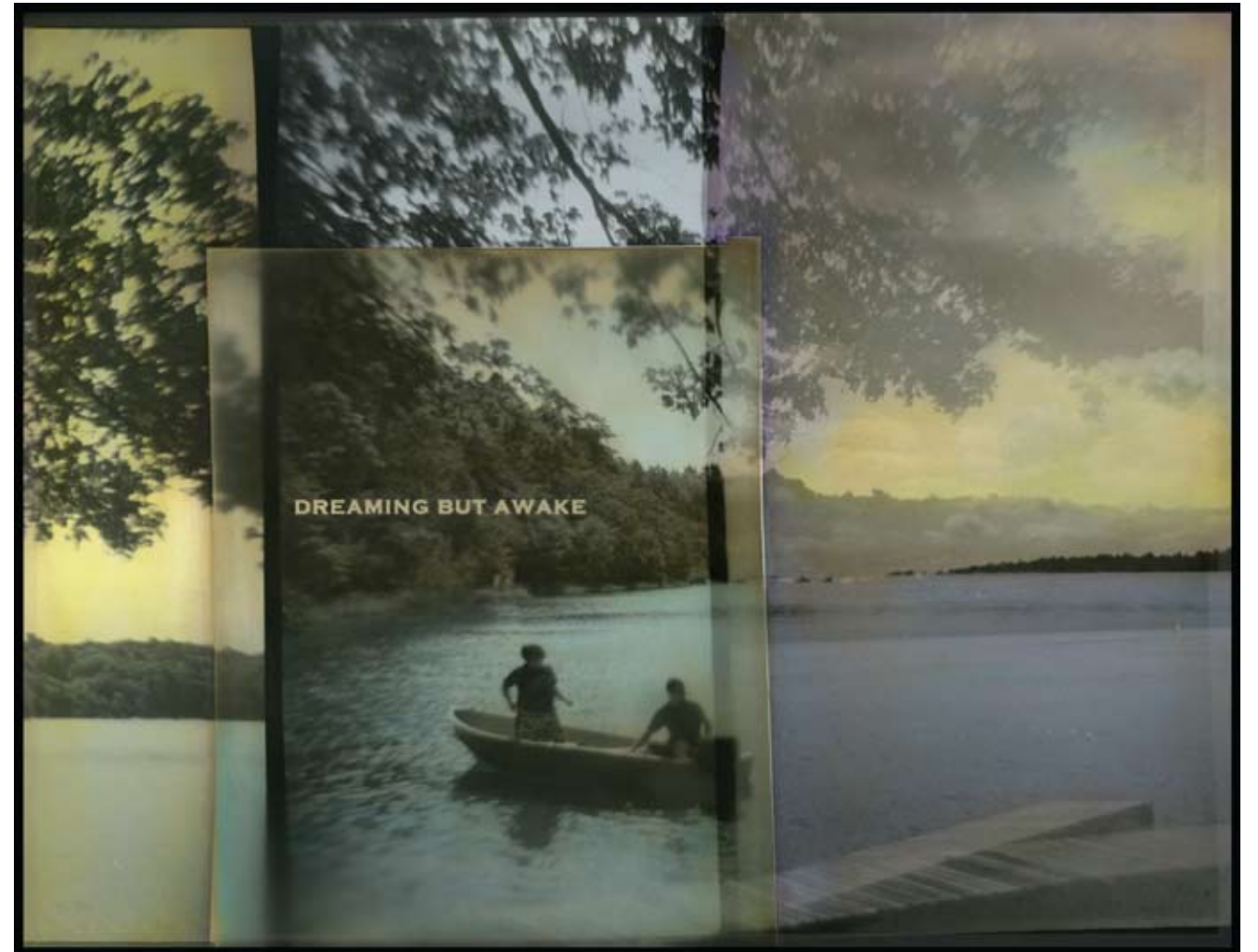


aline smithson
SHE'S SO By Jennifer Chen



UNUSUAL



I first met Aline Smithson at a Julie Dean silent auction in Los Angeles, featuring photography greats such as David Hume Kennerly, Mary Ellen Mark, Douglas Kirkland and Greg Gorman. Aline had a beautiful print up for auction, which she told me was a painted portrait of her daughter. She had taken the original black-and-white

image and hand painted over it—not in Photoshop, but with an actual paintbrush.

Her love of Japanese hand-painted photographs inspired her to create her own. She shares, “With hand painting, you have to print in the darkroom on a certain matte paper to let the paint adhere to the surface.” With her painting background, Aline

moves pretty quickly and can finish one hand-painted image in about half a day.

We discussed the images on display and eventually she told me about her blog (<http://lenscratch.blogspot.com>) that features a new photographer daily. Recently Source Photographic Review named Aline’s blog as one of the 10 photography-related blogs photographers should be reading.

Aline launched the blog in February 2007, and 512 posts (and counting) later, she has connected with photographers all around the world. Aline admits the blog is a “huge time suck” for her, but says, “the rewards outweigh the negatives.” Since the inception of her daily photo blog, a female photographer she featured landed a photo book. Aline originally started the blog about her own work, but after a month she was tired of talking about herself. So she started featuring photographers she found interesting, and built a readership from there. Some photographers contact her to be featured, but most of the time Aline finds the photographers herself. “I do a fair amount of research before I do a post on them.” Aline’s posts aren’t just basic facts, but show a breadth of the photographer’s work and information about the featured images. Every day is a new photographer—a new look at the world.

Before her blog, Aline has been surrounded by images her whole life. Her dad had a darkroom, and her uncle shot travel photography for *Westways* magazine. After she left college, she worked in an art gallery

in New York, but became disenchanted. Afterward she started working in the fashion world as an editor with top designers for over 10 years. She never considered photography until moving to Los Angeles with her husband and starting a family. She took one photography class and the teacher told her she should show her work. Aline comments, “I never looked back. I showed my first piece in 1998.”

Her portfolio *Unreal/Reality* may seem like simple black-and-white shots of cit-

ies around the United States, but further investigation reveals the towns are made up of Legos. Aline, who always totes a toy camera with her wherever she goes, visited Legoland in Carlsbad, CA, with her children and started shooting there. “I liked what I got and went again. Soon, the kids didn’t want to go any more so I went by myself. I felt that the images worked with a toy camera because if you see the buildings in person, you can tell they are Legos because of the color.”

One glance at her portfolio, *In Case of Rain*, the viewer catches a day in the life of a child pre-iPhones, Internet and tweeting. Aline shares, “I’m of the generation that has a foot in both worlds. When I was a fashion editor, we didn’t have computers, but my children were born and raised on computers. So during a summer vacation by the lake, if they weren’t in the lake, they were on the computer.”

A stack of records, old children’s books, paper dolls, stacks of *Life* magazine become



