2025 CATALOG

BERKSHIRE ART MUSEUM EXHIBITIONS

MISSION:

BARBARA AND ERIC RUDD ART FOUNDATION
BERKSHIRE ART MUSEUM

The mission of the Barbara and Eric Rudd Art Foundation, the umbrella organization for the Berkshire Art Museum, is to preserve and examine six decades of artwork by Eric Rudd through the foundation's permanent collection, as well as to showcase engaging contemporary art through rotating exhibitions in the Berkshire Art Museum's galleries.

Having rescued two historic former churches and the historic Beaver Mill, the Foundation exemplifies the adaptive reuse of over 150,000 square feet of architectural space for cultural and educational purposes. By establishing and maintaining these unique art destinations, the Foundation contributes to the cultural economy of North Adams.

OUR THANKS TO THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS WHO GENEROUSLY DONATED FOR OUR 2025 OPERATIONAL YEAR; MOST HAVE GIVEN MULTIPLE YEARS. IN ADDITION TO ANNUAL MUSEUM SUPPORT, SOME DONATIONS HAVE BEEN MADE TO MATCH OUR $100,000 CULTURAL FACILITIES GRANT AND TO SUPPORT OUR ANNUAL COMMUNITY EVENT- THE EAGLE STREET BEACH (2025 IS OUR 25TH).

--**AND AN EXTRA BIG THANK YOU TO THOSE IN BOLD**.

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BERKSHIRE ART MUSEUM

EXHIBITIONS

East Main Street

summer wed-sat 12-5, sun 12-2; fall sat/sun 12-5

NEVER-BEFORE-SEEN
SELECTIONS FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION
Four Big Collages
Small Relief Collages
Artistic Genes: Six Generations
1970s: Plant-Based Organics, Creatures,
Crates, & Ontogens

Robotic Walter's Ontogen

Iceberg installation & 1987-2011 Lexan Sculptures

early work of Eric Rudd 1966-1980

Blueprints – 1929 Original Blueprints

Summer Street Annex

summer wed-sat 12-5, sun 12-2; fall sat/sun 12-5

a chapel for humanity
150 life-sized figures/54 ceiling panels
9/11 meditation garden
WC drawings

Beaver Mill (first floor north) Annex

Selected summer Sundays 3-5

pandemic period pyramid paintings
dark ride project sculpture garden

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“NEVER-BEFORE-SEEN”
SELECTIONS FROM THE PERMANENT COLLECTION

Introduction to the Exhibitions:

Since 2014, the Berkshire Art Museum has included hundreds of artists from all over New England in its changing annual exhibitions. After two years of extensive repairs to the façade, roof, and lower level with the help of a matching MCC cultural facilities grant and not knowing when the work would be completed, the Foundation decided not to commit to an exhibition schedule involving other artists for this season. However, in celebration of our 10 years of exhibitions, we are presenting selections from the Barbara and Eric Rudd Art Foundation’s permanent collection never-before-seen by the public.

