



**I**n almost all of Chris Barry's photo-montages—particularly her more recent—there is a death-like quality about them. There are obvious image-fragments that testify to this quality, like a row of carcasses hanging in an abattoir, or the head of a cow, upside-down, throat cut, and the last of its blood congealed and hanging like an icicle from its gaping neck.

**B**ut even in the most colourful, vibrant, busy or rhetorical of her collages, one senses a cunning deathliness. At times, this quality is only slightly suggested:

from a series titled *Lost in Translation*, portraits of elderly, perhaps immigrant women wearing brightly floral aprons are bordered with an equally bright arrangement of flowers.

The intensity of colour contrasts sharply with the grey and sombre faces of the women, and overall, evoke picture-epitaphs that are a common feature of Catholic, particularly European, tombstones.



**O**ther works are made deathly by association. From another series *Displaced Objects 1*, a medium-shot of an anonymous worker, set against a grey sky in what appears to be an industrial landscape, looks over to the camera from behind a wire fence with a soft and pleasant smile. This image is framed on all of its four sides with fragments of other images; some appear as if pulled out of a family album, while others are fragments of the same industrial site. But also outlining the top and bottom of the image are pieces of barbed wire stretching the width of the entire work.

**T**he barbed wire is at first unassuming, then emblematic. The wire is spotted with red paint as though bloodied, and links the image of the worker to another (hypothetical) time and place. Possibly that of a war-torn country, a battlefield or an internment camp. There is the sense of a minor, individual and personal history unfolding, but not of course through a series of continuous images. Rather, the discontinuous bits of images that are arranged over, across and around the central image of the worker (he is entombed, so to say) propose an equivalence between this scenario and another, perhaps one belonging to his past. The work, after all is titled *Synonymous*.

**A**t this point it may be worthwhile to suggest that in general the use of photo-montage is already a technique which sounds a low-pitched death-knell. Images of people, objects or events are cut out from their original, continuous, natural or familiar context and then newly arranged in a fragmentary scenario. The newly formed image takes precedence, yet discontinuity is the main principle of composition. The fact still remains that everything is a cut-out. Each fragment is a vestige of a past, a scene that is now absent, and thus something of a ghost-like reminder. This is particularly so in the series *Lost in Translation*.

**T**he most forceful of Barry's recent work brings this quality of the photo-montage closer to motion picture montage. It may seem paradoxical to bring together a medium where montage serves a naturally linear and moving form, with one whose form is naturally static, non-progressive. Indeed, it arrests motion. But "montage is conflict", to borrow a well-known dictum of Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein.

**T**here are two recent examples prominent in this respect: *History Painting No.1* and *History Painting No.2* barely compare with the multi-layered construction of Barry's earlier work. Two contrasting images will suffice, and each image is assembled in sequence rather than as a mass of varying bits and pieces heaped over and around each other. The images of *History Painting No.2* are simply a building and a clump of trees. These images are repeated over and

# BARRY

## *H e r S t o r i e s*

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### *List of Works*

**F**rom the series **Being**

**Untitled**, 1990

180cm x 300cm approx.

**Untitled Diptych**, 1990

180cm x 127cm each

**F**rom the series **Habitat, A Question of Place**

**History Painting No. 1**, 1992

300cm x 127cm each panel

**History Painting No. 2**, 1992

300cm x 100cm each panel

**S**electd images from the series 1992, **Lost in Translation**

(**Displaced Objects 2**, reprinted from the original series)

152cm x 127cm each approx.

**D**imensions height before width. All works are Type 'C' colour photographs

Front/Back cover: **Untitled Diptych**, 1990 from the series **Being**

Inside: **Untitled**, 1990 from the series **Being**

over again, though not in the same manner. Sometimes the images are superimposed, or are seen upside-down, while still more of the same images are seen in different stages of fading away. Unlike a majority of Barry's earlier work, there is a distinct lack of colour. They often appear washed out, as though drained of colour, lifeless, which adds to the funereal quality of the work. Together, they form several vertical strips which hang from ceiling to floor, and which resemble enormous strips of motion picture film.

**T**he analogy with cinema is not accidental. *History Painting No.1* is similar though evermore potent, for among the repeated images of a building and a clump of trees is included one of hanging carcasses of cattle. This recalls a celebrated sequence of Eisenstein's film *October* (1926), in which a scene of soldiers being shot is juxtaposed with an image of cattle being slaughtered.

**A**s in this example from *October*, the succeeding combination of images in both of these works by Chris Barry is what is called metaphorical montage. Each image functions as the paradigmatic combination of generalised ideas, albeit conflicting. The building stands for 'culture/society', the trees for 'nature', and the cattle for 'extinction'. Their combination is certainly funereal: the existence of the building (culture/society) can mean or point to the disappearance of trees (nature). And in the next instance, so too is the inverse combination funereal: the disappearance of nature can mean or point to the extinction (cattle) of culture/society. Rather than a direct casual relation between the images, their combination highlights the paradigmatic foil in each.

