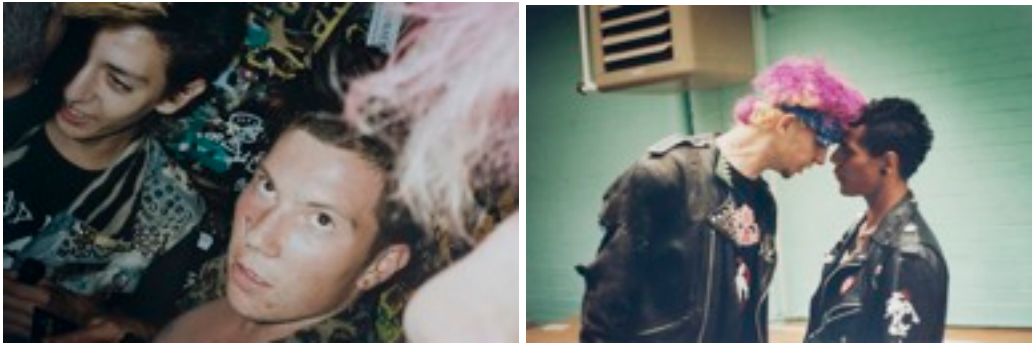


NIALL OBRIEN'S 'GOOD RATS' TAKE RESIDENCE AT ART WORK SPACE

Photographer and Filmmaker **NIALL O'BRIEN** is to make his solo debut this February with an exhibition at **ART WORK SPACE** - a new independent gallery, recently launched in **The Hempel Hotel**, London. The show entitled '**GOOD RATS**', opens on February 1st 2010 and marks the first substantial exposition of work from the '**Superheroes**' series - an ongoing project that has seen **O'Brien** living alongside, and observing the lives of, a group of young punks from South-West London over the last three years.



During this time, the artist has seen the group begin to grow from adolescents to young men, following them on their adventures from Brighton to Berlin and documenting their exploits. **O'Brien** has created a series of photographs so strikingly beautiful that, at first glance, they might belie their raw, uninhibited and primal content. Gradually earning the trust of the group, who to others may seem entirely impenetrable, has enabled him to gain access to some particularly personal and poignant moments in the lives of his subjects. **O'Brien** captures these with an honesty and respect that makes these images and episodes all the more visceral and affecting. *'There's something beautiful about capturing the spontaneity of youth. It's something everyone can relate to on some level, even if they can't immediately identify with this mad group of punks.'* he says.

This trust not only comes with a responsibility to be truthful to the kids' identities, but also towards the work - imposing on the artist a constant battle between his ability to build and sustain his relationship with his subjects and his duty to not influence the way they behave. *'Basically my only rule is never to interfere.'* says **O'Brien** of the need to maintain this balance, *'That can make it hard though, to balance the fact that I want the guys to trust me but I don't want to do anything that would affect what comes naturally. There can be blood spurting out of someone's hand, police bowling in or all kinds of sketchiness, but I can never step in. That distance is important and I hope that comes across in the work.'* The resulting photographs succeed in drawing the viewer into the lives of the characters within them, but never really let one get past the point of voyeurism.

O'Brien's talent and commitment to his subject is already recognised by his peers, with a number of awards including the Irish Professional Photographers' Association Rex Roberts Medal. '**Good Rats**' at **Art Work Space** is sure to see this recognition grow - giving the public an opportunity to enter the world of these young punks and a chance to catch the work of one of the Art World's brightest emerging talents.

'GOOD RATS' runs from 1st February to March 11th 2010.

Private View Wed 10th / Thurs 11th February 2010 (tbc).

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www.artworkspace.co.uk

ART WORK SPACE, Lower Ground, The Hempel Hotel, 31-35, Craven Hill Gardens, W2
3EA, 020 7298 9000

Opening Hours: Monday – Friday 10.30am – 7.30pm, Saturday 3.30pm – 7.30pm,
Sunday 1.30pm – 7.30pm and by appointment

Please consult www.artworkspace.co.uk or call 020 7298 9000 ahead of your visit in
case of any previously booked events in the gallery space

NOTES TO EDITORS:

NIALL O'BRIEN:

Niall O'Brien studied fine art photography in the renowned Dun Laoghaire Institute of Art, Design and Technology. He has exhibited at a number of Irish and English shows and has many awards to his name, including the Irish Professional Photographers' Association Rex Roberts Medal and two main categories in the ICI Photographer of the Year Award. In October 2008 Niall was accepted into the top 20 portfolios in the International Portfolio Review, Bratislava. He continues to exhibit throughout Europe.

His commissioned work is of a gritty, contemporary style, which seamlessly blurs the boundaries between the conceptual and the aesthetic. His growing collection of intimate portraits concentrates on unusual subjects with whom Niall develops a close working relationship. Niall's long-term project "Superheroes" came from a film, which he made in 2006 and has been an ongoing photo documentary about adolescence and desire. Born in Dublin in 1979, Niall now lives in London. His fresh and innovative photographs and films work continues to draw both attention and acclaim.

Selected low-res images of work from 'Good Rats' (high-res images available on request):



'Xavier' by Niall O'Brien, 2009. C-type print



'Luke – KBC' by Niall O'Brien, 2009. C-type print



'Tim and Ash – Whiskey' by Niall O'Brien, 2009. C-type print

ABOUT ART WORK SPACE & NAOMI MURTAGH (GALLERY DIRECTOR):

Naomi Murtagh was born in the small town of Kingscourt, Co Cavan, Ireland in 1979. An early interest in the Arts led her to study Fashion Design at Limerick college of Art and Design where she gained her degree.

Following long stints of travelling around the world, she returned to Europe, moving to Paris to pursue her career in Fashion. She spent several years working for various designers and labels including Sharon Wauchob, Aquascutum, Vincent Du Sartel and Hobbs as accessories designer.

In early 2009 the opportunity to create a gallery within the old restaurant space at The Hempel presented itself and Murtagh, who has always had a keen love of the Arts and interest in the industry grabbed it with both hands.

Gallery area = 120 m2

Selected low-res gallery image (high res images available on request):



ABOUT THE HEMPEL:

Nestled in the heart of West London, The Hempel comprises of 50 individually designed bedrooms and suites each with its own minimalist style and relaxing ambience. A comprehensive range of amenities are offered in each of the rooms as well as wireless internet throughout. The Hempel's restaurant, No.35, offers guests a relaxed but memorable dining experience and the bar; No. 31, serves as an ideal venue for a cocktail or light snack for those in the know. Directly opposite the hotel are six self-contained apartments, an ideal home from home, which all mirror the hotel's contemporary design and offer stunning garden views. Guests are invited to enjoy the peaceful surroundings of the hotel's private Zen Garden to escape the hustle and bustle of city life.

Ends.