

# SEAN KELLY

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### THE SECRET LIVES OF MUSEUM GUARDS



Tammy Ray with “The Mill Stream,” by George Innes, circa 1888. Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2014.  
PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEC SOTH

The photographer Alec Soth is a native of Minneapolis, Minnesota. In the early nineties, after graduating from Sarah Lawrence College, in New York, he returned to his home town and, for a period, worked in the darkroom of the Visual Resources Department of the Minneapolis Institute of Art (Mia). Soth, who today is a member of Magnum and a sought-after documentary photographer (you can see his recent *New Yorker* portfolio from New Orleans here), still lives and works in his home town. Last year, he returned to Mia to photograph the security guards who work the museum’s galleries and grounds, capturing them in front of their favorite works of art and interviewing them about their jobs. His quiet, contemplative portraits—which were made as a contribution to the museum’s new hundredth-anniversary anthology, “The Art of Wonder”—offer an unusual window into the private thoughts that keep museum guards occupied as they hold down their often tedious posts. Jason Ressler, who is shown behind one of Nick Cave’s frenetic Soundsuit sculptures, says he spends his work hours mentally composing music. Leroy Smith, whose favorite piece is Egon Schiele’s harrowing “Portrait of Paris von Gütersloh,” said, “I play little games in my head.” Soth photographed a young guard named Whitney Sauer in the museum’s Connecticut Room, which recreates a farmhouse parlor from colonial New England. “One of the reasons I love the Connecticut Room so much is because I’ve made up my own little story behind it,” she said. “The owners died horrible deaths and now watch over everybody who works here and visits here.”



Adam White with large-leaf verdure tapestry fragment with birds, sixteenth century. Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2014.  
PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEC SOTH



Emily Kaplan with "Blind Man's Buff," by Max Beckmann, 1945. Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2014.  
PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEC SOTH



Whitney Sauer in the Connecticut Room, eighteenth century. Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2014.  
PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEC SOTH



Leroy Smith with "Portrait of Paris von Gütersloh," by Egon Schiele, 1918. Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2014.  
PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEC SOTH



Gina Carchedi with "Dining Room in the Country," by Pierre Bonnard, 1913. Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2014.  
PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEC SOTH



Larell Walker with a scholar's rock. Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2014.  
PHOTOGRAPH BY ALEC SOTH



Jason Ressler with "Soundsuit," by Nick Cave, 2010. Minneapolis Institute of Art, 2014.  
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