

# Stone and Ippolito: On life, death, and photography

Photography is one of mankind's most interesting inventions. Through cameras, humans can capture moments in time that would otherwise be forgotten. Photography is a documentation of history, experiences and emotion. Photography is the embodiment of life and death and the stopper of time. Photographs can be worth 1,000 words, 2,000 words or tell a whole story. They can say everything or nothing. For **Skye Stone** and **Olivia Ippolito**, two independent up-and-coming local artists, photography is all these things, and more.

For someone who habitually stays off the beaten path, Stone's photography and the detours it brings is a chance to be her authentic self. Her authentic self sees memories as still images rather than a movie reel, projecting herself through the lens and into her imagery. Though Stone had been taking pictures since the age of 10, it was a high school film photography class that helped Stone clarify her interests in the field. The class, where restraints on subject matter and disregard for candidness ran contrary to Stone's personal expression of the art, nevertheless inspired. It was the raw, untamed and even dark moments that drew Stone to photography in the first place, and that would continue to drive her artistic endeavors.

Stone often diverges from the acceptable to the macabre, bringing to the forefront things not everyone wants to face. Stone came eye to eye with some of these subjects at an early age. Her mother worked as an anatomy instructor, so it was not uncommon for Stone to come in contact with human bones and other effects post-mortem. This sentiment of these subjects translated to her fascination with urban decay.

Fort Wetherill in Jamestown was Stone's first experience with what would become the focal point of her photography. Abandoned buildings, urban exploration and the way these things began to succumb to time and to nature became common themes. *The Ferris Wheel on Newport's Second Beach* best captures Stone's style, where instead of editing, Stone manipulates the lens to achieve the desired effects. Stone, who is driven by curiosity, feels that it is her job to reveal and preserve that which is unknown or forgotten, while highlighting that which captures the juxtaposition of life (nature) and death (the succumbing of industrial to the natural environment). For, Stone, the latter is all too familiar.

Ippolito shares similar sentiments with Stone, but in a much different way. Ippolito works as a pediatric nurse, where many of her juvenile patients are facing terminal illness. As one can imagine, this work can be extremely taxing on the human spirit. Ippolito, who has been taking photographs since she was a teen, says that photography helps her deal with the daily stresses of life. The solitude that sometimes

comes when taking photos, especially in nature, is a welcomed chance for self-discovery and soul recovery.

Like Stone, Ippolito is drawn to the raw, the candid and the disparity between life (beautiful) and death (ugly). For Ippolito, nothing represents this stark contrast more than her patients. Ippolito, a nurse who considers her patients her muses, is bound by HIPPA laws and cannot photograph them. Instead, the moments she spends with them stay as captured moments in her memories and in that way, she helps those who have perished live on. Like Stone, her work approaches this heavy emotional territory indirectly, finding images that conjure similar responses in her. As a compromise between herself and those she cares for, Ippolito photographs subjects or scenery that evoke similar emotions to what she experiences when spending time with her patients: hope, sadness, inspiration and love.

What can be learned from these two photographers is that everything has its moment in time, but nothing is forever. How we deal with this is up to us. Whether you reconcile this reality by documenting it with photography like Stone and Ippolito, or through personal memories, or just through the human experience - it is a reality that touches us all. There is hope that comes with these unavoidable contradictions. Hope at preservation. For life is candid, and death, foreseeable and unavoidable, can also be that way.