



# PROJECT ATRIUM: HEATHER COX

July 20, 2013 - October 27, 2013

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MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART JACKSONVILLE

*A Cultural Resource of UNF*

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Whether in the guise of candy-filled ribcages, crawling eyes, or full-scale human silhouettes, the human body is at the heart of Heather Cox's work. Employing a varied, even quirky array of materials—from paper, pins, and erasers, to aspirin, frosting, and candy—Cox creates objects and installations that address issues of visibility, discovery, and metamorphosis.

For her 2004 installation entitled *Tissue*, Cox created a series of life-size objects that echo the silhouette of the artist's body. Gauzy black paper was knit together in a precise geometric diamond pattern reminiscent of popular party decorations, fully encapsulating the forms. Hung from the gallery ceiling, attached to its walls, and folded into its corners, the room was populated with three-dimensional shadows that faced the viewer from every vantage point. Visitors to the gallery were confronted with an inescapable yet strangely anonymous presence—the insistent repetition of forms that frequently outnumbered actual bodies in the gallery.

The surprising nature of installations such as *Tissue* ensures that, as Cox intends, the viewer's physical approach to the work is often accompanied by curiosity, confusion and moments of recognition. To cultivate these interactions, Cox's installations are penetrable—visitors are encouraged to enter and immerse themselves in the figural environments she creates. Like *Tissue*, Cox's 2006 kinetic installation *Migration* featured full-scale human forms. Here, black-silhouetted human figures with outstretched arms for wings were suspended from the ceiling in a prone position. Cox varied the figures' dimensions, positioning them in a nearly interlocking diagonal flock that stretched from the far corner of the gallery to its entrance. Hung by double strands of monofilament from the gallery ceiling, larger figures echoed the artist's own proportions while others were more diminutive. A wooden egg dangled from the sternum of each figure, inviting a tug to set the creature's

## FACING OVERLEAF

**Phalanx**, 2005. 5,000 cut and folded offset photos on paper & a wood dock. Installation size 15' x 15'. Each object 8" x 4" x 2" or 4" x 2" x 1". Image courtesy of the Artist.

## COVER

**Crush**, 2013. Sintra. 16" x 16" x 20" each. Installation at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Jacksonville, FL. Photography courtesy of Doug Eng.





wings in motion with both figure and egg bobbing. Visitors entering into the gallery animated the otherwise still bodies through this kinetic interaction. The installation, like a drawing in space, consisted of two separate horizontal planes—the group of figures hovered near the ceiling while wooden eggs punctured the gallery’s middle ground.

This idea of flocks as repeating human forms is an ongoing theme in Cox’s work. In addition to full-scale bodies the Artist’s projects have also made use of human fragments. For example, in *Phalanx* (2005) Cox photographed her eyes and hands, printing them thousands of times before folding the objects and placing them on the floor to create a crablike sea of crawling eyes. Visitors to the installation walked onto a dock-like wooden promontory, hovering amidst an ocean of the artist’s compressed form.

**ABOVE**

**Migration**, 2007-2008. Foam core, wood, metal & monofilament. Each figure 64" x 64" x 32" or 40" x 40" x 20". Installation at Knoedler Project Space, New York, NY. Image courtesy of the Artist.

**RIGHT**

**Tissue**, 2004. Fourteen life-size, handmade figures made out of black tissue paper and glue. Each figure 64" x 15" x approximately 15". Installation at Nohra Haime Gallery, New York, NY. Image courtesy of the Artist.



While repetition is key in Cox's work, so is the artist's emphasis on craftsmanship evident in the intricate procedure of composing those delicate, crablike entities. The same fastidiousness is evident in works such as *Nonpareil Rib Cage* (2009), the meticulously-stitched, candy-filled skeleton.

The *Project Atrium* installation, *Crush*, combines Cox's longstanding preoccupation with the human form, emphasis on repetition, and interest in installation-based environments that challenge the viewer to engage with the art. *Crush* contains eighty-five compressed white sculptures of the human form. Standing at twenty inches in height, each sculpture appears made up of disk-like layers, as if the figure has been run through an egg slicer and then reassembled. In fact, these bodies are based on magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans, which glide through the human body to provide cross-section views of muscle, tissues, and organs. Although the recombined layers—made of board templates that are cut, stacked, and glued together—reconstitute what appears to be a “whole” human figure, the stratification of these slices suggests that each body is oddly incomplete, missing significant excerpts. In this way, the *Crush* figures are unique in Cox's portfolio of works—they are at once fragments of the body and an evocation of the human form as an integral entity.

Cox considers these works a continuation and complement of the *Migration* installation. In both projects human objects create their own spatial planes, seemingly oblivious to the soft, organic audience that shares their environment. Whereas gallery visitors during *Migration* helped the bodies become expansive, opening their arms and soaring through the air, the opposite interaction is true in *Crush*, where the presence of viewers among static figures further exaggerates the collapse of the body's volume and weight.

