

In the essence of capturing elements of 'girlhood' female characteristics are portrayed through symbolism and the theme of transition and transformation. A recognised stage in a female's life, the series works towards depicting the various stages of growing into a woman. The photos are representative of innocence, vulnerability and the curiosity of adolescence. When depicting the female perspective of growing up, the images evoke a sense of shared experience, highlighting the commonality of puberty and self-exploration. The series places emphasis on the elements of being a child and girlhood that remain despite maturing into adulthood/ becoming a woman. Collectively, the diptychs work towards depicting girlhood as a powerful symbol of the female experience and growing up.

Through the use of bras, makeup, stickers and kids toys, the series of diptychs reinforces the notion that girlhood is a phase in life filled with joy and wonder. In associating these props with youthfulness, the photos draw connections between one's inner child and their grown up self. The portraits that use stickers and barbie dolls as a prop evoke a sense of nostalgia and the innocence associated with playing 'pretend'. Barbie dolls with their traditionally perfect features and figures serve to challenge the ideal version of what a woman is to look like. In promoting such realistic and narrow beauty standards, the use of dolls reminds the audience of how such toys can influence and contribute to the internalisation of negative body images. The suggestion of females' physical attractiveness being linked to their worth is also explored in the sticker and makeup self-portrait. The juxtaposition of the makeup set-up to the clown face of the subject emphasises the pressure to conform to societal expectations. Clown makeup is typically characterised by its unconventional and exaggerated appearance. Equally, the text, *Is this really girlhood?* is reflective of the continual self-doubt experienced by young females during this time of change.

By juxtaposing the extreme clown look with conventional makeup products, the diptych highlights the contrast between conforming to beauty standards and embracing individuality despite judgement and fear. The two photos work together to challenge the pressure of adhering to beauty standards developed during adolescence. Similarly, the 'Training bra' photo symbolises the physical changes and the coming of age process that girls go through during adolescence. In photographing this 'transformative' moment, the use of a bra both depicts creatively embracing one's femininity but also the over sexualisation of girls and women.

With the help of a self timer remote, the series is a culmination of self portraits in various locations around my house. Due to time constraints and developing issues, the series had to be taken digitally. The use of a texturing tool and grain has added a film like layer to the photos further adding to the sense of nostalgia. In using saturation and lightroom presets, the photos consistently have a yellow tone across all the individual images. This was done to provide areas of warmth and comfort. The use of vignette and colourisation techniques has also emphasised areas of contour and highlights. Along with framing and cropping tools, the composition of each image varies to convey different messages and themes. In arranging the photographs in a series of diptychs, the pattern of having a portrait with an image of a related object, adds more detail and perspective into the photos. Though individually the pairs could stand alone, the 4 diptychs work together to convey the transition to womanhood in a thematic way. The continuity of the series elicits an emotional response from the viewers by presenting complimentary photos. This is also supported by the emotional resonance created by the subject and overall composition of the entire series.



