read Ashbery, listened to John Zorn. The world seemed so open. But it closed up quickly upon graduation. After a long day at a dead end job, Seinfeld looked a lot more appealing than the avant-garde. So I settled down and married a medium (photography) and got on with my life.

I have no regrets. But I'm now reaching that point where hair is starting to grow out my ears. I'm getting crusty. So I'm grateful that Kurt Easterwood splashed some water in my face today on [his blog](#). Easterwood makes me want to go back to school. His insightful comments even got me thinking about John Cage again (haven't thought about him in years):

"If something is boring after two minutes, try it for four. If still boring, then eight. Then sixteen. Then thirty-two. Eventually one discovers that it is not boring at all." — John Cage.

Kurt, if you are ever in Minnesota, let's go the movies....

8 Comments

1. Alec-
You're on!
Actually, writing that post I too wanted to go back to school, something I daresay I haven't felt but once or twice in the 15-odd years since I left!

Comment by [Kurt](#) — October 17, 2006 @ [12:30 pm](#)

2. Nice, simple. As usual, you've brought up something that I'll enjoy thinking about for some time. Been lurking here for a while. Just wanted to say that I appreciate hearing your perspective in blog form.

Comment by [Brandon Stone](#) — October 17, 2006 @ [5:12 pm](#)

3. Kurt and Alec, it's an incredibly positive experience to hear of such interest in artwork such as this. Being surrounded by many students, I think the times have changed. Most of my peers, either studying art or other areas, come away negatively from such films saying "I don't get it." From my recent studies at the Universiteit van Amsterdam, I got the chance to see many great 1920s and 30s avant-garde work through their cinema studies library. I couldn't be more more excited.

Comment by [Ryan](#) — October 17, 2006 @ [6:17 pm](#)

4. That John Cage quote is so true. I listened to my first Last Exit album a painful 20 times before it suddenly became the most beautiful thing I'd ever heard, and since then I've tried to apply a similar approach to many things. This does get harder as one gets older and ones concerns mount, and from time-to-time I lapse into the mainstream and the unchallenging, but I always try to give myself the occasional "Last Exit moment" to remind me of where I've come from, and that good things often require effort.

Comment by [Dan Sumption](#) — October 18, 2006 @ [4:25 am](#)

5. "I have nothing to say and I am saying it and that is poetry as I needed it" (Cage) is imho one of the most profoundly liberating and enabling statements made by an artist in the 20th century, though I suspect its power is beginning to be lost on younger folk. For what it's worth, I think the films of Tarkovsky are a place where mainstream and avant-garde meet very fruitfully.

Comment by [Mike C.](#) — October 18, 2006 @ [7:57 am](#)

6. There's a great short film called [Sound?](#) that features John Cage talking about how we listen, and also features multi-reed phenomenon Roland Kirk. See Cage yelling in an echo chamber and Kirk's interaction with zoo animals – magical stuff.

Comment by [Joe Reifer](#) — October 18, 2006 @ [12:03 pm](#)

7. Alec, first of all I really admire your work. Early on in flickr I started a [Boring Photos](#) group, inspired by the Martin Parr postcard books, but after some aesthetic struggling with the concept I realized there really was no such thing as a boring photograph so I closed the group to submissions.

Back to photographers and filmmakers, I'm fond of the Rineke Dijkstra's video installations. They're like moving portraits, very much of a piece with her still work.

Comment by [pat](#) — October 18, 2006 @ [7:24 pm](#)

8. [...] 3. Alec Soth, my new favorite blogger, writes about how nothing is boring. I agree. My theory is that an active mind is never bored—restless perhaps, but never never bored. [...]

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