Cox conceived of the *Crush* figures as a response to the pressures of urban space and layered vertical environments. This notion is evident in her tiered approach and recalls bands of sediment, as if the beings themselves are organized according to the accumulation of vertical strata that define

#### UPPER RIGHT

*Nonpareil Rib Cage* (detail), 2007. Resealable polyethylene bag, nylon thread & nonpareils. 20" x 24" x 1".  
Courtesy of the Artist.

#### LOWER RIGHT & FOLLOWING SPREAD

*Crush*, 2013. Sintra. 16" x 16" x 20" each. Installation at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Jacksonville, FL.  
Photography courtesy of Doug Eng.





THE HASKELL GALLERY





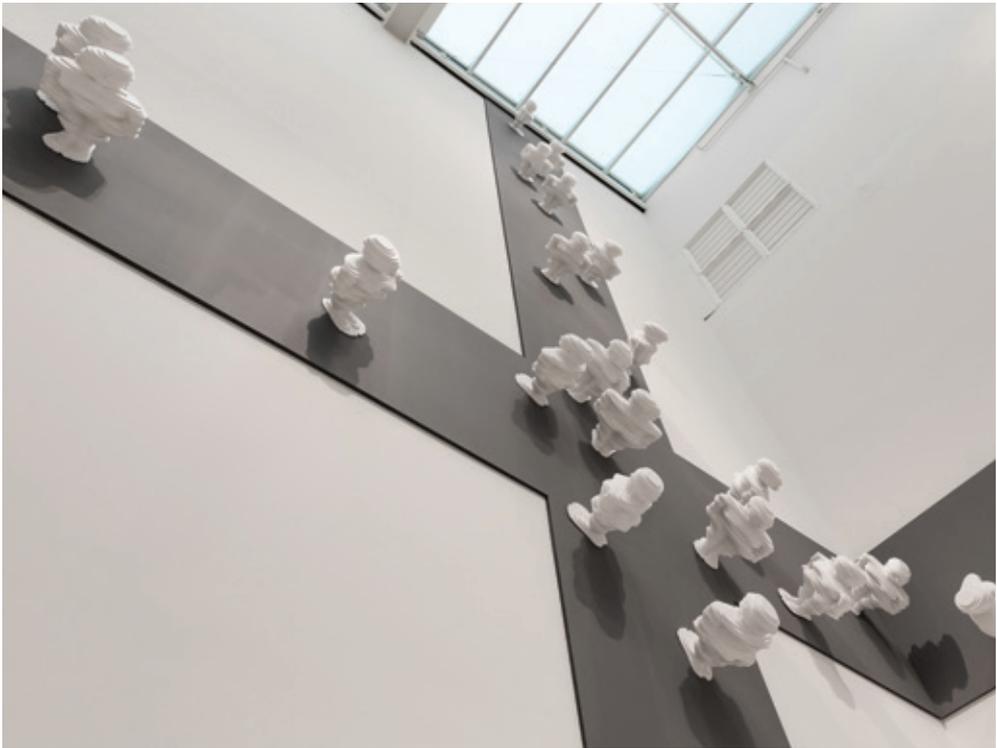


metropolitan living. To emphasize this point, Cox took the figures out of her Brooklyn studio and into the densely traveled spaces of New York City – congested sidewalks, benches, and subway cars – where their pristine, yet compressed forms intermingled with the crowds of passersby, all equally confined by the cramped conditions of urban life.

The *Project Atrium* installation places the *Crush* forms, as well as their visitors, in a radically different physical context. The white figures occupy a series of gray paths that crisscross the open space of the cavernous gallery. Many of the compressed figures are grouped together, navigating a crossroad, as if engaged in conversation. Others are positioned to bring attention to the Museum's less visible spaces, including columns, stairwells, and ductwork. Different opportunities to engage with the installation present themselves while traversing the environment. We mingle among figures while standing in the Atrium and look upon the multitudes suspended sideways from gallery

**ABOVE**

*Crush*, 2011. Sintra. 16" x 16" x 20" each. Image courtesy of the Artist.

