



25 Artists/25 Years
ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION



William Busta Gallery
Cleveland Ohio



25 Artists/25 Years

For the 25th anniversary of opening the first William Busta Gallery, I invited 25 artists who had one-person shows at WBg over the past 25 years. In making my selections, I looked at all the artists and organized them by the date of their first show. And then I selected artists who had their first show at WBg at times throughout the gallery's history—I included several artists who I first exhibited in 1989 as well as one who I first exhibited in 2013. A few of the artists have had different representation in recent years, including Laurence Channing who is exhibited courtesy of the Bonfoey Gallery and Andrea Hahn who is courtesy of Tregoning & Company.

In different ways, each was important to the gallery.

This exhibition is dedicated to the memory of Kirk Mangus, Craig Lucas, H.C. Cassill, Wayne Draznin and Lilian Tyrrell.

William Busta

Christi Birchfield
 Mary Jo Bole
 Kate Budd
 Timothy Callaghan
 Laurence Channing
 Kristen Cliffl
 Dexter Davis
 Elizabeth Emery
 Andrea Hahn
 Don Harvey
 Derek Hess
 Curlee Raven Holton
 Mark Howard
 Andrea Joki

Hildur Ásgeirsdóttir
 Jónsson
 Matthew Kolodziej
 Eva Kwong
 Michael Loderstedt
 Kirk Mangus
 Rob Mihaly
 Lorri Ott
 Cecelia Phillips
 Debra Rosen
 Douglas Sanderson
 Brinsley Tyrrell
 Douglas Max Utter

Cover:
 Timothy Callaghan
Friday Night Lights, 2013
 gouache on paper,
 17 x 20 in.

Above:
 Laurence Channing
*Several Figures Walking
 in the Same Direction*, 2013
 charcoal on paper,
 30 x 40 in. Courtesy of the
 Bonfoey Gallery.

William Busta: Meaning in the City

Since the early months of 1989, when he mounted a two-person show at 2021 Murray Hill Road on Cleveland's east side, William Busta has labored to create a functioning commercial gallery for artists and audiences who live in northern Ohio. "Functioning" is the problem word in that sentence, because it suggests an art-world context that didn't quite exist in 1989 and which remains sketchy in 2013. It seemed like a fantasy, to transplant the values of SoHo or Chelsea, let alone Manhattan's old school midtown galleries (which Busta's spaces have always resembled), to Ohio's far less sexy neighborhoods—like a job for a bigger town. Yet Busta succeeded. The twenty-fifth anniversary of his gallery calls for a party rather than an obituary because he was able to slowly retrofit an international model of an upper end gallery for survival on the north coast. He invented a New York style concept space that somehow slides into the local ecology as if by a kind of trick, like an odd jigsaw puzzle piece.

It was crucial that Busta was able to make use of Cleveland's many fine arts advantages—the presence in town of a number of college and university art departments offering advanced degrees, as well as several museums and long-standing artists organizations and showcases. But while sufficient money and interest sustain art institutions and institution-based careers here, a wider arts public continues to be badly needed, and the point needs to be hammered home that there's far more to culture than its public face. Galleries are crucial precisely because of the private dimension that they reinforce, that they feed, selling work of all kinds at all prices to people who want to take it home and live it with it. That spur to daily, life-long cultivation is the real accomplishment of a "commercial" gallery.

Cleveland is a mixed-up place full of clashing identities; for many it's a football town, but for some of us it has always been an arts town as well. Busta was raised in a Cleveland suburb and has a keen sense of how far and wide the veins of culture run in American communities. Coming of age in the late 1960s, he also knows how potent history is, smoldering beneath the quiet pallor of everyday life. As a young man attending Baldwin Wallace and then Case Western Reserve University in the 1970s, Busta's degree in History and Museum Studies centered on American material culture and social history; he studied the nuts and bolts of cultural transmission, and the long view of art as a thing that evolves from a given native soil. At age 27 he got a job as director of a small museum in Aberdeen, South Dakota (his resume dryly mentions it had a "Big Game Trophy Room" and an art gallery), then worked for another year as Assistant Director of Plains Art Museum in Moorhead, Minnesota. Back in Cleveland in 1979, Busta headed the New Organization for the Visual Arts (NOVA) for two years. That artists' service organization sponsored a variety of public projects, including a gallery in Playhouse Square.



While there, he learned of the flavor and real accomplishments of Cleveland's living arts community. He already was familiar with the so-called Cleveland School, which included major American artists from the days of the city's industrial zenith in the 1920s and 1930s, including Charles Burchfield, William Sommer, Viktor Schreckengost and a dozen other underappreciated painters and sculptors.

