Depew grew up in Medina, surrounded by the fascinating clutter of his mother’s antique dealers, and in cemeteries—spaces that signify longevity, perseverance, and history. Many of Chiplis’s works are situated throughout the city, on rooftops and bridges, and in cemeteries—spaces that signify longevity, perseverance, and history. Any invitation to One (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 has paid tribute to people and places that are special to Cleveland, including Wilma Smith 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 local identity, and nostalgia.

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 yards, 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 borrow 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 recovers 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 reinvention of “everything all at once.”

SPONSORS
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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 Crosscountry 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

Jenniffer Omaitz
Tectonic Limits, 2013
Mixed media
Dimensions variable

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.