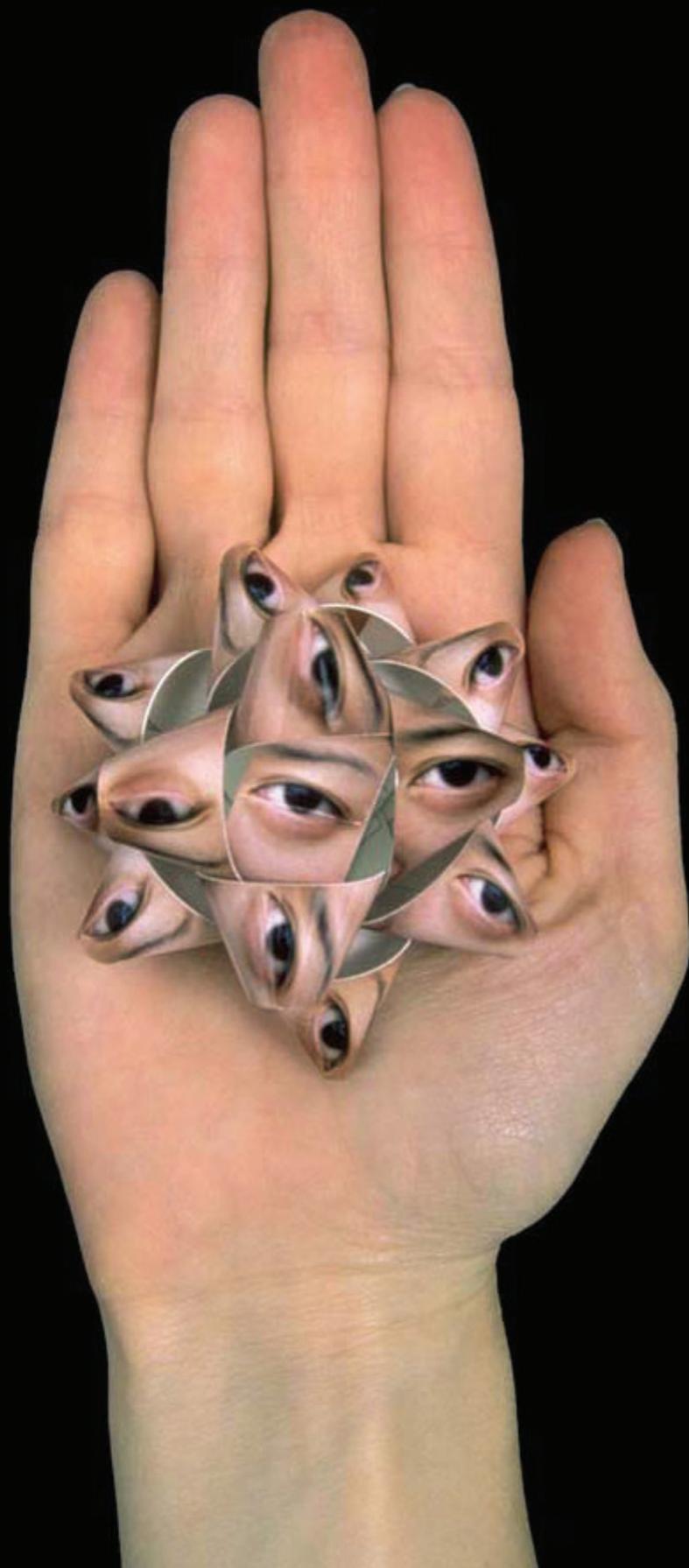


walls. As we ascend to higher floors, the vantage points shift again: pause at the staircase landings to take a sweeping glance at figures climbing the wall and peek down at the now antlike counterparts below from the third floor. Although the figures themselves remain stationary, the ability to observe the project from multiple areas lends them a sense of movement and progression. This is aided by the accompanying drawings, whose dynamic rendering of the circular slices that define the figures animate the forms with graphic energy.

The first *Project Atrium* installation to respond to the gallery's vast scale with diminutive form, *Crush* highlights the heaviness of the work's main protagonist – the weight of the volume that bears down on the figures. As Cox notes, the cavernous dimensions of the Haskell Atrium finally allow this sculptural population to expand and disperse, escaping inner city congestion in favor of the open, vast landscape of contemporary art's Southern home.

**ABOVE**

**Crush**, 2013. Sintra. 16" x 16" x 20" each. Installation at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Jacksonville, FL. Photography courtesy of Doug Eng.





## About Heather Cox

Heather Cox was born in Hammond, Indiana in 1966. She received her early training in book arts and photography at Mills College; Cox went on to study sculpture at the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture and completed her MFA at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

Her projects have been exhibited nationally and internationally, including solo shows at Nina Freudenheim Gallery, Buffalo, NY; Knoedler Project Space, New York, NY; Gesheidle Gallery, Chicago, IL; Nohra Haime Gallery, New York, NY; Miller Block Gallery, Boston, MA. She currently lives and works in New York City.

### ABOVE

*Portrait with Crush Figures*, 2013. Photography courtesy of Samuel Stuart Hollenshead.

### LEFT

*Rapt: 13,000 eyes* (detail), 2000. Folded color photographs & brass paper fasteners. 1,000 bows come in three sizes and measure 2", 3" & 4" in diameter.

## ABOUT PROJECT ATRIUM

*Featuring site-specific and site-sensitive installations by emerging and mid-career artists. The unique placement, dimensions, and scale of MOCA's Haskell Atrium Gallery provide a compelling challenge to the chosen artist – a call to reinvention and active collaboration with the architecture of the museum on a monumental scale.*

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