

STEVEN
KASHER
GALLERY

PDN PHOTO
OF THE DAY

PICTURING THE COUNTRY'S ODDEST LAWS

September 4, 2017



The idea for Olivia Locher's new book *I Fought the Law*, published this month by Chronicle Books, came from a comment a friend made during a photo shoot. As she writes in the book, "Out of nowhere he said, 'Hey, do you know it's illegal to have an ice cream cone in your back pocket in Alabama?' I didn't have an overwhelming response or reaction to his comment and our conversation quickly moved elsewhere." But she kept thinking about the claim, and eventually became interested in the murky lists of unusual laws that have populated websites and books dating back to at least the 1970s, collecting a mixture of current and revoked laws and those that have been misremembered or made up entirely. She became fascinated with the topic, and writes that "because they were all very visual, I knew I had found a new photography project."

Working in her New York studio and her hometown of Johnstown, Pennsylvania and using friends and acquaintances as models, Locher produced images that represent her "fifty favorite alleged laws, one for each state." The photographs share a bright, offbeat mood that sometimes crosses into the silly or provocative. Bits of hair adhere to the soap in an illustration of a Nevada law against putting a flag on a bar of soap. Body paint strategically covers women in images depicting a Florida law against latex clothing and a Wyoming law that forbids hairdressers from grooming pubic hair. In the book, Locher describes shooting the Alabama ice cream law (which she later discovered was not real, although neighboring states have had similar laws). Since a cone would melt by the time she got it back to her studio, she decided to shoot on location in Johnstown, with her mother and brother acting as assistants. "I'm super crazy about the small details of my photographs, so I begged the girl working to make my cone with an American flag wrapper that I sourced and brought along." Her assistants held a backdrop while "I waited for it to look just messy enough in [the model's] back pocket," she writes. "After about twenty photos we knew we had it and treated ourselves to fresh cones." As Kenneth Goldsmith writes in the book, "Off-kilter and spinning out of control, Locher's works give [the law] just the nudge it needs, helping it fall over. By confounding law with art, Locher fought the law, and the law lost."

An exhibition of work from the series will be on view at Steven Kasher Gallery in New York City from September 14 to October 21.