

*Thursday, January 12, 2006*



I am watching a documentary 'The Songhunter' about Alan Lomax (1915-2002) the ethnomusicologist who travelled through the world to record folk music, realizing that these forms of traditional music would disappear soon with the rise of commercial popular music and mass media. He has recorded more than 10.000 songs. At the end of his life he signed a contract with Rounder records. The Alan Lomax collection consists of 100 cd's .

I admire people who have a mission in life, trying to document endangered forms of culture or nature. It reminds me of Roman Vishniac (1897-1990) who photographed Jewish life in the shtetls and cities of eastern Europe during the 1930's. He felt that this life would be destroyed by the nazi's. He worked with a hidden camera through an enlarged button hole. To blend in, he posed as a vagabond peddler and to avoid arrest by police as a psychotic. He was imprisoned 11 times. 'A Vanished World' is the name of his book.

Just like Lomax saved voices and songs, Vishniac saved faces.