

GERING & LÓPEZ GALLERY

# Art in America

## MICHAEL SCOTT

GERING & LOPEZ

Intermittently since 1989, the New York painter Michael Scott has made black-and-white line paintings in enamel on large honeycomb aluminum panels. Intensely optical, each consists of one or more fields of slender, straight-edged stripes of equal distribution. The black lines initially read as figure and the white as ground, owing to the white of the surrounding wall. Immersive in scale, the paintings soon begin to flicker and buzz, energizing pictorial space in the manner of 1960s Op art works. They build on and transcend familiar perceptual phenomena, disrupting the viewer's physical equilibrium and visual habits.

Scott's process is systematic, more or less. In *Untitled (#3)*, 1989, the cleanly taped-off lines are vertical, the width of a cigar. Both confrontational and seductive, with its illusion of wavering forms, the painting confounds attempts to settle on an appropriate viewing distance. More complex is *Untitled (#15)*, 1990, in which two sets of parameters mesh. (Not immediately apparent in the painting, these parameters were revealed in reproductions of the artist's sketchbook pages at the gallery's desk.) Horizontal lines of identical thicknesses are stacked in bands of different heights, sequenced such that there is no exact repetition, no uniform pattern.

The system that engenders the interlocking regions in *Untitled (1/3 Kilometer-#41)*, 1993, is more recondite still, though the viewer surmises correctly that the work's constituent black lines total one third of a kilometer—a painterly reference, perhaps, to Walter De Maria's famed installation of polished brass rods, *Broken Kilometer* (1979). Segments of the Scott composition advance or recede in illusionistic space according to how bold or fine those lines are, with the finest of lines resolving perceptually into a distant, medium gray.

Although 5½ feet square, *Untitled (#74)*, 2003, consists of vertical black lines about a sixteenth of an inch thick. Subtle variations in the width of the white intervals impart an undulating, curtainlike effect visible at distances greater than about three feet. At closer range, the brain's ability to order the incoming information breaks down and vision goes haywire: retinal overstimulation produces stereoscopic hallucinations and

Maine, Stephen. "Exhibition Reviews: Michael Scott". *Art in America*, May 2012.

730 FIFTH AVENUE  
NEW YORK NY 10019  
TEL 646 336 7183  
FAX 646 336 7185  
WWW.GERINGLOPEZ.COM

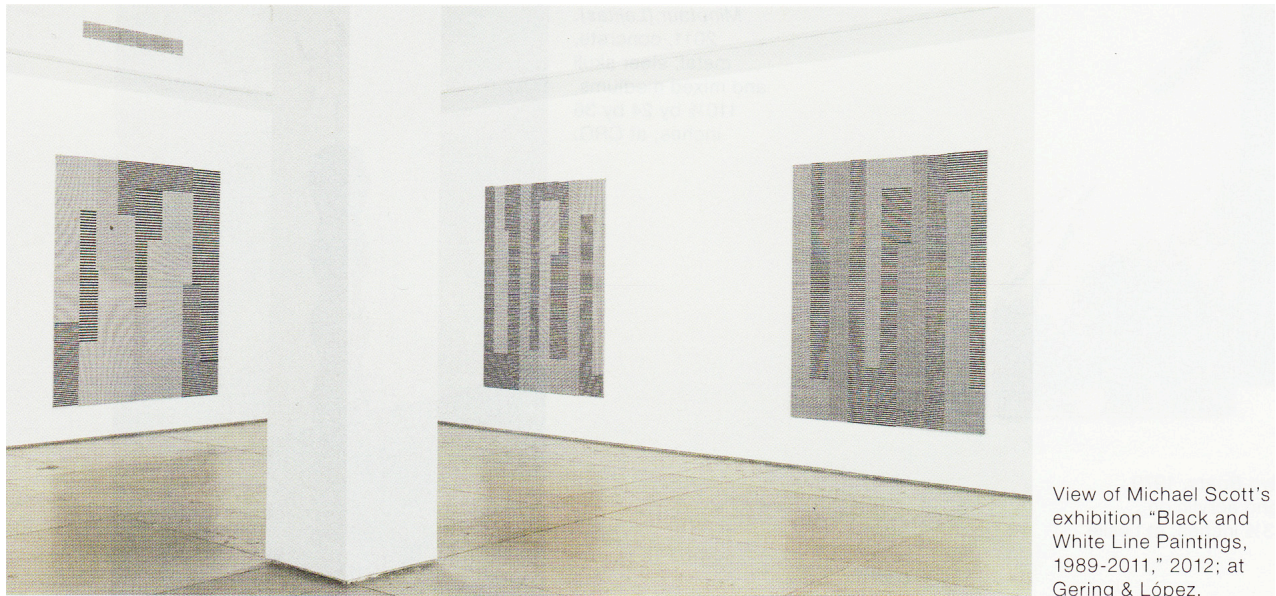
## GERING & LÓPEZ GALLERY

the illusion of chroma. (This viewer experienced the sensation of pale but distinct violet and lime green.)

Departing from Scott's customary meticulous facture, *Untitled (#95)*, 2011, sports black flecks and splatters on its surface and drips around its edges. Its vertical black lines swell in a few places, where the enamel evidently seeped under the masking tape. In these areas, the relative predominance of black implies a figure to the panel's otherwise striped ground; if we are open to suggestion, an image of some sort promises to emerge.

Retina-centric painting is sometimes metaphorically sparse, but it is worth contemplating the implications—psychological, social, even political—of Scott's investigation of the fine, shifting line (or, in this case, multiple lines) between information and illusion.

—Stephen Maine



View of Michael Scott's exhibition "Black and White Line Paintings, 1989-2011," 2012; at Gering & López.