

MOCAMUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART  
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# EVERYTHING ALL AT ONCE

AUGUST 24—OCTOBER 13, 2013

## EVERYTHING ALL AT ONCE

Organized by Liz Maugans, Guest Curator  
AUGUST 24—OCTOBER 13, 2013  
Toby Devan Lewis Gallery

A sign made from particleboard and spray painted with the words 'FREE STUFF' sits permanently on a bustling Cleveland street I often drive down. Used items are frequently put out and gone within minutes. The city is also host to Zero Landfill, Unique Thrift, the RE-store, and plenty of other scavenge-warehouses that hold fragments from our throwaway landscape. Often, it is artists who value these discarded materials, beating the scrappers to the punch. *Everything All At Once* features four artists—Jeffrey Chiplis, Dana Depew, Elizabeth Emery, and Jenniffer Omaitz—who are drawn to such cast-offs. They are curious about what these materials once meant, and what they continue to convey. Picked up, repainted, repaired, or transformed, these everyday objects navigate between the ordered space of the museum and the material jumble of the outside world. These artists physicalize the REFRESH button, and are mindful of the strange absurdity that can be found in our region's obvious tropes of failure, conflict, growth, and renewal.

Both Chiplis and Depew have lived and worked in Tremont, a vibrantly collaged, culturally diverse neighborhood with a sizeable concentration of artists. The polarities of this neighborhood infiltrate the work of both artists: old and new, decline and redevelopment, blue collar and bohemian. Chiplis and Depew have watched the rise of Steelyard Commons, a retail mall complex sited on the former grounds of LTV Steel. They have witnessed the strategy of bringing in high-end housing and shops to stimulate the economy, and the subsequent slow death that can occur in areas where these efforts do not take root. Reclaiming construction material, signage scrap, and domestic lighting fixtures from such transitional zones, Chiplis and Depew focus attention on urban spaces that layer the historic and newly-built.

Chiplis scavenges fragments of neon signage, often directed by leads he gets from friends, tavern owners, and businesses that are closing their doors. He breaks them down and merges them together, transforming commercial signs into playful new emblems and imagery. Many of Chiplis's works are situated throughout the city, on rooftops and bridges, and in cemeteries—spaces that signify longevity, perseverance, and history. *An Invitation to Dine* (2013) was made from signage salvaged from John Q's Steakhouse, a downtown Cleveland landmark that closed this past year. Separated and reconfigured, the letters take on new associations, such as an "I" that resembles the Cleveland Indians's logo. Taking a recognizable sign and shifting its meaning, Chiplis explores the relationships between economic turnover, local identity, and nostalgia.

Depew grew up in Medina, surrounded by the fascinating clutter of his mother's antique warehouse. His electrical, mechanical, and fabrication skills have been honed through a lifelong interest in taking things apart to see how they work. Depew often merges objects that don't belong together, such as storm windows and stained glass, to create a conversation between high and low, destruction and redemption. In past works, Depew has paid tribute to people and places that are special to Cleveland, including Wilma Smith (a local television news anchor) and the iconic Detroit-Superior Bridge. For *Everything All At Once*, Depew makes reference to elsewhere, with a makeshift rendition of the Crystal

Palace, a plate glass and iron building that held the Great Exhibition at London's 1851 World's Fair. Using scrappy, discarded materials to refer to this grand historical architecture, Depew comments on the psychology of our built environment, and how buildings (going up or coming down) embody larger societal narratives.

While Chiplis and Depew maintain aspects of their materials' original functions and identities, Omaitz and Emery draw on strategies of material confusion and transformation. Omaitz creates densely layered environments in uncertain states of resolution. Drawing from the language of architecture, her process of building through accumulation reflects the evolution that urban landscapes undergo. *Tectonic Limits* (2013) overwhelms with a hoarder's pathology; wood, cardboard, plastic, and found objects grow into imagery that is reminiscent of landfills, condemned houses, or the remnants of natural disasters. Omaitz brings the Gallery's aluminum ceiling pans, a unique architectural feature, into the clutter and chaos of her structure; expanding on the ambiguity of the materials and their evolving forms: is this a process of destruction, or a breaking down of systems in order to build anew?

Emery's sculptures are made from ordinary objects such as woven fabrics, bubble wrap, and thrifted figurine bases. Her techniques, including direct carving, textile-wrapping, transfer printing, and mold-making, trace negative spaces and textural imprints, highlighting the details normally overlooked. Carrying residual indications of their original use, Emery's deceptively simple forms burrow information that is "known" into morphing composites that are both curious and comic. Two of her works in this exhibition, *Little by Little Waking Everyday* and *Under an Open Sky of Deep River Clouds* (both 2013), draw inspiration from Chinese scholar's rocks, or "viewing stones," objects of contemplation which are valued for their asymmetry and awkward shapes. Emery's sculptures convey a process of slow formation, and a calm, knowing sensibility. This cohesion, and the focused viewing it elicits, contrasts sharply with Omaitz's frantic, anxiety-inducing explosion.

