

# Rania Matar

Born in 1964 in Beirut, Lebanon. Boston, Massachusetts, USA  
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As a mother of a teenage daughter, I watch her passage from girlhood into adulthood, fascinated by the transformation taking place, the adult personality shaping up and a self-consciousness now replacing the carefree world she had known so far. I started photographing her and her girlfriends, and quickly realized that they were very aware of each other's presence, and that their being in a group affected whom they were portraying to the world. From there emerged the idea of photographing each girl alone in her personal space. I spent time with each girl, so she was comfortable with me, and the photography session became a beautiful and intimate collaboration. I was discovering a person on the threshold to adulthood, but desperately holding on to the child she had barely outgrown, a person on the borderline between two worlds, trying to come to terms with this transitional time in her life and adjust to the person she is turning into. Being with those young women in the privacy of their world gave me a unique peek into their private lives and at their real selves. They sense that I am not judging them and become an active part of the project. I just follow their lead. I thank every one of them for their trust and precious collaboration.

## **Do you take pictures for private purposes?**

I take pictures for pleasure and chose subjects that I am passionate about. I wouldn't define the purpose as being "private" or not "private."

## **Do you keep a diary?**

No, I guess my photographs are my diary.

## **Which city do you like the most?**

I love the two cities that have been home to me: Beirut and Boston. But I also love New York and Paris for being the unique, unbelievable cities that they are, and for the wealth of art and culture they have to offer.

## **What is your favorite music?**

I have many favorite songs, one of them being *The Show Must Go On* by Queen and Freddy Mercury before he died. It is inspirational.

## **What is your favorite dish?**

Not a big eater. If I had to pick, I would say a good Salade Nicoise with a nice glass of white wine.

## **How do you feel about tattoos?**

I personally wouldn't like to get one or have my daughters get one, as it is a decision one could make on a whim but have to live with for the rest of one's life. But it is a personal decision that I respect and have no right to judge.

## **Are you a more introverted or extroverted person?**

Extroverted – I would never have met all those beautiful young women I have photographed if I were too introverted to introduce myself to them, often on the street!

## **Would you consider yourself a voyeur?**

Sometimes, even if I am there photographing with the approval of my subject, and only taking what they are willing to share. I still think I am some kind of a voyeur, as I am always still trying to see more than the obvious.

## **Which camera did you use for this project?**

I mainly used a Nikon D700, but also occasionally a Mamiya 7II and a borrowed Leica M9, and only natural available light.

## **What does "privacy" mean to you?**

My privacy are the limits I set beyond which I am not willing to let anyone in. Those limits can vary with the level of comfort one has with the person on the other end of it. In this project *A Girl and Her Room*, the privacy limits loosened as I spent more time with each girl I photographed and the barriers started slowly falling. But I was still allowed into a very private area of their life and am very thankful to each girl for offering me this opportunity.

## **Do you feel your privacy is more threatened by corporations or by governments?**

I think privacy is more threatened by governments, especially in the age we are living in, where the constant fear of something seems to justify it, but also by the Internet and the ease of sharing and accessing information anywhere and anytime!



