

# Alec Soth's Archived Blog

August 8, 2007

## Where are the great pictures on Flickr?

Filed under: vernacular & Flickr — alecsothblog @ 12:41 am

"I went on to Flickr and it was just thousands of pieces of shit, and I just couldn't believe it. And it's just all conventional, it's all cliches, it's just one visual convention after another." Stephen Shore

Stephen Shore's reaction to Flickr is understandable. The most popular groups like Catchy Colors (36,091 members) or Reflections (14,350 members) are brutal. I can't say I even liked Squared Circle (5,188 members).

My guess is that the best photography on Flickr is hard to find. Good photography is rarely popular. I'm reminded of Bill Jay's essay ([pdf](#)) on photographic fame:

I think we can agree that any definition of fame would include such phrases as "popular acclaim," "known far and wide," "public estimation and regard," "household name," and similar tributes. Now lay back and concentrate. Name an active living artist-photographer who is famous. . . . . (The dots represent time passing. Go ahead, think about it for as long as you like.)

Ready now? Good. Who did you come up with? Joel-Peter Witkin. Robert Mapplethorpe. Annie Leibowitz. Sally Mann. Who? Never mind – we have enough names for our purpose.

The next question is: how many people in the USA have heard of any one of these names? As I cannot hear you I will answer the question myself. Probably one thousand at any one time. More? OK, let us up the figure to five thousand although I think that is stretching it.

Here is the first conclusion: in a nation of 260 million even the higher figure does not represent "public acclaim"; it means that the name is recognized by only five persons in a quarter of a million. Now, compare. When a minor television sit-com actress of dubious talent declared her lesbianism she inundated every major news outlet for weeks, including the cover of Time plus seven inside pages, and her coming-out episode was watched by everyone in the universe except me. That is fame.

So forget about fame and membership stats. Tell me, where are the great pictures on Flickr?

## 305 Comments

1. the great pictures here? (not mine), [http://www.flickr.com/photos/fake\\_a\\_dream/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/fake_a_dream/)

*Comment by CZ — August 8, 2007 @ 1:01 am*

2. I personally like this person's pics (again, not mine):

<http://flickr.com/photos/alspix/>

He does some great work with pinholes, film and obscure cameras. My favourite sets of his are:

<http://flickr.com/photos/alspix/sets/72157594194034275/>

I suppose some of the photos could be considered clichéd, however more often than not Alspix is the one coming up with the idea....

For technically very good pics see:

<http://flickr.com/photos/ellishall/>

There's a pic of me in his stream somewhere! I especially like his tubagraphs and portraits of a reflected venice.

Also, check out the alt group, although you have to like alternative photography I suppose...

<http://flickr.com/groups/alt/>

well, that's my favourites. If you look hard enough and get past the cruft (difficult I know) then there's some very good stuff on flickr — photoblogs don't have the monopoly!

*Comment by Joel Snape — August 8, 2007 @ 1:15 am*

3. If I find a picture that I like, I follow the trail of the photographer's favorites.

I think there's some sort of clumping action going on, so if you follow a flower macro person's trail you mostly turn up more flower macros.

I'm not very good, so don't follow mine.

*Comment by BartF — August 8, 2007 @ 1:18 am*

4. Flickr is a very hobbiest-oriented site. Thus, I think the greatness is in the designers, tech people, housewives, househusbands, corporate minions, etc that find something important in photography. Most likely, since they're moonlighting, there's no art school involved or community of critique, so they share and network there. It suffices.

Granted, the extent of the critiques tend to be "nice composition" and "great colors" but it at least opens a conversation that wouldn't otherwise be available.

I've met several great people/photographers through the site while at a community college completely lacking in a creative community. For that, it was invaluable. Bosse Blomqvist's photography, found here: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/bosseb/> may do nothing for you, but it's one example of someone I feel has influenced me just because we've bounced work off each other for so long.

With Flickr being what it is, it's easy to only see it for the overriding nastiness. The popular photographs are like popular songs — easy to digest, "catchy" — but you really have to get involved to get anything out of the site.

*Comment by Nolan Smock — August 8, 2007 @ 1:24 am*

5. simple: flickr isn't there for great pictures.  
why if you produced a great body of work would you post it on flickr? what would be the point?  
who's eye would you be trying to attract?  
Is Martin Parr going to find it and think it is "quirky" and publish a book for you?  
flickr is for the masses with cameras. since when has the masses been interested in anything interesting?  
if you're interested in good photography, in good art, then you find it.  
if you're interested in celebrities, other peoples sexual preferences, been told what to think and look at a picture of a sunset rather than take the time to watch a sunset, then there's flickr.

*Comment by pj — August 8, 2007 @ 1:50 am*

6. Was she the skinny one or the fat one?

*Comment by Stan B. — August 8, 2007 @ 1:52 am*

7. sorry last comment is way too harsh. i take that back.

*Comment by pj — August 8, 2007 @ 1:54 am*

8. As Flickr is for the general public, and as you mention only the names of those famous photographers are recognized by "five persons in a quarter of a million" [is this a contradiction, how can they be famous if only a few know them]. This should tell you something about the probability to find a good photographer on Flickr I would say.

Bottom-line:

For good photos you simply have to look harder.

Here is mine for a starter:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/dutchphotography/>

Rgds, Martin M

*Comment by Martin M — August 8, 2007 @ 2:00 am*

9. Alec, thats so funny, your right on point again, (with what my friend Rob and I have been ranting about recently). I see alot of work that for the most part is garbage, but with tons of favorable responses. I don't get it.  
I think NS makes a good point though, one that Rob and I both realized, the analogy of lame pop music, there is definately a market shit quality.

*Comment by w robert angell — August 8, 2007 @ 2:03 am*

10. I like her work: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mika-rin/>

*Comment by Eugen Sakhnenko — August 8, 2007 @ 2:03 am*

11. As with most large communities there will be the tyranny of the majority. It reminds me of an old essay by Clement Greenberg, Avant-Garde and Kitsch. People like shit, they are brainwashed to do so. It is no different in painting (<http://www.thomaskinkade.com>) and music (<http://www.billboard.com>). If photography fame is insignificant in the US, don't let me start on

the European situation. I don't think there is one in a million over here that can name a photography superstar!

That being said, great photography is a matter of personal preferences and background. What's greatness? A photograph that perfectly communicates what the photographer wanted or a photography embraced by art critics and the art community? And as for fame, it is a double edged sword. Most likely fame will come as an overnight sensation only to shine you into obscurity when the new kid on the block arrives.

*Comment by Svein-Frode — August 8, 2007 @ 2:11 am*

12. I'm totally devastated. the great Stephen Shore has just passed judgment, and found me lacking in talent, ability and creativity. I suppose that I and all of the rest of the millions of Flickr members should put our cameras away in closets and delete all of our photos.

But wait a second! In his remarks he stresses that the average person doesn't even know the names of the most famous photographers of our time, and therefore its conceivable that more people know the names of some Flickr photographers than have heard of him. He draws a contrast between the lack of fame of renowned photographers and the media attention given celebrities. So he believes that Flickr photographers are celebrities too. OK, I feel so much better now. In the morning I'll start making some calls and line up some talk show appearances. Maybe if I come out as a lesbian I can get on the cover of TIME magazine as well. "Flickr Starlet Comes Out Of The Closet".

Please thank Stephen Shore for his inspiring message to all of us Flickrites.

*Comment by Lisanne Anderson — August 8, 2007 @ 2:12 am*

13. With all due respect to Mr. Shore, it's impossible for anyone to make an assessment of all of Flickr, or even most of it. It's not a single entity, there are all kinds of different communities using it in different ways. There's no doubt that it's consumer-oriented/hobbyist in nature, but there's great stuff to be found if you can ferret it out.

I don't personally participate in Groups or Pools, but I've worked with people via Hey, Hot Shot! who are deep into those communities and get a lot out of it – Ben Roberts, who was a Winter '07 Edition Hot Shot comes to mind. (Check out Ben on Flickr too.)

And speaking of Hey, Hot Shot – Naturally I'm biased, but the collection of Hey, Hot Shot! Sets on my stream is chock full of great pictures.

I use Flickr extensively for both the gallery and the competition... in part because it's easy to integrate into my blogs, but also because I enjoy my own little corner of the Flickr community. Also, there are a lot of people who use my Flickr stream as their main source of gallery news.

*Comment by Jen Bekman — August 8, 2007 @ 2:16 am*

14. What's everyone getting so worked up about?

The bulk of photography for about 60 odd years has been snapshots and throwaways, we just didn't have such wide access to those before.

Flickr just lets folks rummage through other people's shoeboxes. That's part of its appeal to me.

Some is more interesting than others, of course, but that's true of anything

*Comment by BartF — August 8, 2007 @ 2:18 am*

15. late night at Al's place, sure beats a night on the town.

*Comment by w robert angell — August 8, 2007 @ 2:23 am*

16. For my money I'd

try <http://flickr.com/photos/menlo/> href="http://flickr.com/photos/menlo/">this

*Comment by EVW — August 8, 2007 @ 2:24 am*

17. For my money I'd try <http://flickr.com/photos/menlo/>

*Comment by EVW — August 8, 2007 @ 2:25 am*

18. I don't think my photographs can be defined as shoebox material.

*Comment by Lisanne Anderson — August 8, 2007 @ 2:28 am*

19. For me the goal of flickr was to have an alternative way to learn about photography, instead of taking courses. I decided to try to find out what photography meant to me, and explore it more thoroughly..

I was also curious about the possibilities to learn from peers, a model we used to promote when I was a teacher in art school teaching interactive and game design.

Most of the time I have spent there I used to find out what I liked and didn't like about the photography of others, and I also gathered as much information as possible from other photography websites, set myself a few projects, read a lot of books, visited museums, and took a B&W course and learned to use the darkroom.

I agree on the rubbish and cliches, and I'm aware of the different types of flickr users. For me it was quite useful to find out what I didn't like and discover the reasons why.

In more than a years time I learned a lot, and I found some groups that are interesting enough for me to hang around, and I started curating some groups, digging up interesting stuff..

One of the most interesting aspects for me is the fact that flickr is a method of sticking to what I have called 'exploring photography in the spare time between work and family life'.

I have also been looking for other options, where more high quality stuff is available, and I would love to have an online version of the Magnum Workshops, and flickr could be considered an interesting platform..

*Comment by joost burger — August 8, 2007 @ 2:31 am*

20. where? in my flickr

portfolio: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/maciejdakowicz/sets/72157601136881084/>  
but you have probaly seen it already...

and HARDCORE STREET PHOTOGRAPHY group is a good place

*Comment by Maciej Dakowicz — August 8, 2007 @ 2:35 am*

21. It takes time and patience....

but there are good pictures on flicker. sometimes very good ones.

here are some example:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/63714921@N00/454608176/in/photostream/>





<http://www.flickr.com/photos/linascheynius/458946913/>



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/yeah-yeah-yeah/269181028/>



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/malll/286016211/>



*Comment by liz — August 8, 2007 @ 2:41 am*

22. There are photos on Flickr!?

*Comment by shhexycorin — August 8, 2007 @ 2:49 am*

23. I don't have any images on Flickr but it seems like a good way for people to get stuff online without going through the hassle/expense of sorting out your own web page.

However i've heard of a few occasions recently where friends who have images on Flickr have been approached by publishers to use their images, toting the whole "it will be good for your profile" line in lu of payment. I think it's pretty shoddy for people to use Flickr as a free photo library.

*Comment by Stuart Whipps — August 8, 2007 @ 2:56 am*

24. Flickr is for those 1/4 million people (not for the those 5 you mention). It's to share what you like. Like anyone who blogs is a journalist or great story writer. Nope. This is for the rest of us, who are not concerned about things and do not make living of it. Anyone who has few hundred bucks to buy a digicam or scan film is qualified and included. Thanks to flickr. For arty great pictures go to expensive galleries, openings or contemporary art museums :)) or subscribe to fancy

magazines

*Comment by Ozzy — August 8, 2007 @ 2:58 am*

25. "where are all the great pictures on flickr?"

Flickr is a mass appeal commercial site open to anyone in the world with an internet connection.

Thousands (tens of thousands? I forget, but the figure is staggering) of photos are uploaded every minute of every day, so it's no surprise that the gems are well hidden and hard to find, especially when the vast majority of members would not claim to be making art or even aspiring to it.

"My guess is that the best photography on Flickr is hard to find."

You don't say? What an insightful observation.

*Comment by Gil — August 8, 2007 @ 3:03 am*

26. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/supercommon/sets/72157601301195759/>

Most "pros" think posting on Flickr devalues their work, so they make little flash websites everybody hates. Most of the great photography on Flickr is an accident, and the photographer is often oblivious! What happens when digital cameras are everywhere.

*Comment by Taylor — August 8, 2007 @ 3:04 am*

27. well...stephen shore's reaction is a little ass headed in terms of what is expected of flickr.. it is as mass market as it gets... you dont go there looking for high art... (if you look hard enough you will find some real gems though) unless Alec Soth and Stephen SHore start uploading to flickr and

contribute to raising that standard!

*Comment by siddharth — August 8, 2007 @ 3:19 am*

28. Amateur hour:  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ericzieg/>

*Comment by Eric Z. — August 8, 2007 @ 3:30 am*

29. To slightly rehearse some of the arguments already mentioned on here, I'm not sure flickr is intended or suited to the display of 'great' photography. The entire format encourages superficial browsing, following link after link. It's a very different experience to the contemplative atmosphere of a gallery or an artist's photobook. If you're able to slow down a little and commit some time to flickr (luckily I have a job that allows this) you can find find some extraordinary work. You might have to spend some time clicking through to a larger size jpeg to get the full measure of the work, and even then you're a long way off a print . . . I like Stephen Shore but it wouldn't be so hard to click past this picture <http://www.henryart.org/ex/stephenshore.html> as a small jpeg on flickr, whereas in the gallery you're going to think twice. I think I've collected some interesting stuff (my favourites), 'though please don't judge me cos of the occasional boob shot. .  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/alexbynature/favorites/>

*Comment by Alex Edouard — August 8, 2007 @ 3:31 am*

30. I would second what Jen Bekman has said...

One approach is to find someone whose taste you appreciate and look at their favorites. (not so unlike, say, your favorite photo blog.) These are found on the scroll down tab from the user's icon at their photo stream.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/leastwanted/favorites/>  
[http://www.flickr.com/photos/mark\\_s/favorites/page2/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/mark_s/favorites/page2/)

The interface isn't great, the back button is too necessary.

There is an incredible amount of fascinating graphics being scanned as well. If you like that sort of thing, which I assume most photographers do. Searching tabs and sets all yield great stuff – and while I have a lot of photoblogs bookmarked (thanks to Alec's lead to Google reader) I also look at flickr maybe more as, no offense intended, there's more variety there. My interest in say, anonymous snapshots, has led to images that just won't be seen elsewhere.

But, of course, you'll never find the kind of commentary and intelligent writing or great photography as reliably that you see at the better photo blogs... – but it's fun, and there is great stuff there. A great photographer once said (long ago) that "one day the camera will be like the pencil." I think flickr has brought that day that much closer.

*Comment by mark s — August 8, 2007 @ 3:33 am*

31. "Nothing to do with price of fish" but I love W Robert Angells pics, as for flicker, or is it flicker,flec, feltcher, fl, fll.....

*Comment by Mark page — August 8, 2007 @ 3:37 am*

32. Some of my favorites:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/shadowtones/>  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/leveckis/>  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/10481997@N08/>  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/beniliam/>

*Comment by Anders — August 8, 2007 @ 3:39 am*

33. Good things here:

Maciej Dakowicz



Mark Alor Powell (Locaburg)







*Comment by Paul Russell — August 8, 2007 @ 3:40 am*

34. thanks Mark.

*Comment by w robert angell — August 8, 2007 @ 3:43 am*

35. There are some good things here.

Maciej Dakowicz



Mark Alor Powell (Locaburg)







(Sorry if this is posted several times – I keep getting a message telling me this is spam.)

*Comment by Paul Russell — August 8, 2007 @ 3:47 am*

36. @Lisanne Anderson: Your photos are indeed shoebox material. Just look at the amount of photos you publish, too much. There is no selection. And a picture of a random car on a random street? How very boring.

*Comment by Raul Mendes — August 8, 2007 @ 3:53 am*

37. The thing about flickr is this:-  
you actually have to participate to find the good stuff, otherwise its just pictures of flowers and puppies.....  
'last 7 days interesting' is a joke.....

If you wanna see some truely great flickr photographers,heres a few links to get you started:-  
(N.B. none of these are my pictures)

Clarice  
Velco  
Motionid  
Jim O'Connell  
John Gladdy  
Junku-newcleus  
Localman  
Zebrio

*Comment by Uchujin — August 8, 2007 @ 3:53 am*

38. okay, so i have to admit i also have a flickr-account...even a pro-one...but as i don't want to upload all of my pictures on my website but to show some anyway i use this method. furthermore it allows me to copy and paste the html-code for embedding photos in other sites...it's also quite practical if you have an idea and want to show it to your friends. sometimes it also helps me editing. and as i also don't see flickr as a professional platform i don't have to worry. it's a place for sketches as well as for photos i like and want to show.  
and i also enjoy discovering photography by other people because there is good photography, too...i don't mind if i just like 1 or 2 photos of a person and not his whole "body of work" cause sometimes it's inspiring somehow or you can learn something of it..  
also for me it's important to find out what pictures i like and why i like them...that all helps me to develop my own work...

it's like a 08/15 playground where you can be frustrated because you think it's all such an obviously silly waste of time or where you can try to find the plaything that you like or find out how to use the playground creatively to make it your own exciting playground and adventure of which you can get some experience..  
the use of it matters. it's you who can decide. so why be desperate?  
flickr was never meant to be a platform for professionals i think...it's somehow "democratic" at least.