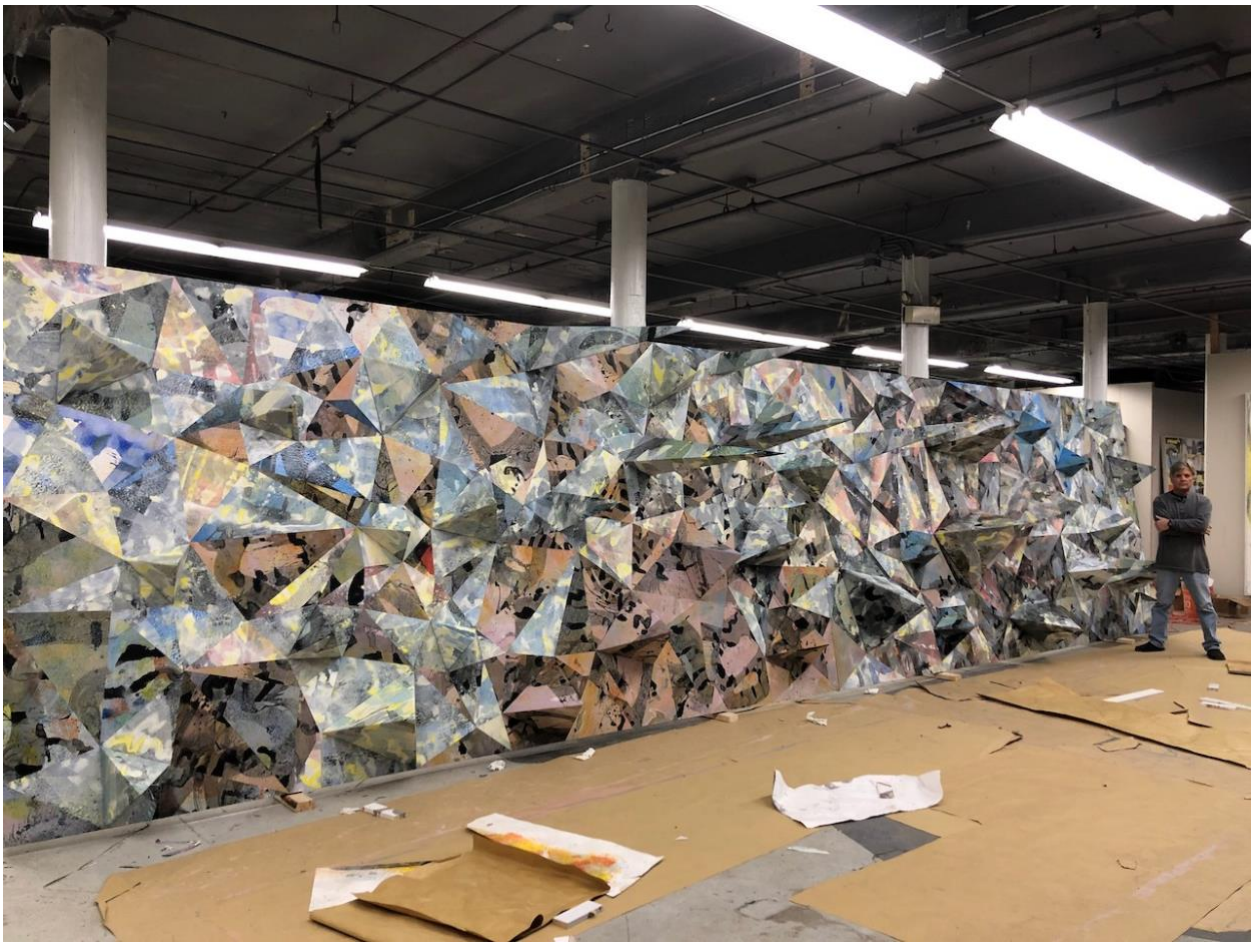
A selection of Eric Rudd’s early artwork (1966-1980) has been on display on the lower level since the museum’s opening season. That selection begins with his 1966/67 minimal artworks (soon after the artist evolved from his abstract expressionist period when Rudd started composing hard-edged structural forms in painting, reliefs, and sculptures) - and continues with his major early periods (London 1968, Dormers 1969, Grids 1970-71, Planks 1972-73) into his 1973 – 1980 work when he adopted an industrial spray-in-place rigid polyurethane foam process, including the two outdoor sculptures on the museum lawn, created in 1977 and 1979.

Included in this season’s exhibitions are his works from the 1970s - Plant-based Organics, Crates, Creatures, and Ontogens. Beginning with Rudd’s use of spray polyurethane foam, the artist incorporated paintings and drawings on paper that he then bent or folded and combined with foam to create relief forms called “Ontogens.” The Ontogens are mostly free-floating wall reliefs, although some were composed within frame-structures. This motif continued in larger formats, the largest being his 1980 “Pavilion” which measured 19 x 19 x 19-feet. For the plant-based works, the artist was interested in large forms that had intricate surfaces, such as found in large bushes. Expanding this interest led to his surreal-fantasy trees, plants, and flowers in various formats. His Creatures meld sculptural study models with his plant-based sculptures since they are fused with the ground. It’s interesting to note that the 1977 “upside-down tree” in the Crate Series was created decades before the outdoor sculpture at the Clark or the signature work previously at MASS MoCA.

