

# ALTERNATIVE PROJECTIONS

Experimental film in Los Angeles, 1945 - 1980

## ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

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### INTERVIEW SUBJECT: Michael Scroggins

#### **Biography:**

Michael Scroggins was one of the founding members of Single Wing Turquoise Bird, a successful Los Angeles-based psychedelic light show. Scroggins grew up in the Valley and attended Canoga Park High. During the 1960s he began spending time in Topanga Canyon with local artists including Wallace Berman.

#### **Videography:**

1971 *Damage*  
1972 *Lose Yr Jobs*  
1972  $\triangle$   
1973 *Countdown*  
1973 *Meander*  
1977 *King and Queen*  
1973 *Resolution*

1973 *Padma*  
1973 *Tucker*  
1974 *Exchange*  
1974 *Dog Plea*  
1974 *For Sam*  
1974 *Corrigan/Lund*  
1975 *Sangsara*  
1975 *Scraps*  
1977 *Rockabye*  
1979 *Drone*  
1979 *Destiny Edit*  
1980 *Recent Li*  
1982 *Nuvudeo*  
1982 *Saturnus Alchimia*  
1983 *Study No. 1*  
1983 *Study No. 9*  
1983 *Study No. 2*  
1983 *Study No. 5*  
1983 *Study No. 6*  
1983 *Study No. 7*  
1983 *Study No. 11*  
1983 *Study No. 13*  
1983 *Study No. 14*  
1983 *Study No. 16*  
1986 *Power Spot*  
1986 *Solaire*  
1986 *California Dream*  
1989 *1921 > 1989*  
2006 *Momentarily* (work-in-progress)  
2007 *what are you looking at?* (edit from 1971/1973 recordings)  
2009 *Adagio for Jon and Helena*  
2010 *Limn*  
2010 *Out of Our Depths* (ensemble performance recording, SWTB)  
2011 *Untitled* (ensemble performance recording, SWTB)

**Performance and Installation Work:**

1988 *Talos et Koine* (live video processing for Michel Redolfi concert, Nice)  
1992 *Mata Pau* (video performance for Michel Redolfi concert, Metz)  
1994 *Topological Slide* (VR installation, Banff)  
2009 SWTB reunion (live lightshow performance, Thousand Oaks)  
2011 SWTB with Jeffertiti's Nile (live lightshow and music performance, Thousand Oaks)

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**Interviewer:** Adam Hyman

**Cameraperson:** Kate Brown

**Transcript Reviewer:** Michael Scroggins, Ben Miller

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**Interview date:** March 27, 2010

**Interviewer:** Adam Hyman

**Cameraperson:** Kate Brown

**Transcript Reviewer:** Michael Scroggins, Ben Miller

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**Cameraperson:** Kate Brown

**Transcript Reviewer:** Michael Scroggins, Ben Miller

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**Cameraperson:** Kate Brown

**Transcript Reviewer:** Michael Scroggins, Ben Miller

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**Interviewer:** Adam Hyman

**Cameraperson:** Kate Brown

**Transcript Reviewer:** Michael Scroggins, Ben Miller

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**Interviewer:** Adam Hyman

**Cameraperson:** Kate Brown

**Transcript Reviewer:** Michael Scroggins, Ben Miller

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**Cameraperson:** Kate Brown

**Transcript Reviewer:** Michael Scroggins, Ben Miller

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**Interview date:** May 9, 2010

**Interviewer:** Adam Hyman

**Cameraperson:** Kate Brown

**Transcript Reviewer:** Michael Scroggins, Ben Miller

## TAPE 1: MICHAEL SCROGGINS

[Micheal Scroggins: In correcting and annotating this series of interviews I was surprised to discover how weak my spoken language patterns were. I understood that spoken language has a cadence and flow that differs from written text, however my heavy use of essentially nondescriptive terms like "whole", "pretty interesting", and "stuff", along with my tendency to replace the traditional word "said" with the "was like" or "goes" of youth culture is not something I was previously aware of --and in fact in the manner of a language snob held in mild disdain. The process of reading and annotating these rambles has been humbling in many ways. I imagine that a fitting title for the transcription might be, *sort of a really interesting whole other story*. I would like to express my appreciation to Adam Hyman, Kate Brown, LA Filmforum, and The Getty Research Institute for making this process possible.

--Michael Scroggins, August 24, 2011]

**00:00:45**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

**Alright. Michael Scroggins. S-C-R-O-G-G-I-N-S. The Michael part is pretty straight forward. M-I-C-H-A-E-L.**

**00:00:56**

**ADAM HYMAN**

**You were born?**

**00:00:56**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

**I was born in Louisville, Kentucky. Or as they say [MS: in the local dialect], Louisville [MS: Luavull], in 1946 June 4, 1946. And I moved to L.A. when I [was] four. So my parents met there in Kentucky, in Louisville and I was first born. My sister came along two and a-half years later. And then they moved out to L.A. when I was 4. My dad had a friend from the Air Force. My dad was in the Air Force but he was in cadets and then got washed out because his heart was-- there was some question about his heart which turned out later not to have anything-- not to be a real problem at all. But, you know, it was a question. So he ended up with the all girls and ended up choosing my mom. They were quite a glamorous couple. Anyway, my father had a friend in the Air Force, Jack Narz who was working in the entertainment industry. He was an announcer for Bob Crosby and did some [other] stuff [MS: later, including hosting quiz shows].**

**00:01:49**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So my dad came out to visit and said “Oh I got to be out here,” and managed to make it. My first impression of Los Angeles at 4 years old was that we came in at night and we came into the lobby of the old LAX and-- it was piston plane era, right. There was a potted palm and I looked at it and said, “Dad! You said there was palm trees and sand. This is just dirt!” I was very disillusioned, you know. But we ended up living at the beach -- Manhattan Beach, in the northern section “El Porto” -- on this old sand dune, so I got LOTS of sand.

**00:02:23**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Tell me the names of everybody in your family.

**00:02:26**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

My father is William, or Bill. William G. Scroggins. My mother was Patricia Ann Staples, became-- Or Patricia Ann Jones, and then became Patricia Scroggins. And my Cindy, [laughs] my sister is Cindy, Cindy Scroggins or Cynthia Jeanne. And that's it. I mean that's the nuclear family.

**00:02:49**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Okay. And then, so what did your father, what your parents get into when they were, had come to Los Angeles?

**00:02:55**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

My father was working for American Airlines. He took his Air Force experience-- because he was washed out, he didn't go through pilot training which is what he was in line for. Jack Narz did become -- I think -- a pilot. But, he got the GI Bill and was able to get a civic aeronautics-- a civil license to fly. But then my mom really didn't think it was safe enough and they really couldn't afford it. He went to work for American Airlines at the very lowest rung and kind of worked his way up to [MS: a top spot in] the company. He ended up a sales executive in Manhattan right toward the end. My dad worked there. My mother became a secretary. She had been an actress in, doing the leads in high school, and had a scholarship to the University of Indiana and I think one other university. And her stepfather said, no, girls don't go to college. Wouldn't let her go off to college.

**00:03:43**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So she ended up then becoming a secretary at a radio station. And then out in L.A. worked in aerospace as an executive secretary. So. [technical]

**00:04:12**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Okay. So what, before college what schools did you go to?

**00:04:21**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

When I first-- When we were living in the South Bay, I went to a school called Center Street School, which I don't remember at all. I think that was in El Segundo. Then they built a new school called Imperial Street School. I remember going there. What I *do* remember, and we'll come back to this I think, but some of my earliest art experiences were around that time. Somewhere between kindergarten and the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. I'm thinking it was 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> grade.

**00:04:46**

**ADAM HYMAN**

So, you go ahead and do that.

**00:04:47**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

So that's where I went to grade school. And then we moved out to the San Fernando Valley. My father said, don't you want a grassy lawn instead of these sand dunes. And I was like, "Yeah! That'd be fun! I can play in the grass!" Not realizing I was going to have to mow the grass and that was the whole other story. We moved out then to Van Nuys which was this sort of 50's suburbs. And so for the-- I did the 3<sup>rd</sup> through 6<sup>th</sup> grade at Cohasset Street School, then went on to junior and high school. We can come back to those I guess, but I'll just mention them now, just to get it out of the way. I went to Cohasset Street School, which it turns out my wife also attended, but many years later, 'cause she was born in 1969. There's quite an age difference between us. But somehow we ended up at the same school. She assumes that she picked up my molecules in the air or something. That's pretty funny.

**00:05:36**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I did that then I went to junior high school at Northridge Junior High School for a couple years. And they opened a new school called Sepulveda so we had to transfer there. Then we moved to the West Valley and I went to a place called Hughes Junior High which is this [MS: which was one of those] temporary bungalow schools. And then went on to Canoga Park High School and almost finished there -- which is a whole other story I can get into as we move along. In terms of my-- this early art experience that stuck with me-- I had a teacher who came and I think she may even have been a substitute. All I remember is we were set up to finger paint and she put on classical music. This really-- probably overtures and rousing stuff, don't remember what it was. But she had us finger paint and she didn't-- at least in my recollection, she didn't emphasize the end product. It was the process. So we were kind of making the music happen visually, dancing.

**00:06:34**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And that's at least how I read what she said. Now maybe I had misunderstood her and she accepted what was I doing and thought it was cool. Or maybe it really was the assignment, but it wasn't about the thing at the end. It was the process, the colors and the mixing and the forms. And so gliding our fingers and swirling to me this immediately had this sense of being able to make visuals dance with music. And, you know, there I was, this 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> grade-- that stuck with me for a long time. And led to where I am today really.

**00:07:05**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Do you recall any other particularly influential or artistic founding experiences prior to college?

**00:07:11**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh yeah. That was my sort of initial one. I was always painting and coloring and drawing. My parents encouraged that. Putting on plays and you know, the usual creative kid stuff that I was really interested in. In junior high school I took an art class and I had a pretty interesting teacher. He was a commercial artist, but he had sort of a broader sense. And so we were designing album covers for jazz records, and that kind of commercial artwork.

**00:07:42**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

And what was his name?

**00:07:41**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I don't remember. It's really too bad. I might be able to look it up. (In high school I do remember I had John Corbeil, who was a really wonderful teacher. He had a big influence on me.) So in the junior high school class though, very encouraging and-- I started doing abstract work using a colored crayon and then putting black watercolor on it to make that stuff punch out. And I was imagining the drawings animating. But I didn't know how to animate. I'd seen Walter Lantz on TV and Walt Disney talking about the nature of frame-by-frame animations, so I had some awareness of it. But I had no access to cameras or peg bars or any of that stuff. I was just imagining what I could do. And through the years I continued to think about projects. I even storyboarded out stuff, was never able to animate it. In high school John Corbeil had a ceramics class where we were doing sculpture. I really loved that class.

**00:08:36      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

He had a teaching philosophy that really spoke to me. Which was that he said-- right from the outset he said, here, if you do the work in the class you get an automatic B. If you have a 4.0 grade average or whatever, if you know, well you could have an A. If you don't do the work you fail. So he was doing blanket grades. And he had been going down to the Board of Education, this is in the L.A. Unified School District. He was fighting all the time over his ideas and his policies. In fact, he took two of my sculptures which I never got back down to show the board. For one assignment he had us do something with clay and a rock. So I did a slab of clay, put a hole in it, made into an arch, put a rock in that. And then I did a tall cone and put a rock on top of that. And at the time that was just what I felt compelled to do. I had no reason why, I just, this was interesting forms and I did them.

**00:09:27      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And it was some years later that it occurred to me, well this is clearly if you look at Jungian archetypes I'm got the anima and the animus. And I'm definitely dealing with that sense of male/female differentiation. It's pretty clear to me in those forms. He may be aware of that and just didn't bring it up, I don't know. I was able then to do sculpture in that class, as well as sort of more traditional throwing pottery and that kind of ceramics. I really loved clay because of its plasticity. I could do forms in three dimensions without having to do the foreshortening that I was doing in drawing. I always had a little trouble with drawing in perspective and foreshortening was a struggle for me conceptually to that work the way I want it to. And so the clay was just the perfect medium. Because it was already there. [MS: It was not an illusion of volume, but an actual volume.] What it was, it was what it was. And I really appreciated that about sculpting. I had worked things out with that class--

**00:10:19      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I was in John Corbeil's home room. His classroom was my home room. Then I had I think maybe ceramics studio. And then I had a study hall. And I would get out of study hall and come into the ceramics studio. And somehow I had one more-- I managed to do four periods a day in my senior year in high school in this ceramics class doing sculpture. And then after lunch I would go to my-- it was geometry and some other class-- and put my head down and sleep. And then go home. I just wasn't interested. And I would go home and go surfing and have to drive from the San Fernando Valley to Malibu or some place to surf. And as I was in my senior year it-- I began to realize that the educational system was failing me. I thought it had-- I mean back in junior high school I was very unhappy. Let me even go back to grade school.

**00:11:10            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So in the last couple of years at least of grade school, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade I was the class clown. I always felt really great if I got the teacher to laugh. I wasn't very oriented toward the subject matter. And I wasn't studying very hard. Earlier in my schooling they recognized there was a problem. And they did some tests and I scored very high intellectually, I was in the 99th percentile and had-- I remember I had an extremely high I.Q. on those tests -- as specious as those tests are! They tested me progressively over the years. Because I remember once in high school I had run into some sort of problem and I was in the principal's office and I got to see my cumulative record. And someone had circled that first score, thinking "Well that had to be wrong." The scores went down progressively. But your I.Q.'s are supposed to stay level. They're not really supposed to go down. So whether it was the cultural aspect or my attitude or the fact that I was just getting dumber because I was so bored--

**00:12:04            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

What it turned out to be--I was underserved in school. They weren't stimulating me enough. I was bored. And I needed that-- I needed a richer environment and there was no way to make that happen in that system. I struggled with that. What I was excited about junior high school-- "This is going to be good. Because this is going to be serious. We're actually going to have a different subject everyday [MS: actually every hour] taught by an expert and now we're getting down to business!" And I got to junior high school and it was like more of the same. We're going over the same material, more than once. It was just-- so then I also got disengaged with the process. And in high school pretty much the same. Unlike my very smart friends who were smart enough to like figure a way around the system, I'm just slammed into it like a brick wall. You know, they were just walking around it.

**00:12:45            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And I was like trying to climb it, or bash into it. I ended up in the dumbbell classes, which were even more boring and it was-- I was completely uninterested in the process. I was interested in art making. And was reading about artists and then looking at artists. Was excited and that was the life I wanted. I had realized since I was a little kid that's what I want to do. I was always thinking of that, but I had other ideas about what a career might be. I could be scientist-- I had a range of things. So, I was failing some classes for the first time ever. I never got F's before. And, I don't know if I want to actually record this story-- I'll just talk about my, the trouble I got into. I stole a blank report card from John Corbeil's desk, filled it out. Took that home, where I had good grades. The one that the school had me take home, I had forged my father's signature and turned that in.

**00:13:48      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Thinking that everything would be cool. I'd get through it all. I got in big trouble. John Corbeil felt like I had abused his trust and he was in trouble. Which is true, you know, I should never have done that. This unethical behavior got me in big trouble. I was kicked out of all those classes. So then I had no reason to stay in school. And I'd been disagreeing with my father over returning to Mexico in-- I failed to mention in the-- my junior year I went to summer school in the University of Guadalajara in Mexico. The University of San Francisco in California sponsored a summer school program there. It was at the Escuela de Artes Plásticas. I was studying Spanish and doing sculpture. I discovered that I really enjoyed the sculpture more. I was in constant discourse, speaking Spanish all the time with other apprentices that worked there.

**00:14:37      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

The maestro was Miguel Miramontes [Miguel Miramontes Carmona (b.1918)]-- I just stopped going to my Spanish language classes. To this day my Spanish grammar is pretty horrible. But I did have day-to-day conversational Spanish. I met the-- with Miramontes I was doing really cool work. I was being able to do my own sculptures. I was sculpting abstractly but I also was doing figurative sculpture, which was sort of the norm. But I was much more interested in sort of abstract sculpture. That was a great experience in that summer school. It was very, very cool. I wanted to go back with Miramontes. I wanted to become an apprentice and work there at the University and learn the craft and be able to sculpt and live in this other culture, which I was so impressed by. It was so different from the culture I was living in. And my father was, no you've got to go to college. The university, you have to become a lawyer or find you know, some sort of meaningful a way to make money.

**00:15:31      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Artists, you can't be an artist. That's just not going to work. You don't want to be a starving artist. You might as well be a ditch digger, you know. Like he would, by the way, he was not interested [in] art per se. And they had paintings and some art. He wrote songs and was interested in music and he also wrote stories but he, visual art wasn't his forte I would say. So, and he certainly thought that it would be, that I was this romantic kid with no clue about how the world really worked. And was going to create a problem for myself. And I can't disagree with him now as an adult. I can see now watching my own son, who is 18, and what his take on what the world was like and how different it is from mine. I could see how that must have been for my father and how worried he was for my survival, you know. But I kind of, to wrap that story up, had that great experience.

**00:16:20            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Then my father said, well no, you can't go to Mexico next summer. You've got to get your grades up. You've got to graduate high school and go to the university, and blah, blah, blah. He hadn't gone to the university. He was a D student who was one of these-- he was very smart. But he was a class clown probably. He was sort of a social butterfly and his father had abandoned the family when he was young. He was eldest. So he had a lot of responsibilities at home. And so he didn't knuckle down his-- one of his, I guess his next younger brother, was the only one in that whole family actually to attend the university and got his degree. So it wasn't in my dad's life, but he thought, obviously-- he missed it. He had taken classes in community college as an adult to better himself and work his way up through his company. He was lucky, because he came into the airline industry at its sort of biggest point of growth into the [post] 2<sup>nd</sup> World War [era].

**00:17:15            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

C.R. Smith, who at American Airlines had arranged to get all these DC-3's that had been used for military transports and there was this whole boondoggle, or what happened. He built a huge airline out of it. My dad was able to work his way up with all the young guys and became a sales executive at a time when you didn't have to have to a Master's or even a Bachelor degree. So in my case he said, "No you can't. You can't go to Mexico." "No, you can't tell me what to do. I'm 17 now. I'm an adult. I'm going to do what I want to do." "No, well no—" The usual father/son struggles but kind of amplified. And because I got kicked out of those other classes, I said well I have no purpose here. I'm done. They told me I should stay in the school system because this is what's better. "The adults have misled me." I was reading Henry David Thoreau and going, thinking "Well here's somebody who agrees with what I'm saying. And he's obviously legitimate."

**00:18:07            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

He's been legitimized so my ideas aren't that crazy. Right. The upshot is one day I didn't go to school. Packed up my stuff and was going to take it down to the bus station. I figured out an escape path to go to Mexico. I was going to get the local bus to the Greyhound Station in North Hollywood and then down to the border, and then on to Guadalajara. Just as I was doing that, my father came home from work early. I had put all my stuff in the little-- He had an Austin Healy Sprite, one of those little bug eyed sports cars, that he picked up in England. I was going to drive that down to drop off my bag of stuff. And he came home. So I like went out the back door. As the front door closed, I came around the side, grabbed my stuff out of the car, and I ran down the street. I actually ran on the lawn instead the sidewalk.

**00:19:04      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Because I thought for sure I would be caught and I would be nipped in the bud and the thing would be over before it started. Well, he didn't notice and I got the buses, everything worked out. I got down to Mazatlan where I had been the summer before. I had done some surfing there and I met some beatniks who were living on the beach. I thought I'd spend a couple weeks and do some surfing, decompress and then head to Guadalajara to the University to see about getting a job. Ended up spending like three months on the beach. Because it was an amazing scene, I got turned on to smoking pot and Existentialism and just a whole other world was opening up for me. So it was-- really, really interesting people. Henry Miller's daughter was there. It was quite an interesting time. Plus I got to surf everyday, which I really loved doing.

**00:19:52      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

For me surfing was an art form and not so much an athletic activity as it was this sort of Daoist harmony with the pattern of the waves and chance operation and finding your balance and harmony in that and extracting this pleasure out of this process that had no sort of productive means other than it made you healthy. So to me it was a very, very interesting form. And over the years I kind of went back and forth with that. And I, well I'll come back to that. This could go on a while. It's a long story. Well, anyway I finally went to Guadalajara. I got the job. I met this guy, Philip Spaulding, III, in Mazatlan. He was heir to some oil money from Colorado. His girlfriend [MS: Linda] had come down. They got married. He and I and a mutual Mexican friend of ours Enrique all went to Guadalajara, got an apartment. I got my job as an apprentice sculptor with Miguel Miramontes. I was working about two weeks. I was not at all discreet about it. I was making, catorce pesos a day, it was like a little more than a dollar a day at that exchange rate. I had a place to live with Felipe and Linda, or "Phil" and Linda.

**00:21:00            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

All I needed was money for food, you know. I could kind of take care of myself. So it was good. Well, one day this little kid comes into the sculpture studio and says, "There's a..." He might have been 14, or 12 I don't know. He says that-- "There's a woman who would like you to do a bust of her. And in exchange she'll do a painted portrait of you." I said "Well, you know, that's-- Thank you that's interesting. But I'm really not that interested in realist sculpture. Here, I'm doing this abstract sculpture here. And this is where my heart is. I'm not interested but thank you." "Oh yeah, but you know, she really would like you to do it." I said, "well have her come see me. And I'll talk to her." "Oh, she's a paraplegic. She can't, she can't go, you know, you have to go see her." "Oh well, alright." so I said, "I'll go with you." You know, he got my heart. So we go out and as soon as --it's one of those typical Latin structure buildings with the big courtyard, you know, a couple of stories.

**00:21:49            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So we go out in the main doors and there are a couple of Generals sitting in a jeep. And the guy gets out. So these Migras guys, are immigration officials, right. "Are you Michael Scroggins?" "Yes." "Are you working here without a work permit?" And like all good criminals I lied, "no, no." "Well, get in the jeep." You know, so boop. So this kid it turns out-- I found out, was a junior detective. They would give badges to little kids and they would go out and rat people out. So he had to get me off the premises for these guys to arrest me. They didn't want to come into the school to arrest me. So they took me off to the jail, which was the Municipal Jail in Guadalajara which was in this building [MS: Palacio de Gobierno] down in this basement. It was like a dungeon. And when you walked in there was this was huge pile of belts and you took your belt off and put it on the pile. And I'm thinking, how I'm going to know what my belt is when it's time to leave.

**00:22:35            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

You know, totally naïve, not knowing, you're not getting your belt back. Right, that's not the way it works. So I was then thrown into this classic jail cell. It looked like something out of a Hollywood movie. Luckily I had a cell to myself. There was a concrete bench [MS: a cantilevered bed slab] built into the wall and a toilet set in a concrete block-- molded concrete, poured concrete. Every time the toilet would start to flush, rats would jump out. These are giant rats. They never came up on the bed. But they were running around. And that was a little creepy and dungeon like. I tried to romanticize it as much as I could. In fact, I really wanted to do a painting of this whole space, because it was beautiful light. I was doing the best to enjoy myself. I was there about three, four days I think. Every day my friends would come and say, we're going to get you out tomorrow.

**00:23:16            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And then tomorrow would come, “No, we can't do it. We'll get you out tomorrow.” They would bring me a little bit to eat, some sandwiches and stuff. One day there's a little trustee kid, maybe 11 years old going around. He had a glue rag, he was sniffing Tolulene. He had a can of watery beans, that's what they would feed you and I would say, “no I didn't want any.” He offered me some pot. He had a little thing of pot. “No”. They left my door unlocked after feeding-- coming by. And I thought, alright, I could make a break for it. I can get out the cell, down the hall, up the stairs. Then I realized - you know what, they're probably just looking for a chance to shoot me in the back or just beat the crap out of me for sport. So I think I'll just stay in my cell. Which was the wise decision at 17, you know. And so I did that. Eventually they came-- these [two] guys came at night. “Okay, you come with us.”

**00:24:00            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I said, “oh, I'm free.” “No, we're going to Mexico City”. They put me on a bus, took me to Mexico City. Because I refused to-- and then he took me-- they wanted me to sign a confession. I said, well, no, I'm going to do that because-- I could read Spanish but even if it was in English legalese, I'd rather have a lawyer. I'm not just going to sign something I don't completely understand. Oh yeah. So then they took me to the American Counsel, he was there. He checked it all out. He said, “oh just sign it. It's cool. They'll deport you. You can come right back. It's not a problem.” Even though the status of the deportation was that I couldn't come back unless the secretary of the government gave me a special permission. He was saying, don't worry about it. They deported me and I thought, oh great, they'll deport me to LA. They took me to the airport and put me on an airplane. I was wearing just a pair of jeans, some shoes without socks.

**00:24:52            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I was barefoot when I was arrested. I had a T-shirt covered with terracotta and Ferrocement and plaster. One of the things we did for Miramontes was help him build these busts. He was doing municipal busts for politicians and stuff. The typical park art sculptures. I remember apologizing to the stewardess. She says, “oh don't worry about what a mess you are.” She says, “last week we had a guy from a print shop and he was really a mess.” So, you know, I was like, not bad. They flew me back to Texas. I was like, “Oh. I'm not going back to California”. They just take you to the nearest border. I was able to call my father and arrange for more transportation to get back. It was American Airlines, I always wondered if he already had arranged somehow for me— them to deport that way, instead of sending me on a bus, or a train.

**00:25:37**            **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

But apparently they put you on the plane and they can close the door and they're done. It was pretty common. But I always had to wonder. I got back from that experience. Now what am I going to do? I'm back living with my parents and my dad said-- well, now I mean this is a little bit later. I decided to go to a community college. I end up going to the University after all. I took a drawing class, because I'm very interested in that. I also took a Cultural Elements of Geography class. And, oh I got a day job, you know, working in retail sales. I was going to school at night.

**00:26:14**            **ADAM HYMAN**

Which community college?

**00:26:13**            **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Pierce Junior College. Yeah. Where I had run cross country in high school, so it was sort of familiar spot. Anyway, that place-- the drawing class was okay, but it really wasn't very inspiring for me. The Cultural Elements of Geography class was really interesting me. In fact, it was the first time I heard the word 'viable'. And I was like, ooh a new word. It's a pretty interesting concept. I was learning and excited about it. Somehow that word really stuck in my head, because I think I didn't know it at the time and so I looked it up [MS: it seems a bit silly to focus on that one moment out of so many moments of expanded vocabulary, but this particular one resonated with me in terms of that early college experience] My uncle had a chance to transfer. He was working for the airlines. He was working for American Airlines. Both my uncles moved out to the West Coast. My father's younger brothers or his two youngest brothers. And got jobs at American Airlines as well. They were working at the airport and living at the beach in Redondo, having a great life. Hermosa Beach, Redondo Beach [MS: Manhattan Beach].

**00:27:06**            **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I got to-- Well I lost the thread because I realized with-- this story was so rambling. Ah, my uncle has a chance to transfer to Hawaii. He said, "would you like to go?" I said, "well, yeah, I'm surfing all the times that I can. I would love to go surfing in Hawaii". I was able-- I was working a retail store in the Topanga Plaza, which was one of the first indoor shopping malls in L.A. I was able to transfer to the Ala Moana Shopping Plaza in the same company. I arranged that and boom, I was out of there with my uncle and I was off to Hawaii.

**00:27:42**            **ADAM HYMAN**

What company?

**00:27:44**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Thom McAn Shoe Store. Sold shoes. Yeah. It was interesting in Hawaii. It was a little bit different scene and the Hawaiian guys-- It was the first time I'd experienced racism directly. I knew that it existed. I lived in this sort of lily white community. We had sort of a Latino community that was a sort of Mexican-American community. I could tell in school some people were-- They called them greasers, right. There was this sort of Pachuco look with the khaki pants and certain shirt. There was styles. It was like the other cliques. There were this sort of Fonzi greaser types, you know, who were really into cars, car club guys. And then there was the soches [MS: a term derived from the word "social"] who sort of dressed up. And then there was this other sub-class, the surfers who wore Pendleton shirts and jeans. As in most school systems, you know, this is pre-Goth but you had some kind of groups people could identify with.

**00:28:33**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I was sort of an outsider. I didn't identify with all of those groups until at one point I thought, well I'm surfing and this surfer look seems to go over good with girls. So maybe I'll just shift and I won't look like such a geek. I adopted one of those styles. I became a chameleon to blend in with the social structure. Why I am talking about that. God knows.

**00:28:55**

**ADAM HYMAN**

It's all good. Because you were talking about Hawaii and racism.

**00:29:00**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Hawaii!! Yeah, yeah. Exactly. The Hawaiian guys would conspire against myself and one of the other, or two other Haole salesmen. They all worked on commission. They would always like make-- To get the men customers where the shoes are more expensive and we would end up have to do the women. I remember you'd do a woman who was like a serviceman's wife, who was totally bored. She would try on like five, ten pairs of sandals without buying anything. The men would come in, plunk down a bunch of money to buy a pair of shoes, and be out of there. So that was-- I wasn't getting as much money. It was a really interesting sort of scene. I ended up with an assistant manager who was kind of [a] martinet. He was an ex-Marine. He was you know, very rigorous about how we had to do things. In those days in retail sales, you had to wear a suit and a tie or a sport coat and a tie, right.

**00:29:51      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Everyone did. That was the uniform. But in this store they allowed us not to wear our jackets because we had to go down to the basement to get stock -- which wasn't air conditioned-- and then run back up. We were always moving pretty fast. So it was cool, you're not going to sweat to death in your jacket. One day, rather than my sort of light searsucker coat I wore in my wool jacket because we weren't going to wear it. I didn't have a belt on. That was my style not to wear a belt, right. The Assistant Manager: "no, you have to have a belt or you're not properly dressed." He had a good point in terms of the etiquette of dressing, but I was like, "no I don't care about that." "Well, then you have to wear your jacket". So it was-- I'm not going to sweat inside this wool coat and ruin it. I'd been working there three months and I was pretty well fed up. I went home for lunch, took off my clothes.

**00:30:34      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Put on my bathing suit, walked down to Waikiki with my surfboard and went surfing. It felt so liberating. I only went back a few weeks later to get my last check. So I just walked out. That was an interesting moment of irresponsibility. Then from that point on I was surfing everyday, not just at nights and weekends. Improving a lot. Meeting interesting people. One afternoon-- well, I met some Kiwi's. There were these two brothers and a friend of theirs who were doing sort of a world surfing trip. They were doing Hawaii and California anyway. They came up from New Zealand on an ocean liner. I got to know them and they were nice out in the break. Then they left for California and they were gone a month surfing California. And apparently Frank and John who were not as responsible as their friend Ronnie, the engineer, were out shopping and missed the boat.

**00:31:27      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

They got back too late and the boat was like, sailing away. So they said, oh! and they had already--, It was their last stop: Vancouver and then the boat was off to Hawaii. They already paid for their round trip ticket, so the only thing they could do is fly to Hawaii and wait for the boat. I met them there. Somehow I ran into them on the beach and they explained their dilemma and I said, well you come sleep at our place. By the way, then I was living in a house with probably ten surfers in a one bedroom flat. A second floor apartment in the back of Waikiki which was called The Jungle. It was sort of the low rent district, where all the people who worked in the hotels lived. Now that was all razed and went highrise. It was too expensive, people had [MS: now have] to come in from Honolulu. But at that time there was this whole low-income neighborhood, which was very dicey and interesting to me. It was a pretty curious place.

**00:32:14            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So there were like ten surfers crashing in this place. It was sort of a pre-hippie crash pad for surfers. So Frank and John stayed with us. The day we were leaving, we were sitting around drinking beer. They used my board in the morning, I was partying a lot and not surfing at dawn. We use to go paddle [out] at dawn to surf so you get the least crowded waves. 'Cause the South Shore was very, very, very crowded place. This was in 1964 coming on '65, probably '64. So they said, well-- And I had told them I had always wanted to see Australia and New Zealand. I remember when I was in junior high I would look at the atlas-- I wanted to be a hermit. I decided I was-- Didn't like this society. This whole culture was a mess. I just want to go live by myself, right. I was looking for a climate that would be perfect. And somehow the rain forest came up as being perfect.

**00:33:00            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I had no idea about the mosquitoes or any of the rest of it. So yeah, I always wanted to see Australia and New Zealand, and they said, "don't give us any of your Yank bullshit. If you want you can stow away with us." I said, "yes." I had a couple hours to make up my mind. But in the end, yeah-- they took my surfboard and got on the boat and my bluey, which is this big denim bag, my dad had given that sailors used to keep their stuff in, right a duffel bag essentially. I got on with a visitor's pass and they tear the pass in half. They keep half, you keep half. And when you get off you give them your half back and they [MS: can match those up and] know that all the visitors who came on got off the boat. So I came on with a few of our Hawaiian friends, this guy named Dynamite, this really crazy Hawaiian guy and a couple others. We were always sort of scamming free food whenever we could. Because we're all surf bums. So we got on. Sat down to this great meal and had the meal. And then my Hawaiian friends got off and I went with my Kiwi friends down to their cabin.

**00:33:49            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

They had a double berth cabin in the tourist class. And they locked the door and I laid down. And pretty soon the engines started and that was it. Launch commit, off to New Zealand. So it was eight days to New Zealand. The thing was, I couldn't sit at a meal, at the dining room because the pursers and stewards knew who was supposed to be at each table. So I didn't-- I had to be invisible. I would go to read a book on one deck, on one side of the boat for the first sitting. For the second sitting I'd move to another deck level and another side of the boat, so they wouldn't notice I was never eating. My friends would sneak me food from tea or a little bit from dinner. But they couldn't bring very much. So I was getting really hungry and kind of crazy. They had barley sugar candies and Orange Tang. I learned to hate Orange Tang. That's all I had. So I was like totally crazed.

