

Alec Soth's Archived Blog

December 17, 2006

Playing with snow

Filed under: [sculpture, snow](#) — alecsothblog @ 8:12 pm

There is no way to have [Snow Week](#) on the blog without highlighting the work of the Swiss photographer Thomas Flechtner. In his monograph, [SNOW](#), Flechtner depicts the frozen Swiss countryside with stunning clarity:



"Colder", 1996-2000 by Thomas Flechtner

Flechtner has continued his investigation of snow by creating time-exposure performance photographs.

Strapping lights to his skis, Flechtner traverses snowy hills in pre-planned routes for as long as fourteen hours.



Chli Rinderhorn, 1999, Walks, by Thomas Flechtner

This work reminds me of a couple of other artists who've combined photography, performance, sculpture and snow.

Originally trained as a sculptor, Tokihiro Sato uses a small flashlight at night (or a mirror during the day) to make pinpoints of light that chart his movement through space. On a couple of occasions he has worked within snowscapes.



#354 Hattachi, 1998 by Tokihiro Sato

Sato's work is often described as emerging from the conceptual tradition of the earthworks artists. Many of these artists experimented with snow:



Dennis Oppenheim, Annual Rings, 1968



Richard Long, Snow Circle

Andy Goldsworthy has done a lot of work with snow and ice. (See the portrait I took of Goldsworthy [here](#)). The documentary on Goldsworthy, [Rivers and Tides](#), shows him making this sculpture:



Perhaps my favorite Goldsworthy project is his [Midsummer Snowballs](#):



I'd love to hear about other artists that don't just photograph snow, but also play with it.

25 Comments

1. I would like to shout out Catherine Opie: Icehouses + Skyways for snow week.

Comment by [Zoe Strauss](#) — December 17, 2006 @ [9:32 pm](#)

2. Thanks Zoe. I like Opie's Icehouses. Maybe now that you are with Silverstein you can get the inside scoop on their connection to Scott Peterman's Icehouses. Did you ever read [this?](#)

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — December 17, 2006 @ [10:10 pm](#)

3. Answering my own request. Take a look at Minnesota photographer Peter Haakon Thompson's [Art Shanty project](#). More info [here](#) and [here](#)

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — December 17, 2006 @ [10:19 pm](#)

4. I met [Lisa M. Robinson](#) at Fotofest this year, where she was showing her "Snowbound" work.

Comment by [Walker](#) — December 18, 2006 @ [2:00 am](#)

5. One of my favorites has always been ([Arno Minkkinen](#))

Comment by [Kristopher](#) — December 18, 2006 @ [4:17 am](#)

6. Artists playing with snow? I'm sure there a lots of...

Comment by [Baris Ilktac](#) — December 18, 2006 @ [7:50 am](#)

7. Alec, have you seen the Opie surfer pictures and one the ones of her ex student [Mark Wyse](#) ?.

Comment by [Brian Ulrich](#) — December 18, 2006 @ [10:06 am](#)

8. David Hammons sold snowballs on the street in New York

Link to a tiny photo: http://www.wexarts.org/images/ed/db/1113_hammons_L.jpg

Comment by [Asha Schechter](#) — December 18, 2006 @ [10:55 am](#)

9. arno minkkinen has some of the best 'snow' work ever done, but i'm not sure i'd consider it 'play.' he's one of those underrated masters, in my opinion maybe the best self-portraitist of all time.

Comment by [john kerren](#) — December 18, 2006 @ [12:37 pm](#)

10. I love Sato's work...did you catch his exhibit at AIC a couple of years ago? The catalog is one of the only extant discussions of his work I've come across.

I dont' remember having seen this snow image of his, so thank you.

Comment by [stacy](#) — December 18, 2006 @ [1:36 pm](#)

11. Simon Norfolk's series Bosnia: Bleed, is beautiful and meaningful! Particularly the final photograph in the series of an Aluminium waste pond at Petkovići.