In 2011, Rudd once again secured access to the blow-molding facilities at Sabic Plastics (formerly G.E. Plastics where the artist first used Lexan ™ blow-molding facilities starting in 1987). During his 2011 work sessions at Sabic, the artist created sculptures using circular formats (three are on display in the iceberg installation on the museum's main level).

While completing his 2011 sculptures, Rudd decided to return to flat rectangular surfaces for work that could be done within his own studio facilities. The last time his work focused on rectangular formats was for his 1970-71 Grid Series (a few are exhibited in the lower galleries). Returning to traditional stretched canvases, Rudd used the technique of collage by applying paint and ink on archival paper which he then adhered onto canvas. The earliest of the Four Big Collages presented on the main gallery level is from 2011 and shows a similar fluidity embedded in his circular Lexan sculptures made about the same time. While maintaining an organic painted surface treatment, Rudd gradually tightened his collaged compositions using angular shapes which eventually evolved into triangular shapes. In 2018, Rudd added pyramid and dagger relief components.

Eric Rudd, “Shanghai Spirit” 7.5’h x 16’w x 4’d, 2022, acrylic, ink on archival paper collaged onto canvas, Corex.



In addition to the large relief works, Rudd continued the collage process in smaller motifs. Several recent relief collages are exhibited in the side galleries. “Artistic Genes” exhibits artwork by six generations, exploring the question whether there is artistic DNA.

Berkshire Art Museum Annex (A Chapel for Humanity):
Rudd has always had a parallel interest in figurative artwork. Rudd taught drawing in the early 1970s at the Corcoran (College of Art) and his interest in figures continued along with his other artwork. His figurative drawings are numerous. However, his largest figurative work (1990-93) is on display in the museum's annex, an epic sculptural installation comprising 150 life-sized figures. The 54 ceiling panels were installed in 2001. The annex, included with BAM admission, is located 200 steps away from the main museum. Another figurative installation, the White Cave (a/k/a Purity Vacuum) can be viewed at the Foundation's First Floor Studio/Museum @ Historic Beaver Mill.

The Future:
The future of the museum is exciting. The two current museum buildings, containing 25,000 square feet of exhibition space, will soon be joined with the 130,000 square-foot historic

Beaver Mill, only a mile away and adjacent to Natural Bridge State Park. Rudd's expansive art studio, one of the largest individual studios in the United States, will someday be on public view as an extension to the museum. The Foundation's total museum space puts it among the twenty largest art museums in the United States (perhaps modest in size only compared to our super-sized neighbor, MASS MoCA). In addition to the Foundation's exhibition spaces, the Beaver Mill will forever be a beehive of creative activity - artists will continue to create in more than 40 working studios located within the mill. In addition to museum and creative workspaces, the Historic Beaver Mill Inn is being added with contemporary accommodations for artists, performers, and visitors interested in the arts.

A Preview – Beaver Mill Studio/Museum:
As a special preview of what's to come, Rudd's 17,000 square foot first-floor studio, part of his 50,000 square foot studio in the Beaver Mill, is open this season on selected Sunday afternoons. On public view are Rudd's Pandemic Period Pyramid Paintings, including the enormous "Wonderlust I." Also on view are major components of the 1995/1996 "Dark Ride Project," including the Sculpture Garden, Purity Vacuum, Artifacts Gallery, Intro-Cave, and the Walter Hopps Introduction. Guided tours of the upper studio floors are by reservation. Please check with the museum staff for specific times/dates.

In Appreciation:
The Foundation and its Advisory Board would like to thank all our donors and especially those who gave extra to help us match our MCC Cultural Facilities Grant.