**00:34:44      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

At five days out we were in Fiji and I actually got off the boat in Fiji. I took one of their tickets and they took a passport. So if we-- if there was any question getting back on we might actually get back on. But I really wanted to get something to eat so it was great. I got some real food five days out. And then I also decided I should get a haircut. Because I'm kind of shaggy now and I was then. I thought well I look a little too obvious maybe. I want to look more discreet. So I got this haircut. It was an Indian barber. There's a whole a sort of mercantile class of people brought from India to work in the sugar cane plantations because the local people just really didn't want to do it. Like why, we don't need money. We've got fish, you know. Why would work hard. It didn't make any sense for the Fijians. So anyway, this Indian barber shop guy cut my hair.

**00:35:33      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

But he blocked it up the back. And I'd been in the sun everyday for so long I was basically very, very dark skinned. So now I had this big white strip. I felt like I stood out more than ever before. On the boat, you know, we'd see people-- we became known as 'the unsociables' because we kind of didn't talk much or hang out or socialize. We were trying not to have too many questions asked, you know, that was the whole process. It was a great trip. I got to see **WORLD WITHOUT SUN** [MS: a Jacques Cousteau documentary] at the movies, play at the pool everyday. I finished reading James Michener's **HAWAII**. And then I found this amazing book on magic mushrooms. This whole guy took Gordon Watson's hand and went off on this whole adventure with that. I could go on and on. So we got to New Zealand three days later. I walked off the boat and I had to wait for my friends. But as we got into the harbor though I thought, oh this is frightening. The crew members were talking to each other looking at me and talking to each other.

**00:36:30      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And I thought, oh they know and they're going to wait until the last minute and arrest me. I was so paranoid. And, you know, kind of no vitamin B and eating this sugary stuff. I almost jumped into the harbor to swim for it. Which would have been, you know, a red flag which—I'm sure I would've been nailed. But I just got off the boat, as if I was going on to Australia. I had to wait for my friends to come through [customs] with my surfboard and my bluey. So then I was in New Zealand for-- I stayed in Auckland for five months. I got a job building surfboards at a surf shop, this little factory [Atlas-Woods] that was making surfboards. I did gloss coats and color coats. And-- [technical]

**00:37:06**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So to make a long story short-- then I went to Hamilton for a month and built surfboards [MS: at Roger Land's shop]. And then had a chance to travel over to Australia. And did that. [technical]

**00:37:22**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I could probably wrap up that surfing stuff so we get back into the art.

**00:37:24**    **ADAM HYMAN**

[technical]

**00:37:26**    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

So I went over to Australia, spent a couple weeks in Sydney with some New Zealanders. We rented a car, drove up the coast. I've got a lot of stories that I could tell about that, but I won't. Then I got-- I'd run in to Bob Cooper in Hamilton, where I was doing this last job. He was a guy I knew from California. He recommended Hayden Kenney's Surf Shop up in Queensland. So I went working there-- I went to work there and Bob McTavish was there. I ended up living in a house that Bob McTavish had and this--

**00:37:50**    **ADAM HYMAN**

How do you spell that?

**00:37:53**    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

M-C-T-A-V-I-S-H. He is the guy who revolutionized surfing with short boards. [technical]

[ END TAPE 1 ]

## TAPE 2: MICHAEL SCROGGINS

00:01:46

MICHAEL SCROGGINS

So I was just talking about stowing away to New Zealand. I spent six months there. I was ready to leave. I was getting a little, you know, island fever maybe. I was also missing the glassy smooth waves we have in Southern California. It was always windy and bumpy there. Because they have no kelp. I was actually-- I had made arrangements to go back to California and then I decided, you know what, I'm going to Australia. I had run into Cooper and talked to him. And Bob Cooper suggests that I could go work at Hayden Kenny's place. He would, you know-- Say Bob sent you. McTavish was there and this was a whole place to live. It sounded like a good idea. So what I did was I went down to the airport and bought a ticket. You-- At those days, if you were a citizen of either Australia or New Zealand you didn't need a passport to travel between them. I didn't have a passport. I had left the country [as a stowaway] and I didn't have anything. I was undocumented all the way.

00:02:40

MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)

So the-- I put on my best Australian or a New Zealand accent, I mean my best Kiwi accent and apparently I was exaggerating it a bit and the guy was-- "pretty funny accent you have there Mr. Scroggins." And I was like, "oh I've studied aboard." "Yeah, okay." Well they let me through. So it worked. I got over to Australia, spent the two weeks there with some friends who were building surfboards there that I knew from New Zealand. And then these other two guys came over and we bought a car for like a hundred bucks and drove up the coast. And surfed all along the way. It was a really great trip. And then I got up to [MS: actually Alexandra Headland] and Hayden Kenny's Surf Shop had burned down. And so he hired me to sit in the old burned-out shop and answer the phone. That was my very first job for Hayden. I remember I was eating peanuts that were covered in this-- It was like red, Georgia red clay soil there. It was that same era, you know, that same geographic-- Geological era. So I got the job, started building surfboards...

**00:03:40            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Was living in this house with McTavish and McTavish came back. He'd been traveling. There was Kevin Brennan, this great young surfer and this other guy who was a fireman whose name I forget now. We were all sharing this house. He came-- Bob came back and actually took in this sort of porch to be his bedroom. I remember I helped him build this bed that was up against the wall, up against the jalousie louvers. George Greenough came over from Santa Barbara. He was a really interesting surfer who rode these knee boards. He'd call them spoons. He built them that way. And he could surf-- Bob was certain that he could out-surf the rest of us on our long boards. We were riding 10 foot long surfboards. One of the things Greenough and I did-- Well, we built this bedroom for Bob and--converted this room into a bedroom-- Greenough went out and got a wash tub and filled it with sand .

**00:04:31            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

He went and got another wash tub and cut notches in it and stuck it down in the sand and then grabbed a drain pipe off the side of the side of the house and made a chimney that went up and out the jalousie window and this made a little [MS: indoor] fire pit. [MS: The double washtub arrangement worked like a small potbelly stove.] Because it was actually cold there. I thought it was going to be Queensland, and this is, we were in [MS: Alexandra Headland] about a 100 miles north of Brisbane . Apparently in the winter there are cold winds that come off, you know, the mountains from inland. Even though the water is quite warm. So it was cold enough at night to have a little fire. Anyway, McTavish and Greenough were always talking about surfboard design and because Greenough could have this great, these little spoons that he was knee board riding on, he could have a great turning arc, use the energy pockets in the wave for more power and really kind of-- At a certain philosophical esthetic sense [MS: derive the] maximum [MS: potential of] surfing on the waves.

**00:05:24            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So Bob starts making shorter surfboards and that was the revolution right at that point where the short board evolved. And people started taking Bob's designs and improving them and today we have both short boards and a kind of resurgence of the old long boards. I remember one day Nat Young came up from Sydney. He was a world champion and a really amazing surfer. And he had just shaped himself a new board. He was very proud. It was 11 feet long. And he was telling Bob, "oh look at my great 11 foot board. It smoothed out my turns... these big arcs—" and Bob's, "oh no, you got it all wrong Nat. You know it's-- shorter is the way to go." And it turned out he was right. Short boards have really revolutionized surfing. So that was around '65, '66, probably '66 by then. I spent maybe four months in Australia. I was getting letters from the draft board. They wanted me to come in for a physical.

**00:06:17            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I had done one before. I left that story out. My father actually drove me down to that one. I remember saying to my dad, you know, why are you bringing me here. You were the one who gave me CATCH 22 to read and you're going to feed me into the jaws of this beast. Well, that's your duty son, you know, and we have treaties with Vietnam and blah, blah, blah, you've got to do it. So, I went in. I had come up with a plan to try to get 4F'd and my plan didn't work. I was in the induction physical, passed the induction physical into the swearing in ceremony. And this-- By the way, I'm cutting back to having come back from Mexico. This is before going to Hawaii and New Zealand. And at the end they ask, "does anybody have any criminal proceedings against them and blah, blah, blah". So "yeah, I'm deported from Mexico for working without a work permit." "Oh yeah, come over here." So I,--they got tied up in red tape [MS: and I was sent home while they sorted that out].

**00:07:06            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And in that interim before they could schedule another one, I'd gone off to Hawaii and then stowed away and suddenly they couldn't find me. I had disappeared. Oh, that was another thing. So when I went away from home and went to Mexico, you know, I needed to get out of there. I felt like a lot of teenagers, oppressed and you know, I knew better than anyone else and had to go do what I had to do. But I had left a note for my parents under a sculpture I was working on that was on the floor. And we had this linoleum floor in my bedroom. And my mother had never wanted me to do that. She always wanted me to work on a table, not—because she thought I would ruin the finish on the floor. So I thought sure they would pick that up, find the note, you know, and know what happened, where I went. But they didn't. My mom was too sentimental. Didn't move it for a long time.

**00:07:51            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So they hadn't found the note. They did put two and two together. In fact my father talked to a Congressman he knew and had a congressional telegram sent out. And one day I'm in Mazatlan--I'd been there a month or two--and this couple comes and is sitting in the little cantina where I had a part-time job. They were very nice. They had a little poodle . "Oh my parents had a poodle, and blah, blah, blah." The next day the guy comes in. It turns out he's a vice counsel and he has this congressional telegram looking for me. He identifies that that's who I am and wants me to come call my parents. So I was just going to [gestures] disappear again, because I thought sure there would just nab me and pull me back. But I went ahead. My friends advised me, no, no, go to the counsel, and make the call. I made the call. Everything was cool.

**00:08:36            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Then I was actually able to get birthday money which helped me sustain myself that much longer in Mexico. Well, in Australia I decided to leave. So to loop back here. This is getting a little more scattered. The draft board had been writing me letters. They finally-- well once my parents knew where I was-- oh I know what it was. The Mexico thing they didn't know where I was, blah, blah. When I stowed away to New Zealand I told my uncle. Now I had been living with him for maybe three months. The first three months I was with him and then when I quit the job I also then ended up moving in with all these surf bums. So he-- I told him what I was going to do but not to tell my parents. And so he stuck to that for-- to this day he and my father don't agree on what happened there. [MS: In reviewing this I think that I actually did not tell my uncle what I was about to do that my friends may not have confided in him at first and so he really was in the dark about what happened to me and thus in an untenable position.] My father thought he should have told him right away what happened.

**00:09:24            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Because I had arranged to go back to California from Hawaii [MS: in fact my father had already mailed me a non-rev pass to come home]. I was getting island fever there. And I just disappeared. A horrible thing to do to my parents. I mean I just didn't get it. You know, but I thought, well, they'll, you know, I've stowed away. Somehow they'll come down on me. And I didn't want the draft board to know where I was. I think they maybe had sent me a letter in Hawaii. So I was kind of trying to stay a step ahead of them. But I had-- I did get letters from them [MS: once I was downunder]. I was writing them back and explaining what I was doing. And you know, "I'm stuck in-- I stowed away to New Zealand and Australia. I don't have any way to get back." That kind of stuff. They were really stupid letters. It's a long story but one day I was disillusioned with my life in Australia and I decided to go back to the U.S. I went down to the local cop shop and turned myself in the dawn hours, you know, just after dawn.



**00:11:50            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So they took me aside. Got my name and number but somehow-- I forget what happened maybe they interviewed me. Then I went to stay at my uncle's house. A few days later there was a knock on the door and two guys in grey suits were there. It was the FBI. They wanted to interview me. I didn't want them to come in the house so I went out and sat in their car. Did their interview and that was cool. So then I'm back in California, right. I'm living with my parents, again. I'm like oh wow this is kind of crazy. And I got a job back at the same shoe store. So I'm back in the retail sales in the Topanga Plaza. I'm thinking, you know, this is full circle. I don't really want to be here. I'm going to have to figure out something. I really thought I would head back to New Zealand. It seemed to be a good plan. But I was kind of curious this whole flower power thing was starting to happen. Maybe this was '66, May of '66. Maybe, June when I got back. [MS: In retrospect it was probably April as my passport was limited to expire at the end of May.]

**00:12:46            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And I'm working in this shoe store and these beatnik kind of people come in. Right. They definitely seemed Bohemian. There was something about them. I could tell. And so I said, "oh where you from?" They were from Topanga Canyon. So, oh. I always had driven through there and there was this guy John [Raymond] with a sculpture studio and I knew there was sort of an art community. And it was a little bit more rural and not like the boring suburbs. I really did not like the suburbs. So, this is where I want to go to live. So they told me about a house that was available. It had just become available. So I drove up there and went to that house. I just remember these three big dogs came out barking at me and this young woman came up. She was almost 10 years my senior. Actually 7 years I just recently found out. This woman, Sylvia, she came to the door and she was sleepy [MS: my arrival had interrupted a nap] and had on this 40's house dress. Very romantic, interesting character.

**00:13:32            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

She chilled the dogs, invited me in to tea. I said, I came here to look at this house. She says, well, there were some junkies living here and they got busted so I took the house. But I used to live in the house next door--this little cabin. You could have that but you have to take this dog. This little dog, this little terrier it was like a year old. This scruffy little dog [MS: named Littlebit]. So I said, okay yeah. So, the story is I got that house.

**00:13:53            ADAM HYMAN**

How are you covering the rent?

**00:13:54**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I couldn't afford the rent on this house, this cabin. Because it was-- this is 1966. It was \$50 a month. Who could afford that? \$50 a month. So I got a roommate, who was the Assistant Manager at the shoe store, Joe Kelly, who was an interesting guy. He'd been a runaway at 14. His father had stabbed him. He had this amazing life. He was a guitar player, he'd hung out in the coffee house scene in Florida with Neil, Fred Neil. And had learned a lot of music from Fred Neil and...-- really interesting guy, Joe. So we-- he became my roommate and we shared this little one-bedroom cabin with-- there was sort a bedroom that had the bathroom next to it. And there was a little entryway with a kitchen in the hall. And then another room with French doors that went out onto a little wood balcony. It was a nice little cabin. In fact it was owned by Honest John Cretoria who was [had been] a 1950's wrestler who wrestled with Gorgeous George and stuff. I'd seen him on TV. He used to wear overalls and had a big handlebar moustache.

**00:14:55**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

He had a hot dog stand at Muscle Beach by the Santa Monica Pier, Honest John's Hot Dog Stand. So I rented my place from Honest John. And that was pretty cool. Sylvia lived next door. She had recently broken up with her boyfriend, Fred, who was trying to make it as an actor in Hollywood. They had met as waiters and waitresses in Big Sur at the Big Sur Lodge, the Redwood Inn and I guess it was-- Redwood Inn it was. They came down to L.A. so Fred could make it as an actor. He was struggling and struggling and really not getting anywhere. And she's just hated the whole Hollywood scene. So they broke up and she went to live in Topanga. And she took this house with this guy Joe who was a cook. He was gay but she was kind of using him as a kind of beard to keep guys from moving in with her.

**00:15:46**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

"This is my brother Joe", so she could be independent and be active and not get sucked in to a relationship because she didn't want that. She'd been in a relationship. She just wanted to experiment. So I would go over with-- hang out with her every night. She didn't use electricity. She would just have candles burning and they'd use electricity for the music. They would have Mahler playing and Joe would be painting these incredible things. He was a bit crazy. He was a mad painter. Really intense character. And she would tell great stories. She had, instead of going to-- she had dropped out of college and gone to Europe and hitchhiked around. She ended up selling the CHRONICLE--what is that Chicago paper--on the streets, you know. Really interesting stories. One of the stories she told me that amazed me: She was living in Greece. She had a cave. This old man gave her cave on Crete. On the opposite side of the main thing.



**00:19:18            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Because it's this rare aluminum head on a steel block, blah, blah, blah. So her head gasket had blown. So we're sleeping together and suddenly I realized I had this intense erotic attraction to her, you know, just-- always before she was like way beyond even, you know-- it was like on a pedestal somehow. I didn't think of it, her that way exactly. But now it was like, oh, yeah. I would love this woman to be my lover. But I didn't do anything about it because I didn't want to offend her or break our friendship. But apparently the vibe must have spoken to her in some way because when we got back to L.A. after three days there [MS: in Morro Bay]-- gosh these are pretty personal stories. I'm going to skip the details. But, we became lovers and her friend Joe came home and apparently he'd been very jealous of the fact that we were up there.

**00:20:09            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

He didn't believe her story somehow. He thought something was up. And she explained to me, well yeah, he's gay but he's got this sort of mother thing for me. And so he was just enraged and jealous. He actually came-- he was yelling at her and I stepped between them and you know, "don't yell at Sylvia." And he just POW, roundhouse decked me. I was down on the floor. I was a pacifist but I was like ready to kill him at that point, you know. But I just stayed there, chilled. The upshot is she moved into my cabin with me. We had to put her brass bed together. It wouldn't even fit. I remember that first night she said, "now don't fall in love." I said, "oh of course not." But over the months I was completely crazy about her. I thought she must be the same. But she wasn't, you know. I was very young and immature and she loved my company and blah, blah, blah. Eventually she got a van and some money and decided to leave and go up North.

**00:21:01            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I was heartbroken. But you know-- it was an amicable breakup but I just really was so attached and kind of mixed up by it. I survived it. It was just fine. We became friends later. So as she went back up North she ended up about a year later running into her old boyfriend Fred and they got back together. And then he started working for her father and the City, doing the BART tunnel under the Bay Bridge, under the Bay, and made a lot of danger pay. They got enough money to go off to Italy and he finally got some work in spaghetti Westerns, came back to L.A. Long story short, he ended up getting to play Henry Miller, one of my heroes, in HENRY AND JUNE. This is Fred Ward. And Sylvia Tambellini. They had a son Django, who was just an amazing kid. I lost touch with them. They are split up now but I've been trying to find Sylvia, because she's like 70 now or something you know. I'd like to be in touch with her.

**00:21:57            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Alright, so, let's back to me.

**00:22:00**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Are you discovering—Yeah, are you discovering art then?

**00:22:03**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Alright, art. I was always making art. When I was in Australia I was painting. I had large sheets of tempered masonite and house paint, latex house paints that I could paint with. I was doing these large color fields on the paintings. If you think of like a Turner painting of the sky, but without any reference at all. Just those skies. It was that kind of diffuse energy fields that I was painting. Mostly in pastel sorts of colors with some intensity. Maybe like a Rothko without any figure at all. It was all about ground. I didn't keep any of those. So I don't have them. But I-- that's-- I was doing that and I was surfing and I was writing stories and stuff. And when I got back to California I got that house in Topanga Canyon. I was fairly interested in the work that George Herms was doing. And Wally Berman was living up there. This was-- there was this whole scene.

**00:22:58**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

They were a little older than I was, so I wasn't part of that circle. But I remember one day-- There was a little cafe there called the Canyon Kitchen that Susan Acevedo ran. I would go there for breakfast. And Wally would be there. And his friends. He had done these posters. He had two posters that were yellow with the-- like the Verifax collage things. It was-- lithographic posters. And I admired them. He ended up giving me one. Oh, here's the first day I met Wally though was kind of an interesting story. I had that job, remember. I came back to California. I'm back in this shoe store. Finally moved up to Topanga so I'm not living with my parents anymore. But I don't have a car, because I didn't want to pay the insurance. I was, you know, in sort of this semi-voluntary poverty. So I was hitchhiking down to the shoe store everyday to work. And I had my suit on and it was hitchhiking. And this guy pulls up in this old station wagon.

**00:23:58**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

It's Wally Berman. He has long hair and he's wearing this sort of Cherokee Indian-looking shirt, you know. Kind of like flour sack cloth, that Shirley had made for him. The dashboard is all collaged and I was like-- I loved collage and dense work. I remember commenting-- he had a photo strip hanging on the front and it looked like a young John Lennon. I said, that looks like a young John Lennon. Oh, that's my son, Tosh. That was my first direct meeting with him. It was a really interesting one. After that I, you know, approached him in the café and stuff. We could talk. He gave me one of those posters, which is missing. I had a roommate who seemed to collect collectibles at one point. So I've lost most of all that stuff, which is really sad.

**00:24:43**

**ADAM HYMAN**

How would describe Wallace Berman?

**00:24:45**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Really warm, easy-going. Very cool, smart. Just a very lovable character. Complex but probably I wasn't aware of that complexity as much, because I was in a very simple mind. I'm still fairly simple minded. But even more so then. He was very charismatic without being gregarious, you know. He was reserved but cool. He was just very, very interesting. He told me about the painting he was doing on the rock [Topanga Seed] and stuff. I didn't go up to the house still, I don't think. I don't think I ever went to his house. My friend Jeff did go up there a few times. I liked that. And I really liked George Herms' work because of the collages and combines and I had— I was very fond of Joseph Cornell's boxes and the sort of-- the mysterious objects. I was always collecting old things. I was making my own boxes at the time.

**00:25:44**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Dean Stockwell and Russ Tamblyn, they were all kind of part of that circle. Oh-- Sylvia had a friend, Ben Matthews this black guy who was a bass player, who had been in Lexington [U.S. Public Health Service Hospital] a few times and had been able to play with Coltrane and Bird I think too. He was an interesting guy. He had moved onto a commune up at the end of Skyline Drive in Topanga. And Sylvia told me about that. So I went to check out that commune. It was pretty cool. So after she had left and I kind didn't have any reason to stay in that house. I was kind of loose. I decided to move up to this commune to live. There were about ten people living there at the time. It was-- The commune had been set up by Evan Engber, whose this guy was a really interesting character, who had been married to Suzanne Pleshette at one point and, you know, become more of a merry prankster. So, a hippie dropout. He and Norman Greenbaum and Bonnie Z had a band called The Dr. West's Medicine Show and Junk Band.

**00:26:47**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And they had a one-- they had [MS: --were--] one-hit wonders. They had "The Eggplant that Ate Chicago," which was a big hit on the radio at the time. And they had toured the country. They came back and they thought things were going well. They had a hit on the radio and the record company said, okay you owe so much money. Well "wait, wait, why do we owe you money?" "Well, because you know, the tour cost this much and you know, record sales aren't that great." So they disbanded and Evan got 11 acres at the top of this place in Topanga for a year, for \$11. And his-- he wanted to do a social experiment. Anybody could come there and live. Right. No-- and yeah that's what it was. It was a big ranch house and big dining house. And then a dining hall area and some bunks, some bunk houses up the hill. So I went there and the idea was we were going to have this agrarian commune.

**00:27:33      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I was really taken by it. Billy Harper was raising bees. They had a billy goat and a mamma goat. They were milking the goat. And I was like, researching how to make cheese. It was this great romantic fantasy that we're going to live on the land. And the place was a hard-scrabble soil adobe. We tried to plant a garden and it was just useless, you know. So we turned into more of a semi-urban commune, you know. We'd make music every night. Evan had this great selection of instruments. Mridangam and gongs and tabla. And a wash-tub bass which he had in the Medicine Show. I learned to play the wash-tub bass but I took it into a kind of a different realm-- Sort of more of a bass berimbau the way I played it. That story actually will lead more into this art history.

**00:28:26      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

This social experiment went well. What started out to be kind of ten people trying to, you know, figure out a way to live on the land in this romantic way, became more and more people. And since we were so close to the San Fernando Valley, high school kids out for the summer came up to live. And this is the Summer of Love. So it was kind of blown-- it grew really big. I didn't mention when I went up to San Francisco with Sylvia, this was '66. We ended up in Haight Ashbury. And she said, well this used to be a gay neighborhood, now it's the other whole hippie thing. It was amazing, all the crash pads and the Diggers. None of that had stuff had hit the mass media yet. So you weren't aware of it in a larger sense. But there was this amazing scene of interesting people going on. And I found-- got drawn to that later, and went back to visit on my own a few times.

**00:29:13      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So on the commune... Evan was a former musician. He had been a student actually at USC and ended up in the 'hood with the brothers in the park playing conga drums, more than going to school. He hadn't been interested. And he wanted to follow his own path. He's got a really interesting life now. He's a hydraulic engineer doing riparian habitat reconstruction. Really interesting stuff. So Evan and I and some of the other people in the commune talked about putting together some kind of a psychedelic carnival. We wanted to take a show together and put it on the road. Somebody donated an old generator and we were going to have a rock band. And I was trying to figure out how to do liquid lightshows. Because I'd been interested in that kind of stuff since I was a kid. I mentioned the finger painting before. And then I was doing storyboards for animations I wanted to do of abstraction based on jazz music.

**00:30:10            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Never able to realize those ideas. And I'd been-- I can remember as a kid I would sit on the banks of the Ohio river. My grandfather had the oldest wood frame houseboat, the Mickey Finn out on the Ohio. And I would visit there in the summers. And I would sit on the banks and just watch the water moving and get mesmerized by this, you know, undulating patterns and just sort of go into a reverie. I always was interested in that. It was one of the things that informed my thinking about abstract movement. I can also remember with my other grandmother sitting out in the parking lot outside her church, you know. Waiting for her-- grandfather to come out and the water streaming down the windshield and the light projecting patterns. And I was really interested in that flow and that pattern. So I was thinking, how could I make projectors that would do that kind of thing. And so we were going to put this show together.

**00:31:00            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And then Evan said, hey I've got this friend over in Tujunga, Hugh Romney. He's got this place. Let's go over and visit him. And so they were up on top of this mountain, Doty's Hog Farm. This guy Doty said, look you guys can live here if you just take care of my hogs and feed them. So they had taken that over. And Hugh was a standup comic, had been on the circuit with Lenny and those people, you know, Lenny Bruce. Interesting guy. And that's where I met David Lebrun and Helena Lebrun. So, we went over there to visit and the idea was we would combine our two communes. So ours was called The Ranch [MS: located at the end of Skyline Drive off of Old Topanga Canyon Road]. And then there's was the Hog Farm. So we were going combine and it made kind of sense. But I really didn't want to live in the really dry smoggy Tujunga area. I really liked the Santa Monica Mountains. And that bothered me. And then they decided they had this plan. They were going to take the carnival and tour the deep South.

**00:31:53      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I thought, that just sounds like a really dangerous place to go. I had all these sort of Hollywood illusions of rednecks and outsiders not being welcomed, you know. Which is a stereotype for a reason I suppose. As it turned out they took their tour and they went North, they went up to Ann Arbor and, you know, through places like that. So, the Hog Farm started doing lightshows. They-- Helena Lebrun had learned liquid lights with Elias Romero, or A-LEE-AS is more properly, but we called him Elias. She learned liquid lightshow technique from him. And he had learned from Seymour Locks who was a professor at San Francisco State. And Elias was a student there. So he learned how to do liquids. The whole story there is-- I only know this secondhand, but Locks had a chance to do some kind of performance to open a new media arts building that they had and he figured out that he could put, using overhead projectors-- He wanted to something like Laszlo Maholy-Nagy had done with light machines-

**00:32:56      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

The stuff that had been going on in the '30s. So he figured out that you could put paints and different kinds of liquids on an overhead projector stage and do kind of action painting in real time. And Elias picked up those techniques and started doing his own shows. At some point Helena Lebrun met him. Elias, by the way, also was friends with [Bill Ham], Ben Van Meter and--oh, another guy whose name just escapes me [Tony Martin]--got very interested in doing light projection. They all ended up projecting for the Trips Festivals and the Merry Prankster Acid Tests and eventually what became the Ballroom scene and the Psychedelic Ballroom scene in San Francisco. So that's where the sort of the psychedelic lightshows were born. There's another thing going on, of course, in New York with Ronald Nameth and the Plastic Exploding Inevitable with media projection. So I met Helena there and Helena and David got a place in Topanga. So I was visiting there.

**00:33:51      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

In fact, one day Elias came and did a lightshow outside. They just stretched a sheet in the trees and he projected onto that. Just doing single projector-- single projection, very slow and interesting. And I was really taken by that. So to cut to the chase, one day Helena says, hey Michael, we're-- Hog Farm is doing lightshows at the Shrine Exposition Hall for rock bands. And you should come down. The Cream is playing this weekend, and blah, blah, blah. I said, great Helena, let me do that because I want to learn this stuff. Evan was now part of this group but our commune wasn't. And I had moved to another house in Topanga. And so I went down to visit Helena and she-- They were rear projecting at that time, behind the stage. And the Cream was out front playing. And there was several other bands on the bill that night, I don't know. And the Hog Farm's technique was a lot of projections and kind of a big hodgepodge all over the place. And there was some other people involved besides the Hog Farm.

**00:34:49      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And so I projected a liquid plate with Helena and that was really great. And then there's this beautiful young girl there as well, that was somehow a friend of Helena. And she would project. We'd take turns. And I was smitten by this girl. We ended up going down and dancing and stuff. And then I couldn't wait until the next concert two weeks later to see her again. We ended up together for three years. It was a beautiful love story. So I started projecting the liquids with Helena. And the Hog Farm was taking their show on the road, this whole circuit that they were going to do. David Lebrun made the Hog Farm movie based on that trip. So the other people involved in the lightshow were people who had been living in this house in Hollywood called the Crest Hill house. Jeff Perkins was one of them. Jon Greene. Peter Mays I think was living there, if not he was certainly associated with them all.

**00:35:43      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Scott Hardy I think was there too. So that group-- To go back, this lightshow group which named themselves Single Wing Turquoise Bird. It was based on Jeff Perkins on a ride to a meeting opening, I think it was, some book of the Vedas and putting his finger down and hitting a line and looking at it and it was Single Wing Turquoise Bird, so he said well that will be the title. I think maybe they were going to have a meeting with John Van Hamersveld. Well, these rock concerts were being put on by a group called Pinnacle Productions, which John Van Hamersveld, the art director which I knew from having done the-- In those ENDLESS SUMMER posters and as art director of several surfing magazines, I knew of him. And then Sepp Donahower and this other guy, and one or two other guys, Gary and-- I forget his name. But they were business students at USC who proposed, let's put together this production company.

**00:36:38**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

John was working at Capitol Records doing graphics [MS: he was an Art Director] so they put together a production company to do Psychedelic Ballroom-style dances at the Shrine Expo Hall in L.A. They had a lightshow but John wasn't very happy with the quality of that lightshow group. So he started searching around and I think somehow he got in touch with-- I don't know if it was directly with the Hog Farm, but somehow the Cresthill house [MS: located on Cresthill Road in West Hollywood] people were-- I don't know that history because I wasn't involved in it at that point.

**00:37:09**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

We're getting it with Peter Mays' talk

**00:37:11**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah. So they'll be some overlapping there. When the Hog Farm went on the road David Lebrun went off with them. But he left behind a lot of his material. What we called the Lebrun loops, which are these wonderful radial symmetry iconography pieces, single-framed white on black, which is perfect for lightshow stuff. So there was Jon Greene, Peter Mays, Jeff Perkins-- I think Scott Hardy wasn't involved at that point, he'd disappeared. And I got involved and Rol Murrow was also involved I think. We started projecting separate from the Hog Farm. We actually were able to move the projection platform out front of the screen and project onto a single flat screen. At one point we had the V screen. It was complex. So because I had learned liquids from Helena and I was able to get a hold of a projector, I don't remember how I got my first projector. If I got it from Scott Hardy or from Helena but I had a Fresnel overhead.

**00:38:11            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

For the Shrine shows we had to rent Transpaque projectors from a place in Monterey Park [MS: The Transpaque Jr. 6000 overhead projectors featured a large offset axis ellipsoidal mirror rather than a Fresnel lens and were made by Projection Optics Co. of East Orange, New Jersey. I believe that the company we rented the projectors from was Technifax –one of the projectors I now own has an embossed metal Technifax label affixed to it]. We had to drive way out to Monterey Park to get these things. And we had a budget of I think \$1,200 for a show for a weekend. We'd take half the money and pay rental on these bright [MS: pieces of projection] equipment. We needed Mark II Xenon movie projectors which I think Bill Moritz got out of USC, I'm not sure we rented them or not. But we needed the Xenon projectors for the brightness for the 16 and we needed these 1,000 watt overheads with the spherical [MS: actually ellipsoidal] mirror to really have enough light to pump-- To fit the screen in the Shrine. Our studio was at Joe Funk's litho studio, it was a part of the pot shop which was on Sunset and-- Like 3<sup>rd</sup> [St.]and Sunset [Ave.] in Venice. Just you know, blocks off of Rose [Ave.]. That was this old industrial steel building. Rol Murrow actually made a documentary when he was student at UCLA called The Tin Shed [MS: actually THE TIN SHACK.

**00:39:04            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And Joe Funk had this litho studio in one part of it, and The Pot Shop was the other half. Sam Francis was doing litho stones there. We were setup so we could project across the stones up onto to a stretched screen at night. And that's what became our rehearsal space. I don't know how that got acquired. But when I got involved with the lightshow and when they [MS: the Hog Farm] went on the road, this was the place where we got together to jam and rehearse.

**[END OF TAPE 2]**

## TAPE 3: MICHAEL SCROGGINS

00:00:29

MICHAEL SCROGGINS

So, alright, so-- I was meeting these people, setting up, I think I failed to mention that the girl I met through Helena was Rachel.

00:00:36

ADAM HYMAN

Rachel..

00:00:39

MICHAEL SCROGGINS

Rachel Ray. And we were together for, I'm sorry, that's, oh what a great slip that was. Rachel Humphries was her name. She [MS: later] married Tim Ray. We were together for three years, almost got married. Then she ended up with Tim Ray, the son of Nick Ray for about 10 years I think. And she was Rachel Ray all that time, not the Rachel Ray that does the cooking stuff. Now she's married to Paul Berliner and so she's Rachel Berliner. And they have a company called Amy's Kitchen. They do really great high-quality frozen foods and other kinds of prepared organic foods.

00:01:15

ADAM HYMAN

Oh.

00:01:15

MICHAEL SCROGGINS

They're vegetarians. Yeah, alright so, Rachel. Wonderful person. And her mother Eleanor, really, really very smart woman.

00:01:24

ADAM HYMAN

Alright, I want to you take back one second though.

00:01:27

MICHAEL SCROGGINS

Good.

00:01:27

ADAM HYMAN

Which is-- and give an overall reflective notion, which is how outside or part of the main stream of L.A. were all these activities of the communes, the lightshow, the various people you were meeting. I mean how much did you really feel like you were really small and isolated subculture. Or how much did you feel like you were interacting with the greater culture and was it both ways or whatnot?

