

upfront

the tabloid issue

August 2005 - #84



Photo by Christine Burchinal, courtesy of Artcite

Cite Unseen

Scott Hocking & Clinton Snider:

Relics & Other Works @ Artcite Inc. - June 25- August 13

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For those of you who haven't yet had a chance to check out Artcite's recent installment, Relics & Other Works, there may still be time. The two Detroit artists, Scott Hocking and Clinton Snider, both received their Bachelor of Fine Art degrees from the Center for Creative Studies in Detroit. They began their work on Relics in 2001, and have continued working and recreating parts of the installation until today.

The piece itself consists of a series of open-ended wooden boxes (approx. 2'x 2') that are used to present the 'relics'. In all, they have created over 400 of these boxes, each containing a different object, series of objects, or a fraction of a whole. The artists present the pieces to the viewer by stacking the boxes on top and beside each other until (in Artcite's case) the collection spans a whole wall from floor to ceiling. The boxes are merely a way of presenting the mass collection of decaying industrial products, working like a grid system. Hocking and Snider collected an enormous amount of

'waste' on their walks to and from their studios. After carefully choosing these objects of interest, they cropped or arranged the pieces in such a way that the items would fit within the confines of a 2' x 2' box. In some instances careful arrangements were required, while other portions consist of whole sections of walls (keeping electrical fixtures intact), and even the front end of a Dodge! Most of the 'relics' bear the decay of time, beginning to wilt to nature's army of elements. The objects are bleeding rust or brittle with peeling paint and cracks. They range from plastic toys to globes, fans, ductwork, ladders, signs, animal bones, etc; an endless array of industrial and societal discarded waste.

The grand mass of the project creates an overwhelming response from the viewer, and with endless sources of stimuli the viewer is forced to slowly read through the piece's bombardment of the senses. Each box artistically evokes nostalgia, memories and aesthetic interests.

Hocking and Snider con-

sider themselves 'urban archeologists', Hocking explains within a brief statement provided for the installation:

"As new technology spreads into the future, the obsolete are left behind. New things are created while past creations decay. Nature begins to take apart what man once struggled to assemble. There is a threshold that is hard to pinpoint, when the manmade objects become nature again...Concrete cracks with plant life, iron and steel bleed rusty stains, years of paint stratify walls...trees grow upon the tar roofs of skyscrapers. Detroit is this transition."

In this way the piece is relevant to all industrialized cultures, possibly holding increased meaning for those in this area. Windsor and Detroit are both known for their industry, and Detroit, particularly, is a city that dove into the way of industry but has begun to get lost in the shadow thereof, with most of its life and population sprawling outwards leaving the city somewhat abandoned. Hocking elaborates, describing Detroit as a "post industrial wasteland" claiming that the population has spread from the city core like "bacteria" to the suburbs leaving the city to be "reclaimed by nature," a fate similar to the discards the pair has found. In this way I feel the piece represents the city it was created in. Just like Detroit, the 'relics' were once someone's architectural, or engineering prize, they at least contained a useful purpose or life, only to be left behind for something better. Thankfully Hocking and Snider recognized some type of interest, beauty or nostalgic quality in the waste and reclaimed the objects as a stimulus for much more than its fallen state. It evokes the old saying 'one man's waste is another man's treasure'.

Relics is man's attempt to "Once again alter nature by extracting these objects interrupting their return to earth, and using them to create a contemporary museum of natural history."

They have displayed Relics many times throughout gal-

leries in Michigan, but they take measures to specifically tailor the piece to each space. It is no coincidence that the installation covers the whole wall done to an inch. The piece is also constantly changing as each individual box is always for sale, and when one sells it is replaced with a new one. The prices for an individual box range from \$100 to \$600. The possibility that some rich bastard who disposed of a factory full of this stuff will now be paying \$600 for less than 2 square feet of it, to hang proudly on his wall, speaks wonders for the power (or influence) of an artist.

There is quite a bit more to see in the space than just the Relics piece, it is one of many installed by the artists. Another piece of interest is also a box (of similar size) on the wall, but this particular box had 1/3 of a boat pouring out of it, sprawling onto the floor and into a large portion of the gallery's space. The boat, just like the objects from the former piece, was far past its prime, decaying, a piece broken from the whole, with paint peeling from its grey, warped wood. Also on display is a series of old discarded coloured photographic slides the pair found, which were almost totally destroyed by weather, but are now blown up and mounted, to become something else, with more meaning than its former life could have ever presented.

Relics is one of the most ambitious yet accessible installations to appear in the space in recent times. The show speaks so much about our ever-increasing ambition to create as well as consume, and our wasteful, commercialist society. The pieces possess a beautiful aesthetic of age and decay, a theme that has been recurring in art since modernity, with artists such as Dieter Roth; who also used grid systems to display objects of decay (usually organic or of a less sustainable nature). The pieces all show industry, withering into nature's beauty, whether it be: corrosion, rust, weather, grime, crumbling, breakdown, whatever, it is all natural, a reminder of everything's impermanence, even our own. ■