Beaver Mill (first floor north) Annex

pandemic period pyramid paintings
dark ride project sculpture garden

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Pandemic Period Pyramid Paintings:
The relief collages presented in the artist's first-floor studio in the Beaver Mill were created during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-2022. The largest, "Wonderlust I," was completed by July 2020 and measures 14 feet high x 28 feet wide x 4 feet deep. The relief paintings are a continuation of Rudd's collage paintings started a decade earlier (a few on exhibition in this museum). They were created with acrylic and ink on archival paper, collaged onto Coroplast and canvas. Except for "Wonderlust I," most of the relief paintings are 7.5 feet high by 16 or 32 feet wide (and up to 4 feet in depth). A 2022 Pyramid Relief sculpture as well as a 1992 blow-molded Lexan sculpture are also on view.

Dark Ride Project:
Based upon an exploration of an innovative conceptual journey that began in 1977, it took 19 years of effort before the artist was able to realize his dream art project - the "Dark Ride Project." (Dark Ride is the industrial term for theme-park rides in the dark.) The exhibition occupied a space of 15,000 square feet and the highlight was an actual 11-minute ride through creative space on the 'Sensory Integrator' - a computer controlled mobile chair in which the viewer/rider looked out a viewing port as the chair moved along a programmed route. Among the technologies involved was navigational robotics, years before anyone popularized the term "self-driving." The artist's darkened Sculpture Garden featured lighted trails that took viewers into various illuminated installations of sculptures. Conceived in 1977, the Project was finally built in 1995, opened to the public in June of 1996, and stayed open for ten years.

While the ride portion (including the 'Sensory Integrator') was removed to allow for studio space, other components of the "Dark Ride Project" remained. After lying dormant for 18 years, the Dark Ride Project Sculpture Garden, Intro-Cave, Purity Vacuum, Artifacts Gallery, and the Walter Hopps Introduction are being restored. Among the art exhibited in these areas include early polyurethane foam sculptures from the mid-1970s, early 1987-88 blow-molded Lexan™ sculptures, and a 1991-93 figurative installation in the Purity Vacuum/White Cave.

Artistic Genes: Six Generations

Carl Thomsen, Anton Thomsen, Ulrica Rudd, Eric Rudd,
Thaddeus Rudd/Nikolai Rudd, Clover Rudd

Is there some sort of DNA "art gene" that is passed down from generation to generation? My late museum director/friend, Walter Hopps, used to talk about my "Russian gene" (on my father's side) and associate my art with the Russian constructionists. Maybe in spirit he was right, but I'm relatively certain his view had no basis in science. My grandfather was from Lithuania, and my grandmother was from Latvia. They met in St. Petersburg (she studied at the music academy, and he prospered in the macaroni/pasta business), where my father and siblings were born. However, in 1917, when my father was 9 years old, the family had to flee to Finland where my father was educated until he and family members immigrated to the United States.

My "artistic genes" (if they really exist) came from my Danish mother's side. My great-grandfather, Carl Thomsen (1847-1912), was a well-known Danish artist with work in Danish museums. He had a daughter who became a jewelry maker, and a talented son, Anton Thomsen (1877-1915), who wanted to become an artist but according to family lore, his mother was against that pursuit. Instead, he became a brilliant professor of philosophy, and wrote two lengthy books on Hume. Nevertheless, he painted on the side. At the age of 38, he was appointed head of the department at the Royal University, a position normally reserved for much older professors. Unfortunately, he died just weeks after taking that position. My maternal grandmother was a very known writer in Denmark, who authored 35 books and plays.

My mother, Ulrica Thomsen (1913-2015) left Copenhagen when she was 21 and came to the United States to study journalism at Columbia University. She married and had children, and eventually took up pottery, studying with Vally Possony, a well-known potter in the Washington D.C. area (one other student was the Vice-President's wife, Joan Mondale). My mother made pots for over half a century, but always made clear that she was not an "artist," but rather a "crafter."

I came next in the artistic gene pool. My mother was looking out to see if any of her children had artistic talent, and she was pleased that I showed ability to draw (I was the last and unplanned surprise). The family joke is that my parents signed up an older sibling for a children's Saturday art program and after the first class session, he cried to leave. Not to waste the paid tuition, although I was only 7 years old, my father sent me in his place. Obviously, I thrived.

