

## huck

Rule  
Breakers

Every non-fiction storyteller, whether they use images or words, enters the world on a sham. They burst out of the gates, all curious and bright-eyed, salivating after 'The Truth'. "I'm a messenger!" they declare. "A conduit, a vessel, an impartial observer. Feed me the world in all of its chaos and I'll feed you nothing but fact!" The delusion sets in hard and fast, but it only lasts so long. Once they see themselves in the stories they tell, slowly the spell starts to break.

Howard Zinn once said "it's impossible to be neutral," and he couldn't have made it any more clear. "Why should we cherish 'objectivity', as if ideas were innocent, as if they don't serve one interest or another?" And yet, the self-deception lingers on. There is no single truth, just an endless carousel of versions. And reality has never looked more blurred.

But in an age where it's hard to believe what we're told, there is a simple way out. And it starts by cutting the crap. By questioning so-called cardinal sins and looking inward for validation. By being an author with a voice, not a messenger living a lie.

This issue is dedicated to storytellers who do just that. Photographers who look to other worlds for solutions to their own limitations. Documentarians who choose to define themselves as artists, and artists who never claimed to be truth-tellers at all. Genre-fluid, cross-shooting wizards who blend fiction and fact. And ordinary people who've lived extraordinary lives by stepping over the line.

Documentary photography, like so many things we hold dear, is facing an existential crisis. As the editorial model continues to collapse, everything is suddenly up for grabs. Opportunities abound - if you know where to look. What comes next may be tied to the past, but it need not be beholden to it. We can break the rules. We can embrace risk. We can be reborn.



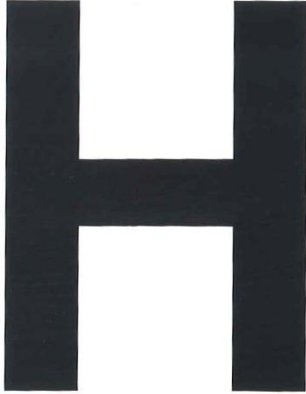
JACK AND LYNN JOHNSON, OKLAHOMA CITY, 1973. COURTESY OF LARRY CLARK, LUHRING AUGUSTINE, NEW YORK & SIMON LEE GALLERY, LONDON/HONG KONG.

# Ed Temp -leton

On

There is a lineage of photographers who shoot to shock, planting themselves in fringe-dwelling scenes with the eye of a lustful voyeur. Larry Clark was never one of them. His photographs of wayward teens bingeing on sex and drugs, and leaving 1960s America aghast, are moments that he lived. It's in this brutal suburbia, in the faces of strung-out kids, that skateboarder Ed Templeton first realised that his own life could be a muse.

# Larry Clark

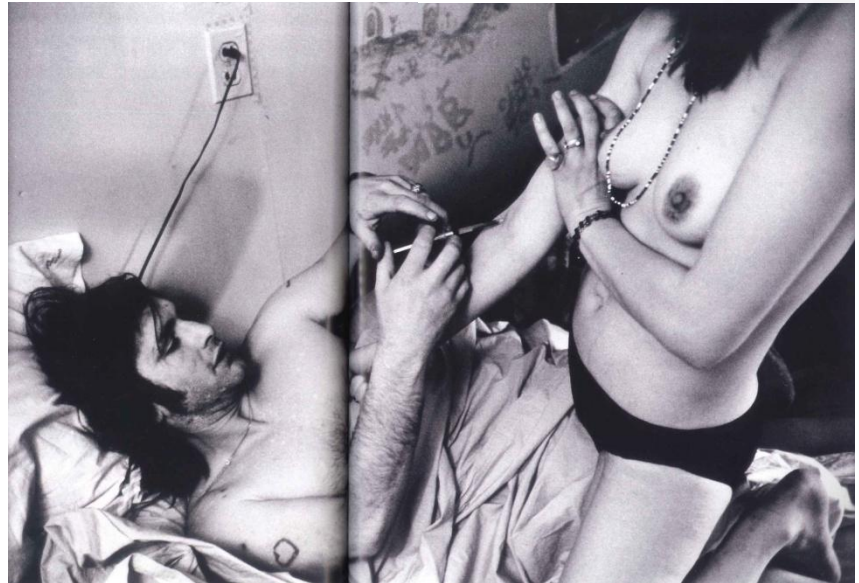


ordes of photographers from my generation cite Larry Clark as an influence, and almost inescapably I am no different. The raw authenticity of his legendary books *Tulsa* (1971) and *Teenage Lust* (1983), once consumed by a young photographer, stays in the stomach undigested and serves as a clarion call to immerse yourself in a lawless druggie culture - even if, as in my case, you don't do drugs and have no access to a drug scene.

