

# BOLLINGER ATELIER

SCOTT HOCKING X BOLLINGER ATELIER - Interview by Daniel Mariotti - March 1, 2023

## ARTIST SERIES **SCOTT HOCKING**



“IN THE END, I THINK WHAT’S IMPORTANT IS THAT I’VE MADE SOMETHING THAT CAN TRIGGER SOME KIND OF REACTION AND SEND PEOPLE DOWN SOME KIND OF THOUGHT WORMHOLE.”

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Scott Hocking was born in Redford Township, Michigan in 1975, and has lived and worked in Detroit since 1996. His work brings in viewers by satisfactory surprise, oftentimes stumbled upon, seen when you’re least expecting to see the artwork. Combining mythical history and narrative transformation, rooting itself in the form, he creates site-specific sculptural work, photographic installations, and a plethora of other mediums to convey his thoughts.

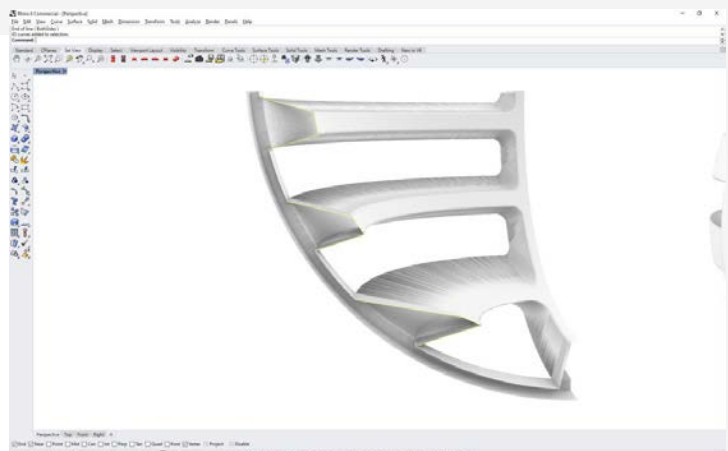
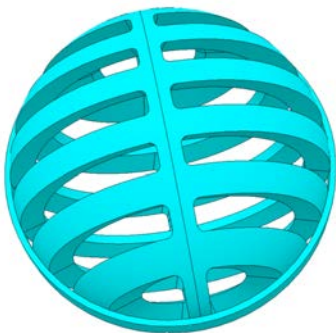
We got to work with Scott on his public art piece “Floating Citadel” where we used all of our tools and skillsets to bring his idea into reality.

Scott’s idea for “Floating Citadel” was the development of years of iteration. His “celestial sphere” forms, seen in exhibitions like Retrograde, OLD, and RELICS, were physically transformed through digital technologies and manipulated to create a shape that takes inspiration from domed sewer grates. These sewer grates then became the catalyst of conceptual transformation for Hocking and became the next iteration of the celestial duality he has been exploring throughout his career.



**BA: What is your process from going to concept to final product?**

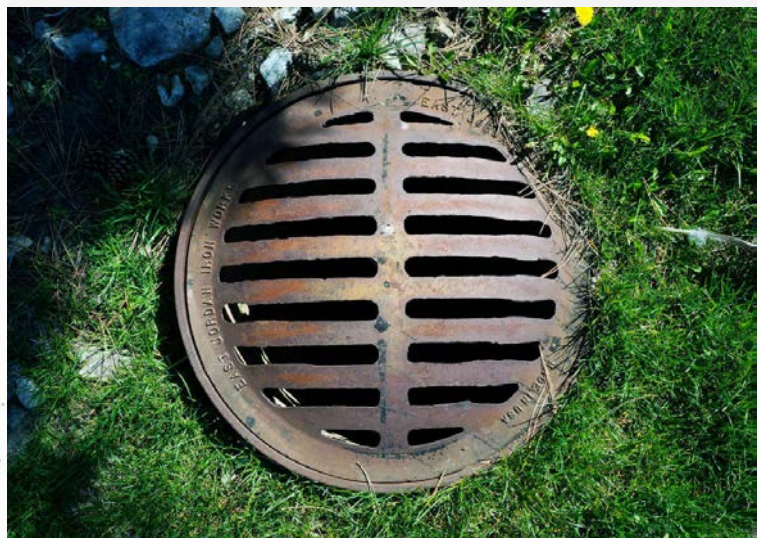
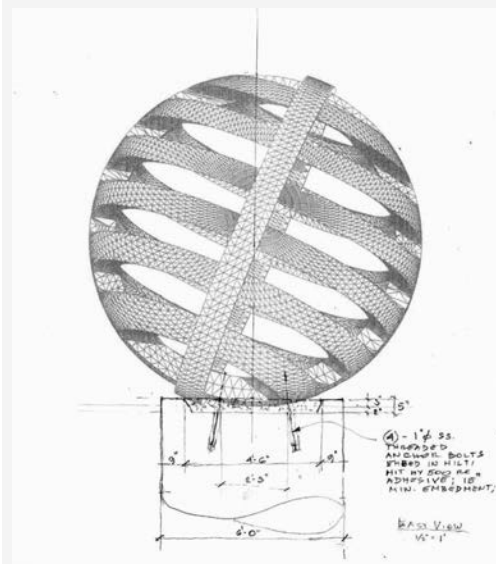
Scott: Every piece I do is a little bit different process due to them being so site-specific. For the case of the Floating Citadel, it was an idea that I've had rattling around in some fashion for over two decades, playing with this form in a lot of different materials and different scales. To get the project going I asked a friend to essentially take one of my very handmade ones, scan it, and turn it into a digital model. From there we made it a perfect sphere instead of my wonky sphere and made other adjustments that would become easier for places to work with. Then the next step was finding a foundry. I've worked in foundries for years for my artwork. A lot of my friends were saying "oh we can just do this in the back parking lot area" but I saw this as more of an opportunity to develop a relationship with a foundry and expand instead of what I've done my whole life and what most artists do, which is figure it all out yourself. So I basically sent out an email to about 30 foundries nationwide. As I'm getting responses back, lo and behold, Tom Bollinger replies with this incredibly informative and impressive email. And that was a pretty great beginning. I was blown away by the foundry and it just seemed like I couldn't have gone wrong with this decision. And it was nice to work with a foundry that also makes work for contemporary artists as one of their main things.

