

You Are my Mirror

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Rania Matar
Rachelle Mozman
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YOU ARE MY MIRROR

As objects, photographic portraits are created under specific circumstances. They accompany the person they belong to and usually they live together in a parallel story. They obtain a prominent place in living rooms or workplaces, they move in bedrooms or storerooms, they are buried in drawers while some of them are quickly forgotten or destroyed. What is peculiar to the photographic image is that the photographed gaze resists the decay of the photographic material. It always appears robust and is as present as the gaze that is looking back at it. Turning their eyes to the lens, people posing anticipate the future glances that will be cast on them. They offer their gaze, expecting another gaze to penetrate the surface of the paper, and following the opposite direction, they meet their own. Their intention, desire and expectation remain unaffected.

Nowadays digital photographs have lost their physical substance. Whether good, bad or indifferent, photographs in digital form today live in limbo in a virtually unlimited digital waiting room. They wait there for the day of their completion, to become visible in the daylight, to regain a body. As contradictory as the choice of the medium may seem, the online exhibition "You Are My Mirror" attempts through a virtual setting to invest these ghostly images with a body and simultaneously to detect the kind of relationship we actually have with them today.

An example of this is given by six women photographers, as they compel us to confront the persons they photographed. Children, teens and young women, pose for the camera lens, look at the photographer behind the camera and through them they stare at us. One would expect that their familiarity with photography, would have eliminated all traces of "pose" at the crucial moment that their photograph was taken. This does not seem to happen. In the hands of these artists the magical power of the mirror appears to be flourishing again. How do I look? What do I look like? Do I look as I think I am? Do others see me as I see myself? These are all questions that we hold within us from our first encounter with the image of ourselves, the first time we perceived our own reflection in a mirror. It is since then that we seek to reconstruct a confused, incomplete picture of ourselves through the images that mirrors return to us, through the eyes that are staring at us and every person or object that we desire or fear. What is fascinating about the photographic portrait is that a similar impulse directs the photographers' choices. They take pictures of other people, they capture their glances to fill in their own incomplete picture.

Nadia Sablin

When she was twelve years old Nadia Sablin, born in the Soviet Union, left with her parents for the United States. In her work “Together and Alone”, the life she left behind takes the metaphysical aspect of a soul sister, a twin sister and friend, which she searches for in her new life and reconstructs through actual experiences. She is looking for her in the pictures she takes, in the detached attitude of children in front of her lens, in their silence and in their gaze that is often turned inwards. “I see her in the eyes of strangers.” she says “Her gestures overtake theirs for a split second, and she is gone before they know what has happened. With my trap, I wait for her to appear there, and if I’m quick enough, if I press the button at the right moment, none of this will be real. We will be together again, she and I conspirators, sisters, laughers of derisive laughter, whole”. With her photographs Nadia Sablin attempts to recover a past that is lost forever and this profound desire pervades the images of children she captures with her camera.



Veronika in the Hallway



Zhenya in Leader Jacket



Aliosha in his Parents' room



Bathers



Boy with Flowers



Aliona with Cat



Misha with his Dog



Nikita Having Fallen



Passion of Elora

Olya Ivanova

"Both emotionally and physically these people feel like aliens, strangers, freaks" say Olya Ivanova. "They like to change their appearance the more often the better as they want to escape from themselves, hide their real face. So at some point it becomes difficult to understand what they actually are. They practice in transgender, homosexuality, body modifications, pierce and cutting themselves. They prefer to use nicknames and to live in some kind of parallel reality, an intermediate area, which is alien to the geographical divisions and political laws, which is not part of any absolute reality or deliberately invented fiction, but is created by its own rituals and rules of behavior..." So who are these persons in Ivanova's photos, what do they look like without this invented "image - mask" behind which they are hiding? The reason for someone to hide behind a mask or even a pose is that the "behind-the-mask-face" does not exist as a coherent picture. So the image that these young people have chosen perhaps is the only true picture of a person that a camera can and has license to capture. Ivanova recognizes this right and she keeps her camera in front of them as a mirror returning their image intact, square and clear.



