



Scott Hocking's "Target" at District Arts

Detroit jewels

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Scott Hocking: Drawings, Photographs, Sculptures

After participation in exhibitions, residencies and discussions abroad and at home, local artist Scott Hocking exhibits his first solo exhibition ever, held at District Arts Gallery this month. In addition to his best known "Relics" collaboration, with painter Clinton Snider, are new and old works displayed as three ongoing series; photographs, wall hung sculptures, and "The Salon".

"The Salon" began as sections of wood or metal scrap found in the abandonment of Detroit's industrial-scape. Hocking carefully chose, trimmed and hung these abstractly patterned surfaces directly on the wall in earlier exhibits. But after multiple reactions that the work was not sufficiently transformed to be legitimate as Art, Hocking began framing these intriguing facades (with found and occasionally gaudy frames) as a tongue-in-cheek solution. As a result, they are a part of, yet resentful towards, the art world to which they are beholden (if it is framed it must be art!). The source for this attitude is exactly the same in all of his work; the struggle between Nature and Man as a literal manifestation of this artist's inner process towards reconciliation of opposing and complimentary forces.

He speaks about nature as a superior force which is creating its own art through the decay of manmade things, "I see the beauty in things that say to me that we're nothing...it's reassuring." Accordingly, his art is homage to nature and makes subtle and obscure references to man's methods of coming to terms, the main reference being the Chinese oracle the I Ching which uses metaphor of imagery and mark itself to enable the user to a clear understanding. This is where his focus lies, and is the same approach used in his art. There is an implied symbolism of the mark of chaos (erosion, patterns of bolts etc.) creating something meaningful.

However, back on Earth, in the world of white walled galleries and fine art, the work is safe. The deeper meanings and these philosophical perspectives are thoroughly concealed to the average observer, by being buried in metaphor and myth, pleasing composition and seductive surface texture. At the same time, his photographs begin to defy this habit of building a wall which only the intellectually or spiritually ambitious can climb. The symbols are more obvious and subject matter is clear and relevant: cold, quiet photos with diverging railroad paths, (an active place of serenity), a visual of Detroit with Third World style overgrowth, and his "Pictures of a City" taken over a period of roughly six years. The latter works point out a scrawled word, a couple of dead fight dogs, a rainbow, and a house entirely under the grasp of a broken tree limb. Here he deals with subject and imagery in more of an open, conversational manner.

Unfortunately this polished gallery is designed with smaller rooms and though well suited for Hocking's smaller works, it does not do the sculptural works justice. They hang in a somewhat wide hallway space which encourages the viewer to approach the art with close examination but not a wider view.

Scott Hocking: Drawings, Photographs, Sculptures runs through Oct. 16. The District Arts Gallery is at 955 S. Eton, Birmingham and is open Tuesday to Saturday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call 248-258-9300 or visit districtarts.com.