

**MAP**  
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Paul Chiappe possesses a ghostly kind of alchemy. Abstaining from the blush of colour and forgoing the sensationalism of scale, this young artist has developed a style of hyperrealist drawing quite apart from any of his contemporaries.

Drawing usually implies an air of freedom, the hastily conceived act of improvisation. And with a lineage that dates from the first cave paintings, the simplicity of the medium chimes with ideas of the accidental and absent-minded sketch. But not for Chiappe.

With sublime detail akin to Serse, and with a knowing nod to Chuck Close and Vija Celmins, this Edinburgh College of Art graduate executes drawing with a clinical precision that is both beguiling and transcendent. Chiappe draws not from life, nor from memory, but from a strange twilight zone usually reserved for photography alone. The figures he renders are hesitant, drifting back and forth, at once fading and surfacing amid terse monochrome shadows.

Chiappe bases his material mainly on found images such as vintage school photographs from local Fife newspapers, and spends at least three months on each pencil drawing. His final-year show comprised only a clutch of works of this kind, and his dedication to detail is intrinsic to each piece. 'I've stuck solely to pencil and always worked very small,' says Chiappe. 'Drawing in miniature can become quite obsessive.'

The laboriousness is fanatical; the daily working and re-working of each drawing becomes an act of devotion. 'It's taking drawing to an extreme,' he adds. 'I really like using these 1920s photographs to draw from. The duality is much better, and the characters are more interesting,' he says, although some of his later work has moved on to contemporary family photographs.

Immersed in meditative complexity and intensity, the works are treated as ghosts. Chiappe toys with notions of memory and history and parallels them with the fragility of his medium. While the wilful rebellion against pop aesthetics and the process of quiet resistance against the alacrity of modern living are together perhaps not unique, they are indeed revelatory for such a young artist. The critic Michael Newman wrote 'drawing, with each stroke, re-enacts desire and loss', and this newcomer's languorous style beautifully embodies such a paradox.