

John Riddy's architectural photographs and photographs of interiors acknowledge both the artifice and the priority of things as they are. Riddy's is a romantic vision; he creates images which transcend their everyday subject matter, drawing on traditional values in art and photography to inform a contemporary aesthetic of exceptional integrity.

These works are created in the pursuit of beauty, their formal integrity the product of the artist's belief that it is possible to make from the chaos of experience images which provide a coherent expression of personal value. The entrance to the Bibliotheca Dominica (*Perugia 1993*) is surrounded by a hotchpotch of sculptural fragments. High above locked doors, beneath the cusp of the arch hangs a massive stone shield, to either side and just below this sculpture are two carved stone blocks, fragments from a frieze depicting the spills and thrills of Bacchus. Below these, on a level with the top of the door frame are two scallop shaped canopies beneath which, on plinth blocks where classical figurative statues in purest white marble should stand, are two dumpy abstracts. This portal of classical reference and learning is a mad jumble of fragments, remnants of a well ordered and articulate description of the world now reduced to decorative rubble. Riddy's photograph restores a consistent order to these objects, a structuring of experience which is the expression of a belief that the meanings of the world are dependent on our own understandings. John Riddy's images have the ordered appearance of archive photographs in which clarity of description is prioritised over "expressive" techniques. However, the diverse set of locations, ranging from Italian Renaissance Buildings to contemporary domestic interiors in France and New York, are an idiosyncratic collection, reflecting not a systematic archiving of classes of dwelling but the subjective choices of an independent agenda.

Two churches, *Normandy 1991* and *Normandy 1992*. Quite different, but both beautiful in their way. Despite being something of an architectural mess (fussy brickwork, ornate stained glass, showy bell-shaped roof), *1992* has a sort of Hansel and Gretel charm. As a result of having been mistreated *1991* is also a mess, though happily so. Its facade rendered in ghastly slap-face mortar is a perfect blank background against which three crosses play with perspective. Flat decorated surfaces isolated against a white cloudless sky, two cut-outs float weightlessly, everything is pulled to the surface of the print. The even tones, cool and low key, and the consistent straightforward viewpoint establish a correct, formal distance and its pleasures

By investing a specific amount of time in its representation, John Riddy isolates a significant location to express his sense of being at home in the world. Thus, passively experienced space is reclaimed for the imagination, releasing that need for intimacy which is usually satisfied by narrative.

In *Perugia 1993*, the bedroom windows are thrown wide open, light streams in past the beautiful lace curtains, onto an armchair, a bedside cupboard, and the edge of a bed. A large double portrait photograph hangs behind the chair, a middle aged couple in their Sunday best who posed for the camera at least half a century before John Riddy re-photographed them. The image has extraordinary pathos. The arm-chair without a cushion; the empty bedside cupboard; the spartan bed, with its linen pulled so tightly around the thin mattress that the metal bedstead and wooden bed frame are visible. It's as though someone were anxious to show that nothing may be hidden, in this well-aired room there are no

skeletons in the cupboard, nor ghosts under the bed, there is very little to hold our attention other than the formal arrangement of the objects themselves. The image is entirely static, narrative movement is suspended in order to reveal formal relationships between things in the world. Significant juxtapositions of objects rather than the overlaying of one thing or event upon another are stressed. This couple neither inhabit the room nor possess it, nor are they its subject, their image has no more or less importance as part of John Riddy's photograph than any of the other objects in the picture. This image does not invite a narrative reading, the photograph is so complete, so self-contained that no change, no further information, no plot is required, instead it provides something scarcely ever available to us - the feeling of limitless time.

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