

Alec Soth's Archived Blog

January 19, 2007

Friday Poem

Filed under: [poetry](#) — alecsothblog @ 3:15 am

The Artist

by Peter Schjeldahl (1972)

The artist does not want to deal with the world.

He wants the world to deal with him.

He realizes that, to this end, he needs the help of others.

Gaining this help involves him in a series of accommodations for which he despises himself and those who help him.

That one day he is a success, and it seems to be exactly what he had imagined it would be

Money, of course, but also the sense that an unlimited number of possibilities for experience await his leisure.

His former friends and supporters now hate him, but even among themselves they pay tribute to his talent.

His work proceeds satisfactorily.

He cultivates what he regards as a rich gamut of eccentricities.

At some parties he is taciturn, at others garrulous.

He finds it increasingly easy to satisfy his limited, if mildly irregular, sexual appetites.

He collects Art Deco one year, Navajo blankets the next – or, rather, he has assistants collect for him.

He is appalled to realize that he has a drinking problem.

He is bothered by a feeling that his progress in life has somehow fallen behind schedule.

He becomes obsessed with the thought that he must create a monumental, devastatingly original work.

After a period of intense application, he does so.

The public reaction is favorable, but no one seems devastated.

This throws him into a lengthy depression.

He is surprised by the thought that his reputation has gotten out of

hand.

Every month or two he reads a new article by some idiot, praising him.

The occasional intelligent article – which he often has trouble understanding – fills him with a vague uneasiness.

Surrounded by assistants and dealers and involved in endless projects, he feels like an industry.

He finds that he can do without parties.

He manages to quit drinking for weeks at a time.

He worries about his health, which is perfect.

He reminds himself continually that he can do whatever he wants.

But all he can think to do is work.

10 Comments

1. perfect.

Comment by [highlowbetween](#) — January 19, 2007 @ [11:26 am](#)

2. Such keen wit tied to absolute proof!

Comment by [tread](#) — January 19, 2007 @ [11:42 am](#)

3. Come off it now, no one really collects Navajo blankets!

Comment by [Chad](#) — January 19, 2007 @ [1:25 pm](#)

4. I think this is a little too easy, and it wouldn't be going to far to say it smacks of a certain self-indulgence...But fuck it, it's poetry...I guess it's licensed.

Comment by [Sam Logan](#) — January 19, 2007 @ [6:58 pm](#)

5. Chihuly collects Navajo Blankets, has a room in his home devoted to it...

Comment by [harold hollingsworth](#) — January 19, 2007 @ [8:44 pm](#)

6. I never thought to equate Navajo blanket collecting with success... very insightful.

Comment by [Jay Gould](#) — January 20, 2007 @ [9:47 pm](#)

7. i love the part about no one seeming "devastated".

Comment by [j zorn](#) — January 20, 2007 @ [11:04 pm](#)

8. i've a friend who's art has suddenly taken off... it's the best and worst thing that's happened to him. your work a product and you a business while the trees still flutter in the wind. He seems to spend most of his time locked in his studio, however, i fear, the vulture's beak will become stronger as with our economic based society. perhaps the best talent for the talented is just to watch.

Comment by [pj](#) — January 24, 2007 @ [12:23 am](#)

9. "perhaps the best talent for the talented is just to watch."

nice line....

Comment by [Mark S](#) — January 25, 2007 @ [2:13 pm](#)

10. Chihuly is the person that sprang to my mind and I didn't know about his blankets.

Comment by [michael](#) — February 19, 2007 @ [6:55 pm](#)