

SCRAP ART PRIMER



By Sam Hundley 2023



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Scrap Art Primer Sam Hundley

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Children's books [Gifts of the Magpie](#) (2021) | [Tag and the Magic Squeaker](#) (2022)

I am a retired newspaper designer, author of picture books for children, and self-described American scrap artist. I create folk art out of found objects.

I collect discards that look interesting to me, without any preconceived notions. Once an object suggests an idea to me, it tends to be fully formed in my mind. The resulting piece is usually composed of very few elements, which I assemble with Goop adhesive, screws, nails, wire, nuts, and bolts. I do not weld, which forces me to work smaller and lighter.

After a lifetime of illustrating and soaking up American culture, pareidolia (a healthy form of hallucination - see next page) has become second nature and part of my routine. It is important that the objects retain as much of their integrity as possible, independent of the finished assemblage. Ideally, a viewer will see the composite and the separate objects simultaneously, which will ignite a spark of recognition, much like what I felt at the beginning of the process. That spark often surprises me, which compels me to keep at it.

Sam Hundley.



"BUZZ" - 2019

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Pareidolia

noun
par·ei·do·lia
per-ī-dō-lē-ə

The tendency to perceive a specific, often meaningful image in a random or ambiguous visual pattern, or the human ability **to see shapes or make pictures out of randomness**. Think of the Rorschach inkblot test.

— Pamela Ferdinand, Merriam-Webster



In our DNA

“If you look at any walls spotted with various stains or with a mixture of different kinds of stones, if you are about to invent some scene you will be able to see in it a resemblance to various different landscapes adorned with mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, plains, wide valleys, and various groups of hills. You will also be able to see divers combats and figures in quick movement, and strange expressions of faces, and outlandish costumes, and an infinite number of things which you can then reduce into separate and well conceived forms.”

— Leonardo DaVinci

“I do not search – I find.”

– Pablo Picasso (“Bull’s Head,” 1942)



Step-by-step

1 beauty

Find objects that interest you and start a collection. I am drawn to old things with type on them, beautiful surfaces – cracked paint, rust, dents and signs of wear; bright colors and unusual shapes and sizes. Wood, metal, plastic, whatever.

2 catalyst

One object usually acts as a trigger and starts the ball rolling. In this case, the 1959 license plate face. It's definitely someone, but who? It hung in my studio for years without answers, until I started looking at things of similar size:

3 scale

I had no idea what to do with that face – until I saw the red rake. Things that are close in size work well together. My *subconscious* saw something beginning to take shape, so that led immediately to the next step:

“Nancy,” 2021 – scrap art assemblage made of license plate, ceiling tin, metal sign fragment, plastic rake and other found objects.

4 proximity

I placed the rake under the license plate. Making scrap art means constantly moving things around. If you can't see it, it won't happen. So make it easy to see – pour the stuff out on the floor. Start putting things physically next to each other, on top of each other, swap it out. Let your mind wander, which will eventually lead to:

5 discovery

Each of these beautiful objects that you've collected has a story to tell. As you start putting different things together, context changes, ideas form and your imagination takes it in a new direction. This is when the magic happens and your personality comes to

the fore, sometimes without you being aware of it. Trust your instincts. The discovery comes when you realize, “It's Nancy!” (This is the big payoff and why I keep doing this. The surprise is revelatory and addictive.) Now, finish it – use your *conscious* mind to fill in the visual blanks – find the hair, pink bow, body, etc.



Ecological



By its very nature, scrap art is good for the environment – repurposing litter into art is a wonderful beautification side effect.

Above, “The Water’s Fine!” (2023) was created in response to the toxic disaster in East Palestine, Ohio. It’s made of driftwood, paintbrush, copper flashing and Reactor Plant sign.

Right, “Tad-da!” (2019) is made of a leather shoe upper found in a creek in Suffolk by a volunteer during a litter cleanup effort there. He came up to me and said, “Can you use this in your art?”

