With Cash Crop, 701 Center for Contemporary Art presents a traveling exhibition by its new artist in residence, Stephen Hayes. The Atlanta, Ga., resident's show will run from January 17 – March 3, 2013, and the opening reception for the exhibition will be Thursday, January 17, 7 – 9 pm. The 29-year-old Hayes is in residence at 701 CCA from early January through the end of March. He will present a gallery talk on Sunday, January 20, 2:00 p.m.

At the core of Cash Crop are 15 life-size sculptures of shackled people placed in boat- or coffin-like structures, with diagrams of captive, warehoused humans in Trans-Atlantic slave ships carved in wood on the back. The sculptures represent, Hayes says, "the 15 million human beings kidnapped and transported by sea during the Trans-Atlantic slave trade." Through these works and others in the exhibition, Durham, N.C., native Hayes invites the viewer into an emotional, physical and psychological space to confront past, present and future.

"During a printmaking class, I came across an image of a slave ship diagram," says Hayes, who in 2010 received an MFA from Savannah College of Art (SCAD) in Atlanta. "The slave ship images resemble a sweat shop. Sweat shops in Third World countries are today's modern slave ships. The exhibition draws parallels between the slave trade and the Third World sweatshops of today. It's about supply and demand, supply and demand. The exhibition asks: what is the next cash crop?"

The 15 figure sculptures in exhibition are 4.5 – 8 feet tall. They are made of cement, fabric, steel and fire-treated wood. In addition to the figure sculptures, the exhibition includes hand-made steel chains connecting the sculptures; prints and drawings; a large, wall-mounted sculpture of

a ship; and scores of wooden, fire treated boxes, 11 x 21 inches in size, containing cement casts of ship shapes, that will be installed as a wall.

"This is a powerful exhibition," 701 CCA board chair and executive director Wim Roefs said. "It's physically and emotionally an imposing installation of objects and two-dimensional work. The rawness with which the sculptural pieces are executed adds to the gut-wrenching impact of the exhibition. This work is obviously not meant to relate comfort but suffering and abuse."

Cash Crop,

which originated in Hayes' MFA thesis exhibition at SCAD, has traveled to the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Art + Culture in Charlotte, N.C., North Carolina Central University in Durham, Guilford College in Greensboro, N.C., and Mason Murer Fine Art Gallery in Atlanta, one of that city's largest art galleries.

Hayes in 2006 received a BA in Visual Communication from North Carolina Central University, a historically black college. In 2007, he received a summer scholarship to take a ceramics class at The New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University in Alfred, N.Y., one of the country's premier ceramics programs. Hayes' art was included in Young Talent From Atlanta, and exhibition at Rush Galleries in New York City, and in exhibitions at Atlanta's Emory University and Space One Eleven in Montgomery, Ala.

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