

CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

Scott Hocking: An artist in transition

By Marti Benedetti

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Like Woodward Avenue and the city of Detroit, Detroit artist Scott Hocking is in transition.

Known for his "found-object" art installations comprised of items he finds on Detroit's gritty streets and in abandoned buildings, the 32-year-old is exploring other art forms, particularly photography. His subject is still Detroit, only this time he is chronicling people in their city environs. His knowledge of the city fuels his projects.

"I come from here. I have a good visual memory and have a map of the city in my head," he said.

Hocking's wall-size installations of found Detroit objects were featured at the **Detroit Institute of Arts** during the city's 300th anniversary celebration. The installation comprised 400 16 inch-by-16-inch wood boxes, each one containing a different object. He said **Ernst & Young** bought an 18-box installation for its downtown office. "I've sold about 100 boxes," he adds. "They have had a lot of momentum."

He also frames some of the objects — from pieces of rusting metal to a porthole mounted on wood.

He took a detour last year with his exhibit at the **Susanne Hilberry Gallery** in Ferndale. His work consisted of colorfully painted and somewhat disfigured glass-fiber animals, which he said he did to show his disgust for the trend of using painted animals as public art for city streets. "They dumb down what art could be," he said. "I also have this compassion for animal life and wanted to bring attention to (animal cruelty)."

His giraffe in the show had a bloody gash where the tail should be to showcase that in many African cultures giraffes are poached and their tails are used for good-luck trinkets, fly whisks and thread for sewing or stringing beads. In the exhibit, the tail laid on the floor in a pool of fake blood.

Hocking, a native of Redford Township, lives and works in his studio — a nondescript brick building off Grand Boulevard, a few blocks east of Woodward.

He's not sure where the photography will take him or what he will pursue next.

"I spent so many years collecting things, I don't have the urge to take objects so much. Now I'm taking images."

He likes to go off the beaten trail and learn the history of some of Detroit's most desolate neighborhoods. He gets to know people, including the scrappers, who try to subsist by selling the materials they take from old buildings. He finds himself in Delray a lot. The southwest Detroit neighborhood was once an industrial, working class area near the Detroit River that has been struggling in recent years.

Although he went without a car for several years, he has one now. So he will drive it to an area and explore it on foot.

He said the city's gentrification is affecting him.

"I feel like the city is changing in so many ways. I can't do what I used to do — using what is wasted. So many places are being refurbished. Things I felt were in abundance are not there so much."

