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John Riddy

05.16.13

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04.12.13-06.01.13 Frith Street Gallery

John Riddy's photographs of Palermo are the outcome of repeated visits to the Italian city over several years. This series, made over a span of three years beginning in 2011, feature superb monochrome images that possess a thrilling intensity and a sense of complete resolution. Looking at them, one can imagine Riddy doggedly trudging the city streets and returning again and again to possible locations, to assess whether the light, perspective, architecture, textures, and distribution of details might generate a picture that announces itself as definitive—inevitable, even. His habit of shooting in the early morning leads to pictures that are literally depopulated, but metaphorically screeching with traces of human activity, from the setting up of shrines and monuments to the spraying of graffiti.

In *Palazzo Delle Poste*, 2012, a sleeping dog slumps against the polished marble of a twentieth-century modernist municipal building. The dog is a crucial, strategic detail; the tone and texture of its hair draw out the quietly luscious marble textures that occupy most of the picture. In *Giardini Inglese*, 2013, a strange, poorly maintained maritime monument of two sailors in a rowboat looms in a sepulchral gloomy background, and in *Piazza Marina*, 2012, a fabulously contorted banyan tree trunk contrasts with a filligree of leaves, wire fences, and glimpses of patrician city buildings. Riddy's camera is socially omnivorous, documenting abandoned shopping carts, muddy puddles, and market stall detritus as compellingly as it does faded Palermitan grandeur. *Giovanni*, 2013, and *Caletta San Erasmo*, 2012, both show scruffy-looking locations on the seafront, punctuated with scatterings of litter, neglected wooden boats, and concrete lampposts, but what's happening on dry land is counterpointed by skylines so spacious and luminous that they transform the whole scene into landscapes with a positively classical aura. These are photos that lock your eyeballs onto their complex surfaces, and keep haunting you long after you've left the gallery.