Also, because of the presence of the Cleveland Institute of Art and several nationally prominent university art departments within a 50-mile radius of the city, there has long been an ebb and flow of contemporary—even revolutionary—art and *thinking* about art through the area, especially since 1950. Robert Mangold and Joseph Kosuth attended CIA, for instance, and major shows of earth art and conceptual art took place at Oberlin and Kent. SPACES' (founded 1978) programming and the continuing growth of MOCA (founded 1968) kept things moving during the 1980s, and the Cleveland Museum of Art's May Show served as a city-wide yearly benchmark exhibit. By the end of the decade there was an ongoing sense of

Douglas Max Utter
Aunt Rose, 2013
mixed media and paint on
canvas, 32 x 32 in.



connection to national trends. Cleveland had its own list of gifted home-grown neo-expressionist painters, and the minimalist/formalist and op art influences of CIA staff, which included important figures like Ed Mieczkowski and Julian Stanczak, made for a lively, up-to-date mix.

Busta realized that ideas about regionalism in the arts, used as a historical perspective in regard to Depression-era art, could be updated to provide context for the artists that he had watched emerge on the Cleveland scene during the 1970s and 1980s. He began to think about starting a gallery. His partner Joan Tomkins agreed: This was something he should do.

William Busta and I lived across the street from each other in Cleveland Heights for a number of years, beginning in late 1988. We met when he appeared around the edge of the big blue spruce by my front porch, and introduced himself. He explained that he was starting a new gallery on Murray Hill Road, and asked if I would be interested in being part of it. As always, Bill had a tentative game plan, a concept, and he mentioned wanting to show a select number of artists from the region. He even talked a little about his interest in presenting art inflected with emotional and psychological dimensions. At that time the Murray Hill address had recently been home to gallerist Joyce Porcelli's storefront exhibition space, where I had showed a number of large new paintings about a year before. I'd also had a show that caught Bill's eye at Tommy's Restaurant on Coventry, and he knew I had been honored with the painting award at CMA's 1987 May Show.

Kate Budd
magnolia pod, 2013
wax, glitter beads, graphite,
1.25 x 2.25 x 1.75 in.



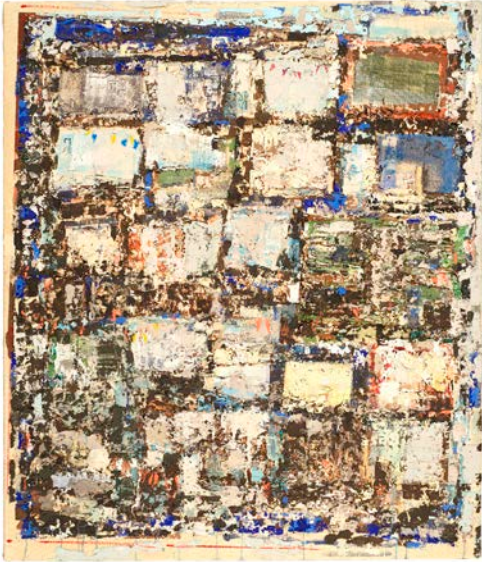
My first exhibit at Busta's took place in June and July of 1989. It was the beginning of a long trek through art-time, during which we were not always travelling together. I enjoyed six solo shows at that first gallery, including his last one in 1998. Long before then, the May Show had been retired by CMA curators who felt it was dated. Perhaps that was true, but its absence left a large chunk of negative space in the city, with very little on the local exhibition scene that could fill it. The main shortage was a perceived lack of professional credibility. This was a quality that the William Busta Gallery could provide in some measure, though it was also a matter of reputation and trust, and had to be earned over time. Gradually Busta assembled a group of mid-career artists working in a broad spectrum of media, most of whom were associated with area art institutions. Several, like Michael Loderstedt, Noel Reifel, Craig Lucas, and Eva Kwong have taught regularly at Kent State University. And there was Don Harvey, already widely revered, based at the University of Akron. Many of these men and women, like Douglas Sanderson, served simultaneously as adjunct faculty at CIA, Oberlin College, and KSU. Their art was visually sophisticated, and typically engaged in contemporary issues. On the whole the group conveyed a sense of aesthetic urgency that could be found in no other gallery in Cleveland. Busta's exhibitions projected a sense of mission and well-informed taste, so that when CMA again took an interest in the city's artists for a more select revision of the May Show, it came to Busta's shows for guidance. The plan was working, but was also exhausting, and after a run of nine years, just as Murray Hill ran out of parking spaces, Busta himself ran out of steam, for the time being.