**00:01:58**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

That's a very good question. I had a sense that we were both outside of mainstream culture and also kind of connected to at least the underground or the Bohemian or the art community of L.A. So I never felt that we were outside of that so much. There was a sense-- you have to remember this was the time when a lot of people were taking LSD for the first time. And that was a catalyst to revolutionize and change how people thought and what their place was, and what social possibilities were. And that certainly was my case. In '66 I had, did my first trip in that little cabin actually, that Honest John rented me. It was very introspective. And so-- I wasn't aware of the deeper traditions probably in L.A. The Theosophy and, you know, what had been going in the '30s and there was clearly a, for quite some time, in the history of Los Angeles, a history. And I was literally outside of that. As a high school student we actually went down to gallery row at one point and went through some galleries.

**00:03:05**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So I knew there was that scene. I don't think I was particularly aware of the Ferus Gallery until later. But as I was in Topanga and there was George Herms and Wallace Berman and a few other artists, I felt sort of connected to that scene. And in the short order I became aware of Bruce Connor and the work that he was doing. So that had some connection. I think I saw that as a kind of outsider art. But it was definitely sort of threaded through some point of the larger art world. Because I hadn't gone to art school, I wasn't particularly concerned with that aspect of art or a careerism of the art world. I just wanted to make what I made and it kind of didn't matter. [technical]

**00:04:03**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So I was making what I made just sort of being compelled to make it. And at that point in my life didn't have any sort of interest in gallery shows. It was living art that I was involved in. But I understood there was a history and that I had read about. In high school I was reading art history books. And in junior high school. In fact, I remember I did a scroll for a presentation, instead of a report I cut apart a paperback art book and annotated that into this scroll. The teacher really loved that because it was sort of out of the main stream. So, just to cut back-- so in '66 I was living in this cabin with Joe Kelly, who played guitar as well as Assistant Manager of the store. Joe ended up meeting a guy who lived just up the street from us named Doc [Eric Hord], who was a guitar player for Barry McGuire [MS: --and also The Mamas and Poppas--] who was a folk singer who had a hit called the "Eve of Destruction." And they had some things-- Joe actually ended up playing with Doc. They were jamming a lot.



**00:07:23**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

1966. And we went every Saturday night. We got high and just got to see these incredible movies. And turns out, you know, that Thom Andersen and a lot of people were at that same time. Peter Mays was definitely—[DEATH OF] THE GORILLA probably showed there. I'm not sure if I saw it. So by '67, '68 when the light show company formed I was already kind of in-- I had seen a lot of really interesting work in that cinema. I didn't know of any of the artists at that time. I mean in Topanga there was, you know, Wally Berman and George Herms, but it wasn't, and I wasn't as connected to this cinema world. [technical]

**00:08:17**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So that was interesting and then as I got involved with the lightshow, we were projecting using these works. We were grabbing any kind of work we could. It was sort of a collage. You know, Stan VanDerBeek had published something in FILM CULTURE about the Cultural Intercom. His idea of taking things out of culture and reprocessing and collaging them. So there was this is sort of cinema. And I had been very affected by Bruce Connors' work. I really, you know-- A MOVIE, that kind of blew me away. So this-- I had been working in boxes and assemblages of a kind. So this notion that you could [do] this cinematically was interesting to me. Taking the materials and reprocessing and re-contextualizing them. And the lightshow itself was all about re-contextualization. So we would go to the Santa Monica Library and they had this great collection of films from Pyramid [MS: and also The Creative Film Society if I am not mistaken]. We could check those out. We had a friend at UCLA. I'll let the other guys talk about how that all happened.

**00:09:17**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

But because of the optical printer and the contact printer, we could make prints off these library films. And then use them over and over and over. So we were able to get Fischinger [et al]. All this stuff that Bob Pike and Angie Pike had, I think, was available there. So we really got a lot of material. And so we were able to pirate that stuff and combine it into the show. In some cases we actually knew the artist, like Burt Gershfield or Pat O'Neill, they would bring us out-takes. In fact, when we started the shows at the Shrine they could show up with a can of film and say, I'm with the lightshow. And get in for free. And we would get their material and get to project it. So it worked pretty well. And I think Burt was actually involved in the lightshow as a projecting member at a certain point early on when the Hog Farm was. And that's really-- I came in after several concerts. I'm not sure exactly when I was "an official part" of Single Wing Turquoise Bird. Or, you know, projecting every week, or every other week.

**00:10:13                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

But I had missed a couple of concerts. So Burt was around but I think he had sort of dropped out. Pat was never really a member of the show, but he liked it and gave us footage. So we had stuff out of 7368 or whatever that film stock is, I can never remember the numbers. And other people had films. John Stehura had his amazing computer film, which we used every week. And sometimes we would thread the film through multiple projectors so it would be delayed in time. We would get Kenneth Anger's. We had a copy of INAUGURATION OF THE PLEASURE DOME. So we could play that. And if you thread the film through three projectors it would be at different point in time and you could have a different size of the frame, with a zoom lens or an anamorphic lens. So you were seeing the same material but offset in time. So, and then blend it in with the slides and the liquid projections or whatever else we were doing.

**00:11:01                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So that was an interesting project.

**00:11:02                    ADAM HYMAN**

I thought you meant a loop coming out of that and going...

**00:11:05                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I guess it would come off the take-up reel. I think it would come off the feed reel, right. Go through one projector, go to the next projector, come in, go through the gate and then be looped up and then over into the next projector and through it's gate. And finally onto a take-up reel. It wasn't truly a loop but it was running, the film was running through three projectors so it was offset in time. It was pretty interesting project. We did that for Bill Moritz at the Occidental College. He had asked us to do a lightshow there for one of his classes. And in the room that we had it was a very long narrow, it wasn't Herrick Chapel, it was some kind of chapel room though. But it was too long a throw for our slides and our overheads. So we just got nine projectors and we ran different films and overlapped them that way. It was a unique approach.

**00:11:47                    ADAM HYMAN**

What year was that?

**00:11:48                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Probably '69. I'm not really certain.

**00:11:51                    ADAM HYMAN**

And Bill was teaching film at Occidental in '69?

**00:11:54                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

It could have been '70.

**00:11:54** **ADAM HYMAN**

I don't know. No, I didn't know him that well.

**00:11:58** **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, he and Beverly O'Neill were teaching there at the same time. And they both I think got canned because they stood up supporting the students who were anti-war, against recruiting on campus and I think it caused them a little political difficulty. You could look into that and find out.

**00:12:09** **ADAM HYMAN**

Well, I can't do it in oral, I'll just... Alright, because I've also got to remember when Chick [Strand] started at Occidental. Do you know when that was?

**00:12:18** **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, I'm not sure.

**00:12:20** **ADAM HYMAN**

Because that was around that time. But I forget whether she was brought in as the replacement, or something else. A side story. Okay, let's move on here.

**00:12:29** **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

So we were doing this kind of kinetic collage of this dense montage using any films we could get our hands on. Francis Thompson's NEW YORK NEW YORK. There was a microscopic film WONDERS IN MINIATURE. You know we just-- whatever seemed to be interesting we would grab and use. I mentioned the INAUGURATION OF THE PLEASURE DOME. It was kind of interesting because one night at the-- when we were rehearsing at the litho shop. It was a very cold winter night. Anais Nin came by and I think Sam Francis brought her, or I'm not sure who brought her. Gene Youngblood there that night too, I think. And-- I didn't really know who she was. I knew Henry Miller, or who he was. I didn't know him personally. I had read his stuff in high school. THE TROPIC OF CANCER was the first one I read. And so it was interesting to meet her though. And she and my girlfriend Rachel had got a rapport. So she actually came back to visit Rachel and brought some of her books. At the time it was sort of like a vanity press. It was very limited.

**00:13:31** **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

The journals were being made available. So I learned more about Anais from reading those. It was very interesting.

**00:13:34** **ADAM HYMAN**

And was the Single Wing work that you did, the first work that you did of like a public presentation nature?

**00:13:49**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

That's probably true. I would say, in fact if you want to sort of track art that gets played in an official place. The shows we did-- we did the rock shows but then the Santa Barbara Museum of Art would have been the first sort of really legitimate, you know, thing. We also, probably before Santa Barbara we did a great show at the Cinematheque 16. But yes, I would say so, in terms of being shown in a professional art context.

**00:14:13**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Oh no no, that was not the question I was asking. I wasn't asking about Single Wing per se. I'm asking about you personally. Was there anything you did with Single Wing, the first things that you ever did that were public.

**00:14:24**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yes, I would say so. Because up to then the paintings and the sculptures and the assemblages were very personal and private art. Never exhibited. Never even tried to get shows. Because I wasn't so interested in that at all. I just wanted to make art. I didn't really care about exhibition. Which is sort of interesting, because how do you learn about art, unless it's exhibited, you know. There are many people doing personal art. Wally of course did shows. But after the Ferus debacle I guess he kind of backed off. And was kind of underground. Of course, you know, with Duchamp pretended not to do art for a long time, though he did. But they were [MS: at one point a] part of that system of gallery exhibition. And that's how we know of them and they were very interested in doing that at the time. So but I, it just didn't occur to me, you know. And I just was making work in my naive way and was very happy with that.

**00:15:16**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So I would say, yes, the Single Wing shows were the sort of first public exhibitions. And I really was very interested in that. It was a great process, what we were doing. And I was doing overhead transparencies and slides. We shot stuff. Once again, this sort of collage. We'd take things out of a popular magazines, out of LIFE magazine, the whole FAMILY OF MAN collection, shoot out of a book. All those very evocative images that have some sort of cultural resonance were what we were interested in working with. So we did that with transparencies and Jon Greene was the other liquid projectionist with-- overhead projectionist which meant we did liquids. With Single Wing and he and I worked at the Joe Funk's litho shop together and he taught me what he had learned from Helena. I learned a little bit from Helena and she'd been teaching Jon, so then it came to me as he taught me how to do this stuff.

**00:16:08**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And I think Scott Hardy was gone at that point. So then-- So I really enjoyed working with the representational imagery as well as abstraction. We also had more or less abstracted photos or photos that were objective but, you know, close-ups, things from the JOYOUS COSMOLOGY the book that Alan Watts did with a lot of photography of pattern. Sort of micro and macro photography. Working with the liquids was especially interesting to me, because of all this stuff I'd been trying to do since I was a kid. Going all the way back to those finger painting experiences. Because you could-- in moving the liquid in real time and especially when we were working with the pop music, you're responding to the sound and you're kind of dancing with the image. So it's another way to think about producing abstract work. Later I started working silently because I wanted to, you know, [MS: understand that] the gestures that I was making to be totally coming from what I was doing and not in response to this other stimulus.

**00:17:13**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

But I did really enjoy also responding to the live stimulus.

**00:17:21**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Then, a bit more on the technical side here. Like what materials really precisely were you using when you're doing the liquids and so forth?

**00:17:28**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Well in the liquids, we had clock faces. We had these glass dishes, they were essentially clock crystal faces, clock glass. And they were plano-convex usually they had a flat area and then they curved up. So you had the flatness and the curve.

**00:17:47**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Where you could place a smaller inside a larger one. Sometimes you had just the single dish. And you put a layer of a colored oil. We used this synthetic oil called di-butyl phthalate, which we called phthilate. But it's apparently phthalate. Di-butyl phthalate, which I still can't say it right.

**00:18:07**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

How do you spell it?

**00:18:07**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Di-butyl, di-butyl, I'd have to actually write it out. The phthalate part is P-T-H-A-L-A-T-E. It's a plasticizer and it's been used in cosmetics because it's got this viscosity that really made it a great medium. And then people realized it was also an endocrine mimetic and so it's kind of been withdrawn from the market for those uses. But it was in makeup and it was inside baby pacifiers that babies could chew on. You know, that sort of stuff. And we used to get all over our hands all the time. In fact, I would sometimes, well, I guess I can mention that now. In projection I would sometimes use a cardboard shutter so I could flash the images off and on at specific rates. And I could reveal and unreveal the image. So it was a kind of percussive thing. And then I'd put the card in my mouth and go about to do something else, and then take the card out. And the moisture from my lip would have attached to the card so the skin would rip off.

**00:19:14**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And then a little bit later I'd be wiping my mouth with the di-butyl phthalate and it would burn. So to this day I'm imagining these giant mushroom tumors growing out of my lips. But so far I haven't had any problems. And then we had, so we had this plasticizer, this synthetic oil, if you want call it that. And we would heat it and put aniline dyes into it. Really intense colors. We got from a company called Seven K Color Corporation which did dyes for Technicolor. And that's gone. So I can't get those dyes anymore. I only have now the dyes that Helena Lebrun gave me and I think when I was doing something in the 1980's. So I just have a little bit of those dyes left. I have to find another source and find out if they're going to be the right colors and the right saturations. If it's an oilsoluble dye it should be okay. But I just don't know. So we had the dyed oil. We also used clear mineral oil.

**00:20:06      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Because it was cheaper than the di-butyl. And then we had water and we had colored water. We would dye it also with the same dyes actually, so they were I guess water-soluble too. And then we would use glycerin and we also would use Doc Martin's colors. Because they had these great transparent watercolors that you could drop in. They weren't light fast though, so they would fade pretty quickly in, on the projector. So glycerin, water, alcohol and the oils in the plates. And you worked them in different ways. So if you put the oil down in a plate on the base and--sort of islands of it--and then use the colored water, you could sort of let it flow and the oils would float on top, but also would stay stuck to the glass. The di-butyl was good, because I think it actually had-- It adhered to the glass a little better than mineral oil would. And so it could stay there. And then you had these patterns flow along. So that was one kind of plate you could do, was just basically colored oil and colored water. Or perhaps a colored oil and clear water and then a gel over the outside of the projector.

**00:21:11      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And it was important to gel for a couple reasons. One, you got a saturated color and you needed to be able to mix down so that things would overlap well. Because we were projecting multiple projectors you had additive color mixing. And so you had to have dark areas for other things to show up or it would all just be washed out. Another type of liquid plate we did was to take a colored oil and then clear glycerin and put those in a plate and put another plate on top and then on that one put colored oil and colored water. And then with the glycerin if you pushed down, the plano-convex plates would press against each other. You could squish the liquid down. And then as you rotate the plate, you could pull it up and that pulling would cause this tearing pattern through the glycerin, sucking the oil in. It would do these fractal-like patterns. So we didn't know about fractals yet. But they were clearly the same sort of self-similar branching procedures.

**00:22:07      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I thought of the way ferns grew or crystallizing water, you know, that kind of thing. So it was a quite wonderful thing. And then depending on the colors you had on the top and how you tilted it the colors would mix and add. So you had a very rich palate of highly saturated color. These dyes and the overhead projectors gave you color gamut you couldn't get off of film. Or off of, you know, any video or slides. It was really, really intense. I think today color gamut is a little better in digital video. So maybe some of the colors that were unique could be had. But I really didn't see the same thing in other media. It also had a very, very high resolution, and which was nice. So we would work with the liquids. And I had two projectors and Jon had two projectors. I worked out a system. We had these large variac dimmers, variable transformers, wire-wound transformers to dim the projectors. The bulbs were wired separately from the fans. And I worked out a system with pulley and rods so you could just use your knee and sideways fade up and fade out.

**00:23:11      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So you could have a liquid in motion and just fade it in and move it around and you know, and then fade it out with slow motion. Instead of sloshing it and-- to let go, to release a hand to go do something. So we would work those liquids. There were other kinds of liquids as well. Jon worked with this stuff called Crystal Craze, which was a special plastic compound that you would put on, people paint on the backs of aquariums in the '50s. They would crystallize and it had saturated color. So they would create these sort of fantasy paintings on the back of an aquarium. That was the main market for Crystal Craze. So as this stuff dried it crystallized out like frost. But it had colors. But what Jon would do and also before him, I think-- I forgot his name already. I was mentioned it before. Anyway, the other guy, Scott Hardy, was a master of it. But he had a deeper dish that had water in it. And you pour the Crystal Craze on top and it would swirl.

**00:24:11**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

You know, that technique of oil that's used a lot of end papers, it looked a little bit like that kind of a technique. So it was marbleizing as you worked with it. And it had a really intense smell. It was pretty toxic stuff I think. In fact, you can't get it anymore. It's been withdrawn from the market because it's too toxic. So, well, but Jon was brilliant at that. And he'd take a rubber tube and blow on it to control, you know, just off a camera, so to speak, off, outside the projector stage light. You could affect the flow of the liquid that way. So it wasn't about just setting up an automatic process and watching it happen. Although, what happened in that automatic chemical reaction was important too. But it was about directing it. So what I loved about working with the liquids— I didn't do the Crystal Craze much because I didn't care for that. But the other liquids it was the fact you had this automatic process, this natural process that would take place. That's not in your control, and at the same time you were directing it and controlling it.

**00:25:08**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So there was a nice balance between this random stochastic or whatever you want to call it, aleatory phenomena and your own will to kind of direct it and shape out moved. So you weren't-- And that was something I loved in action painting and abstract expression. The way Pollock's work happened. You know, there's control and randomness. Sam Francis was the master of that with his particular kind of stains. So, you know, you...

**00:25:36**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Were you thinking in terms of replicating those visual structures or processes of painters in your use of these performative media?

**00:25:50**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Not initially. But later on I was. And I developed...

**00:25:53**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Can you refresh what I asked as well. So we don't hear me.

**00:25:57**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Alright. The question was about the performative media and in doing so we were looking at what painters are doing, trying to recreate what they did. And essentially no, not in the beginning. But as time went on I developed a particular technique that did do that. Or I was very aware, I'm sorry, very aware of what Sam was doing with his painting. And the way that I was working with this one particular plate I developed was a ground of clear di-butyl phthalate and then the colored di-butyl added to that. And it would diffuse in a certain way that reminded me-- It was somewhat similar to what Sam was doing in painting. And I remember showing it to him and asking what he thought. And it was a little too close maybe. But he was, you know, was okay with it. But I realized that I didn't really want to be mimicking that. I just wanted to be able to maybe expand upon it and incorporate aspects of it. But, you know, the idea of recreating another artist's work in another medium is not so interesting.

**00:27:03**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So it was something I didn't really want to do. But definitely I was informed by, you know, what was happening with that. There was a range of stain painters who had that freedom to work with that. So and it was Helen Frankenthaler as well and Morris Lewis and what Sam was doing and other painters. Definitely I was aware of and informed to some degree what I was doing. But I thought of it as kind of a parallel rather than a copy.

**00:27:39**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Okay. So Single Wing. Oh – and have we gone through your various forms of technical....

**00:27:45**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Technical. Now, let's see.

**00:27:49**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Otherwise we can move on to, well continuing the history of Single Wing. I just wanted to ask it.

**00:27:53**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Well, you know, one of the things that I did in terms of developing plates. Because I really originally started doing what Helena showed me, and what Jon Greene had learned from Helena and showed her. But we began to try to push it and discover new things. I just mentioned that I did a plate of clear ground of a di-butyl with just the colored oil added to it and allowing it to flow and stain. I started doing those as a solo performance. When we would do our-- Well I mentioned the rock shows before the lightshows. Let me come-- Let me just say that we started off doing the rock concerts. But then we started doing shows in our own studio and later at other venues like Cinematheque 16 or the Santa Barbara Museum of Art, Loyola or whatever. So in these shows that we worked with our own music, we could use music from La Monte Young or Terry Riley, Steve Reich, or whoever we wanted. The, I would do a solo section, usually silent, for a while we were working with some music that Max Neuhaus made, which was a version of Cage's piece, FONTANA MIX. So he had FONTANA MIX - FEED.

**00:28:59**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Which is a feed back version where Max Neuhaus put contact mikes on cymbals and other percussion instruments and then just cranked it up until it began to oscillate. So he was using Cage's score but making it his own through this process. And that music had a kind of a drone quality to it. In fact, I remember when I was first hearing it, it seemed like a fairly undifferentiated drone. There was this sort of this overall wall of sound. And over the years I began to realize it was very complex and full of change, you know, that at first I didn't notice. I remember also being fascinated by Ad Reinhardt's black paintings because of the subtle differentiation. At first it seemed like a single field of black, and then you realize, on no, there are these different squares. And they're slightly different colors. I enjoyed things that were right on the edge of perception from an aesthetic point of view. Alright, so the-- this stain painting I did as a solo. So that was one kind of thing.

**00:29:53            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And that's the stuff that looked a little bit like what Sam Francis or other abstract expressionists were doing because it shared certain-- or Paul Jenkins, although I don't really care that much for that work. It shared something with that. I also developed a plate which was just a clear mineral oil or di-butyl on a thin layer of water with a surfactant. And it would cause the oils to glob up and come together. And then using a circle of confusion [MS: or more properly dark field technique] by putting a wheel across and half blocking the image, you got a bas relief-like effect, a very strong relief. Kind of like an optical microscope where if you tilted a mirror a certain way of looking at paramecia or some other kind of you know, protozoa, you could bring out the details by having a light at this angle. And you get a chromatic aberration that makes it interesting colorwise. So what sort of monochromatic, it's got just a little bit of color to it. I worked with that. And that looked a lot like to me like quicksilver or I could do out of focus and like clouds. So there would be these sort of associations that you could make to what it did.

**00:31:00            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Probably the reason I developed that monochrome plate was when we were doing the rock concerts in the rock halls, we had two different occasions where we got to work with the Velvet Underground. And for the Velvet Underground we determined we'd do an all monochrome show. No color at all. In fact, for each of the bands in the rock concert era we tried to do a very different kind of set. So we weren't just always the same stuff, not some kind of wallpaper, but really instant cinema, developed and moving through a range of changes. In fact, we would work with recordings. We knew what the headline band would be. Let's say it was going to be The Who. So we'd get "Happy Jack" and we'd listen to that and think about we'll try these images, those images and we'll shoot new material. Every week we tried to prepare for the week to come, and make it fresh. I remember when we did that for The Who and they showed up and they're were doing the "Magic Bus."

**00:31:51            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And with the whole other set of music. So none of our material quite matched what we thought it would be. There was never a one-to-one correspondence. It was really more of a feeling tone. So for Velvet Underground I worked with black oil and clear water. Because we wanted to do a little bit of liquids. But we mostly worked with dry materials for their show. So we had the overhead transparencies. And I know, Peter Mays and Jeff Perkins had shot a lot of stuff of Sarcophagi and marble sepulchers and stuff. We worked with that imagery. It was an amazing show. The thing that I mostly remember about both of them. But the very first one that really stood out was we used rotary shutters. We made these strobe wheels, we called them. That we could vary speed of, to create flicker. And when you have multiple slide projectors and overheads doing this flickering, things mix in an optical way they create an illusionistic quality that was very hallucinatory. You couldn't quite tell what you were seeing and the mind would sort of fill in details. Very, very interesting to vary these speeds, these strobes rates.

**00:32:57            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So the Velvet Underground show, their Hindu crescenda [MS: without listening to the tape myself I cannot figure out what I was saying here, but it was not “their Hindu crescenda”(perhaps it was “ending crescendo”]. This was when John Cale was playing with them. So he had his electric viola and there was this amazing drone. It was the first time I had experienced a full wall of sound. It was incredible. And the band just boom, stopped. And the lightshow was just still going. You know, just as active as it was with the music, with this hallucinatory stuff. And then we realized, oh they're done. And we stopped. And there's another pause. And it seemed like three seconds or so or more. And then the audience started to applaud. I mean everyone was hypnotized. I mean the music and the lightshow together, it was just, it took people to another space. You were just kind of, you know, entranced. That was a strong experience for me. The recollection of that. So working monochrome was important. Developing techniques. Experiencing those--experimenting with the strobes was very important.

**00:33:49      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

At one point the Sam Francis Foundation purchased for us some strobe wheels and motors. These Bodine motors with Minarik controllers which allowed us more precision. Before that we were working with drill motors and variac transformers just to change the speed of the strobes. So we had Alan Keesling was projecting his slides and he built a rig with these rotary shutters. And we also had rotary color wheels. So we had the color gels or filters that could spin as well and create color changes. So adding movement through the scintillation was fairly important technically. And one of the other things we could do, we would take the same image and off-- on our multiple projectors but offset in space, maybe one would be out of focus. You have to think way before Photoshop and After Effects and those kind of things. Where a lot of the techniques we were using actually are in those kinds of tools. Because of what you can do with them.

**00:34:43      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So offsetting an image. Doing a positive and a negative reversal and getting in them to strobe and changing the phase of that strobing. It was all very important. Jeff Perkins developed a great solo performance, which was part of our shows, where he would just have four projectors with circles. And he would project them concentrically at first so you had this kind of expansion-contraction. And taking them out of focus would give them a kind of depth. And then he could offset them as well. And get this kind of loping motion, all very abstract. But especially wonderful. So in the later years of the show when we were doing our personal shows, where we invite people to just to come and see them in our own loft, Jeff's solo pieces were just astounding. Really, really good. I guess to talk about the Single Wing process is important too. Because if you had, you know, five or six artists, sometimes nine projecting at the same time you had to develop a sort of sensitivity. If it was going to be at all interesting.

**00:35:44**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

There was a sensitivity to what you did. So you didn't, you weren't just throwing things on the screen. You were responding to what was there. And there was a sense of context and-- both symbolically and formally that you could move through and develop. And over time we kind of developed sets that worked together. And we kind of just knew what would happen. And we were always improvising but with a certain kind of sensitivity and restraint. One of the stories I used to love telling is that at one particular performance I was doing, a certain image of an 8x10 transparency suggested itself to me. I think, oh that would be the perfect thing to put there, this transparency. And I turned around and went to the file, flipped through it, couldn't find it. It was like, ah, we misfiled it. That was so stupid. Turned around and it was already on the screen. Because Jon Greene had been a step or two ahead of me and already grabbed it to put up.

**00:36:33**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And that indicated to me just how tight we were getting with what we worked with and how it functioned. So, you know, Jeff Perkins and Alan Keesling would do slides. Later on Larry Janss joined us and he would be doing slides. And they would sort of take turns. Jon Greene and I were doing the liquids and the transparencies on the overheads. But we were never always all projecting at the same time. Sometimes we would all be projecting at the same time. But quite often you had to lay out, wait, prepare something new and then come in. So that there was a kind of change. Just as in a musical improvisational group, you're not always all playing at the same time. You're taking solos here, you know, different mixes of things are happening at different moments. So that was pretty important to us.

**00:37:17**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

And how long did you remain involved with Single Wing?

**00:37:21**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

It was several years. It seems like a really long time. But it was actually pretty short. It probably from...

**00:37:26**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

What were the...

**00:37:26**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

'68 to '70. You know...

**00:37:30**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Can you please say what.

**00:37:32**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

So my involvement with Single Wing Turquoise Bird lasted several years. And it was probably really only from maybe early 1968 into 1970. And the reason I stopped in '71, the reason I stopped was I had started, I actually-- when I turned 23 I started to panic. I was really old. And like what I am going to do with my life. You know, I'm doing this stuff and is there an art career for me? How do I make this work? Where-- What do I do? And I had been working for Sam Francis helping him in his garden and he was supporting us with different jobs. And that was one I did, gardening. And I came across this brochure for this new school coming up, California Institute of the Arts. I thought, well that sounds interesting. And I read through it and I thought about it. And I thought, no I won't go. Which reminds me of another story. When I came back from Australia my father said to me, I actually, sorry... [technical]

**00:38:34**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

[technical] It was probably just around the time I was doing the lightshows. My father said to me at one point, "alright Michael, I've talked to my business associates and they said, if you want to go to school, you know, I'll support that. And you could go to Chouinard." And I said, "well dad, you know, I'm already an artist. I don't need to go to art school. Thanks but no thanks." And then a few years later I'm paying my way to CalArts. So, 1970 I enrolled in the very first year of CalArts.

**00:39:07**

**ADAM HYMAN**

What was the reputation of Chouinard?

**00:39:09**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

It was a good reputation for me. You know, but I just knew it was the best art school in L.A. I didn't know as much about Otis for some reason. But I knew about Chouinard. And in high school that's what everybody was talking about, that hung with the art studio. You should go to Chouinard. In fact, that's what I wanted to do and my father was, no. You know, you can't go to art school, you have to go to the university.

[END OF TAPE 3]

## TAPE 4: MICHAEL SCROGGINS

00:00:09

MICHAEL SCROGGINS

So, I heard of California Institute of the Arts and I thought, you know what, maybe this is a good idea. I started producing our last few concerts at the Cumberland Mountain Film Company. We had a lightshow studio above the Fox Venice Theater [MS: this was the CMF loft space above the Fox where the lightshow was able to stay set up for an extended period]. And I decided to produce a few of the concerts to see if we could actually get a gate. You know, we could actually charge admission, like \$2 donation and somehow, you know, get right livelihood out of it. And it was like herding cats to get this lightshow ensemble together. All the artists were-- had their different directions to go in. It was somewhat successful. But it was a big strain and I was thinking, you know, there's no way actually we're going to commercially ever see a return on this kind of work. It's just going to be fine art for fine art sake. But what I do about, you know, right livelihood. So, I thought well if I went to art school I could do a couple of different things.

00:01:05

MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)

One, I could maybe move into gallery art--into that world--which I had an interest in. And I could also maybe learn cinematography, do documentaries, make didactic film. I was very interested in what documentaries could do. And educational work, I thought that could be good. I ended up in a documentary class, being shown these amazingly brilliant documentaries that were being critiqued by the teachers as not good enough because of fuzzy thinking and they knew they were looking at what was negative about-- you know, what wasn't good about them. I realized, you know what, I'm a fuzzy thinker. I'm just going to make worse documentaries than that. So maybe this isn't really what I should be doing. I did discover the portapak, which meant I could shoot endless stuff [MS: the Sony Portapak was the first relatively inexpensive portable video camera and ½ inch video tape recorder to become available. It was possible to record up to 30 minutes on one reel of inexpensive tape]. And did do a lot of casual documentation. And became interested also in the long take format and ways you could work with that to do things.

**00:01:58      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And I ran into Nam June Paik and Shuya Abe the first year of CalArts, and the Paik-Abe Video synthesizer. What could you do with video feedback was very similar to what you could do with liquids. All this kind of relates to my fascination with how water moved and with surfing and the idea that you're presented with a phenomena from nature and then you somehow work with that to create pleasure. To me I gained great pleasure out of projecting liquids. The video synthesizer was more of the same. I clearly remember Nam June when we first got the Paik-Abe first working. Because in the very beginning they were still building it, you know, as the semester started the first year. And I remember him taking tin foil and crinkling it in front of the camera. We were looking at it being processed through the colorizer, the Paik-Abe Video synthesizer. Or holding up blinking Christmas lights.

**00:02:45      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And he was going, ah, beauteous, beauteous. And his students were like, what-- this is just so cheesy, what is this? And I understood exactly what he was doing, because I had some grounding in what Fluxus was, and that approach to thinking. Really what--as I read Nam June's statement--was this is all just stuff, you know. This is just more pretty stuff. It's not that big a deal. But, you know, I was actually seduced by that and the formalism and understood that and made a conscious decision to work in abstract formalism while understanding that in the over-arc of sort of history of art it was less interesting than other ways of thinking about art making. But I didn't really care. I think that's an over simplification of how people look at art history. But at the time you have to think that minimal stuff was going on. There was a lot of writing. And this is 1970, '71, '72 The art and language movement was gaining ground.

**00:03:46      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I was very influenced by Duchamp and what Duchamp had been doing and it seemed like my sort of abstract formalism didn't really fit within that way of thinking as-- in an interesting way. It was just something I wanted to do, because I felt compelled to do it. I don't think you would say John Coltrane's music was somehow less interesting because it had, you know, this emotional content. But abstract expressionism was sort of becoming less interesting to people. These were sort of naïve ways of reading these absolutes. So I was subject to that as an art student. Thinking, oh, this fits there, and that fits there. I hadn't yet learned how amorphous it all really is. So, but I followed through with working with my abstraction with a synthesizer. I also did a number of video pieces that were experimental video work for want of a better term.

**00:04:42      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Ways of dealing with documenting things that take place. So I had both of those threads going. I also continued an interest in sculptural work. One of the things I'd been doing right toward the end of-- actually even before we moved to the Fox Venice, we had a studio in the Monica Hotel [MS: The Monica Hotel was located on the Ocean Front Walk just south of the Santa Monica Pier] in this [unused] ballroom and Sam Francis and Betty Freeman were looking to get-- So Sam could do this very large painting he had a commission to do. It ended up Sam didn't really want to work in the Monica. He decided to do it in his Ashland Street studio instead and let us use the Monica as a lightshow studio. So we were preparing screens there. We were going to do multiple screens, which we really hadn't done before. But I started working with just a pulsing white wall of light. I was very interested in what Turrell was doing and what Bob Irwin was doing. This pulsing wall of light was interesting to me because as you approached the surface you couldn't tell where it was. By varying the flickering rate of between 8 to 10 cycles it dematerialized the surface.

**00:05:47      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So you just had this void and I was very interested in that. In fact my first year or two at CalArts I was trying to find a way to make this installation, because I wanted to get it in the galleries. In fact, in my first year at CalArts in addition to everything else I was doing, I took a job at Doug Christmas' Ace Gallery which was where the old Lindbrook Gallery-- I mean, not Lindbrook, but the Dwan Gallery had been on Lindbrook Drive, next to Flax Art Supplies. So I started working there. Keith Sonnier had a piece. Richard Serra was there. In the back room were these great Armand pieces, like 5,000 joints of Acapulco Gold in resin. And there was a great, Robert Smithson site and non-site stuff. He had blocks of coal in these metal things [MS: painted steel hexagonal channel boxes]. I was a maintenance guy. So my job was just to, you know, keep things clean and dust stuff off.

**00:06:42      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

But I remember Bob Irwin came in to do a scrim installation up to the ceiling. And Doug Wheeler had done a light thing just before I got there where they had put in a white Formica floor and they had white walls and ceiling. And he had done a recessed lighting cove against the back wall. So the wall just seemed to float there. And so with this pulsing wall I was trying to figure how that fit in this context of what was light art at the time. And was really interested in getting an exhibition but it didn't happen. Irwin did this great scrim though in the Ace where they lit it from above. We had some good conversations. Because as he was installing it I had a chance to hang out and talk with him. He wasn't one of my teachers at CalArts, but there he was.