Barbara and I have two sons; both showed creative talent but neither pursued art in a full-time capacity. Thaddeus went into the music business although he executed a number of paintings on canvas and paper, taking advantage of my large studio facilities. Nikolai has done extensive writing – poetry and scripts – as well as a lot of photography.

Finally, Thaddeus has two children. Lachlan has already committed himself for a career in athletics; I can't claim any DNA credit in the athletic department. As I did with Lachlan, when Clover was 6 1/2, I gave her a gift consisting of a sketch pad, pencils along with an electric pencil sharpener, and a mannequin to draw. While we were openings other gifts, Clover drew the mannequin for the first time. Is she the future artist in the family?

I know Clover has talent, and I know she has intelligence, but that's just part of what an artist needs in order to create great art. An artist also needs ambition, passion, and discipline to do hours upon hours of hard work. Only time will tell if Clover wants to go in an artistic direction.

What is talent for art? Is it the ability to demonstrate a specific visual skill (generally with an instrument like a brush or pen in the hand)? Or is it simply the way the brain focuses more strongly on visual aspects, in contrast to hearing music or conceptualizing thoughts in writing (or having a knack for science/medicine/engineering, etc.) which uses different parts of the brain?

For centuries, artists learning the trade had to draw and paint the figure (along with still-life and landscape formats). If you got into sculpture, you pretty much learned to chisel marble. I was born just after WWII, so in many ways, my art training was not dissimilar to how the old masters were trained. I drew and painted the figure, still life, and landscapes/cityscapes in a way that Leonardo da Vinci would easily associate with.

As art concepts changed rapidly by the 1960s, painters opted for many new approaches, especially drifting into abstract compositions using latex paints. In sculpture, instead of chiseling marble or making clay/plaster models, contemporary sculptors learned to weld steel, manipulate plastics, and assemble various materials. It wasn't long before all sorts of new materials and processes started to appear in contemporary art galleries and museums.

In my case, I trained traditionally as a painter, but quickly drifted into 3-dimensinal formats and more exotic processes. For example, my canvases left the wall and became 3-dimentional; I got into spray-in-place rigid polyurethane foam, seamless vinyl floor systems, blow-molding polycarbonates, latexes, resins, robotics, as well as theme park, outer-space, and digital technologies - just to name a few.

The question is, does an artist today even need the kind of "talent" we normally associated with in the past? Does an artist have to be able to draw the figure? Afterall, today we can snap a photo and in just a few minutes manipulate the image on a computer and print it out – in any style and size and on almost any material. In theory, could a contemporary artist have intelligence, passion and ambition and perhaps skip having the "traditional" talent aspect – and still create significant art?

Certainly, there's a recent record of scores of successful artists leaning on the conceptual rather than the visual aspects of art. Art is changing and evolving rapidly. It's also merging with other genres. That's why many descriptions of art pieces are described as "multi-media." Art is also evolving because of AI technology; in the not-too-distant future, computers might create art that'll be far superior to anything a human artist might make. Perhaps, AI will create "great art."

I've always regarded myself as an artist born and caught in the middle of a great historic change – from traditional modes (paintings hung on walls, sculptural works on pedestals) to someone who pushes art into new frontiers using new technologies and concepts. Today's young artist might not be trained the way that my generation of artists, and the many generations before me, were taught.

Perhaps I'm showing my age because I still like teaching the traditional aspects. I even like to take a pencil or brush and draw the human figure from scratch on a blank surface. I've always said to younger artists – reject and innovate as much as you want but have some knowledge and respect for the great artists who came before us. I've met too many artists thinking they were the "cat's meow" when they were clearly doing work very derivative of earlier artwork created by others; they got influenced without really knowing by whom or how.

History is important; an appreciation of the past allows artists to know how and where they want to venture in a truly unique and creative path. Knowing what an artist is rebelling against, or seeking and recognizing new frontiers, allows great art to be realized.