*Comment by CHRISCHA — August 8, 2007 @ 3:55 am*

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[http://www.flickr.com/photos/clarice\\_e\\_simon/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/clarice_e_simon/)  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/velco/>  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/motionid/>  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jimoconnell/>  
[http://www.flickr.com/photos/john\\_adam-aka47/sets/72157594216142241/detail/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/john_adam-aka47/sets/72157594216142241/detail/)  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/junku-newcleus/>  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/localman/>  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/zebrio/>

*Comment by Uchujin — August 8, 2007 @ 3:56 am*

40. I don't really have any witty comment to preface this, and I am also drunk.

I'm sorry.

<http://flickr.com/photos/rickschneider>

*Comment by Rick Schneider — August 8, 2007 @ 4:00 am*

41. [http://www.flickr.com/photos/frederico\\_mendes/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/frederico_mendes/)  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/yuridojc/>

great photographers, great pictures on flickr

*Comment by Igor — August 8, 2007 @ 4:17 am*



42. I would agree that most of what is up there is not v good and that it isn't easy finding the good ones. Sort of like finding a needle in a haystack. One method I use to find them is to search for cameras or lenses likely to be used by more serious photographers.

And keep in mind that for more than a few, Flickr is a play area and the heavily edited, excellent, sets are on their personal web sites. Like Tiny Eyes below, Flickr seems to be the sole outlet for some, but even though he's playing, he knows what he's doing.

Here are some of my favourites:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/eamon/> – Eamon

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/leveckis/> – Ed

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/eshepard/> – Eliot

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mhartel/> – Markus

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/urbanphotos/> – Matt

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/nilsjorgensen/> – Nils

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/tinyeyes/> – Tiny Eyes

*Comment by Luke — August 8, 2007 @ 4:22 am*

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<http://www.flickr.com/photos/eamon/> – Eamon

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/mhartel/> – Markus

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/tinyeyes/> – Tiny Eyes

Tried pointing out seven but WordPress flagged my post as spam. So I'll try with three.

*Comment by Luke — August 8, 2007 @ 4:27 am*

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Tried pointing out seven but WordPress flagged my post as spam. So I'll try with two.

*Comment by Luke — August 8, 2007 @ 4:29 am*

45. Yup! it is hard to find... well harder than looking at the most popular groups or ones that flickr recommends!!

Squared Circle!!! The clue be in the name with that one

You just have to search for groups that you want, filter out the generic stuff (tulips, sunsets and HDR photography etc...)

But even then, when you find what I'd call "good groups" in the flickr world:

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/bringit/>

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/onthestreet/>

They just come across as a random collection of single images with little or no connection between the one sitting at either side of them in the pool. And this pretty much sums up the whole of the flickr experience!

It really is all about the one off images, and if it wasn't they'd have made it easier for people to share their projects/sets/collections.

*Comment by JD — August 8, 2007 @ 5:10 am*

46. flickr, with all of its tags, sets, groups, favourites and all the rest of its many sorting mechanisms allows for a kind of sprawling, day-to-day photography that would be otherwise impenetrable. the idea is that works are followed over time, integrate with the works of others, or are found via search.

while this might not align with the careful spoon-feeding of the gallery going experience, it should not be discounted. the problem with this post is that it assumes that the point of photography is "great photos", when in flickr many times greatness is found in the aggregation of many photos, not necessarily great 'individually' but part of a larger, valuable whole. for example, the point of 'squared circle' isn't the individual photo, it is the collected collective work.

flickr is about conversation. while conversations are incredibly valuable things, they tend to not make for "great" works of literature. think of flickr as a photographic conversation, rather than a series of profound statements, and it'll make a lot more sense.

*Comment by striatic — August 8, 2007 @ 5:14 am*

47. This is a great question. But I guessing this is more a rhetorical question. I'm thinking that you probably can't be pointed to the great ones on flickr – you have to discover them for yourself. Perhaps it will turn out to be the "popular" ones -but likely it is not – because it's up to you to decide. You have to put some effort into it to get anything out of it.

I am most drawn into the flow of Flickr ... you just can't step into the same stream twice (even feels that way in my own flickr stream). It has a certain unconsciousness about it which is quite nice – and mostly undigested even if it is tagged. It fits the amateur's environment in that one probably chooses to participate out of love for the exchange – but not for money – fame or fortune. Why does anyone strike up a conversation with a stranger after all ? Or put a message in a bottle?

My opinion is that you have to look – you have to seek out the things that interest you visually – these things are not served up like in traditional models (I'm thinking traditional here in the sense of being presented in a gallery / museum / institutional – "sanctioned greatness" sort of way).

The only filter is you and whether you might dwell a little longer and pursue the ones that you like and choose to ignore the ones that don't hold your interest.

*Comment by Matt Niebuhr — August 8, 2007 @ 5:23 am*

48. and also, don't forget about the porn.

*Comment by striatic — August 8, 2007 @ 5:26 am*

49. Alex, flickr reached critical mass some time ago, when I signed up late 2004, the gems were not buried so deeply, and compared to some other sites the interface was elegant and quick to learn, over time, I became more and more enamoured by the 'community' and these days my flickr experience has changed emphasis to something more social in an online gaming kind of way. Using other's contacts was one way of finding the gems a tasks that required a fair level of time and effort on my own part. Given that flickr has reached critical mass a task made all the more difficult, here's some of my favourites who I think are worthy of *\*some\** time.

<http://flickr.com/photos/ann3n3/sets/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/akiruna/sets/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/luisa/sets/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/baywhale/sets/>

*Comment by s2art — August 8, 2007 @ 5:37 am*

50. There are quite a few street portraitists, street photographers, some people attempting documentary and others succeeding at it. It's a huge melting pot. I wouldn't have never started medium format if I hadn't seen all the groups that are dedicated to it and show that anybody can do it. In a way is like when I needed to hear Nirvana to understand that I could also play guitar.

Of course flickr it's full of people shooting flowers and bugs, and uploading family snapshots... they are allowed to do it and use it as a gallery to refer to their friends. Others try to get involved into something more artistic and gradually might do something interested. As said before, just check Hardcore Street Photography for seeing a lively and reasonably well curated group. It is hard to find those people that shoot more seriously, mostly because they are few and edit more before uploading. You just can't find them by chance. And for coherent groups of work instead of single ('stunning') images it's even harder (Maciej's St Mary Street shots, Bedlam's panoramic street images, Hin Chua's corporate insider photography...).

*Comment by Joni Karanka — August 8, 2007 @ 5:50 am*

51. Maciej Dakowicz's Cardiff nightlife photos



*Comment by Paul Russell — August 8, 2007 @ 6:11 am*

52. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/macebio>

good stuff

*Comment by macebio — August 8, 2007 @ 6:15 am*

53. Alec created a quick set for you

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/danbandalee/sets/72157601304400053/>

And check out my favourites

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/danbandalee/favorites/>

Feargal Sharkey sang "a good heart these days is hard to find" and I agree with him but saying that I'm really happy with my wife if you get my drift.

*Comment by dan banda lee — August 8, 2007 @ 6:41 am*

54. Alec created this set for you

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/danbandalee/sets/72157601304400053/>

Feargal Sharkey sang a good heart these days is hard to find – this is true but I'm really happy with my wife so what the hell.

amour

dan

*Comment by dan banda lee — August 8, 2007 @ 6:45 am*

55. I have to recommend Todd Fisher's pictures:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/46498700@N00/>

Of course there's a lot of crap and pretense on flickr, but it's like picking through a pile of other people's pictures in the trash. Fascinating.

*Comment by ford — August 8, 2007 @ 6:53 am*

56. After a visit in Pisa in 2004, it made me realize how important it is for a tourist to make a picture of the tower, even if thousands of other tourists was becoming more important than the tower itself.

I then did some researches on Google Image and then Flickr on these "tourist symbols".  
I have to admit that I was like hypnotized.  
Just check by typing "eiffel"!

I agree in a way with Striatic that this is more about conversation. But conversation more than communication (communication would be very optimistic).

However, and with regards to this flow of pictures on Flickr, I would like to point out a sentence of Regis Durand in his book "Disparités":

"The image is not the reflection of a reality, it is it on the contrary which imposes a manner to us of reading the world, and thus, in a sense, which realises it"

("L'image n'est pas le reflet d'une réalité, c'est elle au contraire qui nous impose une manière de lire le monde, et donc, en un sens, qui le fait exister.")

(I apologize if translation is not 100% correct...)

Hereunder my essay on these picts:

[http://www.no-artist.com/corinnevionnet/my\\_album/photo\\_opportunities/index.htm](http://www.no-artist.com/corinnevionnet/my_album/photo_opportunities/index.htm)

and some explanations here :

[http://www.no-artist.com/corinnevionnet/my\\_album/myalbum\\_txt.htm](http://www.no-artist.com/corinnevionnet/my_album/myalbum_txt.htm)

*Comment by corinne — August 8, 2007 @ 7:11 am*

57. it helps me edit.

i really like my favorites, ive found plenty of good photographers there, most of them use it to edit too:

<http://flickr.com/photos/einarsodinecs/favorites/>

*Comment by einars o — August 8, 2007 @ 7:11 am*

58. look no further, as the gates open, the lights of heaven rain down, the chorus sing ahhhhhhh in a high pitch with harmonies:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/shveckle>

Just writting it gives me goose bumps.

*Comment by Lara Wechsler — August 8, 2007 @ 7:13 am*

59. HERE! <http://flickr.com/photos/quaketronics-tom/sets/72057594114240438/>

and don't worry, it's not just a link to some of mine

*Comment by Amy — August 8, 2007 @ 7:18 am*

60. it helps me edit, a nice place to throw stuff up and think about it for a while. i keep trying to edit my stream down to see where im going. i have also found a lot of good photographers (and lots of cute girls taking self portraits), as is evident in my favorites:

<http://flickr.com/photos/einarsodinecs/favorites/>

*Comment by einars odinecs — August 8, 2007 @ 7:21 am*

61. flickr needs a good edit

*Comment by JSB — August 8, 2007 @ 7:21 am*

62. i think lots of people use flickr to edit. i like it because i can throw things on there and think about them for a little. i always try to edit down my stream to see where im going.

i have found plenty of good photographers (and cute girls taking self portraits), which you can see in my favorites (<http://flickr.com/photos/einarsodinecs/favorites/>).

like others have mentioned, you find a photographer you like and then look at their favorites and you tend to find more you like...

(i tried to post before but got tagged as spam, so i actually registered with the site...)

*Comment by einolu — August 8, 2007 @ 7:33 am*

63. I came across this article today about using images on Flickr to fix your "bad" images, where is photography going if we can take a shot and then think it will be made good later???

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/6936444.stm>

*Comment by Chris Teasdale — August 8, 2007 @ 7:36 am*

64. [...] Sometime after midnight Minnesota time, Alec asked the question, "Where is the good stuff on flickr?" It is now 8:45am, and he has received 38 answers to his query, 39 if you count this one right here. Flickr is full of great stuff, it's just a matter of finding it. As a veteran Flickr user, I've found that the contacts and favorites of somebody decent are usually good places to start. It's true that you need to have at least one as a jumping off point, but if you've gotten yourself this far, well then you're pretty close. [...]

*Pingback by Greg Wasserstrom Blog » Blog Archive » Only the good shit — August 8, 2007 @ 7:45 am*

65. Chris: that must be great when combined with portraiture.

*Comment by Joni Karanka — August 8, 2007 @ 7:51 am*

66. I think people on this blog are giving Shore a pass. His opening sentence "I went on to Flickr and it was just thousands of pieces of shit, and I just couldn't believe it. And it's just all conventional, it's all cliches, it's just one visual convention after another." Stephen Shore" it just plain mean. It's rich coming from a photographer whose OWN work was thought of in the same way when it premiered in the late 60s and 70s. Not that I'm a huge fan of Flickr and would never be so crass as to flog my Flickr page, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/jmgiordano>, on this blog but to pick on the majority of the site is like walking into a suburban home and complaining about the Pink Lady and Blue Boy paintings on the wall. Steven please, DO not throw stones. And besides, like your work Mr. Shore, if the art community dubs it "great! genius!" than it must be. Surely you weren't talking, in your statement, about the numerous pictures of half eaten breakfast foods or motel TV sets?

67. >

The fact that there are very few household-name photographers shouldn't be a surprise to anyone. For the most part, photography is used as a highly effective medium for selling products and ideas rather than an end in itself. Most people experience photography through the print media, as advertising or editorial images, not as art on gallery walls. Thinking back to Semiotics 101, I am reminded that when images communicate effectively, the medium itself is transparent to the reader. I think that when people look through Annie Liebowitz's spread of Tom Cruise and Family in *Chatelaine*, they are consuming primarily the symbolic power of those images, which emphasize things like celebrity, family, wealth, beauty etc. The photography may be interesting in its own right, but it isn't the primary focus for the average reader and probably many people don't pay much attention to who the photographer is.

*Comment by derek h — August 8, 2007 @ 8:12 am*

68. I too have a flkr page <http://www.flickr.com/photos/8117812@N07/> I mainly put up stuff there that I want to use as stock and some things I'm just messing around with. It's nice to have a place to just throw up a bunch of stuff and see what sticks. Flickr is mostly crap but with a little work there is some good stuff there strobist has a nice page, I also like alot of this guys stuff <http://www.flickr.com/photos/walford/sets/72157600648444342/> he's an art history prof. I think most folks there don't care about art or commercial photography at all they just want a free place to put up pictures and learn a little about photography, if anything maybe they'll come to respect good photography more when they find out it's harder than they think it is. Lots of people getting together to talk about photography is a good thing even if they talk about crap. So far in just a couple months on flickr I've licensed a few photo's, for about the same as I would get from a stock agency so it's been good to me.

*Comment by doug mcgoldrick — August 8, 2007 @ 8:12 am*

69. You have to see Flickr for what it is. I think Stephen did himself and the art photo community a gigantic disservice with his comment. It's quite unbelievable.

Of course, if you go to Flickr you can't expect to find art-gallery quality photos all over the place (But then I do remember going to art galleries in Chelsea and thinking "Why are they showing this???"). That's really not what Flickr is for. But even if you were to assume that each and every photographer on Flickr wants to be an accomplished art photographer (obviously not the case), Stephen's comment is still quite bad.

In my day job, I sometimes work with students, and the number one thing to realize is that students don't know what someone who has worked in the field for a decade knows. If you don't realize this you're in the territory Stephen decided to pitch his tent in. It's the territory of professors beating down on their students for making simple mistakes (obviously forgetting that they themselves at some stage started out as a newbie).

I often get emails from people pointing me to their Flickr sites. And sure, often the photography is not that great. But why discourage people and tell them their work is just "pieces of shit"? For crying out loud, what's the point of that??? People feel the need to share their photos for a reason, for example to learn and to get feedback, and "pieces of shit" is not very useful feedback.

I remember when I started out photography, not that long ago, I took photos that now make me cringe when I look at them (even though I still like them for the thrill they gave me – exactly the thrill that kept me going). Who knows what I would have done if someone held told me they're all "pieces of shit" – given my personality I probably would have given up (and then started a blog dissing instead of promoting arrogant art professors).

What's the point of going around and dissing Flickr like that? I really don't get it! Here we have a huge community of people interested in photography, and for the first time modern technology

allows people to share their work and enthusiasm – across borders! Regardless of whether 90% of the photography there isn't what we like to see we should be glad that it exists and take it for what it is.

PS: Just to add that – lest people think I am now a huge Flickr fan – the complete opposite opinion, the hyping of Flickr that we've seen so much, is equally useless.

*Comment by JM Colberg — August 8, 2007 @ 8:32 am*

70. "I went to Manhattan and it was just thousands of idiots, I couldn't believe it. And it was just one intellectually challenged convention after another. I didn't meet one genius, just one moron and then another and then another." – Don Simon

*Comment by Don Simon — August 8, 2007 @ 8:34 am*

71. I also found this posted on lightstalkers, pretty amazing

<http://flickr.com/photos/70355737@N00/>

at the end of the day, flickr is a giant conglomeration of lots of personal photo albums. Most people use photography in quite a different way to photographers – most people use writing in a quite a different way to writers – their photos are a mental note, a reminder. The photos are about the subject, not about how the subject is photographed. Most of the subjects are uninteresting except to the photographer and most of the emotional content or ideas are basic and repeated infinitely and that's ok, because if most people were taking interesting pictures there would be no value in the work of professional photographers. With time they will seem a little more interesting. As a piece of social history they are incredibly valuable, even Pet Parade.

*Comment by Amy — August 8, 2007 @ 8:34 am*

72. Dude they are right here:  
<http://flickr.com/photos/akwells>

*Comment by Mark — August 8, 2007 @ 8:36 am*

73. This blog called Squint has a feature called Flickr Find and has some interesting stuff:

<http://www.jonahsamson.com/>

*Comment by Ofer — August 8, 2007 @ 8:51 am*

74. [...] However, the unabashed shaming of sites like istockphoto.com and flickr.com in the name of the cheapening of photography is a defensive reaction of those photographic elite who feel the market slipping away beneath them. [...]

