

Alec Soth's Archived Blog

August 19, 2007

'Jump the Sandwich' update

Filed under: goof, jump the sandwich, vernacular & Flickr — alecsothblog @ 11:59 am

I'm going to accept Sandwich Jumping assignments for another week. Entries should be posted at <http://flickr.com/groups/alecsoth/> by Sunday, August 26th. Soon after I'll announce the winner. Here is what I've seen so far.



photo by Mad_lips



photo by mph.silva



photo by Evephotographer



photo by Petermaxlawrence

This one scares me (I'm not sure I want this contest to be associated with the 'Bloody Shots' pool):



photo by sam_252499



photo by dougphoto_com



photo by whileseated

Whileseated (Michael David Murphy) has the most popular 'Sandwich Jump' on Flickr. And while I'm a fan of Michael's work (go to his website here) and I appreciate the technical prowess of both photographer and model, everything is a bit too perfect. I prefer the disorder of this picture:



photo by adrian1tyler1net

This picture reminds me a lot of Whileseated's:



photo by LNpom

Again, this kind of virtuosity leaves me cold. But in her comments section, LNpom shows the picture without the post-processing:



photo by LNpom

This picture seemed much more alive. I wrote to LNpom to ask if I could have a full-sized version. In her reply, the French photographer described the challenges of making the picture: "It was not so easy because I did that alone and managing to be "flying" at the time of the flash AND in the frame AND looking at the camera is hard job. I usually don't dress like that but I had in mind a flying pin up (like the american ones during the 50's) with a sandwich."

I also asked LNpom if she could send me a less 'perfect' exposure. The picture she sent gets at the spirit of the assignment. The ripples on the wall are a perfect example of Barthe's idea of punctum. For me they evoke rubber rooms. Combined with LNpom's pin-up idea, I imagine Marilyn Monroe if she'd been hospitalized before her suicide:



photo by LNpom

33 Comments

1. When did this blog start catering to bizarre fetichism?

Comment by Allison Grant — August 19, 2007 @ 1:40 pm

2. Allison, isn't the art of photography largely an act of fetishism? I suppose sandwich jumping is bizarre, but can't you say the same about your Women and Garbage Dumps (here and here).

Comment by Alec Soth — August 19, 2007 @ 2:28 pm

3. First and last one – favorites.

Looking even funnier than what I thought it would be. Mad props on this assignment, Alec.

Comment by Tomé — August 19, 2007 @ 4:16 pm

4. Fetishism: the compulsive use of some object, or part of the body, as a stimulus in the course of attaining sexual gratification, as a shoe, a lock of hair, or underclothes.

Yes, I agree that most photographs have an undertone of fetishism, even if the object of obsession is the photograph itself. I don't think all photographs are as largely an act of fetishism as these appear to be.

The bed implies some sort of sexual or at least private act. The girls are all young, many in skimpy clothing and obscurely erotic poses. Even the images that would otherwise seem innocent take on a sexual charge through their presentation within the group. The constant object, a sandwich, seems to have a significant, yet ambiguous role in the whole thing.

Perhaps I should have better considered my words in my initial post. My comment was not meant as a personal insult, as I do not believe you personally aim to cater to fetishism. I think your genuine thought was to merge two photographic groupings that you found interesting and see what happens. It is certainly bizarre, and I don't think that is a bad thing (as you noted in reference to my work). I do think it is hard to deny the presence of implicit sexuality and I find that to be disturbing, particularly because there are children involved.

Comment by Allison Grant — August 19, 2007 @ 4:58 pm

5. allison. alects original post asked for "women" jumping on bed. other readers took it upon thmselves to add photos of children.

Comment by pds — August 19, 2007 @ 6:09 pm

6. > I do think it is hard to deny the presence of implicit sexuality and I find that to be disturbing, particularly because there are children involved.

Personally I don't find there to be anything "implicitly sexual" about women jumping on a bed with a sandwich (and even less sexual about a kid jumping on a bed with a sandwich). It's just kinda funky, and led to some interesting camera work.

Comment by Dave — August 19, 2007 @ 10:07 pm

7. "I imagine Marilyn Monroe if she'd been hospitalized before her suicide". eating a sandwich? ...OK.

