

Michael  
Scott

Chronology

1958

Born May 22, 1958. Father marks his birth by planting two trees on the front yard. One still survives.

1958–1964

Raised in Paoli, PA. Has a duck as a pet. Remembers little from this period including the duck.

1964–1977

Moves to Wayne, PA. Best subjects in school are Math and Art. Does a portrait of Jackson Pollock in 10<sup>th</sup> grade that surprises his friends and family for its realism. Wins team state title in target shooting twice. Graduates high school and receives the award in Art.

1977–1981

Attends Hamilton College, Clinton, NY. First year teacher exposes him to conceptual art. Decides by Thanksgiving of Freshman year to become an artist. Takes Psych test and learns that he is red/green colorblind. Graduates Phi Beta Kappa and receives the award in Art.

1980

Attends Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine. Told by one of the students that of all the crits that summer, she will remember three, two of which were his. The crits were memorable for their level of negativity. Studies with the sculptor Jackie Winsor. Becomes interested in the writings and black paintings of Ad Reinhardt. Eventually decides that 20th century art is much more complex than the pursuit of the “last painting” because realizing what that is completes the question.

1981–1983

Attends the MFA program at Hunter College. Gets job working as a desk clerk at a hotel in Brooklyn. Dials 911 on a weekly basis for a year and a half.

1983–1985

Witnesses the explosion of expressionist based art exhibited in storefront galleries in the East Village. Cannot relate to most of the new work being shown. Gravitates towards the galleries International with Monument, Jay Gorney Modern Art, and Postmasters, which exhibit works by Jeff Koons, Peter Halley, Haim Steinbach, Phillip Taaffe, and Joel Otterson. Becomes aware of the date paintings of On Kawara.

1985–1988

Takes 6-week trip to Italy during which he formulates a position that is based on questioning the concept of “originality”. Upon return from Italy, destroys 95% of all work made up to that time, and embarks on making a series of black and white “target,” or concentric circle, paintings that look identical but vary slightly. Wants to make a body of work where no one painting can be seen as better or worse than

another. Completes forty-four “target” paintings and shows fourteen of them in a karate studio above a McDonalds on 14<sup>th</sup> street. Notices that when shown as a group they create an intense optical experience. The show opens on October 19, 1987—the day the stock market crashes. Becomes friends with the artists Matthew McCaslin, Olivier Mosset, Cady Noland, Steven Parrino, and Steve DiBenedetto with whom he feels his work shares an affinity.

1988

Takes two-month trip to Nepal. Upon return, decides to stop making the concentric circle paintings and instead embarks on a series of black and white line paintings on wood driven by the concept of making works so intensely optical that in theory they would be impossible to look at—the opposite of how painting traditionally functions. Considers the work different from the “Op Art” movement of the 1960’s because of a focus on content over aesthetics. Though he has never taken acid, he has described them as “Op Art on acid”.

1989

Begins having studio visits with dealers, including Tony Shafrazi who offers him a one-person show that Fall. Uses the show at the Shafrazi gallery as an opportunity to make an installation of paintings that question the concept of originality and take optics to an extreme state. The show consists of nine 8’ × 4’ black and white line paintings where the difference between each painting is an increase in the width of the lines by 1% - the concept is to have the smallest reason for creating a new work. Because the paintings are on exposed honeycomb aluminum panels that are mounted away from the wall, they read more as objects than paintings. Si Newhouse comes to see the exhibition with his wife.

His wife asks to sit down because the exhibit makes her feel ill. A total of twenty-one paintings from this series are made.

1990

In the summer begins work on a series of non-repeating line paintings that are based on the crossing of two patterns. When written out on paper, the pattern represented implies a start and end point which are fully described in the painting— if the painting were to continue outside of the picture plane, it would begin or end with what is seen at the top or bottom of the painting—i.e. repeat itself. Two of the paintings measure 1' × 16' and are shown along with five others at the Tony Shafrazi gallery.

1990–1992

In addition to making works in black and white, makes a small group of paintings in color. Two paintings are included in the show “Gambler,” which is curated by the artist Damien Hirst and includes Damien’s first major work “A Thousand Years”.

1993

Makes a group of black and white line paintings in which the length of the lines in each painting totals either a quarter mile or a third of a kilometer. The paintings have sections of lines of varying lengths and their design is somewhat driven by meeting this specific length limitation. Five quarter mile paintings are shown at the Jason Rubell gallery in Florida and four one-third kilometer paintings are shown at the Akira Ikeda gallery in Japan.

