

Shooter

What does the word shooter mean to you? For me this word plays a role in how I define myself. The environment that I am in influences how I am defined as a shooter. In this exhibition, I am an artist, a photographer, a shooter of images. In a different setting I might be an athlete, a coach, a shooter in a marksmanship competition. Both versions are a part of my life, and in creating the body of work entitled **Shooter**, I am using one part of who I am to share another.

So what is competitive shooting? It is an Olympic sport where the difference between first and second place is often measured in micrometers. Competitive shooting is a popular sport internationally, maintaining the third highest participation numbers at the Summer Olympic Games behind only Swimming and Track and Field. Olympic shooting disciplines encompass Shotgun, Pistol and Rifle events. The focus for this body of work is Rifle, in particular Air Rifle and Smallbore disciplines, which I have competed in and coached over the past ten years. Despite being popular on the international stage, the sport has not reached a mainstream following in the United States. This obscurity provided motivation for photographing this series, growing from a desire to shed this anonymity.

This work may at first be defined as a documentary analysis of competitive shooting, but it equally needs to be regarded as a self-portrait. Every image represents me as much as it does the sport and the individuals in the photographs. I photographed my friends and colleagues, representing every level of participants in Air Rifle and Smallbore competition from high school to the U.S. National Team. Collectively we are shooters, and this is the common thread that ties us together. A bond built on countless hours spent on the range, fueled by quiet determination to achieve perfection on every shot. Perhaps not so unlike the numerous hours spent in the darkroom creating this series of images.

Shooter combines two of my passions, competitive shooting and photography. It is my perspective of the word shooter. Perhaps this series will present a new perspective on this word for you. After viewing this work ask yourself again, what does the word shooter mean to you?

Sommer Wood