

STEEF CROMBACH

ONE BAD MONKEY



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

JUNE 25 - AUGUST 4, 2022

AUSTIN, TEXAS

ONE BAD MONKEY

“Attention is the rarest form of generosity.”
—Simone Weil

Steeff Crombach layers time-based elements of projection and sound with sculpture, transforming Women & Their Work’s gallery into a stripped-down, playground-like record of her environment. The artist generously animates several iconic Austin commercial advertising sculptures, including the Wheatsville Raptor and Big Star Bingo Gorilla. The multimedia elements Crombach employs complement the sculptures’ whimsical aesthetic and magnifies the artist’s focus on the ever changing urban environment and collective memory. A world of living, changing symbols exists for those who pay attention. Steeff Crombach reminds us of this perceptual truth in *One Bad Monkey*.

Looking through the glass entrance of Women & Their Work, the sculptures initially strike me as light and playful. Crombach’s white foam sculptures, which she flocks with delicate hairs to create a soft texture, greet me with a quiet stillness from a distance. I am drawn in by *Dollar Store Wholesale*, the first sculpture I see. Upon closer inspection, I begin to notice the scene, and its characters, with greater awareness. Crombach depicts the Big Star Bingo Gorilla flattened out, pinned down by a shopping cart. The scene is cinematic, like a frozen record-scratch where the narrator explains to us how the character got into this mess. As I scan the space, I notice more iterations of this gorilla and the dinosaur, one of whom is precariously unbalanced, tangled in a chain. Each carefully-balanced sculpture transforms in my eyes into a frustrated character who is navigating the perils and sensations of a commercial world.

Surrounding these voluminous floor sculptures are airy, floor-to-ceiling suspensions of tulle supporting expanding foam relief drawings. In *Fledge Allegiance*, Crombach emphasizes the balance between positive and negative space in her gestures. The weight of each shape softly

pulls at its tulle foundation, bending the net and casting shadows onto the floor where the excess tulle delicately lays. Shadows are particularly apparent in *We Buy Gold* and *Doochiekey’s Landscape* as these relief drawings are layered with projection-mapped, colorful animations which land partly on the foam and spill over onto the wall behind it. Creative technologist Casey Alfstad aided Crombach in introducing a lightly-brushed quality to the space by mapping each projection in the exhibition. The whimsical shapes in the projections, moving within the works, were produced by animator Claire Schlaikjer. Like the drawings, the animations shift between fragmented and abstract to recognizable shapes. Flower, skull, and genie lamp shapes float alongside imagery from

familiar Austin establishments, including Peter Pan Mini-Golf and Torchy’s Tacos. Recognizable imagery and material provokes one’s unique memories as we meander through this open, theatrical space.

The experience is complete with a unique musical score composed for *One Bad Monkey* by flutist Kenzie Slottow. Slottow’s mosaic of sounds are spontaneous and responsive; the musician’s experimental playing pulls the listener’s attention into each passing moment. The track begins with a walk signal countdown, recorded from the streets of Austin, which sets the tempo for overlapping musical motifs. Light, fluttering sounds dance over lower and slower notes; the flutist creates diverse, textured sounds



Steeff Crombach, *One Bad Monkey* (gallery view), 2022



30 Day Notice, 2022

muslin, expanding foam, heavy acrylic medium, spray paint, flocking, 63" x 80" x 44"

Cover Panel: *Dollar Store Wholesale, 2022*

muslin, expanding foam, heavy acrylic medium, spray paint, flocking, found object, 43" x 55" x 39"

by varying their breathwork and even beatboxing into the flute. These layers of colorful sound mirror the projections' added movement and further animate the ethereal sculptures. At the opening reception, Slottow moved through the space while performing improvisationally over the recorded score. The aggregate effect of movement, form, light, and sound simulates the vibrant patterns we ourselves experience walking throughout town. In her referential layering, Crombach bridges the interior space to the city outside where these forms originate.

