

MODERN LUXURY

ASPEN

MAGAZINE

HOLIDAY 2013/
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LAYER UP!
**FASHION'S
FINEST**

ON THE SLOPES AND
AROUND TOWN

SKICO
GOES FOR THE GREEN

POWDER PLAYERS
INSIDE THE 100 DAY CLUB

SKINNING
THE OTHER SIDE OF ASPEN

EAST MEETS WEST
IN SNOWMASS

REEL ASPEN
FILMMAKING

PLUS
PAULA CROWN'S SMART ART
MAISON ULLENS COMES TO TOWN
IN THE KNOW: EVENTS TO ATTEND
AND PLACES TO GO

[ART & CULTURE]
PROFILE



LEADING LADY
Contemporary artist Paula
Crown in her Chicago studio

ODYSSEY OF THE MIND

ASPEN GETS INSIDE THE HEAD
OF THE MULTITALENTED
PAULA CROWN.

By Hannah Flegelman
Photography by Katrina Wittkamp

You may know her as a member of President Obama's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities, principal in the Chicago-based investment firm Henry Crown and Company, or prominent fixture on the Aspen scene, frequenting destinations such as the Aspen Skiing Company and The Little Nell. But Paula Crown has another title, too—contemporary artist.

Since completing her MFA at the renowned School of the Art Institute of Chicago in 2012, Crown has garnered the contemporary art world's attention for her multidisciplinary practice. Employing both traditional and digital devices to explore and map uncharted territories, her latest work, *Inside My Head: A Contemporary Self-Portrait*—an installation consisting of MRI scans projected onto large convex screens and set to a Todd Reynolds and Ben Rubin-composed score—debuted at The Aspen Institute's 2013 Ideas Festival.

We sat down with the artist to discuss the crowning achievement—and other matters on her mind.

Inside My Head focuses on charting landscapes—in this case, your brain. From where did your interest in landscapes come? What is it that inspires you?

I grew up on the East Coast, in Marblehead, Mass. I live in downtown Chicago and am a part-time resident of Aspen. How could I not be seduced by the astonishing features of the proximate ocean, majestic lake and mountains? These are things that capture your attention, and beckon you to look closer. Beyond the landscape, I research and map the topologies that intrigue me: various shapes, textures and patterns that inform my work. Using the traditional language of painting, I navigate

these forms looking for spatial bearings. The exterior landscapes are rearticulated in my interior viewpoints as well.

For your self-portrait, you chose to depict the inside of your brain, rather than your visible appearance. Why choose to represent your "inner self"?

Art and science inform and enrich each other and have always done so. *Inside My Head* uses technology to represent the actual anatomy of my brain, as well as the imagined activity that could be occurring inside [it]. The work shows what the thinking process feels like to me. In addition, the work evokes a planetary topology, especially when the brain scans are

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...CONTINUED converted into spheres. The animation of these shapes relates the human interior to the immense physical exterior that we occupy.

Inside My Head employs many forms of technology and media—the MRI scan, a musical score and video projections. What is the impact of utilizing multidisciplinary media to get your message across? In almost any arena, multiple tools enrich the creative process. Artwork is no different. It is typical for me to start drawing with a pencil and then upload the sketch to an open source program called Processing. I then manipulate a two-dimensional drawing into a three-dimensional image in a different plane—a bird's-eye perspective, for example. These tools help me to consider: What if? and How? Photoshop [also] can help me decide if I prefer an image to be more tonal or collaged. Being able to toggle between options is a great asset to the contemporary artist.

The more arrows you have in your quiver of image-making, the better.

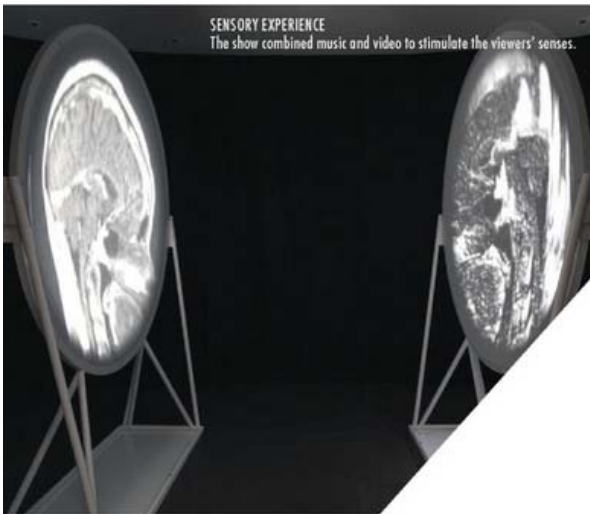
Who is your greatest artistic influence?

Leonardo da Vinci has to be on the top of my list because he understood as early as the 16th century the importance of the relationship between art and science. To achieve competency in either field one must have highly attuned powers of observation and concentration. Leonardo also knew that what we viewed as reality was often a perceptive distortion. He used these perceived distortions to his benefit in his work with multiple perspective planes and painterly techniques.

Between balancing your studio practice, various environmental and political initiatives, and a strong family life, you are quite the Renaissance woman! How do you remain thriving in all these areas of your life? Madeleine Albright said, 'I do think women can have it all, but not all at the



BRAIN FREEZE The images from *Inside My Head* were created using MRI scans of Crown's brain.



same time.' Albright was married 22 years and raised three daughters. She claims to have been still worrying about carpool duties while serving as secretary of state. The wisdom in her words lies in its emphasis on prioritizing; we all need to take a quiet moment to prioritize and figure out what is most important to us. I decided early on that my priorities were health, family and close friends, and then my studio practice. My art practice has always been important to me, but I prioritized motherhood over being an artist for 20 years while I raised our children. It was

the best choice for me, and I'd do it all again in a nanosecond. Now that the three oldest children are grown and our youngest daughter is in middle school, I have the time to focus on my art. I have actively decided to make my art practice a priority. I would say some force within me gives me no choice. ... My adherence to these priorities sometimes means that I can't do everything, but I am happier and more fulfilled.

Learn more about Paula Crown's *Inside My Head: A Contemporary Self-Portrait*, at paulacrown.com. 