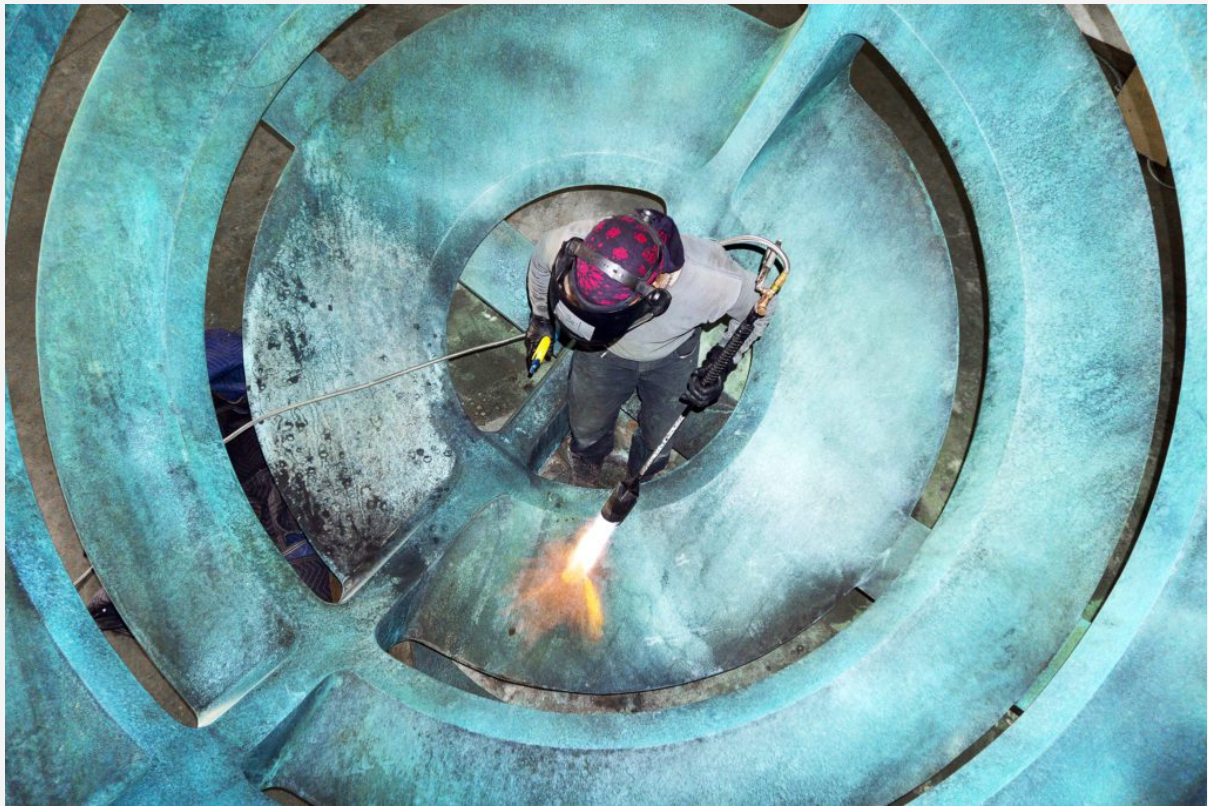




**BA:** So, two decades of thinking about this form which we can see with your work in the RELICS installation, Tartarus installation, the OLD and Retrograde exhibitions. Can you talk about what attracts you to this form?