*Pingback by Web Two Point Oh! » Blog Archive » Flickr and the photographic elite — August 8, 2007 @ 8:53 am*

75. I heartily agree with JM Colberg. The way I see it Flickr is kind of like going in to your local Barnes and Noble or mall bookstore. Most of the books on the shelves that get looked at or purchased are "how to" books or giant coffee table travel photo books. Those are the types of photo books ordinary people buy, and believe me I have received many of these books as gifts from well meaning relatives during the holidays. But occasionally these stores will have a book by Sally Mann or Cartier-Bresson or even Stephen Shore. You just have to look through all of the rubble to find a gem, and that's what makes Flickr interesting as far as I'm concerned. Stephen Shore's comment is extremely disappointing and makes him sound like an elitist jackass.



*Comment by chuck shacochis — August 8, 2007 @ 9:10 am*

76. Just one anecdote: there was a contest about street photography back in July 2007, sponsored by HP, whose 30 winners were chosen by no other than Stuart Franklin and exhibited in Arles. Out of these 30, at least 6 come from Flickr (I haven't checked them all, just people I know, but I'd bet there's more). You can check the discussion here: <http://www.flickr.com/groups/onthestreet/discuss/72157600410778146/>

So unless you discard the president of Magnum's judgement, there ARE good pictures on Flickr ! You just have to find them (and previous posters offered good advice on how to do that).

This being said, Flickr-bashing seems to be a popular sport in some "circles"...

*Comment by Hughes Leglise-Bataille — August 8, 2007 @ 9:48 am*

77. This post is interesting. Even though I love Eggleston, Shore, and many others in the same vein, when people start talking about "art quality" photos, I cringe. It seems to me that such talk is wrapped up in egos and maintaining an elitist community as much as anything else. Why do established "art" photographers feel the need to point out when someone else is an amateur? I'm in an odd position, because I really love many of the photos posted on this blog and other "art photography" blogs that I check out (Conscientious, Christian Patterson), but reading the comments often makes me feel sick.

I'm not sure how one becomes part of the inner circle of photographers that seems to develop around these questions, but it seems like many of the comments/discussions come around to deleniating who does/doesn't deserve to be taking photos. I realize Shore, Eggleston, others of their ilk were commenting on the history/conventions of photography when they did their "banal" work, but I also see an odd irony in them—like the Pop Artists—questioning the division between high/low art and then being so caught up in whether or not their work is sophisticated "art" rather pre-packaged consumer garbage. And at least Shore and Eggleston were doing something interesting, relatively new in the history of "art" photography. The path they helped to open is pretty well worn down by now, and many of today's photographers who are doing the similar things—even if those things engage in theory/tradition—are doing work that is just as "cliched" as a tourist taking a shot of the leaning tower of Pisa. Jus as it could be said—if you're a fan of Baudrillard and all the talk of simulacra—that the tourist isn't taking a photo of the tower itself, but a photo of a photo (the same shot found in other tourists shots/postcards), so many photographers aren't necessarily taking a shot of a banal red door or a cheap hot-dog lunch from a high-school fund-raiser, but an imitation Eggleston or Shore or whatever.

One of the things I get frustrated about in reading these posts, I guess, is the high-mindedness and the idea that anyone who isn't in some inner photography circle can't understand what makes a "good" photo or makes one "work" or some other vague criteria.

In any case, I apologize for the rant. I enjoy the blog, love many of your photos (and the photos you post), and the comments at least make me think. I suppose if I don't like the comments, I could stop reading them—just as those who don't like flickr or the thousands of subpar blogs could stop viewing them.

*Comment by anon — August 8, 2007 @ 9:48 am*

78. I realize i misspelled dilineated.

*Comment by anon — August 8, 2007 @ 9:49 am*

79. I've often debated in my head and with others about posting work on Flickr. Does Flickr cheapen the value of one's work? Does its context change the works intent? I've stopped asking those questions, because I've found Flickr to be a good tool to get others to see your work, maybe fine art galley's aren't perusing Flickr for their newest exhibitionist, but a whole different crowd is. I

think its best to display work cross platform. It seems that those with good taste or appreciation will find good work and those without will keep looking at a level of work they can appreciate.

*Comment by Andrew McComb — August 8, 2007 @ 9:50 am*

80. damn...i still misspelled it...delineated...there!

*Comment by anon — August 8, 2007 @ 9:53 am*

81. alec,  
do you ASK these old guys to comment about things like Photoshop and Flickr?  
It's likeprodding your elderly grandfather to say something un-PC!

*Comment by J.M. Giordano — August 8, 2007 @ 9:55 am*

82. It's funny I found Shore's comment a bit on the elitist side. Here he is snubbing a whole lot of people who are just trying to express themselves thru photography. Instead of deriding these people who have picked up cameras and started photographing the world around them, maybe you should be praising them for at least trying to flex their creative muscles. Maybe they don't have the outlet to get their own fancy flash photography website(I personally hate those flash sites) or they don't have the outlet/opportunity/time/contacts to persue getting their work into musuems/galleries. So flickr is the easiest choice to get their photos out their for people to see.

Yes I will be the first to admit that there are lots of bad photos on flickr. I personally hate all the pictures of cats, sunsets and people's photos of their 3rd cousin's birthday parties. I can also say that I've been to lots of galleries and often left scratching my head wondering why the stuff was being shown. Just because it's in a gallery/museum doesn't mean that it's any good and does the fact that it's in a gallery/museum automatically make it art. Duchamp dealt with these questions long ago.

Too make a long comment short, if you searched long enough on flickr I personally believe that you will find some pretty amazing photos and dare I say museum/gallery quality photos.

In full disclosure, I'm a flickr member and do have photos on flickr. I don't post every single photo I take on flickr I do try to edit down to the best or at least what I think the best are.

*Comment by mike moreno — August 8, 2007 @ 9:56 am*

83. cool, my comment is gone...that makes blogs like this seem even more elitist.

*Comment by anon — August 8, 2007 @ 9:57 am*

84. I wonder how Stephen Shore feels about photographers who hang their work in their local coffee shop?

*Comment by mike moreno — August 8, 2007 @ 9:58 am*

85. I learned about Alec Soth on flickr via through another flickerite/aspiring art photographer. I still have a flickr account but it's more of a sketchbook for me..a place to throw things on the wall and see what sticks so to speak. But I feel I've outgrown it a bit. I'm now looking to start up my own website and produce a book at some point. So flickr was valuable for me, introducing me to many of the fine art shooters who participate in this blog (Shane Lavalette for example...Richard Renaldi is on flickr now also).

*Comment by patrick romero — August 8, 2007 @ 10:00 am*

86. it's back...a glitch on my computer. i apologize.

*Comment by anon — August 8, 2007 @ 10:03 am*

87. Shore is scared of Flickr because Mundane Suburban Neighborhood Shots with Partially Cropped Cars is a threat.

*Comment by Joe Reifer — August 8, 2007 @ 10:03 am*

88. This discussion reminds me the old debate "journalism vs. blog". There's an infinite number of blogs online and only few are worth reading but that doesn't mean that blogs sucks altogether. But really, i think we shouldn't take mr Shore too seriously, he have probably just spent 5 minutes on flickr browsing through random pictures and then he came out with that.

*Comment by sirio magnabosco — August 8, 2007 @ 10:03 am*

89. I like Paul Herbst: [http://www.flickr.com/photos/paul\\_herbst/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/paul_herbst/)  
Check out his site also: <http://my-dream-is-the-awakening.net>

*Comment by Monica Thou — August 8, 2007 @ 10:22 am*

90. Joe Reifer hits the nail on the head.  
As a photographer pick any style, any subject, any idea and search around on Flickr and someone is doing it or has done it. It can be quite dis-heartening when you're just starting out.  
The reason "art" photogs don't put their stuff up on flickr is cos it will just get lost in amongst all the others.  
One has to maintain an elitist attitude to be one of the elite. No?

*Comment by ajmiller — August 8, 2007 @ 10:23 am*

91. Carey has a blog that is full of interesting flickr pictures:

<http://bluebirdphotography.blogspot.com/>

I think she spends hours digging around for them.

*Comment by catharine — August 8, 2007 @ 10:28 am*

92. there may be a few not yet mentioned. (though it is funny how even the hidden gems are more well known than you expect)

<http://flickr.com/photos/francoiscoquerel/>

<http://flickr.com/photos/hinius/>

finding the right groups, bouncing of other (respected) people's favorites and contacts. i usually find a few new great photos everyday. sometimes from new photographers sometimes new posts from people i've already marked.

*Comment by Andres — August 8, 2007 @ 10:42 am*

93. Street photography: <http://flickr.com/groups/onthestreet/>

<http://flickr.com/photos/shestrikesback/>

<http://flickr.com/photos/raoul/>

<http://flickr.com/photos/hinius/>

Alec: you might recognize James Wendall....he works at magnum.

<http://flickr.com/photos/79119242@N00/>

*Comment by bryanF — August 8, 2007 @ 10:43 am*

94. The whole debate about flickr seems rather silly. If artists post art on flickr, there will be art (some do post there, your buddies Zoe Strauss and Brian Ulrich for example). But as most people are not artists most of the images on flickr are snapshots and art is rarely created by accident. (It is also not created by the vast majority of people who try to create it.)

Just because someone creates a group for photos of turtles or circles in squares doesn't mean that those people are claiming their photos are art... they're just having fun. Playing games. Folk culture. Not much different than the types of games/clubs/groups people join in the real world except for the scope and scale and ability to become micro-focused.

The only issue I believe is if you happen to be an artist who wants to display serious work as well posting snapshots for friends/family/etc. The art world hates to think that their artists ever make anything that is not art. The overriding belief is that somehow if you post snapshots it devalues your serious work. But perhaps these crusty old ideas are finally being shattered (by people like yourself, an esteemed artist, who posts to something as base as a blog (Horrors!)).

The solution is simple. Create one login for serious work and post portfolios in a contextually organized way and create another one for snapshots perhaps under a pseudonym. This way the high and mighty art community won't get confused.

As for photography I follow on flickr: I'm a huge Mark Powell fan. He never fails to delight:  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/locaburg/sets/>

Eliot Shepard also always has something interesting going on:  
<http://flickr.com/photos/eshepard/sets/>

and the previously mentioned AKWells has a super portfolio almost raw in it's intimacy:  
<http://flickr.com/photos/akwells>

There are plenty of others but I won't bore you because taste is always subjective (I hate most of the other links posted so far)... As people have mentioned the best way to find interesting photos on flickr is to find one or two people who's images you like and look at their favorites and then let that lead you to other favorites and so on eventually you find yourself beyond the dross with a list of contacts whose photos you look forward to seeing. I check into flickr once or twice a week and have to say I love what it gives me back- a chance to look at work in progress, a peek into the lives of people more fabulous or strange or boring than myself, and, more often than I ever would have thought, a picture that just blows me away.

*Comment by Erika C — August 8, 2007 @ 10:45 am*

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*Comment by Erika Cho — August 8, 2007 @ 10:47 am*

96. I have a problem with Alex's statement about good photography not being popular. All of us with eyes and brains can point our fingers and say "look at that." The kind of visceral communication a really good photograph serves up in all its complexity and revelations has something for almost everyone willing to look. Most folks haven't been lucky enough to sit in a History of Photography class and actually see for the first time amazing Timothy O'Sullivan wet plates or Robert Frank's trip accross America. Many students become immediate fans with educated palates. It's sort of like running. Almost anyone can do it.....even without the good form and expensive sneakers.

Flicker, on the other hand, is a mess generated by the facility and democracy of the internet. Hardly anyone serious about their work has the time or interest in adding to that cyclone. Hopefully they're too busy photographing.

*Comment by peggy nolan — August 8, 2007 @ 10:58 am*



97.

*Comment by Dana — August 8, 2007 @ 11:07 am*

98. I admit that my first reaction to Flickr one year ago was the same as Stephen Shore's. If you take all of the photographs of Flickr, and rank them from 1 to 10, the average score is probably close to 2 or 3.

That was mistake. The thing with Flickr is that there are so many photographs out there, you really need to figure out how to find the jewels. I learned to do it through identifying specific photographers ("Contacts", in Flickr-speak), and then looking through the Contacts list of those photographers. Eventually, you learn to build up a list of high-quality photographers in your Contacts list.

Or, if you're impatient, just look at the photographs that users have ranked as most interesting (<http://www.flickr.com/explore/interesting/7days/>). It's time to admit that the contents of Flickr's interestingness page is probably better than many of the photographs in the expensive coffee table books that line the Photography shelf of most local libraries.

Andy Frazer

*Comment by Andy Frazer — August 8, 2007 @ 11:10 am*

99. I disagree. The amount of amazing photographers on Flickr is the reason I'm on Flickr. Just look at a few of my favourites.

People find what they're looking for.

-g

*Comment by Cordelia — August 8, 2007 @ 11:11 am*

100. Flickr is so massive right now that judging pictures on flickr is like judging pictures on the internet. There's no way to get a sense of it in one visit. That said, I wouldn't send anyone looking for the good stuff to the interestingness pages. There are gems among them but so much of what makes explore (and I say this as someone with his share of pix in explore) is overprocessed and cliched.

*Comment by pat — August 8, 2007 @ 11:28 am*

101. as for Shore's quote, my friend said it best,

"Why are all these people ripping me off?"

( Im thinking more along the american surfaces book)

*Comment by jaime — August 8, 2007 @ 11:35 am*

102. First of all, Flickr is world wide, which means if my sister lives in South Africa, and I live in Seattle, WA, we can share photos, and I suspect a lot of people use Flickr for sharing photos with their families and friends who live far away.  
Second, what are you searching for? If you search "Sunsets", you'll get sunsets, all 2,027,238 photos of them. Kitten photos? There's 339,744 kitten photos as of 9:26 a.m. August 8, PST. Look up Urban Exploration and you get 54,297 pictures of abandoned houses, offices, amusement parks, schools....etc.

It just depends on what you're looking for.

Here's some of my contacts, who I consider excellent photographers.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/bamawester/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/cindy47452/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/cybergibbons/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/upyerbum/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/leonarloforbes/>

[http://www.flickr.com/photos/epiphany\\_5riots/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/epiphany_5riots/)

[http://www.flickr.com/photos/heather\\_shade/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/heather_shade/)

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jimtown/>

It all depends on what you are looking for, and for whom it's meant.

*Comment by KayCee Connell — August 8, 2007 @ 11:35 am*

103. "Hardly anyone serious about their work has the time or interest in adding to that cyclone. Hopefully they're too busy photographing."

so naive. having a flickr account is like opening up your studio to the world. people can watch your work progress and evolve. that's the fun part. watching people improve while they share and make friends.

last weekend in my living room in West Hollywood was a photographer from France, one from Brazil and guy from Arizona who works in Seoul. We all met on Flickr and are all insanely passionate about our work.

That's what it's about....

*Comment by bryanF — August 8, 2007 @ 11:41 am*

104. >

If we're talking about the mass market appeal of photography... It would be hard for photographs and photography to be popular in and of themselves because a mass audience cannot look at a photograph as anything but the referent of the object depicted in it, right? And Bill Jay wants to compare photographers to celebrities...but celebrities themselves are famous because of their

images...images created by photographers and their bosses in order to sell celebrity like a product through the means of photographic reproduction...

Given that, the negative tone of all of this discourse confuses me. Why sound angry that a mass audience is more eager to be titillated by Ellen Degeneres' queerness/otherness than they are eager to seek out and view Witkin's photos of corpses??? Of course they are. Similarly, why hate on Flickr because you expect it to be a democratic bastion of high art?

Personally, I think Bill Jay's rant is a little weird and also kinda homophobic (having read the rest of the PDF). I'll leave the pursuit of "beauty, goodness, and truth" to him since I'm not so sure they're real.

*Comment by lexi — August 8, 2007 @ 11:45 am*

105. The challenge of photography is that anyone can take a great photograph at some point, However, the real challenge is producing a lot of photos, having something to say, communicating a vision of the world and editing a coherent body of work made up of excellent photographs. Most can't do this and that is why we continually look at the work of the greats. It is possible that anyone of us could have taken one of R. Frank's photos from THE AMERICANS, but none of us could have taken them all and put them together like Frank.

Taking a great picture is easy – whether through luck, skill or happenstance – but making meaningful and powerful work is very, very hard – which is why there are so few amazing photographers.

*Comment by ANON — August 8, 2007 @ 11:48 am*

106. Here's a Flickr group for those websites.

[http://flickr.com/groups/steven\\_shores\\_vault/](http://flickr.com/groups/steven_shores_vault/)

*Comment by EVW — August 8, 2007 @ 11:49 am*

107. Right on bryanF. I think you are right. The people you meet. That is the best reason to be on flickr.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/bform/1039641947/>

*Comment by J. Wendell (eyeblick) — August 8, 2007 @ 12:22 pm*

108. I use two tools to find better photography on flickr:

1. Specialty groups – these are mainly equipment/film groups. The large format photography group <http://flickr.com/groups/largeformat/> and the Portra group <http://flickr.com/groups/portra/> are my 2 main go-tos. I figure it like this: people who care enough to shoot large format, or know what make of film they're shooting, are usually interested enough in photography for their work to be above average.

2. When I find a photographer who's work I like, I go through their favorites to find other photographers... and the favorites of those photographers and so on. A lot of great, low view/favorite stuff can be found this way. It's using people as an aggregator.

Personally, I find interestingness to be horrible. Ugly, garish, HDRed images. Sharp pictures of fuzzy concepts abound.

Oh yeah, plug for my stuff: <http://flickr.com/jedrek/>



*Comment by jedrek — August 8, 2007 @ 12:23 pm*

109. It may be difficult to find "great" fine art photos on Flickr, but it's not hard to find examples of very talented amateurs who photograph what's around them (family, friends, etc.) with great passion and skill.

