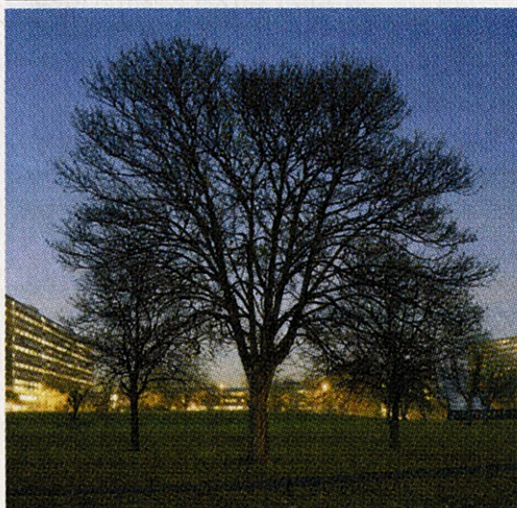


Exhibition of the week

TIME OUT MARCH 2009

John Riddy



'London (Burgess Park)', 2008, detail



Frith Street Soho to Hampstead

John Riddy is known for his formally rigorous and chromatically complex photographs of monuments and places. His wry, art-referential framing of man-made and natural world phenomena – from brutalist flyovers to painterly renaissance skies – conceals myriad overlooked details. London becomes the subject of Riddy's fascination with texture – as material facet of the everyday urban experience and a less tangible spatial state of play. In these, the people-free scenes of an elegantly edited *dérive*, the city appears a visually rich sculptural playground littered with narrative possibilities.

The show's title, 'Low Relief', aptly describes Riddy's technical handling – the compressed effect of object and context. The name is equally applicable to the security of being able to locate oneself (in the picture or the world at large) via generic or familiar forms such as the river, a famous landmark or an architectural sensibility. For while these works could hardly be described as tourist shots (although one of Burgess Park reeks of the municipal promo still), there is nothing exclusive about his navigation of the city. As if from the smeary window of an off-course bus, one encounters a diverse range of sites: from the smudged-graphite stonemasonry of Westminster Cathedral to a chalky section of the Thames at Wapping.

The first and possibly exhibition-defining image, of modernist tower blocks, sees Riddy channel the ordinary/extraordinary shift like knife through butter: the neon-tainted tessellation of squares and rain-soaked housing estate are equally sublime for very different reasons. Time and again Riddy knocks the less canny photography competition out of the frame, mining the territory for just the right amount of sodium to make it appear as if each ordinary façade and age-old site has been temporarily conjured for the camera.

Rebecca Geldard