

Scherben
Leipziger Str. 61
10117 Berlin
scherben.in

Artists: Connor Crawford

Exhibition Title: Life in the Big City

Venue: Scherben, Berlin, Germany

Opening: January 28, 2023 7pm

Date: January 29, 2023 - February 19, 2023

Photography: All images copyright and courtesy of the artists and Scherben

Press release:

A tour guide of the iconic, Connor Crawford's solo show at Scherben, *Life in the Big City*, takes us through streets and alleys so familiar that they lose their sense of place. Crawford began making art in Toronto, a city known for posing as a movie set for other cities like New York, which informs his portrayal of city life. The nameless Big City shown in his reliefs is a flat facade without concrete foundations to keep it upright. Crawford composes his voluminous, dimensional images around trite images and clichés of the modern city: urgency, productivity, busy workers on the go walking fast while talking on their phones, cigarette smoke rising in the thick air, and trash littering the ground. In Charles Peirce's semiotic, the icon is a kind of sign that figuratively resembles the object it wishes to represent. That is, the icon is a distinguishable, timeless image that refers to a recognizable object regardless of the context. For this reason, icons have long populated art as signifying anchors: from Christ on the cross to a Campbell's Soup Can, they guide the audiences through the tumult of ambiguities found in images towards the safe shore of legible meaning. But what happens when everything in an image is an icon? In a sea of tropes and generic images, specificity flies out the window and what was legible becomes its opposite because it lacks the relative comparison that made it stand apart.

Life in the Big City plays with icons, tropes, and surfaces to reveal something about the structure of contemporary life. Crawford's reliefs invoke the semiotic disorders in which we live; it speaks to a human condition where signs have been hollowed and bear no relation to their context, only speaking to one another. It isn't just Toronto playing dress up; in fact, every city is a facade. Through top-down urban planning, cities have been built on bureaucratic principles and detached abstractions; everything organic has been slowly turned generic as sameness washes over in hues of grey and beige. The city is a physical manifestation and logical conclusion of our iconic way of life. Yet these scenes of the city are interrupted by digits. An instruction to paint by numbers? Insinuations of the capitalist passage of time? Schizoid apparitions for the paranoid mind? The numbers punctuate and perforate *The Big City*. They speak to the point of view of a city dweller who, like an NPC in a videogame, walks aimlessly, trying to make sense of an environment built extraneously.

The reliefs in *Life in the Big City* use three-dimensionality to formally gesture towards depth while conceptually playing with its opposite. Crawford invites you to explore the hidden corners of *The Big City* while suggesting there are no corners at all. Perhaps with all their loud cooing, pigeons are trying to tell us we are not so different. We are both formerly wild species that find themselves lost and domesticated in urban settings, both bound by instincts that are rendered useless in a metropolitan world. Like pigeons building their homes with popsicle sticks, humans hold onto legible images and exploit clichés to make nests out of simulacra. And like them, we have no choice but to seek peace and build a life in this dream-like city we call home.

Caption:

1. Exhibition view
2. Exhibition view
3. Exhibition view
4. Exhibition view
5. Exhibition view
6. Exhibition view
7. Underground Scene (941714583), Acrylic on casted foam, artist's frame, 2023
8. Commuters in Cross Section (343167518776359), Acrylic on casted foam, artist's frame, 2023
9. Number Study 123456789, Acrylic on casted foam, artist's frame, 2023
10. Pigeon-Core Plastic birds, Arduino Microcontroller, Motors, Electronics, Hardware, Cardboard
11. Exhibition view
12. Downtown People (72540), Acrylic on casted foam, artist's frame, 2023
13. Metropolitan (167592384), Acrylic on casted foam, artist's frame, 2023
14. POV: Walking on the sidewalk (335082564), Acrylic on casted foam, artist's frame, 2023

13. Cityscape (18325729486), Acrylic on casted foam, artist's frame, 2023
14. Underground Scene (941714583), Acrylic on casted foam, artist's frame, 2023
15. Commuters in Cross Section (343167518776359), Acrylic on casted foam, artist's frame, 2023
16. Number Study 123456789, Acrylic on casted foam, artist's frame, 2023
17. Underground Scene (941714583), Acrylic on casted foam, artist's frame, 2023 (detail)
18. Downtown People (72540), Acrylic on casted foam, artist's frame, 2023 (detail)
19. Pigeon-Core Plastic birds, Arduino Microcontroller, Motors, Electronics, Hardware, Cardboard (detail)
20. Pigeon-Core Plastic birds, Arduino Microcontroller, Motors, Electronics, Hardware, Cardboard
21. Pigeon-Core Plastic birds, Arduino Microcontroller, Motors, Electronics, Hardware, Cardboard
22. Pigeon-Core Plastic birds, Arduino Microcontroller, Motors, Electronics, Hardware, Cardboard
23. Pigeon-Core Plastic birds, Arduino Microcontroller, Motors, Electronics, Hardware, Cardboard (detail)

Social Media Info

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