I hope this small family exhibition demonstrates that perhaps there is such a thing as an "artistic gene." At the same time, there are a multitude of new routes that creative people can take – and most do not rely upon the past traditional roles and old-fashioned steps of becoming a full-time professional artist. Certainly, not practicing traditional methods might allow the creation of great new images currently unimagined. After all, the artistic future is a "blank canvas."

Eric Rudd August, 2023

1970s:
Plant-Based Organics, Crate Series, Creatures, and Ontogens

Eric Rudd's **Plant-Based Organic Sculptures, Crate Series, Creatures, and Ontogens** were mostly created a half century ago – during the 1970s. From the beginning of Rudd's use of rigid-spray polyurethane foam, he incorporated paintings/drawings on paper that he then bent or folded to create relief forms called "Ontogens." (The name "Ontogen" was first proposed by museum director Walter Hopps for Rudd's artworks; it indicates an organism that is self-sufficient. The artist liked the idea of giving "birth" to new life in his artistic endeavors.)

The Ontogens are mostly free-floating wall reliefs, although some were composed within frame-structures. This motif continued in larger formats, the largest perhaps being his "Pavilion" of 1980/81 which measured 19 by 19 by 19 feet.

The Crate Series utilized shipping crates for bathtubs that were being discarded at a construction site across from his Washington D.C. studio. It's interesting to note that the 1977 "upside-down tree" in the Crate Series was created decades before the outdoor sculpture at the Clark or the signature work previously at MASS MoCA.

For the Plant-Based Organic Sculptures, the artist was interested in large forms that had intricate surfaces, such as found in large bushes and trees. That interest stimulated the artist to also create surreal-fantasy plants and flowers in various formats.

His Creatures are fusions of studio models for large creatures (the large Albisauras sculpture outside on the museum lawn is one example) and his interest in attaching these organic creatures to the ground, similar to his plant-based sculptures.

MY 1970s SCULPTURES by Eric Rudd

Ontogens

Using spray-in-place rigid polyurethane foam proved to be a game-changer for me. Since hardly anyone else was using foam for creative purposes (Hollywood probably had the largest track record – creating "boulders" that Superman could lift and other cave-like backdrops), everything I tried was new and innovative. I sprayed polyurethane foam in combination with lots of other materials, including on painted paper shapes.

Museum director Walter Hopps came to my studio often. One day when I was trying to come up with titles for an upcoming gallery exhibition, he suggested I use the term "Ontogen." Unknown to me at the time, the term "Ontogeny" refers to the developmental events that occur during the existence of a living organism. I've always thought that I was "giving birth" to a new organism whenever I completed a new creation, so the idea of a self-living "being" felt right to me. Thereafter, many of my organically shaped paper reliefs were Ontogens, with an additional title and date to differentiate them from each other. When I placed my shapes within frames or structures, they were generally referred to as "Framed Ontogens" or "Large Framed Ontogens."

Drawing is something that most artists do, in some cases to think about larger works, but not often as a major art piece. I love to draw, and to put paint and lines on paper. Paper absorbs paints and inks differently than applying the same material on canvas. The process also supports my love of "fast action." Since my methods often result in sculptural art, it was natural to cut and reassemble painted paper shapes, using my spray-foam as the "glue." It allowed the creation of a relief that gives a stronger presence than if I had been making flat collages.

Plant-Based Organics

In 1973, I started using a new process – rigid spray-in-place polyurethane foam. I had used thick sheets of polyurethane to fabricate my Plank series two years earlier, so I knew about the spray application. After one experience using a contractor's equipment, I purchased the industrial equipment and started buying the raw materials (a resin and an isocyanate) in 55-gallon (500-pound) drums. I took a course to learn the equipment and application process (it was necessary, because I had to make my own repairs since there were no "foam equipment repair shops" in my region). I passed the course and received my "diploma" as a "CFM" – Certified Foam Mechanic.