**Scott:** A lot of the concepts behind my work involve these symbolic, ancient forms (to me). And there's a connection that I am playing with that can happen. A lot of times I'm taking these things that were considered waste material, or invisible, and people don't look twice at them. And I'm elevating them, turning them into an art piece in a way that suddenly they seem like a mystical form. For instance, Floating Citadel is based on a domed sewer grate that was made by the East Jordan Iron Works foundry in Michigan. If you walk over any manhole or drain cover and you look down, it will probably say East Jordan Iron Works. I first started using a lot of sewer grates and grates in general, because I thought of them as being like this symbol for a threshold between the inner and outer, the above and the below. It's mundane, earthly, and non-elevated, but also a symbol for separation, a filter between two planes of reality. Suddenly, this sewer grate became a symbol of heavier issues.





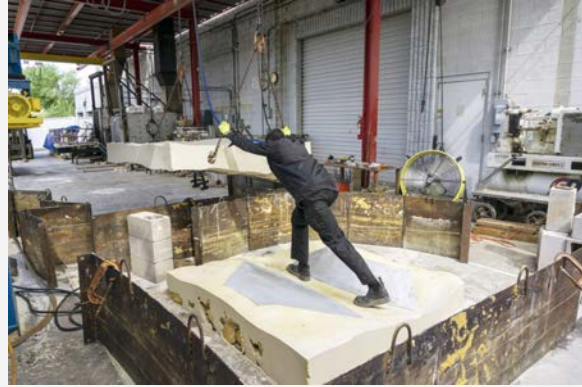
**BA:** Do you feel like your work is answering something? Or is it a question that you're directing people towards?

Scott: I think with artwork, people bring their own baggage, they bring their own ideas, their own life experience, and they see it through their eyes and interpret it as they want. To me, successful artwork is when I've made something that makes someone stop, even momentarily, from whatever they're doing in their life. Even if they say, "What the hell is that?" that is successful. Send people down some kind of thought process or wormhole with your work. Let them be investigative. Maybe they want to get closer, maybe they want to find out more details. That's an important aspect of my work for me.

**BA:** You've done a lot of massive site-specific installations that people have to either stumble across or really try to find if they want to see it. Do you feel like people are searching for your work more? Sort of like artistic geocaching?

Scott: I like the element of discovery, almost like a scavenger hunt. Once, while building The Egg and the Michigan Central Train Station installation, I had a nice discovery interaction. The building was still vacant, so urban explorers would sneak in there. One day one of the marble pieces had something written in Sharpie. Something like "Really cool, keep up the good work, careful with all the weight on one point". And it was signed, "architect student, Ohio". I loved that interaction and similar to a geocache, you know, I was leaving these things for people to discover and they're leaving me things to discover. I saved that piece of marble for sure.





**BA:** So many things nowadays are becoming digitized or using technology to create artwork. And we used a relatively newer process in 3d printing so that we could cast the Floating Citadel which ended up working out great. Have you been using those types of tools more with your pieces?

**Scott:** This is where we kind of went in lockstep on this. I'd never had a sculpture of mine scanned and turned into a digital model or 3D printed before. That was all new for me. It is something that I am interested in because it's available now. It's "immediate" and allows you to explore ideas in real-time. And it's just another tool that allows people to manifest ideas in a different way. So I do feel like I'm moving in a number of different directions into what almost feels like a "cleaner" direction. Like, so much of what I used to do is so filthy and disgusting and hazardous and backbreaking. Now it's feeling a bit more, not necessarily austere, but you know, formal. I'm cleaning it up a little bit, allowing myself to make artwork where the constraint is more about time and less about space and physical energy. And I can transform ideas and iterations differently.

**BA:** It also seems like so many of your pieces before were so hands-on and influenced by location, materials, and accessibility. And maybe now it feels more like documentation, kind of like an observer of your own process?

**Scott:** There's an ideal circumstance where I'm still hands-on to some extent but to do so in a way where I don't injure myself when I'm 80. And being able to use the technologies available to create that longevity is where the balance will be. Because I love being hands-on, I want to forever be hands-on, and it would be nice if there's other stuff like this that could keep happening too. A sort of make the cake and eat it too scenario.





**BA: Before we end, if you were to make a soundtrack to your art making what would it sound like?**

Scott: Hmm well, I like a lot of progressive rock.

To me, it connects a lot to symphonic music in a way. Before I was an artist, I was a drummer. My very first taste of creativity was playing music growing up. I love music and if I wasn't making visual art, I'd probably be in a band. So I get my fix of that, by almost always listening to music while I work in the studio. I get a lot of work done on things like Terry Riley or Philip Glass. It's a bit like orchestration, you know, it has these ups and downs and crescendos and sometimes this kind of meditative sequences.

Now, all that being said, when I'm in an abandoned building, working, I don't want anything but the ambient sounds around me. I like hearing the nature in the places where I work. And that can be anything from like pigeons living in the building, to water dripping through the building, to people coming into the building; I like to be fully immersed, I'm not cranking up the tunes when I'm out there.

See Scott Hocking's work on his website: <https://www.scotthocking.com/>  
and give him a follow: [@scotthockingdetroit](https://twitter.com/scotthockingdetroit)