

UNiversitas: Journal of Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity

Volume 9
Number 1 *Forum Theme: The Digital Turn: A Roundtable*

Article 6

3-2014

What Are Little Girls Made Of?

Francesca Soans
University of Northern Iowa

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/universitas>

Let us know how access to this document benefits you

Copyright ©2014 Francesca Soans

Recommended Citation

Soans, Francesca (2014) "What Are Little Girls Made Of?," *UNiversitas: Journal of Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity*. Vol. 9 : No. 1 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.uni.edu/universitas/vol9/iss1/6>

This Essays, Studies, and Works is brought to you for free and open access by UNI ScholarWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in UNiversitas: Journal of Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activity by an authorized editor of UNI ScholarWorks. For more information, please contact scholarworks@uni.edu.



What Are Little Girls Made Of?

Part of the journal section “Essays, Studies, and Works”

Francesca Soans, “What Are Little Girls Made Of?”

What Are Little Girls Made Of? is a postcolonial exploration of nursery rhymes in which animation and the textures of personal memories are ironically juxtaposed to comment on the continued legacy of European cultural colonialism in India.

As an Indian woman reminisces about growing up in India, a child’s drawing unfolds on the screen, narrating the well-known English nursery rhyme, “Little Miss Muffet.” The woman recalls her deep desire for a white dress and blond hair, as her own dark skin relegates her to the position of “boy” in school plays. The memories, seemingly nostalgic, are juxtaposed with an ironic depiction of a blond Miss Muffet’s encounter with the “other”—the spider—inside herself. Through this juxtaposition, a dissonance is set up between the memories and the animation, providing a commentary on western standards of beauty and the legacy of cultural colonialism in India.

Mixing computer animation, video, and interview footage, this video explores the fictionalization of documentary memory through animated drawings that reflect the subjectivity of the memories being narrated. Through this, the video challenges conventional forms of documentary.

- **Reviewed by Jonathan Storm, television critic for the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in “A Banner Time for Independent Filmmakers,” June 25, 1996:**

“It will reveal itself slowly, over many viewings. And since it’s only four minutes long, you can look at it again and again....the quiet little movie says volumes about how physical appearance shapes girls’ lives.”

Link to Video Documentary [The link to the video on the UNI website was not working on October 25, 2021 when UNIversitas was archived in UNI ScholarWorks.]

SELECTED JURIED EXHIBITIONS

What Are Little Girls Made Of? received its broadcast premiere in 1996 on public television WHYY TV-12’s *Independent Images*, juried by renowned documentary filmmaker Tony Buba.

The station broadcasts to 2.6 million households in Philadelphia and the surrounding areas. It was also selected from 425 entries to WYBE Ch-35's *Through the Lens* international competition.

The film was one of 80 films screened in the 1997 Asian Pacific Film and Video Festival in Los Angeles, CA. The Film Festival has presented the works of such groundbreaking Asian Pacific American artists as Gregg Araki, Arthur Dong, Kayo Hatta, Ang Lee, Rea Tajiri, Trinh T. Minh-ha, Jessica Yu, and many others. In 1998, it was one of 65 juried selections for *Fem'-i-nie n women collectively: womankind*, an exhibition of women artists in Tallahassee, Florida.

GRANTS RECEIVED

Awarded a Subsidy Grant from the Philadelphia Independent Film and Video Association and Pennsylvania Council on the Arts; 1996; city-wide competition in Philadelphia.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/).