Comment by j zorn — August 19, 2007 @ 10:21 pm

8. Allison, this is another example of my misinterpreting the tone of an online communication. I thought your original comment was a joke. I was just trying to play along with my reference to your pictures.

Regarding fetishism, I think your definition is a little unfair. According to dictionary.com, these are the three top definitions of the term:

1. an object regarded with awe as being the embodiment or habitation of a potent spirit or as having magical potency.
2. any object, idea, etc., eliciting unquestioning reverence, respect, or devotion: to make a fetish of high grades.
3. Psychology. any object or nongenital part of the body that causes a habitual erotic response or fixation

That said, I would agree that there is a satirical reference to sexual fetishes. As Willow said on my blog here, "My friend Freddy started the Girls Eating Sandwiches flickr group, and I have indeed (embarrassingly?) been featured on it many times. My understanding is that she started it in response to all the creepy flickr fetish groups."

But let's not get carried away. I'm not 'catering to bizarre fetishism.' This assignment was made in the spirit of surrealist games like exquisite corpse. Everyone plays the game however they wish. I don't think it is fair to make assumptions about one person's picture of a child just because another person made a picture of a woman in a bikini.

Comment by Alec Soth — August 19, 2007 @ 10:30 pm

9. I just wanted to add that my friend steve has an entire portfolio of flying food... thought you might enjoy it... Throwing Fast Food

Comment by Jeremias Paul — August 19, 2007 @ 10:39 pm

10. Perhaps the Jumping Sandwich masterpiece has been **deleted**. (Via Justin)

Comment by Alec Soth — August 19, 2007 @ 11:12 pm

11. I love the first one.

Comment by doug mcgoldrick — August 19, 2007 @ 11:17 pm

12. how can they be deleted pictures when they weren't deleted? in fact they were submitted to a website. something fishy.

Comment by j zorn — August 20, 2007 @ 12:27 am

13. As further response to Allison's concern:
I find the many flickr groups celebrating commodity fetishism ('kitchen gadgets', 'my cute new car' etc.) much more disturbing than the jumping-with-sandwich lark. We could go on all week about fetishism, but Alec's introduction of Barthes's concept of the punctum makes me want to quote from near the end of Camera Lucida:

'Society is concerned to tame the Photograph, to temper the madness which keeps threatening to explode on the face of whoever looks at it. To do this, it possesses two means.

The first consists of making Photography into an art, for no art is mad. Whence the photographer's insistence on his rivalry with the artist, on subjecting himself to the rhetoric of painting and its sublimated mode of exhibition. Photography can in fact be an art: when there is no longer any madness in it, when its noeme is forgotten and when consequently its essence no longer acts on me....

The other means of taming the Photograph is to generalize, to gregarize, banalize it until it is no longer confronted by any image in relation to which it can mark itself, assert its special character, its scandal, its madness. This is what is happening in our society, where the Photograph crushes all other images by its tyranny: no more prints, no more figurative painting, unless henceforth by fascinated (and fascinating) submission to the photographic model... One of the marks of our world is ... we live according to a generalized image-repertoire. An extreme example: go into a New York porn shop; here you will not find vice, but only its tableaux vivants;... it is as if the anonymous individual ... who gets himself tied up and beaten conceives of his pleasure only if the pleasure joins the stereotyped (worn-out) image of the sado-masochist: pleasure passes through the image, here is the great mutation....
What characterises the so-called advanced societies is that they today consume images and no longer, like those of the past, beliefs....'

And it gets even more interesting, but I fear I'm laying a cuckoo's egg in someone else's nest.

To finish, I think the whileseated contribution to jumping-with-sandwich an enjoyable riposte to the challenge; the thumbs up recalling the signal made by early airmen when they were ready for their assistant to swing their propeller and fire the engine.....

Comment by kate kirkwood — August 20, 2007 @ 2:59 am

14. Allison, if you are going to use a word to make a comment, spell it right the first time. Please do not try to coyly disregard your incorrect spelling and then proceed to be the omniscient arbiter of online fetishism. Sandwiches are not ambiguous, they are delicious and non-vaginal.