Two images in particular encapsulate the ideas portrayed in LC's work. In one, a man laying in bed with a shitty homemade heart tattoo is straddled by a topless woman who extends her fist towards his chest to stoke the veins in her arm. The man is plunging a syringe filled with heroin into her skin as a beaded necklace rests in her cleavage. The scuffed wall in the background has words scrawled on it and an outlet has a cord plugged into it pointing right back at the man's head. The content, composition and message it sends is perfectly executed. The photo explains itself without my help.

In the other, a man lays on a bed with his pants pulled down to his knees and a visible gunshot wound in his thigh. He's grimacing with pain while a girl sitting on the edge of the bed puts a hand on her face, seemingly in despair. The caption in the book says, 'Accidental gunshot wound.' The presumed culprit, a tiny gun with a white handle, rests on a chair in the shot. The image not only documents an accident and illustrates the culture these people are in, it also begs so many questions. Why do these kids have guns? How did he shoot himself or get shot by accident? Was it the girl who shot him? Does she feel guilty now? If they are criminals, will they be able to go to the hospital with such a wound without getting busted? ▶

Untitled, 1971. Courtesy of Larry Clark, Luhring Augustine, New York and Simon Lee Gallery, London/Hong Kong.





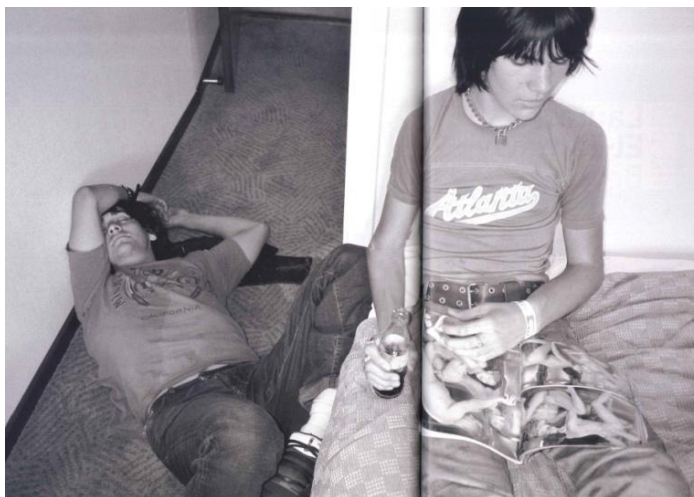
Clark was clearly a participant in the sex and drugs documented throughout his photos. These were his friends and he just simply shot pictures of the daily life they were living like a fly on the wall. But he knew exactly what he was doing. These aren't amateur compositions by some fuck-up with a point-and-shoot. They're in focus and correctly exposed. What he chose to shoot shows that he knew that the life he was living was extraordinary and a story worth telling - so much so that in 1971, when *Tulsa* came out, it scratched a little too deep below the surface for polite society to handle. It created a splash that rippled through the art world and into popular culture.

The trail of influence is abundant. Gus Van Sant and Martin Scorsese, whose respective films *Drugstore Cowboy* (1989) and *Taxi Driver* (1976) were directly influenced by this work, which in turn influenced Quentin Tarantino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994). It's like nobody knew these people existed and were horrified to realise that things like this happened behind the closed doors of innocent America.

Today, 46 years on from *Tulsa*, we now live in a world where everybody broadcasts their lives, extraordinary or not, and there is no underground culture to document that isn't being covered via iPhone by its own participants, if you know where to follow them.

For me, the Clark inspiration manifested itself in the way he got those photographs. Growing up skateboarding in the affluent suburbs of Southern California, I wasn't going to experience anything like Larry Clark's world. But I could shoot my scene and friends just as he did, and take it seriously. I went pro for skateboarding in 1990, and was exposed to LC's work around 1993. It was then that I recognised that the subculture I was participating in was filled with extraordinary people and had its own visual language worthy of documentation. Larry thought so too, because it was around this time that he began looking at skateboard culture in NYC and developing his future film *Kids* (1995), a project spurned by jealousy after Gus Van Sant basically ripped off his imagery. He wanted to do it himself.

It was that idea that turned me on to photography and my interests have since branched out from that in many directions. So, thank you Larry Clark. - Ed Templeton



Larry Clark's work appears as part of *From the Vapor of Gasoline* at London's White Cube, Bermondsey until 21 October.