



**Stephen Yusko**  
My Space: Cleveland



Cover, and detail, below:  
*Glow Light*, 2009  
 Forged and fabricated steel,  
 phenolic tube, neon light,  
 66 x 24 x 6"



Above, and detail, right:  
*Desk*, 2009  
 Forged and fabricated steel,  
 Richlite (desk top),  
 ebonized cherry wood,  
 fiber washers, 30 x 60 x 30."



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May 1–30, 2009

William Busta Gallery  
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## My Space: Cleveland

If you look closely at Stephen Yusko's work you will see this particular dichotomy of materials: some are found materials—chosen, used and loved for all their accumulated scrapes, scratches and patinas; others are raw materials he has formed with the most painstaking care into shapes, surfaces and patterns of exacting standards. A metal tube taken from a scrap pile, chosen for the beauty found in its by-now abused, painted surface, might be used as a table leg. If that use requires the tube to be joined to other metal parts by welding, in all likelihood the joint will be planned in such a way that (a) the weld will be invisible from the surface so the joint seems accomplished by some act of metallurgical alchemy, and (b) the paint found on the tube will not be further marred or scorched by the welding. This is a concept of craft that rises to the level of eccentricity, and might be regarded only as that if it were not also for the powerful beauty of the forms Yusko constructs.

The sense of form is decidedly industrial in its influences. There is a lot of the machine aesthetic in evidence, as well as an evident appreciation of industrial tools and work processes. In this, I would say, there is not a big difference between the look of the equipment in Yusko's studio and the objects he constructs with that equipment. It could be thought of as a redirection of purpose. The love of this environment, in both its pristine form and its decaying form—as old, heavy industry is moved aside by its high-tech replacements—can also be found in the photographs Yusko takes. His photographs are contemporary in their references, but certainly recall an earlier period in photography when Albert Renger-Patsch and others were directing their cameras at industrial subjects in the high period of their importance. This interest seamlessly folds into the sculptures and functional objects that Yusko makes.

Yusko's undergraduate work at The University of Akron was in sculpture and metalsmithing—metalsmithing on a jewelry scale—and his graduate work was in metalsmithing at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale. But it was in experiences that fell between those two periods in academia that blacksmithing and a different range of possibilities of working with metal developed. After undergraduate school, Yusko spent an extended period of time

at the Penland School of Crafts where he began blacksmithing. Following that, he spent five years at the National Ornamental Metal Museum in Memphis working with the legendary founding director, James Wallace. The Metal Museum specializes in repair and restoration of historic metalwork pieces, as well as accepting commissions for new work. Working back into the work of skilled metalsmiths from earlier periods to do repair work was an apprenticeship of sorts—as was working with Wallace. This experience working with traditional techniques and forms now becomes a core foundation within his work as well as in the work he does as designer for Rose Ironworks here in Cleveland.

There is nostalgia in Yusko's work, but nostalgia creatively harnessed. Louise Bourgeois said of nostalgia in art that (I paraphrase here) if you are working your way back to the past because of nostalgia for a time gone by, then it is a weakness in art, but if the past has such a grip on you that it causes a nostalgia through which you try to understand yourself in the present, then it is a strength. The nostalgia in Yusko's work is of the second order that Bourgeois defines. It defines a working process and a relationship to the material world. To us, the audience for his work, it can be a powerful reminder of the thought processes that are generated by direct experiences with the world—haptic experiences with a level of directness unmediated by interpretations, technology or the distancing of a media-oriented world. In a time grown fascinated with the virtual, Yusko's work demands an engagement with the actual.

—Don Harvey, artist

# Stephen Yusko

Born 1965, Dover, Delaware

www.stephenyusko.com

## Education

1999 MFA in Metalsmithing, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, IL

1990 BFA in Sculpture, Minors in Metalsmithing and Art History, University of Akron, Akron, OH

## Selected Exhibitions

2008 *Labor + Industry*, invitational. Asterisk Gallery, Cleveland, OH

2007 *CLE+design+style = functionalart 2007*, invitational. Convivium 33 Gallery, Cleveland, OH (Stephen Yusko design for Rose Iron Works)

*The New Steel*, Juried: SNAG Conference. Delta Axis Gallery, Memphis, TN

*Ironworks*, invitational. Blue Heron Gallery, Deer Isle, ME

*Crossover: Combining Traditions*, invitational. Emily Davis Gallery, University of Akron, OH

2006 *Furnished: Forged and Fabricated*, solo exhibition. Xen Gallery, St. Louis, MO.

*Stephen Yusko*, solo exhibition. The Carnegie Galleries, Covington, KY

*27th Annual Contemporary Crafts Exhibition*, national juried. Mesa Contemporary Arts, Mesa, AZ

2005 *Enclosed Within*, invitational. Penland Gallery, Penland School of Crafts, Penland, NC

*Resources: Coal, Steel, Rubber, Salt*, national juried: SNAG Conference. Cleveland Museum of Natural History, Cleveland, OH

*Three Sculptors*, invitational. Hunt Gallery, Webster University, Webster Groves, MO

2004–05 *Educators/Educated: Jewelry and Metals in Ohio*, national invitational. Ohio traveling exhibition, Riffe Gallery, Columbus, OH; Butler Art Institute, Cleveland Institute of Art.

2004 *Forging Bonds: Kentucky Blacksmiths and their Mentors*, invitational. Lexington Arts & Cultural Center, Lexington, KY

*Condenser House Works*, solo exhibition. Bonsack Gallery, John Burroughs School, St. Louis, MO

*A Work in Progress: 25 Years*, invitational. National Ornamental Metal Museum, Memphis, TN

2003 *Stephen Yusko: Recent Works*, Solo Exhibition. Fontbonne University Gallery, St. Louis, MO

2002 *Exquisite Scrap*, National invitational. Craft Alliance Gallery, St. Louis, MO

*Recreation/ReCreation*, national invitational. Noyes Museum, Oceanville, NJ

2001 *Ancient Futures: The Art of the Blacksmith at the 3rd Millennium*, international invitational. Nova Scotia Centre for Craft + Design, Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada

*Color on Metal*, national invitational. OXOXO Gallery, Baltimore, MD

2000 *IN/FORM 6*, national invitational. IN/FORM Gallery, St. Louis, MO

*New Works/9 States* (juried). Art St. Louis, St. Louis, MO

*Master Works for Master Collectors*, invitational. Gallery WDO, Charlotte, NC

1999 *Beacons for the New Millennium*, national invitational. Nancy Sachs Gallery, St. Louis, MO

## Selected Awards/Honors

2005 Best of Show, *Resources: Coal, Steel, Rubber and Salt*.

2003 Nominated for Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Biennial Grant

1999 First Place Award, *Beacons for the New Millennium*

## Selected Professional Experience

2008–present Board of Trustees. Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Deer Isle, ME

2007–present Artist-in-residence. Rose Iron Works, Cleveland, OH

1993–96 Artist-in-Residence. The National Ornamental Metal Museum, Memphis, TN