

ARDEN WRAY

By Eliana Stratica-Mihail

Arden Wray (b. 1989), originally from Toronto, currently lives in Montreal and is in her last year of a BFA in Photography at Concordia University. She has participated in group shows at the Hotshot gallery in Toronto and the VAV and Lilian Rodriguez galleries in Montreal. Wray is interested by vulnerability, honesty, finding beauty in unexpected places and adventure stories. Her work deals primarily with themes relating to autobiography, feminine identity and intimacy. Central to her creations are pale and soft colors, natural light, memorabilia, and the domestic space. Objects that appear throughout her work and in *Dream Girls* are candles, old photographs, the figure of Holy Mary, beds covered with floral patterned sheets and tarot cards. Through photography, Wray aims at freezing something that captured her attention, details in peoples' homes and a décor that is not staged. She usually photographs her friends, young women in particular, almost exclusively in their bedrooms. Inspired by Sofia Coppola's 1999 film *The Virgin Suicides*, Wray portrays in her video *Dream Girls* (2010) several women in their early twenties, who have been affected by the above-mentioned movie and who shaped their identities through this dreamy vision of girlhood and a mysterious, sensual femininity. *The Virgin Suicides* is the 1993 debut novel by American writer Jeffrey Eugenides, on which Coppola based her film. The story, which is set in Grosse Pointe, Michigan during the 1970s, centers on the suicides of five sisters between the ages of 13 and 17, who live in a Catholic family with very strict and overprotective parents. Wray's video *Dream Girls* deals with the transition from girlhood to womanhood and self-definition. Just like in *The Virgin Suicides*, the long-haired girls, wearing virginal white dresses, are in their personalized bedrooms, and are sometimes looking out their windows. The colors are soft and pale, and the artist used the light that was available, which gives the feeling of a natural and intimate setting. All these elements suggest the femininity and vulnerability of these girls who are about to become women.







Arden Wray. Video stills from *Dream Girls*. 2010.

<<http://vimeo.com/17470050>>.