

PRESS RELEASE

**James Castle / John Riddy**

*Of Things Placed*

18 September – 18 December 2015

This exhibition brings together two bodies of work that share a pre-occupation with the framing and conception of place. James Castle and John Riddy employ very different materials and processes developed in different times and places, yet they share a subtle understanding of descriptive illusion. Whether using the simplest of media or advanced digital technology they make us aware of the subtle strangeness of the everyday, producing images where subject, process and medium are finely tuned to create self-sufficient worlds.

James Castle's drawings are not dated but they come from sometime between 1915 and the mid 1970s. Castle was born in 1899 and died in 1977, making work consistently throughout his adult life. All of the works shown here were made with soot gathered from a wood burning stove and mixed with saliva to create a monochrome ink or wash. This was applied to found paper and card using self-styled sharpened sticks and drawing implements. The drawings depict landscapes and buildings from the Boise and Ada counties of the state of Idaho where the artist worked and lived his entire life. They mix straightforward observation with remembered imagery, surreal totems and architectonic forms of his own conception. Castle's drawings exploit a remarkably subtle grey scale using materials that are derived from the very world they depict, energised and compressed onto small scraps of paper. The emphasis on rough and found materials is in sharp contrast to his use of linear perspective (which was partly learnt from looking at photographs) and the arresting spatial illusion that characterises many of his drawings. Castle's drawn and rubbed spaces and vistas are comparable in effect to paper negatives, somewhere between observation and fabrication, outside of the everyday progress of time and yet descriptive of a familiar world.

John Riddy's photographs all come from a recent series made in South Africa's Cape Peninsula. These works were made in parallel with his recently exhibited photographs of Palermo. However as with other series there is a specific scale (10x8 inches or 'full plate') and this smaller size enforces a compression of detailed description that demands close inspection. As with Castle's drawings there is a finely tuned approach to the integration of structures and spaces held in complex and ordered graphic images. Riddy has made numerous visits to the Cape Peninsula but began this work in 2012. Some of the images were prompted by recent events - including the fires of March 2015 – whilst others focus on forms of social and mechanical engineering that date from the 1960s. Coexistence of all kinds is an issue here and its problematic nature stands out clearly against a revered natural backdrop. Many of the pictures were taken within the confines of the National Park and the mountainous skyline, the intense sunlight and the surrounding seas are emblematic. But between the mountains and the sea unnatural disparities and historical scars are clearly juxtaposed in Riddy's silent and considered compositions.

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James Castle (1899-1977) was an American artist who created drawings, handmade books and constructions for nearly seventy years. Collected by major museums and individuals throughout the US and Europe, his work has been the subject of retrospectives organized by the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 2008 and by the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid in 2011.

John Riddy was born in Northampton, England in 1959 and studied Painting at Chelsea School of Art. His recent photographs have been included in *Schlaflos/Sleepless: The Bed in History and Contemporary Art*, 21er Haus, Vienna 2015 and *Ruin Lust*, Tate Britain 2014. Riddy's works are held in major collections both in Britain and abroad including: Tate, The Government Art Collection, Arts Council England, The Victoria and Albert Museum and De Pont Museum of Contemporary Art.

In cooperation with the James Castle Collection and Archive  
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