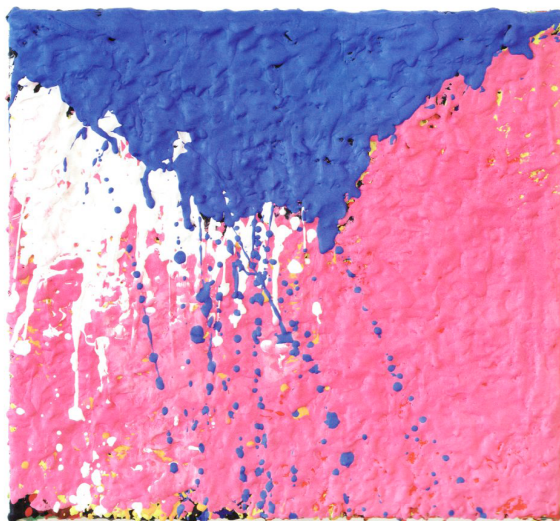


NEW OLD GUARD
MICHAEL SCOTT
NOMINATED BY SOFIA COPPOLA



An artist who has been steadily making work in New York for over two decades, American painter Michael Scott has modestly persevered in blazing an individualistic course, which aligns him with many of the heroes of art history. But it is the artist's shy, quixotic, and entirely unpretentious disposition (reflected in the simple reverence of his abstract stripe paintings) that recalls the insightful, unvarnished storytelling of director Sofia Coppola. Perhaps this is why she is drawn to collecting Scott's work.

According to Scott, his art career began in earnest in 1989, when legendary gallerist Tony Shafrazi sold out an entire show of his methodical, black-and-white-stripe enamel paintings before the opening—though not necessarily, says the artist, due to the gallerist's blind faith. "Tony was great [to work with], because he didn't like anything," he says. "He liked one artist:

Roy Lichtenstein." Unlike the work of Lichtenstein, Scott's paintings have a deeply poetic, conceptual bent; they have sought to explore the idea of self and the role of the artist, aligning him with process-focused artists like Robert Morris. Inspired by On Kawara's date paintings, wherein the artist has, since 1966, simply painted the date each day, Scott went through a period in which the width of each stripe in his paintings was determined by a mathematical code. Eliminating artistic choice in the service of a quasi-Eastern philosophy of selflessness—"To break through the idea of originality," says the artist—the paintings made during this time period suggest a looming sense of the sublime. However, "As we live through life, we reinvent ourselves," the artist says, and he soon began creating thick, tactile stripe paintings with a "sloppy intuitiveness" devoid of artificial instruction.

While geometric abstraction often exasperates with its emotional opacity, Scott's work possesses a thorough humanness and vulnerability, which in turn has driven the artist to examine his formal breakthroughs, however subtle, the way a parent might chart the progress of a child's growth with pencil marks on the wall. These thought-soaked progressions make one think of the male character type Coppola is so gifted at creating—a past-his-prime Sleeping Beauty slowly awakening to the paralysis of his armor of charm-laced bullshit. While this type of man could not be more different from the rational and circumspect Scott, the truthfulness of such a character study unites both creators in their search for art's evanescent moment of meaning. **Aimee Walleston**

Untitled, 2007; **Artwork Michael Scott**
Photography André Morin. Courtesy Gering & López Gallery, NYC

Curation's Onslaught: White Columns Annual and Larry Poons

By **Will Heinrich**
December 14, 2010 | 10:10 p.m

How sensitively can a group show be curated—how deftly can works by more than 40 artists be assembled into an aesthetically unitary whole—before the art is reduced to decoration and it becomes impossible to discern the merits of any one piece? If you can't get to the Barnes Foundation, in Merion, Pa., before it closes in January, you can consider the question here in New York at "Looking Back," the fifth White Columns Annual, curated this year by Bob Nickas.

The aesthetic that Mr. Nickas has assembled so forcefully and beautifully is the '90s retread of the '70s that seemed to be the main product of the aughts, an aesthetic defined by the long, losing struggle against the deadening effects of mass media.



