



*Photo by Ryan Wilkinson*

Overstatements about the loss of youth and growing up are made often without any contemplation of when or how certain aspects of being young have escaped us. We simply remember ourselves being one way and then being the person we are now. For all we know, the transition really *could* have happened overnight.

I was in a little velvet dress the last time I remember seeing myself. The booth, too, was velvet, and the adults were all together and looking good for reasons I still didn't understand, despite my feeling that it was my constant duty to be "fancy". Everything was darkened by the excessively dim light. At some point, I was on my knees and looking over the wood crown of the circular booth and into another room. Another reality, it seemed, where a beautiful girl (by my young, Disney Channel-influenced standards) my age sat with her family in a red velvet booth. Except, she wasn't sitting.

She was looking at me.

I quickly flipped over and sat back down, pushing my back against the velvet chest of the booth so she couldn't see anything but my little legs in their tights. When I decided enough time had passed, I turned back around to peer over the edge, only to be met by her excited, knowing face.

I knew she was cool. I knew she had to be good. Of all the superficial things I, as a young girl, was taught to value in myself and my gender-peers, I couldn't help but see an intelligence in her gaze as her eyes took direct hold of mine.

The adults laughed, though not at me, and I quickly sat back down out of self-consciousness anyways. I told my dad about the little girl in the room on the other side of

the booth. About how she always knew when to look over and catch my eyes. He laughed some more.

I decided that this would be my last time. One last look, at the risk of being reprimanded by my parents for not sitting down. The admiration I had felt for her stalled in that state; it had not yet become a sense of inferiority. Nevertheless, I would try to gain some control. I would look longer, I would capture her eyes. I would incite in her the wonder inside me.

Craning my neck over the wood border, I met my eyes in the mirror, sealing a moment I will always reflect on as the last time I truly saw myself.



*Art is my own*

This detail, done in oil paintstick on wood, has strokes and deep colors (and, ahem, is a detail of a mouth) that remind me of romance . . . blah blah blah, yes, this brings to mind my first *kiss*. The thing is, the kiss that I associate as my first kiss isn't really my *first* first kiss . . . however, just like art, the stories that are impressed in us are the ones that live on. Because of the spontaneity of my second-first kiss, it is what I now remember (and use) as my first-first kiss. As artists, we have a unique power that a lot of people outside of our world forget: we are recording history. And not just our history - the world's history. We have the power to manipulate what has happened to work within our ideals by recording what we *want* to see (not necessarily what happened). I, personally, have a hard time depicting the ugly, which is probably why I admire the Rococo art genre for its subtle weaving of good and evil themes. My paintings do not always reflect a moment as it happened, rather, a moment as I would like to have remembered it.



*Still from video by me*

This is a still from a short video I took last summer in Washington Square Park. I was in New York for six weeks attending NYU Pre-College, which was a time I remember distinctly for being critical to my personal development. I spent a lot of time with people and alone, and this image represents the latter. One thing I know about myself is that I dislike being alone for the same reason that I love it: I am made to think. I am made to mentally wander. At the moment I was in the park, it felt dangerous to be alone, as I was experiencing some particularly painful thoughts. I saw the butterfly in the photo and felt the gravity release from my mind. I related to it in flying alone, admired it for making it look so effortless.

I've never felt a belonging to any archetypal social group, and, therefore, I see that much of my visual art has a theme of anonymity and intimacy. Touch and sensory moments, as well as detail, are of interest to me (see: the detail of the mouth in the above page) for their comfort and ability to make me (and, hopefully, viewers) recount moments when they felt a genuine connection with another being or themselves.