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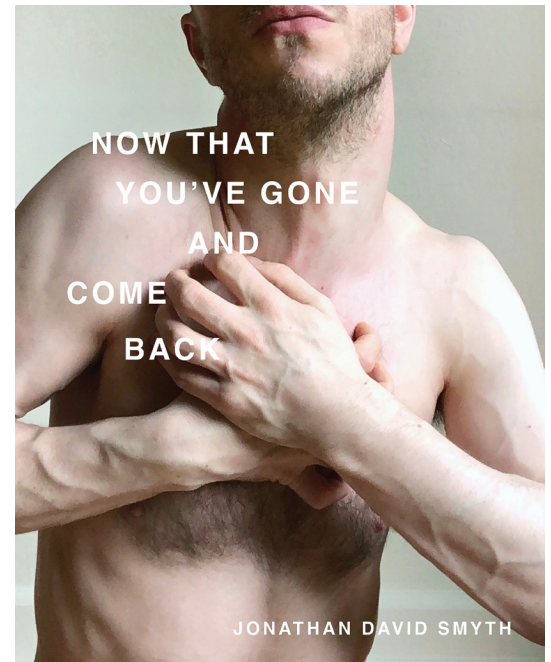
NEW BOOK FROM QUEER NORTHERN-IRISH ARTIST JONATHAN DAVID SMYTH

FEATURING PHOTOGRAPHY, PROSE, AND POETRY INSPIRED BY FINDING
AND RECONNECTING WITH BIRTH MOTHER

bd-studios.com is delighted to announce [*Now That You've Gone and Come Back*](#), the second monograph from Jonathan David Smyth. Made predominantly during the lockdown of 2020, the book features 20 nude self-portraits, 20 handwritten pieces on paper, three original poems, and a personal essay. It will be published on 13 September 2023.

Smyth was brought up in a foster home and was eventually adopted by his foster parents. His new body of work began shortly after he traveled from New York City to Northern Ireland at the age of 31 to meet his biological mother. Though he says this was undeniably healing, it also raised further questions about his roots and the people around him. "Before the reunion with my mother," he explains, "I'd never encountered a direct physical resemblance between me and another person. After we met, I found it nearly impossible to not see her face when I looked at myself in the mirror. This led me to think about the idea of family in its many configurations; how other people can mentor us or deter us, and how shared circumstances and stories can affect and shape us as individuals."

With this idea of family in mind, Smyth turned the camera on himself. "I wanted to show the sense of joy and fulfillment in meeting my birth mother but also acknowledge the underlying conflicts and trauma," he says. He assumed a new posture for each of his portraits based on people from his life that have helped shape him. "I wanted to use my body to express their experiences and my own," he says. This path of empowerment over victimization is why the artist chose to work with nude self-portraiture, to reflect not only



the vulnerability of confronting these topics head-on, but also to show that you cannot have self-realization without vulnerability. "I didn't set out to be totally nude in this work," he states, "but when I thought about how I wanted to present myself in an honest and true way, being clothed seemed hypocritical."

Handwritten pieces from Smyth's *One-to-One* series are also included. "I've used handwriting in most of my work," he says. "It's an organic contrast to the photographic images, something handmade and something digital." The works reflect the artist's long-term habit of collecting thoughts in brief, lyrical phrases, in turn crystallizing sayings he heard as a child. Sayings like, "there's a want about you," a backhanded critique about a person who is unsatisfied, and "sticking out," a compliment when a person is dressed well. Although many of these phrases evoke a Northern Irish vernacular, Smyth encourages each piece to be interpreted by the viewer. "Small-town slang words and phrases are sort of falling away in language," he says, "I'm trying to retain these quirky things I heard all around me as a kid. They are presented in my handwriting because I feel like we as a society are losing that visual aesthetic, too."

Three original poems and a personal essay inspired by early phone conversations with his birth mother round out the collection.

When asked what his birth mother thought of the project, Smyth was uncertain. "That's tough because she doesn't want to look at them because of the nudity," he says, also adding that he knows she's proud nonetheless. But he quickly clarifies that he didn't do the work *for* her. "It's for me, mostly. And though it's a very personal story, I want people to bring their own interpretation to it. Everybody experiences loss and joy. We do not live pain-free lives. So my hope is that others can relate to it in that way."

Now That You've Gone and Come Back is available to order from bd-studios.com or your favorite bookstore from September 13, 2023. In celebration of the book's release, a limited number of editions will be available at the Tom of Finland Foundation, located in Echo Park, Los Angeles.

Jonathan David Smyth (b. 1987, Belfast, Northern Ireland) is an artist working with photography, performance, moving image, sculpture, and installation. His work has been exhibited at various galleries, museums, and festivals in the United States and abroad, most recently in the 2022 FotoFest Biennial in Houston, TX. Smyth received a BA with Honors from Edinburgh Napier University in 2010, and an MFA from Parsons School of Design in 2014. His first monograph, *Just One More*, was published by bd-studios.com (New York City)

in October 2017. *Now That You've Gone and Come Back* will be published in tandem during his time as an Artist-in-Residence at the Tom of Finland Foundation, June–September 2023. He lives in Los Angeles and New York City.

bd-studios.com is the art and publishing studio by luke kurtis. *Now That You've Gone and Come Back* is the latest title in our line of artists' books. Earlier titles include *Springtime in Byzantium* by luke kurtis, *Architecture and Mortality* by Donald Tarantino, *The Male Nude* by Michael Tice, and *The Animal Book* by Michael Harren. Recent poetry titles include *Hang Five* by Sandy Hiortdahl and *The Girl Who Wasn't and Is* by Anastasia Walker. bd also publishes zines, prints, t-shirts, and more, and are available from bd-studios.com and the [bd Etsy shop](#).

[*Now That You've Gone and Come Back*](#) by Jonathan David Smyth

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