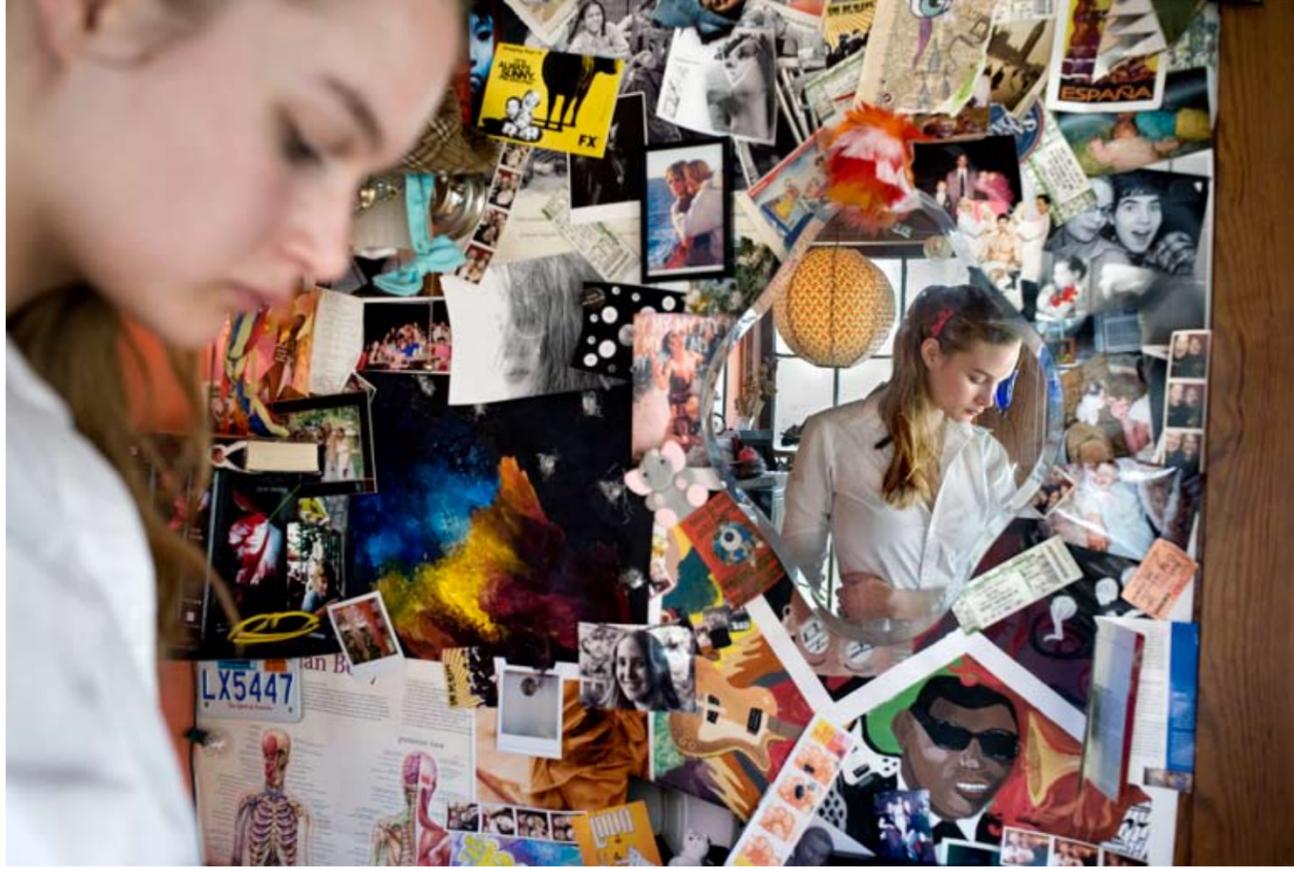
Shannon, 21, Boston, Massachusetts, 2010. Pigment print, 70 x 105 cm  
*As a teenager, I was a certainly a hell-raiser. It was hard wanting freedom so badly and not being old enough to feel like I could be free. So, I rebelled a lot to make a point to my parents that I wasn't going to let them hold me back from being who I wanted to be.*



Kate, 20, Boston, Massachusetts, 2010. Pigment print, 70 x 105 cm  
*I prefer the glamour of garter belts and nylons to modern pantyhose or bare legs, and as I am coming to understand my identity and role as a woman, I am fascinated with retro ideas of femininity and sexuality. I can't live my life in these decades past, so I express my love of the past in the way I dress and wear my hair. This gives me satisfaction enough and makes me feel a little more comfortable living in 2010.*



Lizzie, 17, Cornwall, New York, 2010. Pigment print, 70 x 105 cm  
*Teenage years are the point in life where you must prove yourself repetitively. My mother and I make each other crazy. There is a lot of hostility and tension between us, along with resentment due to the mistakes I've made. However we are all each other has.*



Brianna, 17, Winchester, Massachusetts, 2009. Pigment print, 70 x 105 cm  
*You can't truly be yourself with someone unless you can be yourself by yourself, and I am now taking my own advice.*



Siena, 17, Brookline, Massachusetts, 2009. Pigment print, 70 x 105 cm  
*When I was being photographed what was running through my head was how the models on my wall are the people I strive to look like. I was wondering how we define beauty, and where I am on the scale of beauty in relation to the pictures on my wall. Am I good enough?*