Barry X Ball's *Envy*.
barry x ball

“ **The artists accept that they now make images of images, instead of images of things, and get on with it.** ”

Some artists are resigned: They accept that they now make images of images, instead of images of things, and get on with it. So there are images of images, as well as fragments of images and fragments of reference and fragments of text, which amount to the same thing. Drawings by Andra Ursuta and Karl Wirsum float in space, without backgrounds; Mike Cloud deconstructs and reassembles a photo book into a *Mick Jagger Paper Quilt*; Justin Matherly, Gene Beery and Ms. Ursuta assemble more or less intelligible sentences and lists; and Joseph Montgomery, Chris Vasell and Wardell Milan make collage. There's faux pornography, in the black-and-white photos of David Hurles and Alvin Baltrop, and there are remixed images of real pornography, as in Mr. Milan's *Rose Garden*, a much creased color still of fellatio with added Wite-Out.

Linking the pornography and referentiality is the language of irony, as in Volker Corell's 1964 photograph of two Klansmen with a baby stroller, or Charlotte Posenenske's empty gray aluminum box—also from the '60s—or Amy O'Neill's recent video *FPFZ* (*Forest Park, Forest Zoo*), in which snippets of video, floating in a black background like snapshots, lead us through an abandoned zoo to the sound of a sludgy metal song called "Fetus in Fetu." (The song's official music video depicts the band's singer being decapitated.)

Curation's Onslaught: White Columns Annual and Larry Poons

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Other artists try to turn away. There's primitivism, distortion of anatomy and self-conscious outsider style, as in Freddie Brice's large painting of a snake, which could have crawled out of a Revolutionary War flag; Huma Bhabha's grimacing, piglike demon face; Gert and Uwe Tobias' colorful 6-foot-tall woodcut of circles and lines; or Justin Matherly's heavy concrete creature that lurches across the gallery floor like an anime nightmare. There's non-Western geometry, as in Dan Walsh's beautiful red acrylic grid pattern or Alyssa Pheobus' *Dar al-*, a large, graphite drawing of a labyrinthine gate. The neon green and orange of Dave Malek's *The Promise of Space* and the careful smudging of Michael Scott's blue enamel stripes both look toward New York abstraction more than they do toward, say, the patterns of Delhi's Red Fort, but their purpose here is clear. Three small anonymous paintings from Rajasthan—two of deep blue stripes, one of an egg-shaped black lingam—prevent any confusion.

Some turn toward garbage, or raw nature, but they can't help making it clean, as in Carol Bove's delicate seashell mobile, with its empty, gold-colored pedestal; the pristinely rectilinear dirt-covered frames of Ms. Ursula's drawings; or Virginia Overton's light box—hung in the alcove leading to *FPFZ*—showing a close-up of human hair. There's taxonomy, as in Candy Jernigan's wonderful mounted chart of the crack vials she found around her apartment over a two-week period in the '80s, *Found Dope: Part II*; and there's locavore-style nostalgia, as in Ull Hohn's misty, golden landscapes, Vija Celmins' painstaking aquatint map *Amérique* or Jules de Balincourt's outsider-style oil painting of a motley horse with travois. And there's the frank fetishization of material, as in Ms. Bove's seashells, or Barry X Ball's beautiful orange calcite bust of snake-headed *Envy*.

So what's the answer to the question? Is this show too beautiful? Is it all too deft? My eyes kept returning to the framework pedestal of Ms. Bove's mobile: careful, perfect, beautiful and empty.

FOR A FEW more weeks at Loretta Howard's elegant new space on 26th Street, you can still see, in "Radical Surface: 1985-1989," some of Larry Poons' most violent alterations of the pictorial plane. Using folded and crumpled paper and pieces of foam—sometimes with an eggshell pattern still visible—Mr. Poons creates, on enormous canvases, exuberantly rough and chaotic landscapes and then subjects them to a heavy storm of drip painting so that, in the end, form becomes subservient to color. The paintings are like figurative portraits of the process of abstraction.



Barry X Ball's *Envy*.
barry x ball

reviews: new york

Michael Scott

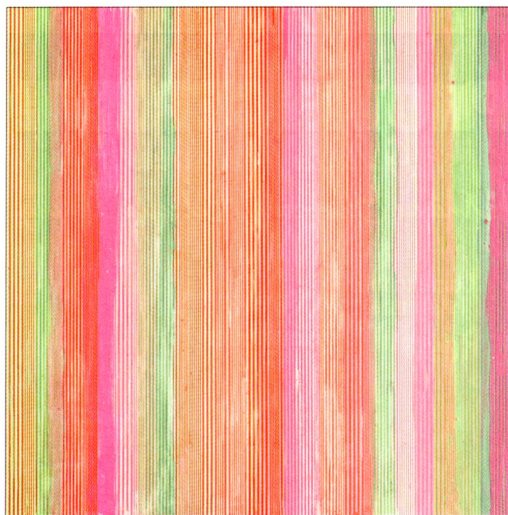
Gering & López

Michael Scott's new stripe paintings keep a variety of impulses perfectly in balance. Relief from the rigorous, unceasing repetition of thin vertical lines can be found in those lines' own edges, all wobbly and wavering. This apparent hesitancy is quite a leap for an artist who built his reputation on identical black-and-white targets—conceptual paintings that question the nature of creativity and connoisseurship.

