

Detroit Art Review

Scott Hocking, Maritza Caneca, Jack Henry @ Wasserman Projects

May 9, 2019 by [Ron Scott](#) (excerpt from full review)



Scott Hocking, Seventeen Shitty Mountains Installation image, 2019, Image Courtesy of DAR

Addressing the urban environment, Wasserman Projects has mounted three solo exhibitions that speak to the state of affairs where man-made structures exist in various forms of decay. Works by Detroit-based Artist [Scott Hocking](#), Brazilian artist [Maritza Caneca](#), and Brooklyn-based artist [Jack Henry](#) opened on April 26, 2019, with different mediums that find their subject matter in abandonment, ingenuity and rebirth. The exhibition required artist residencies weeks before the show opened where the work was collected and, in some cases, custom built into the generous expanse of the gallery space.

“To immerse oneself and fully own the beauty and power of seemingly ordinary objects and environments takes a certain kind of audacity. That is in part what has drawn me to each of our spring featured artists,” said Alison Wong, Director of Wasserman Projects. “Their ability to transform day-to-day experiences into narratives that address both personally and universally resonant subjects is so compelling. And as you engage in their work more deeply, you see at play the dichotomies of the natural and man-made, the contemporary and ancient, the funny and the grave—when those pieces come together in their hands, they produce something fresh, exciting, and real.”



Seventeen Shitty Mountains (No. 13), Concrete, steel, fluorescent pigment paint 46" x 42" x 37" 2019 Image Courtesy of DAR

Scott Hocking, the Detroit-based artist, has been creating site-specific installations, using the city of Detroit as his laboratory to create works of art dating back to 2000. I first became aware of his work with the Detroit Institute of Arts exhibition *Relics*. The scope of his exhibitions inside abandoned buildings or outdoors in the elements, such as the *Rustic Sputnik*, *Tire Pyramid*, or the *Celestial Ship of the North*, all demonstrate a wide range of locations and materials that speak to his expansive and inquisitive imagination. Hocking delivers a formalist arrangement of three-dimensional artwork, primarily vacant interiors, to leverage an open stage as he creates collections of objects that propose deeper meanings reflective in a space that was part of a past. Hocking is documenting change, rebirth and transformation, causing the viewer to be held in awe, and as the artist transforms his found materials, reconstituted into a new form. All the work is carefully photographed for exhibition and documentation of an image in the event the exterior space changes where new development clears the building or land.

This Wasserman installation features discarded concrete sewer pipes that Hocking collected from a now-defunct Detroit Water & Sewage Department building in Eastern Market transforming the cast concrete into colorful megaliths, some weighing as much as 15 tons. Hocking, who has leveraged abandoned spaces in places like Port Austin, Michigan, New South Wales, Australia, and Lille, France, speaks to an artist who seeks new spaces for inspiration. A variety of motifs that reappear in his use of form are the pyramid, the oval and the circle: psychologically universal in their iconic existence for thousands of years, reminding this writer of the role the collective unconscious plays in creative expression.



Scott Hocking, *Seventeen Shitty Mountains* Installation, 2019, Courtesy of DAR

For the lack of a formal artist statement, and perhaps in a Hocking-ish way, he says in his bio, “Like my childhood experiences, I found myself hiking up to the railroad grade via desire paths, climbing through fence holes and busted open doorways, and into these once-bustling buildings of industry, now quiet and still. Cavernous is an accurate term to describe them, not just because of their interior size and space, but also because of their transformations into man-made caves: stalactites and stalagmites formed throughout these often cast-concrete structures, as years of water permeated the roofs and floors. I found solace in the quietude and natural reclamation in these spaces. I craved it in my life and sought it out where I could find it. In these historic Detroit factories, built along the railroad over 100 years ago, and left for dead by the 1980s, I found my church-like experience. My freedom. My escape.”

Seventeen Shitty Mountains at Wasserman Projects is produced in collaboration with David Klein Gallery, which represents Scott Hocking, and Eastern Market Corporation. Hocking earned his BFA from the College for Creative Studies in 2000.

--

While this exhibition presents three individual solo works of art, there is an obvious connection to urban decay and reinvention. Each artist in their own way approaches and encapsulates the nostalgia of material reused, reinvented, and celebrated. It’s more than a discovery, rather a metaphor for our continuing engagement with art as an expression of urban environments from the past and present.

Scott Hocking, Maritza Caneca, Jack Henry at [Wasserman Projects](#) runs through June 29, 2019

Copyright © 2019 Detroit Art Review.