

# Alec Soth's Archived Blog

August 2, 2007

InfraWeegee

Filed under: photographs (not mine) — alecsothblog @ 8:59 am



Boy in theater, 1943, by Weegee

Yesterday's post on Kohei Yoshiyuki's infrared photographs got me thinking about Weegee. Weegee's most famous infrared pictures are of kids in movie theaters. A lot of these pictures show pairs of kids:



Two boys in theater, 1942, by Weegee



Palace Theater, 1943, by Weegee

But Weegee also photographed adults in the theaters:



Girls laughing, 1943, by Weegee



Lovers in theater, 1943-45, by Weegee

Less well known are Weegee's infrared photographs of lovers at Coney Island:



Lovers at Coney Island, 1943, by Weegee

## 17 Comments »

1. Alec,

Didn't I read that the Lover's Picture was a setup? Either way, it's awesome. I haven't thought about Weegee in a while, thanks.

Paul

*Comment by Paul McEvoy — August 2, 2007 @ 9:35 am*

2. The recent NYC photo permits hoo-haw has gotten me thinking about the balance between the "right to photograph" and the right to privacy. These images only press my thinking further that the issue is much more murky than those championing photographers' civil liberties assume. I find these WeeGee images a bit disturbing. The subjects appear to be both unaware and, under the cover of darkness, assuming a certain level of privacy.

Then, there was this article in the Sunday *NY Times* about a guy who posts pictures of children taken in public places (where his right to photograph cannot be infringed) to accompany his pedophilic blog fantasies. This is an extreme example to be sure, but one which underlines the issue of a public subject's privacy concerns.

On the flip side, French law is highly favorable to subjects' control of the use of photography made in public places. This strikes me as overly restrictive in the opposite direction, but at least recognizes there is a tension in the issue and it's not as simple as impinging "freedom of expression".

*Comment by Todd W. — August 2, 2007 @ 10:59 am*

3. Alec,

I'm just curious if you usually ask an artist/photographer permission first before using one of their photographs. Obviously you couldn't of asked Weegee his permission, but of the contemporary photographs that you post do you get their permission first? I'm just curious because every once in a while I myself do a quick little blog about an artist/photographer that I like and was wondering what the etiquette was and your opinion regarding using one of their photos in a blog

Mike

*Comment by Mike — August 2, 2007 @ 1:09 pm*

4. No Mike, I don't ask. This is a murky copyright vs. fair use question. If anyone has a problem, they can email me and I'll take the images down.

For what it is worth, I've never opposed my images being used on blogs.

*Comment by Alec Soth — August 2, 2007 @ 1:33 pm*

5. Fair enough answer and yes I wouldn't be opposed to having one of my images used on a blog either.

*Comment by Mike — August 2, 2007 @ 1:50 pm*

6. Ummm....sorry to stray off of the topic at hand, but I just wanted to take a moment to ask...are you OK? I'm guessing that today's post means you are.

I still haven't heard back from a friend of mine who lives in Minneapolis, and I find it really fucking scary that a bridge in any major US city could just collapse out of nowhere. I guess I'll start holding my breath like I used to do as a kid when driving through tunnels and over bridges.

Nice infrared pictures, by the way. I used infrared film in highschool, but had only heard of its potential in relation to chlorophyll in plants.

*Comment by Annabel Clark — August 2, 2007 @ 2:11 pm*

7. WeeGee fan. Poor sod did not do that well for some time since 'art' and 'news' were two different worlds. His pictures crossed the bridge without much trouble though.

*Comment by PeeWee — August 2, 2007 @ 3:24 pm*

8. taschen is currently preoccupied with the making of a weegee book.

*Comment by robert — August 2, 2007 @ 3:47 pm*

9. And then there are the images he made later in life, which ICP notes he called "his 'distortions,' 'caricatures,' 'creative photography,' or most often, his 'art.'"

<http://museum.icp.org/museum/collections/special/weegee/>

<http://www.matthewmarks.com/index.php?n=2&c=8&l=103&e=279>

*Comment by Leslie Brown — August 2, 2007 @ 7:54 pm*

10. I would like to add few thoughts to the issues raised by Todd W's earlier comment.

About finding the images disturbing, personally I don't. If we mean in aesthetic terms, it's just children/people under a different light. This is not disturbing, rather quite interesting. If we mean 'disturbing' regarding the privacy of people involved.. well.. I admit that if I was in their place maybe it could have been pretty annoyed... But 'annoying' is very different than 'criminal'. I'd be very sceptical to any suggestions of further criminalisation of human behaviours...

Now about taking pics of children in public spaces, as in the example given in the aforementioned comment: First, the number of those individuals is extremely small, really small within a society. And if that only suggests the unproportionality of risk in relation to the attention they receive, there is also social research and facts which tell us the actual, different story: The real threat posed to children does not come really from 'strangers' but to a very large extent by other family members, and friends or other known people to the family.

*Comment by Christos — August 2, 2007 @ 8:40 pm*

11. Hi Alec,

By the way, I'm not sure if I'm the only one who has this problem (I think I might not be) but routinely in your blog some of the pictures don't show up in the browser. I'm using Firefox. If there are 5 pictures only 2 will show up, the rest will just have the title. Which sucks because I love your blog. Thanks for all the good thoughts.

All the best, and glad you are safe.  
Paul

*Comment by Paul McEvoy — August 2, 2007 @ 9:09 pm*



12. Thanks Paul. Yeah, I'd be eager to hear if others have this problem (not that I'd know how to fix it).

*Comment by Alec Soth — August 2, 2007 @ 9:20 pm*

13. Paul and Alec,

I'm using Firefox and I can see all the pictures, so I think the blog is ok.

Nuno

*Comment by Nuno de Matos Duarte — August 3, 2007 @ 3:32 am*

14. I use Firefox as well, and have Paul's problem most often than not. I have to click once or twice on the post's title, open and re-open it until all the pix are visible.

*Comment by Federico — August 3, 2007 @ 7:26 am*

15. [...] Alec Soth posts on Weegee's infrared shots. I'm really liking these: InfraWeegee [...]

*Pingback by QP | InfraWeegee — August 8, 2007 @ 2:23 pm*

16. [...] InfraWeegee from Alec Soth: a series of infrared photographs by Weegee of people in theaters: eerie and nostalgic at once. [...]

*Pingback by From a Farther Room - let us go: a meandering stroll along the web — September 3, 2007 @ 2:54 pm*

17. In photography (as you know) the eyes are the window to the soul, and the children, especially in the first two images have almost completely black eyes, and you can't read into them. It really disconnects the viewer from the children. The camera objectifies everything as it is, and to not see life in the children's eyes, they are objectified even more. Voyeurism is also a form of objectification, to push this idea further...

*Comment by Laurel — April 2, 2008 @ 11:11 am*