

Mimi Kelly



## Double take

In certain contexts, mostly art circles, people regularly mistake me for my twin sister. Sometimes it's like a comedy skit: they pass me, pause usually spin around of their heels. The confident ones call out "Maria?" This double take is borne of confusion as they search my face for recognition. I'm very conscious in these suspended, surreal few seconds of their vulnerability as they confront the uncanny. I generally try and offer a non-threatening smile. I don't intend to be patronising. I just want to reassure because frankly no one likes to feel confused, not to mention embarrassed, after being over familiar with, well, a complete stranger. In the minute or so that we chit-chat I am usually closely scrutinised and as we are about to take leave one of us, invariably comments, apologetically, on the physical similarity between my sister and I.

Studying Mimi Kelly's photographs of her sisters closely – and close study is what they demand of viewers – recalls that state of naked fascination. Kelly poses her sisters in such a way that encourages comparison. In some of the photographs their sweet, youthful faces turned towards one another in mirror-likeness. In others they face the camera directly, framed against a white background, their eyes closed in quiet repose. As a series these photographs invites focused scrutiny, each composition a kind of interplay between similarity and difference. And like some kind of twisted umbilical cord the Kelly sisters exchange their twisted ponytails. The intimate zone that Kelly's photographs occupy – dream-like, soft, and strange – recalls Sigmund Freud's concept of the uncanny, that sensation of strangeness wrought by the simultaneously familiar and the foreign. Kelly knows this sibling love is like no other. As your gaze shifts between the faces to and fro, these images remind us that these familial bonds are ties that bind. In a good way? Do you like hair in your mouth?

Anna Zagala



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