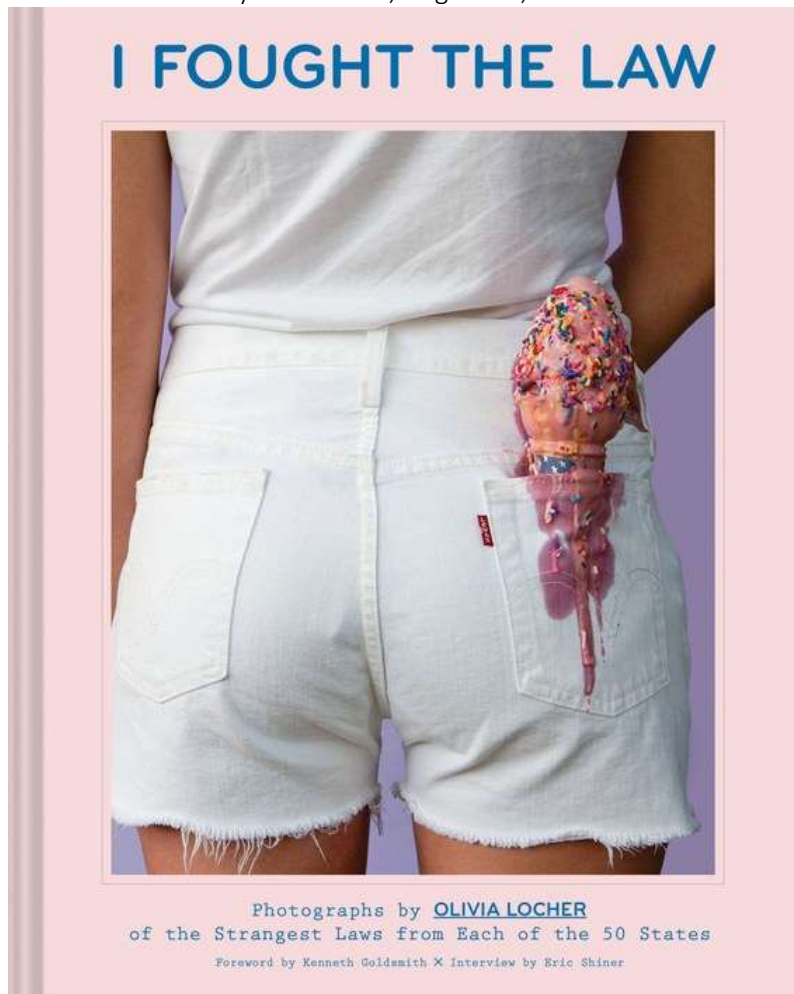


STEVEN
KASHER
GALLERY
VOGUE

MEET THE PHOTOGRAPHER TURNING ALTERNATIVE FACTS INTO
ART

By Lilah Ramzi, August 22, 2017



*It's illegal to store an ice cream cone in your back pocket in the state of Alabama, says photographer Olivia Locher in her debut photography book, *I Fought the Law* (Chronicle Books). Or is it? The book, out next month, presents 50 (one for each state) pictorial enactments of "laws"—a cherry-picked selection of oddball decrees, some mere hearsay and others unfathomably factual. The result is a surreal compilation of imagery: a man riding a bicycle in a swimming pool, fishing poles baited with sticks of Acme-like dynamite, and a not-so-still life of bouncing pickles.*

Referencing Alejandro Jodorowsky's fantastical films of the 1970s and a pastel-heavy Pop Art palette (her appreciation of the Warhol-era runs deep; she describes herself as forever on the hunt for original Halston), Locher's work makes a blithe and cheery first impression but takes a subversive turn upon closer inspection. Her book tells a precautionary tale, calling attention to the blurred line between actual and believed truths. Locher doesn't disclose which of the 50 laws are pure myths ("it would suck the fun out of it"), playfully perpetuating the cycle of misinformation or, as of late, alternative facts.

STEVEN KASHER GALLERY

With a corresponding exhibition at Manhattan's Steven Kasher Gallery (opening September 14), Locher's timely social critique arrives somewhat serendipitously. "It's a really happy accident," explains Locher. "I sat with the contract for a while, so technically this book could have come out maybe a year ago. It's almost magic that I took forever to sign it, because now it feels so much more appropriate."

Over iced coffees at Tribeca's Maman, we sat down with the 26-year-old photographer to discuss lies, laws, and ice cream.

How did you develop an interest in photography?

I was homeschooled, so I was kind of a space cadet, and I was going to the bookstore and getting every fashion magazine. I really took to Marc Jacobs and Juergen Teller collaborations because I was really into the people they would photograph: actors, musicians. I would try to copy Juergen's style with my friends.

Where did you find these laws?

I was using these books from Scholastic published in the '70s. There was no factual information with any of them. There are also places online where people just post lists of these, but it's like, Who came up with that and who decided that that's a law? I got a fact-checker to investigate every one. They called lawmakers and senators, and I am surprised people actually talked! I really wanted to know, just for myself, what I was putting out there.

And what did you learn?

Some laws that are still in existence are important in some way. Massachusetts says you can't take up-the-skirt photos. But there are some that are just totally random, like you can't disguise a bird to look like a parakeet. That's just weird. I found that it's really expensive to remove a law, so sometimes the mundane ones just stay in effect. For the laws that are myths, you wonder, Why did someone make that up and why did it go viral?

Was there a particular state you had the most fun with?

Delaware and the photo of my friend drinking Chanel perfume. I didn't realize how hard it is to take Chanel bottles apart. I was just going at this Chanel bottle with a wine opener, trying to get it so that I could pour apple juice into it. The whole process of getting that bottle open almost felt a little bit disrespectful to Chanel. Now I love it because I keep flowers in it.

Were you referencing anything for inspiration?

I am super fascinated in Pop Art, especially early Pop Art, so I referenced Warhol a lot. I feel like I always bring Warhol vibes into my work; even the shooting process feels a little Warholian.