

PAUL CHIAPPE

EDINBURGH



At first glance Chiappe's intricate pencil drawings could be mistaken for vintage photographs. His pictures of costumed children as well as his allusive portraits are of the kind often discovered in the dusty cardboard boxes of a thrift store's back room. Yet the Edinburgh-based artist actually found

most of his source images on the Internet, and his mind-bogglingly precise technique couldn't be more remote from photographic instantaneity. Chiappe's drawings, sometimes no bigger than postage stamps, take months to make and are executed without any of the grids and magnifying glasses that form the usual photorealist tool kit.

This is perhaps because Chiappe's work has little to do with photorealism. His practice is much more concerned with translation—from one object to the next, from a pixelated shot to pencil on paper. In some of his earlier pieces, he has made humorous additions that subtly transform his sources' compositions. That is how, for example, in *Untitled 6*, 2007, Laurel and Hardy's iconic mugs have ended up in what looks like an early 20th-century class picture. These sly interventions immediately catch the eye and thus shatter the illusion that the picture might be "real."

More recently, Chiappe has abandoned such pranks, focusing instead on mastering sharpness and blur. His command of haziness has reached a pinnacle with the ongoing "Yearbook" series, his obsessive reworking of head shots culled from high-school yearbooks. He reproduces the pupils' faces one by one, class after class, and each is finely tuned to the desired level of imprecision. Chiappe's pictures function like memories, the faulty re-creations of a time long gone. —CM

Paul Chiappe
Untitled 48, 2010.
Pencil on paper,
1½ x 1 in.