In a partitioned corner of the gallery, a darkened room is formed to feature a wall mounted gorilla head. The sculpture, solid white and devoid of expression, becomes animated by shifting colorful facial expressions projection-mapped onto it. Each face in *One Bad Monkey* is a different commercial take on the monkey sculpture from around the country, including Austin's own pink gorilla with dark, expressive features. By projecting these various interpretations onto the clean slate of the gorilla, Crombach creates an anthology of its numerous

incarnations, each with its own unique history and associations. The artist's reference to these different representations, each from different cities, places the exhibition in a broader context, illustrating how the changes experienced in Austin are mirrored elsewhere.

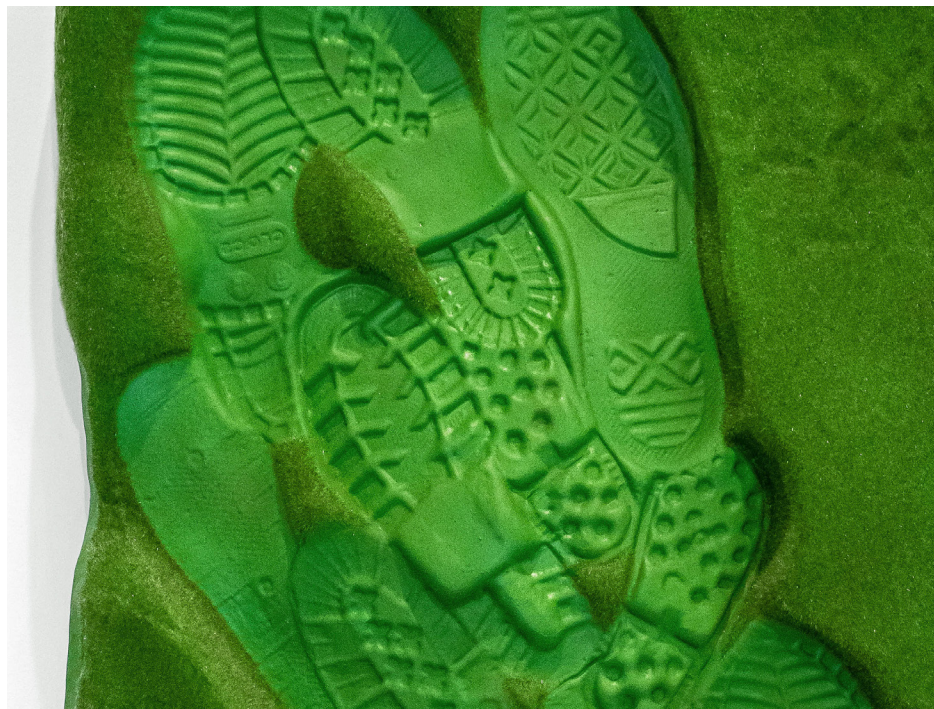
This feeling of transient change is reinforced in the triad of works on the gallery's back wall: *Green on the Green*, *Frontage Road*, and *ERCOT Whiteout*. Crombach evokes familiar substances like grass, tar, and snow, and subjects them to human impressions like footsteps and tire marks. Like a photograph, these tracks are referential to a moment in time and the forces that created them. These colorful works at the back of the gallery are a thematic anchor for the exhibition; drawn in by familiar sensations, we see stacked moments of impact and empathize with the material that is trampled and transformed by us.

The level of presence Crombach brings to her artmaking practice resonates throughout the exhibition; the artist is attuned to her



Startled Raptor, 2022, muslin, expanding foam, heavy acrylic medium, spray paint, flocking, 24" x 23" x 30"

We Buy Gold, 2022, tulle, expanding foam, 66" x 120"



Green on the Green (detail), 2022
muslin, expanding foam, heavy acrylic medium, spray paint, flocking, 27" x 21" x 3"

environment as she moves through each passing moment and recreates this experience in the gallery space. Her attentiveness is reflected in her detailed craftsmanship and care to revitalize icons like the Wheatsville Raptor and Big Star Bingo Gorilla in the amnesiac public memory. Especially given the rapidly changing population and landscape of Austin, Texas, Crombach urges us to devote our attention to our surroundings and cherish the unique figures that she notices before they become lost to time. Like Crombach's delicately flocked sculptures, which appear to be fabric but are constructed of solid foam, our reality is not as it first seems; our curiosity and focus open the door to a heightened visual consciousness through which we better appreciate the wonders hidden in plain sight.

