

Alec Soth's Archived Blog

January 15, 2007

Maira Kalman

Filed under: [artists](#), [painting](#) — alecsothblog @ 12:58 am



STEFAN SAGMEISTER
IS SO TALL. LIKE THE
MAST OF A SHIP IN
A PLAID COAT.
HE GIVES ME PHOTOS
OF AUSTRIAN BEDROOMS
AND SAYS,
"I KNOW THESE
PHOTOGRAPHS WILL
MAKE YOU HAPPY."

I [recently discussed](#) an illustration by Maira Kalman, but until today was unfamiliar with her whimsical mash of photography, painting and poetry. I often dislike it when artists try to squish these things together on a single plane. Usually each medium is stripped of its power and the work collapses under the weight of so much effort. I guess it is Kalman's light touch that makes the whole thing work. See her new series, *Completely*, on [her NYTimes Blog](#).

9 Comments

1. that's funny, in the last saturday i saw i man in Oporto (portugal) just like this one in the picture, exact same clothes and hair.

Comment by [nelson d'aires](#) — January 15, 2007 @ [8:26 am](#)

2. I agree completely with the problem—I've always felt that only a few, carefully chosen words ever compete well with a good image. Don't get me wrong—I love words, but put three well-written paragraphs next to, under, or on top of a great picture and the words always lose. The person who almost always gets this relationship right for me is Duane Michals—again, a light touch like your example here.

Robin

Comment by Robin Dreyer — January 15, 2007 @ [11:57 am](#)

3. If you haven't seen it already, check out the work made by her late husband, the graphic designer and all-around idea guy Tibor Kalman. My favorite part of an exhibition of his at the New Museum of Contemporary Art in 2000 was a wall with a few dozen little shelves sticking out. Viewers were invited to take something from one of the shelves as long as they also leave something from their own pockets. Great, simple idea.

Comment by [Eric Z.](#) — January 15, 2007 @ [3:02 pm](#)

4. Maira's poem/pictures on the nytimes blog site were great, but what was almost better was discovering her husband Tibor Kalman's work/life. I'd no idea that he was the man at Colors or that he'd gotten his start at Barnes & Noble in so haphazard a fashion. Pairing words with pictures is something I've played around with in the past but what seemed witty and fun at first usually ends up looking contrived and forced a few days later. I do agree that Maira's work, more so than Duane Michals, seems very stream of consciousness-like without feeling unnatural.

Comment by [matt tirrell](#) — January 15, 2007 @ [10:58 pm](#)

5. I agree, I saw that show— they were a great team and I like her solo too—check out the book UnFashion by them—wow it is full of inspiration (just came out in paperback last year)

Comment by Susan — January 17, 2007 @ [6:04 pm](#)

6. I just realized today that the work on the New Yorker covers I've liked for so long was Maira Kalman's. Online I saw a beautiful group of works on fabric she exhibited at her gallery. The interviews I just read browsing around are just like her art, all of one kind, and I think as an artist she is completely herself, which I think is the best way to make things.

Comment by [Katherine Dolgy Ludwig](#) — January 21, 2007 @ [11:05 am](#)

7. if you get the chance, have a look at David Shrigley. i think he does similar stuff.

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

and

http://www.davidshrigley.com/list_photographs.html

cheers

ben

Comment by [ben roberts](#) — January 30, 2007 @ [4:24 am](#)

8. Thanks Ben,

I know David Shrigley's work really well because I see a lot of the pieces in London when I'm there. He is great! I like the color sense of Maira Kalman, and that I can see the paint, just as in Shrigley's work the line is so much part of his hand movement. I really enjoy seeing the use of time in both artists' work — the work is really alive.

k

Comment by [Katherine Dolgy Ludwig](#) — February 2, 2007 @ [9:51 am](#)

9. As a stressed out non-traditional graduate student, Maira is a breath of fresh air! Keep up the fantastic work, lady! Love ya.

Comment by [Cris Graham](#) — September 28, 2007 @ [4:07 pm](#)