

# Alec Soth's Archived Blog

September 30, 2006

John Sonsini

Filed under: [artists](#), [painting](#), [portraiture](#) — alecsothblog @ 10:35 pm



Gabriel, 2002

I'm a big fan of Sonsini's painting. For several years he painted the same model, Gabriel. In a 2000 interview in Art Connoisseur magazine, Sonsini describes how he rediscovered painting:

Q: Your collaboration with Gabriel began with a camera, correct?

Sonsini: Yes, I was photographing Gabriel. We'd done, I think, six sessions at the time and then he was here one day and I was bored with photographing. I was thinking, "Well, what will we do today?" Then, I had an idea. The most absurd things in my mind came together that afternoon. One was painting from a live model, and the other, even more absurd, was to pull out the easel I bought for who-knows-what-reason a year before.

So, to paint somebody in that manner felt like I had never painted before. It was one of the most amazing experiences I have ever had in my studio.

AC: After all of these hours, how are you able to keep painting Gabriel?

Sonsini: I still find his image unreal. How many times can I paint that foot on the ground and every time I look at it, my feeling is, "Oh, good lord in heaven, that is a human foot, right there, right next to me." I love that.

Sonsini later moved on to paint Latino day laborers. His process for finding subjects, always men, is an interesting mix of both erotic and political interests. You can read a couple of good articles on Sonsini in [Art in America](#) and [LA Times](#). Click [here](#) to see more of his work.

### 3 Comments

1. At first sight I thought this painting to be by Paula Rego, a Portuguese painter based in London. Familiar with her work?

*Comment by [Luis Farrolas](#) — October 2, 2006 @ [9:03 am](#)*

2. Sonsini definitely has a touch of Rego in his work. Also Alice Neel. I love both Rego and Neel – a mighty good pair of influences for any painter.

*Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — October 2, 2006 @ [9:11 am](#)*

3. I'm gonna check Alice Neel.

*Comment by [Luis Farrolas](#) — October 2, 2006 @ [6:25 pm](#)*