

'Crush' the next exhibit at MOCA's Haskell Atrium Gallery

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By [Charlie Patton](#)



New York artist Heather Cox adjusts the placement of a paper template for the location of one of her "little Crush guys." Eighty-six of the figures are being installed along paths on the walls and floor of the Haskell Atrium Gallery at Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville.



Photos by Bob Self

Over the past two years, the Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville has been using its unique Haskell Atrium Gallery, with 2,600 square feet of space and walls that rise 40 feet, for a series of large-scale exhibits, most specifically designed for the space.

The next artist to be featured in the Project Atrium series will be New Yorker Heather Cox, whose installation “Crush” will fill both the floors and the walls of the gallery with squat, humanoid sculptures.

When Cox was asked by MOCA director Marcelle Polednik to create the seventh exhibit in the Project Atrium series, the first thing she did was come to Jacksonville to look at the space.

At the time, Ian Bogost’s “Simony,” which turned the gallery into a cross between an altar and a video game, was occupying the space. Cox said the dimensions of the Atrium Gallery were inspiring.

“It’s an amazing space,” she said. “I was kind of imaging all kinds of different things. I think the tendency, when you see this space, is to scale up. It’s a cathedral space.”

But instead, Cox decided to scale down. She already had a series of 10 20-inch-high humanoid figures she had created by taking sheets a Sintra, a foam board made of PVC, cutting out “MRI slices,” then stacking and gluing 66 slices to form each figure. She hadn’t had any specific purpose in mind when she created the figures.

“I was just playing, planting my little seeds,” Cox said. “But I’ve been working with the body in a lot of different ways.”

An exhibit she did in 2009 in Buffalo featured stylized skeleton fabrications. “Migration” in 2008 included 31 black silhouette human figures suspended from the ceiling, appearing to fly together like a flock of birds.

Polednik said she and MOCA curator Ben Thompson liked the fact that Cox’s work tends to be “mesmerizing and interactive ... There is a quirky element to her work.”

It would also stand as a nice contrast to the previous Project Atrium exhibit, painter Sarah Emerson’s “post-apocalyptic” mural “Sea of Black Trees,” Polednik said, “a painterly and vibrant work” giving way to one that is “cerebral and monochromatic.”

For “Crush,” Cox built 76 more of the humanoid figures, identical to each other except for the direction in which they look. She assembled the little white creatures in her Brooklyn studio and also planned the pathways they now occupy, working with a scale model of the Atrium Gallery. Once in Jacksonville, she had nine days to create her installation, which opened Saturday.

She has positioned the figures along three different pathways. One pathway runs from the entrance of the Atrium Gallery across the floor and up central wall. Another crosses the gallery floor at more or a less a right angle to the first path and goes up both outside walls. A third path runs across the three walls parallel to the floor. The figures are bolted into place and the visitors can move among them, or view them from the second and third floor galleries.

“I’ll be curious to see what people imagine is going on,” Cox said. “I hope my figures occupy the space in an interesting way ... I think it’s going to be interesting seeing them in this space.”

On her website, Cox’s artwork is described as “quirky and seductive ... Each piece invites a closer look. The viewer’s physical approach is often accompanied by curiosity, confusion and moments of recognition.”

She said she picked the title “Crush” because she likes the sound of the word and because “you can read it in a lot of different ways.”

<http://jacksonville.com/entertainment/arts/2013-07-21/story/crush-next-exhibit-mocas-haskell-atrium-gallery>