To be fully appreciated, Scott's new paintings must be viewed as parts of a whole. Individually they can seem decorative, giving, somewhat cloyingly, the impression of a rainbow; others, nearly monochromatic, can be tedious. But as presented here, each work acted as a foil for the previous one. And just as the sequence of five-foot-square, enamel-on-aluminum works began to feel grandiose and off-putting, right around the corner a set of small paintings on wood panels drew us in, so we might closely examine their basic structure.

guished different values of the same color, so that we saw pink on coral next to fuchsia on rose, and so forth. Finally, some paintings juxtaposed hues from opposite sides of the color wheel, drawing energy from the contrasts between green and pink, yellow and purple, blue and brown.

It could seem that Scott was trying to unify a wide range of color theories. Such a grand ambition, embodied in the show's title, "and then he tried to swallow the world," was offset by the simple beauty and accessibility of the enchanting works. —Eric Bryant



Michael Scott, *ATHTTSTW #4*, 2009, enamel on aluminum, 60" x 60" x 1½".
Gering & López.

Art review

Michael Scott, "and then he tried to swallow the world"

Gering & López Gallery, through Aug 21

Come summer, it's common practice for dealers to slap together a group exhibition or, more occasionally, to give a lesser-known artist a break. But a few prefer to embrace the seasonal weather by filling their spaces with sunny work. This year, Gering & López falls into the latter camp, hosting a selection of effervescent striped paintings by Michael Scott. Marking the end of a decade-long absence from the New York scene, Scott's comeback show follows up a series that made aggressive use of dizzying optical effects with one that adopts a more easygoing approach. While persisting with a systematic process, the artist here also embraces the innate imprecision of working by hand, and allows the peculiarities of his medium (enamel) and supports (square wood and aluminum panels) to exercise their own subtle influence on the results.

Each picture is marked by vertical colored stripes that vary in breadth and opacity, forming a shimmering curtain that rewards both up-close and more distant viewing. In declining to "correct" the frequent bleed of paint under masking tape from one stripe to its neighbor, or the splurge of paint over a panel's edges, Scott distinguishes his project from the quasimechanical exactitude of superficially similar work by Op Art originators such as Bridget Riley. What makes Scott's works pop is not only their intense chromatics, which swing from deep orange to shocking pink to sky blue in the space of a few inches, but the improvisational energy contained within their all-too-human surface details.—*Michael Wilson*

MICHAEL SCOTT

The New York painter has had an omnivorous approach to abstraction—from his early experiments with neo-expressionism and targets to Op-art black-and-white stripes to the jewel-toned line paintings here. There are obvious affinities with Gene Davis (king of the colorful vertical stripe) but hard-edged precision is replaced by wavering evidence of the human touch. When the palette becomes too restricted (reined in to oranges and reds or pinks and greens) the effect can be overly stylized—more J. Crew than Ross Bleckner. But at their best, Scott's paintings have a visual hum that's irresistible. Through Aug. 21. (Gering + Lopez, 730 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 646-336-7183.)

ART IN REVIEW

ART IN REVIEW; 'Seven Grays'

By GRACE GLUECK

Published: January 25, 2002

Paula Cooper

521 West 21st Street, Chelsea

Through Feb. 9

Gray, an elegant color that deserves more kudos (think Cape Cod shingles, silver fox) than it gets, is given some homage in this show organized by Dan Walsh, a Minimalist painter who pursues perceptual matters. His seven grays and not-grays, teasingly illusory, are perpetrated by all manner of materials, ranging from yarn to fluorescent fixtures to tiny overall dots of adhesive paper to plain acrylic paint. Each of the seven is viewed in a separate bay.