Like anything, it takes some time, and luck, to find the best of something. Two photographers who take beautiful, warm, unpretentious pictures are;

Bud Green [http://www.flickr.com/people/bud\\_green](http://www.flickr.com/people/bud_green)

Salty Grease <http://www.flickr.com/6761959@N00>

Perhaps you'll never find their images on a gallery wall, but I doubt you'll find more wonderful photos anywhere else. Treasures they are.

Eric Godfrey

*Comment by Eric Godfrey — August 8, 2007 @ 12:28 pm*

110. Personally....i love this guy's work: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mrhide/>

*Comment by ANDREW PARR — August 8, 2007 @ 12:37 pm*

111. Whoa, what an odd generalization... As Jen Bekman points out, Flickr is a lot of different things for a lot of different people. You'll find everything from professional photographers to perverts to peripatetic personal... um, ok you know what I mean!

But back to the "great photograph", one of those still-scary truths about photography is that someone – anyone – could even accidentally make a great photo (as Sontag pointed out ages ago.) At this point Flickr is close to a microcosm of Photography in General. It's almost the same as asking to look at every photograph printed on October 8, 1986 (or whatever) and wondering where the great ones are... "Art" photography, of course, is included – though it shouldn't hold a monopoly on Greatness – but is a very small percentage of the work done that day, I'm sure. You will be exhausted, but if you looked at every picture, you'd find greatness somewhere.

But that's not the point. I, for one, have used it to post purely "hobbyist" pictures in total contrast to my own studio work, and it's actually opened up the ways I see with a camera, un-sticking me from the limits of my artistic practice. Flickr (and it's predecessor, for me, fotolog) has been more than anything about community, friendly support, and a deep appreciation for Photography in its largest sense. I post pictures of my cats, my friends, and things that interest me as I walk around town. I now have friends from all over the world, quite a few of whom I've now met, and a greater sense of the joy of Simply Taking Pictures . It's certainly better than when I took myself way too seriously, shooting only with 8x10 and ending up with no pictures of my own birthdays...

*Comment by Dan Estabrook — August 8, 2007 @ 12:49 pm*

112. i don't personally know stephen shore, but i have been influenced by his work. i am wondering why he even cares what's on flickr why he would expect it to be anything more than it is. it is not my opinion, but some would say that ALL photography today is cliché and unoriginal. what makes a photograph of a parking lot circa 1970-something more interesting than some of the photographs found on flickr. my experience is that i have seen photographs at galleries that i think are crap, and then some that i think are brilliant – the same for flickr. you just have to find them.

has he looked at his fan groups? i'm sure he hurt their feelings:

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/32124325@N00/>

[http://www.flickr.com/groups/stephen\\_shore/](http://www.flickr.com/groups/stephen_shore/)

*Comment by B.B. — August 8, 2007 @ 12:51 pm*

113. My Favorite:



I found this guy on Flickr, then he deleted most of his stuff. His new website is eye-popping  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jeremycowart/>

*Comment by Paul McEvoy — August 8, 2007 @ 12:52 pm*

114. my bookmarks

*Comment by ES — August 8, 2007 @ 12:57 pm*

115. the notion that there are no good pictures on flickr is ridiculous.

additionally, people (like me) learn things about photography on flickr. Not only are there a gazillion amazing shots on flickr, it's a serious tool for improving peoples' skills.

*Comment by Klongloff — August 8, 2007 @ 12:58 pm*

116. "I went on to Flickr and it was just thousands of pieces of shit, and I just couldn't believe it."

What an amazing talent. Stephen Shore was able to look at every last photo on Flickr and pass holy judgment. Since we all suck, we should just quit so as not to offend Professor Shore's sensitive eyes?

"My guess is that the best photography on Flickr is hard to find."

Uh, yeah. That's why it's so easy to dismiss Professor Shore's remark for the effete, academic grandstanding that it is.

A couple of these have already been cited. And while my photography may be the shit on Stephen Shore's well-worn brogues, I do have my advocates, so I've tacked my Flickr pool on the end.

<http://flickr.com/photos/locaburg/>  
<http://flickr.com/photos/nilsjorgensen/>  
<http://flickr.com/photos/ottok/>  
<http://flickr.com/photos/skorj/>  
<http://flickr.com/photos/badaud/>

Of course there are vast seas of photography on Flickr that are far from Bard- or Magnum-worthy. But there is also a significant collection of snaps that are far more interesting than that same photograph Annie Leibowitz has been shooting for years.

*Comment by Robert Schneider — August 8, 2007 @ 1:11 pm*

117. Oh yeah, and what Jen Bekman said.

*Comment by Robert Schneider — August 8, 2007 @ 1:18 pm*

118. Flickr proves what many of us have suspected: A million people banging away on a million cameras will produce a few images that everyone agrees (including probably Mr. Shore if shown the images) are great and many that are of interest to a very small group of people (your mom).

*Comment by Rob Haggart — August 8, 2007 @ 1:19 pm*

119. Hey what's wrong with that, Rob? Shore gets his "greatness", and my Mom is happy too...!

*Comment by Dan Estabrook — August 8, 2007 @ 1:23 pm*

120. For those used to exploring smaller collections of printed photographs, carefully selected by artists/dealers and magazine and book editors, flickr is going to be a shock. It's a vast collection of photos that random users edit themselves that you yourself have to sift through, using a web social network interface inside a computer operating interface. It probably seems like a savage experience. And it certainly takes a lot more energy and time.

*Comment by Wayne — August 8, 2007 @ 1:29 pm*

121. Is this what it's like to be the curator at a gallery that just asked for submissions?

*Comment by Walker — August 8, 2007 @ 1:36 pm*

122. 120!

120!

120!

Am I commenter number 120?

*Comment by Christian — August 8, 2007 @ 1:42 pm*

123. i think this thread proves that there are interesting people on flickr making interesting photographs.

i'd much rather spend my time on Flickr than the Magnum site because there's a constant influx of NEW content on Flickr, which is also interactive. The Magnum site is rather static other than the blog and in-motion stuff...

*Comment by bryanF — August 8, 2007 @ 1:49 pm*

124. Hey, also the pick of the litter, some of my favorite photos and street photogs all assembled here in one place:

<http://www.flickr.com/groups/455346@N23/pool/>

It has just started, but keep checking back its genius will only grow:

*Comment by Lara Wechsler — August 8, 2007 @ 2:05 pm*

125. Snore: More Flickr Photos for Shore to Ignore

<http://2point8.whileseated.org/?p=240>

(Thanks for the link in there, Alec)

*Comment by MDM — August 8, 2007 @ 2:06 pm*

126. There are certainly plenty of great images on Flickr – and what about the Tate Britain's recent collaboration with the Flickr community?

"For the first time, Tate Britain invited members of the public to contribute to the content of an exhibition. How We Are: Photographing Britain takes a unique look at the journey of British photography, from the pioneers of the early medium to today's photographers who use new technology to make and display their imagery. Members of the public were encouraged to submit a photograph to the exhibition via the How We Are Now Flickr group to illustrate one of the four themes of the exhibition: portrait, landscape, still life or documentary.

40 photographs from those submitted – 10 from each of the four themes – have been chosen to form the final display in the gallery from 6 August – 2 September 2007."

<http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/howweare/slideshow.shtm>

*Comment by Andy Adams — August 8, 2007 @ 2:10 pm*

127. This seems to be an interesting line of conversation, Funny how these patterns of thought seem to emerge at the same time. There is a similar thread running on Pelicula 64. Flickr vs old guard using Crewdson not Shore as it source.

<http://pelicula64.blogspot.com/2007/08/visionary.html>

*Comment by Feejee — August 8, 2007 @ 2:21 pm*

128. Alec, what is the source of the Stephen Shore quote? Just curious about the context.

*Comment by Mike — August 8, 2007 @ 2:52 pm*

129. What is the difference between images shown on gallery and museum walls and pages of Flickr? Context. Shore is looking for images that speak to the language of Art. Images that are usually made with a self-awareness of canonical images made by previous generations and/or nods to contemporary practitioners who function in the same context. Bemoaning Flickr's lack of quality is to miss the point and is kinda like chastising your mother for not making any "great" pictures of you when you were growing up.

I use Flickr as a tool to share images of my family with friends and relations who live far and wide. Some of my "Art" photos and Flickr photos are one and the same; the difference is the context and the edit in which they are shown. When I show images in an art context, they are meant to pose a question, subvert a convention, or add to a dialog of image-making past and present. Anything less would be cliché. I don't ask these questions of Flickr, (although I think is possible for others to do so as evidenced by the many links provided in the comments).

*Comment by Barry Stone — August 8, 2007 @ 3:04 pm*

130. oh man.

*Comment by kevin — August 8, 2007 @ 3:35 pm*

131. what Andy L says–

Flickr is all about 'Popular Photography' and camera club aesthetics. Popular Photography by nature centers on escapism and technical proficiency. The people who practice and enjoy it are looking to be taken to a dreamworld where they can forget about real life. The 'bright and shiny' predominates, especially with the advent of Photoshop – we are witnessing the 'Pimping' of photography. These images are meant to go no further than the back of the retina.

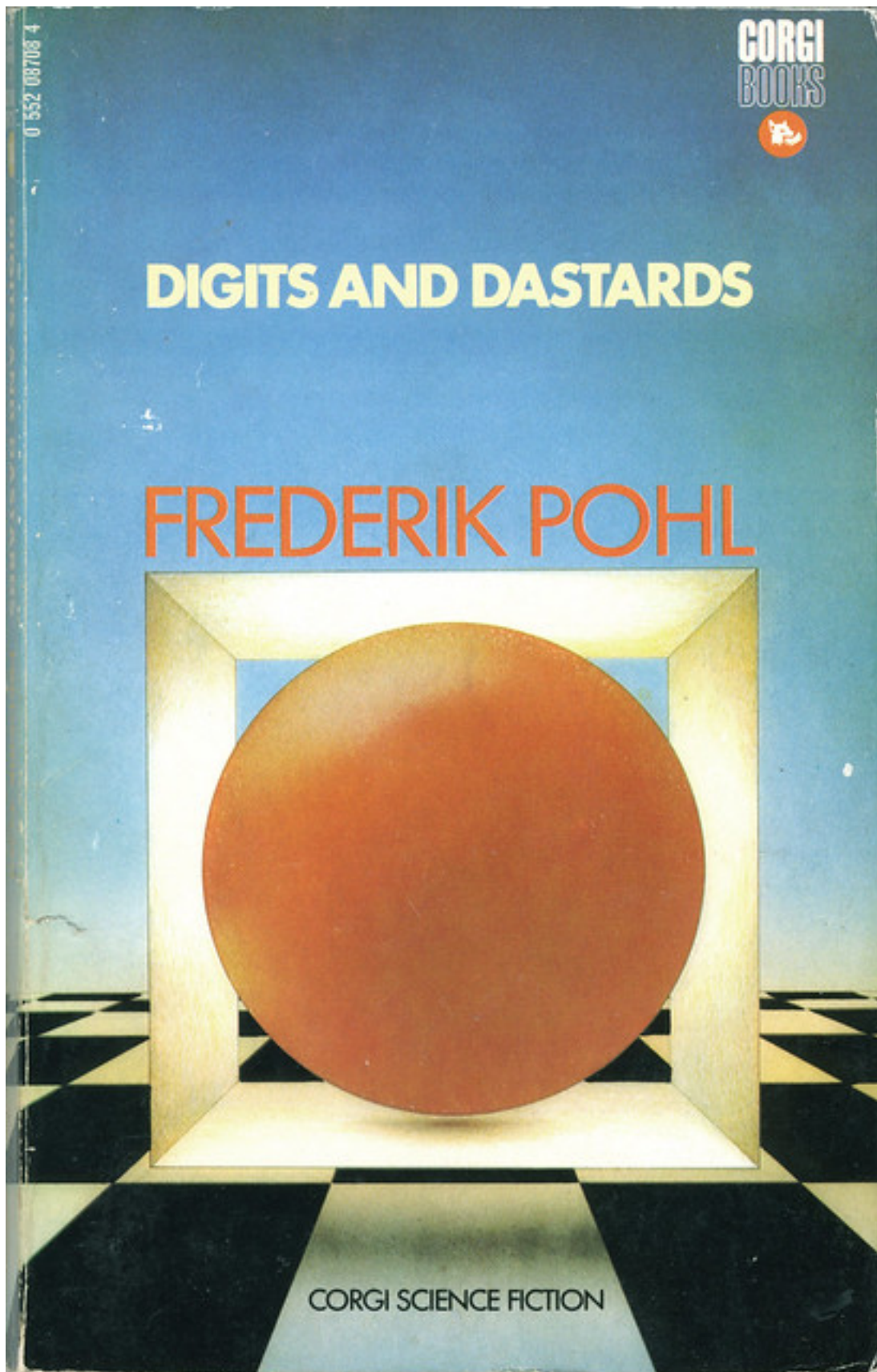
Art photography, by and large, is about examining the world, rather than trying to escape from it. It is meant to be taken deep into the brain. This takes work on the part of the viewer.

–is itself a cliché and a pat response. Like any cliché, it may include some truth, but that doesn't mean that it isn't an immediate way of responding, disposing of something. Not all flickr photography is escapism, and not all photography that gets displayed in galleries examines the world/raises questions.

*Comment by anon — August 8, 2007 @ 3:38 pm*

132. Alec,

repartee:



*Comment by mark s — August 8, 2007 @ 3:43 pm*

133. Andy L said: "Flickr is all about 'Popular Photography' and camera club aesthetics."

i suppose one could say 'fine art photography' is all about elitism and pretension, but a thoughtful person wouldn't make such sweeping generalizations.

again, look at this thread. Alec is at the top of the fine art photography mountain. he posts a thread about flickr and suddenly there 125+ comments and an active discussion going on. do you think the flickr crowd just stumbled upon this blog by randomly googling flickr?

*Comment by bryanF — August 8, 2007 @ 3:45 pm*

134. I agree, most of Flickr is crap. I find that the Face Time group has some of the better images on Flickr (<http://www.flickr.com/groups/facetime/pool/>). They don't just take every photo of a cat someone decides to post. They must have standards, after all they don't accept many of my

pictures... as they say, I wouldn't want to belong to any club that takes me as a member.

*Comment by Jeff Singer — August 8, 2007 @ 3:49 pm*

135. I love Flickr. I don't look for great photos necessarily, but the sheer mass of it makes a great research tool. i remember someone pointing out that if you wanted to see if the spiral jetty was visible or not you can just search it on flickr. Also, for me it is like a blog, but more personal – it makes me think about what in my life i keep private and what i am compelled to make public. Also i am not really attracted to social networking sites, but i have met a lot of people through Flickr, in real life, which has been a nice perk for me since i moved to another country. Photography is totally connected to what i do as a painter, but i have never considered myself a photographer. Flickr reflects my ideas about this relationship but also helps give me a clearer picture of how my ideas about this relate to my world view.

*Comment by Lisa — August 8, 2007 @ 3:57 pm*

136. my stuff's on it so yes there are some great pictures on Flickr. i also like <http://www.flickr.com/photos/dirtyday/> and <http://www.flickr.com/photos/hansilinderoth/> ...among others.

*Comment by j zorn — August 8, 2007 @ 4:01 pm*

137. Mr Shore's early mentor was Andy Warhol; and he would hang out in the Factory doing groovy things. Perhaps, now as a teacher he has lost the ability to laugh at the popular culture of the world. My old Father used to say if you don't have anything nice to say don't say anything at all and although I try to practice that advice I don't always succeed.

*Comment by Edward McCann — August 8, 2007 @ 4:13 pm*

138. I enjoy your blog and work...I often hold my comments for those more knowledgeable about the medium, but thought this might be a subject I know pretty well relative to the crowd that reads the blog.

Sometimes, it's fun to share your shit. That's how I use flicker. Also, there is an incentive to mark other people's shitty pictures a favorite when they mark your shitty pictures a favorite. Eye candy rules over content or meaning. Effects rule over purpose. Speed and convenience rule over thoughtful process and projects.

I've heard of the mentioned photographers and have seen their work. I know better, but I still share shitty images freely (sometimes randomly) on flickr that I would not show in a 'fine art' context — because it's fun. I also seek out shitty pictures of others. Maybe, I am more of the masses.

I also have an interest for new local shitty pictures and goings on that is best queched by obsessive compulsive consumption of Flickr. It's much like the advertising and buying process of

TV and collateral: desire, consumption, partial empty fulfillment, with more desperate longing for something better – something to make you feel better. I'm thinking of the Target slogan: a little bit more, a little bit more. The dancing sexy faces that do nothing to illustrate the product, but make you want it – want the quest for empty perfection like a gape. It's about sexyness and emptiness of the eye candy and look for more or better eye candy that is sort of like the search when looking for online porn that can never be completely fulfilled by the medium. Not that you'd find actual porn on flickr, as they are noted for their policies of censorship and default stance of filtering all ruddish brown nozzles, removing the nozzles from those not crafty enough to find them.