His second gallery, adjacent to Cleveland Public Theater on Cleveland's west side, was more of a placeholder on the local scene, lasting just over a year in 2001–02. I had occasion to write about the new space as a critic for the *Cleveland Free Times*, but didn't show there. The exhibitions tended to be poetic, even casual at times, often showing works by younger artists. I found that they challenged me as a writer especially, and I think it was around this time that I came to understand the fact that William Busta, himself, is a remarkable poet/artist. It's as a gallerist that he comes into his own area of excellence, responding to others who, like him, know how to listen to the keen click of metaphor. I hear this metaphysical echo at most of the shows he has mounted in recent years: in the transmutations of Lorri Ott's informal sculptures and the lavishly beautiful enamel-on-metal Ohio landscapes by Brinsley Tyrrell; or as the hard poetics of the Icelandic landscape become hidden histories of the body in Hildur Ásgeirsdóttir Jónsson's paintings; and as Kate Budd distills the oddness of intimacy in exquisite wax objects, the moons of a strange and personal planet.

Cecelia Phillips
Crystal 1, 2013
gouache on watercolor paper,
11 x 15 in.

Michael Loderstedt
Flyover: Arctic Islands, 2013
intaglio, relief, monoprint,
chine collé on handmade
paper, 31 x 31 in.



FIRST EXHIBITION AT WBG:

- 1989 Rob Mihaly
Don Harvey
Michael Loderstedt
Douglas Max Utter
Andrea Hahn
- 1991 Laurence Channing
- 1992 Curlee Raven Holton
Kirk Mangus
- 1993 Douglas Sanderson
- 1995 Derek Hess
Eva Kwong
- 1997 Dexter Davis
Hildur Ásgeirsdóttir Jónsson
- 2002 Mary Jo Bole
- 2007 Cecelia Phillips
Timothy Callaghan
Matthew Kolodziej
- 2008 Kristen Cliffel
Brinsley Tyrrell
Kate Budd
Andrea Joki
- 2009 Lorri Ott
- 2010 Christi Birchfield
- 2011 Mark Howard
- 2013 Debra Rosen
Elizabeth Emery

As Busta has expanded and rearranged the space of his third gallery, downtown on Prospect Avenue, the clean, wide rooms melt into one another, allowing several solo shows to be displayed, like seasons overlapping. The dates of exhibits also overlap, and while the two largest areas usually are used to display major statements, there are always surprises. Here too a poetics is at work, an unconscious logic of loose reference and tenuous connection that weaves beneath the surface of careers and personalities, through rooms in an art dream, making meaning in the city.

—Douglas Max Utter

Matthew Kolodziej
Tourist, 2013
acrylic on burlap,
49 x 42 in.

Eva Kwong
OVO III (AB OVO Series), 2013
wood-fired egg, stoneware
base, 8.5 x 10 x 10 in.

Kirk Mangus
Octopus, 2013
wood-fired stoneware,
18 x 12 x 12 in.

25 years: With gratitude

I've often told artists that the gallery is smaller than it looks—a way of explaining that staffing is minimal and that the artists who participate in the gallery are often asked to help. But I've also hoped that the gallery is much larger than the gallery walls, embracing and nourishing a community of interest in art that is made in our time, in our place.

I would like to acknowledge a few of the people who have made the gallery possible through the past 25 years. Special thanks to Don Harvey, always wise and generous, the first artist who committed to the gallery and who, with Susan Murray, introduced me to Cleveland's curators and collectors; to Marjorie Talalay, who brought board members and good friends to gallery openings and instructed them to support our artists; to Julie Fedevich, an especially able assistant who gave the Murray Hill gallery a bit of sparkle with her street-smart style; to my son Christopher Busta-Peck—artist, librarian, historian, and enthusiast—who grew up in the gallery, cheerfully helping to build each new space; to Hildur Ásgeirsdóttir Jónsson, whose encouragement and amazing paintings inspired to open a gallery one more time; to Rich Sarian, ever patient and accurately intuitive, for creating the perfect graphic image for the Prospect gallery and for somehow always knowing what's best; to Jeffrey Chiplis, neon wizard, who hinted that the gallery on Detroit, and then on Prospect, needed an illuminating sign; to Robert Bostwick of Bostwick Design Partnership, who suggested many times that I really needed to open a gallery below his architectural offices, and then provided all necessary help; to Jason Bour, contractor and visionary, who designed the Prospect gallery with me as it was built, ever mindful of proportion and presentation; to the Cleveland news media and art writers, who have worked amazing and entertainingly to create a literate audience for the visual arts, including Amy Sparks, Dee Perry and Dave DeOreo at WCPN (who occasionally invite me as a “regular irregular guest”), Steven Litt at the Plain Dealer, and Douglas Max Utter; to Debra Rosen, extraordinary artist and gallery manager, for keeping publicity and exhibition artists as organized as is prudent and for her steadying presence in the midst of installation chaos; to Jillian Braganza, gallery hostess for making all opening guests welcome; and to my wife Joan Tomkins, goddess of victory, whose steadfast commitment and affection have made all things possible.