And what is with this misuse of identifying an objectifying male gaze as a retort? Oh my god sister, so lame. It's healthy to admit complete ignorance sometimes.

And Allison, don't be such a downer off the bat. I think this assignment is awesome. The jumping little girls are hilarious. They remind me of when me and my little sister would bounce continuously on our bunk beds when we were little, with food in our mouths, and then choke. I'm looking forward to seeing some more interesting entries and again, these are funny! I laugh.

Comment by Michael Duong — August 20, 2007 @ 8:54 am

15. Fantastic contribution Kate. Don't take this the wrong way, but you can lay an egg in my nest whenever you like. Along with the Barthes quote, I love the airmen reference. Didn't those guys wear leather jackets? Sort of brings us back to The Fonz:

Comment by Alec Soth — August 20, 2007 @ 10:54 am

16. I just posted my first reaction and listed the reasons why I saw what I saw. I think part of this reaction was from the overuse of sexuality on flickr and other image sharing sites.

I agree that the references are satirical and that I probably over reacted. I guess when I read the assignment I expected the images to have more vertical and less horizontal poses. To be clear, I said nothing about the "male gaze," I only stated what I saw. I am not so worried about the misspelling...life happens that way sometimes. Sorry I got everyone so riled up.

I like Kate's idea of talking further about the punctum. I read Barthes essay on punctum for the first time on a plane, and I almost cried. I think of that experience every time I sit at a window seat on a plane at night.

We all have images like "Winter Garden," and it is so amazing that they are all different, depending on life experience.

Comment by Allison Grant — August 20, 2007 @ 11:45 am

17. No worries Allison. It brought up some interesting issues. I have a captive audience of students and we are going to have a discussion later today on the relationship between fetishes and photography. And if we are going to criticize spelling, I'm in big trouble.

Comment by Alec Soth — August 20, 2007 @ 1:33 pm

18. is 'jumping sandwich' the end of soth?

Comment by ross — August 20, 2007 @ 4:55 pm

19. I suppose the thing I find most depressing about this entire exercise is the relative lack of attention to the sandwiches. Perhaps here is the expose of photography's weakness. One cannot discern a panino from a ssam from a hero in these pix. Prosciutto reads much like mortadella. Only the most obvious, grossest examples of the visual have an affect. This looks like a sly strategy by Alex to shift (or illuminate) the dialog about what photography excels at. Apropos of the difference between photographers (often the most fascinating folks) and photography (often a very dogmatic and repetitive art form) I cannot forget Garry Winogrand's ultimate wisdom about life on the road : order fried chicken, you cannot murder fried chicken.

Comment by Marc Freidus — August 20, 2007 @ 7:02 pm

20. Many have been talking about Barthean ideas and discussing turns of phrases (and sandwiches), but what about stock photos, the ultimate in untapped archives? Here we have the specific in the general and the general in the specific.

The idea of tagging images is taken even further than flickr in stock photography and as the means to sell (and this task is increasingly put on the photographer). There are many linguistic and indexical ideas in stock that have ramifications for photography itself. Just look at the specificity of one of the captions — "a woman in black lingerie kneeling on the bed eating sandwich." I've pasted some of the keywords for this particular image below. "Sandwich" and "bed" are dwarfed by a long list of associated words (cushy?). See the image here: <http://www.fotosearch.com/ISP006/isp0801889/>

beauty, bed, bedroom, biting, bread, caucasian, comfortable, cozy, cushy, eating, female, feminine, health, health beauty, human, hunger, hungry, indoor, inner wear, intimate, kneeling, lacy, lady, lingerie, people, person, privacy, sandwich, she, short hair, woman, alone, stock image, images, royalty free photo, stock photos, stock photograph, stock photographs, picture, pictures, graphic, graphics, royalty free, isp0801889

Furthermore, I just tried "sandwich and bed" on a couple of stock agencies and look what I found...a goldmine:

<http://www.fotosearch.com/photos-images/sandwich-bed.html>

<http://www.alamy.com/stock-photography-search-results.asp?st=0&lic=6&lic=1&ns=1&qt=sandwich+bed+&go=1&a=-1>

Comment by Leslie K. Brown — August 20, 2007 @ 8:40 pm

21. i wonder if someone could find an image of george costanza eating a sandwich in bed after sex. there is an episode of seinfeld where george attempts to heighten his sexual pleasure by eating a deli sandwich, clearly connecting the pleasure of sex and the pleasure of food.

