

CROWDED

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The artworks in this exhibition depict crowded objects, figures, and picture planes to explore the emotional and psychological consequences of crowding. Crowds can cause claustrophobia, loss of individual identity, loneliness, and a feeling of being overwhelmed. However, crowds can also prompt jubilation and a sense of community. Several artists in this exhibition display bustling metropolises and their physical effects: a traffic jam, debris, slums. In addition, *Crowded* presents images—such as crammed spaces and swarms gathered for entertainment or amusement—that move beyond the notion of the overpopulated urban environment.

In all of the artworks in *Crowded*, artists depict congestion but also evoke certain feelings for viewers through visual characteristics and the subject matter. How does each artist go about portraying a crowd—what is their style, medium, technique? What visual characteristics connect these “crowds?” What effects do crowds have on participants and how do the artists capture these effects? To explore these questions, this essay examines four of the exhibition’s most prevalent themes through specific artworks: crowds assembled for a political reason, crowds’ physical repercussions on cities, crowds gathered for entertainment, and the psychological impacts of crowds.

Crowded is organized by Hilary Knecht '13 as part of her 2013 Honors Senior Art History Project. Special thanks to all of the Tang staff, especially Megan Hyde, Rachel Seligman, Elizabeth Karp, Emily Lemieux, Jose Luis Aguirre, Ginger Ertz, Ian Berry, and Patrick O'Rourke. Also special thanks to faculty advisor Katie Hauser, Chair of the Art History Department. The exhibition is on view at the Tang Museum from February 28 through April 14, 2013 and supported by the Carter-Rodriguez Fund for Student-Curated Programs.



Garry Winogrand (American, 1928-1984)

Hard-Hat Rally, New York, 1969 (printed in 1978)

Silver gelatin print

9 x 13 3/8 inches

Gift of Penny Kaniclides '59, 1983.21.5

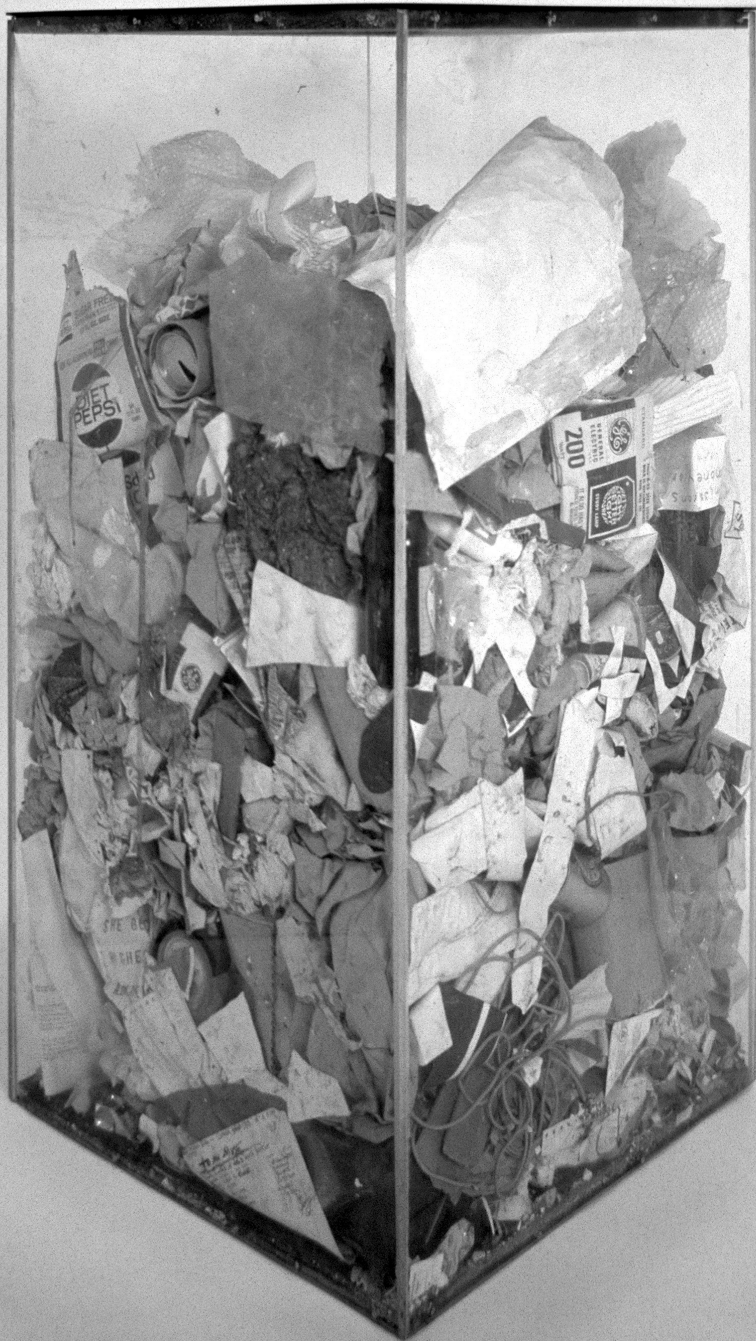
Crowded Figures: Swarming for Political Change

