

Sophia Greiff

Author and Curator for Photography

Mobile +49 (0) 170 – 7357267 • E-Mail mail@sophiagreiff.de • Web www.sophiagreiff.de

ALEC SOTH

LOOKING FOR LOVE, 1996

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“I need to sometimes look backward in order to move forward. I need to remember the reason why I first got interested in photography in order to continue photographing.”

- Alec Soth -

Wandering around and exploring, absorbing the world with a searching gaze – without knowing what exactly the aim of this search is. Finding things, approaching strangers, entering the unknown.

Looking for love, 1996 goes back to the time when photographer Alec Soth first fell in love with his medium and its possibilities. Born and based in Minneapolis, Minnesota he starts documenting the landscapes and places of the American Mid-West, photographs individuals and couples, captures scenes from bars and parties. Like the portrayed looking for love and longing for acceptance, Alec Soth is searching for his visual language and mode of expression through photography: Following his curiosity and intuition, looking at people respectfully, maybe even with love – and sometimes getting some love in return.

Inspired by the grand masters, by the unpretentious motifs of William Eggleston, the ‘persistent beauty’ in the landscapes of Robert Adams or the intensity of the portraits of Diane Arbus, Soth is looking for the subjects that fascinate him, the stories that catch his attention. And somewhere between the minimalistic aesthetics of Lewis Baltz and the comprehensive explorations of the US by Joel Sternfeld, who was his teacher at Sarah Lawrence College in New York, Alec Soth finds his own path, his unique position between influence and differentiation.

Looking for love, 1996 reflects on this pure and uncertain aura of all beginning – in love, as well as in every new photographic project. These are the pictures before Soth’s first book *Sleeping by the Mississippi* (2004), before the stories of newlyweds and broken hearts in *Niagara* (2006) or the desire to escape in *Broken Manual* (2012). And yet they are a little bit of all of them. They are the fragments leading to something bigger, the pieces of an ongoing analysis and reflection on photography and in some way they are most likely part of a personal story.