

visual research/ falling?



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I took this image almost two years ago in the summer of 2009. I was in Austin, Texas and was only passing through town and wanted to check out the popular watering hole called Barton Springs. I had never been to Austin before and had been looking forward to visiting it ever since I began driving across the country from Philadelphia. I was on my way out West, and taking route 10 down South, with the idea of eventually ending up in Berkeley where I was to start graduate school in only a number of weeks. While walking around the springs I crossed a bridge and I was tapped on my shoulder and told to, "Check this out". Next thing I know I see man in suspended animation and I have one of the best images of my road trip across America.

According to Sturkin in the *Practices of Looking*, people have learned to accept the photograph as truth, but some of the first questions I received from fellow students in my visual studies course last semester about this image was whether or not this was real. Due to the lack of context of where this person came from in the image it might seem as if he was digitally placed there. Though Sturkin might claim that people are inclined to believe what they see in an image, I believe in the last decade since this paper was written this inclination to accept may have changed. The prevalence of manipulated images in journalism and popular culture along with the ease of transforming an image may have caused people to be more skeptical of seemingly fantastic looking images.

I told this story because this is what I bring personally to this image. It works into a narrative of my life from two years ago, as somebody moving out West and starting a new and feeling a little bit in free fall himself. Without this background what one might denotatively and connotatively take away from this image may be quite different. Denotatively the region of the country may be difficult to locate, unless you are familiar with Austin as a city. This really could be any river in many places of the country, let alone the world. You might assume it is warm out because the man has no shirt on, and the shorts and sneakers might identify him as a skater.

Connotatively the act this man is taking of jumping in such a way might indicate that he is young and potentially into extreme sports. The act of plunging in head first in such a way might also be a signifier that has signified rebelling against safety and preconceived cultural norms. Though someone might use Barthes tools of analyzing images in such a way I believe a narrative, whether real or self imposed has the potential to make certain images more compelling. My photography is all about documenting and exploration of new places and experiences I might be having. A picture might say a thousand words, but the story behind it could make it a million.