Often characterized as a “street photographer,” Garry Winogrand stumbled upon lively street scenes and quickly captured them.¹ In the 1960s and '70s, he photographed real-life events, focusing on the media's impact on public happenings. Winogrand used a wide-angle lens and tilted angle, while standing in the middle of the commotion, to document action-packed scenes.² His *Hard-Hat Rally, New York* (1969) depicts a crowd of people gathered for a political protest. The flailing arms, charged facial expressions, and waving flags and signs suggest the surge of a mass. The sheer multitude of people, cut off at all four sides of the composition, heightens the crowded effect. Billowing American flags serve as a visual rhythm across the composition; several artists in *Crowded* use this strategy of repetition to unify a potentially chaotic scene.

Protesters' signs provide some context for *Hard-Hat Rally*. "Impeach the Red Mayor" refers to New York Mayor John V. Lindsay, who served from 1966 to 1971 during a period of numerous antiwar demonstrations and civic strikes. The photograph's visual characteristics accurately convey the tumultuous years in New York during the time of Mayor Lindsay: the lopsided perspective, close proximity of the figures in the crowd to one another and the viewer, and the zealous demonstrators contrasted with the smaller number of passive figures.

The microphones indicate the presence of the media, which dramatically transformed how people garnered support for political and social changes in the 1960s.³ During the Vietnam War, the press began to publicize mass grievances on an unprecedented scale. Winogrand himself observed that everything began to happen for the benefit of the press.⁴ The central protester reacts to the microphone, opening his mouth in dissent. In his series *Public Relations*, of which *Hard-Hat Rally* is one, Winogrand wanted to photograph these kinds of snapshots that express how the media influenced the nature of protests.⁵ Hordes gather, aware that the media will broadcast their cause to a more widespread crowd.⁶ Winogrand shows the impassioned protesters against the anonymous media—the viewer can only see the back of the press's heads.

Who attended the rally by their own will and who was merely swept up by the crowd? *Hard-Hat Rally* addresses this question of crowds' effects on participants. Research about urban strikes in 1960s and '70s America revealed, according to crowd theorist Clark McPhail, that "participants could not be distinguished from nonparticipants on the basis of deprivations or frustrations shared in common."⁷ Winogrand captures this interaction between participants and nonparticipants. The hardhat workers cannot necessarily be discerned from the anti-Vietnam war protesters. The press itself possibly participates. The placid young girl in the composition's center foreground breaks up the enraged, primarily male dissidents around her.⁸ Unfazed by the media and political drive of the demonstrators surrounding her, she serves as a counterpoint to the crazed crowd.



