

ROBERTS PROJECTS

Gorilla Flicks

"Ed Templeton and His Hairdos of Defiance"

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ed templeton and his hairdos of defiance

Our longtime friend Ed Templeton has yet another photo book in his published quiver: *Hairdos of Defiance*, a showing of which was recently built around its release at the [Roberts Projects](#) gallery in Los Angeles (currently on display through April 21st). Rick Kosick was on the opening scene to document Ed in his natural habitat, whereas I, Sean Cliver, lazily emailed Ed a few silly questions. These are those questions, all graciously answered by Ed, who was most likely sitting at his desk in the nude—or at least that's how I pictured him, and I say that with no regrets whatsoever.



What's the gist of your new photo book, like give me the infamous artist's conceptual perspective.

The gist of it is photographs of people with mohawks and other "hairdos of defiance." I'd been shooting kids with mohawks over the years and ramped it up over the last few to the point that if I saw a mohawk that looked interesting I would chase the person down and ask for a portrait. So it's one of my typology collections.

Did you always have the title in mind or were there others you tossed around in the working stages?

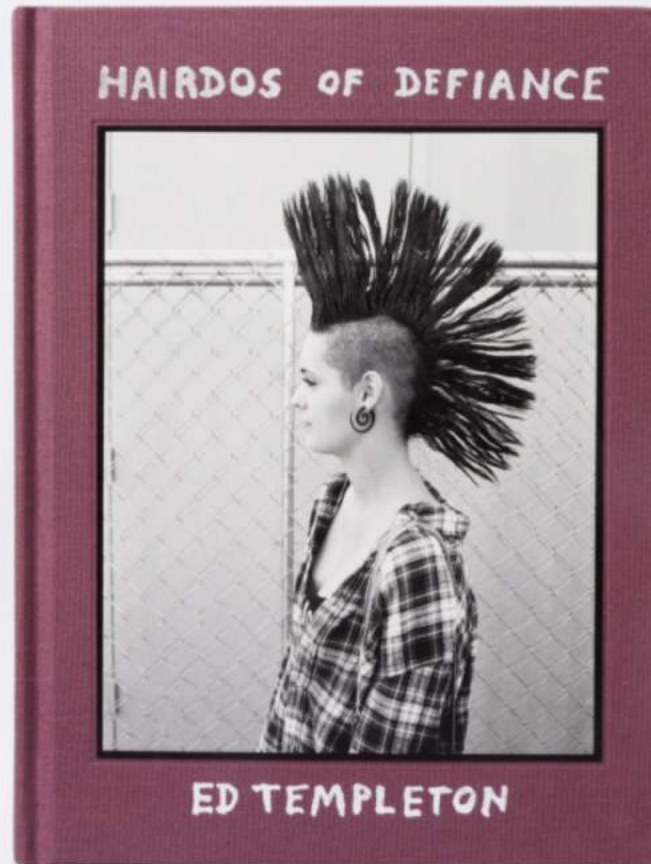
It was always going to be *Hairdos of Defiance*, although I did toss around "Emblems of Non-Conformity" a bit. The title came from an old conversation with Mike Burnett. I thought he coined it, he says it was me, but I think he's just being nice. Ever since that conversation every time I saw a punk hairdo I thought "Hairdo of defiance" in my head.

Do you set about with this grand idea, like, "I'm going to document hairdos!" or do you suddenly look around at everything you've amassed and realize, "Holy shit! I've got the makings of a book about the hairdos of Huntington!" Please, set the creative stage for me.

You described it perfectly. I suddenly look around at everything I've amassed and realize, "Holy shit! I've got the makings of a book." There's always the first one or two, then after ten years go by you sort of realize subconsciously that you have in fact been working on a series. That's when I ramped it up and started shooting them more aggressively. But always under the idea it would just be a fun zine.

What's the most defiant hairdo that you've ever sported?

I'm the ultimate wuss when it comes to hairstyles. I've only ever had four styles in my whole life: the little boy bowl cut, the skater bangs, a shaved head, and then slicked-back hair. I tried to grow my hair out once, but couldn't even get it to my shoulders before wimping out. I had a mohawk for a few hours one time when I shaved my head. I think my conservatism with my own hair is what draws me to the kind of people that can sport a hairdo of defiance in public.