**00:07:25                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

When I went to CalArts I first applied to the School of Art and the School of Film and Video. So Allan Kaprow was my-- Kaprow was my advisor in the Art School and Don Levy was my advisor in the Film School. That very first year Allan came to me and said, look-- we had a meeting and he said, you're an intermedia student and I think all the intermedia students are going to fall in the cracks between the two schools. This process probably isn't going to work to your advantage. You should figure out to be either in the Art School or either in the Film School. You might want to think about being in the Film School, because you get \$500 budget to make stuff. But it's up to you, you know. I thought about it, and said, you know what, I'll do the Film School. And that was fateful because then I sort of hung out more in that realm I think, and less over in the Art School realm. But...

**00:08:08                    ADAM HYMAN**

Well, that's a much larger topic. We were just looking to-- there's this art/film divide, which continues to baffle me. So let's talk about though what CalArts was at that time, in those very first few years.

**00:08:28                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, well the first year of CalArts was really astonishing. Because I remember I showed up and I was very excited. First I actually did an interview. They didn't [only] do portfolios. You actually went in and was interviewed. I was interviewed by Sandy Mackendrick, Don Levy, I think Terry Sanders and Kris Malkiewicz. I had a really strange portfolio. And then also by Allan Kaprow and Paul Brach for the Art School part. The film portfolio-- I submitted a 16mm film that we had made of the lightshow, which was the BABY MAKER. And I also then submitted a foam ball sort of this soft foam pink ball, called the bump ball. It was this sort of thing for stimulating infants or babies. But it had this strange allusion to a sexual toy of some kind-- amorphous. And then a found photograph, an out of focus row boat on a lake with a tower with the number five on it, which was meaningful to me. And my MILK BOOK [MS: MY MILK BOOK was comprised of a set of crayon drawings illustrating a school field trip to a local dairy farm. The book was bound with a stapled construction paper cover] from the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. I actually was able to save this thing I'd done in our visit to the dairy in the 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. So I had this grand drawing. So that's what I submitted basically, as my portfolio.

**00:09:35            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And they were a little-- Well this is different, you know. I think it worked to my advantage. I also had, you know-- Good letters of recommendation. So I went to Cal Arts and the very first day we have a meeting. And Sandy Mackendrick says, "okay you're here now, what kind of curriculum do you want?" And I was [MS: thinking] like, well wait, you're supposed to be the experts. I'm coming here, I thought this was going to be fully formed. Man, I'm going to get in and just... "No, no, we want to find out what's going on." Many years later, just a few years ago actually, I talked to Mort Subotnick and he was, they did the same thing in the Music School. Said, no, we don't want to form the curriculum until we find out what the students' needs are. And how to match them-- best match those. I thought, well that's a really radical approach to education and pretty cool idea. And so that happened. And I ended up taking some very interesting classes in the Film School. Don Levy had a great class where he analyzed a film.

**00:10:28            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

He just took one semester and we looked at THE OCCURRENCE AT OWL CREEK BRIDGE film. That was French made. They got picked up by Rod Sterling for TWILIGHT ZONE. But he broke it down, scene by scene, backwards, forwards. Talked about nodal and anti-nodal cutting and all these structural devices that I had no awareness of. And it was exactly the kind of thing I wanted to learn. I asked him about that later, I said, "Don, you know, I have been reading books on film structure and there's nothing about nodal and anti-nodal cutting. Where did you get that?" "Oh, I just made it up as we watched it, you know". [MS: This is of course a paraphrase as Don would not use the annoying "you know". I am appalled to find how often I use that form of speech in these conversations --along with "like", "so", and the especially appalling "I was" in place of "I thought" or "I said". I was also shocked to discover my over reliance upon the non-descript terms such as "stuff", "things" and "pretty interesting" etc. I was completely unaware that I employed these speech patterns until reading and annotating these transcriptions.] So, with his background in physics and his way of thinking, he just off the cuff created, you know, his work. Because...

**00:11:06            ADAM HYMAN**

And what does that mean? Nodal and anti-nodal cutting?

**00:11:06**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Well, it had to do with cutting on movement or cutting on stasis. So, in the simplest way of thinking about it. So depending on what's happening within the frame or things are going to transition out of the frame, with you know, characters and the acting, it was based on that. So it had to do with action or pause basically. That was a really pretty interesting class for me. The one with Nam June was great. I also went to the Music School classes and I met Charlemagne Palestine for the first time. And later in the second or third year he taught a class called Timbral Perception, which I took. Where he was just-- It was all about drones [MS: and the complex harmonic structures to be appreciated in those seemingly simple yet actually very rich sound events]. He went around Cal Arts with microphones recording the sound of the wind through the doors. It was really opening my mind to ways of thinking about sound. And of course we listened to Alvin Lucier's I AM SITTING IN A ROOM. You know, a range of things to think about...

**00:12:00**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Other ways to think about music. So that was pretty cool for me.

**00:12:05**

**ADAM HYMAN**

I didn't realize they were all here-- I didn't realize Paik was here.

**00:12:08**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh yeah, Paik was here. The first year was superstar year. Ravi Shankar was teaching classes or giving, you know, demonstration lectures. Nam June was here the first year and Shuya Abe was here. And they did the Paik-Abe Video synthesizer but they [CalArts] wouldn't come up with a salary to pay for Shuya Abe. So Nam June just said, well you give my salary to Shuya and I'm going to leave. And they said, well it wasn't about that. So Abe-san stayed and kept developing the Video synthesizer the second year or so. And then [MS: the administration] decided they weren't going to renew his contract. They were not going to keep giving him Nam June's money. Because he wasn't the art star that Nam June was. And this was a real problem for Shuya, because his family had come out from Japan and suddenly they wouldn't sign his contract and he was kind of screwed.

**00:12:56**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And he would go to Mort Subotnick and say, "I need money for the Video synthesizer, I'm building this new one." And he [Mort] would say, "well no, go talk to Allan about that." And he'd go see Allan Kaprow and Kaprow would say, "oh yeah, no, no, go talk to Mort about that." So he was getting the runaround. So he just said, well never mind. Took his own money and built this thing. And then when he was leaving he was taking it with him. When the students said to the school, well we're going to lose our synthesizer. And they said, "well, Shuya, you can't take this." And he said, "well I built it on my own time with my own money. What do you mean I can't take this?" And it was true. What was cool about Abe-san was he-- We said, "well we're going to lose access to this newest generation of Paik-Abe Video synthesizer and what's worse is, when we graduate we'll have no access to this means of production."

**00:13:40**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So he said, "well you can make copies". About seven of us-- there was Sharon Grace, and Jim Weisman and Paul Challacombe, myself, I'm not sure of the other, Williams, Ed Williams and I think one other person. So we all were going to build our own and we did that. And apparently Shuya taught me how-- I had done soldering stuff as a kid, because I was interested in electronics. But he had taught me some great techniques and I guess I was adept enough at it, and he liked the way I built things, that he actually took me with him, because we weren't finished yet with our synthesizers so I could help finish up Sharon Grace's and mine. And we were doing work at-- we went to Binghamton to the ETC [MS: the Experimental Television Center] and then down to-- or maybe we went to GBH first. We went to WGBH in Boston and then to the Experimental Television Center in Binghamton and then down to, what's the Channel 13 in New York, the PBS station?

**00:14:36**    **ADAM HYMAN**  
WNET.

**00:14:36**    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, WNET. Always fixing up-- Because they had sold them Video synthesizers in each one of those locations. That's where [I]met Ron Hayes the first time. So --and John Godfrey was there at NET. So, that was a very interesting tour for me to travel with Nam June and Shuya.

**00:15:00**    **ADAM HYMAN**

And how would they see things while on the road?

**00:15:02**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I can't describe it. One of the things I do remember of being interesting was-- We were on the New Jersey Turnpike, and I'd never been on the Jersey Turnpike. And it seemed to me like we were on a merry-go-round because we kept passing the same Howard Johnson's over and over as if it was a circle. The terrain didn't seem to change. So that was pretty interesting.

**00:15:17**

**ADAM HYMAN**

So one question I have then of course is-- you were what, not a model student in the city system. How did you become a student? I mean what was-- how did this—yeah, I think you know what I'm saying.

**00:15:34**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Well, you know, I wasn't a model student in high school. And I went to the Community College and was uninspired by really what was being taught. Although the geography class was interesting. But I said, well I don't want to do that, so this doesn't seem to be the thing to do. So I decided-- I also decided that I wanted to pursue the things I loved doing the most while I was young and could do them. So in a sense I retired at the age of, you know, 18, 19 and did that for a while. Because I realized, you know what, I can work later and then when I'm older I can retire. So to this day I'm really glad I took that time off and just did what I wanted to do. The surfing and painting and not worry about school, etc. Doing what I wanted to do was more important. By the time I got to school then, 1970 and I was like 23, 24, I was completely motivated to do what was going on in school. I had sort of had a chance to be free and out of kind of following the same thing, year by year by year. And now I was ready, really ready and hungry to learn and do things [MS: within an educational institution's structure].

**00:16:34**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So Max Kozloff had this art history class, you know, I really wanted to take that and critical thinking, and-- the great thing about CalArts was that critical studies was this sort of counter-cultural thing Maurice Stein had set up. There were wonderful teachers there. I got a little over my head. I was taking General Systems Theory with Jivan Tabibian and I didn't even know what systems theory was yet, or hadn't-- there was Heidegger and there was all this stuff I was missing as foundations. But I kind of jumped around and grabbed what I could. But just because I was motivated and the teachers were really strong. The best art history class I took was taught by Paul Brach and Allan Kaprow. And the two of them right away-- they were on either side of the stage--the first thing they said was, these are not paintings. These are slides of paintings, right. They're not the same thing. You need to know that first. But then they started showing work.

**00:17:32**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And by the time they got up into the postwar era--post 2<sup>nd</sup> World War-- they knew the painters so they had anecdotes to tell. But they would also be looking at work, even the stuff with the people they didn't know-- as they showed slides, they would get excited and see something they hadn't noticed before in a painting and get very excited, and talked about it. So it was the most alive art history class. It wasn't somebody who took art history and got a degree in a college and then went to teach what they had already learned. They were-- It was kind of somehow percolating. Because they were first artists and secondly they were talking about art history. So it was a different approach to art history. It was really a great class. I found almost all the courses, you know, very, very interesting. And also at that time CalArts was very experimental. We talked about it being like Black Mountain College. And everyone said, well you know, this isn't going to last.

**00:18:21**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Black Mountain didn't last, how can CalArts last? It's too good to be true. For instance, for deans instead of academic administrators, you've got artists. How is that going to work? You know? They're just not going to be practical in any way. But somehow it did work. And, you know, has continued it. CalArts has become much more conventional. But it was very experimental then. So it was really about doing, learning through doing. And Sandy Mackendrick was really not an academic. So as the Dean of the Film School he really took that approach. And Kaprow for all his theory as Associate Dean of the Art School he was really was about experiential learning. So let's do projects, let's do happenings. Let's, you know, make things work and do it that way, rather than a more conventional studio approach perhaps.

**00:19:08**    **ADAM HYMAN**

Now I've heard things from people where Sandy Mackendrick simply like doesn't care for experimental film work at all.

**00:19:17**    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, it's true.

**00:19:18**    **ADAM HYMAN**

But you know, of course he's presiding over a place where this is one of the two main things being done. And I don't know did that ever come up as an issue with you and him?

**00:19:28**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

It did. Not with me and him directly. But what was interesting about Sandy Mackendrick was, you know, he was selected to be Dean. He came out of the studio system and brought himself up. He worked as a commercial artist. He and his brother wrote screenplays and he had some successes. He came into Hollywood and got slapped upside the head a few times. And so, when he was offered a chance to teach, he was, you know, pretty excited about doing that. First thing he did was-- For his Associate Deans he hired a documentarian, which is not what Sandy did, he got Terry Sanders. Then he hired Don Levy who was an experimental filmmaker, who had great credentials. His doctorate was in Theoretical Physics and, you know-- but he had made films and he was at the Carpenter Center at the time at Harvard. So Sandy said, I'm bringing this guy in. He knew that he was diametrically opposed to the way that Don Levy thought, but he thought this would create a great tension and make it a much more interesting school.

**00:20:20**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And he was very, very true, and very right. In fact, I got to take art history, film history classes that they taught. Screening classes. And Don would sit on one side of the stage in a black turtleneck and Sandy would sit on the other side with a white turtleneck. And they would show films and give you diametrically opposed takes on what was going on in the work. And it would be a range of work. From very conventional narrative cinema, which was Sandy's passion, to extremely, you know, abstract or experimental kinds of work. But at one point they became so contentious that a third party had to be brought in. And Hallock Hoffman who was sort of equivalent of being a student [advocate], and sort of [Director of] Student Affairs, I forget exactly the title at the time. He came and sat in the middle in a grey turtleneck. So it was great theater to watch these guys work. I also remember when Don Levy took a sabbatical a creative leave [MS: the Creative Leave is a one semester equivalent to a university Sabbatical], maybe I had come in as faculty by then.



**00:23:48**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I guess for me Nam June's Fluxus background, that way of thinking about art making, the sort of Neo-Dada approach, was very attractive to me. And on the other hand, you know, I could see that I had my own particular passion or interests. And it was-- I allowed myself to follow that. I realized that in fact what I need to do is that which is most interesting to me. Nam June, I could see was also interested in this sort of track of the historical arc of art through history and how various artists come to our attention and survive. So he was incredibly self-conscious about that. And that's one of the reasons I think that he was interested in John Cage. John Cage was an artist and a composer who was revolutionizing ways of thinking about how you make music. But he was also very active in proselytizing that particular point of view. He was not a wallflower. He was, you know-- the ideas were as important as anything.

**00:24:46**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

His accomplishments were through education, discourse. I remember reading his books like *A YEAR FROM MONDAY* and *SILENCE*. And it was a very big influence on me in ways of-- other ways of thinking about music, music and composition, and art and how it fit. Well, Nam June was very similar in that. He was thinking about other ways of thinking about how art can be and what you can do with it. And very interested in a question about the whole nature of the medium. And some of his earliest pieces like cutting away the screen or, you know, having a blank-- A little Buddha staring at a blank monitor, and that kind of stuff. I remember I gave Nam June a gift once of a *ZEN FOR VIDEO* for Nam June. It was just a blank tape. You know, a half-inch reel-to-reel tape. So, the uncreated. I think from Nam June-- some of the things I learned were this way of thinking about--of art in-- well I was already inclined to think about art as not being material or object.

**00:25:53**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

That was very much in the air, in a number of different ways. And it was especially important to me. When we were doing the lightshows, what's interesting is [we] knew that we did a performance and then it just evaporated. It had this evanescent quality where it's there in the moment, you're in it, and experiencing it and then it's over. There's no object at the end and nothing you can buy, sell, take home. And it was kind of like music before the era of recording. Where you had a performance, everyone experienced it and then if you wanted to have that experience again, you had to perform it again. You know. It wasn't like filmmaking-- very, very different. Or like recorded music. So I was in voluntary poverty and very interested in this notion of art's so pure you would never sell it, you know. Wouldn't that be prostitution? Why would you do that, you know? And over the years I realized, well that's a way of thinking about it, but in fact if art galleries and-- the art gallery, critic, museum, triangles didn't exist, we wouldn't be aware.

**00:26:58**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

You know, so much of the art that influences me is only there because somebody exhibited it and it got it out there and there's a whole economic engine that drives that. That's fine, you know. Carl Andre can lay down a row of bricks and I could buy his bricks and put them in my house, or I just go get my own fire bricks and build my own, you know.

**00:27:18**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Is there a-- what do you think underlies--it seems like we're close to it. It's just, which is-- What do you think underlies this sort of art gallery versus experimental film/theatrical presentation separation?

**00:27:36**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I think it's the fact that film is time-based. And so it seemed in a way where you actually have to set a device up. And you have a mechanism and you sit down. So when Bruce Connor makes A MOVIE, you could show it in the gallery on the wall or the-- in the back room, right. But it's a process with a beginning and an end. And you have to actually sit and experience it. Whereas if you've got a static piece, like one of his collages or you know, the stretched fabric and the black paint, you have an object that you can contemplate and you can actually pick it up and take it somewhere. It's that commodity that can even be sold. The films are much harder. So I think it's sort of-- no matter what you try to do with film, the theatrical experience of it was there. It's a social experience, a group of people get together, put a film on and show it. Things have changed with electronic media and DVD's, where people can have things at home.

**00:28:33**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

We've been able to do much more kinds of installation work. But you think of Robert Whitman's PRUNE FLAT. There are projections and it's a performance so it's very theatrical. So even though you're using film as a medium and Simone Forti is on stage moving and you have doors opening that aren't there. And people, you know, all-- it's a use of the technology in a way that's unique. But it's still somehow got this theatrical or performative aspect. So I think that's one of the divisions that's there. Because it's time based it carries with it expectations from mainstream cinema which are hard to break. Lots of people have broken it, and if you're approaching the work in the right way, it doesn't matter. When I saw the Movies Round Midnight at the Cinema Theater, there was a whole group of us sitting in chairs looking at the big screen and sharing our experience.

**00:29:23**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So if it was a Brakhage film, or a VanDerBeek film there was a theatrical aspect to the way it was seen. But we thought of them as art. They were being presented in the context of being art. But I guess you just couldn't sell them the same way. I know Ed Janss had some copies of Bruce Connors' films and he told me that every--and I don't know if this is true--but he told me that every film that Bruce sold was different. He made a slightly different cut. Because he wanted each one to be unique. He also wanted to know if dubs showed up somewhere, copies, which--where it came from. I don't know if that's-- if there's any truth to that at all-- but it was an interesting story.

**00:30:05**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

I just wouldn't-- I just couldn't imagine that Bruce Connor could remember each individual little change he made to figure who sold out. Alright, let's get back to the specific for a moment. Can you describe or do you have any particular recollection of special screenings or events at Cinematheque 16?

**00:30:27**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Well, yeah. As Cinematheque 16 got onto my radar-- I mean, Movies Round Midnight at the Cinema Theater is where I saw the most work. I didn't really attend the Cinematheque 16 until we were invited to do a l-- I think I didn't attend it, until we were invited to do a lightshow there. And while we were setting up to do the lightshow Warhol's NUDE RESTAURANT was playing. And I got to see that film over again and over again. And it took on a whole other level of meaning. It was very interesting. It's not the way you normally would see a film like that. You'd come and sit down and there'd be the screening. But we were busy setting up and it-- Somehow it was playing, you know, the whole time. I don't know why that would be now, but that's what I recollect. In our case we did a kind of a special screening there. Peter Mays shot outside what-- he went behind where the screen would be in physical space and shot the street. And then we started our shows with this street, as if the wall was made to disappear.

**00:31:26**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And then we brought up some flames and you know, the cars driving by and then flames. And then we went into these images of bodhisattva's and then moved on. And we did that for I think it was three nights in a row, I'm not sure. So—yeah, go ahead ask.

**00:31:43**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Where was that, what street was that?

**00:31:43**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Well, I think it was Sunset Boulevard, but it's actually kind of a side street that comes down from that. Because the Cinematheque 16 was-- there was Sunset and then I believe there was a little side street. So in my memory I used to think that it was Sunset, but I was talking to Peter about it a few years ago and he was explaining, well not exactly the layout. But it was in essence Sunset Blvd. Yeah.

**00:32:07**

**ADAM HYMAN**

And what do remember-- can you describe an evening at the Cinema Theater?

**00:32:13**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Well, not so much. I mean at the Cinema we would all, like for Movies Round Midnight we would line up outside, you know, and talk and go in and see movies. It would be a range of bills. You know, you would see Kuchar Brothers, and then maybe Robert Nelson and you know, followed on by whatever Jonas Mekas-- whatever it could be. And I was seeing this stuff sort of naively at first. I didn't, you know-- after a while I got to know, oh Kuchar brothers, here comes another Mike and George film, let's see what's going to be. But in the beginning it was all fresh. I wasn't reading FILM CULTURE. I wasn't, you know, taking part in that. My associates-- Well actually that's before I knew the lightshow people, you understand. So later Jeff Perkins turned me on to FILM CULTURE. He was paying attention to all that kind of stuff. He was very interested in it. With the Cinematheque 16 I think I saw for the first time David Holzman's DIARY. I remember watching that movie and getting incredibly annoyed.

**00:33:16**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And then coming to realize, oh it's supposed to be annoying. And as this guy's life gets more and more horrible and boring, and you know, and it takes on a great meaning. I saw people walking out and leaving. You know, but I think they missed it. Because it was a pretty interesting film. Also, being able to see, you know-- I probably saw SCORPIO RISING there, rather than... well, you know, maybe INVOCATION OF MY DEMON BROTHER I saw there, rather than at the Movies Round Midnight at the Cinema Theater. It's kind of a blur. So it's really hard to tell. I don't now remember. One thing I can tell you-- it's just a story about the Cinematheque 16. So we were doing our lightshow stuff and people came to see it. The Hog Farm came as a big group. And they used to do something-- Hugh Romney, later known as Wavy Gravy, he used to do this thing where everyone would hold hands. And it was called a circle jerk [MS: actually it was a circle JOKE, which is in reference to a circle jerk which is something very specific].

**00:34:05**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And it was kind of a group chant [MS: where all the participants were linked by holding hands]. It was a very interesting communal experience. So we all did this before the lightshow. And I noticed that there were two people in the audience who weren't doing-- They weren't taking part. And it was Richard Whitehall and Gene Youngblood. So the two cinema critics for the L.A. FREE PRESS were like aloof from it, because they were observers to the phenomena, rather than participants. I remember teasing Gene about that later and he was really annoyed. "Oh no, I can't even remember doing that." Or he thought my reading was wrong, but that's how I took it at the time.

**00:34:38**

**ADAM HYMAN**

So tell me about why-- let's return to say winding up at CalArts. When did you graduate and what did you see as what you were going to do next?

**00:34:47**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Well, I was student from '70 to '75. We had a three-semester system in the beginning. And the first year I had some student loans that covered tuition up until-- and a scholarship through Roy Disney. And it covered it up to a point. But I couldn't afford the third semester so I had to leave. And I actually went back to New Zealand to visit friends and do a whole thing. So I had the third semester off. They--

**00:35:14**

**ADAM HYMAN**

How could afford not to go to school, but you could go to New Zealand.

**00:35:17**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yes, it's very funny. Well, because my father worked for American Airlines and they had started service down under. I actually could fly for free on the non-revenue [pass] as a son of an employee. I could fly for totally free. Years later they started, you had to pay the taxes and then the surcharges but at the time, it was yeah, it was completely free. So it was actually cheaper to go to New Zealand than to stay at CalArts. So the powers that be at CalArts said, well we can't have that. You can't do that again next year. So they gave me a full scholarship. So then I was set. So I did have student loans but I also had the full scholarship, which really helped. And the three-term system eventually became two. I graduated in '75.

**00:35:56**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Why use terms...

**00:35:56**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, semesters. So they would have three sessions in a semester or three sessions in a year, like semester 1, 2 and 3. And then they'd call them term 1, 2 and 3 at the time. Now they have two semesters, so it's Spring and Fall, or Fall and Spring.

**00:36:13**

**ADAM HYMAN**

But it was a multi-year program.

**00:36:14**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh, the program was, but it was broken down year by year into three terms [MS: and later two as I mentioned earlier]. So normally I would have graduated in '74 but I graduated in '75 because I got-- actually I got an extra two semesters out of the whole thing, because of the system. Which was fine with me. My last year I was actually working downtown most of the time and coming out and teaching. One of the things as a student I did, was as a teaching assistant. Teach a class in-- when Nam June Paik and Shuya Abe left, Paul Challacombe started teaching the class in videographics. So the video synthesizer, Paik-Abe class. And when Paul left I ended up teaching it as a student. So, as I was teaching that class as a student. It was unsupervised so I actually show up in the catalog as the teacher. I went off in and had got this job downtown in an ad agency doing layout for the L.A. TIMES ads we were running. And I just came up to teach my class basically.

**00:37:11**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So I really wasn't taking much that last year, even though they had it available to me. I was then on my own. I started doing some industrial films-- anything I could pick up, you know--sort of side work. And working for my friends at the Fox Venice to make money. In 1978 I got a call from CalArts to come and teach. One of my former students who had become-- took over my mantel as teaching the Paik-Abe after I left. Peter Koczera said, look we're doing a search. I've told them you can't keep having students do this. We need to get an actual faculty member to teach this class. It's too important, blah, blah, blah. So there was a search and I threw my hat in the ring. I was very ambivalent about it. Because I had some other projects going on and-- I was designing a digital watch. There's a whole other story. There's a beautiful potted and clear epoxy, super-thin, waterproof, really advanced kind of watch.

**00:38:06**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And through Charlie Lippincott--he was part of Single Wing Turquoise Bird, and he was also the publicist for STAR WARS, the first movie--I was going to arrange to get this new watch in the second film, Mark Hamill would wear it, you know. We'd sell lots of them. So, I had this side project going on. Plus, other art things I was doing.

**00:38:23**

**ADAM HYMAN**

And what happened to the watch?

**00:38:25**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Charlie and I arranged a meeting with Gary Kurtz at the Black Tower at Universal. And we got there to the gate and they wouldn't-- we couldn't get in. It turned out that because there was a lawsuit going on between ILM or Lucas Film and Universal over BATTLESTAR GALACTICA, Gary Kurtz had a deposition and he couldn't talk to-- he and Charlie couldn't be in the same room and talk, until things were settled. Because Charlie was coming from Lucas Film as the publicist and Gary was coming from-- well actually Gary was, well I don't know how that worked. But anyway there was some issues where--so it couldn't happen. Thus, I couldn't get the watch in the film--which I was counting on as a way of helping drive forward the investment in getting a company to manufacture this thing. And it turned out they didn't do an aftermarket watch for the second film anyway. The first film Texas Instruments did it. They did an LED watch.

**00:39:22**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So this thing was beautiful because you could-- the other problem was my idea was that the whole thing was potted in clear epoxy and you could see the little integrated circuit chip which is an amazingly detailed device with little gold wires. And I actually had to work to design the circuit boards. Normally the chip would have been under the LCD. I had to have it outside of the LCD, and blah, blah, blah. So I did my whole design and it was gold traces on black epoxy, really cool. And then the clear epoxy with all the components. It turned out that photons hitting the IC would screw it up. Time. So the watch didn't-- wouldn't work the way I wanted it to. Unless we put a blob of black epoxy on the thing which ruined it. So I just lost interest. There's actually more to it than that.

**00:40:10**

**ADAM HYMAN**

This seems like quite a distance for you to be coming in this period of time. I mean when did you start working on like designing...

**00:40:18**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Digital watches.

**00:40:20**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Digital watches or circuit boards?

[ END OF TAPE 4 ]

## TAPE 5: MICHAEL SCROGGINS

00:00:09

MICHAEL SCROGGINS

Okay. So I had this elegant digital watch design. The thing about it that impressed me was at the time watches were really clunky. And I have very small wrists, right. So I wanted something lightweight and thin. I even had a very thin, you know, square analog watch. But I wanted a thin digital watch. So by this process of making the circuit board and potting it in clear epoxy it could be very thin. And it was also waterproof and we had a place for the battery compartment, contact switches. I worked with an engineer. I didn't design the electronics. John Williams my friend in Topanga who had this cottage industry building sleeping bags, Yeti, [YETI ENTERPRISES] was trained as an engineer--did the engineering work [MS: John later designed the first Automated Web Canopy Exploration system for the traversing the rain forest canopy in Costa Rica]. I did all the layout of the rubyolith images that had to be then shrunk down to print the circuits. I designed how the circuit, how the printed circuit stuff would flow. But he was the one who made sure that all the electronics were going to do what they were supposed to do.

00:01:03

MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)

So the watch was super-thin, waterproof, everything I wanted. And it started out because I wanted one. Well, if I want it, probably a lot of other people want it too. So why not go ahead. And because of-- Well there's more stories, we'll leave the whole watch thing for another thing-- Another interview at some other time, maybe. But one aspect that interested me is I put out letters to all the watch companies that made things to show them the watch. And none of them would do it and sign a non-disclosure agreement. It was explained to me the reason they didn't want to sign my non-disclosure agreement, was because they wanted to rip it off, right. Was that I could be bringing in a project from the outside, an inside employee could have given me the information. I come in with my non-disclosure agreement, get them to sign that, and suddenly they lose the research they've done.

**00:01:59**            **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

In other words, their lawyers thought it was too risky to sign a non-disclosure agreement with some sort of unknown party who could be pulling a trick on them. That's how it was explained to me. Nonetheless, I couldn't get them to do it. One company would do it. And this was the Xernus Watch Company, which is actually Sunrex backwards. This guy from Taiwan. So I go in with my friend John to the meeting. I have my Star Wars watch on which is the Texas Instruments black polycarbonate—the LED watch, but my sleeve is covering it. The first thing this guy says is we don't make those cheap plastic watches. He made these big thick metal ones with set screws. They looked like the very, you know, hefty macho machined watches. But he did interact with us. We explained our idea. Because he was happy to sign a non-disclosure agreement.

**00:02:46**            **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

But he said, alright you'll have these problems if you go to manufacture this. You setup let's say in Malaysia you've got a factory that's making the watches. But you don't how many are going out the back door and how many are really being sold. And it was-- whole aspects of that business that I had no idea about. But I thought he had a manufacturing facility. My idea was, you get the idea, you get the contract with the film. Everything comes together, these things can be mass-manufactured, bubble-packed and put out. And my idea was that it would be a watch for kids but also for geeky adults [such as] myself who really wanted to see it. And it had such a simplistic elegance that I thought sure that as an industrial design object, you know, it would have its own weight. He wasn't going to pickup the watch. So it seemed like a dead end. And because of this problem with the photons striking the watch and discharging-- making the chip not work, not being able to show the chip, I kind of also lost interest. Because that was for me a driving aspect.

**00:03:40**            **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Not just that it was thin and light. Okay. Let's move on to art making.

**00:03:45**            **ADAM HYMAN**

Why would photons affect it?

**00:03:46**            **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh, I guess and it could be just an incandescent light, not just the sun. Because we put an ultraviolet transmitting, ultraviolet absorbing dyes into the plastic, but the light would affect the electrical circuits, those integrated circuits are so tiny with all the little transistors that they're essentially unstable. And so photons hitting them would be enough to change the values. And that's the short way of saying it.

**00:04:14**            **ADAM HYMAN**

Did you learn this sort of stuff-- from whom did you learn this sort of stuff?

**00:04:20**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Just talking to people in the process. I mean when I went to design the watch I just did research about how they are made. I took them apart, looked at them. Talked to people. We got a company who knew how to do the plating and make the chips and so, you know-- I just learned [as] I went. I'm self taught in so many other areas, it was just one more thing, you know, in which to do that.

**00:04:42**

**ADAM HYMAN**

When did you get interested in learning about the chips and the cords and the wires and all that?

**00:04:49**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Well, I guess I, as-- I've just always been interested in technical things and devices or how the world works. So I just read up on it, you know. It was sort of SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN-level of knowledge, you know. It was just like, oh this is interesting, and that's the abacus [sounds like]-- but I first discovered virtual reality in SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN. Scott Fisher had a picture of his data glove on the cover and there was a whole story about the work they were doing at the Ames Research Center. And I thought, well this is cool. And then I was able to go to a thing at-- I don't know if it was Filmex, there was something at the AFI where Scott Fisher and Brenda Laurel presented work about the VR. And it some festival, I think it was probably, I think it was the Sony AFI Festival. I don't know, but I just know it took place up there at the AFI.

**00:05:35**

**ADAM HYMAN**

When was this year?

**00:05:40**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Late '70s, early '80s. I'm not sure.

**00:05:44**

**ADAM HYMAN**

So, wasn't that sort of side of, was-- how much of that did come through your days at CalArts?

**00:05:51**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Man, I don't know. You mean how did the watch thing or... going to see the VR stuff?

**00:05:58**

**ADAM HYMAN**

The pursuit the more technological stuff.

**00:06:01**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

As a kid I was interested in technological things. You know, I took things apart. My parents for Christmas gave me one of those electronic kits which is a peg board where could attach things together. So I started making things and motors and those photocells and transistors came out. I was studying that stuff. So I was just interested in how, you know, how to make stuff. And I wanted to make my own light detectors. I was really interested in remote sensing ideas, you know. So all that stuff fascinated me. So in order to do what I just had to pick this stuff up. And that's where I ended up soldering and making my own things. Making radios and stuff. I never became a Ham radio operator. I didn't go into the highest technical stuff. I remember when I was in junior high I wanted to get a Ham radio license and I went to these classes at night at this place.

**00:06:49**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Everybody was adults. And they were, you know, dealing with concepts that were just a little too-- too much for me. But I was kind of working hard to get at how vacuum tubes work and amplifiers and was learning this stuff. But actually the stumbling-- I was in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade actually. I mean the stumbling block was you had to learn Morse code and I had to try to teach myself Morse code. So I had a little thing I could send the signals, but I was hearing it what I was sending. How do you break that down? I needed a second party to send me code that then I could learn to decode and vice versa. I didn't seem to have a network of friends interested in doing that. You know, so I was, it was just me alone. My parents couldn't-- You know, they had too many other things going on too. So.

**00:07:33**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Okay. So your video production started when?

**00:07:37**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I started working in video the very first year of Cal Arts. We had portapaks. I had read Gene Youngblood's EXPANDED CINEMA, which was rife with you know, excitement about video and what it could do. And so here's CalArts and now we've got these [Sony] AVC 3400 black and white reel-to-reel portapaks. That every school had like six units I think. Only the Film School's survived. The other schools' got trashed pretty quick. But the Film School people thought about technical things in the different way, and how you had not get sand and stuff in and, you know, protect the lenses and stuff. So it was a little different. So I had the portapaks. I had access to shooting reel-to-reel. The stock was cheap. So, you know, for I don't know, \$20 you could have a half hour of tape and just record. And you could do direct takes. What was interesting was you couldn't edit very effectively.