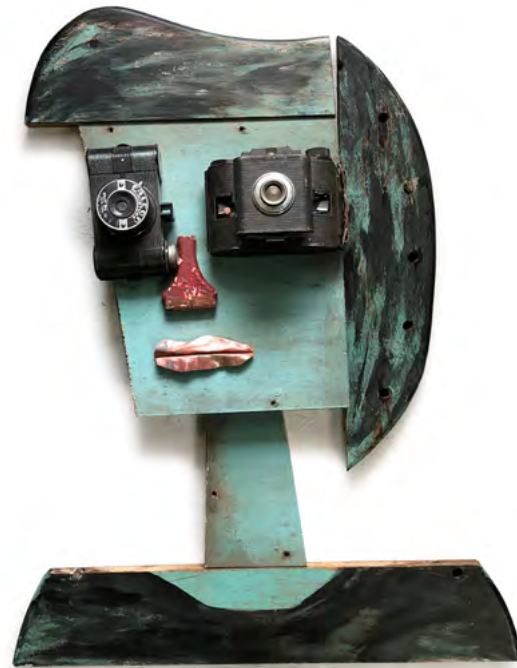
Next page, “Beachcomber” (2019) is made of driftwood and plastic toys collected and donated by a generous Hampton resident who picks up litter on the beach around Ft. Monroe.



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KLAUS SCHWAB



DIANE ARBUS



THELONIOUS MONK

Likenesses

■ If a real person begins to emerge – a celebrity, family member, old flame – follow through and make it look as much like that person as possible.

KEITH RICHARD



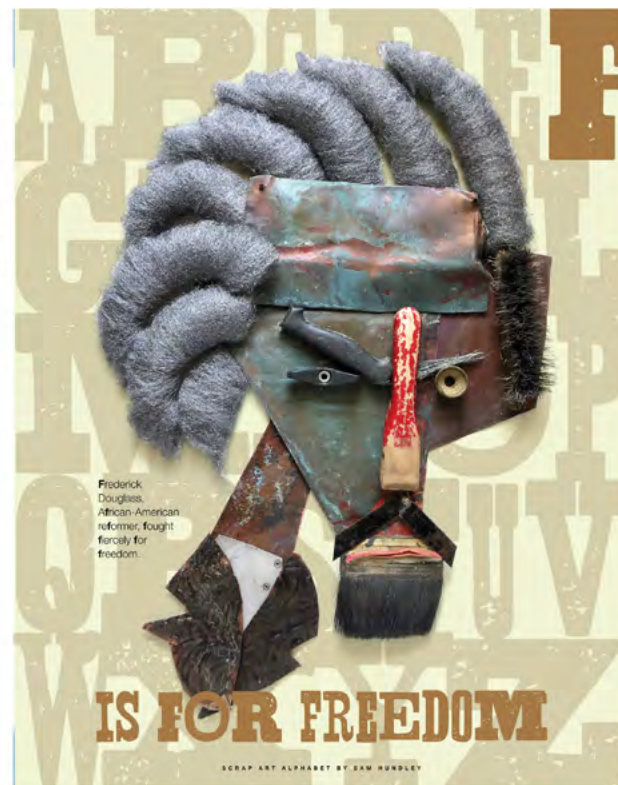
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Tell a story

- Don't underestimate the importance of narrative – it took me years to realize that my best work always tells a story.
- Dive in – you can change whatever you don't like later.
- Always be on the lookout for suitable backgrounds - seasoned oven trays, old picture frames, plywood scraps, metal panels. The wooden drawer, right, made a great shadow box.





Do more

- Eventually, you will create enough different animals, people and things to make your own alphabet book.



You do you

- Only do what you love.
- Never second guess yourself.
- Always have fun.

Scrap doodles



Tips

- Arrange simple figures on white letter size paper.
- Because these are “sketches” – to be photographed only – there’s no pressure. So, relax, daydream and have fun.
- Make as many as you can.



I was a newspaper artist, and what had always been a creative job suddenly became a production treadmill. I was going nuts. So, I set up a drafting table in a tiny, unused room and emptied out a box of small dug relics donated

by friends. Every day, I’d rush in, assemble a goofy character or scene, photograph it, return everything to the pile and race back to The Sausage Factory. Having those precious 15 minutes a day for creativity and *play* made everything else tolerable.

“You need to let the little things that would ordinarily bore you suddenly thrill you.” – Andy Warhol



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LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). If you stumble, don't worry. Falling is an opportunity. While you're down there, pick up something off of the ground that might be useful to you.