Bay No. 5 contains a sheet of pegboard enameled in shiny gray; Bay No. 6, a screen of radiator grille backed by twinkling green Christmas lights; Bay No. 7, vertical strands of yarn laid down on wood in repeated color runs, with purple, blue and green among them. Gray at its, well, grayest, is seen in Bay No. 3, a monochrome contemplative void by Olivier Moset that puts the viewer on the edge of infinity.

Outside this more formal investigation, Mr. Walsh has brought in the work of other artists for a free-ranging jam session on color theory. One impressive contribution is Michael Scott's "History of Memory" (1993), an ultra-Minimalist-Conceptual painting on aluminum in which irregular columns composed of short black and white horizontal lines are imposed on an overall bed of finely spaced horizontals in nuanced gray. Another winner is Michael Rhodes's tricky "Untitled," two triangular plexiglass boxes mounted on a gray board and connected by a multicolored zig of paint. Shiny gray film inside the boxes bounces light to break up the zig in distorted color reflections.

And the versatile Mr. Walsh contributes a number of works himself. In "Itten Study" (named for the Swiss painter and color theorist Johannes Itten, 1888-1967), rows of shiny tiles effect a transition from black to white by way of a color series. "Binoculars," a perceptual apparatus that the viewer peers into, blends five different colors with the aid of mirrors and fluorescent light fixtures. Other works about the process of perception range from Matthew McCaslin's "To the Rainbow," in which a humidifier blows steam through light to generate a highly tenuous rainbow on the wall, to Kathy Drasher's untitled octagonal wall piece that leads the eye on a subtle journey from palest orange to rose.

The show tends to be scattershot, with more than a few exhibitors too many. But its quirky, light-hearted approach brightens a tired old subject. GRACE GLUECK

LIAM GILICK: WHAT LED TO THESE NEW paintings?

Michael Scott: I made canvases 30" square with a circle round the edge and a circle in the centre. There were six circles in between. What I would vary were the widths of the lines. They were black lines on white. Paint on canvas. They were very flat, hard-edged. The first twelve were different but then I decided to make them all pretty much the same so you could hardly tell the difference between them. The only intuitive element occurs for me with the first painting then all the others can follow without too much subjectivity. I made forty six of them.

LG. Were they always black and white?

MS. Yes, all my work has been black on white. I am interested in questioning ideas about originality, partly it's reaction against an expressionist period in New York.

LG. What kind of time was that?

MS. Around the start of the Eighties. There was this show *Berlin Art*. I remember thinking to myself that it was strange that although expressionism is supposed to be about the artist expressing originality, the art was not very individual. So when you walked into the museum it was hard to tell who did which or what. It is true that you can always tell one piece from the other, but I wanted to change direction a little and have only the slightest reason to make a piece. I wanted to make work where no piece is better or worse than any other. If you look at Picasso there are good ones and not so good ones, he can have a good day or a bad day, and you can make fairly objective arguments about one piece or another, whereas with late Mondrian for example it is much more difficult to do that. The differences in my work were so slight.

LG. Your work is very optical.

MS. I moved into black and white so as to avoid subjective choice as far as possible whilst still making a flat artwork, and I did have an idea about making the work impossible to look at, yet I consider Op-art to be a failed art movement because it was too wound up with ideas of design.

LG. Why did you not get the work fabricated if you were interested in distancing yourself from the art?

MS. There are levels of distance. Steinbach is more distant from the process than myself in one way, dealing with ready-mades. But in other ways he is very much more involved than I am.

LG. Are you familiar with Allan McCollums work? He seems to be asking why we place value on one artwork or another. Where in society does that value system come from. How do we recognise art?

MS. That is more to do with economics than my work is. I don't think of my work in terms of economic issues.

LG. You talked about dealing with notions of originality?

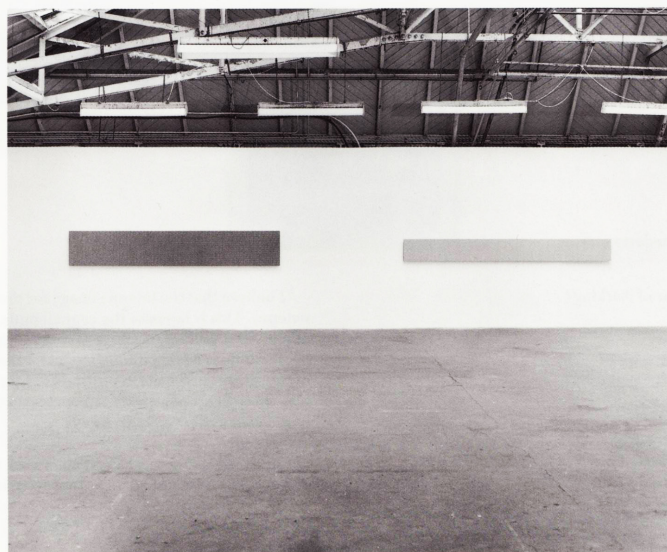
MS. It's more like having the slightest reason to make a new object. I see art as like a cousin to philosophy. You have an approach to art, you have ideas and you make objects and the objects are merely by-products of that thought process. I am interested for these new works to exaggerate the form so that there is an overload of information, but information that is irrelevant outside the piece itself.