Alex Pincher



Polina Bramon



Angel Thanatos



Kate Budnik



Vova in his mom's sweater



Kate Budnik II



Katya Nenf

Margo Ovcharenko

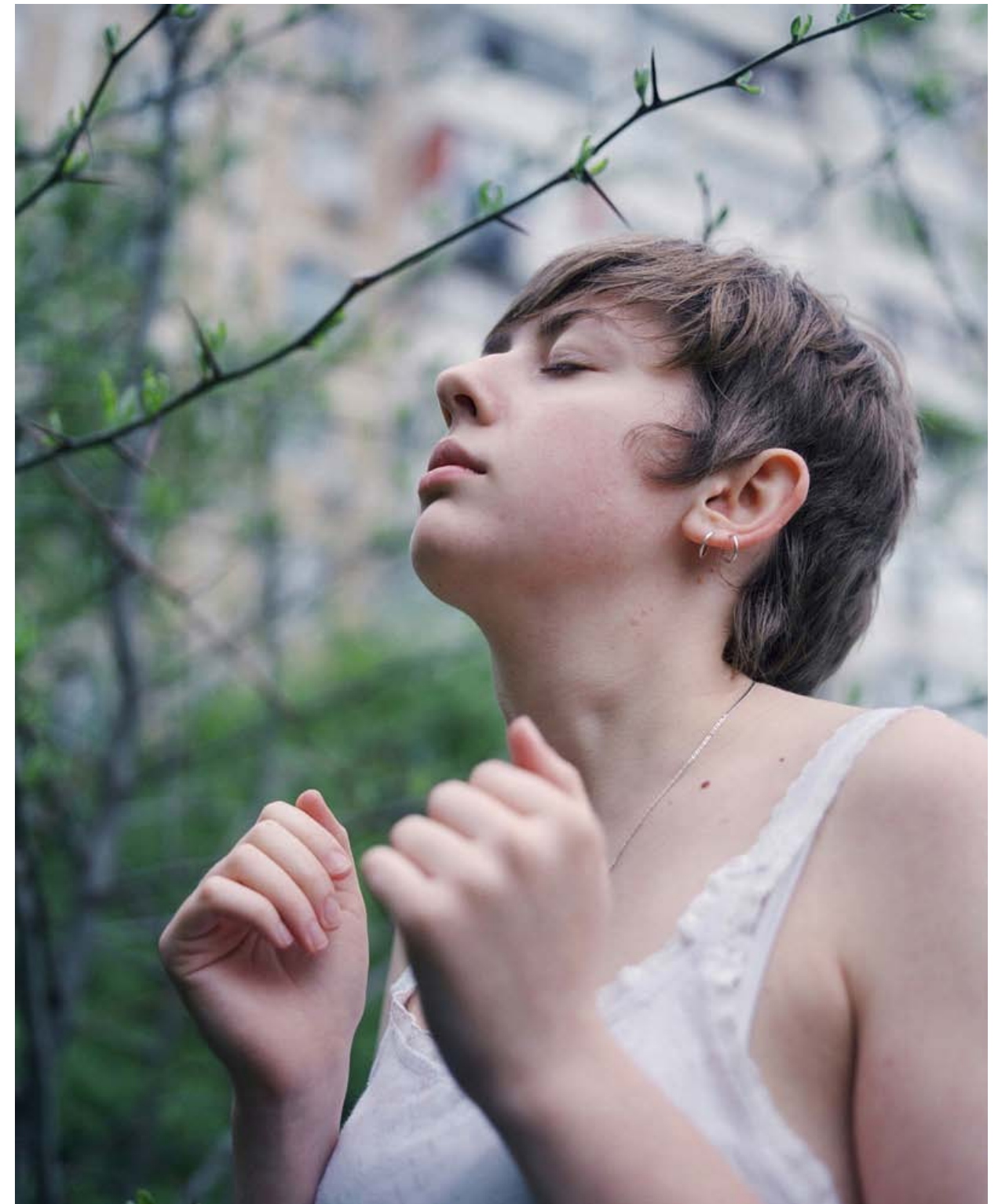
The faces of the young boys and girls in the photographs by Margo Ovcharenko fill up the entire area of the photographic frame, and while they look like coming closer to us, they remain distant, melancholic, absorbed in themselves. Unfinished and unclear gestures suggest to us that these photographs also depict a relationship, an event or story. But the fragmented narration is such that no story can be completed. Ovcharenko is directing her models without interfering. Choosing the exact angle, the correct frame and shooting when they are left to themselves, she urges us to invade a private space where silence and introspection becomes the refuge of these young people's generation. "At 17, I realized what I wanted to get into making portraits was to avoid the effect of pose, to bring out naked a character dressed and catch a look of confidence of a character naked, to obtain the same perception of light and color as it was conceived in paintings before the nineteenth century. I love it when the distance between the subject and the viewer becomes minimum. I love photography that does not transform the subject in order to make it look more or less attractive, although I prefer to slightly blur the temporal and spatial margins around my characters".



