

A Conversation with Yanka Rodrigues

Jerry Perez: Where did your photographic process begin for you? What is your earliest recollection/interest in photography?

Yanka Rodrigues: Hi Jerry, as cliché as it sounds, I think that I've always known I wanted to be an artist. My dad loved documenting my family growing up so I was able to pick up on the hobby quickly. I think that I started taking it seriously on my 10th birthday, when my mom gifted me a camera (SONY Cyber-shot). She bought this camera so it could serve as a way of visual communication between us, since she immigrated to the UK when I was just six. I don't think I've used any camera more than my pink Sony. On my 18th birthday I traveled back to Brazil and brought it back to Boston with me. Ever since, I've kept it as a memory of my start in the photography journey.



Self-Portrait

JP: Your work tends to talk about youth, adolescence, and maturity. What inspires that exploration?

Yanka Rodrigues: I have been fascinated by the changes my body and mind went through the past few years. I find it amazing that we are able to develop into whoever it is that we want to be. Human connection is a constant theme in my work and life. I love that through human relationships I get to meet and learn about the life of a whole other human who I had never known before. I think this is what drives my interest in people. This past year, I've undergone

some serious life decisions and I was faced with deciding who it is that I want in my life long term. This is how my current project began. I photographed the process of this life-changing year through my closest friends and our experiences living as individuals, and then living together.

Below: "soft and gentle, a rebellion long overdue"



JP: As a multimedia artist, do you see your work cross pollinating to expand your interest in your photographic studies? More specifically, do film and video aid your photographic process?

Yanka Rodrigues: For a long time I thought I would be a videographer. I was first introduced to this medium through an after school program in Cambridge. At CCTV, I was able to explore art and myself in ways I couldn't otherwise at home or school. I've made probably 30+ videos over the past few years. Most of these videos were about self-identity and human connection, all while I also pursued photography. When I decided to study photography, I knew that video making would still be a huge part of who I was and would become. Eight years later, I can now confirm this. So, yes - to answer the question- I think that without filmmaking I wouldn't be where I am today exploring difficult and intimate topics.

I hope to continue exploring both mediums and perhaps create an installation where both could live in one space. I especially see this happening for my most current project!



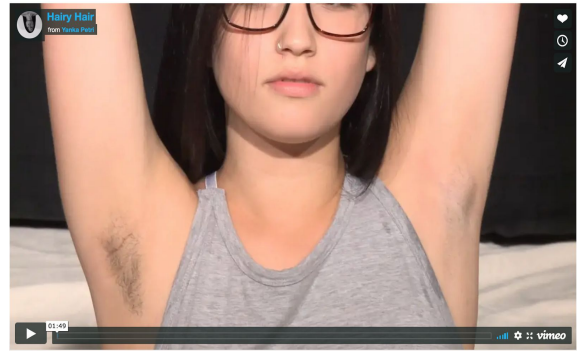
"What is Feminism?" <https://vimeo.com/147385491>



"RAY" <https://vimeo.com/147516299>



"SHAWTY" <https://vimeo.com/216585214>



"Hairy Hair" <https://vimeo.com/147383054>

JP: Who or what fuels your artistic process?

Yanka Rodrigues: I'd say the people that inspire me most are the ones around me. Yes I like looking at other photographers' work, but what truly inspires me is living my day to day life next to the ones I love most.

But..... for my most recent body of work, Nan Goldin and Wolfgang Tillmans are my favorites.



Wolfgang Tillmans and Nan Goldin

JP: What are your thoughts on social media as an art form and how that paradigm is changing the landscape of art, especially as a photographer?

Yanka Rodrigues: I think social media is cool, but it scares me... especially as a growing artist. I think there is a lot of potential in social media. If you use it to your advantage, it could become your monthly income... or it could destroy you (mentally). I think the advantage of the internet to artists is that you can showcase your work to millions of people and get recognized for your hard work. Or- and this happens more often than anything - people that aren't as serious about photography get more recognized than the ones who have been doing this for a long time. So it's a tricky question. I am not so good at showcasing my work online yet. This is a goal of mine for post-grad life.

JP: Where do you see your work living (Magazines, galleries, etc.)?

