

# Monster

**Banksy and Matthew Brown**

Pop Gun, 293 23rd st, Brooklyn, NY

October 18, 2024

In the two person exhibition, *Monster*, Pop Gun presents works by Banksy and Matthew Brown in a newly refurbished South Slope apartment gallery. At the rear end of the living room, a white beam bars off a window-lit nook space. Displayed on the center of the beam stands a meticulously assorted collection of Hulk figurines. Some appear to be mass-produced, while some appear to be fan-made or handcrafted. Inside the bedroom, overhanging the master bed resides a painting pair of Kurt Cobain and a panda bear, evidently painted by superstar artist, Banksy.

Similarly to a traditional apartment tour, where viewers are guided through works in a private collection, the exhibition *Monster* grants access into objects through the eyes of a collector. A shelf display affords the pretense of value for Brown's collection of Hulks, similar to how the Collectible Grading Authority (CGA) grading scale grants authenticity to objects found on a collective of non-hierarchy<sup>1</sup>, eBay. In Brown's solo exhibition at Disneyland Paris this past April, *Museum DP*, institutional apparatus, such as museum vitrines recontextualized Pokémon collectibles as artistic objects worthy of museum collections. Here, the image of Hulk is reiterated across machine and hand-made, corporate and fan-made iterations. It is reinforced as a popular image, and a poor image, which, indistinguishable to Hito Steyerl, "express all the contradictions of the contemporary crowd: its opportunism, narcissism, desire for autonomy and creation, its inability to focus or make up its mind, its constant readiness for transgression and simultaneous submission."<sup>2</sup>

In Pop Gun's backroom, two Banksy paintings hang above the gallerists' bed. The stenciled spray-paintings depict Kurt Cobain and a glock-wielding panda bear. Their value is derived from a personal anecdote of acquisition:

*On the 5 year anniversary of my cousin missing out on buying an authentic Banksy, I stumbled into a reiteration of his same subway station painting-sale stunt. Members of a film crew instructed me to raise my hand and after a few minutes, a balaclava clad man-in-black approached me, communicating only in nods. While his sign said bitcoin or cash only, his boss confirmed over the phone that Zelle would be an acceptable form of payment, and soon enough the man-in-black was scanning the barcodes on my two plastic sealed Banksys (one for me and one for my cousin). The paintings are stamped with a red BANKSY signature. My Zelle payment traces back to BLACKMARKET ART MANAGEMENT LLC, based in Fort Lauderdale, FL.*

- Gunner

Banksy's Kurt Cobain appears as an image stretched into t-shirts, murals, conspiracies, political projects. The poor image is no longer about the real thing—the ordinary original. Instead, it is about its own real conditions of existence: about swarm circulation, digital dispersion, fractured and flexible temporalities.<sup>3</sup> Kurt appears as he is, as he was, as we want him to be/ as a friend, as a friend/ as an old enemy. Perhaps even more likely, he appears as a reflection of the collectors he hovers above at night. No matter the authenticity of the object, to be hung in the home is to be honored with a sincere appreciation.

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1. Johnson, Paddy. "Creature: An Interview With Haim Steinbach." *Art F City*, 3 November 2011, <http://artfcity.com/2011/11/03/creature-an-interview-with-haim-steinbach/>. Accessed 3 October 2024.
  2. Steyerl, Hito. "In defense of the poor image." *e-flux*, vol. 9, no. 10, 2009, 08.09, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/10/61362/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/>.

**Banksy** is an anonymous British artist. He is the director of the Oscar-nominated documentary film 'Exit Through the Gift Shop'.

**Matthew Brown** presents images and objects made accessible and collectible through the internet. His recent work is concerned with the subversive possibilities of subjective, fan- oriented collection in relation to institutional practices and 'higher' modes of display. Alongside his studio practice, Brown directs Bill's PC -an independent exhibition program currently run from a computer and a storage space in Western Australia.