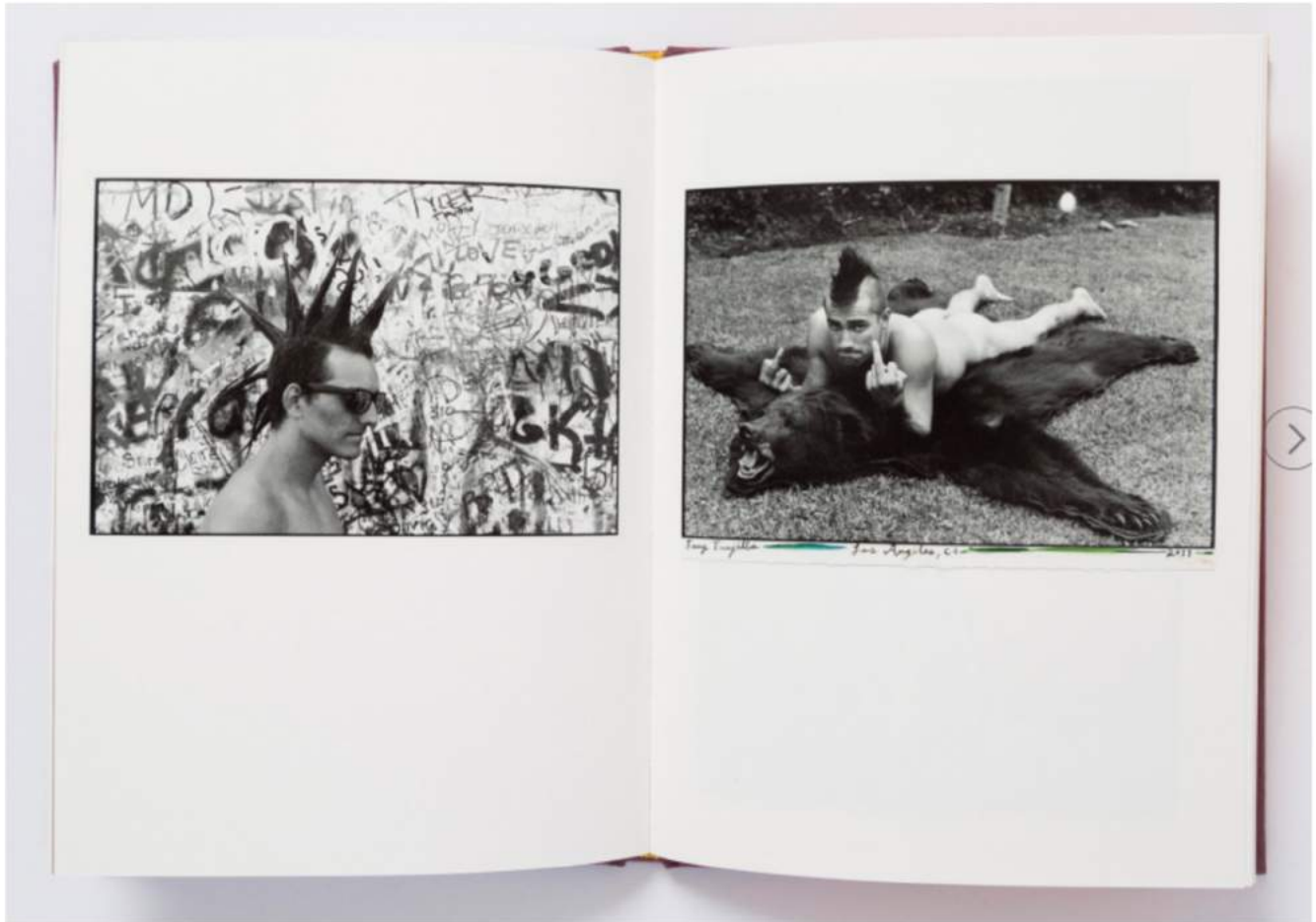


Have you considered doing a sequel, you know, something like "Hairdont's of Compliance"? What does that even mean?

As much fun as that would be, it was hard enough to ask people for their portrait when you had a good reason, i.e., they have a photogenic hairstyle. I couldn't imagine stopping people in the streets with a mullet or some other hair-don't and trying to explain why I want a portrait of them. "Excuse me, sir, your hair is horrendous, may I take a portrait of you so that we can make fun of you later?" Having said that, I have not searched my archive for bad hair... maybe I have enough already!

Once upon a time, tattoos and piercings were considered to be an act of defiance. Now, however, they've pretty much become standard operational procedure for people across the board from all mainstream walks of life. So, from your anthropological studies, where do you see the next youthful act of defiance coming from?

I'm not sure in the internet age if anything will be able to make a splash like mohawks, tattoos, and piercings. The "stretched ears" thing came along and was adopted by mainstream copycats immediately. I have asked multiple ear stretchers why they did it and it always boiled to down to "My favorite band does it" or "It looks cool." I think kids need to up the ante and do the bottom lip stretching to the point where they can put a giant plate in there, or the neck rings until they look like a giraffe. Maybe that will shock people.



Wouldn't it be neat if one day far off in the future you were memorialized as a statue on the Huntington Beach pier with your camera clutched in hand?

Ha! As much as that would be neat, I highly doubt my particular brand of documenting the HB pier is going to gain widespread acceptance by the city. It's already crazy that I did an exhibition at the Huntington Beach Art Center, but I guess you never know what could happen. I could turn into the "HB pier greeter." Have you ever heard of the guy in Laguna Beach who just waved at people driving by on PCH every day for decades? He has a statue. They won't even build a skatepark on the beach, so it's unlikely that they would celebrate a person who looks at HB with a critical eye.

One of the hashtags you frequently use on your Instagram account is #photobookjousting. Have you ever thought of staging a tournament where you stand at one end of a field with your new book in hand while Nan Goldin stands at the opposing end of the field with one of her books in hand and then Deanna blows a trumpet and you and Nan run at each other screaming and start bashing each other with your books? i guess what I'm awkwardly trying to get to is this: who would win in this book bashing duel, you or Nan?

Although she does have a formidable icy stare, I think it goes without saying that I would destroy frail old Nan—no quarter.



(Photos by Rick Kosick; 2018)