

From 'Paved with Gold' - Kettles Yard, Cambridge.

John Riddy mines the experience of being an attentive stranger in cities and spends time reconnoitring on first arriving somewhere. The photographs contain subtle convergences of time and incident with acutely observed details that act like a pinprick. In these pensive images we encounter incongruous graffiti, crisp shadows, peeling stained walls, advertising hoardings, street furniture; anthropomorphic trees offsetting the geometry of architecture, or people caught in unlikely poses. These details jolt us away from our habitual numbness to the urban environment, letting us catch a glimpse of what intimately animates a place beyond it's material facts. In many of these works space is divided up by the overlay of electric tram lines, telephone wires, street lighting, barred doors, and shuttered windows, giving the scene a strangely quantified appearance. This lends the pictures a deceptive quiescence that draws us in to inspect them for some sign of disruption, no matter how subtle. This act of looking triggers our own memories of travel and the pleasure taken in being an outsider in an unfamiliar city, where responsibilities are temporarily pushed aside to be replaced with a new alertness. These photographs emphasise the differences that shift us from the customary experience of being in a British city. Consequently, we need to adjust ourselves to a new tempo of urban existence: a different order of things. Riddy's photographs have an affinity with the strong sense of resolution in paintings by Vermeer or Pieter De Hoogh, particularly in their fascination with the geometry of space, pictures within pictures and the interlocking of materials creating public and private realms. Similarly, Riddy's work invites us to read details and imaginatively inhabit space, but also to become fascinated by the extraordinary quality of the urban environment and the enigmatic juxtapositions it is capable of producing.

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