**00:08:27**            **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

We didn't really have an editing system for them. So working with direct takes was almost sort of native to the technology, you know, straight takes. But I really liked that aspect of time and letting things develop. Some of the tapes I did within the next couple years in the 70's dealt with that. I was very interested in processart and thinking about that kind of work. So one of the earliest tapes I did was to point a camera at a monitor and record onto one recorder what the camera was seeing and then thread that tape through to playback on another VTR. So that the playback was like a few seconds delayed. And then that would be displayed on the monitor that the camera was seeing. So you could switch it. So you get a tunnel, a picture of a picture of a picture of a picture, but they were delayed in time. More, completely than it would be just in the real-time scanning. So I did a piece where, or countdown where I just went 5, you know, and then waited, and then 4, and then 3 and you'll see the hands go back in time.

**00:09:44**            **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I did another one that was more interesting I think, where I just-- I had a resolution chart up on the screen, pushed the button on the switcher, which was this funky glitch switcher. It switched then to the output machine. So there was a machine recording, a machine playing back. So it switched the image from the camera looking at the resolution chart to the recorded image of the resolution chart as it played back from the playback machine. And now the camera is seeing that. So you get a picture of the resolution chart and then that comes through and then you get a picture of the picture of the resolution chart and the picture of the picture of the picture of the picture. But I kept them the same scale. So it was kind of like doing a Xerox of a Xerox of a Xerox and you see how it changes. So the nonlinearities in the system, optical shifts, electronic distortions, contrasts would build up. So over time this thing just begins to degrade, you know, and-- at the end you're in there with a screen that's half black and half white.

**00:10:40**            **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And there's an audio-feedback with not particularly pleasant-- that builds up over time. So, that was a piece. And it's the kind of thing that just is a process, you set it up and it's done, that's it. And I saw it something you would show in a museum [MS: or gallery] context, not something that you would sit in a theater and watch. I didn't think of it that way.

**00:11:01**            **ADAM HYMAN**

What ends up being, well it's something that exists only in the moment of its original happening? Or is there then a final recording?

**00:11:08**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

No, it's a final recording. Yeah, the actual tape that's been part of that process then becomes the artifact that then you screen-- Which I would screen. It's not unlike let's say, but less interesting, but not unlike the idea of Alvin Lucier doing I AM SITTING IN A ROOM, where he records his voice, plays it back into the room, and then plays that back. You get the resonance. It's not an unsimilar process. Or dissimilar.

**00:11:30**

**ADAM HYMAN**

What else? What else for you, MEANDER, PADMA, do you remember. What sort of things were you in general trying to investigate?

**00:11:42**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Well, MEANDER was a video feedback piece where I had forgotten that I had saw, seen in EXPANDED CINEMA on someone who shot a video feedback thing where they turned the camera at 90 degrees to the monitor. Somehow, it escaped my conscious memory. And so I did something that I thought was unique. Where I took the monitor and I-- We had these black and white studio cameras in the facility I was working at that time. This is like 1970. We were still at Villa Cabrini in Burbank [MS: CalArts temporary campus which was used in the first year while the permanent campus was being completed]. But I turned the monitor on its side and then the picture of the picture of the picture, which is video feedback, did a sort of quaternary figure. So it has sort of a four-sided symmetry, kind of like a kaleidoscope that's four sided. But the patterns that formed were very much like maze-like patterns or that sort of meanders that Celtic culture was very interested in doing, or the kind of Celtic knotting that was done.

**00:12:39**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So I saw in this a physical system you could setup electronically that created a pattern that was--seemed archaic and I was very interested in that. And so that's a piece that just sort of starts and stops. It doesn't have a dramatic arc, it's not, I'm not trying to perform like I was with the lightshow, where it's more musical in a more common sense of musical as having a dramatic power. It was just a phenomena. And I did a number of pieces sort of exploring that possibility. Another one I did a little bit later was called RECENT LI. where I took a piece that was also video feedback, a quaternary figure in video feedback and-- I had done a piece actually that I dedicated to Sam Francis, it's called FOR SAM. That was just high contrast black and white feedback, this, it looks very calligraphic and for me it had a point of reference to his paintings like BIG RED.

**00:13:51      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Which were the big brush stroke paintings, some of his earlier paintings. So there was this sort of cellular form to the image. And I was very interested in how that formed and shaped up. So I took that and then processed it later to make RECENT LI. And then in RECENT LI, I actually did four different segments that were quite different. And I processed the video in different ways. So I ran it through the switcher. I added color. I keyed between the black and the white levels of the high con. And at the time I was very interested in what's the significance of color? I had been dealing with pure form. But now what about color and how do I think about color in new ways. I was reading the TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD and thinking about how this-- What's the symbolic power of color that's indicated there. And so I made this piece in four sections, this quaternity.

**00:14:42      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I was also reading a lot of Jung and thinking about his approach to color and symbolism. I guess I made RECENT LI in '79 maybe, just when I started to teach at Cal Arts, around '70. I guess in '78-- Oh, I know what: In '78 when I started to teach at Cal Arts-- One of my teachers at Cal Arts had been Joan Logue, who did a lot of interesting work in video. And she was living in New York at the time. And I asked her to stop by Westbeth and visit Nam June and make a recording where he could introduce me to my class. Because I wanted this sense of lineage. Because I was being tapped to teach the Paik-Abe Video synthesizer. So she made a recording. She just caught him in the elevator or something and there's a discussion. So I took a segment of that for RECENT LI. So in the head of RECENT LI Nam June starts off and he's saying, "if by some practical nature-- If by some practical joke of the Gods, if honey bees didn't have color vision, all flowers would be black and white."

**00:15:42      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And Joan, off camera you hear Joan say, “really?” And he says, “yes. Nature has no waste.” And then I cut to this quaternary figure, which is monochrome--appears to be monochrome in sort of a figure ground-- is shifting between the figure and you know-- The contrast is shifting between the figure and the ground. So it's very-- It disappears and reappears. And then I'm slowly adding a little bit of color but it's just almost imperceptible. I mentioned earlier I was interested in Ad Reinhardt's black paintings because of this nearly imperceptible quality. So that then was what was going in RECENT LI. And the thing about the video feedback that continued to fascinate me was that it was this image of an image of an image. This nature of recursion and in this recursive process somehow these very fascinating forms developed. And the forms that are most interesting, the slower more complex ones that I found most interesting, happened right when you're zooming the camera so that the size of the image of the camera pretty much matches the size of the monitor that's showing the camera's output in this feedback loop.

**00:16:51      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Right at that point it gets slow and-- Before that it's sort of streaming and shooting in one direction. Then you get past that and then it's doing it another. It's kind of just rough and wild. But right where it's almost in a point of stasis it gets very nuanced and subtle. And what's happening is nonlinearities in the system, noise and geometric distortion and changes between the camera and the monitor create more complexity. This is before any of us really knew about chaos theory and fractal mathematics. But I realized that this principle was very interesting. And it turns out to be a similar principle. I had made a sculpture in 1966. Actually it was a conceptual sculpture. I didn't fabricate it until later. Of two mirrors that are put face to face. So the idea was two first-surface mirrors. My thinking was, well if you've got two first-surface mirrors and you have them face to face and you bring them together, they're reflecting each other. And as you get closer together you could say that the hall of mirrors effect gets higher and higher in frequency until they're in contact.



**00:20:21**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Sort of, yeah. Well, THE MEANDER was more streaming, but RECENT LI, actually the figure sort of stays centripetal. So it's rotating and sometimes it takes on a swastika form, which is very unnerving to people. And you have to understand that this symbol predates the Third Reich and its adoption as a logo. And there's a whole other story about the magical power of that. And why it got used. I've had trouble in screenings with this, where people [say] you've got me seduced in this image and then you hit me with the swastika, what's going on here you know? And-- Very interesting discourse could come out around that piece. So, but yes it comes from that process of the feedback. I used feedback in many different ways over the years in the work up through the video studies. Because I was always found it had a compelling quality. And it's not dissimilar from the reasons that fractals are so attractive to us. And anyway Jung is-- his notion of the quaternity is a symbol that has a certain numinous quality or power that evokes [MS: a resonant feeling in] us.

**00:21:24**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And I was interested in well what's there? What's going on with that? And a lot of that early work that I was doing was very much about meditative states. And that kind of grew out of, well childhood fascinations of sitting and watching water move and kind of going into reverie, up through the lightshows and then in--which could become very hypnotic-- and then into these other spiritual practices. So looking at films like John-- James Whitney's LAPIS, you know, could really put me in a particular state. So I did a number of pieces. Another one called PADMA. Which is [where] the camera monitor [MS: rotation] relationship is setup so there are actually ten repetitions as it goes back. And then I work with stuff just at the edge of perception where at first you don't see. It's just a grey field. And then you begin to see that it's scintillating with little dots and noise and then as I slowly adjust the system over the period of 20 minutes or a half hour, it you know, gets and more and more gross in the movements.

**00:22:23**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

But it's a very, very slow transition. I remember James Benning really liked that piece because it doesn't develop fast in time. You know, he's always kind of in contradistinction to the fast pace of a lot of media. So....

**00:22:38**

**ADAM HYMAN**

What is it about investigating the nature of perception that is of interest to you?

**00:22:47**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Well, you know, here we are in this world and you know, I'm looking at you there and you're in my mind. And I have a construct and I'm getting the optical data and I'm getting the, you know, all the other sensory inputs, but it's existing inside my own head essentially. And in your head and those I'm watching and you. Questioning what is perception and how does, you know-- How is it functioning? What's real and what's not. It's just interesting. It's sort of ontology and epistemology, you know, how we-- because we have language we're always constructing things around definition and language. And the-- So for me I'm very interested in phenomena and things that are happening just at the end of perceptibility. And for whatever reason it fascinated me. Bob Irwin's early circle pieces where you look at it and he's got the light, so you've got the sort of the four shadows and it just, it disappears in front of you. That really fascinates me.

**00:23:48**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And the stuff that Jim Turrell was doing, projecting light in a corner and then later, you know, his later work has always interested me because it's questioning what you look at. And at the same time there's this sort of delicious quality of the stuff right on the limn of understanding or consciousness. So, it's been something that's fascinating me for a long time. I can't, I don't know if I can explain why exactly.

**00:24:13**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Yeah, well I'm always fascinated by—oh well, that's a whole separate question. People are always like why do you want to write about such a thing? [INCOMPREHENSIBLE]

**00:24:18**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Well, and one of the things I can say about most of my work was very early on I realized I was not dramatic. I wasn't interested in stories. As a kid, as I would read fiction I was more interested in descriptions of how things smelled and looked and sounded and tasted and, you know, than I was in who did what to whom when. You know, I wasn't as interested in the drama and the plot. I was very interested in phenomena and that's maybe why I wanted to go become a hermit, you know, some asocial aspect. So although I could appreciate drama and I still do, I didn't think that was something I should do. You know, in my own writings it was really much more about how it felt and looked. And so the primacy of the visual or the sonic is more interesting to me than the primacy of social interaction. When I recognized that in Film School, I was like, oh well that's what I should be doing. I should be following the thing that I'm most fascinated by and seem to have the most gift for.

**00:25:18**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And not try to force myself into this other way of working. I realized that. I dream at night and do I dream abstract, subtle nuanced stuff? Typically no, it's drama. There's people talking and somebody's writing that dialogue, you know. So, obviously the theatrical is important to us. And the way I see the mainstream cinema and dramatic narrative is it's really linked to nocturnal dream process. We have this huge history of drama going back to the earliest sort of dances around the campfire and trying to evoke the spirits and do hunting and up through Greek theater and then into the modern age. And, you know, not ignoring all the other cultures in the world. But all cultures have a history of drama. So it's obviously important and trying to understand your space in the world, social space has a very important function. But my personal interest is really more about this phenomena and this nuance.

**00:26:13**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So I also sort of early on was sort of inculcated with modernist aesthetic. This notion of reductivism, that more reduced the more pure it becomes, the more valuable it is. And then I grew to realize, well yes that's a way to think, but it's not the only way. There are many other ways of thinking and post-modernism and that-- transitions that came have influenced me. But ultimately I keep finding out I almost have this sort of Calvinistic adherence to Modernism you know and the stuff that I do or appreciate.

**00:26:44**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

And why did you not work in film?

**00:26:50**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I wasn't interested in film as an... you mean photochemical film?

**00:26:55**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Yeah.

**00:26:56**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Actually I started to work in film. And was traumatized by it and backed off. One reason was cost. The other was video, which I had access to first, was real time, which I was accustomed to with the lightshow kind of work. And immediate. And I could record it and play it back. And shooting film you couldn't see what you were doing, except in the optical viewfinder. And then you have to send out to a lab and it gets processed and then it comes back and then maybe you see what you have. So it didn't have the immediacy. So there's something about the immediacy of video I liked. And as I worked with real-time video and the video synthesizer, it was all about immediacy. So film didn't need to be a part of that equation. When I took Pat O'Neill's optical printing class I was very excited about doing that. I had some tests, I actually shot a whole roll. We had a-- Well I shot a loop that we had used in the lightshow, it was something I was fascinated by, I was going to make a film out of it.

**00:27:55**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

It was such a dark idea that Pat suggested, why don't I do a black on black. So that appealed to me once again, because thinking of Reinhardt's, you know, black paintings. I knew I could do something that was almost imperceptible with that. So I did the film on the optical printer, frame by frame by frame, you know, it was another different process for me. I wasn't a hand animator who animated that way either. So I got the film done, sent it out to the lab. It came back, it was all black. So it's like, what? So what I had done was sent out the raw stock and put my exposed thing back in the raw stock cabinet. So I never got that film. Then I wanted to shoot it again. And it was made out of a loop. So I took this old piece of film, 16mm film and I thought I would actually clean it, right. So I grabbed what was apparently a bottle of cleaner and put it on a KimWipe and rubbed it along the film, well it was cement.

**00:28:44**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So the film shriveled up so now I didn't have the film anymore. And it was like, okay, I think maybe I'm just not meant to work in film. Plus, you know, the cost factor. There wasn't anything I was doing that demanded film. And there were things about video that seemed to me inherent in video as a medium, going back to that modernist idea. So I was sort of attached to staying in video. I remember when I was doing the video studies, which came a little bit later, in the '80s. I showed one to Woody Vasulka who was a visiting artist and I had him in my class to talk and show stuff. And I confessed to Woody, well this one part I'm using an oil wipe technique, not unlike the one Hy Hirsh uses in CHASSE DES TOUCHES. And Bill Moritz explained to me this technique had been around a long time. And I'd started doing it in the lightshows just because made it sense to do it.



**00:31:46**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

“Get me a Mai Tai, get a Mai Tai.” “No”, they would not do it. So he just said, you know, “the hell with it.” And spun the dials on the proc amp and walked out [MS: Proc amp is short for processing amplifier and has controls on it for adjusting video brightness (gain), contrast (pedestal), hue (phase) and saturation]. This is the story that was told to me after the fact. But when my piece came up it was just all wrong. And I was in the audience just you know, slinking down in my seat. It was horrible and on top of that, I had done a transfer [MS: at Video Transitions (a video post production house) where an audio hum was accidentally introduced into the piece]. [technical]

**00:32:19**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

The piece of RECENT LI is showing at the Kennedy Center. It's this premiere, I'm really excited to see it. And the color is wrong, because the guy in the booth has had a conniption, deservedly, because they wouldn't like help him out, and cool him off. So it's wrong. And on top of the color being wrong and that was important to me, because the color was the content of the work essentially. Form plays a part, but color was the big part of it. The sound had a 60-cycle hum in one channel. I'd done that stuff with Peter Kirby at Video Transitions and there was a ground loop problem in my original recording that we didn't hear somehow. And so it's always there. I've actually tried to filter it out in newer versions. But that just-- my big moment there to see my stuff on this big huge video projector at Kennedy Center was just wrong.

**00:33:08**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Bad color, big buzz. And I got through it. Okay. [technical]

**00:33:17**    **ADAM HYMAN**

I'll return slightly. Or, maybe not. Tell me about Studies 1 through 16 overall.

**00:33:22**    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Alright. Well, they are very similar and that's why they have those similar names. We were, I was working with video in the Paik-Abe Video synthesizer which could do certain things.

**00:33:35**    **ADAM HYMAN**

Let's stop there. What is the Paik-Abe Video synthesizer?

**00:33:40**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

The Paik-Abe Video synthesizer is a device that Nam June Paik and Shuya Abe put together. Nam June met Shuya Abe in Akihabara, in the electronics district in Tokyo and they struck up a conversation. And they realized they had points in general. Abe-san loved to tinker. He was strong in drawing visually too, so he was interested in the arts. And so they formed a partnership. And Nam June wanted to make a video synthesizer. We had audio synthesizers for music composition, why shouldn't we have a video version. So they struck up an idea for a design. And I don't know who had the most input on the design. But it was basically a seven-channel colorizer. So you could put in seven different video signals or you could use wave shapes, audio signals in place of the video. And then those would be mixed into the colorizer section, which gave you control over the hue, the saturation, the luminance and the brightness or the contrast.

**00:34:41**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So pedestal was contrast and then you had luminance or brightness and then phase, which was [MS: color] hue, and [MS: color] saturation. So the unit was actually a colorizer, I mean an encoder out of a video camera where you took two video signals that were supposed to be the red component minus the luminance, R minus Y. And the B, the blue component minus the luminance, or the B minus Y. And convert them into a single signal, which was the NTSC video signal. Which is called composite video. And cleverly Shuya worked out a way that these black and white signals could feed both sides of the R-Y, B-Y matrix to create color. So it was a colorizer in essence. And when he set it up because he was working on this quadrature relationship of R-Y or B-Y, [which] are called I&Q in NTSC video. The opposites on the color wheel which is how you look at the signal as a cycle.

**00:35:41**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

It's a circle. The opposites were always complimentary. So you had blue opposite yellow. You know, cyan opposite red and that kind of thing. So you almost always had quite beautiful colors. It was hard to make it look really ugly, maybe too much red versus green, you know. It was a really great instrument. So this colorizer then could be used to process live camera footage. Recorded video camera footage. And you could put oscillator wave shapes in as well to create patterns that were basically bars. So if there were square waves or sine waves, you get horizontal bands or vertical bands and a diagonal, you know. Depending on the frequency you could dial the oscillators and change it. So it was very, very simple. Other people, Steve Beck did a video synthesizer that was a little maybe closer to what an audio synthesizer was. Later Dan Sandin created the Image Processor, which is very much like a patch-programmable audio synthesizer where one signal affects another signal, affects another signal.

**00:36:44**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So you could take luminance and patch it into the red channel or you could take the horizontal and patch it into something else. So it was a very cool device. And then Bill Hearn got together with Sharon Grace and on a weekend devised the Hearn, Electronics Associates Berkeley, the EAB video synthesizer. Which is also patch-programmable, something we have at Cal Arts. Pretty interesting devices, analog synthesizer devices. So the Paik-Abe is one of the very first and it was an amazing thing. And you could do really subtle things with it. I loved performing with it. I spent years working with my Paik-Abe without a video recorder. So like the lightshows, it was evanescent, it was, you know, an experience, a process and it just evaporated when it was over. Nam June Paik told me once that video recording was like leaving a concrete wake in history.

**00:37:33**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So if you can imagine a boat moving through concrete as a fluid and it sets up behind you, you've got an artifact at the end of the process when you record. But if you're performing live video it's just-- It evaporates. You only have memory. So. Yeah. And I was actually attached to the idea that it was intangible. I loved that. Later I realized, oh I wish I had those experiences to relive. Had it been... a video recorder been available to me... then I could [have] just dumped it off. When I started teaching at CalArts I got access to a video recorder. So I started recording stuff.

**00:38:05**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

So back to the studies.

**00:38:07**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Alright, so the studies. We had this old video switcher that I did some work with in our video studio. It was called a Cohu. That's just a brand of it. And it allowed you to mix things like you would for broadcast television. And I could take Paik-Abe-generated stuff and mix it. I could also use the studio cameras and feedback and mix those. I talked to Ed Emshwiller about getting something better. Ed Emshwiller was Dean at the time. And he was interested in video. So we arranged to get a Grass Valley switcher, which was a 1600 7 H, it had three banks that you could do AB, AB and AB. So you could have six sources and combine them together in three different levels. And you could do keying and you could do wipe generation. I got very interested in the wipe generators. Because you could do these hard edge patterns and differentiate. So I could make layers of images where you had one layer including another layer. So you could eclipse and reveal the layers.

**00:38:57**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And you could work with figure-ground relationships and sort of change. And I found ways of creating formal interest with the shapes that way. The hard edge shapes that the wipes allowed you to generate allowed me to play those hard edge geometries off against the soft more amorphous shapes of the video feedback. So I started layering things. I was very interested in the architectonic structuring of these layers and looking to music as a model for how could you think about structuring them. So in music, you know, one of the things you deal with is sort of antecedent and consequent. So you repeat something and you expect something else to happen after that. You set up an expectation through the patterns and then if you diverge from that, you create a sort of frustration that creates tension. Or maybe it's not a frustration, but it's a delight that "oh, it has changed." So you do that through this antecedent- consequent process.

**[END TAPE 5]**

## TAPE 6: MICHAEL SCROGGINS

00:00:11

ADAM HYMAN

May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2010. Can you please say and spell your name again?

00:00:12

MICHAEL SCROGGINS

Michael Scroggins. It's Michael Scroggins. S-C-R-O-G-G-I-N-S. Traditional M-I-C-H-A-E-L.

00:00:20

ADAM HYMAN

Cool, all right where to begin.

00:00:21

MICHAEL SCROGGINS

Yeah, I hope I calm down here. Performance anxiety always sets in. [non-interview dialogue]

00:00:31

ADAM HYMAN

Oh! That's a good place to start. What is performance animation?

00:00:33

MICHAEL SCROGGINS

Aah, it's animation that's done in real time. And, so for me it's a bit like musical performance. It's an easy analog. I'm interested in formalism, and visuals. Instrumental music is basically formalist. There are different ways to think about instrumental music, but it's a crucial aspect of it. You can perform with your human voice. You can sing. So you have the will to produce sound. You don't need any instrumentality, no technology you just sing. And, that's sort of the basis of music. That's where it starts. Right?

00:01:04

MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)

And, you can also say stomping and clapping could be part of it, but singing is a big part. So, the will to produce sound is done and then you're performing it. A visual equivalent to that would be an ability to perform-- oh so then you-- let me back track, then you could add an instrumentality. You could create an instrument let's say a monochord where you're plucking a string. You can get up-- take that up into a piano, or a harpsichord and you know you have a wide range of potential.

**00:01:33      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

But, what you do when you create this technological device whether it's a monochord, or a horn you're blowing into, you're creating a technological extension of your will to produce sound. That's kind of crucial. And you're able to do things with the instrument that you couldn't do with your human voice. So, it extends this will to produce sound and enriches the possibilities in whatever you're going to compose. In the history of music things were improvised. It wasn't scored, it wasn't written. People would improvise. They would make sounds, make up patterns. And then if they were interesting enough, they could repeat those later. They could remember them.

**00:02:14      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And other people could hear them and repeat them. But there-- we didn't have this sort of codification that happened once inscription was done. And you begin to actually notate scores. So, with this will to produce sound that's unmediated--the voice--we have kind of a similar thing visually. You can dance. You don't need any technology to dance. You can take the will to movement and expression and simply dance, or you can also add an instrumentality. So, if you create a technology that can take the will to produce movement and extend it you can perform that as well.

**00:02:49      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So, in traditional animation you're typically key framing. You're doing one drawing after another, or you're posing a puppet one step after another. Whatever technique you're using it's a series of sequences that are shot not in real time, and then played back in real time to create the illusion of movement. With contemporary technologies it's much easier to perform visual compositions. I mean you can track back to other techniques before animation where people tended to perform with casting light and shadow. Then this extension of the will to movement through an instrumentality becomes sort of crucial performance.

**00:03:32      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

When I was doing the liquid light show work with the Single Wing Turquoise Bird I was moving the liquids in response to the situation that took place. So, I was talking a moment ago about improvisation sort of being the core of how musical structures evolved. And that as they became more and more successful patterns of things were held. One of the aspects of music that's interesting is that you create a pattern, you can repeat the pattern and then-- So you create an antecedent-consequent expectation. And then at a certain point if you thwart that expectation you create musical tension and it becomes more interesting.

**00:04:12      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So, musical structures tend to do that and you can have visual structures that are the same. I realize I just sort of spiraled off from, you know, what I wanted to talk about with performance. So, the crux of my work, at least with performance animation in particular was that I wanted to find something as affective as a musical experience could be. And, it seemed to me the best way to discover what-- how you would organize time and space in performance had to be determined by this sort of stimulus-feedback loop that occurs in live improvisation.

**00:04:50      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So in music you play notes, you hear what you've just played, you anticipate what you're going to play next. You make accidents, you have discoveries, and the whole process grows until you've created some kind of a new composition. And it's very affective. How you feel as you're making the music affects how you're going to change the music as it progresses. So this notion of improvisation is key. In contemporary American Jazz that became a very big deal. Again, the improvisation added a kind of juice a kind of aliveness that had somehow gone missing from much of western music.

**00:05:23      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Improvisation has been around in all cultures for a long time, but you know it was sort of renovated in you know the contemporary American culture. Or at least over the last 100 years. I was interested in finding a visual equivalent to musical process and in order to do that properly you had to improvise, experience how that made you feel, use that affect to then modify what you were going to do that followed. So your subsequent events that you create are affected by what you have been doing and how you feel about that.

**00:05:59      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And I think that's really crucial. It's a different way-- it's a very traditional approach to structuring an experience. Since-- well even before John Cage, but particularly since John Cage, we can look at ways of creating musical experience that are outside of these performative improvisational affective processes and still have something interesting. Just a quick aside before I get back to 'What is performance animation'. John Cage was at CalArts for-- he was traveling as part of his big birthday celebration. It was sort of the year of John Cage.

**00:06:34      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

He came here and they staged a performance in our modular theater. It was a large ensemble and this group-- it was a group of CalArts students who were accustomed to improvisation. The kind of people who were --when they were tuning up-- would be making music not just completely tuning. So they performed Cage's music and they stuck to the score. They did work within the parameters that were there, but they were-- because they had room to be expressive they created an extraordinarily beautiful evening. The music was astounding. It was sublime.

**00:07:08      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I remember I was sitting next to Gene Youngblood and he and I were really kind of blown away by it. Afterwards, John Cage came on stage and he was near tears, if not actually there, and said this was the most beautiful performance. You've proven my critics wrong. My music can be pretty. I think he used beautiful not pretty, but-- it was an interesting moment. So, even given specific algorithmic structural devices, or predetermined score structures, improvisation can allow for a kind of juice or magic to happen that, you know, is based on the emotion or the affect that music can create.

**00:07:44      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

All right visually you can also create affect. Clearly, sound is mapped onto our consciousness through our ears in a very different way than vision is in the brain. So, what the direct parallels are, are still you know, up for grabs. Any kind of direct correspondence between pitch and color--because they're both sort of spectrum of frequencies--is probably the wrong path to go down. I think that's sort of proven to be a dead-end. People could argue that it's not. Well, in my case performance animation started with these liquid lights. And it was a direct experience, direct expression. As the liquids are moving you're dealing with a chaotic flow.

**00:08:24      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

You have this fluid dynamic going on, but you're also shaping that flow through your own experience. So, there's this balance of sort of virtuosic gesture and random process that makes it very, very interesting. I think I've sometimes compared it to surfing. Some people will find-- well, what is that. Some lame sport. But for me the essence of surfing was an art. It wasn't about athleticism. Athleticism is a part of it, of course. As a dancer needs to be athletic, to surf if you need to be athletic.

**00:08:52      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

But it had to do with free expression and the fact that this chaotic phenomenon of the wave is generated by nature. It presents itself and it has certain patterns that you learn to recognize. And then you capitalize on those. You sort of-- you could say exploit those patterns to find points of energy, tension and release and you're doing a kind of dance. But you're dancing with this wave, which is presented to you in natural form. When I was surfing I thought of it in a Daoist sense. It had to do with the harmony of nature and man.

**00:09:21      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So we're part of the whole system and recognizing that somehow created a really beautiful thing. My attitude toward surfing was very much form follows function--that sort of Bauhaus aesthetic--where it wasn't ornamental or decorative. You were actually just finding the purity of expression that could happen in that point. And like with all aesthetics that's open to interpretation. So I brought that kind of sensibility to working with the liquids. You have phenomena that you're not in control of, but you can work with and find a harmonic way of creating more expression, meaning, joy, things of interest, experiences of interest.

**00:10:02      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Well, that's performance animation. When the lightshow ensemble was working people projecting slides that Jeff Perkins with his multiple circles of light and the strobing motors was performing the animation in real time. And, as the flickering rates and the illusions that were being created affected him he was tweaking and making changes. So, he was literally playing these instruments as if he were playing music. So, that's what I mean by performance animation. I've also moved that into video with videographics. Where I worked with a Grass Valley switcher.

**00:10:37      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

By the way, I work with video feedback, which once again is a phenomena like fluid dynamics which-- it gives you a certain random, or uncontrollable process, but you're able to shape that. So within what you're presented by the natural process, you're able to create expression. So that's the essence of performance animation. The latest iteration I've been interested in and this has been going on for a couple of decades and I'm just now on the cusp of being able to realize what I want to do is to put on a pair of VR goggles, so you're immersed in the image.

**00:11:14            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

You're no longer looking through this proscenium window. You're generally - you're totally surrounded by image. I thought about that in terms of a visual equivalent to music. Because we're sort of suspended or immersed in this ocean of air. Sound is all around us. It's not localized the way our vision is. And, so if at least your representation to the visual senses is presented in such a way that there's no frame like with the VR goggles. Wherever you look there's always image. And, my notion there is then to be able to use large body gestures to create shapes, to delineate trajectories for objects to move [along].

**00:11:54            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

With one hand you could be controlling hue and color and saturation. There are a lot of --numbers of ways you can use your physicality to control the quality of the images you're performing in real time. And, they're also in the round. They're surrounding you. One of the things I liked about that is that you could create this. You could step back, play it back, and look at it. Step back in and then add to it and change it. And, in fact once the data is recorded and presented it-- as long as it's preserved it can last infinitely and anyone could come in and modify and change the data, add to it, without destroying the original which I thought was a very interesting concept.

**00:12:32            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Going back to my videographic animation working with the video switcher I had a traditional production switcher which had T-bar handles, it had geometric wipes. So, I started working with the archetypal power of those forms of the wipes, the triangle, the circle, the square. Manipulating those in combining them with internal systems of the video feedback where the camera is looking at the image of itself to create complex, more amorphous forms. So, playing the hard edge off against the soft and performing with this T-bar where you're gesturing physically to create the image. Turning knobs was another kind of gesture to create the hue.

**00:13:09            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So you've got a direct physical interface, but what you're seeing is expressed on the screen. So you become the image on the screen. And that's sort of the crux of performance animation. As you're acting out the performance, the image is who you are. Just the same as if I was playing a saxophone. I could be-- I am the sound. So, John Coltrane was the music he was performing at the time he was performing it. But, they're integral you don't really separate those out. [technical]

**00:14:23**

**ADAM HYMAN**

So, how have you-- how was the technology involved in your performances then evolved [unintelligible] I mean you've gone through several of the iterations.

**00:14:35**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah.

**00:14:36**

**ADAM HYMAN**

So, is there a way that you're able to sort of give an overall notion of what the evolutions and technology have been over the last 20, 30 years?

**00:14:44**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Sure, I think the evolution when I was working with the ensemble, with the Single Wing Turquoise Bird, that had a unique process. Because, you've got six or more people sort of projecting onto the screen. And, I was talking earlier about how you become the image you create. You become the sounds you're creating. So, when you have an ensemble creating sounds that-- you have a group let's say it's, you know, Miles Davis and John Coltrane and Cannonball Adderley all together. Suddenly you're inspiring each other. There's a synergetic thing that takes place and the sum becomes much greater than the whole of the parts.

**00:15:19**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

In the light show ensemble as we were all projecting on the screen there was kind of an architectonic structuring of the image that was being made complex because of the many people involved. People knowing when to stop projecting, when to lay out, when to come in, how to be inspired by what you see to make things happen. There's a story I like to tell in the Single Wing days where I-- we're also in addition to liquids with the overhead projectors-- I had two, Jon Greene had two--we would use 8 by 10 kodalith transparencies. So these hi con black and white transparencies.

**00:15:54**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And, we'd project those and you could have the same image on a stage of each projector and slightly mis-register them and have them flicker and move. You could rack focus. There are a lot of techniques and tricks you could use and well ahead of, you know, Photoshop and After Effects, but a lot of the similar techniques actually. So, in doing that at one of our particular shows the-- Peter Mays is projecting films and Jeff Perkins and Larry Janss and whoever's projecting the slides--maybe Alan Keesling. And things are really going on. And [snaps] I had an idea of an image I wanted to put up.

**00:16:23      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And I turned around, went to the file we kept of images. It was sort of like a regular file folder for text... things. I couldn't find the image I wanted. I was a little upset. Aw, it's been misfiled. That's lame. I turned around. Jon Greene had been a few steps ahead of me and already had it up on the screen. And that illustrated for me just how tight we had become as an ensemble. We had a sense of what was going to work with what. We were improvising but we were familiar with our materials and were able to create a performance that way.

**00:16:52      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

That technology was fairly straightforward. When I went to CalArts in 1970 I ended up working with Nam June Paik and the video synthesizer and here was an instrument that could do real-time chaotic performance much-- The video feedback and the colorization was a very similar to what I was doing with liquids. But one of the differences was I could control the hue by turning a knob. When I was working with the liquids the only way to change the hue was to add other colors, or to slide a gel in. You had a fairly limited palate in terms of change [MS: relative to the Paik-Abe].