Untitled from "Hermitage" series 2010



Untitled from "Without me" series 2008-2009



Untitled from "Furieuse comme un enfant" series 2011



Untitled from "Hermitage" series 2010



Untitled from "Boys" series 2008



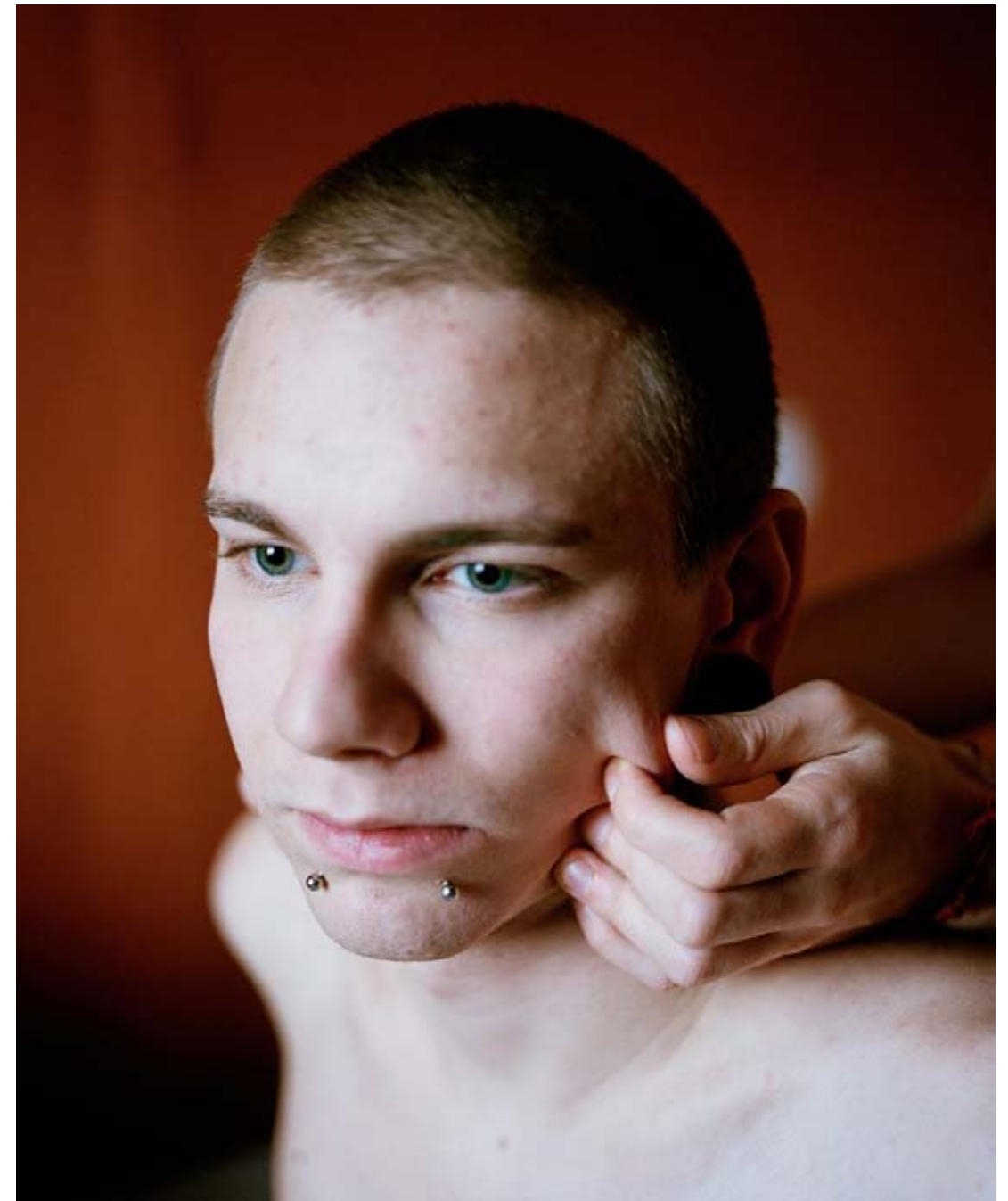
Untitled from "Hermitage" series 2010



Untitled from "Without me" series 2008-2009



Untitled from "Hermitage" series 2010



Untitled from "Hermitage" series 2010

Rania Matar

One could say that Rania Matar's approach in photographic portrait follows the traditional portrait photography in the studios of late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The backdrop used by the photographer and the objects surrounding the photographed person were chosen to reflect his status, profession or age. Something similar happens with the photos in Rania Matar's "A Girl and her Room", with the difference that here the decoration is self-made and real. The wall of the rooms where the girls are photographed take the role of the traditional photographic backdrop. Posters and notes are attached on it, shoes and clothes are thrown left and right, all sorts of gadgets, scattered souvenirs of joy or disappointment, reflect the history, character, origin and age of the girls. "I initially started this work" Rania Matar says "focusing on teenage girls in the United States and eventually expanded the project to include girls from the two worlds I am most familiar with, the two worlds I experienced myself as a teen and a young twenty year old: the United States and the Middle East." Similarities and contrasts swirl in the room around the faces and postures of the girls, in some pictures testimony of coquetry and indolence, and in others of modesty and melancholy.



Arielle, Westwood, MA 2011



Danielle, Jamaica Plain, MA 2010



