



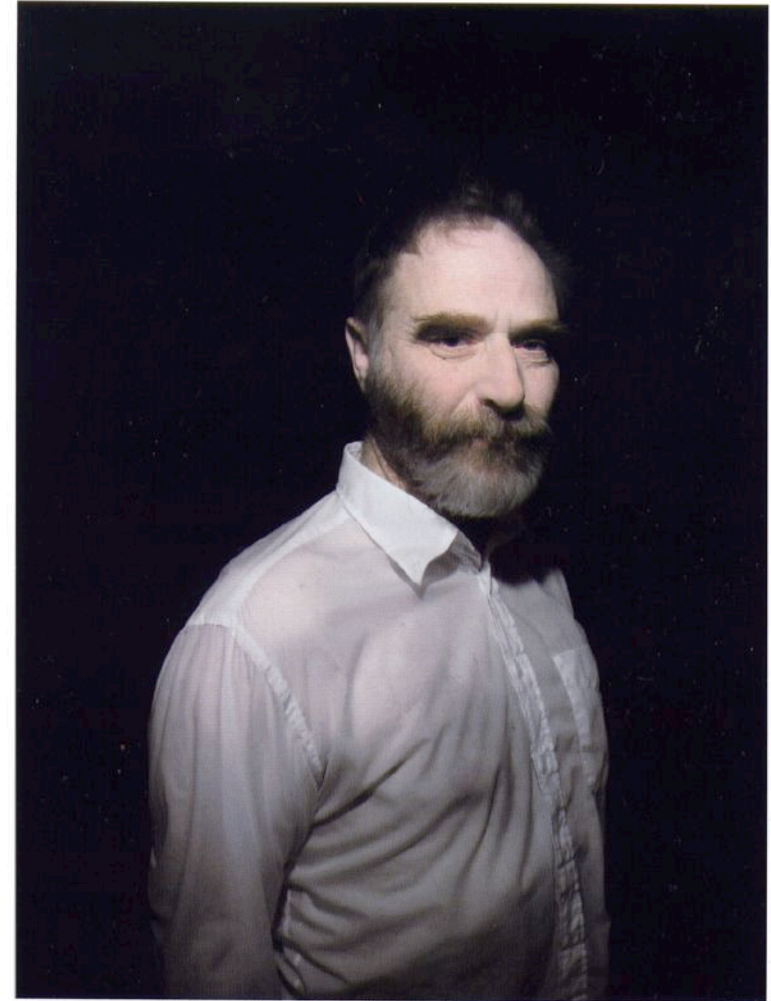
best of
Brighton

from the Series New Photographs from Belgrade © Howard John-Davies

Brighton inhabits a vibrant cultural milieu both as a university and as a city with a thriving art scene. Not surprisingly, the photography course at the University of Brighton attracts a hotbed of creative talent and this year's degree show encompassed a lot of memorable work. Tim Clark, a recent graduate of Brighton, introduces us to the stars of the show.

With over 40 students on the programme the show was inevitably eclectic. A fanfare of the latest trends, as well as a plethora of borrowed influences, as students appeared to emulate the pictorial formulas of their tutors. Mark Power, Xavier Ribas and Jim Cooke. Howard John-Davies' *New Photographs from Belgrade* is a series of work embodied by the captivating image of a soulless, utilitarian housing area left in ruins, which according to John-Davies, bears witness to a "striking but featureless metropolis". These photographs are records of the social conflict that has paralysed this part of the world. Similar to an archaeological site, this image of urbanism takes on the role of an emotional landscape with distant memories of peace. A potent metaphor for the alienation of the individual by the nation state. John-Davies' does not place any emphasis on the ability of photography to alter reality, only our view of it, offering these images as a tool of education to prove that "what we learn from history is that we do not learn anything from history." His work is invested with a compelling humanist perspective and a disarming compositional arrangement.

Art best of brighton



© Emma Critchley

Mikael Eliasson's photographs are part of an ongoing ten-year period of working as a volunteer on a camp for underprivileged children living in the suburbs of Gothenburg, Sweden. These photographs of 'problem kids' who suffer from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder are shot up close, revealing the person in the child rather than a picture of a child. They have a very narrow depth of field so that the facial features are sharp and startling, whilst

everything else plunges into the blurry void behind. The camera picks up all the small wonders that make up individuals as well as the more obvious defining characteristics; on occasion detailing the remnants of their last meal on the sides of their mouth or the speckles of dandruff in their hair. Emma Critchley's ambiguous three-quarter length portraits, for which she won the AOP student award, contain fraught tension. All

is not as it seems, making them tantalizing to decipher. The subjects are illuminated out of the darkness into light as if lost in between worlds. On closer inspection it is clear that these figures, placed in disorientating surroundings, are actually under water. The effect of holding their breath creates the most unsettling expressions and poses. The result is a slightly morbid dramatic theatricality as well as a serene tranquillity.