

Rania Matar on Photographing Women and Girls

By [Carrie Wise](#)

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Soraya and Tala, Yarze, Lebanon, from the series "Unspoken Conversations," 2014 [Photo: Rania Matar]

After September 11, 2001, Rania Matar was troubled by portrayals of the Middle East in the media.

"I became very aware of my identity, not only as an American, which I had become by then, but also as a Lebanese and a Palestinian," she said. "So I decided to go back and tell a different story."



Clara, 8, Beirut, Lebanon, from the series, "L'Enfant-Femme," 2012. [Photo: Rania Matar]

Matar, who lives in the Boston area, photographs girls and women in both the Middle East and the United States.

"It was important for me to include both, and in that sense focus on our shared humanity and our sameness," she said.

From girls becoming young women to mothers caring for their aging mothers, her photographs explore female identity in the exhibition, "[In Her Image](#)," presented by Cleveland Museum of Art at Transformer Station in Ohio City.

One series, "A Girl and Her Room," captures teenagers hanging out in their bedrooms amongst their clothes, furniture and influences of popular culture.



Siena, Brookline, Massachusetts, from the series, "A Girl and Her Room," 2009. [Photo: Rania Matar]

"I was exactly one of those women 25 years earlier in a different county, different culture," she said.

Another series, "Unspoken Conversations," features mothers and daughters together in the same image.



Brigitte and Huguette, Ghazir, Lebanon, from the series, "Unspoken Conversations,"

While the mother-daughter relationships all appear different, Matar, a mother of four, points out that she can see herself in “the cumulative aspect of them.”

“In Her Image” is on view through January 13 at Transformer Station. Matar will discuss her work with a panel on Nov. 16 at 7 p.m.

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