**00:17:23      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

There were ways of adding colors that would mix together and through the process of our performance would alter and change, but you couldn't go back to where you were. It was, you know, a very finite thing. But, with the electronic analog video you simply turn a knob for hue and you change the relationships. Shuya Abe had done a beautiful thing when he designed the Paik-Abe. He used an encoder from a color camera, had black and white inputs that were balanced so that a certain portion of the black and white signal was feeding the R minus Y of the coder and a certain part, the B minus Y.

**00:17:53      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And, these are values that actually mix together to create the RGB of the final colors. In the way he designed it, you almost always got complimentary colors. So it was hard to do something horrendously ugly. You tend to have a nice harmonic-- not a discordant, but an actually pleasing chord. Say more of a major than a minor chord. You could find the minors, but you had to work at it. Well that was a big difference. When I moved into working with the video switcher I had the same kind of process. I had knobs I could turn to change hue, luminance, and saturation.



**00:20:03            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And then it-- As the oil flows back it--the image goes away. So, you have this great quick drawing tool. So, when I did POWER SPOT I actually added that technique. It was sort of the first time that I had a camera pointing at something that wasn't completely internal. And, I did add very subtle shades of video feedback inside it [MS: via mixing and luminance keying]and [other] things to change it. But I remember showing it to Woody Vasulka and I confessed to him I did this. And, he-- It was sort of a mock disdain 'You would do that?'

**00:20:31            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Because he realized that I was being a bit of a fool and a purist, you know? I have a tendency to subscribe to some sort of a tight theory when, you know, everything can't work, you know? So, you have to be a little more relaxed. I was-- it was a funny moment. So the video switcher gave me these controls. At one point Peter Mays and David Lebrun and I put together a small lightshow company in my studio in Venice. I had built a loft in [MS: my warehouse] studio and it was a great projection space.

**00:21:02            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And Peter had been a painting teacher of Ray Manzarek when he was at UCLA. Ray and Jim Morrison formed The Doors there. So Peter had stayed in contact with him over the years. Since Jim Morrison was dead The Doors couldn't take a road tour. At the time they weren't thinking of you know picking Sammy Hagar or somebody to step in. That seemed like, absurd. So, they thought maybe we could do a multimedia show. So Peter proposed something.

**00:21:28            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

We did a light show in my studio with just three people. I projected liquids and David and Peter were running films. I had been away from doing liquids for a long time. I had been back in video, so this is in I guess maybe in mid '80's I'm not really certain sometime in the '80's. I was shocked to realize that my romantic sense of what I could do with the liquids was great. I loved the high saturation, the fine detail, there are things that you could do that were outside of NTSC video that were precious.

**00:21:58            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

However, I couldn't change the hue. I didn't have my hue knob. So, that was sort of a change in technology that was sort of highlighted for me at that moment. By the way, the three-man show I think didn't work. I think it takes more than three people to really make that kind of magic happen. You need quite a bit-- you need at least six people and enough different technologies to get the density you need. And, also to be able to not have everyone projecting at the same time, but to weave in and out in the appropriate way.

**00:22:25            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Otherwise, it kind of becomes less interesting pretty quickly. So the video switcher changed things. I moved into working with computer graphics and they were not real-time. And by the way it was the computer scientists who came up with the term “real-time” because the first computers could not show you anything on the spot. You actually had to wait for it render out. Not unlike you know shooting under a rostrum camera and then getting your pencil test back. So, we didn't have real-time systems and I was craving that.

**00:22:55            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

As VR was starting to come forward, you know...

**00:22:59            ADAM HYMAN**

What does VR stand for?

**00:23:00            MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh, virtual reality. That was a term coined by Jaron Lanier. I first heard of it because of Scott Fisher. He had a cover of SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN with a--wearing a data glove-- and there was a story about that. Then I went to, I think it was a part of it was something at the AFL. I think it was actually part of the festival, but at any rate Brenda Laurel and Scott Fisher did a really interesting presentation about virtual reality. And, I immediately was very--from the first time I started hearing about it I was excited about that.

**00:23:33            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I had actually heard a little bit about that potential in the late '60's. My roommate Chris Wells, who was a brilliant computer scientist, at the time a student at UCLA-- he later went to work with John Lilly trying to work with digitalization of sound events to try to decode the dolphin language. Rather than try to teach dolphins English they were trying to learn Dolphinese. The experiment didn't succeed, but it was a very noble experiment. Well, Chris got word of an interesting thing that was going on down at Rand Corporation.

**00:24:08            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Barbara Brown was a professor at UCLA and she had formed-- this was the first international bio-feedback conference. So, I went to this. I was interested in brainwaves and what bio-feedback can do you know? Alex Hay--or Hayes-- [MS: it is Hay, not Hayes] had set himself up with sensors [MS: for a piece entitled GRASS FIELD as a part of the E.A.T Nine Evenings series"]. There was a number of people working with either brainwaves, or other physical senses. And, I wanted to learn about what that meant and how it could be used. And we met a guy there who told us of this experiment going on in Utah with this head coupled display where you had monitors that showed you two images.

**00:24:41            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And you had a joystick and you could actually reach in and move molecules around and feel them connect. And I thought this is a fascinating idea. It turned out this would be Ivan Sutherland's SWORD OF DAMOCLES. But I had not heard about any of that computer science at that point. That did get me thinking about what could happen. So by the time Scott Fisher was dealing with NASA-Ames and bringing this stuff forward and then Jaron Lanier at VPL were doing things. I realized that I really wanted to move into what could be done in virtual reality.

**00:25:10            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I delivered a paper in 1991 in Moscow about how I could extend the work I was doing with videographic animation into the immersive--the fully immersive world of VR. And I was really interested in that capacity. So that really changes things too. You have a greater range of technical expression and thus you can extend this sort of will to--of the body into space, in more complex ways. Right now it's more theoretical. I've just done the beginnings of drawing in space. I want to do much more than inscribe lines. I'm interested in complex forms.

**00:25:48            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

One of the things you can do is-- and from '91 I was talking about this-- you could, you know, move your hand along and have an imaginary string reaching up from the hand and have a flock of triangles sort of scintillating and following it. (Craig Reynolds had written this BOIDS program which allowed for flocking behavior which is a naturally occurring and quite beautiful algorithmic process. So he's simulating that very well.) And with your hand you can contract it or expand it with the data glove to cause the [invisible] string to come in and out. So you're gesturing with this flock of triangles and your other hand could be changing the hue and transparency and any number of things.

**00:26:22**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

But as I talked about in the paper, those instrumentalities really were waiting to be discovered. Until you actually have a set where you can experiment and discover what works you're just having you know pure conjecture. And, obviously in practice you're going to start—"well, this is not interesting, that is interesting" and on the spot improvisation will allow you to sort of invent something fresh and discover the technology. So, I see that as the ultimate place that I want to go with this stuff. And it's really a pretty big step from -- down from the videographic work, and down [MS: all the way] back to the liquids. [MS: This last statement is particularly awkward and confusing due to the way in which I attempt to use a chronological hierarchy to trace performance techniques backward from the potential of VR technology "down" through the earlier technologies of videographics and liquid projection.]

**00:26:59**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

By the way, in the videographic work [MS: of the "studies"] I would lay down a track and then play that back and then perform over it. Sometimes I'd lay down two different tracks, play both of them back [simultaneously], and lay [a new performance] over that. So, I was like overdubbing much in the way that was pioneered by Les Paul. You could add to your performance in the studio process. So, it's live performance. It's real [time] gesture. You're responding to yourself. And yet you're doing it layers. And that's what I imagine doing in the VR space as well.

**00:27:25**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I was interested even in the time I was doing the videographic thing in the '80's --and what I wanted to do with VR also, is working in an ensemble. I think when you have different minds, different consciousness interacting, the results can be even more interesting than a single person, you know, multi tracking. So...

**00:27:43**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

You mentioned Ivan Sutherland's SWORD OF DAMOCLES what was that a reference to?

**00:27:51**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Well, he was a...

**00:27:53**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Say his name in your answer.

**00:27:54**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yes, Ivan Sutherland was a professor at the University of Utah. And, University of Utah at this particular period--I forget the exact range of years--was a very amazing place. Some of the brightest minds in the country who wanted to deal with these issues of computer graphics were there. In fact, they had a chance to pick the low-hanging fruit. So, Ed Catmull was there, Alvy Ray Smith, well actually I don't think Alvy was there. He and Ed ended up [MS: working together] later. But, John Warnock who [later] founded Adobe systems was there working [on his doctorate].

**00:28:25**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Bui-Tong Phong who developed Phong shading was there. Before, Phong developed his shader, Gouraud-- Henri Gouraud invented the Gouraud shading algorithm [MS: while a student at the University of Utah]. And, there are a number-- I'm leaving out a whole raft of people that were there [MS: Jim Blinn, Steve Coons, Jim Clark, Frank Crow, Jim Kajia, Alan Kay, Martin Newell, Fred Parke, Lance Williams] . So, it was a very cool time. Well, Ivan Sutherland had the bright idea of creating a system where you could have two cathode ray tubes and a prism optic system to present a computer image to each eye and they [--the images--]could shifted in parallax. So, that you actually had stereoscopic vision.

**00:28:53**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Because when you're generating a 3D world in the computer it's no problem to move a second synthetic camera offset just the way your eyes are in terms of convergence and the inner-pupillary distance. So, he had made this set up that could run in real-time and present wire-frame images of computer models. That's the best he could do. And, in order to track the movements of the head you had a mechanical device that was optical shaft encoders connected to you. So, you were kind of wired up to this big rig and thus *The Sword of Damocles* was the name he chose for it.

**00:29:23**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

By the way, Sutherland also came up with a sketch pad system where you could draw on the screen with a light pen and actually interactively draw. Before that time, you typed in coordinates and waited for the computer to connect the dots and do a hard copy printout, or maybe put it on a CRT. So, he pushed this notion of interactive drawing on the computer as well. That of course became extended by Tom Porter and Alvy Ray Smith and others into paint programs and a wide range of things.

**00:29:48**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So anyway that was Sutherland's pioneering work. This notion of interactive immersive image was very, very fresh. It was as far as everyone-- as far as I know was the first time anyone did that. You know you can use a joystick, or a mouse to move the computer image around and look around a scene, but what was brilliant about this was you coupled your head with the displays, so when you turned your head the computer moved the image. The illusion was as if the image was still and you were looking around it. That's a major breakthrough.

**00:30:19**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Doesn't it seem like, you know all this is getting incorporated just into various video games? I mean what are the differences here?

**00:30:25**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Well, the difference in most video games are that you're still looking through a proscenium. Typically, you're not seeing a stereo 3D image, although that's possible and more people do it. I think a lot of gamers have-- I actually have a head mounted display that was designed for gamers. It's the eMagin Z800. So, that was the idea to come in at a price point that the home gamer could actually see a stereoscopic thing with a head-mount display, using an inertial sensor. But, the gamers found that they really need to be very quick and responsive.

**00:30:53**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Because typically they're doing fight-or-flight games and so their very survival depends on peripheral vision and seeing things quickly so they tend to work with a single screen. I think there's a really interesting blend coming with virtual worlds. And we have Second Life. We have the games that are being developed that get more and more interesting. For the artists there are many, many possibilities. Eddo Stern has done really interesting work with games. For instance, recreating the Waco compound, and you can be David Koresh. Or you could be someone else and actually experience that run down the hall, the grenades and fire going off. It's quite a scenario that can be reenacted.

**00:31:31**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Anything is possible once you get artists involved I think. So, yes I think the synthetic world that the way the game industry drives this push to photorealism means that someone like myself who wants to work in absolute imagery or what may be called abstraction has more and more powerful tools available. They become a commodity price point which makes it more reasonable to get your hands on.

**00:31:56**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Have you been troubled ever or tell your views regarding archiving? Particularly of performance-based things.

**00:32:06**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Ah, well it's interesting when we were doing the light show performances with Single Wing Turquoise Bird one of the things we took great joy in was the fact that was evanescent. We did a performance and then it evaporated. All you had was your memory of that performance and we liked the fact that we didn't have a commodity. It wasn't [MS: an object that] could sell. It fit our social political point of view that this is not something-- we could go in to a museum and do a performance, but no one could own this. It was just like music was in the days before recording.

**00:32:34**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

An ensemble would set up, they would perform music, everyone would listen and when it was over you had your memory of the event. But, there's no way to reflect on that. Now of course we have the ability to record. When we had a chance when Jim Bridges did his first feature film. He was a theatrical director who wanted to do a feature. And he wrote this movie called THE BABY MAKER. He wrote our lightshow into it because he'd come to our performances and really liked it and thought it would fit the countercultural theme he wanted to work with in aspects of his film.

**00:33:05**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And thus we had to record the lightshow in action, doing things, and actually record on a screen. What we discovered was we couldn't record the whole lightshow on 35 millimeter film because the way we performed-- the scale we performed at it wasn't bright enough. There weren't enough lumens even for the film stock of the day. So we ended up having to do a simulation by shooting a very small image, you know three feet wide, four feet wide and create elements. And then Peter Mays set up A, B, C, D, E rolls to figure out how that would work to edit the whole thing together and then this great optical printer team in Hollywood actually, you know, put it all together for us.

**00:33:44**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I remember when the film was done we looked at it and went "oh, man it's nothing near what we could do live. It's really too bad." And, now we're very happy to have that document. Because, it does capture the essence of so much of what we did even though it's not nearly as strong as our live performances were. So, being able to archive that I think is important. But, right now we're able to digitally record live performances and we're in the process of doing that, although we're you know 30, 40 years what almost 50 down the road it seems. And you know, we're not the same people.

**00:34:16            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Jon Greene isn't even with us anymore. So, it's very-- we've all experienced so much. We're not who we were then. It would have been great to kind of capture the essence of that then. But it wasn't possible. I had an experience-- Well, because we shot this film for THE BABY MAKER we had many copies. And, one day I was at the Fox Venice down in the audience with my friends and we were getting high and just, you know-- Jon Greene was projecting stuff from up in the booth.

**00:34:41            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

He did what was called an Alka-Seltzer plate which is one of the things I usually did in the show. We each had our kind of specialty areas. Jon did this great swirly marbled Crystal Craze plate and I had my quicksilver and what not. So, I would do the Alka-Seltzer plate, which is something I learned from Helena Lebrun. Basically, you're using colored water. You break up some Alka-Seltzer tablets into a convex clock face, put another one down on top of that that's smaller and you crush the tablets underneath and you get these bubbles that start to form [MS: and stream outward].

**00:35:09            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Let's say you have blue water and a red gel you're going to get purple deep background with red spheres coming out. Or, maybe you use red water with blue gel and you've got blue spheres against the purple. You can drive that around. By moving the plate around you can direct the flow of the bubbles and create some sort of gestural expression. And at the same time you have this [gestures] radiating spheres. Now you can do that kind of stuff on a computer pretty quick. But we did it real-time in the day.

**00:35:37            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Alright. So I'm at the Fox Venice I'm looking at this stuff on the screen. And, I've gone to CalArts. I'm off on some other realm. I left the light show in 1970 because I wanted to go to school and then I got involved in video. One of the reasons I actually left was I didn't think we could make a viable entity. I produced a few of the concerts. I tried to raise enough money from the gate so we could pay for our bulb costs and our materials at least, if not you know, have enough money left over to eat on.



**00:37:43**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And Jon never knew, was his brake job faulty, or was Richard just, you know, a crazy driver. But it really weighed on him. He was kind of a brooding character. He was-- I was a much more lighthearted and certainly psychologically much younger I think, than Jon. Jon learned liquid projection with Helena Lebrun. And Scott Hardy, who also worked with Helena. Helena had learned liquids from Elias Romero, or "a-li-as" Romero. We called him "e-li-as", but "a-li-as" is actually his name. And, Elias had learned from Seymour Locks at the University of San Francisco.

**00:38:14**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So, there's kind of a trace back there.

**00:38:17**    **ADAM HYMAN**

[unintelligible]

**00:38:19**    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, so Jon was living I think at the Cresthill House in Hollywood and I know Peter Mays and Jeff Perkins and I think certainly there were a few other people who were around at the time. I'm trying to think of his name now-- Burt Gershfield. It was kind of a scene that was going on. I don't know how many people actually lived there. I never went to the Cresthill House. I didn't know them then. I was living in Topanga Canyon on a commune with Evan Engber. Our commune decided we'd put together a psychedelic carnival.

**00:38:47**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

We'd gotten a hold of a surplus army generator so we could take our show on the road. I was trying to figure out how to project liquids. Utterly naively. I had been interested in doing this since I was a kid. Playing with my mother's food color and watching them move. And, etcetera, etcetera. So I was looking for some way to do that stuff. We were going to merge with the Hog Farm and the Hog Farm-- Helena and David Lebrun were involved in. Helena had this-- Had learned the liquids from Elias [a-li-as], Elias. I'm just going to call him Elias.

**00:39:16**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So, she learned from Elias. And when John Van Hamersveld picked the group from the Cresthill House and the Hog Farm people to do lightshows at the Pinnacle concerts at the Shrine, Jon was involved.

[END OF TAPE 6]

## TAPE 7: MICHAEL SCROGGINS

00:00:44

MICHAEL SCROGGINS

Well, so Jon was a very a much more complex person I think than I at the time. I also believe I was the youngest member of the ensemble. So, Jon had joined early on learning liquids from Helena. He was projecting when the Hog Farm was full on. It seemed to me there were like 30 people projecting at the Hog Farm. It was probably you know, 9 or 10. But there were a lot of people-- Hog Farmers and then there was the--sort of the Cresthill group. Jeff was doing slides and films and Peter was doing films. Jon, liquids.

00:01:15

MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)

The Hog Farm was preparing to go on the road they had a couple of large geodesic domes [MS: constructed] out of pipes. In fact, I remember at one point they had set them up at the end of the Shrine Expo Hall for one of the concerts. And then Marshall Buck had giant strobe lights up on either ends of the edge of the balcony with like magenta and green filters. They were strobing at different rates so you dance inside the domes and they seemed to be rotating and counter-rotating. It was a pretty extraordinary phenomenon.

00:01:42

MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)

When the Hog Farm went on the road the light show went down to a smaller number of people. And we moved from projecting a combination of behind and in front of the screen to all in front of the screen which I really preferred because you could see the band. You were in touch with the room in a different way. Jon Greene and I took the front row, with two projectors each. We had to rent projectors that weren't our own, because our personal projectors-- I got projectors from Scott Hardy. And our projectors weren't bright enough for the throw we had to do at the Shrine.

00:02:12

MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)

So, we would rent transpaque junior projectors from Technifax. We had to drive out to Monterey Park or some place. We spent almost half our budget it seems renting equipment. And we also had to get the Mark II Xenon film projectors from USC to get that brightness and throw that we needed. So Jon was working in darker colors, sort of moodier more complex. And, I was lighter and probably brighter. And so I think we complimented each other in a really great way.

**00:02:39**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

As I got older I started working in more complex and darker colors as well. But as I think back on it, it was a nice contrast between us. We worked very well together. I had mentioned earlier how I went to get an image put on the screen from a transparency and Jon had already selected it. He-- after the Single Wing Turquoise Bird sort of dissipated he moved up north to Project Artaud, got a studio and he was doing shows on his own. He gravitated toward working with slow dissolving slide imagery and continued doing different kinds of lightshow works.

**00:03:17**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

In San Francisco, he was?

**00:03:18**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, yeah.

**00:03:20**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

What was Project Artaud?

**00:03:21**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

It was a...

**00:03:22**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Say Project Artaud...

**00:03:23**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh, Project Artaud as I understand it-- I never went up to visit Jon there-- was a communal space. So, it was a collective of artists who rented out a large space and sort of shared it. So, it was a communal large studio space that people had different studios in. I don't know exactly the details of it, but it sounded like a great idea. They made it economically feasible. At the same time you had a community of artists who could inspire each other in various ways.

**00:03:49**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Spelled after Antonin Artaud?

**00:03:50**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yes.

**00:03:52**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Spell that for the transcriber.

**00:03:54**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

A-R what was it A-N...

**00:03:56**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

A-R...



**00:05:21                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And thinking very much-- I think I was inspired in some--somewhat by the writings of Stan VanDerBeek and his manifesto on this sort of Culture Intercom. The notion that you could take parts of the culture reshuffle it and fold it back. I was very fascinated with Wally Berman's verifax collages and how that iconography did certain things, or Bruce Connor's films. All of that was sort of in our mind. So we would work with imagery that had a certain cultural resonance and-- shooting things out of THE FAMILY OF MAN.

**00:05:54                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Whatever we found that seemed to have some sort of archetypal power we would use. It could be sort of a universal archetypal power or something that's very cultural specific.

**00:06:05                    ADAM HYMAN**

In what ways did you find that that your use of that imagery did affect your audiences?

**00:06:11                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I think it affected them quite a bit. You know, obviously if you didn't know what Artaud looked like or you hadn't seen those photographs or read the book you might not be aware of who that was. So perhaps there's an unconscious power in those images, but in essence probably not. I've often wondered about the paintings of-- my mind goes blank again. A few beats it's completely gone out of my mind. Alright who's the great abstract-- Mark Rothko. Rothko's paintings are so simple in appearance. You think sensually he prevented--presented with a fairly limited amount of information. But there's a psychic power there. There's a numinous quality that you just feel.

**00:06:55                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I've often wondered if someone else painted a copy would it still feel that way? Is there some inherit magic in this object that he's created that's imbued somehow in it? Hmm, probably not, but I've wondered. Well, that notion of creating that kind of power in the image-- it could be that if you had an image of Artaud and someone in the audience wasn't familiar with that image it would still carry with it some sort of connection through the group mind that you know-- the sort of amorphous collective unconscious that Jung would talk about.

**00:07:27                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I was never convinced that any of that existed, but I was always curious about the possibility.

**00:07:34                    ADAM HYMAN**

What sort of feedback or comments would you get from your audience after a show?

**00:07:38**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I don't know if they were so specific. They clearly were very engaged and we would go for hours. I know that Wally Berman really loved the show. Dean Stockwell would come and sort of that circle with George Herms. And, I think what we were doing fit very well into their aesthetic. Particularly Wally with his collage work. So I think that yes, that the audience did-- you know Gene Youngblood came and wrote about our show. He came down to our studio in Venice. We were in Joe Funk's litho shop, which was adjoining to the pot shop, this big metal shed at-- not far from where I ended up with a studio later.

**00:08:19**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

That space-- We would have guests come down and I remember Anaïs Nin came down one night. She wrote some beautiful thing about her experience there. And Youngblood came down I think he was there the night Anaïs was there. And, anyway he wrote in the L.A. FREE PRESS descriptions of what we were doing. Later incorporated an excerpt of that in his book EXPANDED CINEMA. I can read his descriptions and know what materials we were using. I mean he captured sort of the essence. His perception of what the images were doing and how they affected him are such that I can understand what images we were using.

**00:08:59**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So, there's a universal quality in that kind of symbolism that I think is easily read. So, yes it could be something obscure like this John Law on the beach with his arms out and if you'd seen the LIFE magazine and you know that this is, you know, John Law then that's one thing. Or, Tom Law. I forget now. I think it was John. They were brothers. So, that-- the pose he was in, the way it was lit, also had a certain power. So, you didn't necessarily have to know, you know, what the reference was.

**00:09:29**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Let me move ahead to something which is what is the notion, well what sort of other--besides Gene and Anaïs--was there any other to you interesting critical feedback or commentary on your project?

**00:09:45**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Well, Bill Moritz wrote wonderful things about it. He really got what we were doing. In fact, he would come to the Shrine shows. Pat O'Neil talked to us about it. In fact, Pat would get in-- He and Bev would come down with a can of film and say where's the lightshow? And they would get in free to see the concert and Pat would give us outtakes from whatever the film stock one is. 7362 or 63? I can never remember the numbers.

**00:10:08**

**ADAM HYMAN**

7362

**00:10:09**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah. So that-- all of that was you know kind of a [sounds like] formative mix. Clearly we had a lot of people interested. We were projecting at Joe Funk's litho shop at night and Sam Francis was doing stones during the day. He'd ask what's all this stuff? He wanted to know what was going on. So, he came by at night to see what was happening and he immediately became fascinated. He would come very often and in fact projected with us sometimes because he wanted to see what was going on with this stuff.

**00:10:35**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So, clearly we had a very strong positive effect on a lot of people. I can't recall specifically what. All I know now are the things that were transcribed, you know. People wrote stuff. I can read what they wrote. So, I don't remember for sure, but definitely there were a large following that would come to our concerts on a regular basis.

**00:10:55**

**ADAM HYMAN**

And then-- for your later video work then, how do you see the-- well the differences in one sense of course are obvious. Between your single-channel video work that happened after Single Wing, and then your performance work both of Single Wing and then whatever performance-type work you were doing through the '70's, how would those things work together or were expressions of different parts of your brain through that period?

**00:11:29**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Well, I think the video work I was doing became an extension of the Single Wing work. At one point when we had the Monica Hotel Ballroom Studio, which was a really great space we got through Sam Francis. I developed this slow liquid plate that I'm still doing today. It's my favorite plate to do and it was something I would do as a solo in the show. So, typically we could get to very high energy levels and very frenetic and this was [an]extremely adagio, slow piece. And, it was always right on the edge because you didn't know was going to happen. It was the least controllable of liquid plates [that I performed].

**00:12:01**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

But it had a very powerful pattern-forming and compelling aspect to it. So I would do those solos and that was nice to be just me doing something. And there were times in the show when I would maybe be the only thing on the screen liquids and then Jon and I-- Jon would come up and we'd be together and then I would fade out and it'd be just Jon. And then a movie would come in, or the slides would start to come up. One of the things we did in adding in images was to fade them up so slowly that sometimes they were subliminal. You didn't realize they were there and suddenly just-- they were there.



**00:14:17**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

That's right. So, I would record live and then I make another live recording and then I could A, B, roll those in to the switcher. So I had two now, two recordings going. Make another one, play that back. I could go in to our one-inch machine and actually then play things back slow-motion and reverse and layer those in. So, I was definitely improvising against myself. I had mentioned earlier it was a little bit like the techniques that Les Paul developed for multi tracking. So, you play it. You play over it. You may not consciously remember what you had done, but unconsciously you do and so you're timings for the changes you make are in the right place.

**00:14:56**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

It works out. But, there's a lot of serendipity involved, you know?

**00:15:00**

**ADAM HYMAN**

How would you know like if you were reaching your solo for a liquid during the lightshow how would others know to stop projecting their things and that's the solo?

**00:15:14**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, sometimes I think we had a prearranged point. I think quite often the musical structures we used-- when we worked in our studio alone we rarely worked with live music. It was almost always recorded. So that the length of a particular recording would be a segment of what we did. The next recording would come on and that could be a cue for instance for doing something different. Sometimes, we could have a break and then I would start with the slow plate and then after the appropriate amount of time which once again was only discovered intuitively someone would begin to mix in an image and it would be appropriate --it would work.

**00:15:49**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

But, it was always unspoken. We never communicated verbally. I think that came from the rock days when it was so loud we couldn't. And, then when we were working in our studios we could have talked to each other, but we tended not to. We communicated directly on the screen. That was something that was sort of important to us.

**00:16:06**

**ADAM HYMAN**

What music were you playing when you were not doing live music?

**00:16:11**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh well we had recordings by Terry Riley. Betty Freeman had gotten us some tapes that she had from Terry. We also had the drift study from La Monte Young. It was just a 60-cycle drift study, very simple piece. We had recordings of Max Neuhaus and his variations for a feed which is a version for contact mikes on percussion that he edited the feedback [MS: this was a variation of John Cage's FONTANA MIX (Fontana Mix - Feed) in which Max Neuhaus used percussion instrument contact microphone feedback which he manipulated live]. We had Stockhausen recordings, Toshi Ichyanagi. Sam Francis had a tape of some of Toshi's work that was interesting.

**00:16:41**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Henri Pousseur had a great recording of TROIS VISAGES À LIÈGE which was originally designed to be played with a live [visual] performance [MS: as part of a son-et-lumière concert] and that the city fathers of Liège decided that they didn't [like]his music which was actually a quite romantic piece of musique concrète. It's very classical in a sense in its structure. But they played Gershwin [instead] much to his chagrin. So he has a nice tart comment about that on the liner notes. Let's see we also had Jazz recordings, we had Herbie Hancock's MAIDEN VOYAGE.

**00:17:12**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

We worked with that. We worked with rock music like extended jams by the Grateful Dead. I'm leaving out a whole-- oh one day Charlie Lippencott had just picked up a new record at Aron's Record Shop which was this great record store on Melrose. And he came in, popped it on. None of us had heard it before and it was Steve Reich COME OUT. I'd never heard COME OUT. None of us had I think. And, so...

**00:17:35**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Spell that.

**00:17:35**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh, C-O-M-E C-O-M-E O-U-T.

**00:17:38**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Oh, Come Out.

**00:17:39**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, COME OUT. So, it's-- there's that little clip where he takes the recording "I had to like let the bruise up-- I had to like open the bruise up and let the bruise blood come out to show dem." And, Steve takes 'come out to show dem' and repeats it and loops it and sets it off phasing. So it's come out to showdom, come out to showdom... pretty soon it's like West Indian music-- Not West Indian, West African rhythms. And you're hearing all kinds of sounds in there that you know-- that hallucinates-- it's a quite wonderful experience.

**00:18:08**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So, that was open-ended and then-- we loved it so much we would just use that quite a bit. And, then we learned to work with it. Jeff Perkins would do his circle animations where he just had discs of light [made] with holes punched in opaque slides that he would line up and defocus and the strobe [shutter wheel] motors would spin at certain rates and he would just tune them and zoom them and it would become this beautiful hallucinatory moment. It was quite appropriate for that phase music. So, that's the kind of recordings we worked with.

**00:18:37**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Not Pink Floyd?

**00:18:38**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, well of course yeah we had Pink Floyd. I'm leaving out tons of stuff.

**00:18:43**

**ADAM HYMAN**

There's still Pink Floyd with light shows.

**00:18:43**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh, yeah well you know the Boyle Family did some amazing stuff with them. In fact, the Boyles were doing actual chemical lightshows where you were using reactive reagents. Chemicals that are changing color and you know zinc that's bubbling in acid. All kinds of stuff that-- very toxic and dangerous. We were working in more conventional color dyes and you know dyed oils and waters. The crystal craze was probably as toxic as we got. It was a high solvent. It was the stuff used to paint the back of aquariums in the '50's. It was brightly colored transparent and it would crystallize and form these frost-like patterns of bright color.

**00:19:18                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

It was on the back of these kitsch aquariums. So we-- Jon would pour it into a plate. He was a master performing it. He would use a tube to blow the surface. It was kind of like when you see marbleizing for endpapers and books, that kind of technique. It had that quality to it. And, you could add alcohol and then bring in the sizzle and break it apart. It was a very difficult and tenuous plate. Jon had the virtuosity to do that. I just stayed away from it. I also didn't like the fumes.

**00:19:44                    ADAM HYMAN**

Tell me about Charles Lippincott.

**00:19:49                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

He was a--

**00:19:50                    ADAM HYMAN**

Try and include his name.

**00:19:50                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh, Charles Lippincott, or Charlie as we called him was a connoisseur of music. He had the most amazing record collection I'd ever seen. Just walls and walls of Jazz. And, he knew you know all of the players and what, who they were and what the back history was. He was very interested in film, underground film, had studied that. So, he was an expert in many, many things. I guess Charlie along with Bill Moritz were sort of my encyclopedic friends that-- you could always ask them questions and they had the answer. In any conversation they would amplify things with the facts that they had at their disposal.

**00:20:27                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So, Charlie was involved with USC. He had gone to school I think with Taylor Hackford they were friends. And, at one point Charlie ended up becoming a publicist and he was the publicist on the first *Star Wars* film. In fact, that was my connection to Gary Kurtz to evolve this digital watch thing I talked about. In '77 we were trying to make that happen. Charlie also because he understood the power structure of Hollywood he was trying to get us connected in things. Once we got involved with Jim Bridges and THE BABY MAKER film, Charlie was point person on that to make sure the contracts were all together. He understood the business.

**00:21:06**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

He also worked with us at one point we were going to do some stuff at the Mark Taper Forum and it was going to be really great. Just the Single Wing Turquoise Bird doing this great show. And, we got involved with this Hollywood producer who really loved what we doing and he was the classic Hollywood glad-hander. “Yeah, boys we're going to -- just like in, you know, ‘Which one's Pink?’, you know. It was this guy-- it was pretty funny. Anyway, his brother was very famous for [MS: a successful career], as a record producer. Now, he's in jail.

**00:21:39**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Who's producer of the producer?

**00:21:40**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

No, I'm not going to mention, I'm not going to mention.

**00:21:41**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

[unintelligible] Brother.

**00:21:42**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

No, the producer's brother. Not Lippincott no, no. So, this guy was really going to make something happen, but we were excited. This looked like it had potential. And, then at the end it was killed because the union just said that well, for every lightshow projectionist and remember there were 6 to 9 of us. We have to have a union lighting guy standing by. So, they were going to have to pay the union crew and pay us. And, it was not going to be viable economically to do these shows.

**00:22:07**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So to have a lightshow at the Mark Taper Forum and charge a gate and make that a viable process it just, it didn't-- it fell apart. It was really too bad, because I think it would have been a really interesting turning point. And I'm a big union supporter, but this was I think inappropriate use of that power. We weren't putting any guys out of work by doing what we did because they couldn't even begin to do that. They did other things nicely.

**00:22:34**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

And, what else did Lippincott then do after STAR WARS...