Initially, I used discipline and restrained myself by concentrating on reliefs, but very quickly I began making huge "free-standing" and "free-floating" sculptural forms. Polyurethane foam allowed me to engineer large sculptures that would be almost impossible using traditional materials. After a year or two, I became very adept with the process and started to experiment with all sorts of formats and in combination with other materials. My plant-based sculptures were just one experimental offshoot.

When I first started creating huge sculptural forms, because the surface was not usually smooth, I discovered the best method to paint them was to use an airless paint sprayer. Painting the surface was necessary to prevent ultraviolet light from decaying the material, but mostly I painted the surface for artistic benefits. Rather than just coat the foam with one color (like black, for example), I treated the surface artistically with colors and textures, often adding a dry brush to expose the outer "bumps."

As I got interested in the "delicacies" of the skin, I started to observe in nature other large shapes that were intricate – for example, large bushes with millions of surface leaves. I dreamed of making epic gardens but alas, without having the space, it was impossible. Nevertheless, one post-holiday in 1975, I went around with my station wagon and scooped up discarded Christmas trees which served as a structural base to enhance with foam and paint. From small trees, I got interested in plants and did a series of potted plants – all made from scratch with paper and metal before spraying, so in answer to some inquiries, I never "killed" living plants. And moving into smaller natural formats, I got interested in flowers and leaves. Of course, my flowers were never intended to portray those grown in someone's garden. Instead, mine were perhaps flowers plucked by future astronauts on a different planet. In fact, most of my work in this medium can be construed as being strange forms from "another world."

I was the first sculptor to explore blow-molding (at G.E. Plastics in Pittsfield, MA) starting in 1987. This cooperation lasted for several years and was the reason I discovered the Berkshires and a huge mill in North Adams which eventually become my home and studio. In 2011, I was able to convince Sabic, which had purchased the G.E. Plastics division, to allow me access to their facility in order to make more blow-molded Lexan sculptures. By coincidence, Sabic had committed to putting a decorated tree in the annual holiday exhibition at the Berkshire Museum in Pittsfield. Seeing how I was working at their facilities, they asked if I would consider making a Lexan sculpture-tree for this show. Normally I will not do "requests" but since I had a history of making plant-based sculptures, including using Christmas trees in the mid 1970s, I gladly accepted (especially since they were donating the time and materials on the blow-molding machine). My rotating Lexan "tree" with interior lights was quite a sight in contrast to the traditional Christmas trees on exhibit (currently on display at my Sculpture Space in the Beaver Mill).

With years of creating plant-based sculptures, many of my organic shapes used in other artwork, whether painted on flat surfaces or as 3-dimensional sculptures, echo these strange studio-grown "plants."

Creatures

I started creating very large "creatures" when I moved to a house outside of Washington D.C. that had an acre and a half. I moved my rigid-polyurethane foam equipment to one end of our double-sized garage during the summer months and despite the heat (because I had to be completely covered in clothes and gloves for the foaming process), I made a number of large sculptures. I called them "creatures" because several of them had forms that

resembled legs, allowing them to stand up in the yard and pasture. In my studio, I made small models, exploring different concepts, but rather than just making the individual pieces to place on a pedestal, I made the immediate ground and included them with the organic creatures (and they could be walking creatures or simply plant-based creatures that grew from the surface, or something found on another planet/galaxy). Several were made to hang on a wall, so that the creature would protrude out into the viewer's space.

Crate Series:
I was working on all sorts of forms and images using my foam – sometimes from scratch and often using a found object, or even duplicating objects like plants and figures. Rather than having the sculptures viewed in open space, I tried to use various architectural enclosures to surround the objects. One day, I spotted debris from a building renovation. The crate series utilized shipping crates for bathtubs that were being discarded at a construction site across from my studio. I started to put my organic shapes (including figures) inside these "crate-cages.'

More than two decades later after moving to North Adams in 1990, and then experiencing the big opening of MASS MoCA in 1999, it's interesting to point out that the 1977 "upside-down tree" in the Crate Series was created way before the outdoor sculpture at the Clark or the signature work previously at MASS MoCA.

Using enclosures for my organic forms continued in other ways, such as the "Framed Ontogen Series" and the "Glass Ontogen Series" that were started around 1977 and continued for several years. Several of both types are on display in the lower level of the museum.

