

STEVEN
KASHER
GALLERY

Interview

A FEMALE PHEROMONE HOTBOX

BY RACHEL SMALL

PHOTOGRAPHY KATE OWEN



Opening tonight at Steven Kasher Gallery, "Pheromone Hotbox" presents the work of five young female photographers whose practices revolve around depicting other women: Aneta Bartos, Amanda Charchian, Shae DeTar, Olivia Locher, and Marianna Rothen. Discovered over the last year and a half by Kasher and his partner Andi Potamkin, with whom he runs the gallery's smaller offshoot Kasher|Potamkin, the artists embody an invigorating post-*Girls* feminist attitude toward women

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creating art about women. Images are electric in the way that they channel the complicated and arousing current between women who are physically and emotionally close.

In earlier projects, Charchian named this abstract, sensuous meeting space a "pheromone hotbox," and lent the idea to the show. "I saw their work as an antidote to the Terry Richardson-esque style of demeaning women," Kasher says. "And it seemed to me very different from [a similar show] 15 years ago, [in which] young women represented other young women as beset upon, embattled, challenged, insecure, and confused." Styles range from Bartos's muggy, voyeuristic nudes, to DeTar's nature-inspired shots overlaid with paint, to Locher's playful setups riffing on everything from stereotypical 'How-tos' to off-kilter state laws.

"In this new generation of images, the women are victorious...They celebrate the body and sexuality as if the devouring male gaze is not problematic," Kasher continues. "I cannot think of more timely works than these, as they take the narcissistic, porn-pervaded, image-overloaded culture of our time and make of it something beautiful, liberating, and even empowering."

Read on to learn more about each photographer.



ANETA BARTOS

AGE: This question is great if you are under 25 or, like, 90.

BASED: New York for 16 years by way of Tomaszow Mazowiecki, Poland

FIRST CAMERA: Russian camera, Zenit. I bought it.

DREAM SHOOT: Aliens from different planets

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CRAZIEST SHOOT: Years ago I was shooting an editorial in Everglades, Florida. I went into the swamp filled with alligators to get the shot. My team was watching from afar in disbelief and the model was clueless—I think it was her second day in the States and she didn't speak any English. Two years later I read that couple of women were eaten alive by the alligators in that area.

THE IMPOSSIBLE IMAGE: I wish I could go back in time about a decade or so to start shooting my dad for my new project, which I began a year and a half ago, called 'My Dad the Bodybuilder.'

WHAT'S NEXT: I'll be shooting my Spider Monkeys as soon as it gets warmer—this time water will be my main location. Then [I am] flying to Poland to continue photographing my dad.

IN FIVE YEARS: I don't think that far ahead. I live day to day.



AMANDA CHARCHIAN

AGE: 26

BASED: Los Angeles. I need the light in California.

FIRST CAMERA: My dad had a 35mm Nikon camera that I used incessantly to photograph my girlfriends in high school.

DREAM SHOOT: Georgia May Jagger in the "Sea of Stars" on Vaadhoo Island in the Maldives. [There is a] beach that, in the night, looks like a mirror image of the stars above. The bioluminescence in the water makes the phytoplankton glow. It's so magical. Or I would have liked to photograph Bas Jan Ader on his boat before he disappeared into the sea forever.

FAR OUT: I was shooting a campaign in a fire ravished desert forest in Idyllwild, California. The grounds

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were all black and charred. It was the middle of summer. I bought this colored powder that they use in the Indian Holi festival, and was pouring it on the ground to make these shapes around the models. I was thinking in my head that it was a spell to heal the burnt land. Then one of the models said something like "Let's make it rain." We started shooting and just as we were finishing it started to rain! It wasn't a heavy storm by any means, but we were all so amazed at our magical ritual's results. Of course, it stopped when we got in the car.

ON THE EXHIBIT: "Pheromone Hotbox" is the philosophical construct I have been working within for the last few years. When Steven approached me about the show, I told him about the concept and he asked to use the name. It is the specific idea of what happens when a woman photographs another woman intimately, and the biologically confounded process our pheromones go through during that time...With every picture, [I try to] bring the extraordinary out of the ordinary.

WHAT'S NEXT: I am working on my first monograph, which is a collection of the photographs taken from 2012 to 2015 under the "Pheromone Hotbox" experiments. In addition to fine art photography I work in sculpture, fashion photography, and film. So there will definitely be more of that this year in the realms of fine art, fashion and music.

IN FIVE YEARS: I will be interviewed in *Interview* by Yoko Ono.



SHEA DETAR

AGE: 36

BASED: New York via Pennsylvania

FIRST CAMERA: My artist brother Greg bought me a Mamiya Rz 67 Twin Reflex. It's still my baby and I've shot nearly everything with it, until very recently.