Now, here's some interesting shit that I found there:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/tetheredto/521689378/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jenaardell/540500909/>



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/tetheredto/865266440/>







<http://www.flickr.com/photos/charleskang/366220074/>











<http://www.flickr.com/photos/tetheredto/437515022/>



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/tetheredto/410312243/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/tetheredto/486634094/>



*Comment by Randy Douglas — August 8, 2007 @ 4:20 pm*

139. hate to add more to the longest thread ever.....but here is an interesting project of an exhibition made out of flickr self-portrait images at PACE/MACGILL Gallery

it is called "selfportraitr"

[http://www.pacemacgill.com/exhibitions\\_flickr06.php](http://www.pacemacgill.com/exhibitions_flickr06.php)

Rather than being about the images per se, it uses the framework of flickr and its networking-web 2.0 potential as the source for the art.

*Comment by Adam — August 8, 2007 @ 4:20 pm*

140. 220!

220!

220!

am i commenter 220?

*Comment by William Greiner — August 8, 2007 @ 4:24 pm*

141. Interesting to see that the opening picture of this post is MINE. The poster should have had the decency to ask or send a mail. It was pointed out by somebody else, thanks for that. Maybe the poster would do good to understand two things:

1. Check out some of the other pictures in my stream and react to these
2. This picture is a special one as pointed out and only a strange addiction to the squared circle group.

Nice though that this post is giving me so many views LOL

Oh, you can find many interesting techniques, pictures, subjects, people etc on flickr

Regards to all!

waterwin

*Comment by waterwin — August 8, 2007 @ 4:28 pm*

142. wake me when it reaches 420

*Comment by J. Wendell (eyeblick) — August 8, 2007 @ 4:41 pm*

143. It's interesting how many comments this post is getting. Someone mentioned that Andy Warhol was an early mentor of Stephen Shore (actually have one of those early Shore photos of Andy Warhol himself). I wonder what Mr. Andy Warhol would make of all this. Of flickr, YouTube and the internet in general? Essential has his idea that everyone will get their 15 minutes of fame come true. Would Andy himself use Flickr to post his party photos?

Yes I'm on flickr too!





*Comment by mike — August 8, 2007 @ 4:46 pm*

144. a couple more: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/junku-newcleus/> and <http://www.flickr.com/photos/holga-art/>.

*Comment by j zorn — August 8, 2007 @ 4:54 pm*

145. and since Mr. Shore hates Flickr i'm sure he would really, really hate Polanoid.net.

*Comment by j zorn — August 8, 2007 @ 5:06 pm*

146. maybe flickr is the democratic forest for presenters and viewers?

*Comment by William Greiner — August 8, 2007 @ 5:08 pm*

147. If you browse for long enough, you can come across some literature that would make Sam Beckett proud:  
<http://flickr.com/groups/portra/discuss/72157594283686771///>  
or should that be flickrature?

*Comment by christoph — August 8, 2007 @ 5:17 pm*

148. Flickr is absolute fucking genius. It's the greatest website on earth.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/nathanielsears/>

*Comment by Johnny — August 8, 2007 @ 5:18 pm*

149. jimminy jillickers touch a nerve with this one Alec.

Time to move on.

*Comment by doug mcgoldrick — August 8, 2007 @ 5:22 pm*

150. my favorites for a sampling: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/68845799@N00/favorites/>. i'll stop now.

*Comment by j zorn — August 8, 2007 @ 5:25 pm*

151. Flickr is great. It allows anyone to share an image with the world. And the best thing is it bypasses self appointed arbitors of art, like the very overrated Stephen Shore.

*Comment by Ralph — August 8, 2007 @ 6:02 pm*

152. Was it Szarkowski who once said, "Everyone has their silver bullet"?

Perhaps someone should spend the next several years finding everyone's silver bullet on flickr and curate one project after the next. I certainly don't possess the patience to tackle such a daunting task.

Maybe Tim Barber should curate it. He seems capable finding those pictures that straddle the fence between the cliché amateur snapshot and what some might call an "art photograph".

*Comment by Würm — August 8, 2007 @ 6:04 pm*

153. Waterwin, your creative commons license is an open license with attribution, if you don't want it linked without being notified you need to change your license settings.

This is you now: <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0/deed.en-us>

*Comment by Michael F — August 8, 2007 @ 6:26 pm*

154. Buy new glasses.

*Comment by Nelma — August 8, 2007 @ 6:32 pm*

155. Waterwin, I posted your picture because I thought it was fantastic. On this blog I'd recently devoted an entire week to circular photographs. Yours is a great example. (I love the extra circle, and shadow, in the upper left).

I'm sorry that you are upset about the usage. It has been removed. (At least I linked to the image).

Interestingly, this issue of permission was just discussed on this blog here.

*Comment by Alec Soth — August 8, 2007 @ 6:34 pm*

156. Where are all the great films on Youtube?????

Share the love, its all chewing gum for the eyes

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/bcshoots>

*Comment by BC — August 8, 2007 @ 6:36 pm*

157. haha! one of my favorites on Flickr is an Alec Soth portrait with Joerg and Jen posing in front of it- the appeal to me is in the presentation, juxtaposition and context, not in the (fine) photo itself- or the (fine) photo within the photo

as Shakespeare says somewhere, the play's the thing

the recent competition on Flickr held by Tate Britain encapsulates the Flickr experience- out of thousands and thousands of perfectly acceptable submissions, the tone of the curated "How We Are Now" final forty selection seems neither "arty" nor "deep" but vernacular and sentimental to a certain demographic, and mystifying to others (wot! no people of colour? no babies or small children? no footballers or fans? no graffiti? no cows? no aerial views? no gardens? no food or tipple? no urban storefronts or docks or moors or wildlife? no arts or industry? no traffic or roundabouts? no weather? no queues?)

<http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/exhibitions/howweare/slideshow.shtm>

but they seem very typical of Flickr photo-sharing to me and representative of aspects of folk genre photography: contemporary domesticity+mood+expression+pov

and compositionally speaking, they're 'right'

what blows me away is that an of-the-moment shot from a camera phone is being exhibited in a museum because of Flickr- the possibilities are seemingly endless in 'culture for the masses'

which is why I think Flickr is a good thing, not as a treasure store of 'art' but as a fleeting and constantly shifting peephole on the world as it is now and how it might be next- (w)arts and all

*Comment by rb — August 8, 2007 @ 6:40 pm*

158. "I went on to Flickr and it was just thousands of pieces of shit, and I just couldn't believe it. And it's just all conventional, it's all cliches, it's just one visual convention after another." Stephen Shore

jesus, old stephen sounds like he takes all of this waaaay too seriously. it's photography, and there are thousands upon thousands of pictures there. many people are just trying to enjoy themselves and have a good time-and i say more power to them.

there are plenty of great pictures on there, just as there are plenty that aren't so good. who cares? why get upset about it?

it's always great when someone makes massive generalizations and judgments about something that cannot be defined quite so easily. but then, stephen shore has the right to his opinions. and i have the right to dismiss them as nonsense.

i like wandering through sites like flickr and others, just to see what all of those people are doing. it's interesting to see what people do with cameras, whether they're peter beard, ralph gibson, HCB, alec soth, or not. just as i love reading william t vollman and steinbeck, i also like reading

through the democratic madness of the blog world to see what people are doing and thinking. it's cool that people are able to communicate in these ways--no longer are we all limited to publishing in books, magazines, etc. im about all the chaotic democracy of the internet.

*Comment by ryan a — August 8, 2007 @ 6:58 pm*

159. God, I just looked at a lot of flickr.

*Comment by Paul McEvoy — August 8, 2007 @ 7:05 pm*

160. i used to wade through the serious world of fine art. and then i got over it, thank god. art should make life better, or more interesting, or something. i personally don't give much thought to what the gatekeepers of the fine art world go around declaring. if you like it, great. if not, no big deal. fine art photography is just as trendy and political as the fashion world. ive seen more interesting pictures in shoeboxes than MOPA at times. i've also seen great things at MOPA (san diego).

find what you like, and leave the stephen shores of the world to pontificate as they see fit...

ok, im done now.

*Comment by ryan a — August 8, 2007 @ 7:16 pm*

161. For me, interest in flickr begins and ends with Siegfried Hansen: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/streetphotography/>

He's my only contact who consistently posts compelling shots.

Everyone else seems to fall into one of the following categories:

1. The amateur fashion shooter.
2. The celebrity portraiture copycat.
3. The hipster snapshot diarist.
4. The stock image reject.
5. The new DSLR purchaser.
6. The macro maniac.
7. The sunset wide-angler.
8. The camera tosser.
9. The timelapser.

and of course...

10. The perv.

*Comment by Sol Irvine — August 8, 2007 @ 7:22 pm*

162. andy I:

what's the difference between "popular photography" and "fine art photography" in your opinion?

to me there seems to be quite a bit of overlap. a lot depends on trends in aesthetics and style in photography--as to what is considered fine art at any given time.

*Comment by ryan a — August 8, 2007 @ 7:25 pm*

163. The question shouldn't be "Where are the great pictures on Flickr?" but rather, "what makes a good picture?" Flickr isn't about good pictures, it's about community building.

*Comment by garry — August 8, 2007 @ 7:40 pm*

164. I'd recommend taking a look at the work of Alan Dejecacion.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/61966933@N00/>

And thanks for keep up a great blog

*Comment by David W. Sumner — August 8, 2007 @ 7:53 pm*

165. Mike, the original context of Stephen Shore's comment is here. The entire interview is utterly relevant to this conversation, but here is a longer passage:

There has to be on the web a treasure trove of brilliant untutored pictures. I'd seen the photographs that were made at the time of the London Underground bombing by people with cell phones in the Underground cars. And they have an energy to them, and an immediacy, that was pretty extraordinary. They weren't structurally fine pictures, but, you know, this is a new world. This is people in a subway car that has just been bombed – they flip out their phones and start taking pictures. This is pretty amazing. So I thought, okay, I'm going to find a lot of great stuff and I went onto Flickr and it was just thousands of pieces of shit. I couldn't believe it. It is just all conventional. It's all clichés. It is one visual convention after another. Just this week a friend of mine sent me some pictures he's been collecting on eBay. And they were fabulous. It is just stuff for sale. The difference is that on eBay the people are not trying to make art. They are just trying to show something. 'This is what this bottle looked like. It is not silhouetted. I'm not going to do it at sunset. I'm just going to take a picture.' That is the motive of most photographers – 'This is something I find interesting in the world and I'm going to make it clear.'

I don't think Shore deserves such vehement criticism (you know how we elitists stick together). I mean, many of us are indebted to Mr. Shore for his sophisticated appreciation of vernacular photography. What is clear is that if you don't have the right door into Flickr, it is pretty overwhelming. But as so many of you have indicated, there are ways to surf into the good stuff.

I haven't had time to do a lot of this surfing, but with only four pictures in this brilliant group (sarcasm, folks), I've already found one that I like.

*Comment by Alec Soth — August 8, 2007 @ 8:01 pm*

166. I think Flickr is one of the most wonderful inventions that has come across the Internet. It's true that there are photostreams which get dozens of comments on photos that I don't enjoy and don't think are brilliant. But one of the most beautiful aspects of Flickr is how it brings parts of the world together, and allows people to see through the eyes of cultures which we otherwise might fear or detest. Think of the Pakistani with the Israeli contacts, or the gay man whose contact might be the Utah Mormon. There is an incredible amount of communication on Flickr.

I also have seen how differently Brazilians, Americans, Italians, Germans, Japanese, use their cameras. Flickr lets one create their own group (such as "Inspired by Paul Jasmin" <http://flickr.com/groups/pauljasmin/pool/>) allowing amateurs to aspire to something greater than their own experience or knowledge. Flickr is a learning tool.

In its technical information, one can reference the location of a photo, as well as the shutter speed, type of camera, time of day, aperture, etc. These are great ways of imparting knowledge.

So what if there is not one king curator on Flickr to weed out mediocrity? Haven't we lived through enough crap handed to us nobodies from the great Whitney Museum or MOMA? Maybe the crazies should take over the asylum.

*Comment by andrew — August 8, 2007 @ 8:23 pm*

167. We over at Farting on Thunder just happen to be in the middle of this conversation.  
[Click Here](#)

*Comment by Farting on Thunder — August 8, 2007 @ 8:37 pm*

168. "So what if there is not one king curator on Flickr to weed out mediocrity? Haven't we lived through enough crap handed to us nobodies from the great Whitney Museum or MOMA? Maybe the crazies should take over the asylum."

Ha. I agree. I say let em loose.

*Comment by ryan a — August 8, 2007 @ 8:44 pm*

169. Peace Alec Soth,

I was speaking to a photographer today on the streets of Los Angeles, he was all excited about this chat on your site.

So, here are my thoughts.

Art is didactic, photography is art...hence, it can be used to both educate and entertain.

There is a lot of chatter about what is good and bad; popular or not. However, good art of any kind makes a connection with the viewer. It can be poster in KMarts, or a signed print from the MOCA Wack show.

The problem with the masses of camera carrying people is they have fear. They have a fear of engaging the subject.

They have a fear of going deep into the lives of the subject. Oh, yes -harm could follow them. But, so what.. Most street photos I see today... would have been my throw aways in high school!

Before I was 23 years old I had covered several wars around the globe. Does that make me famous, not at all. Does the fact that I have a huge body of work of kids in war make me a great imagemaker, no!

What makes me special...I care about the subjects, about humanity.

What makes one famous is their connections to rich people, great public relations, branding, and luck!

I dig your work Alec Soth, yet- I'm not going to use a bunch of fancy words to impress you and your readers.

Dude..You got style...

One of my sites: <http://www.popdocumentary.blogspot.com> gets a huge number of vistors, at last count they came from 46 countries.

Why, because it is all about what people like or don't like.

My sites with images of human suffering, and visual insight, get less then 10% of the visits.

Miles Davis would turn his back to the public... Even he, one of the great american master artist learned to embrace pop.

I like flower images, cute girls, puppies... We have a choice.

Not good, not bad...simply a choice.

Alec:: may you continue to prosper, and make nice images that people enjoy, and pay for!

Peace,  
WShepherd.  
American | Pop Documentary  
<http://www.popdocumentary.blogspot.com>  
[http://www.lightstalkers.org/william\\_shepherd](http://www.lightstalkers.org/william_shepherd)

*Comment by American | Pop Documentary — August 8, 2007 @ 8:47 pm*

170. WShepherd,

"The problem with the masses of camera carrying people is they have fear. They have a fear of engaging the subject."

The problem lies in pretending that there are masses of people who can be defined in such simple, and universal, terms. What masses? Why turn thousands of people into a faceless statistical mass and ignore the details of life?

I am not a fan of sweeping generalizations. We lose too much by leaning on them.

*Comment by ryan a — August 8, 2007 @ 9:15 pm*

171. interesting discussion...

The brief history of photoblogs suggests that inevitably any such blog given to the public will become a vessel of image mediocrity. There's no way to edit. I wouldn't call many of the pictures photographs (snapshots maybe), and I don't think that more than 1-2% of the users on flickr would even call themselves photographers.

I joined fotolog.net back in 2003 when it was a community of about 2000 people and there were a lot of interesting images which were easy to find. The community was small, and it was easy to connect. Fotolog used to have 'meetups' in different cities on regular nights where you could meet some very interesting people – some shooters, some not. Then came an article in the NY Times, which everyone thought would be fantastic for fotolog until every twelve-year-old in Brazil created an account and started slathering the servers with awful teenie-introspective pictures (actually, some of these were so bad that they were quite interesting). But fotolog couldn't handle the pageviews and server capacity and as it grew, it sputtered and choked.

Many of the original fotologgers (myself included) packed their bags and moved to flickr. About the time that was happening, some of the founders of fotolog published a book (fotolog.book, thames & hudson) which was fairly well representative of early fotolog. The book is not a collection of masterful photography, but a document of what happened when this new method of blogging began.

Soon, flickr ramped up, was bought by Yahoo, and the same thing happened. I started a group on flickr called 'analog' hoping to focus on what in photoblog terms is called "old-school" photography. But I soon found out that it was impossible to edit or encourage or curate a group on a public blog. People get offended, and the last thing anyone needs on the net is more grief. Eventually, I deleted my flickr blog, and now I just manage a group for a local art center.

I suppose I say all of this to make the point that photoblogs are not receptacles of great photography. That's just not what they are. They are tools of images, communication and community, which in my opinion are helping to define the difference between images and photography.

*Comment by Craig McCormick — August 8, 2007 @ 9:22 pm*

172. why so interested, A?

*Comment by vita — August 8, 2007 @ 9:36 pm*

173. WShepher,

What makes me special...I ....

People anointing themselves special...lame

*Comment by Ralph — August 8, 2007 @ 9:37 pm*

174. This is amazing, I read your post this morning, thought I'll mull it over and throw my 2 cents in when I get home...175+ comments later, to say that you and flickr have tapped into something is an understatement.

As has been echoed by now hundreds of times, flickr is a tool. Some use it for marketing, some for games, some for documenting, some as a diary, and some for art – just like photography itself. It's not so much individual images for me, but the great uses that are so brilliant, much like an amazing archive or a powerful database. This is also similar to the purpose, function, and now renewed interest in vernacular photography. With the patina of time, will all flickr images gain such collector status (that is, if they can be retained later and perhaps become physical)? Flickr for me is a giant box of photos at a flea market that I can dive in, sort through, and take what I want from it and perhaps use or think about images in new ways.

Inspired by Jen Bekman and our 30th anniversary, the PRC started a flickr site, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/prcboston>. We use this to document our programs, post installation shots, and connect with our community. I can't tell you how great this is for a small non-profit. And yes, to the poster earlier, this is how curators feel when they put out a call for entries (smile).

Signing off – WWST (What would Stieglitz think?)

