

Alexandra Uhart

Real stories through the power of image

Since the last month of my masters, I've transformed my home into my temporary studio. I live in a newly built flat with big white walls, two of which at the moment are covered in photographs, sketches, sticky notes and diverse research material that I have been gathering for my latest work "Someone here". I'm sitting at what used to be the dining table, and now transformed into a desk. I have a laptop, books, a couple of pens and a glass of water in front of me. From here I face the window. It's raining heavily outside, I'm happy to be working in today. If I were to photograph this, I would set up my camera on a tripod and shoot the scene from behind me. The photograph would capture me facing the window from across the table, showing the artist behind the work and the process behind the photos. I would maintain a certain mystery by facing away from the camera, giving the viewer an opportunity in doing so to connect the dots and make up their own story about the scene.

Freelance photographer Alexandra Uhart has just completed her Photography Masters at the London College of Communication. With a mission to document real life, and an execution that is unique and compelling in every way possible, Alexandra stole our hearts and will soon devour yours too.

When did you know you wanted to be a photographer?

Photography has always been a passion of mine. My first camera was given to me on my 9th birthday. It was a little Ninja Turtles themed film camera, which took photos that had a Ninja Turtle stamp in the right corner of every print. I remember photographing my toys with it; organizing them in groups and posing them amongst very elaborate settings. As I grew up and upgraded my photo equipment, I started photographing my friends. I would spend the afternoons borrowing make-up and clothing from my mom and styling photo shoots with them as models. However it didn't occur to me to study photography until years after I left college. I tried being traditional at first and went to law school for a couple of years, quickly realising that it was not for me. After that I decided to study Aesthetics. I really enjoyed it but I wasn't sure where it would take me, since I felt like something was missing. It was not until I moved to Paris in 2009 that I decided to pursue photography, realising I wanted to be the one creating and not just theorising about other people's creations.

Where do you go for inspiration?

I think everything can inspire me at a certain moment; inspiration can come from so many different places and I go and search for different things depending on the work that I am looking to produce. I would normally start by doing some research on an idea and moving forward from there. The truth is reality can be immensely inspiring.

When is a scene good enough to be captured?

I think every scene is good enough to be captured, depending on what you're looking for. My work comes from a documentary and street photography tradition, from capturing the life around me and trying to understand it through images.

I'm motivated by humanity; how we interact with each other and with our environments. In my latest series "Someone Here" I've focused on different aspects of our current struggles with the environment. In this media-driven world that we live in, photography has the opportunity to be shared easier and faster than ever before, making photography an invaluable channel of communication in raising awareness. What we choose to photograph can actually make a difference in the world.

Your portraits have a very authentic feel to it. Tell me something about your process of shooting portraits. What is your goal, and how do you achieve it?

I really enjoy taking portraits. Most of the ones I shoot are set in people's studios or houses, which helps give the photograph a more intimate feeling. However, the camera can be very invasive so it's very important for me to make my subjects feel at ease quickly. My goal is to reveal something about them, to show an aspect of their personality. I have to say that the most important part of the process happens before taking the photo. I do my research, I prepare everything. Then I go to their homes or their working spaces. Once I get there I talk to them while setting up my equipment. I love getting to know people, having the opportunity to capture something special about them with my images.

I'm fascinated by your photo series 'mind trap'. It conveys however a very different style and feeling than the work you did in the beginning of your career. Can you tell me something about the concept?

'Mind Trap' was one of my first incursions into fine art photography. After years of working in more commercial areas of photography, I decided it was time to explore my personal interests and move to a setting that would allow me to freely express my views. I created this series when applying for the Photography MA at LCC. My inspiration came from a deep concern I have for our environment and its species. In the past years we hear of an increasing number of animals that are going extinct due to our careless appropriation and treatment of their ecosystems; with these images I aimed to mirror the way in which people have been confining them into man-made spaces where they don't belong.

Any exciting projects in the future?

I just finished working on my new series 'Someone Here' a documentary exploration of the Atacama Desert in Chile, where the rise of the mining industry has led to an alarming environmental detriment. As a Chilean artist, I think it is important for me to show the stories of my country and help raise awareness of its problems. I am currently exhibiting this work at LCC College as part of the MA Photography show. I'm thinking of creating a book with the body of work and some of the research that led to the creation of this project in the near future.

Since film is an area that I have also always been very interested in, I am eager to start working on a collaborated film project with Chilean-Swiss director Nicolas Bauer that will be shooting in Miami next year.

After that, I see myself continuing on the path I am now: combining fine art photography and film. However, as I evolve as an individual so will my way of looking at things and photographing them. It is essential to keep reinventing myself as an artist and photographer, but I hope to do this while still being faithful to what's drawn me to photography in the first place: telling real stories through images, documenting life.

Alexandra's new series "Someone Here" is exhibiting at the London College of Communication from the 18th until the 24th of November.