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The Smiths' 1986 album *The Queen Is Dead* opens with a sizzly sample of "Take Me Back to Dear Old Blighty," (1916) a plaintive ditty recounting the patriotic homesickness felt by British soldiers on the Western Front of WWI. Such nostalgia is reframed by the rest of the album, which voices contempt for the monarchy and British imperialism with ironic humor. In Kara Joslyn's exhibition at M+B, *Bigmouth Strikes Again*, titled after the sixth track on *The Queen Is Dead*, the painter appropriates images sourced from mid-century craft books that teach readers how to create paper sculptures. Joslyn pulls these nostalgic figures and domestic scenes into the shadow realm of her stark paintings, charging this sentimental imagery with a noirish mystery. Whereas The Smiths pivot away from nostalgia by satirizing its attachments, Joslyn homes in on nostalgia as a form of illusion that masks complex narratives about personal and national identity.



Joslyn's process is much like a nostalgic refrain, characterized by the meticulous reconstruction of found images. Beginning with scanned photographs of folded paper sculptures taken from craft books, Joslyn then digitally manipulates the images before painting them on canvas panels. Airbrushed with glistening polymer-based automotive paint, the resulting black, white, and blue paintings look both hyperreal and unreal. Each staged within a dark void, the semi-abstract paper sculptures are rendered with such precision that they verge on *trompe l'oeil*.

In the claustrophobic *If it's not Love, then it's The Bomb that will bring us together...* (all works 2023) two airplanes fly at harsh, diagonal angles. Stark chiaroscuro infuses the source imagery with a melodramatic flair. The planes resemble B-52 bombers, which were developed in the 1940s and remain an enduring symbol of American power and military might in popular culture. The planes are overblown and congested within the composition, evoking a sense of brutality without a context for the conflict. Joslyn's isolation of this jingoistic symbol therefore underscores America's fixation with violence and war.

While the B-52 conjures a nostalgia rooted in American nationalism, Peter Pan emerges in the exhibition as a figure steeped in the fantasies of a never-ending childhood. In *Peter Pan Syndrome Recovery Project*, a Tinkerbell-like fairy floats mid-air, sporting small black dots for eyes and stilted arms that jut out from its torso. The painting feels lifelike, as though you could reach out and grab the paper form. But instead of drawing viewers into the kitschy sentimentality of Peter Pan, Joslyn estranges our idea of this childhood symbol. The painting simultaneously inhabits and interrogates nostalgia as a state of arrested development, one that suspends us in a false world.

*Bigmouth Strikes Again* excavates more sinister narrative undercurrents obscured by nostalgia's fictions. In *Swallowed*, a flock of nearly twenty birds flies into a church steeple, recalling Alfred Hitchcock's 1963 film *The Birds*, wherein a series of crow attacks threaten a small town defined by the same mid-century values found in Joslyn's craft books. As *Swallowed* suggests, nostalgia's return to the past can often be painful—a fact embedded in the word's Greek root "algos," or "pain." Joslyn conjures such complicated feelings in her surreal tableaux that unpack the pretenses fueling our American imaginary.