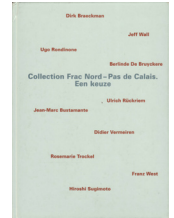
LG. There seem to be just enough lines in each painting for there to be too many yet not so many that the work starts to look like Op-art. The surface is very flat, everything seems a little neutralised. Do you see them as paintings?

MS. I know people will read them as paintings, but I don't see them that way. I tried to keep the paint as flat as possible, with no ridge where the black and white stripes meet, and choose the materials very carefully. I have been using a type of honeycombed aluminium as a base which is held a little way from the wall. I often think that painting has very little to offer apart from a regurgitation of its past, although I admire what Peter Halley has done.

LG. It seems to me that earlier attempts to create distance between the artist and the work often involved a kind of Euclidian Geometry, used to act as a neutralising aspect. You can stand back and say "It wasn't my fault, the circles and squares made me do it." Whereas Halley has said that these things are all loaded with meaning and anyway are probably inappropriate for today. There's a whole new non-geometric set of possibilities, ones that can act for artists in different ways.

MS. Geometric art can be just as academic as landscape painting. I am not interested in romantic notions like that. I want real logical reasons for making something.





Michael Scott

Het schilderij *Untitled* van de Newyorkse kunstenaar Michael Scott (Paoli, Pennsylvanië, 1958) maakt deel uit van een reeks schilderijen met dezelfde afmetingen. Elk schilderij vertoont hetzelfde motief (een reeks verticale banden), geschilderd met hetzelfde materiaal (lakverf), in dezelfde kleuren (zwart en wit) en op een gelijkaardige drager (aluminium). De enige parameter die in elk schilderij gewijzigd wordt, is de breedte van de verticale banden. Deze worden bij elk nieuw schilderij 1 procent breder.

Door de geometrische vormgeving en de afwezigheid van kleur krijgt dit werk een weinig persoonlijk karakter. Het gebruik van industriële materialen en het seriële karakter van het mathematische uitgangspunt verwijzen eerder naar een industrieel productieproces.

In een reactie tegen het romantisch subjectivisme van de neo-expressionistische schilderkunst, die in de jaren '80 de markt domineerde, produceert Michael Scott een soort schilderkunst waaruit elke emotie systematisch geweerd wordt. Het enige verhaal dat het schilderij vertelt, is dat van zijn eigen ontstaansproces.

Ondanks zijn materieel uitgangspunt, legt de kunstenaar hier ook de nadruk op het subjectieve aspect van de waarneming. Wegens de steeds wisselende optische effecten van het beeld, ziet de toeschouwer niet altijd dat wat de kunstenaar geschilderd heeft.

Untitled de l'artiste new yorkais Michael Scott (Paoli, Pennsylvanie, 1958) fait partie d'une série de peintures de dimensions identiques. Chaque peinture affiche le même motif (une série de bandes verticales), peint avec le même matériau (peinture émail), dans les mêmes couleurs (noir et blanc) et sur un même support (en aluminium). L'unique paramètre qui varie de panneau en panneau est la largeur des bandes qui augmente progressivement d'un pour cent.

Au-delà de la configuration géométrique et de l'absence de couleur qui donnent à cette œuvre un caractère relativement impersonnel, l'utilisation de matériaux industriels et la répétition sérielle du principe mathématique donnent à penser qu'elle a été réalisée suivant un procédé industriel.

En réaction au subjectivisme romantique de l'art néo-expressionniste qui occupait les devants de la scène artistique des années '80, Michael Scott revendique un art qui enraie systématiquement toute émotion. En dehors de tout autre élément narratif, l'œuvre se contente de relater sa gestation.