Eric Rudd, August, 2023

My Large Collages (2011-2022) by Eric Rudd

For major artwork, I had not used rectangular canvases for four decades. Most of my large works were shaped reliefs or free-standing and free-floating 3-dimensional sculptures. I believe my last "flat rectangular" canvases were the Grid paintings of 1970-71 (a few are on exhibit at the Berkshire Art Museum). Subsequently to that period, most of my work came off the wall (partially or fully) and into space.

In 2011, after not having access to blow-molding equipment for 17 years, I was able to convince Sabic (a company that acquired the G.E. Plastics division) to let me make new blow-molded polycarbonate (Lexan ™) sculptures. I made 22 new sculptures, among my best, with many of them having a circular composition. But this work was during a specific period and created outside my studio.

About this time, for various reasons or impulses – it's impossible to always know - I decided to return to rectangular formats and fabricate large stretchers, which I then stretched with heavy cotton duck and primed them for my applications. Because many years prior I had acquired huge rolls of archival paper, I decided to use my paints and inks on the paper rather than directly onto the canvas. Paper allows liquids to flow more easily and to create various textures. More importantly, it is much easier to cut up and reassemble. That's the principle of collage, but in my case, I was applying my materials to canvases that were 7 or 7.5 feet high (the maximum that my 8-foot cotton duck would allow) by 16 feet wide; in many cases, I doubled the width to 32 feet by using two stretchers, and in one case triple (to 48 feet wide).

My method was quite productive. I made raw material of painted paper. I then "mined" the materials for processing; this meant that I cut up the paper into large shapes, exposing the more interesting shapes and textures. From that point, it was a matter of editing specific pieces and applying them to the surface, composing as the artwork developed. The process is slow, cutting and affixing each shape one at a time. Changes came as any painting might, but instead of taking a brush and painting over, I would simply cut a new shape (with whatever color/texture/brushstrokes I chose) and apply it to my composition. As with any artwork, the more I did, the better I was able to control and push my ideas.

At first, I used very large brushstrokes and shapes and composed the shapes rather loosely. Then I started to stack my shapes with horizontal bands. Later I assembled odd-shaped forms, almost like simulating the construction of the Inca's stone walls I observed in Peru. As my art evolved, I started using angular cuts, with one shape's boundary hitting another in dramatic ways. As the shapes tightened into more triangular forms, I eventually added relief pyramids and angular daggers that reached out as far as 4 feet from the surface. This work developed over a ten-year period, and the 2020-2022 Covid-era intensified my studio work (many of these large works are on view at my first-floor studio at the Beaver Mill). On display at the main museum are four works, the earliest from 2011 to a full pyramid-relief completed in 2022, which clearly demonstrates how my collage paintings evolved over the decade.

Eric Rudd, August 2023

Small Relief Collages by Eric Rudd

After cutting and using the larger painted materials, I had a lot of very interesting remnants, with shapes and textures too small to use on my large-scale relief paintings. Consequently, I started applying these smaller shapes in various experimental forms and discovered that I enjoyed using this material for small-scaled collages. Many are fixed upon 16 x 20-inch canvases (or similar sizes/scale). What makes them so different from collages by other artists is that each shape has its own painted texture, in contrast to using opaque colored paper or photographic images. These textured shapes are then adhered adjacent to other similar/dissimilar shapes, creating a vibrant orchestra. My work started very loosely, then evolved to a series using vanishing points, then to clustered assemblages, to the latest compositions with an array of forms which are quite articulated. They are new and yet they echo some work that might have been done with oil paint during the first part of the last century (for example, Cubistic works). In 2024, I started to put my collages into a relief format. My reliefs can protrude a few layers to several layers into the space, allowing the illusion of space to be intermixed with actual space.

2024 EXHIBITIONS AT THE BERKSHIRE ART MUSEUM

For information: Barbara and Eric Rudd Art Foundation,
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First E-Edition: Summer 2025 BAMuseum.org