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THIS ARTIST BROKE SILLY LAWS IN 50 STATES AND
PHOTOGRAPHED THEM

By Kara Weisenstein, April 2, 2018



If you happen to be walking down Madison Avenue in Manhattan, keep an eye peeled for art amidst the advertisements. One block over from the fancier shopping on 5th Avenue, above a luxury goods store hawking Fendi bags, photographer Olivia Locher has turned four humble panes of glass—literally the window of her second floor studio—into a guerrilla art gallery.

Every day for ten days, from April 1 to 10, Locher is showing a new photograph from midnight to midnight. Called Moving, Everything Must Go, it's Locher's salute to the capitalist playground she's lived and worked in for the past three years before she packs up and vacates 159 Madison Avenue.

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Locher is a prankster. Her photographs are colorful and sunny, but beneath the surface they bubble with absurdity. She's well known for her series I Fought the Law, which featured photographs of people violating strange and arcane laws in all 50 states. An example: In Connecticut, pickles must bounce to be officially considered pickles.

VICE caught up with Locher to find out what inspired her latest act of artistic disobedience and what her neighbors think of her pop-up photo show.

VICE: Why did you decide to do this show, and what's the title about? Are you trying to do some spring cleaning?

Locher: The title, Moving, Everything Must Go came about because I'm moving studios. I've occupied and worked from 159 Madison Avenue for the past three years. I've always noticed people passing by on the street get very curious by my strobe light going off when I'm shooting and tend to look up and into my space. I love to have studio visits and entertain people, so this is my last rendezvous for the public who wouldn't get that formal invite inside. Eight of the ten images were shot from my studio, so I'd like to think of it as an invitation to see what happens inside of this space. None of my neighbors or the businessmen below have fully grasped what it is that I do, so here's that chance.

Why'd you pick these ten images?

I wanted for these images to act as a signifier for the street below. My images are all, in some way, advertisements, but they are not selling anything beyond a concept and an idea. To create images that are easily digestible, I often channel my knowledge of the deep history of advertising and its power of persuasion. I've decided to leave any information (titles, my name, etc.) out of the images, so the pedestrians will be left with only their own impact and knowledge of the image.

When selecting the photos, I was considering things that are familiar. Most people will see a photograph of David Bowie, but if you look closer and longer, you will see that it's someone's child posing as David Bowie. I am inspired by the tension between the comedic and the tragic, plus the pull of high versus low.

Why is it important to show work on your own terms?

Anyone who creates can show work on their own terms! I come from a strong DIY and punk background, and my youth revolved around experiencing DIY shows. I don't have permission to show this work. I'm waiting for my building to slam down my door and tear the prints off the windows, but that's what makes it special. So far, my building's reaction has been positive or unaffected.

A lot of times in life you don't need approval. I think it's important to follow your impulses. I've had the idea for this show for the past two years and always knew my last month occupying the space was the time to execute it, so here we are.

How does your window display interact with the shop windows on street level? Is there any conscious comment on consumer culture there?

Yeah, of course! What's funny about Madison Avenue is everyone tries to advertise. When you look up into windows, everyone has some sort of sign up. It happens from the highest to the lowest scenarios. You'll see Citi Bank posting huge banners in their windows and also see a small business next door putting terrible looking signs and advertisements in theirs. This must come from the deep history of the ad man on Madison Avenue. Everyone is still trying to swindle you into buying something that you may or may not need.

I want people to have the rare opportunity to see something on Madison Avenue that has no set goals for them.

Hopefully, if anything, this public display can brighten someone's day. Andy Warhol's last factory was located directly across the street at 158 Madison Avenue. My doorman once told me that Warhol often used to remove work from his

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studio through his large windows, because the pieces wouldn't fit through his doorway. That idea stuck with me and led to what I'm doing now.

Other than seeing the photos in real life or on Instagram, is there a way for people to check the work out?

Yeah! At the very end of this, I'm releasing a new handmade zine. I'm currently working on them right now. I also show my work in formal situations—I am represented by the Steven Kasher Gallery. And my first book, *I Fought the Law*, is available via Chronicle Books.