



Stephen Yusko
A Way Home



Cover:
Blue Box: Sanctuary, 2014
forged, machined, and
fabricated steel;
8.75 x 3.5 x 8 in.

Above:
Transit, 2014
forged, machined, and
fabricated steel;
38 x 58.5 x 9 in.



Above:
*Intersection Table: Stainless
Detour* (detail), 2014
steel; stainless steel;
21.5 x 30.5 x 10 in.



Above:
Transit (detail), 2014
forged, machined, and
fabricated steel;
38 x 58.5 x 9 in.

Opposite:
Federal Box: Blue Haze, 2014
forged, machined, and
fabricated steel;
8.75 x 3.5 x 3.75 in.

Stephen Yusko
A Way Home

May 1–30, 2015

William Busta Gallery
2731 Prospect Avenue
Cleveland OH 44135

W williambustagallery.com
T 216.298.9071
E bustagallery@gmail.com

Stephen Yusko: True Blue



Stephen Yusko's sculptures and utilitarian objects embody ratios of motion to obstruction, vacancy to form, strength to decay. Sometimes they appear to effloresce, producing dusky patches of baleful (but beautiful), eroded yellow and blue paint, world-weary tints that hint about human values wearing thin, stretched across narrow equations of need. Mixing architectural and landscape elements with a tight-fitting industrial aesthetic, Yusko finds consolation in the soaring junctions and binding visual logic of factories and powerful machines. The forged and fabricated steel he uses to depict roads and buildings often seems nearly weightless, transformed by his skillful, asymmetrical juggling of form and implication. Beginning with obdurate privation (one recurring composite image in Yusko's sculpture is a steel house, feeding a strip of dark road out into the empty air), Yusko bends his hard facts toward a surprisingly gentle, human dimension, proposing bridge-like visions suggestive of partition, suspension, and disconnection.

The floor-mounted works *Transit* and *Long Way Home* are elaborations of Yusko's earlier hybrid furniture, especially his *Intersection Tables*, which consist of two narrow, curving lengths of steel mounted on trestles—like diverging lanes on an elevated highway. The newer pieces become unabashedly sculptural, mainly by adding house-shaped steel “boxes” (these also emerge from a long prehistory of Yusko works) to the basic road-and-trestle formulation. *Transit* presents a house shape at one end, made of black metal. This is actually a line-up of very thin sections, as if a house had been sliced, divided perhaps by the miles of travel toward it, or away from it. At the other end of the road is another house, painted in Yusko's soulful damaged yellow. This one is under the

road, not on it. Either it's on the other side of the world and the curve of Yusko's steel is a cipher for great distance—for the curvature of the earth; or it's the “underworld,” and this work is a meditation on our mutual journey toward death. In any case, these places are out of sight from one another, are contextually divorced. Referencing home and distance, childhood, loneliness and the fearfulness of growing up, Yusko's work brings to mind dangerously heavy antique cast-iron toys, and also mid-size public objects like playground equipment and mailboxes, all ringing with their own psychological resonances. It balances not only before and after, here and there, life and death, but also innocence and maturity. Latent in its toy-like structure is the menacing efficiency (and dark beauty) of machines, and the intentions encoded in machines. Its lineage includes a history of industry and of war.

Yusko's stand-alone *Blue Box Series: Sanctuary* is even more concise, locking several strongly associative artistic gestures together in a single powerful image. It's not exactly a box, though it has a stack of measurement-like horizontal lines etched on one side, suggesting that it might contain something. It's narrow but tall and long, with a roof-like lid masterfully fabricated by compressing a section of steel mesh. It's more like a house, comparable to Yusko's other houses, but it's important that the title “*Blue Box*” is here modified by the concept “*Sanctuary*.” The tastefully weld-burned and burnished blue surface of this object is like the sacred blue of medieval Christian iconography, a color reserved for the Madonna's cloak, and in view of this shade and the associated words box and sanctuary, it begins to resemble a kind of secular reliquary. Like all of Yusko's sculptures, *Blue Box* is a place where key observations and experiences are realized and kept safe, their energies preserved through skilled labor and the miraculous coincidence of an exact fit, a reunion of materials and transcendent significance.