Shelby Sult, artist and arts writer based in Austin, TX

Steef Crombach

EDUCATION

- 2014 BFA Painting, Royal Academy of Fine Arts, The Hague, NL
2011 Fine Art, Academy of Fine Arts, Maastricht, NL

SOLO & TWO PERSON EXHIBITIONS

- 2021 *FOaMO*, Ivester Contemporary, Austin, TX
MAP SLAP, Steef Crombach & Casey Alfstad,
Immediate Fashion School, Virtual Exhibition
2019 *Residency Exhibition*, The LINE Austin, Austin, TX
*M*A*S*H*, Steef Crombach & Alexis Mabry, Co-Lab Projects,
Springdale General Gallery, Austin, TX
Place + Repeat, Steef Crombach & Andrea Muñoz Martinez, Pump
Project at Cloud Tree Gallery, Austin, TX
2017 *Bij wijze van ham*, Vonkel, The Hague, NL

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2022 *Tournament of Lies*, Wassaic Project, Wassaic, NY
Mind:Full, Artists for Artists, Houston, TX
2021 *Soft*, Contracommon, Bee Cave, TX
Veintuno, curated by Ender Martos, Virtual Exhibition
2020 *Mask Collection*, Vault Stone Shop, Austin, TX
Thread Count, Cloud Tree Gallery, Austin, TX
2019 *Flash Collection*, Vault Stone Shop, Austin, TX
2018 *Secret Pop-up*, Co-Lab Projects, Austin, TX
Big Banal, Big Medium, Austin, TX
Prospects and Concepts 2018, Art Rotterdam, Rotterdam, NL
2017 *Royal Painters Prize 2017*, The Royal Palace, Amsterdam, NL
Expedition Batikback, Co-Lab Projects, DEMO Gallery, Austin, TX
2016 *East Austin Studio Tour*, Big Medium, Austin, TX
West Austin Studio Tour, Big Medium, Austin, TX
2015 *The Cliff Hanger Show*, In Your Living Room, Maakhaven,
The Hague, NL
Bloody Mary, Maagdenhuis, Amsterdam, NL
Olohuonenäyttely Living Room Exhibition, Yhteismaa NGO,
Helsinki, FI
Winterwolven RADICALS, Roodkapje, Rotterdam, NL
2014 *De Springplank Tentoonstelling*, Het Kunstgemaal, Bronckhorst, NL
35 Titles for a Group Show, VROM, Den Haag, NL
2013 *Me, Myself and I*, NEST, Den Haag, NL

AWARDS | RESIDENCES | FELLOWSHIPS

- 2022 *International Art Presentation Grant*, Mondriaan Fund, Amsterdam, NL
2019 *The LINE Residency*, Big Medium, Austin, TX
2018 *PRO Art Projects*, Stroom, The Hague, NL
Full Fellowship West Austin Studio Tour, Big Medium, Austin, TX
2017 *Dutch Royal Painters Prize Nominee*, The Royal Palace, Amsterdam, NL
Contribution Young Talent Grant, Mondriaan Fund, Amsterdam, NL
2016 *SPOT Group Exhibition Grant*, Stroom, The Hague, NL

- 3/4 Fellowship East Austin Studio Tour*, Big Medium, Austin, TX
2015 *SPOT Individual Exhibition Grant*, Stroom, The Hague, NL
2015 *Full Fellowship West Austin Studio Tour*, Big Medium, Austin, TX
Stroom KABK Talent Invest Prize, Stroom, The Hague, NL

CURATION

- 2017 *Expedition Batikback*, Co-Lab Projects, DEMO Gallery, Austin, TX
2016 *Dirty Daisies*, ART The Hague, The Hague, NL
Everywhere and Always, Vonkel, The Hague, NL
Behind the Visible, Vonkel, The Hague, NL