Becomes interested in the surreal and the psychedelic, with a focus on the psychedelic. Interested in making paintings that create a state of familiarity simultaneous with a state of disorientation. Thinks often about the Max Ernst quotation

that Surrealism is about keeping one eye open and focused on the physical world, and one eye shut but focused on the inner world.

Son and daughter are born. Plants tree to mark their birth.

1994

The artist feels he has reached an end game with his black and white line paintings and embarks on a series of figurative works that derive from children's comic book imagery. The first are optical and utilize black and white lines. The latter are freely drawn without reference to any of the previously made work. Up to this time the artist has felt that his work was in part about the emptying of content through a means of reduction or exclusion. He believes these new figurative paintings empty themselves of content through the use of banal imagery. Exhibits these works at the Tony Shafrazi gallery, including a painting that shows a fence dividing a field that is titled "My Property Ends Here". The show can be seen for 45 seconds in the movie "Unzipped". The Art Journal "Coagula" writes a one sentence review of the show saying "It doesn't get any worse of kitschy than this—the art world really may not be worth saving".

Records in his journal the Dadaist statement "if you wish to keep your ideas clean you must change them regularly, like your shirts".

1995–1996

Begins making large-scale paintings on canvas with fluorescent spray paint and stencils. These works primarily depict ginger bread type houses on mountaintops, usually surrounded by clutter that might be left over had a derelict clown lived there. Titles for these works include "An Ancient

Song Sung Too Long” and “In the Well of the World’s Sadness”. The titles and themes contrast with the politicized work that dominated the NY art world at this time. These paintings are shown, along with the only sculpture the artist has made, at the Sandra Gering Gallery in New York and the gallery Art and Public in Geneva.

1997–1999

Begins making smaller scale detailed line paintings that are abstract in nature but reference the face. Ten of these paintings are exhibited in salon style at the Sandra Gering Gallery in 1999.

2000–2006

Makes a group of larger scale line paintings in which the lines are so thin that it is impossible to control their regulation, allowing inconsistencies and imperfections to be seen in the paintings. These works relate to, but differ significantly from, earlier paintings in that the hand of the artist is apparent. Feels there is a Zen aspect to his approach to making art that results from the repetitive process that occurs during their making and for this reason he considers these paintings to be more humanistic than any of the work he has made to date. Two are exhibited in “The Painted World” at PS1 in 2005.

2006

Asked to create a comic book as part of an artist’s project in remembrance of the artist Steven Parrino. Once completed, finds that his is the only book that in any way resembles a comic book. Continues to make graphic drawings in this format on a regular basis. Learns to play the guitar.

2007–2008

Spends one year making a group of small-scale encaustic paintings that are painted intuitively without any pre-determined idea as to the final painting. As a result, they are extremely thick, utilizing about \$100 in paint for each, even though most measure only 12 inches square. Exhibits a group of these paintings along with thirty drawings in Dijon, France in 2008.

Interested in the idea that by design Rorschach tests are meant to be neutral, their significance coming from the viewer's interpretation of them. For this reason they become reflections of the subconscious thoughts of the viewer. Sees this as a relevant point when viewing intuitively made abstract works such as the recent wax paintings.

2009

Begins work on a series of color line paintings that contradict the earlier line paintings made in the 1990's in that they are not about perfection but rather embrace the intuitive process of creating and the imperfections that are inherent in that process. Unlike the earlier black and white works which denied their own viewing, these paintings embrace it. Believes that the making of art is a "practice"; what is important is the act of making and the questions one addresses during that process. Sees this body of work as more about the recording of an event, blemishes and all, rather than about the aesthetics of painting. These paintings are exhibited at the Gering & Lopez Gallery in June 2009. Because of the scale of the space and the paintings, he believes this to be his most ambitious show since the 1990's. For this reason he titles the exhibition "and then he tried to swallow the world".



2010

Does a two person show in NY with the Dutch artist Roland Schimmel. In a correspondence between the artists the T.S. Elliot quote “and where you are is where you are not” is referenced. Finds this meaningful because it implies the where is not a destination to work towards, but rather the current state one is in. Interprets it along the lines that everything one does is equally valid as long as it come from the same place—which is ourselves, wherever that may be at that point in time.

2011

The film director Sofia Coppola nominates the artist for the fashion magazine V Discovery Issue, listing him as one of 100 people to know.

Does a one person exhibition at Witzenhausen gallery in Amsterdam.

2012

Exhibits nine black and white line paintings whose dates range from 1989 through 2011 at Gering Lopez gallery in New York. Over this time period the most dominant works made are the “highly optical” black and white line paintings. This exhibition presented this type of painting that has taken different forms with each re-investigation.

Michael Scott-To Present  
Circuit 2014  
© [www.circuit.li](http://www.circuit.li)