**00:22:37**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

[overlapping] He projected with us. Oh he became a film producer. But, he also projected with us and did film at some times. He was a film projectionist with us. He actually ended up producing JUDGE DREDD. I remember I ran into him at SIGGRAPH one time. I said “Charlie I'm sorry I haven't a chance to see the film yet.” He said “well, you better go see it soon, it's a dog. It sucks.” [MS: I reading this I believe that perhaps I did not paraphrase him here accurately and am creating an amplification built from other conversations. He may have simply said that it was not doing well in the box office.] It got out of his, totally out of his control as a process. He was very down about it. He was not happy. At least that's my recollection.

**00:23:06**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So, then I the last I know he retired, you know. But he was under a lot of stress. He did a lot of cool stuff. I don't really know all the things that Charlie had done. Astounding guy.

**00:23:21**

**ADAM HYMAN**

And as an impresario? As a producer?

**00:23:24**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I think he was good at that. He certainly for us --the role he played in setting things up for us I thought was always handled very well. And he had a great sensitivity to the art and what we were doing and had an awareness of art film and the music that was unsurp...—right like I said he brought in this recording of Steve Reich. By the way, on that same record was Pauline Oliveros' NIGHT MUSIC [MS: actually NIGHT MUSIC was by Richard Maxfield and the music of Pauline's that we used from that record was I OF IV]. And, we started working with that too. That was just a great piece of music.

**00:23:54**

**ADAM HYMAN**

You know since-- give me one paragraph on Aron's records since I grew up here and [unintelligible]

**00:23:58**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

[overlapping] Aah.

**00:23:58**

**ADAM HYMAN**

I went to Fairfax High School and I was across the street from...

**00:24:00**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

[overlapping] There you go.

**00:24:01**

**ADAM HYMAN**

I was there, but...

**00:24:01** **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**  
[overlapping] Yeah.

**00:24:02** **ADAM HYMAN**  
[overlapping] ...have it on tape.

**00:24:02** **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**  
Well, yeah I would go to Aron's Records and just pick out this stuff that you couldn't find anywhere else. And, all-- Quite often they had cut outs, so you could get stuff that hadn't moved. And, the fact that it hadn't sold well didn't mean it wasn't good. It was a great resource in L.A. for cutting edge music both popular and this avant-garde stuff. The fact that, you know, Charlie Lippincott popped in and found this record we had. I forget who--the other artists-- were on it [Richard Maxfield]. But, Pauline Oliveros and Steve Reich. There it was and we were able to get that.

**00:24:34** **ADAM HYMAN**  
So, was it like a leading independent record sort of...

**00:24:36** **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**  
[overlapping] It was the leading independent store in L.A. It moved to another location I think later maybe it lost its...

**00:24:41** **ADAM HYMAN**  
[overlapping] Highland and then it closed [unintelligible]

**00:24:42** **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**  
Yeah. I later got interested in Rhino Records in Westwood and that was an amazing place because Lee Kaplan was involved working there. Then Vinny Golia who now is on faculty at CalArts. And that was a great thing. Alex Klein and his brother [Nels]-- I could go in there and-- I was actually distributing Fox Venice calendars. It was a thing I did to make food money, right, is their monthly calendars. So that was one of my stops. It was a pretty amazing job for me because I got to cover L.A. from the South Bay, Hollywood, San Fernando Valley. I went places I never went before.

**00:25:20** **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**  
I also learned to become an aggressive driver as a delivery guy who had a route to do. I'd been a very timid and polite driver up to that point. So, I turned New York on them. Anyhow, I would go into Rhino and you know "hey, what's up?" And, Vinny would turn me onto some new thing or Lee Kaplan would "oh, you've got to get this record". And, I would get it and take it home and it would be great. I had a similar thing with Dennis Cooper at CalArts.



**00:26:59**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

We did a lightshow there. Bev and Bill invited us out. They were teaching classes and we set up to do a performance and it wasn't the Herrick Chapel it was in some other hall. But, it was this long chapel-like space that we couldn't really do the liquids and the slides in it. The throw was too long. So, we decided to do an all-film show. And, the students were invited and was, you know a Single Wing gig at Occidental. And, we had at least nine projectors, film projectors 16[mm] and we would loop films through them.

**00:27:30**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So, we had a copy of Kenneth Anger's INAUGURATION OF THE PLEASURE DOME which we used quite often. Remember I said we appropriated anything we could get our hands on. We would run that through three projectors, so it would come up at different-- so you see and now you see the cage come up and then later there she is again. It played with time in an interesting way. We ran multiple films through these projectors and loops. And it was an all-film show. So it was a very interesting and different thing.

**00:27:54**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

One thing I remember about Bev and Bill there was at a certain point there was military recruiting on campus. And, there were a group of students opposed and some faculty opposed. And, Bill and Bev both stood up and said no we don't want recruiting on campus. We think this is bad for our students it shouldn't be done. And they got squashed. Basically, as I understand it they both lost their contract to teach and there was no, you know, way around that.

**00:28:21**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So, that may be the apocryphal story. It may not be true, but that's how I remember it.

**00:28:26**

**ADAM HYMAN**

So, [technical]

**00:28:35**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

The Cannabis reference is not an issue here right? It's a...

**00:28:37**

**ADAM HYMAN**

I don't care.

**00:28:37**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah.

**00:28:40**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Nobody's arresting you now for it.

**00:28:40**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Right, exactly. Yeah.

**00:28:44**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Okay. [technical]

**00:29:18**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Tell me about the screening of EXTERMINATING ANGEL?

**00:29:22**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Ah, well Bill Moritz had invited a group of us to his house. And, he served a really beautiful dinner. And, we smoked a lot of pot and the time wore on. We saw several films and Bill had this new thing this inflatable chair, this black, vinyl chair that was inflated with arms and you could sit in that and you're kind of down low on the floor. And, my strong memory of that event was-- so it's late in the evening EXTERMINATING ANGEL is on and you know, as you know the film is about people trapped at a party they can't escape.

**00:29:51**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And, I'm feeling-- I'm tired now, I'm trapped at this party and I can't get up out of this chair. I'm going to escape. And then Pat would get up to change the reels or Bill--I think it was Pat though--to change the reel. And, I'd think okay now I can escape I'm going to get up. But before I could, and move my lethargic self up off out of that chair, the fi-- it came back on again. And, of course then I was, you know totally fascinated. Entrapped in the movie along with the rest of the guests. So, that is a strong memory for me of an intriguing evening.

**00:30:20**

**ADAM HYMAN**

I mean who else were you socializing with then through these years?

**00:30:24**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Ah, my gosh that's such a tough one because they were just kind of a scene. There are a lot of people that crossed over. I think I mentioned Wally Berman, and you know I knew him kind of peripherally and we had some great conversations. But, I wasn't a tight friend or part of his sort of close circle. Yeah, you know, the Hog Farm guys -- at one point Ken Kesey came by our studio. I remember I had a really bad headache and he had me lay down flat and gave me a great massage from below that just totally took away the headache. He had the magic fingers so it was pretty cool.

**00:31:04      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

But, you know that was like a one-time encounter. There was a whole scene in L.A. going to the Movies Around Midnight was one scene and then that kind of permeated and kept over. So, there were a number of artists and their names are just kind of flitting out of my head. There was quite an interesting scene both in Venice and in Topanga. And then there were people like Ed Moses and Jim Turrell. I had a studio for a while next to Jeff Perkins on Main Street, Main and Hill Street when it was a skid row. You know, its certainly not that today.

**00:31:34      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

We were paying 16 cents a square foot for our studios. And, Jim Turrell was just across the corner from us. He had this really cool-- he'd blocked out the windows because it was on the ground floor of a corner building, but he left some real small slits, so the cars driving by the lights would project light across the window in a really beautiful way. So, that was really interesting, to go visit him. Cho Kawai had a studio just directly across the street. Baldessari was way down at the end. I didn't know him. He was down at the end at Pico.

**00:32:04      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Sam Francis had his studio. Diebenkorn moved out [MS: of the rear studio in the Ashland Street building] and built a place down the street closer toward Pico, but not all the way there. Jimmy Hayward moved in eventually. There were about nine artists up and down that street you know. I'm so bad with names. Tony Berlant had a place, you know. So, that was kind of a mixed scene. And, then I was very interested in-- deeper into Venice there were people like Jim Turrell-- I mentioned him. Bob Irwin was doing really interesting work. One of the things I did right when we were in the Monica Hotel Ballroom was start to project onto a huge white surface a flickering wall.

**00:32:43      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And I remember Doug Christmas and Ron Cooper came by and they were-- Doug was going to do something at the Ace Gallery called the Wall Show. They wanted-- They were looking at work. "Well, what could you guys do that might fit in that?" And I was doing these projections of just a single flickering white surface. By adjusting the speed right around the alpha rhythms between 8 and 13 cycles per second--pretty much the same speed that Brion Gysin's DREAM MACHINE worked at--the material, the wall would seem to dematerialize. As you'd walk toward the surface you couldn't tell where it was anymore.

**00:33:13                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And, I was really interested in the ambiguity of spatial perception that that involved. I actually at one point I purchased a huge sheet of muslin that was seamless and gessoed. And my first year at CalArts came after that, right. A couple of years later I was at CalArts and so I really wanted to make this installation of this flickering wall. And I remember I tried to get an exhibition space at CalArts at Villa Cabrini, and I couldn't do it. And, there was-- Wolfgang Stoerchle had a studio it was off campus.

**00:33:41                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And, I asked him about it. He wasn't interested. I also wanted to do a piece with ultrasonic sound transduced to acoustic levels. So, there's a work I was interested in and did that was sort of outside of the--this sort of pure visual realm. But what I wanted to do was fill a gallery-- Well I wanted to put ultrasonic microphones in a gallery, take the sound that was being picked up and transduce it to-- heterodyne it] down to lower frequencies that were audible, so you could just perceive something that was beyond our range of perception. I was simply interested in extending this sensorium.

**00:34:19                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

It was a very simple piece. But, I presented this [to] Wolfgang and he says "well, why do you want to do that?" And, I didn't have the art speak justification that would have convinced him this should be done. All I could say was it would be cool. You know. That piece never was realized. I had done all the research on doing that and it was pretty interesting. For me it was interesting.

**00:34:40                    ADAM HYMAN**

Well, when you say that you did other things that aren't in the visual realm what other things were you [unintelligible]

**00:34:51                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Well, they were in the visual realm, but somewhat different. Once--something I didn't mention I started to touch on a moment ago was you'd asked about the music we used for the lightshows and recordings. For one show I decided - -I'd been reading A YEAR FROM MONDAY and other work. I decided to take two microphones--we had two RE 50's-- we would put them out on the Fox Venice marquee so they're pointing out to Lincoln Boulevard, which was a right angle to where our screen was in the studio space. We had two speakers next to the screen. I took the sound from the street with stereo, had it rotated 90 degrees and projected into the room.

**00:35:24      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And so we did a whole set that was just the ambient music from the street. So people walking and talking on the sidewalk, you know. Total ambient space. I was very interested in that. I also built a white noise generator [MS: and we did some performances just to white noise. Rol Murrow guided me in building the white noise generator based on a project plan in Popular Electronics magazine]. Rol Murrow who was one of the Single Wing members was a bit of an engineer. In fact he was the one-- Jon Greene was the only one of us who really understood electrical power and how to plug in and figure out how many amps we needed in watts.

**00:35:53      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So every time we set up we went to the Venice Library [MS: or other remote location] to do a show or something it was Jon who figured that out. Well, when Rol got more deeply involved he was the other guy who had the technical knowledge. I was clueless, you know. I still am about, you know, how many watts and amps am I going to work with. I built this white noise generator with Rol's help using a Zener diode. We just did a whole [MS: segment of a] show to, you know, this hissing white noise.

**00:36:18      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Maybe it was just a little bit pink. Because I was interested in extending things. Another thing I wanted to do at the time, but didn't know how to do-- I had the idea wouldn't it be interesting if you could have a chord and you could shift the frequency of all the notes in a chord, but keep the chord relationship. What would you still have the sense of this harmonic chord, but could it be appearing-- if you had the sounds raising-- I was going to build a whole set of motors and potentiometers to make this work.

**00:36:44      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

The sound could come up and as the higher pitches raised you could dial those out and dial more in at the bottom. So, could you have a constantly ascending or a constantly descending chord that never went anywhere? It was changing but never arriving. And, it turns out that that was done it's called a Shepard tone and in fact, I was hitchhiking once and this guy picked me up and I was telling him about this thing and he said oh, that's already been done at Bell Labs. This guy Shepard figured out a system to do it digitally.

**00:37:11      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Shepard tones are great. I use them in my Alternative Approaches class here at CalArts. I teach about that because I think it's a fascinating area. I have an idea for something like that, didn't have the means to realize it. Like a lot of good ideas somebody else had the idea as well. Other things I did were sculptural installation work. I had a piece with three cameras, video cameras on a triangular array, all facing in from their vertices toward the center. And, then you could stand in the center and see yourself from three points of view simultaneously at monitors placed in between all the cameras.

**00:37:44      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I was interested in that. That was sort of a test I did in Peter Kirby's Experimental Video class. Then I went on to devise a sculpture that did that with tubes –conduit-- so I could have four cameras [MS: each one,] at the apex or vertex of a tetrahedron, a triangular [MS: pyramid in the form of a regular] tetrahedron. All pointing into the center. A single viewpiece that you could look at that was on a on a kind of a snaking cable taken out of a Portapak camera [MS: the viewfinder from a portapak camera constructed to use as a handheld viewer on the end of a flexible cable]. So you could see yourself enfolded in four different ways from four different angles.

**00:38:16      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I was very excited to do that. We had the equipment to do it the kind of [video] mixers that I could [use to] make it work. But, then summer came and I had to wait. For the summer I picked up an ART FORUM and there's this piece on the cover that--oh, what's his name--another artist had done with four cameras on the ground looking up, superimposed. And, I was like well--it sort of took the wind out of my sails. There was this whole notion of primacy and it would seem like I was just a weak second copy or something. So, I didn't do it.

**00:38:42      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I think it was Dan Graham. Maybe it was somebody else, but-- that was disappointing. I could go on and on about a number of things like that. I also did a sculpture that was silvered spheres packed together in a tetrahedron. Close packed, but the image of the image of the image of the sphere set up this really complex crystalline pattern. I was very interested in that from a formal sense. In 1966 I did a sculpture that was two first-surface mirrors that were placed face to face. And, the notion with that was you could just put them on the floor in a gallery.

**00:39:15**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Or, if you wanted to stick them on a pedestal you could. But, you had to rotate one slightly from the other or you wouldn't know what was going on. It made me think a little bit of Duchamp's WITH HIDDEN NOISE which was a ball of string [MS: fixed between two metal plates by long bolts]and something in there that you couldn't see. But that came later actually that association. What I was interested in about that was if you have two mirrors that are face to face it's like the hall of mirrors effect, you know, like you would see in a barber shop or a store.

**00:39:41**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

The idea is that as you're putting the two mirrors closer and closer together. The frequency of the vibration of the reflection between them seems to increase. It gets higher and higher pitch right. And as they finally come into contact you must reach a null point, sort of an infinite sound. And, you have no space contained there physically and yet the notion of the reflection is that infinite tunnel that goes, you know all the way to infinity in both directions, in sort of a Euclidian sense. So, I did think of--

**00:40:11**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

All right are we at 40? [technical]

**00:40:12**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah.

**00:40:14**                    **KATE BROWN**

Yes, right.

**00:40:15**                    **MICHAEL SCROGS GINS**

Brancusi's ENDLESS COLUMN also occurred to me. But I was most interested in it for that particular notion of no space and all space.

[END OF TAPE 7]

## TAPE 8: MICHAEL SCROGGINS

00:01:33

ADAM HYMAN

...Larger art scene.

00:01:34

MICHAEL SCROGGINS

Yeah, what was I, how much was I aware of?

00:01:35

ADAM HYMAN

Yeah.

00:01:35

MICHAEL SCROGGINS

Precious little I'd say.

00:01:37

ADAM HYMAN

A perfectly good question.

00:01:39

MICHAEL SCROGGINS

Yeah.

00:01:39

ADAM HYMAN

Yes, so the issue is like what-- what other investigations going on in the art world did you feel that your investigations were in dialogue with?

00:01:50

MICHAEL SCROGGINS

Oh, that's a good question too.

00:01:51

ADAM HYMAN

[overlapping] ...conversations with?

00:01:52

MICHAEL SCROGGINS

I felt like we were operating outside of that realm.

00:01:56

ADAM HYMAN

Out of what realm?

00:01:58

MICHAEL SCROGGINS

The art world.

00:02:00

ADAM HYMAN

[unintelligible]

00:02:01

MICHAEL SCROGGINS

Yeah, sure.

00:02:01

ADAM HYMAN

[unintelligible]

**00:02:01**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

The art world of the gallery and very contemporary museum. I mean I knew we were related in some way but I didn't feel like--

**00:02:10**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Who's the we you're referring to?

**00:02:11**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh, the ensemble, the lightshow. Well, it depends on the era we're talking about. If we're talking about the late '60's and the lightshow then I had a particular orientation to that. Jeff Perkins was the member of our who's probably most active or aware of that gallery scene. He had lived in Japan and knew Yoko Ono and Tony Cox and he was, you know, involved with George Maciunas and Brecht in the Fluxus movement. So, he was very aware of that.

**00:02:37**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

He brought to the table in dialogue with me all the things I wasn't aware of at the time. And, then there were trade magazines ART FORUM, ART IN AMERICA, etcetera that I would read and absorb, you know, what was current or what was being promulgated as you know the most interesting stuff. That was what I was aware of more than actually going to the gallery to see it.

**00:02:57**

**ADAM HYMAN**

And then what about in the '70's?

**00:03:00**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Then I started-- I was going to a lot of gallery openings. You know I couldn't go to, I never-- I don't believe I ever went to a gallery opening in L.A. that John Baldessari was not present. The guy was amazing. He was everywhere all the time. Now, just-- I don't go to nearly as many I'm sure. But, so yeah I was then more active trying to see what was going on investigating. There was a range of interesting work being done.

**00:03:21**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I was also interested in artists who were working outside of that realm. To some extents Wally Berman had done that and after the debacle at the Ferus Gallery he swore he wouldn't exhibit, so he was painting rocks at his house and, showing-- of course his friends his circle knew what he was doing, but he wasn't that larger-- ART FORUM actually did a Wally Berman article. So obviously-- He got the cover with one of his verifax collages. He was still being understood but he wasn't participating in quite the same level.

**00:03:49                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And, I had a friend Guy de Cointet who worked for Larry Bell as a technician who was doing really wonderful conceptual very oblique kind of work and he and Jeff Perkins were very close. We would get together and you know drink and talk. There were a group of artists who were living in Venice that I was aware of. And, later as I got into video, people like John Sturgeon were doing work and there was a great series of video screenings at Environmental Communications. Not the Asian group that's together now, but it was Steinberg and Green I'm trying to remember the-- well it was a group of people who had this organization. [MS: David Greenberg, Roger Webster, et al]

**00:04:31                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

The most important thing was they hosted a weekly video night. Bill Viola came through showing his work. He was sort of first coming to prominence and a whole range of artists would come by. That was also very active for me as a community. And living in Venice and Ocean Park, you know kind of kept me in touch with that. In 1984 I moved up to CalArts and became less and less immersed in the larger groups.

**00:04:58                    ADAM HYMAN**

I believe I'd heard about this weekly video...

**00:05:00                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

[overlapping] Oh, well John Hunt--

**00:05:02                    ADAM HYMAN**

[overlapping] Where was it? Who organized it?

**00:05:03                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Well, it was in Venice. There was an architectural study group called the Environmental Communications. Roger-- I'm so bad with the name, the names are blanking out. Several people were involved in this group whose names are escaping me and they arranged with John Hunt, or John Hunt arranged with them to set up a weekly video screening. He billed himself as Dr. Video and he would do this sort of fake VJ thing and play tapes. Sometimes his shtick got a little annoying, but other times it was not so. He was a curator and brought through all kinds of interesting work.

**00:05:39                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I think I mentioned John Sturgeon. I showed work there. Bill Viola. Everything-- things are falling away from my mind at the moment. interesting current video scene that was going on. Obviously, the Video Free America people. The Rainedance people, the there was another great group on the East Coast who did cable stuff whose name escapes me. That was all very intriguing and you know it was a constant learning experience.

**00:06:10**

**ADAM HYMAN**

What year was that? What year of period was that?

**00:06:12**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Early '70's I'm thinking.

**00:06:16**

**ADAM HYMAN**

And, did you ever attend screenings with Film Oasis or Filmforum in the later seventies?

**00:06:18**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

[overlapping] Yes, yeah I did. When Terry Cannon was doing one of them I attended. In fact, I remember Pat O'Neill built a blimp for the projector because they didn't have a space that could, you know keep the clack of the 16 out. So, those were very interesting. I went to those. Before that I think I mentioned I had gone to the Movies Around Midnight at the Cinema Theater in 1966, '67. In the '70's there was Filmforum and Oasis. I attended irregularly, but you know fairly often.

**00:06:48**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Were there any particularly memorable shows for you?

**00:06:52**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

No, they were all interesting and it's kind of a blur right now. So, nothing jumps out as having astounded me. I do remember when John-- Gene Youngblood was doing a film screening series at CalArts my first year seeing Michael Snow's films for the first time. And, those were an eye opener for me. Some of the students just couldn't stand this stuff. All they wanted was you know-- oh, man I think I'm starting to fade. So, Rosebud you know...

**00:07:29**

**ADAM HYMAN**

CITIZEN KANE.

**00:07:30**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

CITIZEN KANE. I still can't think of the director though isn't...

**00:07:32**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Orson Welles.

**00:07:33**

**KATE BROWN**

Orson Welles.

**00:07:33**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Orson Welles it's such a block, weird block. Anyway, for them the epitome of cinema was Orson Welles and Michael Snow just they could not relate to. They ran screaming from the theater. Where I was, of course fascinated. I loved them both. I loved what Orson Welles could do but I thought-- BACK AND FORTH, was and there were some very, very interesting--. And of course there was Hollis Frampton. There was a lot of interesting work that was sort of demanding, but to me intriguing. Tony Conrad's THE FLICKER was a film that I really loved because I still love stroboscopic effects and flicker and how it works. [MS: I also had the opportunity to see Ken Jacobs' sublime film, TOM TOM THE PIPER'S SON.]

**00:08:11**

**ADAM HYMAN**

And, oh Cinematheque 16 did we talk about that last time I haven't checked on it?

**00:08:19**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I don't remember I would occasionally would attend things at the Cinematheque 16. My biggest memory was when we actually did our light show there and in fact Andy Warhol's NUDE RESTAURANT was screening. So, we were setting up and seeing this film over and over again. And, it actually was the best way I think to see that film. Because you got these people coming in hanging out in a cafe and they're talking right? To be a captive audience and sit through it in a linear way I don't think is the best [way] to experience it.

**00:08:43**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

When it's just part of an environment it's like you're just in a café and these things are happening it's much more interesting I think. But, I think that was a unique opportunity to experience it that way. It wasn't being presented that way.

**00:08:55**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Do you ever remember going to Encounter Cinema or Theater Vanguard?

**00:08:58**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yes, Theater Vanguard has a whole series that I went to. Very, very interesting. One of the things I saw there was-- My mentor at CalArts at the time-- wow, how does this happen? Senior aging... Don Levy did a performance. And he'd been working on projects, but he was never quite happy with them. So he hadn't shown anything in a very long time. It was a big deal that he was doing this screening at the Vanguard. And what he did was a slide show. He went through very series of slow dissolve slides. quite interesting conceptually. working with quaternary figure and kind of symmetry building up to something.

**00:09:37            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And at the very end he ran a film. It was a Fastax film of a trick that we've seen many times. But, I'd never seen it before and Don may have been one of the earliest people to do it. A Fastax is a 16 millimeter camera that runs at super high speed with a rotating prism shutter. So, it's zzzzz-- I don't know how many frames per second it's going, but it's very, very high. And, it's good for analysis of fast events.

**00:10:01            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

In this case he had his wife Ines in front of a large balloon filled with water and it pops. So, you don't see that. You just see the water and the refraction through it. And, slowly her face emerges and you know there's this mist and then it solidifies and the water drips. So, it's like an amazing birthing kind of a moment. And, in the context of what Don had shown it was extraordinary. So, that was a real highlight for me at the Vanguard. But, there were film after film.

**00:10:31            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I always used to go there also for music concerts. A lot of avant-garde music pieces. I actually discovered an interesting phenomena there. If you go to an avant-garde concert, or some contemporary experimental music concert quite often the audience is made up of other composers and they can be really irascible and not happy with what their-- you know so this is not what they're interested in. So, they would be sour stomach and you know moving in their chairs. And, I was really intrigued. Several times I had that experience there of people who were not pleased with what was being presented. But, they had to be there because it was the scene and they were trying to find out what was going on.

**00:11:04            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I think you can have these weirdly rarified audiences which are quite different from a broader audience for an event.

**00:11:11            ADAM HYMAN**

Can you describe Theater Vanguard for me?

**00:11:14            MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

You know it was kind of at the end of I think at the end of Melrose. To me I remember it as kind of being near where Cafe Figaro was at the time. It was very small intimate. It had an opening. I always think of it as kind of very dark and that's about all I remember physically of it. There's a lobby and-- earlier in when I was in high school I went to the Encore Theater and saw a few films. I saw PHAEDRA and you know BLACK ORPHEUS and stuff and I think I discovered that because the local Jazz station KBCA would talk about the films there.

**00:11:46**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

That was also a very interesting place to go.

**00:11:48**    **ADAM HYMAN**

Where was that?

**00:11:49**    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

It was in Hollywood somewhere in kind of-- I don't even remember now the street and which neighborhood. The Encore Theater was really important because at the time if a film was out of first run, you wouldn't see it. So not always was it art house, but it was stuff that-- thus The Encore. It was stuff that was being revived and there weren't a whole lot of places you could do that. There was no Beverly Cinema, or Nuart, Fox, that kind of thing. So, it was a great experience.

**00:12:19**    **ADAM HYMAN**

And, did you ever get to shows at the Coronet or no?

**00:12:22**    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I did yeah, but I can't remember which ones. We actually went to the Coronet and met with Sal Mineo about maybe the possibility of doing a Single Wing Turquoise Bird lightshow somehow in that theater, in that setting.

**00:12:36**    **ADAM HYMAN**

Sal Mineo!

**00:12:36**    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah.

**00:12:37**    **ADAM HYMAN**

What does he have to do with it?

**00:12:37**    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I think that was the Coronet. You know I may be confusing the Coronet. He had--

**00:12:41**    **ADAM HYMAN**

It was on La Cienega.

**00:12:43**    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

It was actually a legitimate theater not just a movie theater. So, he was doing some play there he was producing or directing. And, maybe starring I don't remember. It was very vague I just remember that we were interested in possibilities of doing something and looked into it. So, that's-- when I think Coronet that name pops in my head.

**00:13:02**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Yeah, primarily live theater[unintelligible] certain film got edited at certain times. I mean Rohmer screened films there. That's where like the earliest regular experimental avant-garde film screenings in LA were. Okay, cool tell me about-- now I'm going to go through some of your films. Tell me what 1983 STUDIES NO. 1-16, what were those?

**00:13:24**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Those were the videographic studies where I was using the Grass Valley switcher. I talked earlier about working with the wipe generators and the background generators.

**00:13:32**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Start again to include the name of what the pieces are.

**00:13:35**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Okay, so the pieces you just asked me about were the series of videographic studies I did from STUDY NO. 1-- how do you want me to phrase this?

**00:13:45**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Just say STUDIES NO. 1-16 were.

**00:13:48**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Ah, STUDIES NO. 1-16 were videographic improvisations I did at CalArts using the Grass Valley switcher. I'd done some experiment[s] with a switcher we had before that and I was able to talk Ed Emshwiller into getting this super duper switcher which had six-- it had three buses that could do multiple reentries. So you could get very complex layering. You had three buses, or you could have A, B, C, D, E, F rolls playing and combine them. And then a downstream key for yet a fourth level.

**00:14:17**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So I was able to work in very dense layers of abstract imagery using the geometric wipes and then the background generators and then having color cameras aimed at their own monitors and working the controls to generate very subtle kinds of feedback. There's one kind of video feedback that's very loud and raucous sort of, you know, moving. But you can also get these very soft color fields and drifting streaming or just sort of subtle ramp shading kind of things. So that's what those were and I started-- The first one was actually called SATURNUS ALCHEMIA.

**00:14:49            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And, then I moved on to STUDY NUMBER ONE. SATURNUS ALCHIMIA I worked with some music from my friend Jon Hassell. I had met him at an event that-- after a concert that La Monte Young had done and Joe Bogdonovich had a bunch of people over at his house for a reception. I met John there and we struck it off right away. He was living up in Malibu at a house that I had only seen from the beach and had an affinity for which I couldn't explain. It was actually Otto Preminger's old place had been subdivided into apartments.

**00:15:19            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So, I visited Jon and his girlfriend De Fracia [Evans]there. Later they came and stayed at my studio [MS: on Main St. in Ocean Park] for a while before they moved on. And, so I was-- I knew some of Jon's music. Without asking him I actually edited it to make it shorter. This is for SATURNUS ALCHIMIA. I then sent it to him and he approved and he hadn't even couldn't even see the--feel the edit you know, so I did a good job with that. So, *Studies No. 1-16* then are representative of that period. And, they took place over a several year period.

**00:15:50            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

The most concentrated being right around '83 I would say. I began-- Jon had commissioned-- because of these works and what I was doing Jon commissioned me to do a piece for his newest release which was going to be POWER SPOT --this new album. And, so I was working with the title from that that. Typically, I would make my imagery and then add sound to it later. Originally, I started working with sound like we did in the lightshow days. And a question was raised for me that-- well where is the affect coming from here? Is it the affect of the music and I'm just responding to that, or am I amplifying the affect with what I'm doing?

**00:16:30            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So I thought --take the music out of it completely, work silently then I'll know that the affect of the visual is what's creating the energy the power that --the engagement for want of a better term. And, I was working silently. Then I would add music later. I would commission a composer. Typically I would say to the composer I want incidental music to go with my piece. Later, I realized that might have not been the best strategy because the music becomes less engaging. Maybe 50/50 is better. But that's what I did.

**00:16:56**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So Jon commissioned me to do something. So I had his music to work from. So I was actually working with his music. Quite often in the studio I would play other kinds of music to inspire me, or I would do silent work. But, I had Jon's thing. So, POWER SPOT and companion piece SOLAIRE were sort of the very last things that I worked on [MS: in that series of videographic works done on the CVG 1600 7H switcher]. I was working at the time with my wife, Lydia Winn Levert and she and I broke up. She had left me. It's a long sort of story. I was very heartbroken and I-- every time I would go back into the studio to work I just couldn't get into it. You know there was too much trauma, too much-- it was difficult.

**00:17:34**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So, luckily for me Jon changed record labels and he moved to ECM and in the interim a lot of time took place and I had sort of recovered emotionally and was able to go back and complete the work. And, still I think POWER SPOT's one of more successful works. My last wife-- my current wife she-- I have first wife and current-- and a last wife--she calls herself that--[MS: its an in joke with us] Shayne Hood, prefers SOLAIRE which is a piece with a lot more space in it. POWER SPOT is very dense, tight layering, and it never really lets up.

**00:18:04**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

It's incessant. There's always something on the screen. It's always moving. SOLAIRE lets the screen go dark. Things transit the screen. They come and they go. As with music, you know, the silence-- the spaces between the notes is as important as the notes. So, there's something to be said for that sparser approach. So those were very important pieces where I overdubbed myself, multiple layers, did tape manipulation, backwards, slow motion and-- Anything I could do to give it a, you know, what I was after in terms of process.

**00:18:34**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Where would these get presented?

**00:18:37**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

They were shown in L.A. and places like LACE, LAICA. I sent them out to festivals, you know Atlanta Video Festival. I can't remember now. At that time I was sending stuff out a lot. So, they would get played basically at festivals and alternative arts organizations.

**00:18:59**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

And then you said here like one was the first music video of ECM? What was that?

**00:19:05**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh, POWER SPOT-- it turns out that when Jon commissioned me to do POWER SPOT, ECM was-- you know had to sign off on it and pay for it. They had never commissioned a music video apparently. It was the first one they had done and his music is very much on the fringe. John had a real problem with his music because of marketing. Because the record stores didn't [know]where to put it. Well, does it [go] in New Age, or does it go in Jazz, or does it [go in]Classical, I mean where? And for him it's like a contemporary classical music. But, where does it fit? Because, it's a --very much about a fusion. It was really tough for Jon [MS: although sales were good and the subsequent concert touring based on those sales went well].

**00:19:37**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Anyway ECM sponsored the thing. We had PAL copies made and they played it on television ostensibly in Europe. I never saw it there.

**00:19:47**

**ADAM HYMAN**

And, that whole period of work then from SATURNUS ALCHIMIA to SOLAIRE I guess did you again where there other works going on in the world that you felt you were in conversation with?

**00:20:00**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Not so much. I think I was more in conversation with earlier works. I was, you know, paying attention to Harry Smith's work. Oskar Fischinger, obviously. Viking Eggeling, Walter Ruttmann. Those were sort of my inspirations. I didn't see a lot of contemporary work that seemed to be addressing those aspects. They may have been there, but I wasn't really aware of them. There was video synthesizer kind of work, but it was kind of a different structure.

**00:20:29**

**ADAM HYMAN**

But, what was-- But then you were working in video, obviously, and not film. So can you speak to the aspects of changing the medium and the medium specificity element?

**00:20:38**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, I was very interested in medium specificity. To me it was pure video and the fact that I was generating electronically --I wasn't pointing a camera out at the world and abstracting what I saw. I was actually generating it internally. To me had a purity. It was about the medium. I did some pieces that were even just investigating the scan line structure, or you know kind of - very simple black and white horizontal bars moving. I was very, very intrigued by that. But, these other pieces were a little more directly sensual [MS: in their appeal].



