

# Girlhood Lore

## Girlhood Lore: a love letter to the girls we once were

di Laura Rositani

The theme of female adolescence is a matter that is both deeply personal and collectively shared. This dual nature is also reflected in the exhibition "Girlhood Lore", which consists of seven distinct narratives that touch upon landscapes of changing bodies, shared moments with friends, and the intimacy of one's own room. Fears and desires.

In an interview, Michela Murgia spoke about the special quality of the relationships that intertwine during adolescence: their unique characteristic is that you can still be everything you dream of, you are still a blank page waiting to be scribbled on.

The exhibition's atmosphere captures this concept, that fine line where everything is still to be defined. It's a time that is still blurry but for this reason, unique and extraordinary.

Although there are seven artists involved, the stories that intertwine, the names, the faces, the bodies of girls, are a multitude.

Safe and Giorgia are part of the narrative, in the paintings of **Inès Michelotto** (Padova, 1997). Safe has a slender body, lying down and looking directly at the viewer, while Giorgia feels ashamed and covers herself, laughing awkwardly. At the center of the story, the bodies, one's own identity and intimate transcriptions of moods, like a page from a diary. Shame is intimately linked to the gesture of showing, to exhibitionism, to the aesthetics of judgment and to the conventions according to which we move within the visual culture of a societal model that wants us to be standardized.

A small room covered in soft panels evokes an intriguing image, with references to femininity and the sharing of secrets in a protective and intimate environment.

This is "Surrounded by Angels", a site-specific installation by **DaddyBears** (Bradford, UK, 1994). The artist creates a scenario that simultaneously evokes a sense of innocence and protection: the angels refer to positive female role models or supportive figures in a girl's life. DaddyBears manages to materialize fantasies by interpreting inner dreamlike landscapes: the exploratory aspect of play allows for the creation of fantastic scenarios with nostalgic yet recognizable influences.

Unreal visions are also found in the photographs of **Delali Ayivi** (Baltimore, US, 1996) who recreates the power of the collective imagination. Addressing the issue of identity, she combines realistic portraits of girls with fantastical elements. When adolescents share their fantasies and dreams, they create a sense of belonging and sisterhood: this shared experience fosters empathy and creates a safe space for exploring one's personal sphere.

The experiences of adolescent girls can vary significantly depending on factors such as culture, socioeconomic background, family dynamics, and geography. These aspects can create significant differences in individual experiences. Despite this, some fundamental aspects of female adolescence remain constant: the journey of self-discovery and how one wishes to be perceived. For this exhibition, **PILAT** (Denmark, 1995) has chosen to represent three experiences from vastly different cultures: Denmark, Cambodia, and Western Sahara. These stories come from three friends who grew up in these places. There are many differentiating

factors in these three stories; different cultures have different perspectives on adolescence. However, there are also many common themes, such as the fear of exclusion and loneliness, for example, that transcend cultural and economic boundaries.

Female adolescence is a tender passage, marked by vulnerability and the search for belonging. Within this journey, community becomes a beacon, guiding one through the complexities of growth. **Lucia Jost** (Berlin, Germany 1998)'s "Capital Daughters" captures this essence, weaving a visual tapestry of sisterhood in Berlin. Her photographs celebrate the bonds that unite young women, exploring themes of sexuality, inclusion, and motherhood. Through these portraits, Jost pays homage to the freedom of self-discovery and the empowering force of female connection. Her work is a love letter to a generation of women, embracing their individuality and celebrating their collective strength.

Girls seeking to break free from stereotypical conceptions, sharing the essence of everyday moments, the carefree moments of teenagers who simply enjoy each other's company in the paintings of **Yufi Yamamoto** (Japan, 1990). Inspired by the surf culture of the streets of Los Angeles and characterized by a psychedelic and pop atmosphere, the silhouettes of female figures move against vibrant poolside backgrounds. The girls in question are carefree, self-assured, accepting of their weaknesses, and embracing their inner child. Yufi Yamamoto portrays the imperfect and unique beauty of gentle and free friends.

The exhibition aims to be a page from a diary where we recognize ourselves and where we tell our stories. A selection of photographs by **Ramona Jingru Wang** (China, 1995) takes up this idea of a visual diary in which she captures the beauty of moments shared with friends or private and intimate times in her own rooms. The concept of care in the work of Ramona Jingru Wang is multifaceted and is present through gestures that capture the love for oneself and for others. It is linked to the concept of responsibility that develops during this adolescent phase.

"Girlhood Lore" seeks to be a series of intimate notes, visual memories, and affective reminiscences that take us back there, to a moment that we thought we had lost forever in time.