Christilla, Rabieh, Lebanon 2010



Dima, Beirut, Lebanon 2010



Elham, Shatila Palestinian Refugee



Hiba, Shatila Palestinian Refugee Camp, Beirut 2010



Jessica, Rabieh, Lebanon 2010



Mariam, Bourj al Shamali Palestinian Refugee Camp, Tyre, Lebanon 2009



Lubna, Beirut, Lebanon 2010

Rachelle Mozman

Two worlds, geographically distant but amazingly similar are described in Rachelle Mozman's photos from her works "American Exurbia" and "Costa del Este". The homes where the shootings took place are in areas outside the suburbs of cities in Panama and New Jersey, far from the urban centers. Affluent families that live in these areas have surprising similarities, observes Mozman, in their aspirations of safety and segregation despite been so far apart. "My interest" she says "in photographing these children lies in my fascination with the development of identity in children within newly created environments. Both the girls and boys in my photographs are represented in moments where their individuality confronts the limitations of their respective and transforming culture" She also admits that this project is in part a personal exploration related to her own experience as a teenager moving to a small New Jersey town. Rachelle Mozman manipulates skillfully the light. Balancing the interior light with light coming from windows and doors she creates the impression of a clean, sterile and flat space. The rooms look smaller than they actually are, and the presence of children in them creates the illusion that the homes in these communities are built specifically like dollhouses for their privileged children. But in their weird poses we realize that there is something more that Mozman wants to tell us; perhaps that finally children are equally vulnerable there like everywhere in the world.



