

SCOTT HOCKING

*Born Redford, Michigan, 1975
BFA College for Creative Studies, Detroit
Lives in Detroit*

If James Brown was the hardest working man in show business, Scott Hocking is arguably the hardest working artist in Detroit. Even a virtual trip through the monumental site specific installations, photographic studies and gallery projects on his website is an exhausting business. But hard work can only get you so far, and doesn't by itself explain how Hocking, alongside contemporaries such as Clinton Snider and Mitch Cope, has managed to develop an international practice based in, and often quite literally on, the city of Detroit.

Hocking shot to prominence in 2001 with *Relics*, a collaboration with Snider that was first shown in a prestigious exhibition to celebrate the city's tri-centenary. Comprised of hundreds of purpose-built wooden boxes containing thousands of everyday objects recovered from the city, it established many of the recurring themes in Hocking's work. These include the tension between the symbolic qualities of the objects and their former functional properties, an exploration of the ambiguous relationship between permanence and transience, a rigorously experiential approach to history, and a pseudo museum-like display that either epitomized, or parodied, an anthropological picking over of the city's bones. The installation included both industrial and personal artifacts, but was centered on the industrial. The dominant color was a factory green and the dominant surface finish was rust. Formulating the installation around identically-sized boxes allowed it to be re-displayed and/or sold in different configurations, but also nodded to commodification and interchangeable manufacturing, two key concepts from the culture that generated the relics.

Scrappers (2004) and *The Zone* (1999-2010) are Hocking's most obviously documentary works. *Scrappers* is a photographic series on the reality of the scrap metal industry and the lives of some homeless men who scrap to survive. *The Zone* is a long term study of a former residential area that is being progressively cleared to make way for an industrial "Renaissance Zone." The term "cleared" is important in comparison to "cleaned," a more expensive process necessary for a former industrial site. These two projects in conjunction with *Tire Pyramid* (2006) – which is simultaneously a temporary art piece on the lawn of a hyper-wealthy Detroit art patron, and an investigation of the economics of tire dumping/recycling – show Hocking's keen awareness of the interactions between micro/macro economic forces, social structures and the physical environment of the city.

Both *Tire Pyramid* and *the Zone* (a reference to Andrei Tarkovsky's eerie 1979 film *Stalker*) point to an interest in more universal themes. This is continued in site-specific works such as *Garden of the Gods* (2009-2011), *The Egg* (2007-2013), *Sisyphus* (2010), and especially *Ziggurat and Fisher Body 21* (2007-2009). In these works Hocking strikingly juxtaposes classical forms and mythology with Detroit's surreal post-industrial landscape. The resulting images are ambiguous; are they mnemonic devices intended to tap into some collective unconscious, a commentary on the almost mythic scale of devastation in the city, or harbingers of some civilization yet to arrive? Hocking is reluctant to give the viewer easy answers, talking only of the richness of his personal experiences in executing the work and a desire to re-introduce a sense of mystery to the world.

Hocking's 2012 gallery installation *Mercury Retrograde* is comprised of a 1955 Mercury Monterrey, around 300 taxidermy animals in diorama cases, and various materials, most notably salt. It is an interesting comparison to his breakout 2001 collaboration *Relics*. The Mercury of the astrologically-charged title refers to both the ubiquitous historical object at the center of the show and the mythical winged messenger. Salt reflects the ambiguous nature of permanence and transience, it is a fundamental of taxidermy but an active agent of corrosion. If there is one obvious difference with the 2001 work, beyond Hocking's more exacting command of his central themes, it is his increasingly confident grasp of a sense of theater – or as some might say, of showmanship.

