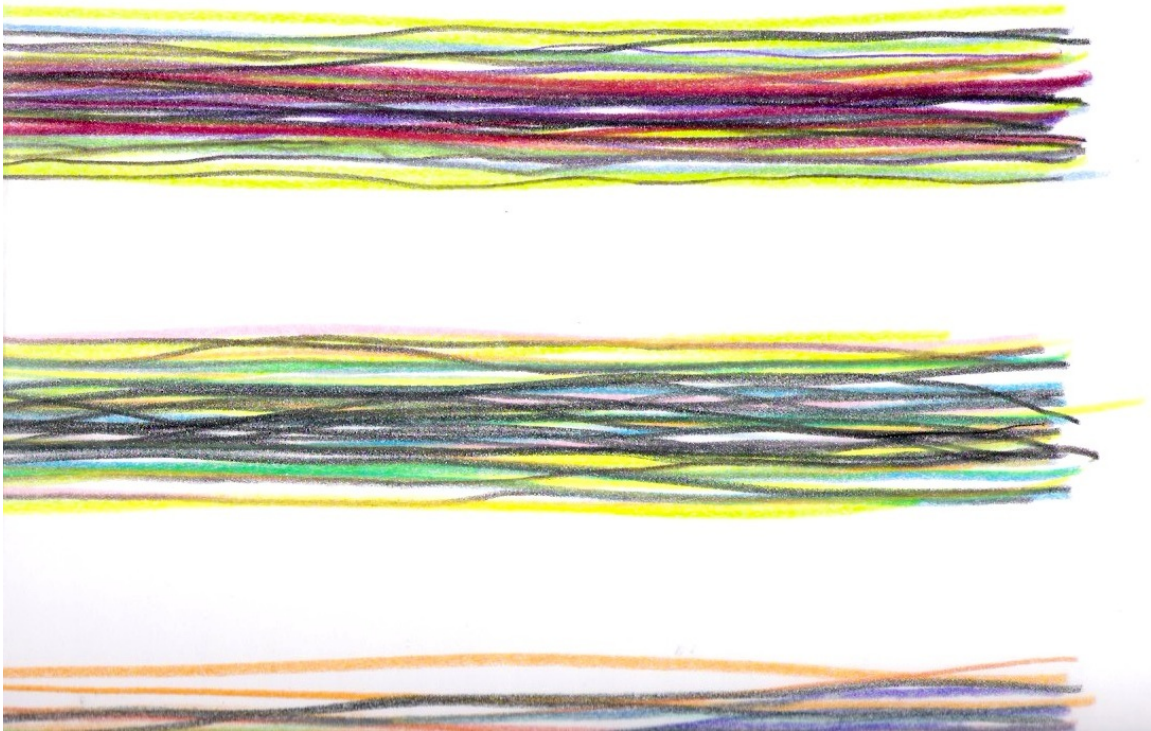


# Michael's Drawings



Part I: One day late in December, Michael had us into his studio to show us a recent series of drawings. These were quiet works on heavy French printmaking paper, gestural drawings of basic forms: a circle, a square, a column, an 'x' or 'v'. The forms were repeated over and over to create a softly layered, woven ground. The colors vary: many of them are shades of grey with a layer or two of color quivering within, while others seem to represent the whole color spectrum.

What felt remarkable to me about these drawings was their quiet confidence. Michael has always been a confident artist, with an unapologetic use of color and caricature. These works felt like magnifications of tiny details from past works: a freckle and a curl from the face of a logo, a reflection atop a koi pond near the corner of a poster, stray strands of hair around a firefighter's temple. I was moved by these new drawings; it felt to me that they had come forth from an inner self to express a humbling theme: letting go.

There are some small studies on vellum that led to the larger works on paper, and on those we can see Michael's graphic expertise abound. The lines are playful and strong, the colors offer a menu of possibility. The larger works feel less graphic. The quantity of lines and their varying weights and colors cause the drawings to radiate. Their scale is portal-like and draws us in: look fixedly at one, and you may sense the shape is expanding and contracting. When

focusing on the singular lines, the forms appear to be in motion, and recall something physiological: pathways in the brain, or impulses traveling between nerves.

On the whole, while the shapes appear self-contained, they also reach toward a beyond. We can get lost in the gravitational pull of these sketches, like a trance. It can take us to another realm and release us back to where we stand, transformed. These grounded explorations help us understand Michael's deep appreciation for place and time—his own, as well as our shared human experience.

Studying these drawings is an opportunity to be with Michael. Drawing has an extraordinary quality that allows the viewer to become very close to an artist's presence, because all of the information is there, line by line. Very little is hidden. Through drawing, we can see time passing, imagining Michael moving a pencil from one side of the paper to the other and back around again; it brings him forth. What an extraordinary gift.

*Analisa Goodin, May 2013*

## Michael's Thoughts

*Part II: I transcribed portions of our interview, attached are some bits.*

I sat with Michael on a Tuesday in December. On this particular sitting (and there were many) I asked if I could bring a tape recorder. We settled in, and his good friend Don arrived. "What are you up to?" Don asked, "Well," Michael said slowly, "there are certain things that need to get put on tape, and I think these are them."

Here are a few of our explorations.

*What does the world look like to you right now?*

On the one hand, it looks like it's coming apart at the seams. At the same time, the world looks beautiful... full of joy and tidiness. I am very optimistic about the future.

*What makes you feel optimistic?*

Well it always happens, there's a kind of cycle, a pendulum swing. As the pendulum swings back and forth, it gives a chance for the earth to shed what it was so tired of doing, and come back in the other direction.

*What does your world look like right now?*

My world is filled with angels, family and friends doing miraculous and dear things for me.

*On Grace*

What's Grace... well, it's not quite love... it could be love, but it's really something different. To really understand and reflect something, it takes grace. For example, what do you do in times of adversity? Chop wood and carry water. What's more graceful than that?

*On Learning*

When we learn, we become equipped and armed with something more powerful than before. If our teachers are right, they can say and do things to you that allow you, and in a sense force you, into a higher state of consciousness and of mind.

*On Dignity*

I've got my friends, I've got my family, they're all looking at me. I better step lively into this good night, I want to show that I have joie de vive, that I'm brave, and that I can do this, that I know what's coming next. The only problem is that I don't feel any of that. I am just blessed by their response to me, and wow. The fact that they love me, and want to take care of me, and make every gesture to make me feel loved and comforted... I don't have enough time to worry about myself, I just have enough time to marvel at the gracefulness of it all, and the blessings that come down from them. It's extraordinary.

*On Travel*

To take a risk, to be involved in something larger than yourself. Open yourself up to danger.

*On Love*

At the end of the day, it's really only about love.