

URBAN OUTFITTERS

UO INTERVIEWS: OLIVIA LOCHER

By Cara Flaherty, September 5, 2017



We visited the colorful home studio of photographer Olivia Locher to learn more about her photo work and the inspiration behind her new book, *I Fought the Law*, which examines strange, outdated laws from each of the 50 U.S. States. Space Ninety 8 will host a book launch with the author in conversation with Gallery Director Cassandra Johnson on Thursday, September 7th from 7-9pm.

Tell us more about yourself, where you are from, what you do.

I was born in Johnstown, Pennsylvania 26 years ago. I lived there until I was 18 then I moved to NYC. I am a conceptual photographer who is fascinated with color!

When did you take up photography? Was it always something you wanted to pursue or did your interest happen organically?

When I was a tweenager I became obsessed with fashion magazines. I was homeschooled and spent a lot of time daydreaming. Luckily my parents never stopped this behavior. I was particularly inspired by Marc Jacobs and Juergen Teller's collaborations. I got my start in photography by trying to imitate what Teller was doing by using my friends and myself as subjects. Myspace's popularity also helped encourage me to make images, it was all about that profile photo, right?

Where do you find inspiration for your work?

Living in Manhattan is very inspiring for me. It sounds cheesy to say but I feel like New York has a very special vibration that I feed off. I also love that I can go look at amazing artwork anytime I desire. The curation in the galleries and museums is always top notch here. Otherwise, I watch so many movies both Hollywood and arthouse. I especially love the directors Alejandro Jodorosky, Matthew Barney, John Waters, and David Lynch.

You have a very distinct aesthetic and point of view. How did you find your photographic style?

I started to find my style somewhere in my third year of art school. I began practicing Transcendental Meditation my senior year and a few months later I had developed this real clarity. It's hard to explain but it's almost as if a light switch was turned on for me.

STEVEN
KASHER
GALLERY

What sorts of things are you drawn to when you're taking a photo?

When I get an idea that I like and it keeps repeating itself I know it's one I need to shoot. My work is very premeditated so I plan everything out before I bring in someone to pose for it. This allows for my subject to simply step into the frame and perform whichever action I've planned for them. It's magical seeing all my planning come together on days I'm shooting.

How did the concept for I Fought the Law come about?

I Fought the Law came about in a totally random way. I was photographing a friend when he randomly told me that, "it's illegal to have an ice-cream cone in your pocket". Our conversation quickly moved elsewhere but it was odd, that image kept haunting my thoughts. About a year later I decided to research it and found there wasn't a shortage of interesting laws. I then knew I had a new project.

What projects do you have on the horizon?

I am working on another long-term photography series called How To. Around the time I started the project I was looking through a lot of cookbooks. After a few cooking disasters, I got inspired by how directions could be easily lost in translation. I started illustrating simple tasks that were a little off.

Do you have any dream projects or people you would love to collaborate with?

I think Kanye West would be incredibly fun to work on something with. I'd also love to start working on fashion projects more steady, I love the work of Thom Browne, Marc Jacobs, Alessandro Michele – Gucci, and Susie Cave.

What advice would you give an aspiring photographer who's just starting out?

It's so important to experiment! You should photograph everything until you find the one thing that you're obsessed with, and then that thing can and will always change. Another major thing that I learned when I first start working was to never be afraid of failure. My personal failures have always taught me my biggest lessons and have allowed for me to grow.

What are some other current interests for you — music, art, design, places, people, etc.?

Here is a list of some things that immediately come to my mind! Coffee, Mike Kelley, Arthur Russell, 70s Halston's, The Rolling Stones, Eames Furniture, Josef Albers, Tom Waits, Andy Warhol, cactuses, Sonic Youth, Erwin Wurm, Brian Eno, and always collecting art books for my collection.