Yanka Rodrigues: Ideally I'd love to work for a magazine, not necessarily being their photographer, but being an editor, social media strategist, or an art director. Working with people in one space excites me so I am not sure being a freelancer is my ideal job.

But I also see my work living in galleries, in a space that I am able to create and make my own. I like making scenarios and installations that change ordinary spaces.

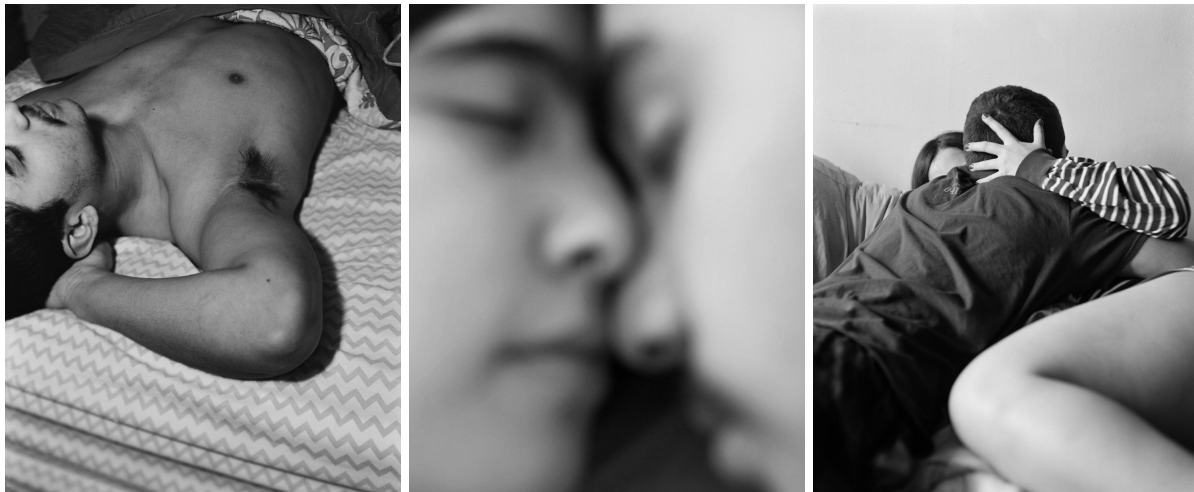
Below: "The Feminist Eye"



JP: Your bodies of work seem to echo off of each other, do you ever return back to a project you once started or finished?

Yanka Rodrigues: Yes! I feel like all of my projects relate to one another because of my curiosity of self and human connection. None of my projects feel finished because there are endless topics to explore. Myself for instance: I can explore myself in front of a camera for the rest of my life because of body and mental state changes. I plan on returning to almost every project in a few years. I think revisiting projects and ideas are essential for artists because we tend to get easily “bored” or exhausted by ideas that are constantly in our heads. Taking a break is good, refreshing, and necessary!

Below: “The Two of Us”



JP: Who are some artists you'd like to collaborate with? And why?

Yanka Rodrigues: I don't see myself collaborating with anyone, at least not for now.. I'd love to see what Nan Goldin's process is like. As well as some fashion photographers like Annie Leibovitz. I guess my idea of collaboration is more like a “following you for a day and seeing where it takes me”



Nan Goldin



Annie Leibovitz

JP: Sometimes our work is guided by our intuition to feel. What emotional forces drive your work?

Yanka Rodrigues: I love.... love! Like... seriously. I think that the time we are living in now during the COVID-19 pandemic is a perfect example that love and human connection is essential to our survival. I am very emotionally driven in all aspects of my life, but even more towards my art making. I want my viewers to feel empathy AND sympathy when looking at my videos or photographs because it is all a visual representation of what this time in my life means to me!



JP: Through your years as an artist and individual, what's a piece of advice you want to give to our readers?

Yanka Rodrigues: Throughout the years I've learned the importance of stepping out of my bubble and exploring different ideas that relate, but also challenge one another. I think that art making is about breaking boundaries and being yourself unapologetically. This is something I continue exploring and so should you!

Make work that is meaningful to you, regardless of what other people might think of it. If you thought about it, it matters! You matter!