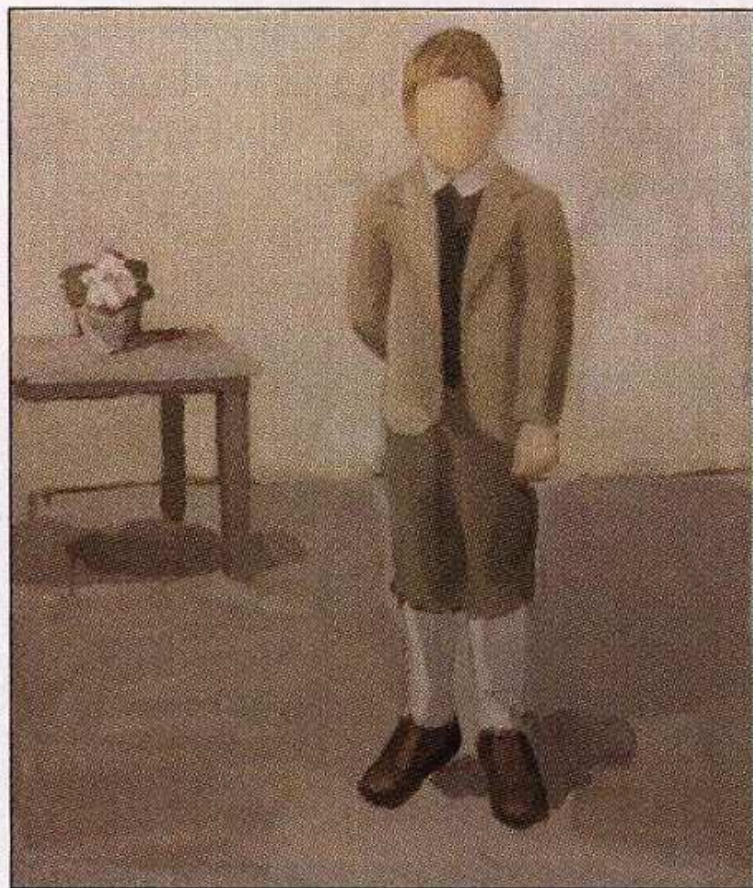


# Gideon Rubin

★★★★★

**Rokeby** West End

Gideon Rubin's paintings of faceless children are disconcerting. But dwelling too long on this would be to project contemporary anxieties about voyeurism onto his more complex take on the nature of painting and its ability (or inability) to represent. Rubin used to paint from life; now his images come from old photos, and the



*'White Flower', 2006*

worn-out tones he uses do an efficient job of capturing the melancholy of times past.

It's a tactic that indebts him, like so many young artists, to the ubiquitous influence of the painter Luc Tuymans, but Rubin's sustained focus on an intimate emotional register charts a more redemptive journey for paintings of people who are perhaps now nothing more than memories. The lack of features in his subjects makes the point that to paint a likeness is already to offer too much detail, too much presence. Rubin instead strips detail out of his paintings – a hand is no more than a few blocks of colour, a red flower just a blotch. Memory fades, they seem to say. Yet his skill lies in how this economy of means produces an intense focus on the essence of a pose, or a gesture. They're paintings, after all, not photos, and paintings don't care much about death.

Faces do appear in the tiny portraits on cardboard downstairs, and are almost exclusively of attractive young women. Paradoxically, their features tell you as much or as little as the faceless youngsters. Rubin's prolific output at times makes things look a little too easy. But his mission to discover how to represent emotion and memory, rather the immediate present, is one to follow. *JJ Charlesworth*