

# STEPHEN WIRTZ GALLERY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Julie Casemore  
(415) 433-6879, [julie@wirtzgallery.com](mailto:julie@wirtzgallery.com)

## **ALEC SOTH**

*Sleeping by the Mississippi*

Exhibition dates: June 2-July 10, 2004

Opening reception for the artist Thursday, June 3, 2004, 5:30-7:30 pm

Artist Talk at Stephen Wirtz Gallery Wednesday, June 2, 2004, 6:00 pm

Stephen Wirtz Gallery announces an exhibition of Alec Soth's series *Sleeping by the Mississippi*, large format color photographs documenting the people, landscapes, still-lives, and interior scenes that tell the story of Mississippi River culture.

Over the past five years, Soth has made numerous journeys from his hometown in Minneapolis down the Mississippi River to the Delta recording the eccentricity, unexpected beauty, profound mystery, and sadness of the people and places he discovers along the way. The artist's masterful sense of composition and the startling clarity of the images realized with an 8 x 10" view camera imbue the often-forlorn subject matter with an undeniable presence and the grandeur of Old Master paintings. Soth selects his subjects with an eye for the surreal and his images engage the viewer with dignified presentations of abandoned interiors, debris-laden landscapes, and portraits of fringe lifestyles that have the otherworldliness of a waking dream.

Soth records American life and landscape in the powerful photographic tradition beginning in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century and extending to the work of such photographers as Walker Evans, Robert Frank, William Eggleston, and Joel Sternfeld, who was his teacher. His immense curiosity about his chosen subject compels him to approach selected individuals and engage them in conversation about their lives—permission to create a portrait of the person where they live is often granted. In both portraiture and landscape images, Soth carefully controls the placement of all elements in the composition and may carefully rearrange what he finds in the environment to effectively tell a story.

Holland Cotter in the *New York Times* writes, "In short, the trip is an encounter with fame, sex, and salvation, three of the great American passions, and with landscapes and interiors, equally ruined and haunted. The final image in Mr. Soth's book, of a metal bed frame lying half-submerged in Mississippi River swamp weeds, adorned by a few white flowers, is the perfect coda to the series: a kind of dream-memorial to strange, sad tale persuasively told."

ALEC SOTH (b.1969, Minneapolis, MN) received his B.A. from Sarah Lawrence College. His acclaimed series *Sleeping by the Mississippi* is included in the 2004 *Whitney Biennial* currently on view. A solo exhibition of the series was exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Photography, Chicago, in 2003. His work is included in many museum collections, including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN. *Sleeping by the Mississippi*, a monograph of the series, will be published by Steidl and released this summer.

Stephen Wirtz Gallery is located at 49 Geary St., 3<sup>rd</sup> Fl., San Francisco, CA 94108, (415) 433-6879. Gallery hours are Tuesday-Friday, 9:30-5:30, Saturday 10:30-5:30.

For additional information please contact Julie Casemore, Tel.: (415) 433-6879, [julie@wirtzgallery.com](mailto:julie@wirtzgallery.com).

###

STEPHEN WIRTZ GALLERY, INC. 49 GEARY STREET SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94108  
TELEPHONE (415) 433-6879 FAX (415) 433-1608 EMAIL [SWG@WIRTZGALLERY.COM](mailto:SWG@WIRTZGALLERY.COM)