*Comment by Leslie Brown — August 8, 2007 @ 9:37 pm*

175. the art photographer vs. snapshotter/amateur identity issue here is pretty interesting, actually. many comments on here are about separating what is happening on sites like flickr from a higher, better, or superior kind of art photography.

*Comment by ryan a — August 8, 2007 @ 9:37 pm*

176. dearest leslie k.,

hey! i know who you are. i think i linked to your site some time back. but enough small talk, we're here to talk about photographic philosophy—or something like that.

you wrote:

"With the patina of time, will all flickr images gain such collector status (that is, if they can be retained later and perhaps become physical)? Flickr for me is a giant box of photos at a flea market that I can dive in, sort through, and take what I want from it and perhaps use or think about images in new ways."



Being someone who is in the process of studying cultural anthropology, i think flickr and other online sites like it are amazing—and yes, i think they are fascinating insights into people's lives. im not sure about the images gaining some kind of artistic collector status though.

i like your flea market comparison though.

it seems to me that photographers, writers, and many others are always going around trying to understand humanity and life. well, sites like flickr (whether art, vernacular shoebox nonsense, or what) give pretty amazing views/slices of SO MANY lives that it's mindblowing really. when have we ever been able to access so many people?

anthropologically, flickr is a gold mine. i dont really care how much great art is there. great art is so personal anyway. who knows.

*Comment by ryan a — August 8, 2007 @ 9:48 pm*

177. I said in a discussion with Mr. Parr in his group:

"Flickr is horrible in the same way that New York City or Paris would be horrible places to see photos if you didn't know your way around. Imagine basing your opinion of the city's photographic culture based on knocking on a random door and asking to see the person's shoe box of snapshots."

That these guys don't get what's happening, simply doesn't matter. This movement, this change in photography, will happen whether or not they approve or understand it.

Sometimes I feel like a monkey that's just crawled down from a tree to watch the last dinosaur die.

*Comment by Jim O'Connell — August 8, 2007 @ 9:57 pm*

178. flickr is what it says, you flick through it, i find it hard for a image to hold my attention as it would in a book on or in a gallery!!!! flick thorough flickr

*Comment by Chris Teasdale — August 8, 2007 @ 9:57 pm*

179. Congratulations on reaching this part of the thread –

I can only offer my own perspective on this, i was somebody that didnt really have a lot of money to get into the whole film thing, lacked a lot of support and self belief due to background and experiences –

(i made dash snow look like a goddamned pansy – any true bohemian would have pawned his camera long ago) –

in getting away from all that, i got creative and flickr was such a boon to me – people were very encouraging, i got linked to by a visual arts guy from a newspaper and now i'm at art college – maybe it will work out – yes i know a lot of flickr is complete nonsense – (jorg may have had some visual impairment at the time i sent him my work) but it gives you something to react against, which being the punk i am, i find quite helpful, i don't think being approved of by men in sandals would really motivate me as a photographer.

*Comment by steven — August 8, 2007 @ 10:07 pm*

180. Hi Ryan! I think we're coming at this from similar angles (from art historian and anthropology).

What I meant by collector status was really the fascination of an image divorced from its original use. i.e., if someone came across a shoebox full of some neat square photos that had circles in them (a group on flickr) but didn't know about its origin, man would it draw a lot of interest, both

money wise and in a museum! We showed a great documentary film a while back in conjunction with a show. Other People's Pictures followed snapshot collectors and dealt with why people collect what they do. In a way, flickr allows folks to both photo and collect, groups and pools take that one step further. And yes, it is fascinating.

This weekend I will go to Home Movie Day at the Harvard Film Archive (to find where and when in your city, go to <http://www.homemovieday.com> ). Will I see stunning art films? No. Will I see some glints of art and brilliance in someone's old super 8 kodachrome? Yes. Will I see some amazing pieces of history, culture, and windows into people's lives? Most definitely!

*Comment by Leslie Brown — August 8, 2007 @ 10:10 pm*

181. "i don't think being approved of by men in sandals would really motivate me as a photographer."  
that's funny.

*Comment by ryan a — August 8, 2007 @ 10:10 pm*

182. I try my best : )

*Comment by steven — August 8, 2007 @ 10:11 pm*

183. leslie-

"In a way, flickr allows folks to both photo and collect, groups and pools take that one step further. And yes, it is fascinating."

the whole process is fascinating. it's a huge mess, and it's full of all kinds of photos that cover the spectrum of 'good' and 'bad' photography. but it's messy kinda like life is. i enjoy wandering through sites like that.

not everything in life is as edited, well composed, and ordered as fine art photography shows, books, etc. sometimes it's very interesting to see the more organic, loose, crappy, boring, disorganized sides of people.

but then, i have seen some pretty damn good photos on that site as well.

i really like looking at old photos, books, documents, and films like what you are talking about. and reading into them, wondering about them, trying to figure out more about people through them.

fascinating indeed.

much of the arguments on this thread seem concerned with flickr's place in the aesthetic world of fine art photography. im not so worried about that.

*Comment by ryan a — August 8, 2007 @ 10:17 pm*

184. by the way stephen...

in my opinion, if it works for you, and you get motivation or inspiration from it, then it's a good thing.

i say keep on truckin' and don't mind the critics. and not only does flickr have its share of complete nonsense, so does the world of fine art.

as old brett weston once said, "This verbal-gobbledy-gook just bores the hell out of me, I'm sorry. It might excite certain psuedo-intellectuals but it doesn't excite me. All this art talk on painting and photography is a pile of horseshit." (Danziger and Conrad 1977:168).

To each his own (opinion) indeed.

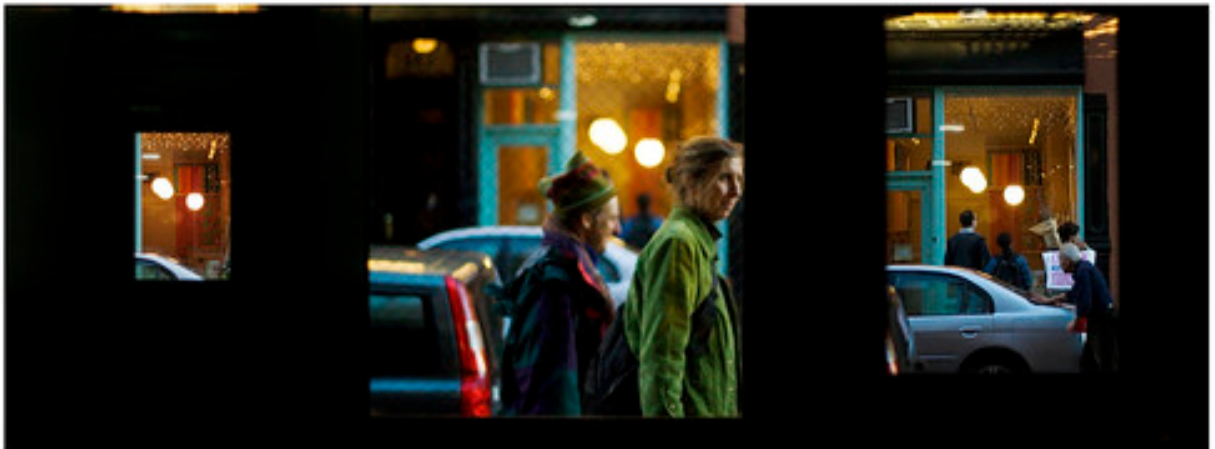
*Comment by ryan a — August 8, 2007 @ 10:24 pm*

185. Tom Burke <http://flickr.com/photos/shatneresque/>  
Erin Antognoli <http://flickr.com/photos/halophoto/431506093/>  
Issara Willenskome <http://flickr.com/photos/designbum/sets/731590/>  
Marty Fromm <http://flickr.com/photos/fromm/>  
Susan Bein <http://flickr.com/photos/wizmo/sets/313485/>  
Sabine Korth <http://flickr.com/photos/sabinesdigimontage/sets/72157594206569777/>  
JE Piper [http://flickr.com/photos/raven\\_cat/sets/72157600114875331/](http://flickr.com/photos/raven_cat/sets/72157600114875331/)

*Comment by Robert Holmgren — August 8, 2007 @ 10:28 pm*

186. OK – I'll add a few I like of late:

<http://flickr.com/photos/alainastruc/829277411/>  
<http://flickr.com/photos/shotage/707734714/>



and one of my photographs:



I think of Flickr as very democratic and friendly.  
Most of the photos are bad – but the people are mostly nice.

*Comment by Don Guss — August 8, 2007 @ 10:40 pm*

187. Ashley McDowell <http://www.flickr.com/photos/ahmcdowe/>  
Francois Coquerl <http://www.flickr.com/photos/francoiscoquerel/>  
Rishi Singhal <http://www.flickr.com/photos/fotorishi/>  
and maybe myself, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/tamtams/>

It does take digging to find the good stuff. I agree with most people and say that the majority of the images on flickr are for editing purposes and not final portfolio selections.

*Comment by Jane Tam — August 8, 2007 @ 10:44 pm*

188. Oh this is good. I just read over 150 posts and I feel educated. I would say that is what we receive from Flickr, blogs, youtube..... a chance to create an opinion online. Alec, I'm sure someone will make you a youtube video in the next week.

*Comment by Karolina Karlic — August 8, 2007 @ 11:06 pm*

189. I can see how Stephen Shore came to that opinion. I felt the same way until I started posting my own photographs there and looking around some more. It takes a lot of looking to sort things out on Flickr.

*Comment by Paul Light — August 8, 2007 @ 11:29 pm*

190. if a famous photographer like shore can't be miffed at the quality of the photography on flickr, does that mean a nobody like me can think the same thing? it's kinda impossible to engage people in meaningful discussion of their work.

anyhow, here are some nice photogs.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/vord/>  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/einarsodinecs/>  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/rebaseonu/>  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/dubmill/>  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/baltimoreandrew/>  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/bartf/>  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/patrick73/>  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/fodder/>

*Comment by aizan — August 9, 2007 @ 12:04 am*

191. I was looking for more concerning Stephen Shore and his views on Flickr and I found this [http://www.flickr.com/groups/stephen\\_shore/](http://www.flickr.com/groups/stephen_shore/)

From the page: "please post you photos that imitate Shore's Color photographs "

I'm sure Stephen would be proud.

*Comment by Jason Campbell — August 9, 2007 @ 12:36 am*

192. You are just another opinion and in most cases an unwanted one. Flickr is mainly for people sharing with friends and families. It is least about professionals and a bit about wannabees like myself. Your opinion doesn't count as far as I'm concerned.

*Comment by Joel — August 9, 2007 @ 12:41 am*

193. Tell me, where are the great pictures on alecsoth.com?

*Comment by Eliot — August 9, 2007 @ 12:49 am*

194. it's pretty obvious that the minority of flickr (the pros and serious amateurs) does care.

*Comment by aizan — August 9, 2007 @ 1:08 am*

195. right here....

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/leveckis/favorites/>

..and all of it more interesting than the stuff mr. shore produces

*Comment by leveckis — August 9, 2007 @ 1:42 am*

196. So Mr. Shore doesn't like flickr....

so what?

It's just an oppinion.

No reason to get uptight about it.

I don't know flickr.

But I know amateurs visiting my workshops.

I highly respect them.

They love photography, they are gifted,  
they just don't have the education and the time as the professional artists,  
whose lives are centered on photography.

*Comment by Zoltán — August 9, 2007 @ 2:28 am*

197. Here are mine. Hope you can take a look.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/peninsular>

Erica,  
Singapore

*Comment by Erica — August 9, 2007 @ 3:01 am*

198. @ Alec Soth

No I am not upset about its use, as pointed out this is in the Creative commons license. But I would have liked a more clear explanation on your views on the picture, as it was followed by the quoted sentence

"I went on to Flickr and it was just thousands of pieces of shit ...

A quote from Stephen Shore, not yours. For a quick reader this would leave the impression that the illustration above is one of the pieces of shit. Something I do not like as a qualification without being able to answer. Therefore, and as always I prefer to know when a picture is used

At your discretion, I would like to see the picture linked again at the start, as this will prolong my 15 minutes of fame ...

Thanks for your reaction in this blog!

waterwin

*Comment by waterwin — August 9, 2007 @ 3:15 am*

199. Should his name be spelled Stephen or Shephen ?

*Comment by waterwin — August 9, 2007 @ 3:16 am*

200. Stephen Shore..... lots of mundane and uninspiring photographs. Get over yourself Mr Shore.

*Comment by Thrumycamera — August 9, 2007 @ 3:20 am*

201. maybe here there are someone...

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/juanrayos/favorites/>

*Comment by Juan Rayos — August 9, 2007 @ 4:41 am*

202. all these absolutely perfect photographs technically, clean on them make cold in the back, any personal glance, all the photographs are identical, not a grain of dust does not exceed, not shade, all are enlightened pareillement, beurk!

*Comment by ilse — August 9, 2007 @ 4:45 am*

203. [...] alec soth – blog » Where are the great pictures on Flickr? "I went on to Flickr and it was just thousands of pieces of shit, and I just couldn't believe it. And it's just all conventional, it's all cliches, it's just one visual convention after another."–Stephen Shore (tags: flickr photography alecsoth) [...]

*Pingback by pete geniella photography–fort worth, tx photographer links for 2007-08-09 — August 9, 2007 @ 6:20 am*

204. For a true photo artist you should take a look at Ron Diorio's work on [http://www.flickr.com/photos/av\\_producer](http://www.flickr.com/photos/av_producer)

Myself I get hardly any views for my photos posted on flickr but I don't do kittens, dogs, kids or families on the beach but after 2 years of experimenting I'm gradually moving towards a personal style.

See <http://www.flickr.com/photos/jodo/>

*Comment by john o'doe — August 9, 2007 @ 6:53 am*

205. This discussion has even spilled over into the flickr forums too.  
<http://www.flickr.com/groups/central/discuss/72157601294787076/>

and here's a link to my bad photography on flicker.





*Comment by mike — August 9, 2007 @ 7:52 am*

206. damn, i guess my comments did get though the spam filter... sorry for the spam above!

*Comment by einars odinecs / einolu — August 9, 2007 @ 9:27 am*

207. I find the discussion taking place here in this blog much much better than the one taking place in that flickrcentral group, which can be summed up in one sentence: "stephen shore suxxor". Lame. It's not surprising, though, as I've found many times, many of the people there can't handle the faintest breath of criticism.

*Comment by melissa — August 9, 2007 @ 9:34 am*

208. No Flash Corner – <http://www.flickr.com/photos/whileseated/sets/548932/>

*Comment by j zorn — August 9, 2007 @ 9:40 am*

209. [...] Ever the instigator, The Soth\* asks: Where are all the great photos on Flickr? [...]

*Pingback by Personism » Blog Archive » Here's One — August 9, 2007 @ 9:55 am*

210. I second what Amy posted

<http://flickr.com/photos/70355737@N00/>

I especially like the 'Junk Drawer' series.

Give a Marine an M8 and anything is possible

*Comment by jethro — August 9, 2007 @ 10:08 am*

211. i thought this was interesting

<http://lauriemcginley.com/twopointoh/?p=42>

*Comment by Johnny — August 9, 2007 @ 10:13 am*

212. [...] alec soth – blog photographica, miscellanea, etcetera « Where are the great pictures on Flickr? [...]

*Pingback by alec soth - blog » Blog Archive » Shore, King & Street Fashion — August 9, 2007 @ 10:30 am*

213. I like my pictures, thank you very much, even if they do not get a lot of comments on flickr and probably are not good enough for some exquisite taste.  
Anyway, I opened most of the links that were mentioned here in answers and took a look. First dozen pages I looked at most of the images, sometimes I liked what I see, sometimes I am not. Then I looked at thumbs only and selected images on 5-6 more pages. And then I got tired seeing thousands of good images and closed the rest of the pages without even looking at them.

*Comment by Oleg Shpak — August 9, 2007 @ 10:34 am*

214. Andy L:

Your definitions of fine art and popular photography make sense to me...especially since those are YOUR definitions. Everyone is going to have slightly different understandings of terms/ideas like that. That's the whole point—it all depends on who you are connected with, what groups, ideas, traditions, etc. you have been exposed to.

So for you they both have something to do with the portrayal of beauty. That makes sense to me.

"I also think that Fine Art is used to describe the degree of effort and skill put into the final product. For many years Fine Art was pretty well restricted to the view camera crowd, especially with BW film."

And don't forget that for many years—well before the view camera folks became the supposed gatekeepers of fine art photography—photography itself wasn't considered 'art' at all. But that was a while ago.

I can see why you would use 'effort and skill' to differentiate fine art from other kinds of art. But then, how do the polaroids of Walker Evan fit in? Not much effort there, really, and they looked as good as anything I saw of his exhibit at SFMOMA a few years back. And I have seen plenty of people with incredible amounts of technical skill whose work didn't do much for me. So it's hard to pin down. Ya, effort and skill are a part of it, but there are many other factors that play into it.

For me fine art is an idea that is understood differently by many different people. The world of gallery owners and magazine editors, and the people who participate in those arenas, have a definition that works for them. But it's built out of participation and conversation, and it's not like everyone in that world agrees.

For me I guess fine art means that i like something, that it speaks to me for some reason, and i appreciate what the person was trying to do. I used to have a more rigid definition when i was a view camera acolyte, but studying anthropology the last 6 or so years has softened things up. Ideas about art are, in the end, really very personal. Sure, we have big institutions going around telling us what's good, and famous folks like Stephen Shore expressing their opinions, but in the end it all comes down to what we like or don't like.

*Comment by ryan a — August 9, 2007 @ 10:44 am*

215. 20 years ago the head of IBM said PC were going no where – the future was mainframes. He was wrong and Stephen Shore is wrong.

