

44 - PORTRAIT OF MARK E. SMITH



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“The Fall have always been at arm's length. That's our mentality.”
(Mark E. Smith, 1980)

As with Joyce, Beuys, and Wyndham Lewis, the historians will be arguing about Mark E. (for Edward) Smith until the kingdom comes. 20th century culture has been kept alive by the irritants which work their way under its skin. In this much, Wilde's late-Victorian aphorism, “To be great, one must be misunderstood,” required a new century to prove its accuracy. Mark E. Smith, who could so easily be the subject of a myriad Sunday supplement profiles, has remained a shadowy and mistrusted figure, silhouetted on the banks of the cultural mainstream. As our times appear to demand art terrorist outsiders, Smith has called the era's bluff by refusing easy routes to fashionable and commercially lucrative acceptance. Whilst Damien Hirst prepares to suspend his Turner Prize in a vat of formaldehyde, Mark E. Smith—unknown to many—continues to ply his trade as an independent musician, philosopher, historian, writer, wit, and fly-in-the-ointment.

– “Mark E. Smith,” Michael Bracewell & Jon Wilde, Dot Dot Dot #11, 2005

Chris Evans,
Portrait of Mark E. Smith, 2005,
airbrush painting, 43 x 33 cm