

Project Evaluation

This portraiture project has been one of the most significant and meaningful experiences of my first year. From the outset, I knew I wanted to make work that wasn't just visually strong, but emotionally honest and rooted in something real. Photographing my niece, Frankie, across multiple sessions allowed me to explore the intensity and complexity of adolescence, not as a fleeting phase, but as a profound and often misunderstood state of becoming.

What compelled me most was the psychological territory of youth: the emotional contradictions, the quiet resistance, and the fragile self-construction that happens behind the surface. I wanted to reflect the internal reality of growing up in a world that is often unkind to it. Frankie's age places her at a turning point, not just personally but culturally; emerging into a society that places immense pressure on young people to be formed, visible, and defined before they've had space to explore who they really are. This project became my way of pushing back against that.

Working with my niece over time allowed me to create a relationship built on trust and collaboration. Rather than directing her too heavily, I let our sessions unfold slowly. Her presence in the portraits ranges from uncertain to self-possessed, vulnerable to assertive and I believe that change was necessary not just for the sake of my project. I didn't want to impose clarity where there was none, but instead hold space for the ambiguity and emotional richness that defines adolescence. These portraits are not about fixing her identity in place, but about acknowledging the fluid, often conflicted experience of becoming.

Visually, I took influence from photographers like Sally Mann, Rineke Dijkstra, and Joseph Szabo, who engage with young subjects in ways that feel tender and unsentimental. I aimed for a similar stillness and intensity. I used natural light and minimal settings to strip away distraction and allow Frankie's gaze, posture, and energy to lead the frame. I learned how much strength there is in restraint and how powerful it can be to simply pay attention.

One of the most challenging aspects was the final portfolio edit. I didn't want to create a narrative or suggest a transformation arc. Instead, I arranged the sequence to echo emotional shifts, fleeting confidence, guardedness, quiet introspection. These are not static portraits. They are layered. Documents of emotional life under pressure. They ask the viewer to slow down, to sit with the unresolved, and to look beyond surface appearances.

Ultimately, this project became more than a portrait study, it became a way for me to engage with the wider conversation around what it means to grow up today. It speaks to the tension between inner life and external expectation, and to the resilience it takes for young people to form themselves under uncertainty and anti-socialism.

I've grown immensely from this process, both technically and personally. It's made me more intentional, more sensitive, and more attuned to the quiet complexities of people. This is the kind of work I want to keep making; thoughtful, collaborative, and rooted in truth.