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VANCOUVER — A Toronto photographer is catching the attention of key players in the international art and fashion scenes, with her often provocative shots of teenage girls.

The fact that Petra Collins recently graduated from high school only adds to her allure and her honest perspective of the subjects she captures.

The 18-year-old's work mostly centres around teenage girls in soft and nostalgic lighting and settings. Her photos have been featured in popular magazines *Vice*, *Complex*, and *Jacques*, which Collins wasn't legally allowed to purchase at the time it was published, due to its mature content. (She was 17 when she submitted her work.)

Collins said her photographs are a direct and honest reflection of her young age, and the fact that she's still developing as a woman and an artist.

"This is like a time where I'm coming of age and I'm learning everything and it comes through in my photos," she said. "It's also something I'm very interested in, femininity and sexuality."

Although Collins studied photography in high school, much of what she's learned about the art world has come from immersing herself in it. When Richard Kern came to Toronto to shoot a new series, she modelled for the acclaimed and controversial photographer. They hit it off so well that the New York-based Kern hired Collins to cast several of his projects.

She credits the power and connectivity of the Internet for helping launch her work and putting her in touch with others who share her passion, drive and vision.

"I was able to do all this because I have these resources, whereas three or four years ago, it wouldn't be the same," she said.

Earlier this year, Collins sent her work to 15-year-old American fashion blogger Tavi Gevinson, who was taking submissions for a project she was launching with veteran magazine editor Jane Pratt. Collins was chosen as one of two photographers for the soon-to-be-launched website and magazine titled *Rookie*. (Due to complications with her main publisher, Pratt will not be involved with the project.)

Gevinson was already a fan of Collins' work and was thrilled when she saw that she wanted to be part of the new venture.

"Petra's work makes me think of a teenage girl's diary," she said in an email interview with *The Canadian Press*. "Not because it all reads like a photo diary, but because she manages to visualize and execute all of those very hazy feelings of being a teenage girl so well."

Nadja Sayej, a Canadian art journalist and critic currently based in Berlin, admits she didn't expect the teenager to have much talent after she interviewed her for a story she was doing on Kern. But after seeing her work, Sayej quickly realized Collins was much more than an attractive, popular teenager. She calls Collins a "creative leader" and describes her style as "post-hipster, social media photography, that's not necessarily narcissistic."

"It looks like she's taken her best friends from high school and polished them into super glamorous but not overdone, high quality style magazine fashion stuff," she said. "For that to function in the art world, it takes a really particular balance to pull that off right."

On top of her solo work and upcoming projects, Collins also founded and curates the international all-girl photography collective, The Ardorous, which will have its first exhibit this month in Toronto.

Collins plans to attend the Ontario College of Art this September but suspects her booming career will conflict with her schedule. She's planning on eventually taking a year off to travel and focus on her work.



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“I’m hoping to be able to get more jobs,” she said. “I hope I can keep doing it and sustain myself by doing it and making it into a career.”