Comment by stefan abrams — August 20, 2007 @ 8:59 pm

22. btw here is a link the the script of that show: <http://www.seinfeldscripts.com/TheBlood.html>

Comment by stefan abrams — August 20, 2007 @ 9:03 pm

23. Brilliant work, Leslie. When it is time for the definitive exhibition of bed-jumping sandwich photography, you would be the perfect curator.

Comment by Alec Soth — August 21, 2007 @ 12:15 am

24. I have pondered the idea of a stock photography show, mining it if you will. Now this adds a twist!

Comment by Leslie K. Brown — August 21, 2007 @ 8:25 am

25. The discussion of fetishism raised by "women eating sandwiches while jumping on a bed" makes me think of Roger Ebert's review of David Cronenberg's "Crash:"

<http://rogerebert.suntimes.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19970321/REVIEWS/703210301/1023>

"[He] has made a movie that is pornographic in form, but not in effect, [because it] ...is about characters entranced by a sexual fetish that, in fact, no one has... If you seek to understand them, ignore their turn-ons and substitute your own."

But seriously, what's so wrong with "catering to bizarre fetishism?"

Comment by Wes — August 21, 2007 @ 9:44 am

26. [...] Talking about beds and fetishism, provides the opportunity for introducing the link to another interesting discussion going on in Alec Soth's blog and his latest entry: Jump the sandwich, which follows his public assignment calling people to produce photos of women with a sandwich flying in a bed.. Hmm!... Explore the comments for some interesting remarks about photography.. you

won't be disappointed -I found my deletedimages link there too [...]

Pingback by deleted « Think in pictures — August 23, 2007 @ 5:03 am

27. Hmm.. how did this part from the latest entry in my blog appeared here? (see above).. and so automatically? I never made that post above myself if I remember well..

This blogotechnology keeps amazing me...

Comment by Christos — August 23, 2007 @ 6:21 am

28. All I can say is that if I were going to "jump the sandwich" I would want a safe landing zone. A bed seems to be the most readily available and appropriate place. Not everyone has a bungee just hanging around. And I fail to see the teeniest suggestion of eroticness or fetishism in ANY of the pictures shown. Humour, yes.

Comment by Sarah — August 23, 2007 @ 8:25 am

29. [...] Remarkably, readers of his blog have responded to his request. On Sunday Alec posted some of the Sandwich Jumping submissions he received. Here are a couple of the pictures, click through to Alec's full post to see more. [...]

Pingback by [Bed Jumping Sandwich Eaters](#) — August 23, 2007 @ 1:18 pm

30. Looking forward to the 2008 trend of bed-jumping sandwich-eating celebrity portraits in Vanity Fair and GQ. Will Clooney be the first to do go? Or Bill Clinton? Or Dennis Hopper? Maybe one of the presidential candidates wants to "loosen up"?

Comment by Eric Z. — August 23, 2007 @ 7:38 pm

31. I can't believe that one guy would think a kid eating a sandwich while jumping on a bed would be considered sexual. Sheesh! I'm a flickr-holic myself and there is something for everybody there. I've done two jumping photos in my photo stream and they're fun to do. And if you want weird, one night last week, I was meandering around on flickr, while I was talking to my mom on the phone and found a flickr group called animals having sex and then one called insect porn with dragonflies having sex. Now THATS weird. LOL!

Comment by awittykitty — August 25, 2007 @ 9:15 am

32. [...] The goal of my recent sandwich jump critique was to push participants toward a looser style. Jens Holzapfel responded with an excellent version of 'Munching by the Mississippi': [...]

Pingback by alec soth - blog » Blog Archive » JTS — August 27, 2007 @ 10:26 am

33. Rather oddly, I recently arrived in Moscow from Paris where I was part of a collective of photographers there. I just clicked through to this site from a Moscow photography forum to find one of my old drinking buddies, LNpom, is a contributor.

What a small world it is....

Comment by JohnnyLomo — September 8, 2007 @ 1:43 am