The next Annie Leibowitz is on Flickr today learning from the community and refining her craft. And this is threatening to Stephen Shore and a host of other professional photographers.

I work in advertising and I buy a lot of professional photography each month. 5 years ago digital photography threatened the way photographers earn their living. It scared them. They adjusted. Flickr scares them. They'll adjust.

To my Flickr friends out there – keep up the creative process and never let critics get you down. The next Robert Mapplethorpe is among us. Maybe he is a ten year old just learning his craft. One day he'll look back at comments like Shore's as terribly short sighted.

*Comment by longfamilytales — August 9, 2007 @ 11:11 am*

216. I use flickr for my edits, and it was a great way to fake having a website for a bit. Nothing wrong with some flickage.

Sure there is allot of crap, but well yea there is allot of crap. what else am I supose to do on the internet all day.

Plus flickr great pictures of dolphins

*Comment by Dan Boardman — August 9, 2007 @ 11:15 am*

217. meh.....

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/patrick73/>

*Comment by patrick romero — August 9, 2007 @ 11:39 am*

218. [...] Where do the artists go? August 9, 2007 Filed under: Art Community, Photography — Katie @ 12:59 pm Yesterday Alec Soth posted on his blog about the lack of "great" pictures on Flickr. I have to agree with the sentiment, although his wording seems a bit shaky to me. However, I whole heartedly concur with AFC's response. I think there needs to be a place where fine art photographers or just artists in general can have a community online. Almost like Flickr, but specifically targeted to artists, not just the general public. The Saatchi Gallery has the right idea with their Stuart website, but it's set up poorly and doesn't really function as well as it could, so my patience for it ran out. There seem to be lots of creative computer-savvy people sprouting up, some of them should come together and build an online community for all those poor artsy types without an internet home. [...]

*Pingback by Where do the artists go? « Katherine Lindquist — August 9, 2007 @ 11:59 am*

219. Just checked hundreads of these flickr links. Shore was spot on.

*Comment by dyl — August 9, 2007 @ 1:07 pm*

220. [...] Alec decided to bring this back into conversation on his blog – following it up by asking simply, where are the great pictures on Flickr? [...]

*Pingback by SHANE LAVALETTE / JOURNAL » Blog Archive » On Finding Good Photographs — August 9, 2007 @ 1:24 pm*

221. @ Katherine Lindquist Says: "I think there needs to be a place where fine art photographers or just artists in general can have a community online. Almost like Flickr, but specifically targeted to artists, not just the general public."

Sounds like a some temple not a community.

*Comment by Ron Diorio — August 9, 2007 @ 2:01 pm*

222. I try to bring different photography:



or  
<http://www.fotocollectief.nl/website.aspx?mid=100>

*Comment by Coppens — August 9, 2007 @ 2:11 pm*

223. Actually, there is a photographer on Flickr whose pictures were discovered by Microsoft. Some of the pictures are now used by Microsoft Vista...therefore, not everything posted on Flickr is "shit."

*Comment by Monique — August 9, 2007 @ 3:28 pm*

224. flickr rocks. get off the high horse. there is a ton of amazing photography out there. look at explore....or just pick random people and look at their faves...follow it around. you'll see

*Comment by rob — August 9, 2007 @ 3:56 pm*

225. Hi, I'm a bored 25 girl alone on my bed.  
If you want to see more great pictures of me please go to the address below and pay me a pro account extension:  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/schizoo23/>

thanks  
XXX

*Comment by schizoo — August 9, 2007 @ 4:48 pm*

226. flickr's explore would be the last place I'd look for good photography...

*Comment by melissa — August 9, 2007 @ 4:55 pm*

227. Ha ha. Could there be some sort of fine or mandatory humiliation for, say, the 1000th person to post a link to their own Flickr page.

(Unless it's really good, of course.)

*Comment by Paul Russell — August 9, 2007 @ 5:19 pm*

228. I think ryan was maybe thinking that i was kind of battling on against the opinion of stephen shore or whatever – i've had many compliments on my work – but i dont find them very motivating in a sense – 2nd album syndrome or whatever – do people produce less work after they join magnum ?

*Comment by steven — August 9, 2007 @ 9:56 pm*

229. Wow – you certainly have a lot of links to sift through.

I'm frankly astonished that no one seems to have mentioned Rui Palha – one of the best street photographers on that site.

Have a look when you've the time:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ruipalha/>

Best,

Katia

*Comment by Katia — August 9, 2007 @ 11:39 pm*

230. Late to the party, as always.

Flickr's appeal lies in its brilliance as a social tool for building networks of common interest among photographers and people who like looking at photographs.

99% of those using the site have no interest in the world of contemporary art photography or in tackling the kind of aesthetic and philosophical issues that trouble the mind of Mr. Shore when he presses the button.

Instead, most people prefer to enjoy the thrill of having new pictures to show (don't we all?) and engage in the to-and-fro of comments and contacts requests.

So, to criticize the general standard of photography misses the point of the site.

Having said that, much of the most popular photography on flickr is highly conventional and, for me, not interesting.

I wonder if this is because the comment-based economy of the site is tilted towards mutual flattery rather than totally frank and honest criticism.

After all, sometimes it's good to have somebody who knows what they're talking about tell you "That's shit".

*Comment by iain — August 10, 2007 @ 3:18 am*

231. Well said, Iain.

*Comment by Don Guss — August 10, 2007 @ 7:08 am*

232. Unlike the arrogant author of this blog, flickr, as I understand it, is a site where anyone and everyone can share their pictures. I generally use the site to share what I am doing with friends and family across the world. Many of those pictures are great and provide great joy and happiness – far more, I would suggest, than some of the pictures produced by fakey, arty-farty types whose only opinion worth hearing is their own!

I derive great pleasure from the pictures I find on flickr, and I consider many of them to be great – often because of the emotional response it produces in me. Perhaps the author of this piece needs to view the pictures from a more human view point rather than the tunnel vision that comes from watching the world from their own backside.

*Comment by Mark — August 10, 2007 @ 8:11 am*

233. Shhexycorin is my favorite photographer  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/upyerbum/>

*Comment by Totalvo — August 10, 2007 @ 11:02 am*

234. Mark, Alec is quite possibly the antithesis of arrogant. If you read this blog regularly and/or participated in the (extremely civilized) community of commenters on an ongoing basis, you'd know that.

Drive-by posts riddled with ad hominem attacks do nothing to further the conversation.

As I said in my initial response, Flickr is many things to many people, and that's a-ok.

Alec asked a question in earnest and a lot of people answered. Sure, he used a provocative quote to kick things off, but it's resulted in a spirited debate that's broadened the horizons of many.

*Comment by Jen Bekman — August 10, 2007 @ 12:25 pm*



235. Arrogant? From reading his blog and looking at his pictures he seems to be the furthest thing from arrogant.

*Comment by BartF — August 10, 2007 @ 1:08 pm*

236. Jen, I really agree w/ you, its really important to check your emotions, I made some comments on another blog that were pretty careless, it was an emotional response, and I actually really regret that. we are emotional beings and photography is really personal, esp for a lot of people who dont connect w/ the arts, its their outlet.

I read thru all the flickr comments about this post, and realised that flickr users and flickr are symbiotic. its an organism, and this post triggered defence mode.

There is a kind of child like playfulness about flickr, and I think that is beautiful, after all we are really all people who have very similar wants and needs, to be loved, accepted, and treated w/ respect.

I have to say that sometimes though by not really weighing up the consequences of an action before one proceeds w/ that action can have really interesting results.

eg. there were many comments about "who the hell is S.Shore" That is huge if you think about it. People who had never heard of S. Shore were looking at his wrk and discussing it and trying to figure it out, and w/ some interesting remarks to boot. I think this post brought a lot of people to the table, who dont usually eat at this restuarant. (sorry about the crude analogy).

I really admire what Alec creates here, he has an incredible perception of things, and this post has been extremely revealing.

*Comment by w robert angell — August 10, 2007 @ 1:18 pm*

237. Stephen Shore is right...

AND...

Flickr is a great thing.

*Comment by khufu — August 10, 2007 @ 2:09 pm*

238. i agree with what jen bekman and w robert angell are saying.

in the end, this whole discussion has really opened some horizons, and that's a great thing. this has happened among a group of people in various places who, without this technology, wouldn't be communicating. this is a good thing.

i have to admit that i was pretty irritated with shore's comment, as it sounded like the elitist words of some self-proclaimed gatekeeper of high art. and as he admitted, the comment was pretty glib. so be it. we all have our moments that we regret, and the main thing is that we learn from them. i certainly have had my moments.

all of this is about communication, in my opinion. communication of ideas, experiences, thoughts. stephen shore made his comment, but anyone who took the time to read a little more about him has realized that there is more to him than that--and that's a good thing. at the same time, i would never expect anyone to simply accept whatever shore says based upon his supposed position in the world of art. that's all continually being negotiated, and that's a positive thing i think. it's good for people to interact, to share ideas, to debate, and yes, to disagree. the main key is finding ways to communicate without flying off the handle, and always trying to keep your eyes open. i always have to check myself to see if im being too stubborn about something. eventually i learn (usually).

anyway, the whole discussion was great to me, and i learned a lot and thought about a lot. so i appreciate alec soth for providing the forum, and the initial inspiration, for this whole debate. even though it got a little heated at times, and some people weren't exactly 'nice', i think that many people had their horizons expanded in the process. and that's a good thing.

*Comment by ryan a — August 10, 2007 @ 2:31 pm*

239. Why is that when a writer/photographer/musician/whatever tries to do something different or push the boundaries he is dismissed as being snob/elitist/pretentious ? This "majority dictatorship" pisses me off...

*Comment by chemicl — August 10, 2007 @ 2:44 pm*

240. <http://nigdzie.com> great selection

*Comment by nitz nitz — August 10, 2007 @ 4:01 pm*

241. A lot of Flickr is sheer effluence.

But what makes photos of banal landscapes art?

What makes one photograph a cliché and another photo groundbreaking? When does photographic style cross the line from breakthrough to cliché? Does a groundbreaking artist become cliché after employing the same style for years?

Why would one set of photos of, for example, a desolate intersection or a dish of pancakes be in a gallery while another set of the same thing be considered Flickr crap?

*Comment by Peter Manzari — August 10, 2007 @ 5:25 pm*

242. I think a lot of art school po-mo type of photographers don't like flickr, photo.net etc. because they can't stand the thought of the unwashed masses having an audience for their "snap shots".

*Comment by Tim Holte — August 10, 2007 @ 5:42 pm*

243. Tim I think your off the mark. Basically you fall into the mass generalization brkt w/ that point. I think it worthy to note that The Tate had their show of flickr photos. How many submissions were there? A lot.

I think the people on flickr want be accepted just like you or me, nobody wants to be generalised. People for the most part want their wrk to be looked at and liked. If you have an idea about your wrk and you've been recieving praise for it, it can hurt to recieve critisim. and thats were your emotional intelect really needs to step up.

just one thing about flickr though, I would really have liked to way in on the their discussion, but I could not because of some red tape, got to be a member. I thought ..hmm... thats a little insular. But anyway I still enjoyed looking.

*Comment by w robert angell — August 10, 2007 @ 7:29 pm*

244. [...] [...]

*Pingback by burntsienna.nu - Where are all the good photos on Flickr? — August 10, 2007 @ 7:55 pm*

245. I could be off the mark but why would a serious photographer even bring up a group like flickr? Got me!

*Comment by Tim Holte — August 10, 2007 @ 10:39 pm*

246. [...] Something to ponder 11Aug07 Recently came across this site: <http://alecsoth.com/blog/2007/08/08/where-are-the-great-pictures-on-flickr/> [...]



*Pingback by Something to ponder « Back To Mine Sessions — August 11, 2007 @ 6:13 pm*

247. By no means do I think I am the best. But I do love what I do and hope others can find beauty and hope in my work. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/brianpcarlson>

*Comment by Brian Carlson — August 12, 2007 @ 11:57 am*

248. Yeah, flickr sucks, but some of the people who post their work on there are actually pretty good. It takes a hell of a lot of work to digg through the crap and get to the good stuff, but it's easier if you're logged in and you have a list of contacts

*Comment by stephan — August 12, 2007 @ 1:38 pm*

249. Here are the great pictures on Flickr. Both of these people should be famous by now.

Mark Powell  
Deb Ripley

*Comment by lb — August 13, 2007 @ 5:36 pm*

250. I'm like Joerg — that Flickr thing makes my brain hurt. I try to look at it, but can't do it for very long. I wonder how different that Flickr would be accepted if it didn't have the name Flickr, and maybe if the interface and overall look of the site was less, uh, consumer, and more, uh, "serious" or gallery-like? Would different types of images then be uploaded?

I also find it interesting to compare Flickr to somewhat of a European counterpart — AltPhotos and possibly even Ball Saal. Below is a link to "Favorite within last thirty days" on AltPhotos. People sign in and vote on the images. Interesting to see many people shooting film, and mostly B/W, on these sites, whereas the Flickr thing seems to be mostly digital 35.

<http://www.altphotos.com/Gallery.aspx?browseby=topratedmonth>

<http://www.ball-saal.com/MainPage/Members.php>

Still, Flickr definitely seems to serve a purpose — to bring people together, and to provide an outlet for expression, and in the end, how can that be so bad?

*Comment by Mark Tucker — August 13, 2007 @ 7:34 pm*

251. This is fun... I am not sure that anyone can point out where the great photos in flickr are, because as I follow many of the links above, it is heavily biased towards street photography — a great category, but perhaps one of the hardest genres to find a good photographer among so many.

The comment at the entry reminds me of the impact of the highly improbable (i.e., The Black Swan ), in that once a lot of crap is seen, it proves that all is crap. Of course, this is nonsense, and problematic — but a matter of personal choice and patience.

Excellence in photography does exist in flickr — just a statistical certainty for sure. The low probability makes it a bit discouraging, and that is what perhaps is meant by "all." I do not think that "all" has to be taken literally here, it is a common laziness in the way people speak, as in the use of "never" and "always" are rarely exact — less so in the all-too-familiar "you never take me anywhere anymore"

I think the point missed about flickr is how it humanizes photography — where I think it should reside in the first place. Instead of the gallery, or personal website, flickr reminds us of how photography being elevated to art creates an isolationism. True, the consequence is that of a lot of cliches, overuse of photoshop, an over dependence on the equipment, etc. However, as noted previously, one sees what one wants to see and for my part it has been the most insightful educational experience about photography I could ever get (regardless of price). It has been a lot of work and tried my patience for sure. After all, learning from what is bad/overdone still leaves the room for oneself to form, as opposed to being taught how to do good by an expert, and assimilating the teacher's style (as I see from the disciples of Kenna, Adams, etc.) As I have no formal education either, it has been great how some comments point me to my favorites now like Paul Strand and Hiroshi Sugimoto.

*Comment by fernando — August 14, 2007 @ 12:08 pm*

252. There are some exceptionally talent photographer on flickr but it takes a lot of hard work to find them admidst all the Lara Jade copycats and \_\_rebekka copycats. It's the internet, and anyone with a digital camera that has a flick account will think it's okay to do whatever the most popular "photographers" are doing.

It's just like DeviantArt but a lot less cliquish.

*Comment by Ori — August 15, 2007 @ 4:15 pm*

253. Just out of SVA, back in the 80's I took a job at a one hour photo lab. I was amazed at the quality of the photos that I printed for the general public. There was one old man who took pictures of his friends playing bridge. They were all out of focus- blurry pictures of very old people- it said something about photography to me- it was a record for a time, for people who had little time left, but it was something that mattered to them, and they might not have realized that the focus was off...  
I became convinced by this experience that the best photographs were and are being taken by the general public, whether they know it or not.

*Comment by geoffrey hutchinson — August 16, 2007 @ 12:31 am*

254. [...] Where are the great pictures on Flickr? [Alec Soth] Discussion on merits of Flickr for serious photographers. 250+ responses. (tags: art flickr photography) Post a comment | Trackback URI [...]

*Pingback by links for 2007-08-16 < Travelers Diagram — August 16, 2007 @ 5:23 pm*

255. I've been thinking about "Where are the great pictures on flickr?" for over a week, and this is the only person who's pictures I always return to...

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/zenbombed/>

*Comment by Craig McCormick — August 16, 2007 @ 10:52 pm*

256. <http://www.flickr.com/supergeorgina>, the majority of whose pointed work can be found at <http://www.georginasanchez.com>

humbly: <http://www.flickr.com/aspyglassfull>

*Comment by R — August 16, 2007 @ 11:58 pm*

257. It's like a wooly jumper Alec, pull one loose end and you can unravel the all thing...  
Your loose end is that one photo you like, I can't tell you where it is, you'll have to find it for yourself!

But then when you got it, you 'll have to go and check that photograher's favorites page. I can almost guarantee that you will find some other works that will interest you there. Open them, check those photographesr favorites.....

*Comment by Brigitte — August 17, 2007 @ 6:16 am*

258. [...] About Flickr. People are talking a lot about it on their blogs after Alec Soth asked Where are the great pictures on Flickr? with this quote from Stephen Shore: There has to be on the web a treasure trove of brilliant untutored pictures [...] So I thought, okay, I'm going to find a lot of great stuff and I went onto Flickr and it was just thousands of pieces of shit. I couldn't believe it. It is just all conventional. It's all clichés. It is one visual convention after another. Just this week a friend of mine sent me some pictures he's been collecting on eBay. And they were fabulous. It is just stuff for sale. The difference is that on eBay the people are not trying to make art. They are just trying to show something. 'This is what this bottle looked like. It is not silhouetted. I'm not going to do it at sunset. I'm just going to take a picture.' That is the motive of most photographers – 'This is something I find interesting in the world and I'm going to make it clear.' [...]