Blue dress, 2008



Brother and Sister, 2006



Twins in yellow, 2007



Hanna, 2005



American girl with dog, 2004



Green boy, 2007



Red shoes, 2007



Las mamas, 2006



Glass table, 2007

Anna Skladmann

Anna Skladmann's "Young Adults" explores what it feels like to grow up as a privileged child in Russia. She was raised in Germany but, with both parents born in Russia, she maintained strong ties with this country. In 2000, she went to Russia for the first time, and was impressed by the behaviour of children there. "We celebrated New Year's Eve at a fancy ball, and there was this table of children all dressed up as little adults," she says, "Even in their mannerism, they looked like little adults." Skladmann was then fourteen years old but she has not forgotten this meeting. She returned to Russia as a photographer, seeking to learn what is imposed on these children to make them dress up and behave like adults. This kind of task raises the question whether it is ever possible for photography to grope at something behind the surface of things. The answer as always is given by the photographs themselves. And in Skladmann's pictures children are presented according to her own perception as masters of a world that already belongs to them. They are photographed exuding confidence, fully aware of their future position in this world. Initially impressed by their maturity and wealth, Skladmann believes today that some of these kids have a tough time living up to their families' expectations.



Varvara In Her Home Cinema, Moscow 2010



Uma In Her Father's Restaurant, Moscow 2009



Eva In Her Living Room, Moscow 2009



Petr and Boris, Moscow 2009



Lisa, Katya and Sofia in Her Mother's Jewelry Store, Moscow 2009



Antoshka As A Hussar, Moscow 2010



Eva In Her Living Room, Moscow 2009

You Are my Mirror

curated by Costis Antoniadis

Olya Ivanova

Olya Ivanova (b.1981, Russia) received a BA in literature and worked as a copywriter with global advertising agencies in Moscow. She is a self taught photographer who has been heavily influenced by the work of Alec Soth and Guillaume Herbaut. Olya currently shoots for magazines including Monocle, Psychologies, Time Out, Russian Reporter and others. Her photographs has been exhibited in Russia and internationally. Works are in museums and private collections.

<http://www.olyaivanova.com/>

<http://theindependentphotobook.blogspot.gr/2012/07/olya-ivanova-kich-gorodok.html>

Rania Matar

Born and raised in Lebanon, Rania Matar moved to the U.S. in 1984. Originally trained as an architect at the American University of Beirut and Cornell University, she worked as an architect before studying photography at New England School of Photography, and at the Maine Photographic Workshops in Mexico with Magnum photographer, Constantine Manos. She currently works full-time as a photographer and teaches documentary photography at the Massachusetts College of Art and Design. She also teaches photography in the summers to teenage girls in Lebanon's refugee camps with the assistance of non-governmental organizations. Her work has won several awards, has been featured in numerous publications, and exhibited widely in the U.S. and internationally.

<http://www.raniamatar.com/>

<http://girlroom.raniamatar.com/>

<http://ordinarylives.raniamatar.com/>

Rachelle Mozman

Rachelle Mozman grew up in New York City, and New Jersey and currently makes work between Brooklyn and Central America. As an artist working in photography and video her practice intersects document and narrative tendencies. Mozman is a Fulbright Fellow and has won several awards and has been exhibited widely. Her works are in museums and private collections. Mozman lives with her husband, musician Caito Sanchez, their son, and cat.

<http://www.rachellemozman.com/>

Margo Ovcharenko

Born in 1989 in Krasnodar, Russia. Margo is a Moscow based photographer. Margo graduated from The Rodchenko Moscow School of Photography and Multimedia in 2011, and is represented by Russiantearoom Gallery, Paris. Selected prints are available through Aperture Foundation, New York.

<http://www.margoovcharenko.com/>

<http://www.rtrgallery.com/>

Nadia Sablin

Nadia Sablin was born in the Soviet Union and spent her adolescence in the American Midwest. After completing an MFA degree at Arizona State University, she now lives and works in Brooklyn, NY and St. Petersburg, Russia. Her photographs have been shown at the Griffin Museum of Photography, Wall Space gallery and Jen Bekman gallery among others.

<http://nadiasablin.com/>

Anna Skladmann

Born in 1986 in Bremen, Germany. Anna is a freelance photographer that lives and works between New York and Moscow. She graduated with a B.F.A in Photography from Parsons School of Design in 2008 where she studies partly in Paris and New York.

<http://www.amazon.com/Little-Adults-Bill-Kouwenhoven/dp/3868281924>

<http://www.annaskladmann.com/>