

# MILK

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## UNDERGROUND I

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### AWOL ERIZKU

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MAY 11, 2011

This multi-talented artist/sculptor/film-maker/photographer is a Cooper Union alum who also curates two of the coolest sites out there – his insane 'OFF THE WALL TV,' is a spotlight on the coolest kids in the art scene and his personal tumblr 'THANK YOU! COME AGAIN,' is a visual monologue. The VICE, Maxim, and Whitewall contributor shares how he got his start in a barbershop and why he'll always prefer film to digital -

*When did you first pick up a camera?* I took up photography at the old age of 18.

*Why photography?* A photograph of Lil' Kim by David LaChapelle for interview magazine that hung in the barber shop where I used to get my hair cut from at a young age influenced me to investigate the medium, the fact that it's a medium of truth (without photoshop of course) made it my medium of choice for my work.

*Where did you study?* At the Cooper Union.

*What's your favorite thing to photograph?* I like photographing people who exert a lot of energy in person; I love to be the one who captures that.

*How would you define your style?* My photographs reference, criticize or rewrite iconic images in art history.

*What is it like being in the photography industry right now?* The industry is saturated with a lot of "photographers" who just replicate the next big person's work or abuse digital manipulation- "prosumer" cameras are easy to get your hands on, but it's not the camera that makes the photographer, it's the vision...which luckily a lot of people don't really have.

*Do you prefer digital or film? Why?* Digital has its advantages but nothing shot digitally will ever have the richness of film. If it was purely up to me and all about aesthetic, I'd always choose film every time.

*Who are your mentors?* I've studied and worked with some of the greats - David LaChapelle, Lorna Simpson, Margret Morton, and Christine Osinski. They've all left footprints in my work - I really

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admire all of their styles and have learned how to re-shape their techniques and apply it to my own work.

*Favorite shoot memory?* I did a personal shoot with my young sisters documenting me cutting my long hair. They're very busy with their own work so it's very rare that we work together on one thing. It was interesting being on the other side of the camera – we got a lot of quality time in and I was able to give me so insight into what I do.

*What's up next?* My basement of a flower shop in a neighborhood where Robert Mapplethorpe once made his work, which I call my studio. I'm continuing to photograph the people I find interesting in New York City, and through that process slowly building a portfolio for Yale's master program.

