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Art 325

girlhood to womanhood: the contrasting ceremony of playtime - Written Statement

girlhood to womanhood: the contrasting ceremony of playtime delves into the evolving yet mirrored ritual of the playdate through curated images, video, and audio. These images juxtapose the familiar ceremony of adolescent playdates with the ritual often embraced by femme individuals before a night out, offering an exploration of these parallel practices. Through digitally collaged media and audio, it showcases how this ritual shapes a girl's sense of self across time, weaving together themes of whimsy and creativity to the inevitable transformations that produce a chase for the ritual of a female hangout.

The visual elements are carefully constructed to highlight this duality. The greyscale photographs, generated through AI, contrast with the self-drawn and found ceramic frames that perpetuate an authentic and nostalgic quality. This blend of techniques emphasizes the difference between the structured, photorealistic AI imagery and the personal details of the handmade elements. Much of the inspiration comes from Lauren Greenfield's *Girl Culture*, where raw and candid depictions of womanhood and girlhood serve as a lens to examine familiar social dynamics and expectations. Her ability to capture intimate, casual moments influenced the narrative structure of this artwork, which follows the same female participating in the ritualistic practice of the playdate from childhood into adulthood.

As someone who has recently sustained a disability that limits my participation in the ritualistic steps of playtime, I have grown more aware of the importance these actions hold in affirming gender and identity. Rituals that nurture relationships and selfhood are often overlooked by those who can fully engage in them. From this perspective, AI-generated greyscale images symbolize the notion of the growing yet familiar distance from the able-bodied experience. This process captures a tailored perspective of this personal yet shared ceremony, transformed into fixed, photorealistic stills to reflect the slight disconnect from reality. Yet the grounding facets lay in childhood drawings, stickers, and notes, alongside the club tab, reminder notes, and message screenshots for womanhood.

The cultural and generational association of the playdate as a ritual is central to this work. The ten collages are divided equally between two stages of life—girlhood and womanhood—presented as a video sequence, with each pair of images fading into the next. This transition blurs the boundaries between the two eras, creating a visual metaphor for the continuation of the ritual through the passage of time and the evolution of self. Accompanying audio underscores the emotional associations of these phases. Each set of images begins with an audio signal that acts as an invitation to the ritual, highlighting the changes in the invitation stage from a little girl's "hi" to the pings of texts. For girlhood, whimsical music reminiscent of princess movies composes a sense of fantasy and light-hearted play. In contrast, womanhood is

paired with the muffled club music of Lady Gaga, capturing their adult playdates' blurring, intoxicating nature, and more complex emotional undertones. These intentional audios enhance the visual narrative of the stages, deepening the contrast between the two visualized stages of life concerning the ritual of the hangout.

The personalized childhood drawings and nostalgic elements, such as stickers from the early 2000s and handwritten notes, symbolize the innocence and curiosity explored throughout girlhood hangouts. In adulthood, the same ritualistic steps persist but with a sense of obligation, transforming the act into a less whimsical experience represented by grayscale post-it notes, texts, and receipts.

The significance of the ritual is furthered by a projection spanning from floor to ceiling on a third of a wall. This immersive format magnifies the intricate steps of the playdate, from the initiation stage to the farewell. The continuous looping of the video mirrors the reoccurring stages and interactions, reinforcing the repetitive nature of the ritual.

This repetition is especially integral to playdates concerning girlhood because small, consistent actions of play foster gender identity and connection. By enlarging these moments, the work invites viewers to reflect on the playdate's profound social and emotional impact. Play, trust, and connection developed through intentional acts of friendship and self lay the foundation for social affirmation through a gendered lens. The projections scale draws attention to both the universal and deeply personal nuances of these stages, celebrating the collective significance of the ceremony.

By chronicling the journey to the steps of the playdate, this artwork confronts the enduring power of these five stages, ultimately stressing the stagnant yet evolving role of the playdate by considering the profound ways this ritual affirms connection to self and others in a gendered environment across a lifetime.

Documentation + Final Video: <https://www.artbykriss.com/art325>