—Douglas Max Utter

Stephen Yusko

Born 1965, Dover, DE
Lives and works in Cleveland, OH

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 Recent Exhibitions

- 2015 *Stephen Yusko: Transformations*. Solo Exhibition. Maass Gallery, SUNY Purchase, Purchase, NY
2014 *Resolutely Ambiguous*. Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, MN
2013–14 *The Modern Table: Ohio Furniture Designers*. Invitational. Riffe Gallery, Columbus, OH
2013 *Stephen Yusko, Metal*. Solo Exhibition. Turtle Gallery, Deer Isle, ME
An Object of Beauty: Metal / Fiber / Glass. Invitational. Visual Arts at Chautauqua Institute, Chautauqua, NY
Then/Now. Invitational. Metal Museum, Memphis, TN
2012–14 *Transformation 8: Contemporary Works in Small Metals*. Traveling Exhibition. Society for Contemporary Craft, Pittsburgh, PA; University of Little Rock, AR; Leigh Yawkey Woodson Art Museum, Wausau, WI
2013 *F*SHO*, Annual furniture exhibition, Cleveland Twist Drill Building, Cleveland, OH (also 2012)
2011–12 *Cast, Cut, Forged and Crushed: Selections in Metal from the John and Robyn Horn Collection*, Arkansas Arts Center, Little Rock, AR
2011 *Re-new*, Solo Exhibition. William Busta Gallery, Cleveland, OH
Chair and Tell. HGR Industrial Surplus-sponsored exhibition. Ingenuity Fest, Cleveland, OH
NICHE Awards Exhibition. National Juried. Buyers Market of American Craft, Philadelphia, PA
2010–11 *Craft Forms 2010*, National Juried. Wayne Art Center, PA
2010–12 *Iron: 2010*. Traveling exhibition. Originating at National Ornamental Metal Museum, Memphis, TN; closing at the Fuller Craft Museum, Brockton, MA
2010 *Haystack: Board/Board*, National Group Exhibition. Center for Community Programs, Deer Isle, ME
Modes of Making: Contemporary Studio Furniture. Invitational. Society of Arts and Crafts, Boston, MA
Iron: Forged Tempered Quenched, Invitational. Houston Center for Contemporary Craft, Houston, TX

Selected Awards/Honors

- 2013 Individual Excellence Award, Ohio Arts Council, Columbus
2011 Creative Workforce Fellowship, Community Partnership for Arts & Culture, Cuyahoga County, OH
Finalist, Elizabeth R. Raphael Founder's Prize, Society for Contemporary Craft, Pittsburgh
Finalist, Niche Awards, Niche Magazine, Baltimore, MD

Selected Professional Experience

- 2014 Windgate Artist-in-Residence. Fall Semester, SUNY Purchase. Purchase, NY
2012–present SNAG Conference Programming Committee.
2008–present Board of Trustees. Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Deer Isle, ME
2007–present Artist-in-Residence. Rose Iron Works, Cleveland, OH
1999–06 Mount-maker. The Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, MO
1993–96 Artist-in-Residence. The National Ornamental Metal Museum, Memphis, TN

Selected Teaching/Lecture Experience

- 2015 St. Louis Community College, Meramec. Visiting artist.
2014 Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo, MI. Visiting artist.
2013 Industrial Designers Society of America, design conference, panel speaker, Cleveland, OH.
Penland School of Crafts, Penland, NC. Summer session, blacksmithing workshop.
New England School of Metalwork, Auburn, ME. Summer session. Blacksmithing workshop.
2012, 2013 Touchstone Center for Crafts. Farmington, PA. Blacksmithing workshops.
2012 Kent State University, Kent, OH. Visiting artist.
2010 Souto Studio. Merida, Venezuela. Blacksmithing workshop.
Haystack Mountain School of Crafts, Deer Isle, ME. Summer session, blacksmithing workshop