*Pingback by FLICKR & HETEROGENEITY — August 17, 2007 @ 9:12 am*

259. Grainy.

*Comment by Rosie Wood — August 18, 2007 @ 8:07 pm*

260. "I went on to [Amazon.com] and it was just thousands of pieces of shit, and I just couldn't believe it. And it's just all conventional, it's all cliches, it's just one [literary] convention after another." Lazy, boring complaint.

*Comment by jeff — August 22, 2007 @ 8:45 am*

261. The biggest problem with flickr, and other similar sites, is that, although they are marketed as communities, they are, in fact, corporations that have profit as number one on their list of goals. Any other goal, like artistic freedom, will be ignored if it clashes with, or the possibility of making a profit. That's why is so difficult to find interesting work in flickr, either because it's restricted from general viewing or because it's banned directly. I really doubt that people like Nan Goldin or James Natchwey would have a chance to show their work to a big audience in flickr.

If you are a photographer, my advice is to get your own hosting, don't use sites that may shut down your account because some stupid soccer mom is offended by your work.

*Comment by emma — August 26, 2007 @ 2:54 am*

262. <http://flickr.com/photos/upyerbum/>

*Comment by Totalvo — August 28, 2007 @ 3:52 pm*

263. Alec, I think if the Shore quote had initially had the padding of more context, the debate would not have been so volatile. I read sooo many angry posts (and was indignant myself) until I saw that basically Shore had seen some interesting, direct stuff on Ebay and elsewhere, came to flickr looking for more of it, and was disappointed to discover how widespread... Photoshop actions of flowers are. Well, that's okay. He was looking for the untutored. Doesn't sound elite or snobby to me. Sounds egalitarian. Sounds like someone nifty.

So how did this thread get so twisted?

You know, I came on to flickr as a fine art painter looking for photos of people to paint. Dissatisfied with other's work, I got a camera and started (FINALLY!) learning to shoot, with help from many, many kind and supportive folks on flickr. I love the mix of high art, snapshots, even

the overdone stuff. It's stimulating. There are some folks who are only posting pictures of their cats, but they take the time to talk about art in a meaningful, intelligent way. I think it is a wonderful thing for an artist to be able to have a dialogue with so many different people. I think, in 20 years, no 10 years, no... maybe it's happening already- there will be a lot of great artists emerging from flickr and thanking the stars for having access to so much.

*Comment by Remis — August 28, 2007 @ 9:16 pm*

264. [...] But it would be arrogant to think that designers are the only people going through a crazy transition today. How about photography? Two posts from Alec Soth's blog are worth checking out. They both have to do w/ him questioning the quality or lack there of photographs on flickr. Is there more originality going on w/ product shots on eBay? The first post is titled Where are the great pictures on Flickr? and the second is Shore, King & Street Fashion... [...]

*Pingback by DesignNotes by Michael Surtees » Shifting Design Positions as it Evolves — August 29, 2007 @ 12:34 pm*

265. If you dont like it , look elsewhere.

*Comment by Kimberly wright — August 29, 2007 @ 4:02 pm*

266. i'm going to toot my own horn, what the hell... <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mannydiller> ...it's shit anyway, right?

*Comment by mannydiller — August 29, 2007 @ 10:09 pm*

267. My answer to the topic of this blog is that great pictures can be found are all over Flickr – practically everywhere you look. My opinion is fairly much the same as Jim O'Connell's (see his post on August 8th.) I feel Flickr is greatly misunderstood by the older generation of noteworthy photographers (Parr, Shore, etc). The perception of those photographers is quite frankly, out-of-date. The reality is that Flickr does represent the current state of photography, whether you care to admit this or not. The majority of people who post images do so because they have access to a fast DIY medium (digital cameras), whereas in the past it was a much more expensive and inaccessible process. Most non-photographers as a result used photography as a casual hobby, or means of recording notable events in their everyday lives. A lab was where they went to drop off and collect their film.

That has obviously changed – the majority are now capable of experimenting with photography to a very high degree. They can use Photoshop and inkjet printers to produce work of a very high quality with relatively low overhead. Flickr has democratized photography. Perhaps that is a scary notion for some Parr and Shore?

The vehement attitudes of Parr and Shore suggests to me that their motivation is simply to maintain their pre-eminence in the art world. It is quite a struggle for them (I imagine) because all of a sudden there are a multitude of very promising and extremely creative photographers, with different attitudes about what is "great" photography. All of it is right under their noses, a few mouse clicks away...

David Axelbank  
London  
August 30, 2007

*Comment by David Axelbank — August 30, 2007 @ 4:57 am*

268. it is his opinion...

*Comment by Stefan Rohner — August 30, 2007 @ 11:30 am*

269. This topic keeps bubbling up in my RSS reader.

I think focusing on “where the great pictures” are overlooks what in my opinion a significantly more important element of Flickr – it is the audience.

It is an audience that is passionate about photography and open to a variety of presentation and approach. I think to focus on the output without an examination of the consumption and interaction with the images misses a vital element of its overall value to photography.

*Comment by Ron Diroio — August 30, 2007 @ 5:38 pm*

270. Ye Rin Mok

*Comment by goodis — August 31, 2007 @ 5:16 am*

271. The interesting thing about flickr is that it is an excellent learning tool. It is an integrated community structured toward display, and spurs interest and investment in photography and the development of competence at an amateur level. It would be very strange to suppose that photography at the professional level would be displayed on flickr. Instead, flickr represents a largely very middle-class aesthetic that is both invested in some form of pseudo-descriptive medium that can also be called “art.” Accordingly with the structure of the community, various strategies of ascension are employed to develop one’s own competence at photography. Hence, we can find almost identical photos in many different photo streams, as individuals attempt to replicate the techniques of photographers they find extremely talented and whose form of presentation they aspire to reproduce. This is not necessarily dubious, because it is simply a form a learning (and what that entails in terms of monotony can be discussed by someone else). The community provides an arena for familiarizing oneself with certain techniques that which are given value, and one attempts to reproduce the forms of invention implied in the more recognized flickr members in one’s own work. Similarly, an art class might have you try and replicate various works of Van Gogh repeatedly in order to familiarize you with the style and technique of painting. Because flickr is not just a medium for displaying one’s own photos, but is also a community for learning and the development of skills and styles, it is not surprising that there should be so much reproduction and monotony. One can witness a clear progression in many photo streams from the first photos posted, which are often extremely amateurish, to later photographs which are much more in keeping with the informal norms that seem to prevail on flickr. It is not so much a lack of creativity as an attempt to replicate styles of creativity.

Anyway, those are my two cents worth.

*Comment by In-der-Welt-sein — August 31, 2007 @ 11:42 pm*

272. One thing I’ve noticed when giving comments on Flickr (which I don’t actually do that often), is that most people cannot take an honest critique very well if it points out a flaw in their work. I would hate to see how these types would fare in just one MFA critique, let alone two whole years of them!

*Comment by Callie — September 3, 2007 @ 1:40 am*

273. I found excellent pics from this guy’s favorites (photos he likes from other flickr users)

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/merkley/favorites/>

Once you find a photo you like, look to see who has it as a favorite, then check out their other faves. Likewise, if you find a favorite flickr user, look at their favorites. It can be the neverending yellow brick road.

Also, don’t flatter yourself. Most people have heard of at least some if not all of the super photographer elite squad that you mentioned.

If you only explored flickr via perusing the largest groups or the groups entitled with superlatives like “best”, “top”, etc. then you are missing out big time. You might also want to brush up on your search methods. They sound a little bit on the conventional side.

*Comment by Infostyx — September 3, 2007 @ 9:44 pm*

274. I just realized that I addressed my comment to those who were quoted by the author and not the author himself. Oh well.

*Comment by Infostyx — September 3, 2007 @ 9:49 pm*

275. have a look at <http://www.yourshot.eu>  
a web 2.0 photography community  
hope to hear from you  
[valerie@yourshot.eu](mailto:valerie@yourshot.eu)

*Comment by Valerie Hersleven — September 6, 2007 @ 8:13 am*

276. I think photography is a bit like poetry, in that everyone thinks it's easy to do — just snap a picture. or scrawl some phrases without punctuation, and voila. Few people realize how much work goes into a well-composed photo or "free verse" poem.

*Comment by Lisa Hunter — September 10, 2007 @ 6:14 pm*

277. I generally agree with Mr. Shore. FLickr is full of alot of nothing, non-the-less that is both it's charm and power. There are good things here and there though;

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/nimum> (I personally like his BWs)  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/sarahphotographer>  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/30335466@N00> (a man with his muse)  
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/notheories>

*Comment by TS — September 24, 2007 @ 10:53 am*

278. Well what's the name for the modern condition of a place that is both a storage medium for thousands of gigabytes of unthought-out snapshots and yet also functions as a gallery space for pros and for artists who are trying to show their work to broad audiences? Maybe it's name is Flickr? Maybe stumbling across an artist like this one:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/ploger/>

makes wading through the rest occasionally worthwhile.

*Comment by Steve — September 24, 2007 @ 11:15 am*

279. I like this guy's work:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/jabelson/>

He does all film.

*Comment by Tim — September 24, 2007 @ 11:16 am*

280. Some people just use Flickr like a blog. It's not necessarily supposed to be about art.

*Comment by Emily — September 24, 2007 @ 11:19 am*

281. While I too often find myself wondering about what makes average or even bad photos popular on flickr and think too many users think they're skills are better then they are as a result of being

part of such a generally un-critical community, I can't say that it really bothers me at the end of the day.

I post a lot of photos on flickr, but I post them for a host of reasons — occasionally I'll think I've taken a really good photograph, but often my shooting habits veer more towards documenting things, or using the community to identify things as much as they do trying to take truly great photos. As a result, I've long since given up the idea that what I post has any resemblance of a "portfolio" and thus have much different standards for what I'll use it for

I think similarly, even with the better photographers I've come across, I don't see the postings there as something like a portfolio that needs to be curated and heavily edited. In fact I've grown tired of many of the people I've started following simply because the format of posting many photos over time has led to me seeing their flaws or their lack of diversity, etc.

I'll thoroughly enjoy going through the links in these comments, but I'm not expecting any of them to lead to a professional portfolio or anything that would, and I wouldn't be shocked or annoyed to come across some baby, cat, or flower pics in their stream among the more noteworthy photographs.

*Comment by Chris Casciano — September 24, 2007 @ 11:23 am*



282.

*Comment by Mike — September 24, 2007 @ 11:49 am*

283. Check out this photographer, she does a lot of fashion, editorial and documentary stuff: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/mtbphoto>

*Comment by Cube Jockey — September 24, 2007 @ 12:48 pm*

284. Tommy Oshima's work from Japan is beyond words. Often has a very dark mood sometimes of subject matter (think visual Portishead). I have rarely seen someone take such poignant photos of

everyday scenes, he does incredible work with a range of equipment, from his Leica Noctilux shots to large-format very saturated and rich scenes.

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/tommyoshima>

Some favorites:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/tommyoshima/collections/72157594587589715/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/tommyoshima/collections/72157594587861045/>

My own are at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/csantosphotos>, but certainly not up to that caliber. Tommy's are a treat indeed!

*Comment by Carlos — September 24, 2007 @ 12:49 pm*

285. By far, the best pictures for any given day on flickr can be found here: <http://www.flickrleech.net>

awesome site that humbles me every day.

*Comment by Jason McAfee — September 24, 2007 @ 1:13 pm*

286. I find that many professional photographers or serious hobbyists like to control the environment in which their photos appear and Flickr doesn't allow that. I don't include myself in that group, but as a graphic designer I know that it would be easier and more interactive to post my photographs on Flickr but I am too opinionated on how and where they appear to do that right now. I don't even like them showing up on Google images, but I get a lot of hits that way.

With anything that has large numbers of participants you will see the overall quality go down and those gems are just harder to find.

*Comment by Megan — September 24, 2007 @ 1:41 pm*

287. Is the question really how come there are no pictures I like or consider great on Flickr? Who cares?, is my answer. I never liked Shakespeare, wish he was still alive and could fix that.

Cart

*Comment by ECartman — September 24, 2007 @ 1:49 pm*

288. that's easy:

<http://www.flickrbabes.com>

*Comment by guest — September 24, 2007 @ 2:46 pm*

289. Mine aren't super-spectacular, but what the hell? <http://www.flickr.com/photos/dlestarjette/>

*Comment by Daniel Lestarjette — September 24, 2007 @ 4:25 pm*

290. Yes, Flickr is full of shit. Just like the rest of the internet.

To find what you like, you gotta try hard. I think google has spoiled everyone but sadly it still a popularity contest and can't figure the good from bad... I'm glad about that.

*Comment by Harsh — September 24, 2007 @ 5:28 pm*

291. Have you seen my image manipulations?



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/interhuss/collections/72157601984068281/>

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/interhuss/>

I love Flickr and I find great stuff on there all the time.

*Comment by Intergalactic Hussy — September 24, 2007 @ 6:25 pm*

292. I can't believe Flickr didn't just spoon feed a stream of good photos. What, with the entire history of photography to this point being an unbroken tradition of masterpieces.

*Comment by SnowHugger — September 24, 2007 @ 10:10 pm*

293. somewhere, someone is reading this blog and judging it's design and content by the same criteria. like all artistic forms, photography's value is subjective. Flickr is not a gallery, it's a photo album spliced with an online experiment. it's a capture of lives from all over the world. I think that has value despite the lack of formal training in it's users on how to take an original shot.

People here list links to their own photography to show their work, they're proud of it. Are they as good as you or anyone else here to judge? maybe, maybe not, Critics will certainly use the topic to talk 'above' the flickr crowd and throw out terms and references that make them seem more important, but at the end of the day, someone is judging you too.

The topic is valid, but the answer isn't definitive.

*Comment by beau — September 25, 2007 @ 2:10 am*

294. Well all the people just posting links to their own "masterpieces" kinda proves Mr. Shore's point.

*Comment by MC — September 25, 2007 @ 3:55 am*

295. [http://flickr.com/photos/lisa\\_wassmann/](http://flickr.com/photos/lisa_wassmann/)

*Comment by Sebastian — September 25, 2007 @ 4:54 am*

296. Go through your contacts and find the people who's shots you really admire.

Then go through their contacts and see who they're watching. I never go to Explore and rarely use groups but the Contacts section is like a giant personal recommendation tool.

You can feel free to use mine as a jumping off point if you don't have a lot of contacts on your own yet... <http://flickr.com/people/rycoleman/contacts/>

\*Mute, Pisco Bandidto, PatsPiks, wvs, & Mark Velasquez are good people to start with...

*Comment by Ryan Coleman — September 25, 2007 @ 8:11 am*

297. I guess the question is "what do you consider great photography, anyway?".

*Comment by Adam Fields — September 25, 2007 @ 8:26 am*

298. My hero on flickr – brings me back to Brooklyn and captures NY and surrounds like nobody I have seen.

<http://flickr.com/photos/franklynch/>

*Comment by trekbody — September 25, 2007 @ 9:55 am*

299. flickr: a place where averageness is applauded and uncommonness is despised.

*Comment by sylvia — September 25, 2007 @ 2:43 pm*

300. Stephen Shore's comment could also be an unconscious reaction to the fact that modern fine art photography is so similar to the random images done by ordinary people that the difference between them is essentially non-existent! Just look at all the web pages of the "art photographers" around the world. Is this stuff any different from what you see just randomly on Flickr? Blow any one of them up large, put in a nice frame and hang in a gallery and you have art as fine as anything else you see there. The "fine art photographer" should be threatened by this stuff.

*Comment by Steve Murray — September 25, 2007 @ 3:05 pm*

301. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/riickye/>

*Comment by Bill Haley — September 25, 2007 @ 5:03 pm*

302. Greetings Alex,

First of all let me say thanks for your blog. Its a great source of information, ideas and dialogue. I use it and refer my students to it often.

In response to your post above, I'd like to direct you to some of my work. Its a series of portraits I made on the streets of Chicago in collaboration with strangers. They took my picture and I took theirs. The shots were superimposed in the camera.

I was working towards fusing two disparate influences: the emotionally cool & formally daring Institute of Design photographers, and the humanistic portraiture that was popularized by Doubletake Magazine in the '90s. I also was trying to discover how to use the camera in a new way.

Anyway, I'd love to hear what you and others think. Please see the link below to my Flickr account and the series I'm referring to is called "Intersections, 1999-2001"

<http://tinyurl.com/2kbd9a> (link to my Flickr site)

Joel Wanek

*Comment by Joel Wanek — September 26, 2007 @ 11:27 am*

303. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/darkshapesprowl/>

*Comment by Chris — September 27, 2007 @ 12:21 am*

304. "It was just thousands of pieces of shit, and I just couldn't believe it. And it's just all conventional, it's all cliches, it's just one visual convention after another."

This is a description for photo.net and other photo critique sites, not flickr. If you look hard enough you'll find some very good stuff in flickr.

*Comment by peter — September 27, 2007 @ 2:06 am*

305. arrived here via kottke – interesting discussion.

flickr can be infuriating, it can also be inspiring, sometimes both at the same time.

i have +9500 favorites at flickr, without kids or cats in the mix, so i'd say at least a few people are doing something right over there

*Comment by kh — September 28, 2007 @ 1:21 am*