

# TRIBU

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## MAGAZINE

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Photographer **Sylvain Granjon** first caught my eye when his work claimed a rightful poster position for *'Photo-Off'*, an exhibition in Paris' up-and-coming *le Bellevilloise* last winter. Since that blustery evening, showcasing some of the most prominent young photographers from all corners of the world, Granjon has rapidly been making his name as one of France's new wave of tech-savvy artists. His works span a variety of genres – from the candid shots of *'1000 Pieds Sous Terre'*, to the beautifully modelled *'Douce Amère'* and even the comic book-style *'Mister Zuper'* - but the key theme and concept rarely strays from Identity. Perhaps that is what draws the eye to the artist's extensive œuvre: the accessibility of the works. Identity is as important to the artist as it is to the spectator, and the art itself, thus all three are intimately connected through a variety of mediums, both personal and universal.

By far the most striking of Granjon's collections is *'Douce Amère'*. The concept behind this series is "*an adult on a desperate quest of the mythical image of childhood*", which is expressed honestly as the photographer captures the essence of his 5-year-old daughter's youth, yet somehow entwines a haunting sense of growing old and losing innocence.

The images are simple, black and white portraits, each incorporating a prop of some kind, as well as very subtle photo-manipulation, giving a depth of character to the entire series. With each reflection on the collection comes a new layer of meaning. In an interview released along with the premier of the *'Douce Amère'* exhibition, Granjon explains his intended interpretation of the piece, "*it's not me who's looking at the photograph; it is she who is looking at me*". Whilst this is the key concept behind the work, the simplicity with which the photographer has realised *'Douce Amère'* is what makes it so powerful and able to surface strong emotions of sentimentality. It is a collection which really does not wear its heart on its sleeve as the meanings become more profound and apparent the harder you study it. On first inspection it can look like harmless, playful photography, but the closer you get, the deeper the intensity of the child's gaze, and the more alert you become to the significance of the props, be they enlarged facial features, dolls or ripped photographs.

Granjon's direction and his daughter's modelling collaborate elegantly and are able to evoke ideas of searching for a lost childhood without being obvious or controversial. This combined with the signature soft-focus, vintage quality of the post-production creates just the right balance between elegance and eeriness, sadness and playfulness.

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