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Slideshow: Culture Lab Detroit - A Survey of a City's Outsider Art Scene

by Benjamin Park | April 29, 2014

Scott Hocking Artist Scott Hocking has gained national recognition for his ephemeral installations of found materials in derelict, condemned spaces. “In a lot of ways, what graffiti artists do and what I do are similar,” he told ARTINFO during a visit to his home (which itself is also a former industrial space). “We’re doing something illegal that we have no control over and no ownership of. It’s a great exercise in letting go. I never know if it’s going to be there the next day, if it’s going to be torn down or boarded up.”



Photo by Janelle Zara

“I’ve been in this industrial city my whole life, and I want nature. I need my wildness,” Hocking said. “I’ve been trying to seek it out where I can find it, and the closest thing I

have is the abandoned buildings reclaimed by nature. It's less about excitement than it is about solitude. That's my walk in the woods."



Over the course of his 13-year career as an artist, Hocking has seen the landscape of Detroit change. There's been the onslaught, for instance, of curious photographers searching for scenes of decay interloping on his work. "They'll walk in and see me, this random guy wearing a ski mask, waving and yelling hello," said Hocking. "Time magazine happened to be in Detroit while I was building [a wooden brick pyramid in an abandoned plant] and photographed it. The caption read, '[Photographer Sean] theorizes that the pyramid was built by artistically-minded vandals.' I love that. I love that people have a 'what-the-fuck' moment."

There has also been the decline of the homeless populations living in the sites in which he works. "That whole era of homeless guys living in abandoned warehouses is gone," he continued. "My theory is that homeless guys are now more likely to live in tiny abandoned houses now than when warehouses were freshly abandoned in the '90s; they still had windows and shelter. Now that they've been scrapped, it's not a shelter, but a skeleton."



“Ziggurat” (top) and “The Egg and MCTS,” Courtesy of the artist

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