Steve Panton, January 2015



Relics, 2001-2013, Installation View, Detroit Institute of the Arts, 2001
Image courtesy of the artist

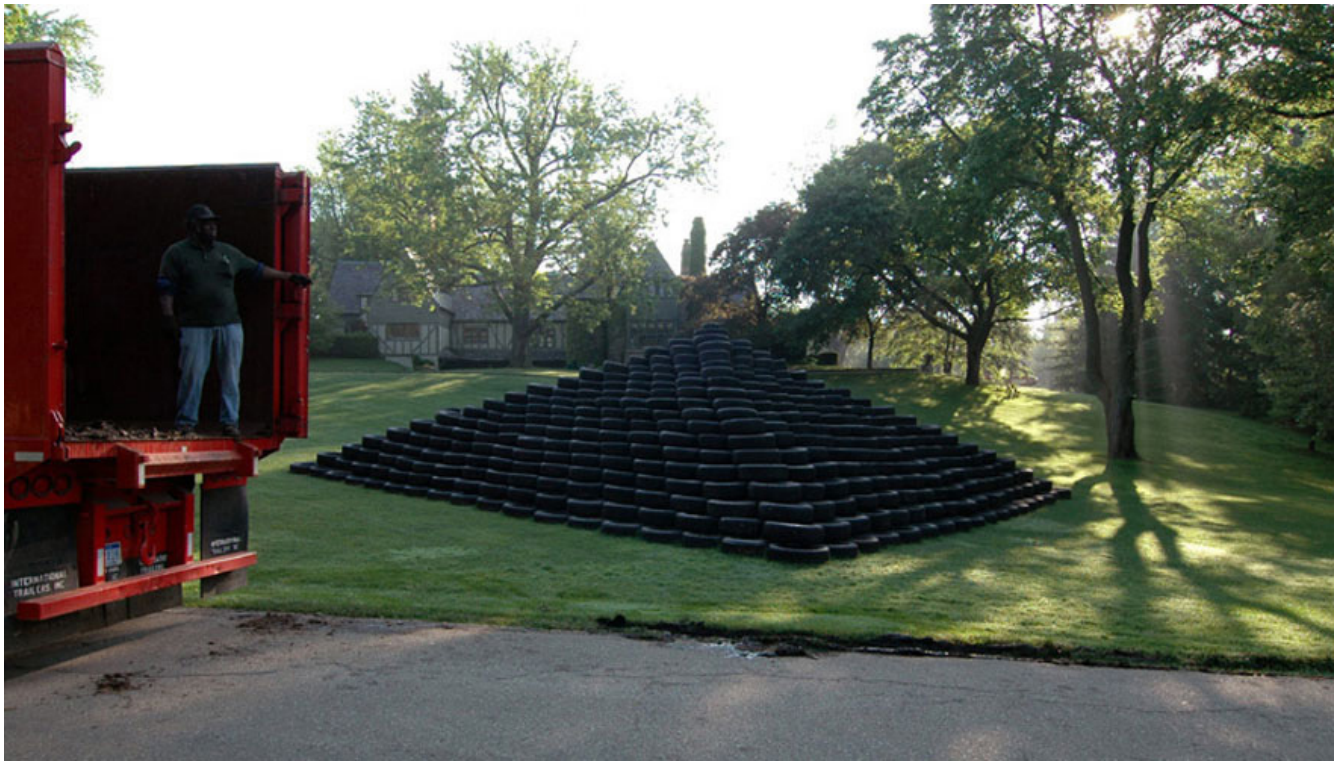


Country Boy's Fire, from the "Scrappers" series 2000-2004
Image courtesy of the artist



Image from “**The Zone**” series, 1999-2010

Image courtesy of the artist



Tire Pyramid, 2006, Used tires sourced from illegal dump sites in Detroit
Image courtesy of the artist



Garden of the Gods, North, Winter, 2009-2011, Site-specific installation

Image courtesy of the artist



The Egg and Michigan Central Train Station #4718, 2007-2013,
Site-specific installation using discarded marble
Image courtesy of the artist



Sisyphus and the Voice of Space, 2010,
Site-specific installation using discarded polystyrene
Image courtesy of the artist



Ziggurat, Dusk, Mid-build, 2007-2009,
Site-specific installation using discarded industrial floor blocks
Image courtesy of the artist



Mercury Retrograde, 2012

Mixed media installation

Image courtesy of the artist