Crowded Objects: The Results of Cities

French artist Arman's accumulation of American trash in *Grande Poubelle* [Big Trash Can] (1962)⁹ reflects an inevitable consequence of urban crowding—excess waste. Early crowd theorists feared these types of repercussions of crowding that accompanied the rise of industrialization and urbanization.¹⁰ Beginning with Gustave Le Bon in *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1896) and continuing into the twentieth century, theorists often concluded that when acting as a mass, people in a throng tend to follow others without considering their own morals and ethics, which can lead to negative social consequences. Unwanted debris is one of these consequences of urban crowding. Accordingly, in *Grande Poubelle*, the pervasive cardboard and gray lint—accentuated by bubble wrap, torn product containers and crumpled textual fragments—become an overflowing mass contained only by the Plexiglas. Arman collected items until this “critical mass” developed; the objects lose their individual shapes, instead emphasizing the overall form.¹¹ Early twentieth-century crowd theorists might have viewed this waste preservation as a negative commentary on urbanization.

Subsequent twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholars criticized earlier theorists and the general population's tendency to fear crowds and their consequences. Instead, these critics maintain that people tend to act the same whether alone or in a crowd. Individuals' predispositions, expedited by others around them acting the same way, create an unhinging crowd, not the other way around.¹² Likewise, Arman creates a visual strategy that helps viewers think about some of the inevitable, not necessarily negative, consequences of crowding. He systematically collected worthless objects to transform the way we view the object and repurpose it into art, rendering its original purpose obsolete.¹³ In *Grande Poubelle*, each piece of trash crams the adjacent scrap, together crowding the entire sculpture. This visual strategy is also evident in other images seen in *Crowded*: in lieu of focusing on individuals, the artworks depict indistinguishable and unidentifiable figures or objects forming a mass.

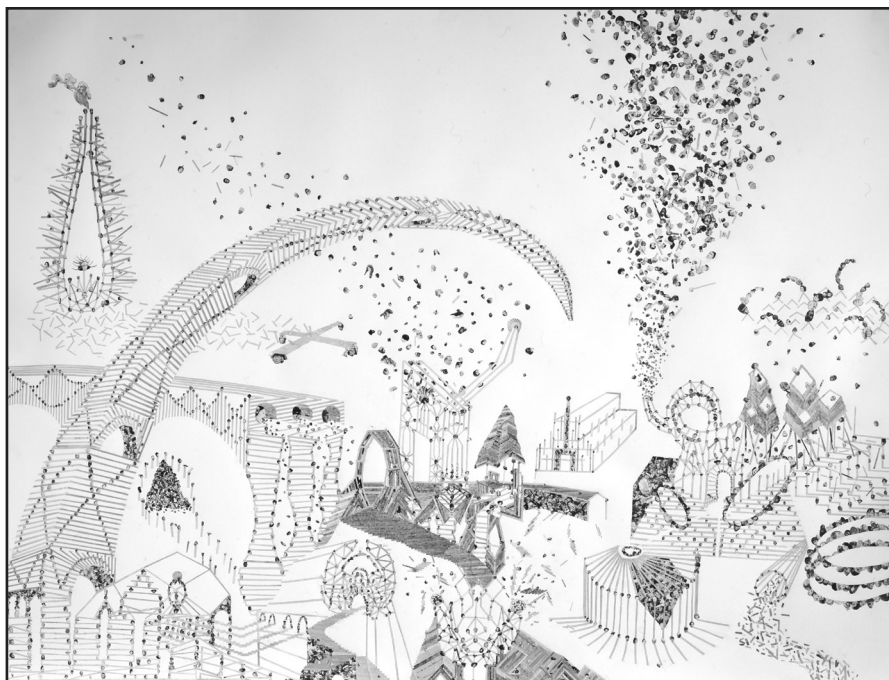
Arman (French/American, 1928-2005)

***Grande Poubelle*, 1962**

Accumulation in Plexiglas

49 ¼ x 24 7⁄8 x 24 3⁄8 inches

On extended loan from Sonnabend Collection



Johannes VanDerBeek (American, b. 1982)

Heads and Beams, 2004

Collage on paper

40 x 52 inches

On extended loan from private collection

Crowded Picture Planes: An Amused Multitude and Their Headspace

Johannes VanDerBeek's *Heads and Beams* (2004) depicts swarms of heads gathered for entertainment at some form of amusement park. VanDerBeek plays with space, the physical space surrounding each head and the overall swarming picture plane, to reveal disparate results of crowds. The use of heads—appropriated from magazines and popular culture—to form many of the “beams” and structural components can be interpreted in multiple ways. The decapitated heads, many spinning out into the abyss, suggest the intensity of the action erupting at this place of amusement, possibly as a result of the crowd. The packed heads convey people whirling and playing with joy, an off-kilter world bursting from excitement.