En dépit de son approche matérielle, cet artiste met, malgré tout, l'accent sur l'aspect subjectif de la perception. De par les effets optiques changeants de l'image, le spectateur ne voit parfois plus ce que l'artiste a peint.

Extraits d'une conversation

Michael Scott : Toutes les parties sont d'égale importance. On peut prétendre qu'on préfère cette peinture à celle-là, ou qu'on estime que telle peinture est plus réussie que telle autre, mais tout cela est subjectif. Les lignes permettent de créer une situation où aucune partie de la peinture n'est plus importante que l'autre. Le sujet demeure toujours le même.

Robert Nickas : Ryman a dit que l'oeuvre n'a pas pour sujet ce qu'il faut faire, mais la façon dont il faut le faire. Dans votre oeuvre le "comment" est à peine présent et le "quoi" encore moins.

MS La conviction que la peinture ne peut rien apporter de neuf, sauf des répétitions de son passé, voilà la motivation de cette oeuvre.

RN Certaines personnes sont des peintres dans l'acception moderniste du mot. C'est ce qu'ils sont et ce qu'ils font. Ensuite il y a les artistes qui font "des peintures". Ross Bleckner est un peintre et Peter Halley est un artiste qui fait des peintures. Dans le cas de Ryman cela devient problématique : on a tendance à dire que c'est un artiste qui fait des peintures, bien qu'on ne puisse nier que ce soit un peintre. Mais j'estime qu'il y a une espèce de "peinture" pratiquée par des artistes... et dans un certain sens je pense que c'est la peinture dont nous avons besoin aujourd'hui.

MS Se déclarer "pour la peinture" est à mon avis une conception romantique et j'y serais plutôt opposé.

RN Cette oeuvre n'est pas précisément une simulation ni une récupération et on ne peut la replacer dans la tradition d'une certaine peinture abstraite ou d'Op-Art.

MS Dans ces peintures les effets optiques ont été poussés à l'extrême, au point qu'il devient presque impossible de regarder l'objet... en fait, exactement à l'opposé du fonctionnement traditionnel de la peinture. De Kooning a dit qu'il ne considère pas que l'art soit une situation confortable. Et je crois que cela s'applique à mon oeuvre, pas uniquement au niveau des effets optiques, mais plus encore à celui du spectateur confronté à un groupe de tableaux apparemment identiques.

RN : Il y a une espèce d'honnêteté dans l'oeuvre, dans ce sens qu'elle ne prétend pas à ce qu'elle n'est pas. Nous savons ce que l'oeuvre n'est pas, ce qui nous permet d'entrevoir la façon dont elle résiste à l'interprétation et à la catégorisation. Je pense qu'il faut vraiment faire l'expérience de l'oeuvre. Ces oeuvres forcent les spectateurs e.a. à rester dans les environs immédiats de la peinture. De l'autre côté de la pièce ou tout près, tout juste face à l'oeuvre ou de côté. Les oeuvres déplacent le spectateur partout dans la pièce. Elles sont passives et pourtant agressives. Si vous vous trouvez tout juste en face, vous verrez que ces lignes ordonnées commencent à s'enchevêtrer. On ne peut pas les regarder pendant longtemps. Mais à une certaine distance les lignes reprennent leur place. L'oeuvre a un comportement différent - ou un mauvais comportement - qui dépend de la place où vous vous trouvez par rapport aux peintures. Elles enregistrent graduellement votre proximité. En même temps, vous pouvez regarder ces peintures, aller de l'une à l'autre et ne pas avoir la moindre idée des sentiments de l'artiste, de son humeur au moment de leur réalisation.

MS Le romantisme et la spiritualité sont des notions très séduisantes, mais inventées par l'homme. Je ne veux pas que mon oeuvre parle de choses dont je ne puis croire qu'elles existent. J'ai donc décidé d'adopter d'abord une démarche logique. "Est-ce que je fais de l'art?", c'est le seul souci de l'artiste. Tant qu'on ne se répète pas... car dès qu'une image s'empare de l'artiste, l'art lui imposera sa volonté... tant qu'on croit qu'on fait de l'art, c'est la seule chose qui compte. L'artiste a des théories et des idées sur l'art. On voit ce que font les autres, il se peut que vous désapprouviez l'approche... et cela vous motive pour avancer vos propres idées sur ce que vous considérez comme de l'art, voilà la motivation pour faire de l'art. L'artiste détermine pour lui-même ce que c'est que l'art et l'art lui-même est un produit dérivé de ce processus.