

EXPOSURES

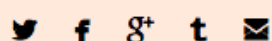
Exclusive: Eric Lawton

The hip-shooting photographer dwells on the physical properties of light and the lucidity of bare hands in close-up.

LAUREN FESTA

MAY 16TH, 2016

SHARE



*Somewhere in Queens, New York, photographer Eric Lawton is looking at a poster of Bruce Nauman's *Body Pressure* (1974), with its typewritten instructions on pink: Press very hard and concentrate on the image pressing hard. Pressure can strain human connection into something as fleeting and ethereal as sunlight through a narrow apartment window. Another kind of pressure induces injury, especially in sports. One such injury made Eric give up his high school football dreams for a new pastime—pointing and shooting. In film cameras like the Yashica T4 he often uses, it is the pressure plate that keeps the film smooth and flat for maximum sharpness, and of course it's the pressure on the shutter that makes the picture happen in the first place. Eric's pictures concentrate light on body parts that seem on the verge of relaxing—because after the pressure, there is, of course, release. Here we talk about his series *Lucid Light*, to which he added a dozen special selects just for us.*

Is there a style of photography or a photographer's style you love or constantly reference?

Eric Lawton: I think there's always one of [Rineke Dijkstra's](#) beach portraits in the back of my head to some degree. Her work is constantly bouncing around my mind along with that of some other photographers: Malerie Marder, Tina Barney, Nan Goldin, and Nikki S. Lee. I'm also mesmerized by the work of artists Robert Irwin and James Turrell, and I study Constantin Brâncuși whenever I start to question my own acts and intentions.

The movies I return to over and over are usually by John Hughes and Richard Linklater. Lastly, I have to acknowledge the ridiculously talented musician Jai Paul whose work leaves me so hopeful for the future and whose presence is severely missed. Where are you Jai...

Light is a recurring factor in these shots. Can you tell us how it plays a role? What does it show?

Eric: The series *Lucid Light* began three years ago when I was living in Berlin for the first time and I had just begun a romantic relationship. Banal moments that would seemingly mean nothing, like a hand strung out across a sheet or a foot sprawled alongside a wrist, suddenly took on huge importance. On paper they were undefined, everyday occurrences. But to me they were everything. Those extremely quiet and intimate moments with another person—those moments were love. The world, as it existed for me in that split millisecond in time when the shutter opened and closed, was right before my eyes. Nothing else mattered.

After reviewing some negatives, it dawned on me that the series was defined by the physical light present in the scene. Body parts shifted, angles and color temperatures changed, but the illumination stayed constant throughout. That tangible luster undeniably shifted how I perceived and understood the experiences. That awareness, its naked lucidity, became the foremost characteristic tying the photographs together.

In *Lucid Light*, most if not all of the shots are very close, void of faces or full bodies. Why did you choose to shoot the series like that?

Eric: For starters, universality. Although the actual experiences that led to these photographs are uniquely mine, the encounters themselves are universal. How one deciphers their surroundings is based on a number of factors, one of which is light. For me, light was the most impactful variables in how I came to interpret intimacy. The intrinsically human sensation of closeness is literally exposed through rays from sun. Germans have this great word to describe the feeling I'm always striving towards—*gemütlichkeit*—which doesn't translate directly to english but can mean a cozy situation with genuine friendship and a warm sense of belonging.

I want to leave as much an impact as I can with viewers, and I want them to be able to experience the images without removing themselves entirely from the scene. By keeping the entire frame in closeup, I wanted to keep the viewer focused on the feelings involved rather than the where, what, who, and why.

We love hands here at ADULT. Speaking of body parts, do you have a favorite?

Eric: Hands are such an alluring appendage! The way they twist, turn, and grip, not to mention that the first contact we have with others is often via hand shake. Other than that, I'm obsessed with collarbones. There's something so honest about them, and I have no idea why. The backs of necks too, especially when hair just so delicately graces the upper back.

What do you think is the best camera to shoot with or what camera do you normally shoot with?

Eric: I love film grain so I always shoot film, preferably 35mm but occasional some medium format. There's just something organically beautiful about the texture; I can get lost staring at grain for hours. I don't know if digital will ever be able to replicate that. As of right now, pixels don't even come close to real grain, especially when these images are printed full size at 36 by 24 inches. I mostly shoot with a tiny 35mm Yashica T4, which is surprisingly sharp and lets me shoot quickly with no setup or shutter speed/aperture changing involved.

What do you find erotic?

Eric: To be present, to give somebody your full attention; that is what I find erotic. For all that the 21st century has given us, surely amazing and productive inventions, I find unadulterated human connection slowly becoming more and more elusive.

When you are not taking pictures, you are...

Eric: Importing obscure and rare houseplants from around the world or designing wood furniture for my apartment.

Who in your orbit is producing work that you are loving right now?

Eric: I'm lucky and honored to be surrounded by so many thriving emerging artists. [Elliott Brown Jr](#) and [Rin Johnson](#) are both creating powerful and stimulating photographs and videos involving conceptual and constructed identities. [Emily Oliveira](#) is making much needed and terrifically commanding performance art. I'm also lucky enough to work on a regular basis with fine art and fashion illustrator [Mats Gustafson](#), whose elegant and refined watercolors are tremendously engaging.

Any upcoming projects you are working or that you are excited to share with us?

Eric: Photography is the beginning, not the end. I'm fascinated with the theory of perception and how it can shift over time depending on the place/people/etc. I imagine I will continue to work through these relevant questions with new work whether that be installation, sculpture or whatever else in the future.

← VENUS LUX WANTS TO B...

View More from Exposures



Exclusive: Morgan Young

APRIL 26TH, 2016



Exposures: Mia Wilkinson

MARCH 28TH, 2016



Exposures: Aneta Bartos

JANUARY 21ST, 2016



Interview: Nicole Vega

JANUARY 12TH, 2016

ABOUT
STAFF
REGULARS
PRIVACY POLICY
STOCKISTS

Get Mail

Sign up for hand-typed letters from Sarah Nicole Prickett on the weekly.

Email Address

GO