Crowds pervade *Heads and Beams*, both literally and implicitly. Amusement park attendees often experience the never-ending line, aptly suggested by the stacked heads in *Heads and Beams*. Instigated by crowds, children can instantaneously shift from excited by the prospect of riding the supersonic rollercoaster to sugar-crazed and impatient. The composition reinforces the feeling of crowds through the piles of heads as well as the heads spilling and twirling off the edges of the paper. The heads become structural so that each individual becomes insignificant. As VanDerBeek observes, “Masses of people are used to make monuments but their meaning teeters amid a voided terrain.”¹⁴ VanDerBeek's heads may represent the number of people present at the amusement park at a given time or possibly how one might feel at the amusement park—a head lost in the crowd or a void. VanDerBeek expands:

This attempt to bridge the illusory depth of two-dimensional space with an absurd three-dimensional logic is something that I still aim for. With this work, I started to think about combining two illusory kinds of space, pictorial space with headspace, in actual space. This piece just approached headspace in a more literal fashion.¹⁵

Crammed Spaces: The Psychological Effects of Crowds

Packed into a subway car on the way to work, nearly suffocating from the lack of space in a mosh pit, or fighting to see over the mob at a sporting event, everyone has experienced being stuck in a crowd, whether or not by choice. George Segal's *Girl on a Chair* (1970) conveys how one might feel pressed in by the mass—the walls closing in on you, people and surroundings pushing on all sides of you, blocking off view, prohibiting escape.

Girl on a Chair suggests what one might feel when lacking “near space,” a term which relates to the distance immediately surrounding one’s body and correlates with an arm’s length. When objects intrude too close to one’s body, near space triggers defensive reactions against these possibly harmful entities. A distorted sense of near space can cause anxiety or claustrophobic fear.¹⁶ Claustrophobia occurs from fearing suffocation or restriction. Even if the physical environment may not be especially constricted, those who suffer from claustrophobia feel confined by even the suggestion of a small space.¹⁷ Small rooms and crowded areas can cause a fear of restriction, as seen in *Girl on a Chair*, with the figure appearing far too big for the foreboding black box enclosing her. (Closely related to claustrophobia, agoraphobia is the fear of crowded or public spaces, in which a person experiences anxiety over their ability to escape.¹⁸ A direct fear of crowds is termed enochlophobia.)

However, *Girl on a Chair* can also be interpreted in quite the opposite way. The figure’s back faces viewers and her facial expression is unknown. Perhaps the red chair indicates a more hopeful and playful scenario. Some people enjoy being in crowded situations without experiencing any fears or discomfort. For example, Charles Baudelaire asserts in his famous poem *Crowds* (1864):

To enjoy crowds is an art... Multitude, solitude: equal and interchangeable terms to the active and fertile poet. He who does not know how to people his solitude, does not know either how to be alone in a busy crowd.¹⁹

Baudelaire equates solitude with the crowd. He claims that individuals cannot be content in a crowd if they cannot be gratified alone. Applying Baudelaire’s poetic interpretation of crowds, *Girl on a Chair* may paradoxically depict a girl satisfied simultaneously in her isolated and crowded surroundings. Thereby, *Girl on a Chair* shows how at times crowds and crowded spaces elicit a combination of contrasting responses from uncomfortable to enjoyable.