PRESS

- 2022 Courtney Thomas, "Steef Crombach's *One Bad Monkey Review*",
Sightlines Magazine, July 2022
Glasstire Top Five Mention, *Glasstire*, June 2022
Koos Tervooren, "Down South - Austin (Creative and Tech),
S2 E3", *De Oversteek*, May 2022
2020 Casey Alfstad, "Steef Crombach: Globalization and Searching for
Symbols", *Concept Animals*, April 2020
2019 "Celebrating Art, Culture & Community with BigMedium's Artist
Residency at The LINE Austin", *We are Austin, CBS Austin*, July 2019
Sean J Patrick Carney, "M*A*S*H": Alexis Mabry and Steef
Crombach at Co-Lab Projects", *Glasstire*, May 2019
2018 Klaartje Til, "Steef Crombach, A Dutch Woman in Austin", *POM
Magazine*, October 2018
Roos van Rij, "Februari: Steef Crombach", July 2018
2017 Tatiana Ryckman, "Steef Crombach, Austin, and 'Hacked' Batik",
Glasstire, August 2017
Jeroen Bosch, "Koninklijke prijs voor Schilderkunst 2017",
Trendbeheer, October 2017
2016 Bertus Pieters, "Art The Hague 2016; Fokker terminal, The Hague",
Villa Next Door, October 2016
Erik Korsten, Radio Interview, 'Kunstlicht' on *Den Haag FM*,
July 2016
David Brendan Hall, "West Austin Studio Tour 2016", *Austin
Chronicle*, May 2016
2014 Rosa Helldorfer & Rob Groot Zevert, "Verslagen academie bezoeken",
November 2014
Tinkerbell, "Op zoek naar studenten die superwezens worden",
Trouw, July 2014
Niek Hendrix, "Steeds meer druk op kunsttalent; 22 nieuwe
makers om goed in de gaten te houden", *Cultureelpers*, July 2014
Sophia Zürcher, "Lichting 2014; KABK", *Kunst in beeld*, July 2014
Niek Hendrix, "Eindexamen Expositie; KABK Den Haag", *Lost
Painters*, July 2014
Bertus Pieters, "Graduation Festival. Royal Academy of Art
(KABK), The Hague", *Villa Next Door*, July 2014



One Bad Monkey (stills of projection-mapped animation), 2022
 muslin, expanding foam, heavy acrylic medium, spray paint, flocking, 16" x 24" x 14"

WOMEN & THEIR WORK

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Photographs by Casey Alfstad, Preston Rolls, and Sofia Ruiz courtesy of Women & Their Work

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Women & Their Work is a visual and performing arts organization located in Austin that serves as a catalyst for new ideas in contemporary art. Since 1978, Women & Their Work has created significant opportunities for artists and audiences to experience contemporary art through ambitious exhibitions, commissions of new work, performances and programs that inform audiences of all ages. We have actively developed the careers of more than 1,900 women artists, presenting 331 visual art exhibitions, 161 music, dance and theater events, 30 spoken word and literary performances, 16 film festivals and 780 programs & education workshops with the goal of ensuring that diverse women artists are equitably represented in all forms of art. Women & Their Work helps meet an important need in Texas providing exhibition and performance opportunities and helping to attract critical attention to the work produced here; it is the only organization of its kind in the region and one of the few organizations in

the United States that dedicates itself to the work of women artists. Nationally recognized, Women & Their Work has been featured in *Art in America*, *The New York Times*, *ArtForum*, and on *National Public Radio* and was the first organization in Texas to receive a grant in visual art from the National Endowment for the Arts. In 2020, the Smithsonian Archives of American Art acquired the 42-year archive of Women & Their Work ensuring that our entire history of the work of women artists and our website will be preserved in perpetuity.



1311 E. Cesar Chavez St.
 Austin, Texas 78702
 (512) 477-1064
 info@womenandtheirwork.org
 womenandtheirwork.org

