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Daltri, Veronica. "One Democratic Pound (Photo) – International." *Breaking Latest News*, January 27, 2022.



Breaking Latest News

American photographer Alec Soth has been “the great traveling witness of American life” since it came out in 2004 *Sleeping by the Mississippi*, work that made him known to the general public and officially landed in the world of art.

Since then the artist has been tireless, obsessed with images: those he creates, those of others, the processes that give rise to them and their various intersections with other media. In addition to giving life to his own projects, he collects (almost accumulates) photographs, writes a photography and poetry newsletter, has a publishing house / laboratory (Little Brown Mushroom), a YouTube channel on photography books and during the lockdown he created the show *The palms*, in which he selected and projected images improvising to the rhythm of the drums of jazz musician Dave King. He organized a summer photography camp for children, he devoted himself to the “yoga of laughter” applied to photography and now to meditation as a life practice and teaching.

His new book *A pound of pictures* (Mack, 2022) is a summary of all these activities. The project begins in 2018 with a precise idea: inspired by a poem by Walt Whitman, Soth wants to document what divides the United States in terms of politics and society, retracing the road made by Abraham Lincoln’s coffin from



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Washington, DC to Springfield , Illinois. But then came the pandemic and social distancing. And in May 2020 George Floyd was killed right in Minneapolis, where Soth lives.

In light of these epochal changes, Soth realizes that the initial idea is no longer enough for him. To get out of the immobility after the lockdown, inspired by another Whitman poem, he adopts a more fluid and free approach based on the flow of consciousness, thanks to which he writes lists of things to photograph (one later used as the cover of the book) which pastes on the steering wheel of his car and which he searches while crossing the United States, sometimes even choosing places thanks to the roll of a dice on a map.

Above all, he photographs the things he encounters and which immediately attract his interest, letting himself be guided by the simple pleasure of observing and by the confidence that there is something of value inherent in everything that intrigues him. Notice where his attention goes, such as during meditation. Take photographs and continue to collect those of others, including markets and vendors. He comes across an antique dealer who sells photos by weight (hence the title *A pound of pictures*, a pound of images) and begins to reflect on the physicality of each photograph and on that of the photographic process.

Bewildered, you may be wondering what this book is about. It is a fragmented series of images that make up a photography book about photography itself. Soth writes: "If the images in this book are to be about anything other than their physicality, they are about the process of their creation: the connection between the ephemeral (the light) and the physical (the eyes / the film)", that is the generative process common to all photographs.

William Eggleston's democratic gaze towards things (everything can be photographed) extends to the physicality of each photograph. Each volume in fact contains five different reprints of vernacular photos purchased by the author, freely inserted between the pages of each copy. The boundaries between Soth's photographs and those of others are thinning more and more: all become democratically part of the pound of images.

Here the video on Instagram of the opening of the exhibition by *A pound of pictures* at the Sean Kelly gallery in New York.