A still life painting by Barry Ross Smith. The central focus is a large, dark, textured vase filled with a bouquet of roses in shades of pink, peach, and cream. The vase sits on a dark wooden cabinet. To the right of the vase, a small, light blue rectangular object with a white square in the center is placed on the cabinet's surface. In the background, three circular objects, possibly plates or shallow bowls, are arranged on a shelf. The background wall is a mottled, textured grey. The painting style is characterized by visible, expressive brushstrokes and a rich, somewhat muted color palette.

everyday fictions
Barry Ross Smith

front cover
royal wave (detail) p.6

essay *Lost and Found* by Peter Michael Le Fevre
additional text by Barry Ross Smith

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My Eden Life

Photographs are handed down experiences. The original photographs that these paintings aspire to are banal and anonymous family histories, lost mementos that are acquired from depositories of redundant needs; the second-hand shop and garage sale. Adrift from their inception they become fragments and remediate with the biography of each new viewer. They are retrieved and uploaded to websites, awaiting recognition again amongst the legion of images within the online ether. I am drawn to their personal and anonymous desires; they simultaneously attempt to capture a desired conceptualized ideal while exposing it as myth. Painting the photograph accepts and exemplifies this imprecision in the crafting of the hand-made object. Viewers may identify with the inner life of painted figures but complete absorption is vanquished in the open materiality of oil paint entering the viewer's world. The image becomes uncertain, initializing an interpretative freedom for the viewer. They reflect an interior life, a projection for the esoteric desires. My hope is that the viewer may become immersed within the works, connecting to their own lineage, an ancestry of indistinct faces, of relatives and strangers in order to reflect upon uncertainty, and his or her role in interpreting the past, and the present.



backlit
size: 70 x 70 cm
medium: oil and enamel on board
left: backlit (detail)



In the one hundred and fifty year existence of the photographic image much has been debated regarding the photography versus painting issue. The predicted death struggle between the traditional and new methods of picture making seemed at first clear and simple. What emerged initially seemed to be that photography released painting from the burden of verisimilitude to which it was implicitly subjected. It provided painting at first the licence and then the obligation to concentrate on what photography could not do. This worked partially from the premise that photography was the honest and impartial recorder of truth and likeness; it was scientific and unflawed unlike painting with its inherent human frailty.

Lost and Found

The moment proved fleeting and the advent of the digital era with its post-millennial fluidity of boundaries and altered images has left us with a

right: *royal wave*
size: 48 x 70 cm
medium: oil and enamel
on board

right: *smile*
size: 60 x 41,5 cm
medium: oil and enamel
on board





discipline that now only retains a residual association to its original observed reality and truth. We had discovered a terra-incognita, the digital world which continually needs exploration and in which the issues of the place of photography and painting need redetermination. Add to this the layered complexities of relationships that are created by an artwork and the debate deepens. This is Barry Ross Smith's territory.

In considering photography as a medium it becomes in essence, a surreal depiction of the world as a series of disassociated bodies, like a collage or a collection of quotations, always the momentary headline and never the novel. It is a scopophiliac activity in which the removal of the hand from the

the blokes
size: 50 x 50 cm
medium: oil and enamel
on board

right: party people
size: 60 x 41,5 cm
medium: oil and enamel
on board







photographic process has concentrated all the attention to the eye, to the exclusion of all other senses.

It is a process of obsessive examination of small fragments without allowing us to view or understand the whole. But in our contemporary experience this could be all that is required of it. The constant and unrelenting production of increasingly facile wallpapered imagery could herald societal decline into a state of visual ennui.

Within this body of work Smith re-engages us in a revitalised debate. He selects photographs from the vast library of anonymous “lost” images that have been found and posted on the net, but which have no apparent attached history or commentary. These intriguing momento-mori recording experiences, which at the point of creation were considered of sufficient significance to be recorded, preserved with the intention of being revisited. They elicit a powerful resonance of recognition, a human empathy of a shared experience. For the viewer on first encounter there tends to be an oscillation between voyeurism and recognition. The human experience of living captured in its banal moments. These images are records of the clumsy performances of photographer and subjects that became the standardised lexicon of much recorded imagery as the technology of

Painted girl (detail) p.16
size: 26 x 36 cm
medium: oil and enamel on board



fish wife
size: 30 x 30 cm
medium: oil and enamel on board

right: black heart
size: 29,5 x 43 cm
medium: oil and enamel on board

film photography became affordable and democratized. Smith renders these everyday images as paintings which mimic the veneer of photography but which upon closer inspection reveal an expressionistic, painterly approach with the artist employing an open handwriting of brushwork, which dissolves the truth of the photograph into a disintegration of marks, exposing the construction of illusionism.

In these works both disciplines of photography and painting are reinvestigated, there is no longer any claim to sovereignty of vision by either discipline; there have been no deaths and no longer even a vestige of struggle, merely a shift in our thought and vision. These paintings or paint rendered photographs are not images that depend on the photographic source as additional information providers but are works about processes, the artist as the magician hereby revealing his magic, layer by layer. This careful and deliberate deconstruction allows the viewer an active space to exercise a critical scrutiny and for a direct and fascinating engagement with the work.

Peter Michael Le Fevre.
(2011)





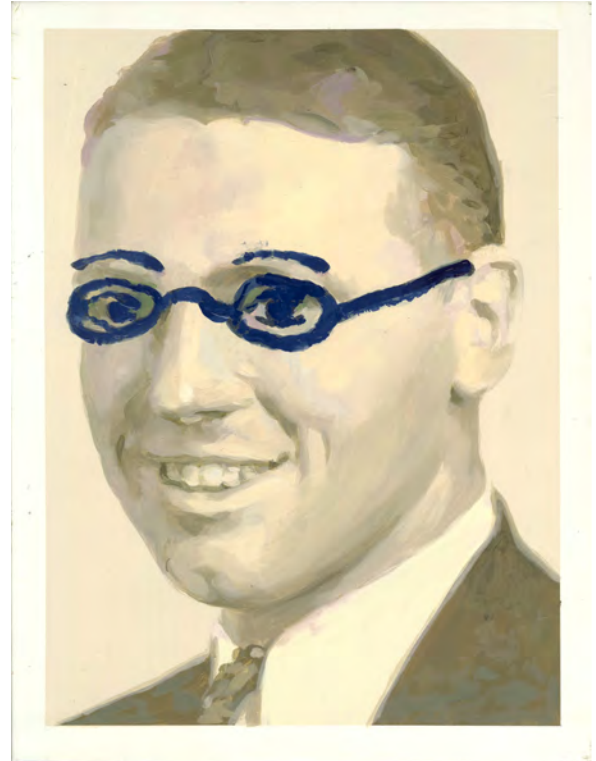
far left: *black and white Christmas*
size: 45 x 45 cm
medium: oil and enamel on board

top left: *picture window*
size: 50 x 50 cm
medium: oil and enamel on board

bottom left: *couple*
size: 60 x 60 cm
medium: oil and enamel on board

right: *pink fade*
size: 70 x 70 cm
medium: oil and enamel on board







far left: *Painted girl*
size: 26 x 36 cm
medium: oil and enamel
on board



left: *four eyes*
size: 21 x 28 cm
medium: oil and enamel
on board

above: *beach boys*
size: 45 x 45 cm
medium: oil and enamel
on board

above middle: *kiss*
size: 29,5 x 43 cm
medium: oil and enamel
on board

right: *trophy*
size: 22 x 37,5 cm
medium: oil and enamel
on board





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left: *photobooth*
size: 60 x 41,5 cm
medium: oil and enamel on board
back cover: *the blokes* (detail) p.8



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