

**The Skinny**  
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Paul Chiappe @ The Gallery of Modern Art

**Just as Angela Carter twisted familiar fairy tales, so the magician Chiappe twists the relics of this shrine, creating a most convincing illusion**

A small chamber within The Modern Art Gallery's lengthy interior hosts a collection of drawings by the emerging artist Paul Chiappe, winner of this year's John Watson Prize. The prize is awarded annually to a graduate of Edinburgh College of Art, granting them an exhibition in The John Watson School, now known to all as Edinburgh's Modern Art Gallery.

Appropriately, Chiappe's minute drawings depict scenes of Victorian children sourced from old, discarded photographs. These astonishingly realistic works are like a contact sheet of negatives revealing the defiant brow of a boy in Scout uniform or the short trouser leg of a front row squirmer. One image portrays a class of innocent school children, blocked in by faceless teachers. Looking closer with the provided magnifying glass, I discover the disturbing face of a Charlie Chaplin-like character squeezed in between rows of naive kids. Equally mesmerising is a drawing so small that to the naked eye it looks nothing more than a scratch made by a tiny hand.

Naturally, these pencil scenes evoke nostalgia, but they also exude a stale air of uneasiness within the chapel-like space. A sinister undercurrent suggests it could be a memorial to the forgotten of the Watson school; a hint perhaps to the hidden children's graveyard that rests behind this gallery?

Just as Angela Carter twisted familiar fairy tales, so the magician Chiappe twists the relics of this shrine, creating a most convincing illusion. He is in full control of the viewers, luring them to his inconceivable handiwork, which successfully persuades that he is nothing short of a genius.

<http://www.theskinny.co.uk/article/41515-paul-chiappe-the-modern-art-gallery>