

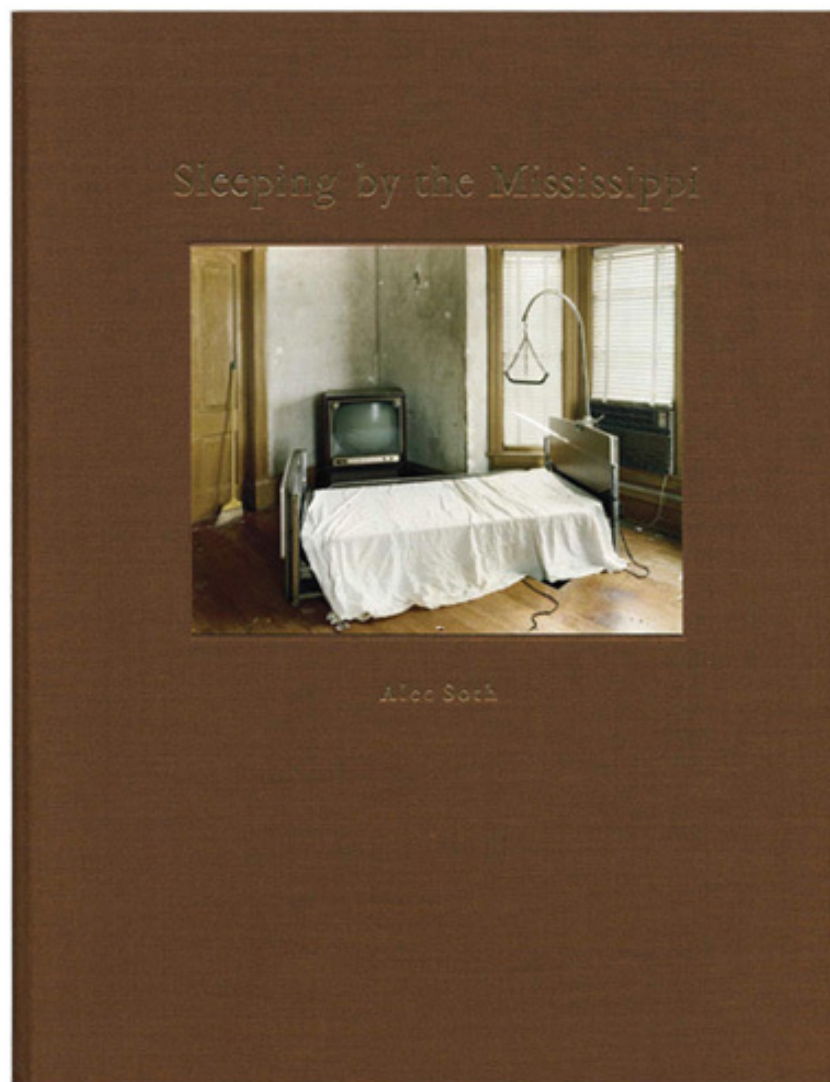
Alec Soth's Archived Blog

September 11, 2006

FAQ: book dummies

Filed under: [FAQ's](#) — alecsothblog @ 11:29 pm

Art schools normally teach photographers to make work for the walls. But most of the fine art photography we see (especially if you don't live in NYC) is in books. I'm a big believer in making book maquettes. It is pretty easy these days. I know Stephen Shore has cranked out a bunch of [Apple ibooks](#). I just make inkjet prints and take them to a bindery. I use [Campbell-Logan](#) in Minneapolis. This was my dummy for *Sleeping by the Mississippi*:



Martin Parr and Gerry Badger will be including this homemade edition in their new book, *The Photobook: A History. Vol II.*

24 Comments

1. Alec,
Like your work. I was interested in your book maquette note – could you post a few more details – like do you use any dividers between the inkjet prints etc – anything to watch out for in regard to binding. Thank you.

Comment by [Rod Tuach](#) — September 12, 2006 @ [5:21 am](#)

2. I use Epson Matte paper. With my Mississippi and Bogota maquettes, I used double sided matte, but this is limited to 8.5×11. With my Niagara maquette I used single sided Epson. I don't use dividers between the prints. I also don't print in the gutter so I don't have to worry about losing anything. My biggest problem is that the paper is too stiff. It is a little uncomfortable to look at. I haven't had any other problems.

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — September 12, 2006 @ [6:53 am](#)

3. I've finishing work right now on several commercial/editorial portfolio books (gotta pay the bills...) using InkPress' "Photo Luster Duo," another double-sided inkjet paper. Double-sided paper lends itself well to an authentic book feel.

The print quality is great, as long as you use the appropriate ICC profiles. I'm printing on an Epson 4000, using 13×19" paper—a hefty size, but the prints really pop and the book can be FedEx'ed to prospective clients.

For those interested in this paper stock...InkPress had been sourcing the paper from Konica, a company that has gone out of business. I've been told that they're securing a new source to make the paper available again soon.

I'm receiving delivery of a few new books soon. If I have time, I'll photograph a book and post it to my blog sometime soon.

Comment by [Christian](#) — September 12, 2006 @ [8:32 am](#)

4. Ah... memories. I remember seeing this way back when in Karen Irvine's office,(2004). Was such a pretty little thing. Since, I've seen these in every art world office I come across! How many do you usually make?

Comment by [Brian](#) — September 12, 2006 @ [10:03 am](#)

5. I made about 50 Mississippi books, 10 Bogota books, 5 Niagara books. Hmmm, seems like a trend.

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — September 12, 2006 @ [10:16 am](#)

6. I've used inkjetart's double sided matte paper for mine. I stitched the pages together on a sewing machine and ran linen tape up the spine. More of a booklet that's limited to 20 or so pages. The dummy for 'Sleeping by the Mississippi' looks beautiful. I'll have to find a bindery. The iPhoto books I've seen weren't that great looking in terms of print quality.

