

## PICTURES OF A CITY : AN OBSERVATION BY SCOTT HOCKING

Focusing on the post-industrial neighborhood in which I live, PICTURES OF A CITY will use a variety of mediums to document the people and structures of this environment, specifically the men called “scrappers.”

Scrapers manage to survive by salvaging *scrap* metals such as aluminum, copper, brass, and iron found within Detroit’s abundant decaying structures. They find metals and transport their loot through the city with orphaned shopping carts, which can be found virtually anywhere. Often living within conveniently located abandoned buildings, I have encountered and become friends with many of these men on my travels.

Caught within a bizarre cycle for survival, scrapers depend almost entirely on the abandonment and neglect of Detroit’s industrial buildings and the like. The high amount of physical effort it takes to retrieve metals without power tools and push a loaded shopping cart for miles is hardly rewarded in dollars. They make just enough to survive. They work almost constantly: sleeping a bit during the day, and working all night. I have never met an alcoholic bum or junkie among them; They hardly ever rest.

It is an invisible world that I want to unveil to others. The scrapers work and live in darkness, without water, electricity, heat, etc. All night they work, solitary and silent. Their homes are collapsing structures of the past, soon to be demolished by gentrification. They are ghosts living in Detroit’s remaining haunts. They don’t exist.



*Portrait of Bernie, at Jefferson and 8<sup>th</sup> Street*

I have employed photography to document the buildings where they live, abandoned sites, and pictures of the men themselves. I am using materials found within the structures they frequent as physical documentation of our surroundings a portrait of a man. I have purchased one charred shopping cart full of scrap metal (copper wiring) from one of these men (Country Boy), which will be suspended through two floors, through a ceiling mounted pulley, attached at the opposite end to a second cart, filled with an equal value of caramel corn snack food, a favorite choice from the limited options Country Boy has.

Exhibited as a whole, PICTURES OF A CITY will present use various media to create a portrait of the scrapers, their environments and surroundings, and their histories. I envision the loaded shopping cart to hang and gently twist in front of a wall covered with images. Confronting the viewer with the realities of post-industrial Detroit and awakening them to the existence of these exceptional individuals and sites, I present these objects in hopes of making this world that I see visible to others.

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*The 350 thousand square foot Fisher Body Plant No. 21 is located just blocks away from my studio/ home. I have been using it as inspiration and medium for years, and I know every corner of its vast expanse. Through my constant visitation, I have become friends with the permanent resident scrapper of this site, who goes by the name Country Boy. He continues to make it through the harsh Detroit winters, amassing furniture, clothing, blankets, and even a barbecue. Although others come and go through this building, this is Country's home. He is already aware of my intentions with this project, and has agreed to be a part of it.*



*Detail of Country Boy's living area, in the first floor truck bays. He was out to work when I took this shot.*

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*The vacant lots just east of the Fisher Body Plant are favorite locations for scrappers such as Country Boy and James to burn the plastic coating off of valuable copper wiring. With a surplus of shopping carts at their disposal, they ignite a cart full of cable and remove the metal while still smoldering. This debris will most likely stay unmoved for a year or more. (unless I move it...)*

*Seeing this cart as a nice example of those who scrap metal for a living, I have 'acquired' this cart for use in this project*