George Segal (American, 1924-2000)

Girl on a Chair, 1970

Plaster, wood

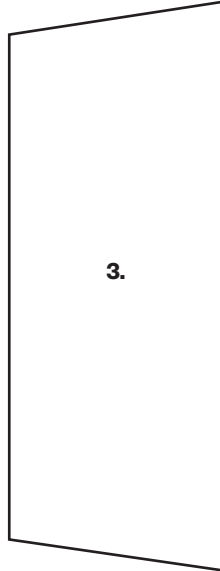
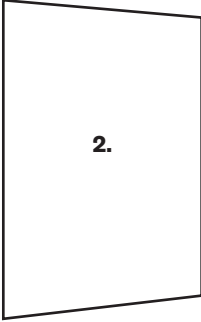
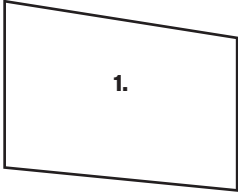
36 x 24 x 12 inches

Gift of Diane L. Ackerman, 1983.23

Endnotes

- 1 Jeffrey Fraenkel and Frish Brandt, ed., *The Man in the Crowd: The Uneasy Streets of Garry Winogrand* (New York: Distributed Art Publishers, Inc., 1970), 7-8.
- 2 Tod Papageorge, *Public Relations* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1977), 12-13.
- 3 Papageorge, *Public Relations*, 14.
- 4 Barbara Diamonstein, "Garry Winogrand," in *Vision and Images: American Photographers on Photography* (New York: Rizzoli, 1981), 180.
- 5 Papageorge, *Public Relations*, 14.
- 6 Christine Poggi, "Mass, Pack, and Mob: Art in the Age of the Crowd," in *Crowds*, ed. Jeffrey T. Schnapp and Matthew Tiewes (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 202.
- 7 Clark McPhail, *The Myth of the Madding Crowd* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1991), xxi.
- 8 Kenneth Baker, "Winogrand Snaps Feral Best of 'Animals,'" *San Francisco Chronicle*, July 27, 2012.
- 9 Rachel Haidu, *From Pop to Now: Selections from the Sonnabend Collection* (Saratoga Springs, New York: The Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, 2002), 34.
- 10 Schnapp and Tiewes, *Crowds*, x-xi.
- 11 Jan van der Marck, *Arman* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984), 66.
- 12 McPhail, *The Myth of the Madding Crowd*, 61.
- 13 Van der Marck, *Arman*, 66-70.
- 14 Ian Berry, ed., *Amazement Park: Stan, Sara, and Johannes VanDerBeek* (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2012), 19.
- 15 Berry, *Amazement Park*, 18.
- 16 Stella F. Lourenco, Matthew R. Longo, and Thanujeni Pathman, "Near Space and its Relation to Claustrophobic Fear," *Cognition* 199, no. 3 (June 2011): 449.
- 17 Ilse Van Diest et al., "The Dutch Claustrophobia Questionnaire: Psychometric Properties and Predictive Validity," *Journal of Anxiety Disorders* 24 (2010): 715-722.
- 18 Jessica Burstein, "Agoraphobia: An Alphabet," in *Crowds*, 359.
- 19 Charles Baudelaire, "Crowds," in *Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Verlaine: Selected Verse and Prose Poems*, ed. Joseph M. Bernstein (New York: The Citadel Press, 1947), 106.

All artworks from Collection of the Frances Young Tang Teaching Museum and Art Gallery, except where otherwise noted.



1. Peggy Bacon (American, 1895-1987)

The Promenade Deck, 1920

Etching

Gift of Eva Marshall Bates Weaver '21, 1988.30

2. W. Eugene Smith (American, 1918-1978)

World War II, 1943-1945

Silver gelatin print

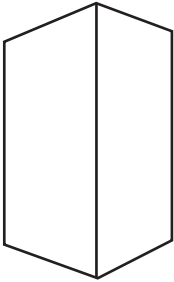
Gift of William B. Snyder, 1985.48

3. Lester Johnson (American, 1919-2010)

Lafayette Street, 1972

Screenprint

Gift of Schenectady Museum & Suits-Bueche Planetarium, 2007.3.24



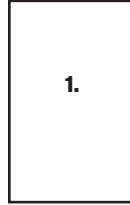
Free standing

Arman (French/American, 1928-2005)