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EARLY EXPERIMENTS: I found photography later in life. The first year I started experimenting with photography, I shot a lot of self-portraits, mainly out of fear of wasting people's time sitting for me. The first image I remember making that I really liked is a self-portrait—I heavily painted myself lying down with lace shadows on my face. I tinted my body blue and painted yellow flowers all around my body. It's sort of a haunting but peaceful image.

DREAM SUBJECT AND LOCATION: Dream location is Iceland! I am desperate to go there. My dream subject is Bjork. As an artist, she is so inspiring and creatively free. I would love to collaborate with her. I actually tried writing her manager a few months ago saying I would love to collaborate, but I never heard back. But I always say, you never know if you don't try, so I put it out into the universe and hey, who knows, maybe one day it'll happen if the time is right.

GOING THE DISTANCE: I feel like most of my shoots are sort of crazy, or I guess just one big adventure. I'm usually climbing mountains, rocks, hills, swimming in rivers with currents, or trekking deep in the middle of flower fields with rattlesnakes, and usually with a bunch of women getting nude or wearing costumes. We must be a sight to see if you happen to be in a car driving by us. I've dropped my camera climbing on multiple occasions; I have had to get my camera seriously fixed about four times from my climbing and falling.

ORIGINALITY: I hand paint most everything I work on, so most of my work is hands-on. I photograph an image and then I take it home and I spend time molding it into a new creation. I rarely stick with the original image I shot. I love to take the viewer out of direct reality, creating a moment in a world that maybe doesn't exist.

WHAT'S NEXT: I have shows in London and Paris, and I am working on a series of much bigger work, blowing my images up and painting on them from a larger scale than I usually do. Also, I wrote a screenplay for a short film a few years ago and a treatment for an art video, but I put them on the back burner because I wanted to focus completely on fine art. But this last year, I've been thinking about going back to those scripts and seeing what might happen if I tried making them.

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OLIVIA LOCHER

AGE: 24

BASED: New York for 6 years, from Johnstown, Pennsylvania

FIRST CAMERA: Sometime in early 2006 I received a FedEx delivery containing a Nikkormat FT2 and several lenses. I later found out it was sent from a man in his sixties who was a follower of my blog-life. The blog contained mostly webcam selfies and other teenage rants. Strange enough, that's how I got into photography.

DREAM SUBJECT: I can't narrow down just one—top three on my wish list are Matthew Barney, Joaquin Phoenix, and David Lynch. The work these men do really inspires me, it would be an honor to photograph any of them.

INTUITION: Everything is inspired by something; no one's ideas are brand new. I am inspired by early pop art, cinema, music, etcetera. I guess what's different about my work is my process, my practice is very idea based. Each idea is the foundation for a new piece. I work impulsively and trust my ideas...I'm a female artist who often deals with feminist concepts with a sarcastic approach.

WHAT'S NEXT: I am about to finish a two-year long project titled "I Fought the Law." I am beginning to research publishers and am hopeful for an art book to come of it. I'm excited to finally have it off my plate; it's the longest I've ever worked on a singular project.

IN FIVE YEARS: [I will] still [be] making photographs and following my wildest ideas. I don't know

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where I'll be in the world, I keep telling myself someday I'll move away from New York, but it's really got a hold on me.



MARIANNA ROTHEN

AGE: 32

LOCATION: New York for 10 years, from Bolton, Canada

FIRST CAMERA: My first camera was from McDonald's. It was a wind-up toy car that I pretended to take pictures with. I called it The Spy Camera.

FIRST FAVORITE PHOTO: I took a black and white photograph of my brother dressed up as Edward Scissorhands. This was the late '90s. It was the first time I felt everything was magic.

DREAM SHOOT: Faye Dunaway in the 1960s on the set of a Sergio Leone film.

GETTING INTO CHARACTER: [For one shoot, I traveled] deep into the desert for a week, to middle of nowhere, in the dead of winter—just me and my actress, who had to play a female character in a state of distress!

THE IMPOSSIBLE IMAGE: Photographing dreams. If there was a way I could capture snippets of my dreams at night onto a print—vivid, haunting, mysterious, intricate.

THROUGH HER EYES: By mixing digital and analog formats my images become suspended in time. My pictures are a reflection of the way I see the world.

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WHAT'S NEXT: Finishing up a short film series and shooting a new body of work.

IN FIVE YEARS, SHE'LL BE: Hopefully wiser, better, and the same.

"PHEROMONE HOTBOX" OPENS TONIGHT AT [STEVEN KASHER GALLERY](#) IN CHELSEA AND IS ON VIEW THROUGH FEBRUARY 28.