

# ANTHONY REYNOLDS GALLERY

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## PRESS RELEASE



## RICHARD BILLINGHAM | BLACK COUNTRY

29 APRIL – 29 MAY 2005 TUESDAY – SATURDAY 10.00 – 6.00

*“Here, there are photographs taken in the daytime, 1997, and photographs taken at night, 2003. They were all taken in the small industrial town of Cradley Heath in the Black Country, West Midlands where I was born and grew up.*

*I wanted to prove that you can take good pictures anywhere and the most ‘ordinary’ subject I could think of was the town I grew up in. It was about four miles from where I was living at the time. To others I imagined it to be the kind of featureless, non-descript place they would drive through to get somewhere else.*

*I felt a great longing for these little places, street corners, bits of waste ground and brick walls, places that I would play in as a kid or pass through on the way to school or to run an errand for my mom. I also realised my relationship with my home town had begun to change at this time. Although living very close by, I was no longer as innocent and no longer with no money and low expectations, like many of the locals. I was more conscious of my surroundings but at the same time I did not want to let go of the emotional reassurance and security that my home town afforded me. I moved away some time after making those pictures and they are the last “snapshot” photographs that I have taken.*

*In 2003, six years on, I wanted to see how my relationship to my hometown had further changed. This time I decided to take more detailed photographs on a medium-format camera and at night using long exposures. Making much slower work in this way forced a different kind of attention before taking each picture. I also found that my senses seemed more heightened at night due to the silence and the darkness and the fact that no one else was around.”*

*Richard Billingham, 2005*

These are remarkable images. The absence is almost physical but there is also a palpable intimacy. The powerful sense of loss in the earlier photographs is replaced by the richness of discovery in the new work. The night-time photographs are hauntingly beautiful and together these two series of works, six years apart, confirm Billingham’s extraordinary ability to produce ravishing images from the most mundane material.

*Black Country* A book of these photographs, with an essay by Jonathan Watkins, is available from the gallery, price £17.95 (The Public, 2004,)