Mining detritus from human excess, Chiplis, Depew, Emery, and Omaitz generate compelling and resilient new forms. The materials in their works are activated by an urgency that redirects post-recession melancholy towards a new inventory system of STUFF that reconsiders value and potential meaning. The scrappy, the resilient, and the authentic, all rise from the urban whirlpool where nature, culture, and industry collide. Engaging with the emergent social and economic "upcycle" of Cleveland, these artists draw on a grass-roots movement that finds hope in the humorous reinventing of "everything all at once."

### SPONSORS

This exhibition is funded by Leadership Circle gifts supporting inaugural year programs and exhibitions: Britton Fund, Agnes Gund, Scott Mueller, Doreen and Dick Cahoon, Becky Dunn, Harriet and Victor Goldberg, Donna and Stewart Kohl, and Toby Devan Lewis.

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## ARTIST BIOS

**Jeffry Chiplis** (1952, Indianapolis, IN) lives and works in Cleveland. He holds a BFA in sculpture from the Indiana University. His work has been featured in solo exhibitions at White Box Gallery, New York; the Butler Institute of American Art, Youngstown, OH; and William Busta Gallery and The Sculpture Center, both in Cleveland. Since 1978, Chiplis has served on the Board of Trustees of SPACES Gallery, Cleveland.

**Dana Depew** (1972, Cleveland, OH) lives and works in Cleveland. He holds a BFA in sculpture from Kent State University. His work has been exhibited at the Decorative Arts Center, Philadelphia; Midwest Sculpture Initiative, Valparaiso, IN; Western Exhibitions, Chicago; and Zygote Press, Cleveland. Depew founded and ran the Asterisk Gallery in Cleveland from 2001 to 2011.

**Elizabeth Emery** (1964, Boston, MA) lives and works in Cleveland. She holds an MFA in ceramics from The New York State College of Ceramics at Alfred University and a BA in art history and Italian studies from the University of Pennsylvania and. Her work has been exhibited at Dom Umenia, Bratislava, Slovenia; Urban Arts Space, Columbus, OH; and Boston Sculptors Gallery. Emery has received the Hedy and Michael Fawcett Prize for Visual Arts and the Special Opportunities Grant from the New York Foundation of the Arts.

**Jennifer Omaitz** (1979, Cleveland, OH) lives in Kent, OH and works in Kent and Cleveland. She holds an MFA in painting from Kent State University and a BFA in painting from the Cleveland Institute of Art. Solo exhibitions of her work have been held at The Sculpture Center, Cleveland; Sandy Carson Gallery, Denver; and Kent State University. Her work was featured at the 2010 Biennial of the Americas in Denver. Omaitz is a part-time faculty member at the Cleveland Institute of Art, Kent State University, and the University of Akron.

## CURATOR BIO

**Liz Maugans** (1967, Lakewood, OH) lives and works in Bay Village, OH and Cleveland. She is co-founder and Executive Director of Zygote Press, a non-profit printmaking studio, and the founder of the Collective Arts Network, a quarterly journal. Her recent curatorial projects include: *CURB APPEAL* (2013), Rooms to Let, Columbus, OH; *Obsessive Intricacies* (2012), Zygote Press, Cleveland; and *The Unbearable Lightness* (2012), Sullivan Gallery, BayARTS, Bay Village. Maugans is an adjunct faculty member in printmaking and drawing at the Cleveland Institute of Art.

## WORKS IN THE EXHIBITION

### Jeffry Chiplis

*An Invitation to Dine*, 2013  
Neon, argon, steel  
38 x 38 x 6 1/4 inches  
Collection of Rick Cassara

*I Can't Quite Focus*, 2013  
Neon, argon, steel  
50 x 53 x 4 1/2 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

*The Show-off Chameleon*, 2013  
Argon, steel  
21 x 29 x 5 1/2 inches  
Courtesy of the artist

### Dana Depew

*Rust Belt Crystal Palace*, 2013  
Reclaimed storm windows, stained glass, and found objects  
8 x 12 x 11 feet  
Courtesy of the artist

### Elizabeth Emery

*Empty Watching of Numberless Beings*, 2013  
Plaster, concrete, gold leaf, wood  
16 x 15 1/2 x 11 inches

*Little by Little Waking Everyday*, 2013  
Plaster, concrete, gold leaf, found objects  
21 x 10 x 14 inches

*Memorializing a Crisscross Journey*, 2013  
Plaster, concrete, gold leaf, found objects  
9 1/2 x 8 1/4 x 8 inches

*Precise Size of Windblown Modesty*, 2013  
Plaster, concrete, gold leaf  
17 1/2 x 13 1/2 x 6 inches

*Under an Open Sky of Deep River Clouds*, 2013  
Plaster, concrete, gold leaf, wood  
20 x 13 x 7 inches

*Wandered a Vast Landscape*, 2013  
Plaster, concrete, gold leaf, found object  
29 x 16 x 8 inches

All works courtesy of the artist and William Busta Gallery, Cleveland

### Jennifer Omaitz

*Tectonic Limits*, 2013  
Mixed media  
Dimensions variable  
Courtesy of the artist and 1point618 Gallery, Cleveland

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Jennifer Omaitz, *Tectonic Limits*, 2013 (detail); Dana Depew, *Rust Belt Crystal Palace*, 2013 (detail); Jeffry Chiplis, *The Show-off Chameleon*, 2013; Elizabeth Emery, *Precise Size of Windblown Modesty*, 2013

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