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

Comment by Murray — December 18, 2006 @ [7:48 pm](#)

12. The Snow Show appears to be a compelling event so much so could almost be talked into attending (and I too live in Minnesota.) Kiki Smith & Lebbeus Woods "Skypool" from Lapland 2004, remarkable + memorable: <http://thesnowshow.com/>

Comment by Polonia — December 18, 2006 @ [10:48 pm](#)

13. <http://www.patrickkelley.org/>

Comment by Anna — December 19, 2006 @ [12:27 am](#)

14. [...] .flickr-photo { border: solid 2px #000000; } .flickr-yourcomment { } .flickr-frame { text-align: left; padding: 3px; } .flickr-caption { font-size: 0.8em; margin-top: 0px; } Alec Soth has been covering snow photography this week, including a couple of absolutely incredible images by Swiss photographer Thomas Flechtner. Soth also mentions one of my favorite photographers, Tokihiro Sato. [...]

Pingback by [Joe Reifer - Words » Blog Archive » After Sato](#) — December 19, 2006 @ [11:31 am](#)

15. Information on this year's Art Shanty [here](#)

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — December 19, 2006 @ [11:51 am](#)

16. Nice surprise to see Sato here. Like Stacy, I treasure my AIC Sato catalog. Does ice count? Matthew Wheeler took photos through a lens [made of ice](#).

Comment by rob — December 19, 2006 @ [3:40 pm](#)

17. I have [this book](#) by Fujii Tamotsu. I just realized that he and Tokihiro Sato are different people. More on Tamotsu [here](#)

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — December 19, 2006 @ [10:17 pm](#)

18. After a walk in the park behind my home and noticing the bent grasses forming geometric shapes, I made a set of sculptures of the platonic solids and took them back to the park to photograph them on location. You can see them here <http://www.frankgross.com/polyhedra/>

Comment by [Frank](#) — December 20, 2006 @ [11:44 am](#)

19. re: your last caption, photographers are people, too, therefore you'd love to hear about other photographers WHO don't just play with snow...
(sorry, i'm an editor)
how about Ken Libbrecht, the CalTech snowflake guy, written up in the L.A. Weekly by Margaret Wertheim here:
<http://www.laweekly.com/general/quark-soup/the-ice-man-formeth/9540/>

Comment by Tom — December 20, 2006 @ [11:53 am](#)

20. Terrific link Tom. Thanks. Makes me think about the Starn Twins [snowflakes](#)

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — December 20, 2006 @ [12:15 pm](#)

21. Luc Delahaye's Winterreise floors me.
<http://digitaljournalist.org/issue0408/richards.html>

It's pretty depressing though, so I turn to David Hammons snowballs for sale to regroup.

Comment by John von Pamer — December 20, 2006 @ [4:40 pm](#)

22. Alec, I played with ice in an abandoned oil depot in Flint, Mi for 2 winters. 6000 square feet of sub-level rain water 8 inches deep would freeze every December, and melt in March. I photographed the light on the ice, dealing with interior/exterior ideas, but found this lacking in originality. I eventually hauled in 50 pounds of rock salt as a political homage to Michigan roadways and the auto industry. I played with the existing pressure cracks, laying salt on them to expand and enhance the natural, through artificial (sculptural) means. Imagine the sound of Pop Rocks going off in your mouth. Now imagine 6000 square feet of that, echoing in an abandoned industrial space. That, was fun.

Comment by [Brett](#) — December 21, 2006 @ [8:53 am](#)

23. Try this image by Lee Miller, of the Eiffel Tower obscured by snow...

Comment by Beth Wilson — January 2, 2007 @ [8:48 pm](#)

24. I once read about a Mexican Artist who took a huge block of ice and then pushed it around the streets and sidewalks of Mexico city until the thing had melted and scraped into nothingness but a small puddle. This was in the past ten years, but I can't for the life of me find the book again that had this entry. Anyone know who this was?

Comment by Bill Bob — March 20, 2007 @ [1:02 pm](#)

25. [This auction website](#) has a lot of links to other sites containing Tokihiro Sato photographs. No additional snow photos (that I saw) – but you really get a sense of sculpture (like you mentioned) when you start looking through a bunch of them. Turns out he was originally trained as a sculpture.

Comment by bo — July 23, 2007 @ [12:18 am](#)