

## Factory Fresh

Lissa Bockrath's painted photographs reveal a side of Cleveland that might make the Chamber of Commerce wince. Urban clutter rusts and pollutes the land under dark skies parted by the light of industrial labor.

"I have always been interested in landscapes, and when you live in Cleveland, the smokestacks and factories begin to emerge in your work," Bockrath says. "I wouldn't be true to myself if I wasn't doing this kind of work in Cleveland."

Despite the decaying darkness of these landscapes, they are warmed by a hopeful human presence. The scenes glow with an internal light from small dwellings that are tucked between the factories and the highways. It's as if the images are more about the life *within* the landscapes than about the landscapes themselves.

Bockrath's current show, *Urban Landscapes*, is exhibited in her gallery until December 24. The pieces range from large, expansive landscapes to small, intimate scenes. They are all made by applying paint directly onto the surface of photographs.

There is often an irony in Bockrath's work. In "Demystifying the Path," for example, her photograph frames the dome of a Russian Orthodox church with street signs that appear to offer spiritual guidance on the road to enlightenment. The odd juxtaposition of the sacred and the ordinary in this image is true to the personality of Cleveland, revealing the artist's fondness for the town.

Bockrath received her BFA from the Cleveland Institute of Art in 1995 and quickly opened Bockrath Gallery, a space dedicated to exhibiting art by young, emerging artists. Her shows often feature the work of other Ohio artists who have limited exhibition opportunities elsewhere in the area.

"I think there is incredible talent in Cleveland," she says, explaining why she chose the city as the home for her gallery. "I have been to many galleries in many cities, and I am always impressed with the level of work that is coming out of Cleveland."

Bockrath points out that galleries and performance spaces are more likely to survive in a place like Cleveland, where rent is cheaper and there is less saturation of the arts in the community.

"One of the perks of Cleveland is that there is always room for another gallery."

While Bockrath's work may not depict Cleveland the way the Chamber of Commerce would, her *Urban*

*Landscapes* reveal a city that all of us can recognize as our own. — Mike Hovancsek



***Urban Landscapes* continues through December 24 at Bockrath Gallery, 2026 Murray Hill Road. Hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. and by appointment. Contact 216-721-5990 or [bockrathg@aol.com](mailto:bockrathg@aol.com).**