Comment by [ford](#) — September 12, 2006 @ [10:18 am](#)

7. I made a mock-up and had it bound at a great binderery in Ann Arbor, MI (www.bessenberg.com), my only complaint was the paper thickness as well and how it wasn't comfortable to flip through. The owner told me about the paper grain. If you hold the sheet of paper and bend it you'll notice it is easier to flip if you print with the grain.

i've also been doing a lot of print-on-demand books too with lulu.com. my friend and i recently started a website to showcase some of the work. you can check it out at <http://www.pingpongprojects.com>.

Comment by [Melissa Catanese](#) — September 12, 2006 @ [10:33 am](#)

8. Alec:

Try ANW Crestwood's smooth cotton duo 190, it is a high ink density, short fiber sheet made for bookarts. It has a great page flip and prints beautifully.

Mike

Comment by [Mike Rebholz](#) — September 12, 2006 @ [2:29 pm](#)

9. Oh how I remember those prints...
I feel like I did them myself.

Comment by [HeidiQ](#) — September 12, 2006 @ [2:48 pm](#)

10. there are ways to bind stiff papers and still have the book lay flat. you might try asking on book_arts-l.

Comment by [aizan](#) — September 12, 2006 @ [4:18 pm](#)

11. Book Maquettes.. I love them!

FYI..There's a great story in Art In America this month which spells out how terrible the economics of the art book business has become. As a crazed photo book collector it just makes me so sad.

But I wish more young Art Photographers would make these Maquettes available at the galleries. Many photo's don't stand well on their own, and frequently, I find, the book a much more enjoyable work of art.

Comment by [Mike](#) — September 12, 2006 @ [4:57 pm](#)

12. I only skimmed the Art in America story. It seems focused on scholarly art books. I get the feeling that artist's books are going to survive. Nobody makes money, of course, but it seems to keep getting easier to do small runs. Printing on demand seems quite possible.

I agree with your comment about selling artist books. But there is a pricing problem. I recently encountered a gorgeous artist book. I inquired about the price. It was \$800, edition of 50. It was cheaper than the inferior prints on the walls. But because it is a book, it seemed expensive. Know what I mean?

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — September 12, 2006 @ [5:25 pm](#)

13. Thanks for the tips Alec, the dummy looks great.

I was thinking about trying to put something together like Lee Friedlander used to do in the 1970s which I saw at his show in Moma last year. Unfortunately they were all in glass cases so could only look, no touch. I'm sure they were very expensive at the time.

Comment by [Tadhg Devlin](#) — September 14, 2006 @ [5:34 am](#)

14. I'm going to be forward and ask how much a print run of 50 cost you Alec?

Comment by [Theodore Williams](#) — September 15, 2006 @ [5:10 am](#)

15. It was a long time ago, but it was approximately \$50 a book for binding, maybe \$10 for printing (I'm just guessing). So, approximately \$3000.

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — September 15, 2006 @ [7:49 am](#)

16. Wow! A little more expensive than I would have guessed!!
Cheers Alec.

Comment by Theodore Williams — September 17, 2006 @ [5:28 am](#)

17. Hi Alec,

Love your work. When you made these books, a long time ago, what was your intention... I'm assuming if you paid for this yourself then you didn't have gallery representation or an agent at the time(?).

I'm asking because I'm in the process of printing up 15 books and I'm at a loss of what my move should be after they are printed. To be honest I'm not even sure why I'm printing them (although I've had some shows and sold a few pieces), it's not like I have collectors knocking. I suppose I just love art/photo books and thus I'm making my own.

Comment by [Theresa](#) — September 18, 2006 @ [1:21 pm](#)

18. My reasons are just like your Theresa. I love photo books. I figured I wouldn't have a book published until I was 80, so I figured I'd just do it myself. I sold a few. This helped pay for the production. And I gave a bunch away to people I admired. As it turned out, a few people really responded to the work as a book.

If you love pictures, make pictures. If you love books, make books.

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — September 18, 2006 @ [8:09 pm](#)

19. Hello Alec

As a great fan of your work I was very excited recently to get a print of Melissa (Niagara). However, I am really struggling trying to locate a print of Charles, Vasa in any size at all !
I would love to know more about your small print run hand-made books. it may be a wonderful substitute to not finding the print could you perhaps please email me on how to find a copy.
Thank you!

Comment by Serge — September 19, 2006 @ [3:36 am](#)

20. Unfortunately the books are long gone. There are copies floating around out there but I didn't keep track of who received them. Sorry I can't be of more help.

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — September 19, 2006 @ [7:51 am](#)

21. hello alec

i would like to hear your opinion about e-books...<http://www.zonezero.com/books4sale/index.html>
what do you think ??
thank you in advance and best from russia

Comment by valeri nistratov — October 27, 2006 @ [8:46 am](#)

22. I don't have a strong feeling one way or the other about e-books. But for me it can't replace the tactile quality of a real book.

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — October 27, 2006 @ [3:04 pm](#)

23. Hello Alec,

A rather dull technical question I'm afraid but...

I was wondering if you did the scanning of your images (presumably off neg?) yourself, or if you had to get them done at a lab on drum or flexi-scan?

I ask this in the context of what a mock-up book will look like with its ink-jets alongside or compared to exhibition prints. Hope you have a moment to respond. Best wishes from London! Pete

Comment by Pete Massingham — April 11, 2007 @ [5:04 am](#)

24. Pete, I made pretty low-res scans from prints for the book dummy. No need to scan the negs for such a small publication.

Comment by [Alec Soth](#) — April 12, 2007 @ [6:19 am](#)