

*The Celestial Ship of the North (Emergency Ark)*, aka the Barnboat, by Scott Hocking

Art selection and comment by [Aaron Rosen](#) in the [August 14, 2019](#) issue



Scott Hocking is equal parts scavenger, spelunker, and archaeologist. At the nadir of Detroit's lean years, the artist began scrambling over walls and scuttling under security fences into abandoned factories in order to create mysterious, primal shapes out of refuse, using materials from concrete to polystyrene. In some instances, these forms remain in place, like ancient rune stones; others have gradually collapsed or been bulldozed by developers, leaving little trace. Rather than fighting entropy or destruction, Hocking sees his works as part of a continuum of creation, transformation, and decay. In *The Celestial Ship of the North (Emergency Ark)* aka the Barnboat (2015), the artist took this intuition into the Michigan countryside, where he found a ramshackle barn that had not been touched in 20 years. Rearranging the weather-beaten planks, he formed a dilapidated, yet strangely dignified, vessel. Unlike Noah's ark, it does not promise to sail us to safety to rebuild the world afresh. Perhaps more fittingly for an era of catastrophic climate change, it has arrived too late. If there is any hope to be found here, it begins with recognizing our failure.