



eindhoven  
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# HEART LAND

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from the heart of  
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**muziekcentrum** vanabbemuseum

# SCOTT HOCKING



Scott Hocking, *Ziggurat*, Detroit, 2008

I've never liked the term "Heartland". It's been used in America as a marketing tool and political buzz word for so long it makes me cringe.

It conjures up images of working class, denim-decked Marlboro men having a Budweiser after work; commercials for pick-up trucks with country rock soundtracks; cornfields and cows, even George Bush himself. The word alone doesn't bother me. It's kind of pretty, really – a Heartland sounds like a strong and beautiful place. But, it has been simplified into a stereotype. In reality, the Heartland combines the Midwest, the Great Lakes, the Great Plains, the Rust Belt, the Bible Belt, and the Mississippi Basin. Its part Dust Bowl, part Appalachia, part North, part South, and everything in between. Heartlanders are as diverse as the landscape. It's hard to imagine what America's Heartland means to people in other countries. Or if they even know it exists.

As an artist, I am interested in forgotten places and things kept out of sight, out of mind. I spend a lot of time exploring my surroundings, hunting for and gathering information, images, and materials. I spent three years without a car in Detroit. I walked, biked, bummed rides, and rode the bus. Life slows down without a car in the Motor City. It is a driving city, and it's very hard to find everything you need within walking distance from your home. Sometimes it could take me two hours to reach the same place by bus that would take twenty minutes in a car. I learned to be patient and meditative while waiting for and riding on the bus.



Scott Hocking, *Skylight Forest*, Detroit, 2008

Walking through Detroit, on the other hand, became much more to me. I never minded how long it took, and I loved exploring details that I had missed while whizzing by in a car. Going along the railroad tracks or into abandoned areas of Detroit became my nature walks – the closest I could come to a hike in the woods. I found solace in massive, empty factories and overgrown neighbourhoods, and beauty in the decay and transformations there. I've had a motor vehicle for many years since then, but I still prefer walking to work sites, like the one documented in the Heartland exhibition. It's not impossible to live in Detroit without a car, but it isn't easy either. It all depends on how much time you've got.

Wherever I go, my artwork is influenced by the history and people of that place. Often I am responding to being either inspired or bothered by what I find. In Detroit, I have worked with abandoned industry and former sites of native earthworks, knowing that I am somehow collaborating with thousands of others who once lived or worked there, used the materials I now find, and built the vacant structures I now work with. Although I am influenced by the past, specifically how humans interact with nature through history, I am equally affected by current events. When I imagine how our time will be viewed in the future, I am simultaneously excited and frightened by where the world may be heading. I try to present viewers with issues I believe are important and things they might have overlooked, such as ideas of learned beauty and/or ugliness.

Work by artist **Scott Hocking** (lives and works in Detroit, Michigan) is on view in the Heartland exhibition in the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven.