

**Discover new worlds with the RPS
Science Photographer of the Year**

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'Self portrait' by Esme Duckworth, aged 13, from the project *Through Our Lens*

A PORTRAIT OF YOUTH

As they face an uncertain future young people have found inspiration with the photographer Carolyn Mendelsohn

When Carolyn Mendelsohn interviewed and photographed exactly 90 girls for her project *Being Inbetween*, something one of her subjects said about the experience stood out.

"It has been amazing to have the opportunity to say what I think and how I feel, and that you listened," said the girl. "No one has ever asked me these questions before."

From the climate crisis to Covid-19, the generation of young people coming of age faces great uncertainty, on top of the pressures and anxieties teenagers have always had to cope with.

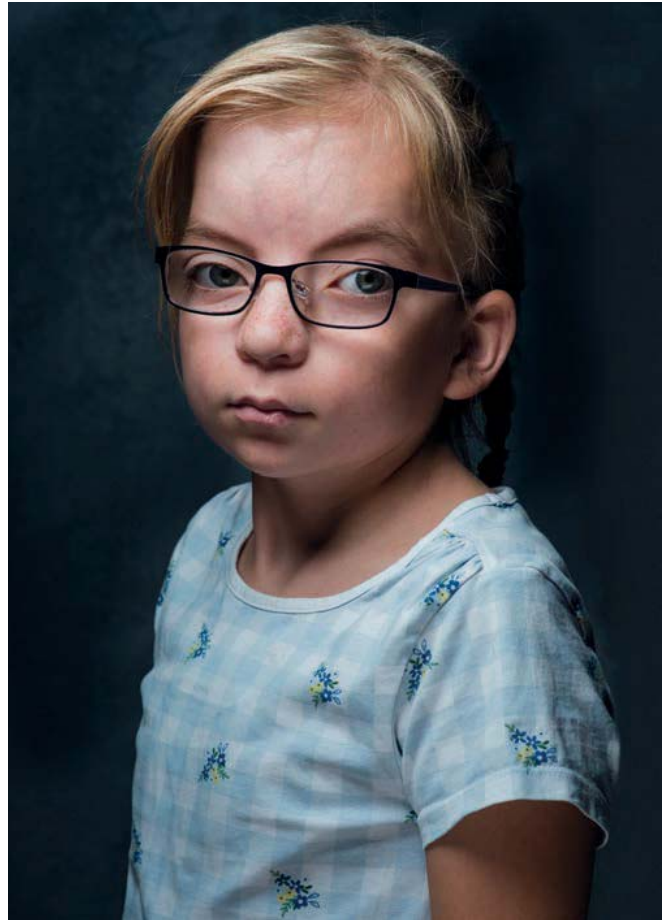
On show at Impressions Gallery, *Being Inbetween* focuses on girls aged 10-12. The result of a collaborative process, it is far more than a series of images.

“It’s a platform, an exploration, a way of giving a voice to the girls who are at this special time in their lives,” says Mendelsohn, “and a way to explore the hidden complexity, duality and contradictions that mark it.”

Bradford-based Mendelsohn began her career in theatre and film before moving into still photography when her three children were young. In recent years she has focused increasingly on youth as a subject, though her body of work is wide-ranging.

During the pandemic she launched *Through Our Lens*, an online photography workshop for young people aged 13-18, with a grant from Bradford Council. It offered a sense of community and an outlet for self-expression at a time when many young people felt isolated.

Now, with funding from the Arts Council, Mendelsohn is expanding the project – working with young refugees, partnering with organisations such as the National Science and Media Museum and Impressions Gallery, and bringing in mentors including Daniel Meadows HonFRPS. She hopes to create a *Through Our Lens* platform and app,



‘Alice Ashley, 11’ from the series *Being Inbetween* by Carolyn Mendelsohn

“It’s a way of giving a voice to the girls at this special time in their lives”



‘Self portrait’ by Harry Berry, aged 16, from the project *Through Our Lens*

co-produced with the young participants, as well as exhibiting work at Impressions Gallery later in the year.

While the two projects have distinct formats, Mendelsohn approaches them with a similar ethos. “I don’t change the way I talk, or the ideas I’m trying to get across,” she says. “I don’t underestimate the young people. Like everyone [they] have a story to tell, a collective one, and also one that is grounded in their personal experience, and they are the expert of that. My role is to use my camera and the skills to enable and encourage them to express this.”

The book *Being Inbetween* is published by Bluecoat Press. An exhibition curated by Anne McNeill is at Impressions Gallery, Bradford, until 24 April. impressions-gallery.com carolyn-mendelsohn.format.com