—William Busta



The William Busta Gallery represents contemporary artists who live and work in northeast Ohio. Mostly, the gallery presents one-person exhibitions, and then continues to represent the artist.

The gallery has always been as much about Cleveland as it has been about art. We believe that the things we create are documents of the time and place in which we live; that the things we create have their highest expression in our arts; and that our arts are created in dialogue with the past and are our voice to the future.

William Busta Gallery

williambustagallery.com

Timeline

- 1988 Entered agreement with Joyce Porcelli to purchase gallery furniture, mailing lists and lease for space that Joyce Porcelli Gallery had occupied in the Little Italy neighborhood, Cleveland.
- 1989 **Jan 2** Opened Gallery at 2021 Murray Hill Road. Began renovations while remaining open under Joyce Porcelli Gallery name.
Feb 10 Opened first exhibition, *Noel Reifel and Ron Garrett: Printworks*
Mar 17 Renovations complete, opened *Robert Mihaly: Barcelona Vessels*, first exhibition with gallery name Souvenirs.
Dec 1 First of series of Northeast Ohio Print Annuals, through 1997.
- 1990 **Jan 5** At suggestion of all gallery artists, changed name to William Busta Gallery.
- 1998 **Mar 29** Closed gallery space after 100 exhibitions with *Douglas Max Utter: paintings and monotypes*.
- 1999 **May 7–22** Pop-Up Exhibition, *Club Illusion: Four Young Cleveland Painters* (Dexter Davis, Clay Parker, Yong Han, Kam Lee) presented by William Busta Gallery and Julie Fedevich at 3rd Floor Loft, St. Clair Avenue, Cleveland.
- 2000 **Oct 13–Nov 11** Pop-Up Exhibition, *Fabricating Memory* (Ray Juaire & Patti Fields, Emily Blaser, Hildur Jónsson, Holly Morrison), presented by William Busta and Bellamy Printz in storefront at 2735 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland.
- 2001 **Feb 2** Opened Gallery at 6403 Detroit Avenue, Cleveland (same building as Cleveland Public Theatre) with *Prints from Artists Image Resource*, Foreland Street. Jeff Chiplis creates neon sign for gallery transom windows, with letters W B G. A version of his concept eventually became the gallery logo.
- 2002 **Mar 9** Closed after nine exhibitions with *Martin Ball: Contorni*.
- 2003 William Busta created gallery for Heights Arts, on Lee Road, organizing 20 exhibitions between April 2003 and September 2005.
- 2006 William Busta organized retrospective *The Persistence of Conscience: Lilian Tyrrell, Textiles and Drawing, 1979–2005* for SPACES, Cleveland, and *Edris Eckhardt: Visionary and Innovator* for Cleveland Artists Foundation, Lakewood.

- 2007 **Apr 14** Opened Gallery at 2731 Prospect Ave, Cleveland with exhibition *Timothy Callaghan, First Time, Long Time*.
Rich Sarian creates visual identity with gallery logo, exhibition card, and website design.
Sep 7 Series of brochures starts with *Hildur Ásgeirsdóttir Jónsson: Vatnajökull Paintings*.
- 2009 **Oct 10** First concert by *Les Délices*, (Cleveland-based ensemble playing music of the French Baroque), initiating a series of two performances in the gallery each season.
- 2010 **Sep 10** Kristen Cliffl sculpture *Act Like You Love Me* exhibited in gallery, later installed above front desk as a permanent fixture.
Nov 19 Gallery expands, increasing exhibition area to 4000 sq. ft.
- 2013 **Feb** New storefronts by building owner with open transoms. Jeff Chiplis creates and installs reconfigured neon WBG
- 2014 **Jan 3** 25th Anniversary Exhibition opens, the 105th exhibition presented on Prospect Avenue.



Debra Rosen
untitled, 2013
silver, found object, pearls,
sequins, 6.5 x 2.5 x 2.5 in.