**T**hus, finally it is apt these two works be called *History Paintings 1* and *2*, for this type of montage is one which frustrates the auspicious narrative sweep that is the historian's main task at hand. It seems appropriate that Chris Barry's earlier work would find resonance in this metaphorical use of photomontage: this particular use stands distinct from how we have come to practice and understand History as a metonymic process. One which entombs other stories.

**R**affaele Caputo.



## CHRIS BARRY

(Krystyna Marczak), Born Melbourne, 1954.

### Studies

- 1983-85 Diploma of Photography.  
Photography Studies College, Melbourne.
- 1989-90 Graduate Diploma in Fine Art (Printmaking),  
Victorian College of the Arts, Melbourne.

### Individual Exhibitions

- 1986 *Displaced Objects 1*, Artists Space Gallery, Melbourne.
- 1988 *Displaced Objects 2*, Artists Space Gallery, Melbourne.
- 1989 *Displaced Objects 1 & 2*, Horsham Regional Gallery, Victoria.
- 1990 *Displaced Objects 1 & 2*, Latrobe Valley Arts Centre,  
Ararat Regional Art Gallery, Mildura Arts Centre.
- 1992 *Lost in Translation*, Rebecca Hossack Gallery, London;  
Mala Galeria, Centre for Contemporary Art, Warsaw.
- 1992 *Habitat, A Question of Place*,  
Victorian Centre for Photography, Melbourne.
- 1993 *An Imaginary Life*, Studio 12, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne.

### Selected Group Exhibitions

- 1988 *Australian Photography the 1980's*,  
Australian National Gallery, Canberra, and toured nationally.  
*The Thousand Mile Store*,  
Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne  
and toured regional Victoria.
- 1989 *New Acquisitions*, National Gallery of Victoria.
- 1990 *Mixed Media/Mass Media*, Painters Gallery, Sydney.  
*Palimpsest*, Fine Arts Gallery, University of Tasmania.  
*Australian Photography: The Waverley Collection*,  
Waverley City Gallery, Melbourne.  
*Art Workz Two* (Acquisitive Exhibition),  
South Melbourne Town Hall.  
*Tell them it was wonderful* (Graduate Exhibition),  
Ian Potter Gallery, University of Melbourne.  
*No Vacancy* (A Detail from the series *Being*),  
Collins Street Shopfront, Melbourne.  
*Artists-in-Hospitals*, Drill Hall,  
Australian National Gallery, Canberra.  
*Art and the Cancer Ward*, Linden Gallery, Melbourne.  
*The Alice Prize*, Araluen Centre, Alice Springs.  
*Around Ten*, 200 Gertrude Street, Melbourne.
- 1991-92 *A Constructed Reality: Aspects of Contemporary Photography*,  
National Gallery of Victoria.  
*Ibid.*, Latrobe Valley Arts Centre, Morwell, Victoria.
- 1992-93 *Sites of the Imagination: Contemporary Photographers View*,  
*Melbourne and its People*, National Gallery of Victoria.  
*Chris Barry/Johnathan Nowick*, Union Gallery, Adelaide University.

### Selected Bibliography

- Helen Ennis, *Australian Photography: The 1980's*,  
(catalogue), February, 1988.
- Linda Hicks-Williams, 'The Marvellous Mundane',  
from the catalogue *The Thousand Mile Store*, March, 1988.
- Helen Grace, 'Still Moving - Recent Australian Photography',  
*Art and Australia*, Spring Issue, 1988.
- Raffaele Caputo, 'Taking Time Out', *Cinema Papers*,  
No. 75 September, 1989.
- Arthur McIntyre/Freda Freiberg, *Contemporary Australian  
Collage and its Origins*, Craftsman House, 1990.
- Isobel Crombie/Sandra Byron, *The Hallmark Cards catalogue*  
(20 Contemporary Australian Photographers), June, 1990.
- Robert Nelson, 'Art and the Cancer Ward', *Agenda* No. 20/21,  
November, 1991-January 1992.
- Freda Freiberg, 'Lost in Translation, Photo-installations by Chris Barry',  
*Photofile* No. 37, November, 1992.
- Isobel Crombie/Geoffrey Blainey,  
*Sites of the Imagination: Contemporary Photographers View*,  
*Melbourne and its People* (catalogue), December, 1992.

### Collections

- Australian National Gallery, National Gallery of Victoria,  
Commonwealth Art Bank, Monash University,  
Alice Springs Art Foundation, Horsham Regional Art Gallery,  
La Trobe Picture Collection - State Library of Victoria,  
City of Waverley, City of St. Kilda,  
B.P. Australia Collection, various private collections.

### Awards

- 1987 Project Grant, Visual Arts/Craft Board of the  
Australia Council.
- 1990 *Art Workz Two* (First Prize), South Melbourne Town Hall.  
Project Grant, Visual Arts/Craft Board of the  
Australia Council.
- 1991 *The Alice Prize*, Alice Springs Art Foundation,  
Alice Springs, Northern Territory.

### Residencies

- 1990 Artist-in-Residence, Oncology Unit, Heidelberg General  
Repatriation Hospital, Melbourne.
- 1993 Artist-in-Residence, Araluen Arts Centre, Alice Springs,  
Northern Territory.

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## CHRIS BARRY

### Her Stories

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