



Clothes are also a key to the mother-daughter relationship. The coat Sloane wears is borrowed from her mother, part of Sloane's attempts to create an individuality through dress. Sarfati reprises this obsession with clothes in her portraits of Christine, Sloane's mother. Shot from below, Christine is photographed in a sleeveless dress, her black hair cascading over her shoulders, her heavily tattooed arms held by her side. She looks down as sun-dappled trees reach over her. In another image she wears a wedding dress, a sad-eyed bride awaiting her fate, while another shows her standing in the black dress, her hand holding her stomach in a posture of grief and regret.

Sarfati is interested in the similarity and differences mothers and daughters show. So we see Christine in the yard. She wears a dressing gown and clutches a child's bicycle, one Sloane used to ride perhaps.

Is Christine mournful of the childhood that Sloane once had but has now lost, or of the child Christine herself used to be? Similarly, the image of Sloane crawling on a bed evokes something both of the physicality of childhood and also impending adulthood and a transition into the mother that she may one day become.

Gloom and doom pervades these 'Mother and Daughter' images (the first in a series that is to be continued) but that is perhaps a reflection of Sarfati as much as it is of Christine and Sloane or American culture. "They look melancholy and depressed," says Sarfati. "Everybody is depressed."

But though Sarfati believes that what she shows is brutal and a result of her control, her suggestive mix of costume, props and gaze also portray something that lies outside that control. "People think photography is reality. This is a misunderstanding. Photography is just pictures, a representation of something. Whatever you photograph, it is never what it is."

Text by Colin Pantall

Images taken from Sarfati's new series 'Mother and Daughter' 'The New Life' book is out now by Twin Palms Publisher

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