Grande Poubelle, 1962

Accumulation in Plexiglas

On extended loan from Sonnabend Collection



1. George Segal (American, 1924-2000)

Girl on a Chair, 1970

Plaster, wood

Gift of Diane L. Ackerman, 1983.23

2. Winslow Homer (American, 1836-1910)

Harper's Weekly, August 26, 1865, Our Watering Places: Horse Racing at Saratoga, 1865

Wood engraving

Gift of Jean Poskanzer Rudnick '44, 1975.2

3. Eugene Atget (French, 1857-1927)

Porte d'Asnieres-Cite Trebert, 1913

Albumen print

Gift of L. Bradley Camp, 1984.194F

4. Eduardo Paolozzi (British, 1924-2005)

Untitled (from the series Moonstrips Empire News), 1967

Screenprint

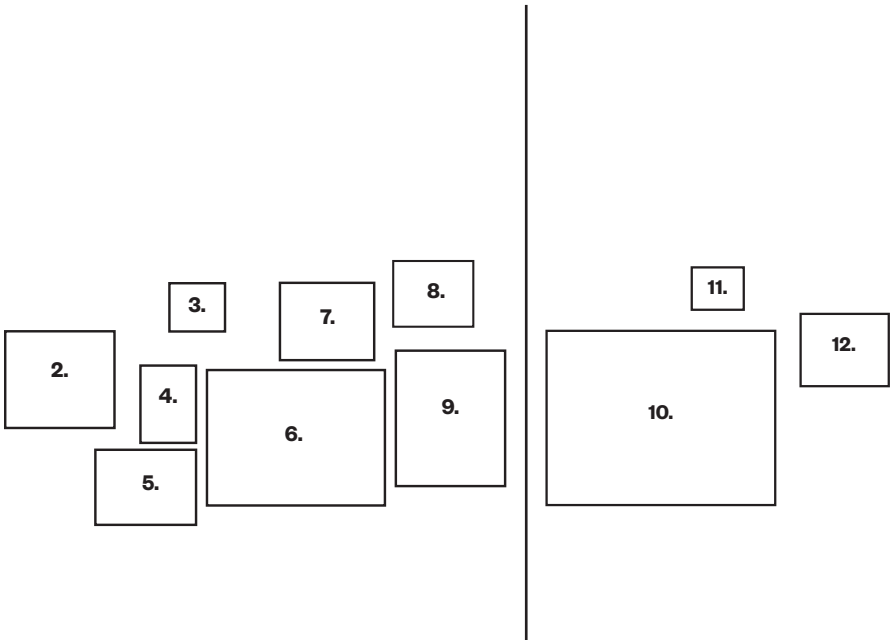
Gift of George Friedman and Diane Love, 1980.292.20

5. Emmett Williams (American, 1925-2007)

Coptic Optics, 1979

Screenprint

Gift of Samuel Hunter, 1981.56.6



6. LeRoy Neiman (American, 1921-2012)
The Game of Life from Eaux Fortes, 1980
Etching
Gift of Steven Brier, 1984.468.10

7. Garry Winogrand (American, 1928-1984)
Hard-Hat Rally, New York, 1969
(printed in 1978)
Silver gelatin print
Gift of Penny Kaniclides '59, 1983.21.5

8. Barbara A. Stroock Kaufman
(American, b. 1918)
Skidmore Special, n.d.
Lithograph
Gift of Barbara A. Stroock Kaufman '40, ND186

9. Michael Harrison (British, b. 1945)
Disappearing World, n.d.
Intaglio/silkscreen
Gift of Ben and Lesta Wunsch, 1982.68

10. Johannes VanDerBeek (American, b. 1982)
Heads and Beams, 2004
Collage on paper
On extended loan from private collection

11. Eugene Atget (French, 1857-1927)
L'Eclipse, Avril 1912, 1912
Toned silver gelatin print
Gift of L. Bradley Camp, 1984.194G

12. Andy Warhol (American, 1928-1987)
Birmingham Race Riot, 1964
Screenprint
Gift of Anne T. Palamountain, 1966.4.5

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and Art Gallery at Skidmore College
www.skidmore.edu/tang

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