

# IN BRIEF



## PAINTING WITH A LENS

Like many other photographers, John Riddy started out as something else. He was a painter by training and briefly a sculptor, but was attracted by the range of results photography offers compared with its economy in terms of expense and activity. Perhaps because of his background, he's been able to keep his distance from contemporary critical theory. While the photography contingent beats its collective breast about representation, Riddy is out there with a mission to capture on film the world just as he sees it. The results are descriptive pictures redolent of work by nineteenth-century French practitioners such as Atget and early twentieth-century figures like Paul Strand, and postcard images in the style of Hurlimann – all men who really did think they were using the camera to bring us the world – and which have an unsettlingly timeless and placeless quality. Riddy focuses on fragments of the built, often rural, environment, but with no desire to imbue them with meaning. His only inconvenience (if it can be called one) is that he has to go abroad to get the shots: working in Britain would risk allowing his own cultural baggage to intrude.

John Riddy Photographs is at Frith Street Gallery, 60 Frith Street, London W1, until 4 November. *Caroline Roux*