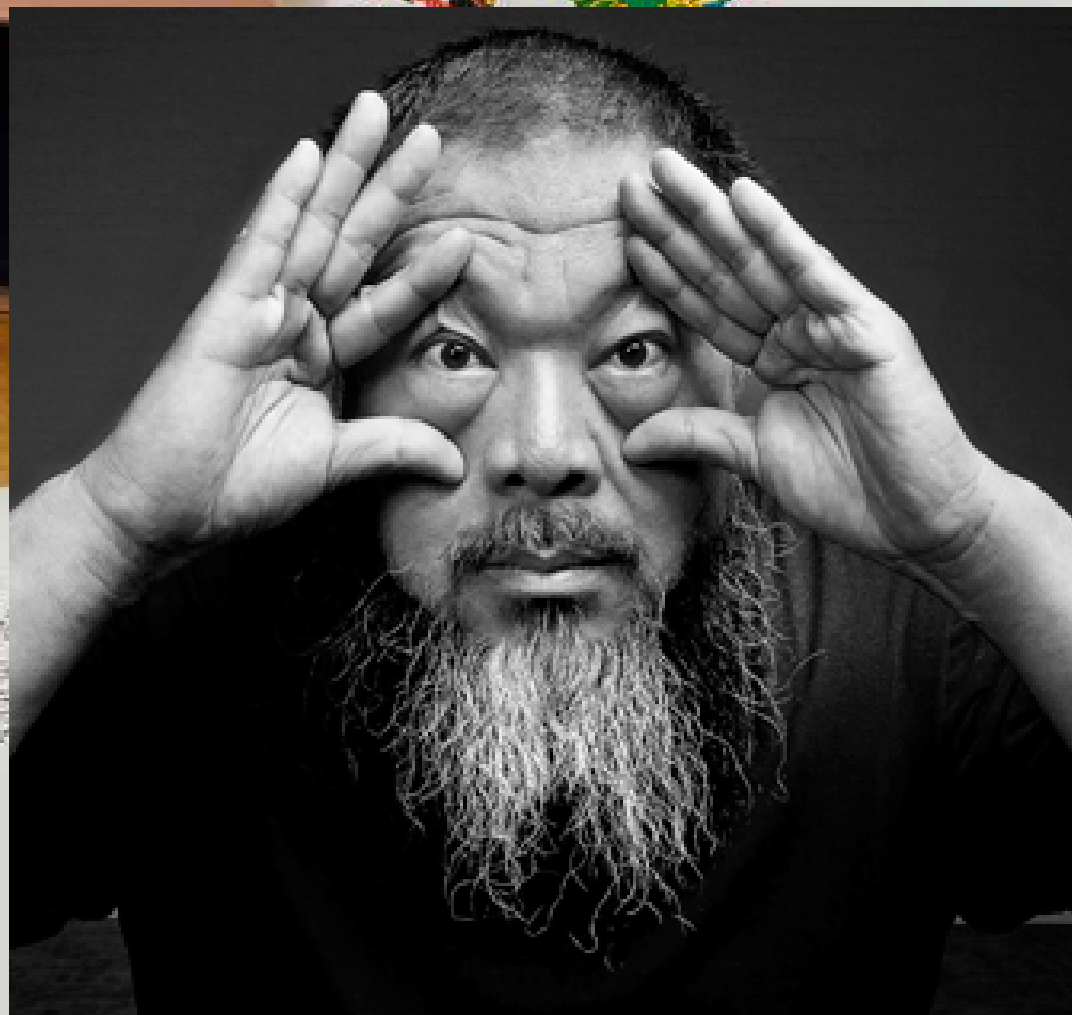


SELECTIONS

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DUBAI

Capturing Moments of Transition

Photographer **Rania Matar** works with girls and women to capture moments of physical and mental change between one state of being and another

by Danna Lorch

Rania Matar is entranced by the liminal moments that girls and women experience over the course of the life cycle, from the foal-like first confidence of puberty and contrasting sharp-edged insecurity, to the second adolescence that women walk through as they enter menopause and watch as their daughters develop into a younger, often prettier versions of themselves. East Wing presents Matar's first solo show in the UAE, *Becoming: Girls, Women and Coming of Age*, which brings together three distinct projects, as well as the launch of the photographer's latest book, *L'Enfant Femme*.

For most of the works in the show, which are included in the accompanying book, Matar — who left Lebanon for the US during the Civil War — photographed girls in affluent American suburbs, cosmopolitan quarters of Beirut, and Palestinian refugee camps and areas popular with Syrian refugees in Lebanon. In many cases, it is virtually impossible to tell the girls apart — three of them have coincidentally chosen matching outfits of jean shorts and hot pink tank tops. Their commonality, rather than socioeconomic limitations and advantages, are what really stand out here.

Selections interviewed Rania Matar to find out more about the project.



OPPOSITE PAGE: Rania Matar, *Brigitte and Huguiette*, Ghazir, Lebanon, 2014 from *Unspoken Conversations*, courtesy of East Wing, © Rania Matar

BELOW: Rania Matar, *Stephanie*, Beirut, Lebanon, 2010 from the *Series A Girl and Her Room*, courtesy of East Wing, © Rania Matar

ABOVE: Rania Matar, *Darine 7 and Dania 8*, Beirut Lebanon, 2014 from *L'Enfant, Femme*, courtesy of East Wing, © Rania Matar



Danna Lorch: *What did you conclude about the fragility or strength of girls at this particular age?*

Rania Matar: This is a very potent age where girls' bodies are transforming and where they are starting to grow into their own selves as women — just at the cusp of early adolescence. There is a simultaneous fragility/vulnerability and power/strength going through that process — just like going through any transition in life, I believe. And yes, this part of growing up transcends all else.

DL: *How do you think the portraits will resonate with an Arab audience?*

RM: I live in the United States, but I was born and raised in the Middle East, so it is important for me in my work to focus on our sameness and on universality. I am equally the product of both cultures, and I equally identify with both cultures. As a result, I photograph girls and women in both cultures. If one looks through my new book, *L'Enfant-Femme*, one would notice that I only refer to the girls by name and age. I don't specify the location until the end, in the captions. I hope one feels a deep sense of universality; a beauty that transcends place, background and religion. ♦

Becoming: Girls, Women and Coming of Age continues at East Wing until January 28