**00:23:55            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

There's only so much you can figure out and I'm fond of quoting Laurie Anderson from the film HOME OF THE BRAVE. She has this great quote which is 'Talking about music is like dancing about architecture'. There's only so close you can get to the essence. But, there are ways you can try to analyze it and try to break down what is maybe an intuitive process. Then it becomes elaborate.

**00:24:16            ADAM HYMAN**

I'm trying to do a thesis on architecture school regarding dance and architecture. All right, tell me about these couple of other pieces oh, SANGSARA AND SCRATCH?

**00:24:29            MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Ah, SANGSARA is-- I just actually reviewed that this week and gave a copy to Astra Price who's going to forward it onto Kathy Rae Huffman because I'm trying to find work from around the time of the Long Beach Museum's shows. SANGSARA is a piece I did in Topanga Canyon in the early morning hours, the dawn hours. It's a video feedback process and I continued the work actually at CalArts in the studio. If you take a video camera and turn it off axis relative to the direct image you create an image of an image of an image.

**00:25:06            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So, depending on the angle you've turned it you can get a different figure. You have it 10-sided or 5-sided or 6 whatever you want to do. So, I forget SANGSARA how many sides it has to it. Maybe it's a 6 or 8-sided. So it's a kind of a formal ring that's appearing and disappearing. I'm very interested in the albedo --there's a certain time at dawn and dusk where the sky takes on this very lucid to deep quality. And, I think I mentioned earlier I'm interested in William Turner's paintings and how light behaves.

**00:25:39            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So there's something about that which appealed to me. I'm working with sort of positive/negative ground reversals. So the shape is coalescing disappearing. Also I'm working with a controlled positive break into particles and then coming back together to dissipate [MS: yet again]. And, at the time I was reading the Evans-Wentz translation of events of the TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD. I was looking for cues on color. What is the spiritual meaning of color? What are the deeper meanings of color? You know you can read Kandinsky and others [MS: but I wanted a greater knowledge].



**00:27:44      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So as a poor student this video was great for me. And I also-- we couldn't really edit very well in the early days of video, because you had to do glitch edits. So with CORRIGAN/LUND-- Bob Corrigan was the first president of CalArts. He came out of Tulane and established a pretty interesting school. He was involved along with Herbert Blau in getting things set up and right away met with resistance from the Board of Trustees, which was fairly conservative.

**00:28:11      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

They imported—appointed-- Herbert Marcuse as head of Critical Studies and that got shot down. There was a lot of debate. There was an incident where there was a trustee meeting and the trustees were very concerned about nude swimming at the pool. This is an era when that was just the natural thing to do. Everyone-- Only weirdoes would wear bathing suits at a pool and get your clothes wet--why would you do that? At Villa Cabrini, our temporary campus, apparently the Irvine Foundation-- a group from the Irvine Foundation had come through on a tour and they saw the nude swimming in the pool.

**00:28:44      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And since it was families, there were little kids. And some people think kids should never see naked adults. It's like totally wrong. Well, I think it's just the opposite. I think that-- you don't want to be afraid you just know this is nature. It's natural. But, it's a complex issue. At any rate, apparently we didn't get the Irvine grant because of-- these people were so outraged. So there was a debate. And we were up at the new campus. They didn't even have a swimming pool because they didn't want to deal with nude people swimming.

**00:29:09      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Finally, the students said we have to have a swimming pool. So they put in a swimming pool. Right away of course, most people are swimming nude. So this became an issue at a Board of Trustees meeting. One of the photography professors a really great guy (he used to wear white linen suits. It made me think of Tom Wolfe a little bit). Ben Lifson stood up in the middle of the meeting and said it's only the human body. We're artists. There's nothing to be afraid of. And proceeded to undress.

**00:29:37      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

This caused an uproar. He was making a point, he expected to get an uproar. But the trustees said we have to fire this guy. This is unacceptable. Bob Corrigan said I can't fire him that has nothing to do with his academic standing. He's you know, blah, blah, blah, blah. So they eventually sort of more or less fired Bob Corrigan. The day that he's giving his farewell speech to the school and Diane Disney's husband, so nephew I guess of Walt--I'm not sure of the lineage there--has agreed to take over as interim president to keep the place afloat.

**00:30:11      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And it's very important that this happens this change of power takes place. So I'm in the front row videotaping Bob Corrigan giving his speech. And in his speech he quotes a line. He says 'And I for myself must return to the still center of destiny's wheel'. It was a very nice metaphor and-- But while he's giving his-- oh, so then Bill Lund comes up to be introduced and welcome everyone and announce that--this momentous change of power, right. Bob Corrigan walks out gets in his car and drives away.

**00:30:47      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Lund is giving his speech. Very nice guy, by the way. He helped CalArts quite a bit. But this is the first time we've all seen this guy. He starts a speech and he says something about it's very difficult at times to be--to follow into the shoes of another man. And he starts to use destiny's wheel metaphor and he gets it all boggled up. And while this is happening I'm videotaping, but instead of staying on the podium capturing that moment I [had] notice[ed] a distraction, so I pan down. I have panned down and there a group of docents or I'm not sure who they are. These ladies are walking along chatting--blah, blah, blah--completely blithely-- apparently blithely ignorant of this momentous change of power that's taking place behind them.

**00:31:30      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

They're walking across the Mod lobby where the doors are and they're going into the restroom and they're kind of quizzically looking around. It's a good piece you'll have to see it. So they go into the restroom. I'm following that. And then Bill Lund messes up his speech. He stumbles over his words. He said "well, I'm usually quite articulate, but [at] times like that even I get flustered", and he excuses himself and he leaves. When I read the videotape I realize probably what has happened is that these women are walking along. The people in the front row are reacting to them because it's just very out of place.

**00:32:03**            **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And they're [MS: the front rows are] sort of probably laughing and you know and-- Bill Lund is giving his speech and he's-- What is going on? Why are they laughing, is his fly open, you know. What is he doing, what is he saying that's somehow causing this reaction. Not being aware that it's something happening behind him. I think that's what caused him to flub his lines because he's a very articulate guy. What interested me about that as a video is that my intuition was to follow these women as they walked along and they actually were the fulcrum that probably caused this mistake to happen.

**00:32:32**            **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So I actually did an edit where I took that piece, and SANGSARA, which is this Wheel of Destiny, and another piece called LOSE YR JOBS where I had taken an excerpt from a Nixon speech on television where he's basically telling reporters that they have to be-- ask him hard questions, or they'd be considered that they were soft on him. But basically he says "I'm Nixon. [MS: You'd, You'd,] You'd lose your jobs." And what I did was I-- he stammers in it. I would run it forward then rewind quickly to half inch reel-to-reel, play it again, run it forward--backwards, play it forward. So I was creating loops, but on the fly.

**00:33:08**            **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And re-photographing with another camera. You have to do that because the sync would be all unstable, right. Because you're messing up the control track and everything. The image tears and it creates a very interesting texture. As I said earlier I was interested in the texture of video and the line structure and those things that made it uniquely video. I made that piece and then I ended up inserting the re-scan into a blue sky. And this is the piece called LOSE YR JOBS. At one point I decided that LOSE YR JOBS, SANGSARA, and CORRIGAN/LUND kind of fit together and so I put them together as a trio.

**00:33:38**            **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So, that's what and CORRIGAN/LUND is in a [rolls eyes] nutshell.

**00:33:43**            **ADAM HYMAN**

And, then what was okay what was KING AND QUEEN?

**00:33:46**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

**KING AND QUEEN** is a piece I referred to a moment ago. It's [MS: composed of] horizontal bars of light and dark rolling up the screen in two different directions. There's a sort of a drift study. I was inspired by La Monte Young's 60-hertz drift studies. This is kind of a visual equivalent. It doesn't affect you the same way physically or viscerally. But, I was interested in--and I still am I guess--with polarity, duality, where there's light dark, hot cold. And video feedback is interesting because when you point a camera at the monitor you have subject object and in that process some interesting things take place. And why is that, you know.

**00:34:23**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

**KING AND QUEEN** is this simple positive negative bars. I was thinking of Duchamp's interest in chess [MS: and an alchemical reading of the process of individuation within the conscious/unconscious mind] which is why I named it **KING AND QUEEN**.

**00:34:33**

**ADAM HYMAN**

We'll keep going through a few more. **ROCK-A-BYE**.

**00:34:36**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh **ROCK-A-BYE** is a single long take of my niece, Jennifer, as a baby infant in a mechanical swing that swings toward the camera and back, toward the camera and back. Off camera my grandmother, my great aunt, my mother are talking, just in the distance. What you see is this baby swinging toward the camera, to and fro, back and forth. And, she's starting to fall asleep and then trying to stay awake. So it interacts with the audience in this very-- it's one of James' favorite piece. James Benning really loves this piece because it deals with interval in ways that he's interested in and at the same time you see this little girl trying to stay awake and not--

**00:35:18**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

You can image an audience viewing something that's just a little girl swinging back and forth and maybe, 'What is that?' you know. I remember screening it at video night at Venice and John Sturgeon was--'that was very interesting,' you know. He wasn't-- because his work was more structured and directed to different kinds of questions. I was interested in this oblique thing. At the same time it's got this quaint home movie quality because its family. And the comments from off camera add a certain specific quality to that.

**00:35:47**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Then **DRONE**?

**00:35:51**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I'm not sure which one **DRONE** is now.

**00:35:53**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Okay.

**00:35:54**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

It's probably a video feedback piece, but I don't remember.

**00:35:59**

**ADAM HYMAN**

And, DESTINY EDIT?

**00:36:00**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Ah, DESTINY EDIT is the three I just referred to. It's the CORRIGAN/LUND, SANGSARA, and-- actually I think it starts with LOSE YOUR JOBS then goes to CORRIGAN/LUND and then goes to SANGSARA. So it's three of them together. I'm not sure of the sequence now. That's what DESTINY EDIT is.

**00:36:14**

**ADAM HYMAN**

And, NU VUDEO\_.

**00:36:17**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh NU VUDEO . That's just awful. It was one of the earlier things I did in the videographic experimentations. It might have been SATURNUS ALCHIMIA. I'd forgotten about NU VUDEO.

**00:36:28**

**ADAM HYMAN**

And RECENT LI?

**00:36:30**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

RECENT LI is actually one of my favorites.

**00:36:31**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Yeah we spoke about it a little bit the other time, but I still have an arrow next to it that leads me to believe that we didn't really finish addressing it.

**00:36:38**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Right. RECENT LI starts out with Nam Jun Paik looking full frame into the camera. When I was appointed to teach at CalArts it was like I was only gone for three years and I was asked to come teach. And so I asked Joan Logue [SP] if she would shoot Nam June introducing me to my class because I wanted this sense of lineage. I thought that would be really cool. So, she catches him in the elevator at Westbeth, right, in their studio complex. And Nam June has-- at one part of it launches into the-- he does this whole introduction to Michael Scroggins blah, blah, blah, you know.

**00:37:12      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

But the thing that I loved was a statement he made [MS: within that extended introduction]. He said: “If by some practical joke of the Gods, if honeybees didn't have color visions, all flowers would be black and white.” And Joan Logue off-camera says: “Is this true? And, he says: “Yes. Nature has no waste.” So, I took that quote. Because I was at the time interested in exploring color and meaning. I talked about SANGSARA I was interested in the TIBETAN BOOK OF THE DEAD, symbolism of color and the spiritual meaning.

**00:37:44      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

In RECENT LI I took a piece that you may also have on your list --a piece called FOR SAM which is a quaternity feedback piece where I actually turned the monitor completely on its side to the camera and-- which creates a fourfold symmetry. And I was also reading Carl Jung's work and the notion of the quaternity figure plays an important part in his investigation of symmetry and mandala structure and other kinds of collective unconscious stuff. The particular feedback I got created little shapes that were quite like Sumi brush strokes, or leaves of bamboo.

**00:38:19      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

A very nice cellular quality. Sam did a whole set of early paintings. One is-- You can see-- Well, it used to be in the stairwell at MoMA in New York, called BIG RED which are big brush stroke areas that sort of cellular shapes that kind of float. So these cellular shapes are moving around and this quaternity figure--so it's four sided. They're kind of appearing and disappearing. The way the feedback works is coalescence, so it's evolving and dissipating and evolving, almost like a visual Shepard tone kind of thing.

**00:38:50      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

The quaternity figure presents some very strong images. At times it turns into a swastika which can be very alarming unless you understand the whole ancient history of the swastika as a symbol and-- There's another story about how it got adopted by the Third Reich that Aysha Quinn told me which is probably not true, but it's a great story. I won't go into that here. Any rate, so I took the piece for Sam which is pure black and white which I loved as it was. I used that as a source for RECENT LI. And RECENT LI is in four parts and I used that figure in several of them.



**00:40:38**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, it's crazy. Well, in this scene I think Donald Sutherland is playing Don Juan [MS: He is actually playing Casanova and the film is entitled FELLINI'S CASANOVA]. He's at the bridge. This is toward the end of the film and he's at this bridge to the other world. And this automaton is there. The only [MS: true] love of his life has been this automaton. He has these tears, he sees it in the carriage, because he... [MS: has this realization. I had to come to realize that the love with which I created the sensuous feelings of work like that in Recent Li had a certain pathetic aspect to it --that in some sense I was making love with or through this apparatus. I used that music track as a way of loading the fourth section with an obscure --yet for me-- meaningful reference to this questionable yet fulfilling process.

**[ END OF TAPE 8 ]**

## **TAPE 9: MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

**00:00:38**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I was showing-- I was invited by Stephen Prina and Jim Welling who were doing it--I think it was Jim was doing a class with him at the time at CalArts-- to show work. [MS: It was not James Welling, but was actually Christopher Williams. I was transposing Chris with Jim based on an earlier seminar course on the films of Alain Resnais which had been conducted by two other students, David Salle and James Welling.] And I was very anxious about that because I knew it wasn't going to fit in what I assumed was their area of conceptual interest, right. But I did it anyway. I was probably somewhat apologetic about the nature of the work. Stephen Prina was very smart when he said 'There's a room for sensual-- purely sensual work should also have a place in the art world'. He was very supportive of that notion that things didn't have to be intellectually dry or concise.

**00:01:12**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

There were ways to think about-- of valuing work outside of that other framework. And that was very comforting for me. Because I had made the decision to pursue this line even knowing that it was going to keep me on the margin of serious consideration by a larger group of people who have particular interest in the development of art and contemporary culture. That this stuff would be marginalized. Fischinger was marginalized, you know. I came to realize well, that's okay, you know. If I'm doing what I'm most compelled to do it's probably that-- what I should be doing. Not forcing myself to work-- I'm not going to make a Morgan [Fisher] sync gang piece. It's probably not what I'm going to do.

**00:01:52**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Nonetheless, I can talk about some pieces here that were of my own ways of dealing with that kind of gesture really for myself. EXCHANGE would be one example.

**00:02:02**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Okay, so let's talk about EXCHANGE.

**00:02:03**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

EXCHANGE was simply a telephone videotaped ringing. And it was intended to be placed on a pedestal in a gallery show. And it's a maddening piece. Because the phone is ringing, there's clearly a message, and you can't answer it. And like a baby crying, we want to pick up the phone, we want to stop it ringing. It's really calling out saying 'get this, get this, get this' and you can't. Because you know, it's on the monitor. You can turn the monitor off [MS: but you cannot pick up the receiver].

**00:02:32**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So, EXCHANGE was that. I [later] used it sort of within some other work for a short piece as a point of reference. The unanswered message, the message you can't get. So that as a metaphor. So that was a case of something I was doing that was a more of an intellectual gesture than a sensual gesture.

**00:02:50**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Do you think that's still a trend or division in the realm of digital or video?

**00:02:57**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I think it's much less than it was. Although I still think it's there, you know. People really want to understand media practice in terms of what's been active in the discourse that came before and what might extend the discourse in some new realm. So that's always I think, a valid, interesting place for art to go. But I also believe that we can see a plurality of approaches; things that don't neatly fit in these obvious categories. I think trying to discover the latest next best thing as a strategy for an artist probably isn't very effective.

**00:03:31**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I believe that intuitively some artists will do that. So sometimes you can over think work and it's really kind of stillborn. It's lifeless in a way. But, Morgan Fisher's sync gang piece--I forget the name of it--is brilliant [MS: The title I could not recall is CUE ROLLS] . I mean I love seeing that piece. And understanding the process as it's being unveiled. So I respond well to that kind of work. But it's probably not the work I'm best at doing, or [MS: a direction that I] should be following.

**00:03:55**

**ADAM HYMAN**

All right let's go back to what was-- to RESOLUTION.

**00:04:00**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Ah, well RESOLUTION actually fits in this realm. Once again of investigating of a kind of a medium specificity. What I did for RESOLUTION was I set up a camera on a monitor, so they were of the same-- I was zoomed in. So for RESOLUTION I'm—I have a camera zoomed in on its monitor, so that the image in the moni--in the camera--is the same aspect ratio or the same size relative size as the camera. So, the camera raster, the monitor raster, are pretty much the same [MS: that is to say with each device equally covering the full video frame --not a larger or smaller area of the frame.].

**00:04:35**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I used a switcher and I put up a resolution chart which is a standard test chart in video, so you can see what the lines of resolution are. And, I was using a very funky industrial system. It was a very low resolution Concord. And then I recorded the camera looking at the resolution chart on the monitor onto half inch reel-to-reel tape, fed that to another VTR for it to play back on. So, there was a time delay. And then I threw the switch so that the display on the monitor was no longer the count--a camera looking at a resolution chart, but was the recording of the camera looking at the monitor [MS: display of the camera's recorded image]of the resolution chart

**00:05:13**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

This is a little hard to explain without a diagram. So what happens is then you've got the recording of the resolution chart showing that the camera's recording back onto the tape. It's playing back on the next tape, so boom it pops up again, but this time it's a copy of the copy. So, not unlike a Xerox of a Xerox of a Xerox, nonlinearities in the system begin to amplify. So, geometric distortion, contrast changes, any noise, is amplified. And so over time the piece just begins to degrade. You see the distortions happening, the nonlinearities and the difference is between the monitor display and the camera display.

**00:05:50**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So it's an interesting investigation in information and transformation of information through reiteration. You know I can tell you a story and you tell someone else the story, and it changes. The same kind of idea. So, I was interested in that. I did a companion piece that same evening where I zoomed the camera back, so I had a tape delay, but it was hall of mirrors with a space in between. I put my hand [MS: in the frame with all five fingers extended] and I said five and then I waited the right interval and I went four [MS: retracting one finger so that now there were four fingers extended]-- And so then on the monitor you see five and that's further back then four is in the front.

**00:06:21**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And, then I did three, two, one so what you see is five is further down the stack. It's five, four, three, two, one and it just continues on into infinity until it disappears. I was interested in looking at how video could deal with time. A lot of people were investigating tape delay and that sort of notion. Video feedback itself is interesting because even though you're operating quote and unquote real time, there's a lag between the scanning of the camera and the scanning of the monitor. If you do the hall of mirrors effect, there's this lag that happens just in the scanning process without any tape delay --causes a kind of smearing in time. Things drift and shift and it

**00:07:02**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

creates I think an interesting visceral-- sort as well, or as central or as well as a conceptual approach.

**00:07:10**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

And, so were those two pieces like recorded for future presentation or they were really just...

**00:07:17**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

[overlapping] They were they...

**00:07:19**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

...performance.

**00:07:20**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

...No they were. They were actually recorded for future presentation because- there was an artifact left over of the recording, of that process. So it was documented and then it could be played. So it didn't have to be seen-- in fact I did it alone. There wasn't even an audience when I did it. Could have been, but there wasn't.

**00:07:36**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Do people understand it when they watch the video?

**00:07:40**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I'm not sure unless there are program notes that explain the process they may not. It's the kind of work that actually it does benefit knowing the process in which it was generated because it's really about generative procedure.

**00:07:53**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

So do you include-- I mean where and when do those get screened? Were you...

**00:07:57**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

[overlapping] Those were screened at Long Beach Museum of Art. I think David Ross screened them. Maybe later Kathy Rae Huffman did. I don't know how many other places I might have had those screened maybe at LAICA. Usually they could be part of a longer set of work. I like to show those in contradistinction to the other work I did, so that people could see that well, he is thinking about certain issues. And, in fact the way I used video feedback was very deeply involved in a sort of conceptual notion of the subject and the object and this notion of duality and the observer and the observed.

**00:08:30**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I think there's something fascinating about consciousness that way, and single pointedness. And I believe that there's no accident that video feedback is compelling and happens to deal with the subject of object. In fact, what I discovered early on with video feedback is the subtlest most interesting sensual approach of the video feedback, or affect of the video feedback, is when the camera is zoomed in to be-- so the raster is exactly the same size. So, the monitor and the camera are the same area. I think there is sort of a stasis and slow, slow change. To me that was the most interesting to look at and conceptually it went back to this piece of 1966 I did with the two mirrors face to face.

**00:09:07**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

It's like all space and no space and at the still center what is that? You know what happens at the point of non-differentiation and it seemed to point to all those issues.

**00:09:19**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Great. And then oh, PADMA?

**00:09:22**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

PADMA is another video feedback piece that's also with a rotation. But the rotation angle is such that it creates a ten-sided figure. Initially you see this sort of disc, this soft ten-sided disc that's gray. And, as I slowly adjust the controls over the half hour that the piece takes place you begin to see a little noise and it's very fine texture. And somewhat reminiscent of parts of James Whitney's LAPIS, but not nearly as discreet. The noise takes on a sort of a pattern and it begins to flow and as I slowly change it becomes more and more intense until it gets very bold.

**00:10:03                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Once again it-- You end up with patterns that are reminiscent of Chladni figures which are a vibrational kind of [MS: harmonic resonance] pattern; which also relate to drawings of chakras that come out of Hindu culture. It's curious to me --what is it about that vibratory pattern that people understood in making those representations and how does it relate to this electronic process?-There's something going on there of interest.

**00:10:31                    ADAM HYMAN**

And then TUCKER.

**00:10:33                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

TUCKER is another like the CORRIGAN/LUND, it's a moment of serendipity [MS: and of the prescient gaze]. My roommate's son was up early one morning and I had the Portapak camera out and I was just shooting and he's in the sun and he's looking up in the sun and he's like oh, you know you can't see. So he's like, Michael can you move it over here? So he's directing me and he begins to direct me through a process. And then the TV-- he turns on the TV he says point it here Michael point it here. So I point to the TV and you can see him reflected in the TV. None of this was intended, it just happened that way and it actually becomes very interesting, at least to me.

**00:11:09                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

The TV comes on and it's a particular, you know, PBS show and then it cuts out at some point to a test pattern. And he gets a ribbon and he puts it across the test pattern and he says 'Where are you looking Michael, are you looking here?' I recently re-cut this to show it at a class that Bérénice Reynaud had. I called it WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT? because he asked me that question. And I think in the whole context of this segment of him in that house directing my vision draws really interesting attention to the notion of what do you see and what do you look at?

**00:11:47                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

There's a kind of conscious unconscious play that takes place in that piece that is very, very interesting, and quite charming. It's also one of my favorite pieces still.

**00:11:59                    ADAM HYMAN**

And DOG PLEA.

**00:12:01**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh, DOG PLEA. I started working for Topanga Public Access because I had access to video at CalArts and was fascinated by video. The guy who ran the local Tesco cable-- it's a very small, you know, master antenna cable system in Topanga because we could get no reception from the city. So this entrepreneur had set this thing up. There was a man Mark-- his last name [McCarthy] a professor at UCLA helped arrange to get a van--this trailer actually--equipped with some video equipment so we could do Public-access cable.

**00:12:31**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So on channel 6 we had Public-access. I showed up for my shift one afternoon--because we went live on the air with the local news, the Topanga news--and this kid had shown up. He was a very scruffy sort of a street person, you know, a Topanga street person. He was actually living down in the canyon at the steep part. His name was Zero. His eyeglasses were put together with pipe cleaners and his lips were dry and chapped. He was a very extreme looking guy. And, he had a skin-- the head of a, you know, taxidermy animal on his-- on a necklace kind of thing.

**00:13:10**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So I come in I don't know what's going on I-- we're rolling. Let's go. Boom, so I'm shooting. And this guy starts off 'People of Topanga I want to address to you all' and he starts to tell this cautionary tale of--he had shown some people how to skin and preserve hides of animals, but now they were going after people's pets and he wants to warn people. If your dog or cat is missing go to the Twin Pools area, you know? And it was just very strange, bizarre. So, I did one of those classic slow zoom ins you know as it was happening. And this was just all spontaneous.

**00:13:46**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

But the chilling nature of his message and the fact that you notice he's wearing an animal on his neck, you begin to wonder is he warning you against himself, or is it really third parties that he's-- I mean his story is not clear. It's a fascinating little segment of sort of a Diane Arbus video, if there were such a thing.

**00:14:06**

**ADAM HYMAN**

And, what else? Did we talk about...

**00:14:10**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Is it Diane or Deanne by the way?

**00:14:11**

**ADAM HYMAN**

I don't know.

**00:14:10**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah.

**00:14:13**

**ADAM HYMAN**

And what's the-- call it 'triangle'...?

**00:14:17**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Triangle-- Oh, DELTA. DELTA was a piece that I did in Peter Kirby's Experimental Video class as a student. It's three cameras mounted--looking across the opposite face for the other camera. So, they're on the vertices of each [point] of this triangular arrangement and you go in the center and you see yourself [from] multiple positions [MS: as the images from each of the cameras is superimposed in a mix at the video switcher]. I was interested in simultaneous views and thinking about cubism and how that worked and what could you do with video that allowed you to see more than a single point of view.

**00:14:45**

**ADAM HYMAN**

And CALIFORNIA DREAM?

**00:14:49**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

That's actually not one of my favorite pieces. It was some-- I was commissioned by Barry Schrader. He was doing a composition and he wanted some video to go with it. And I had done something with him before I believe. In this case he gave me the sound and what I chose to do was to track the audio levels in terms of amplitude and use the ARP 2600 to drive a raster processing machine called the OEI [MS: the Optical Electronics Inc. raster processor was a system I assembled from modules in order to provide signal processing as similar as possible to that of the Rutt/Etra video processor. We called it the poor man's Rutt/Etra or Scanimate. I used the OEI to]] to rotate a figure. And depending on the amplitude of the signal the rotating figure because of the clock rate of the 30 frames a second, or 60 fields of video would form geometric forms [MS: based upon the harmonic relationship between the rate of rotation and the scanning rate of the display system]. So you get triangles, hexagons, dodecagons, whatever, you know.

**00:15:34**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And then I was using a Fairlight CVI to process it with a noisy color field drifting, so it was leaving traces on this color field as it goes. It was the first time I sort of experimented with an automatic algorithmic process. And I really didn't care for it aesthetically, but you know-- it's there and it is what it is. Some people love it.

**00:15:58**

**ADAM HYMAN**

And '1921 IS GREATER THAN 1989' or something?

**00:16:01**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, 1921>1989 it could also be read as 1921 INTO 1989. 1921 IS GREATER THAN 1989 was done-- it was my first piece in 3D computer graphics. And as I started working with the Wavefront software -- and I hadn't worked with 3D CG yet, but I was very fascinated and wanted to do it. I discovered that it was set up on the Cartesian coordinate axis so, you've got X, Y and Z orthogonal 90 degrees to one another and that's the basis of the matrix transformations and the volume space in 3D computer graphics.

**00:16:33**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

There were eight people who got access to this new computer and its software. But we were together as a group going to do a group project. So, faculty and students. Don Levy was involved, Myron Emery, myself as faculty, maybe Jules Engel I can't remember, and a few students. The idea was we were going to have to create a room, populate the room with objects and other stuff. I was not interested in that conceptually at all. It's like I don't want to represent a reality I-- You know I want to do my abstract kind of work. All right, so what can I come up with that will meet the requirements of the group project and still interest me?

**00:17:09**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And I thought of the planes of neo-plasticism in De Stijl. I thought all right I could take the walls in the room and turn them into--at some point--into this abstract sculpture that's moving based on the theories of De Stijl. So I thought all right I'll have to read De Stijl, go back to see what--

**00:17:26**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Spell De Stijl

**00:17:26**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

D-E-S-T-I-J-L. And I guess it's Dutch for 'the style'. Theo van Doesburg was writing a lot of theory. He was the editor of the magazine and he and Mondrian were very active in the movement. In fact, he and Mondrian had a big fallout over the diagonal. It's like whoa we're talking about purity. The diagonal, that's no good. Van Doesburg thought it was okay. So I thought well, I'm going to do this piece let me find out the tenets of neo-plasticism so I can do it correctly.

**00:17:57                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And I discovered much to my delight that the hard rules of neo-plasticism kept changing from issue to issue [MS: of the magazine]. They were constantly redefining what was the purist --the best way to go. Ultimately, Elementarism became, you know became a thing that van Doesburg was pushing. So that helped illustrate to me that this notion of having--discovering the true pure way to do things is not going to--is foolish. It's foolhardy. You can do it, but it's ultimately a futile exercise in terms of absolute truth, at any rate. So, I decided to take the tenets from 1921 and work with those within the parameters of creating neo-plastic planes and a sort of architectural space, or architectonic space, with a camera that's constantly rotating.

**00:18:42                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And I had them work-- to do the composition I worked in orthographic views. So I had top, side, bottom. And I worked my compositions so that it was compositionally aesthetically pleasing to look at from each angle which then meant in the three dimensional view it should be as well. And I was fascinated because, you know, Mondrian or van Doesburg, didn't use mathematics to determine their volume. They did it intuitively, but they worked within their rule structures. So that's what I did. Made the piece. I commissioned Barry Schrader to create sound to that after the fact, so that was maybe our first collaboration.

**00:19:17                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I started initially with just individual panels coming in and I created an algorithmic path or structure of how it would work and how it would repeat and stuck to that. So it was very different. A much drier approach than I usually used in my work.

**00:19:35                    ADAM HYMAN**

And then what was the-- You started with some installation work. So, tell me about... TALOS & KOINE, about the video process?

**00:19:42                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Ah yeah. That was a piece that Michel Redolfi, the composer, was doing in the Manca Festival. He had become director of the Manca Festival. He was in California for a while at UCSD. Did a lot of work with underwater microphones. Very interesting composer. So he came to visit me and ask me if I would do a video piece to go with this spectacle. The opening of the performance was going to be at The Acropolis in Nice, this big huge theater. Beautiful space. He was working with dancers. Jean Luc Mattus I think, was the choreographer, or Jean Mattus [Jean-Marc Matos]. And they-- He had commissioned an artist who built a robot which was a three-wheeled object that had a series of antennae, or rods with beads, wood beads, on them that could open and close, a bit like a flower.

**00:20:33            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And this device was programmed to dance-- to be choreographed along with the physical dancers. We were in rehearsals at the MÉNAGERIE DE VERRE which is a great rehearsal hall in Paris and this thing was always not working. So they had to come up with a back-up plan to drive it, or park it in case it went out of control. As it turns out in the live performance it failed [MS: after functioning properly during the first part of the performance]. But, it was a beautiful idea and it worked in its own way. So, what I did was I took the Fairlight CVI which is a digital video instrument that Fairlight made that had a lot of digital possibilities and presets that you could work with.

**00:21:09            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

On the site I worked with what they were doing with the performance, figured out what I'd do with-- Cathy Vogan who is a French video artist was a cameraperson and we arranged that she would shoot, for instance, a close-up of a dancer just before their solo. I could freeze frame the dancer's face up on what was a large rear projection on the set. I'd freeze frame that. Then the dancer would solo, so you could actually watch the dancer and pay attention. And then when it was more ensemble work I would process the dancers with various video ways that made it interesting.

**00:21:38            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So that's basically what I did with that piece. And it was very successful. I was really happy with how it came out. After that there was another piece that he commissioned me to do which was MATA PAU which was at the Metz Festival. It was a few years later. And in that case I decided I was going to put a circular screen above the performers-- half above the performers and the audience, project up on to that. I took pre-existing videos that I had, masked them all into a circular format with a switcher, re-recorded them. Had a custom laser disc pressed at Laser Pacific. And then wrote a HyperCard stack so I could use a Mac program to scrub the video.

**00:22:16            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Because I knew there was no other way for me to kind of, perform live. So I thought well I can scratch these images and work it out. And I had a Pioneer LDP8000 video player which will-- has a frame buffer in it, so I can grab the last frame it'd have. So I could arrange to go into black to grab a frame, because I didn't have a mixer to work with. Then I could move up to the next section. Or, I could freeze frame on an image. What I did was essentially was I had segments on the laser disc that I had predetermined could be interesting.

**00:22:47**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

They were some of my videographic improvisation, some other kinds of works, stuff from RECENT LI. You know whatever-- I repurposed my stuff. I could perform it in real time by scratching the laser disc player, by going back and forth rocking. I could respond to what was going on in the performance. There were seven musicians standing on platforms in water and-- It was a very elaborate piece. It worked out very well.

**00:23:12**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

And how were people responding to those?

**00:23:14**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh very well. People were amazed. It worked in powerful ways. I found the congruence of what I was doing with the video, what was going on with the music, and with the live performance, all worked very, very well. MATA PAU had a great reading by Michel Lonsdale or Michael Lonsdale this actor who played the villain you know in the Bond movies. He did this beautiful reading. MATA PAU is based on that notion of this vine that strangles trees in the Mato Grosso. So that was the poetic part that Michel Redolfi was after. What I did kind of worked within that context.

**00:23:53**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

And, should we do the next one as well? The TOPOLOGICAL SLIDE.

**00:23:57**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Okay yeah TOPOLOGICAL SLIDE is another one of my favorite pieces. I had delivered that paper in Moscow in 1991 on absolute animation. My work in absolute animation and extending that into virtual reality, what could be done with that. So I was talking about these improvisational techniques— [overlapping] Yeah go ahead.

**00:24:14**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Moscow 1991? Was this before or after the fall?

**00:24:20**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh...

**00:24:20**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

The Soviet Union.

**00:24:21**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Let's see it was on the cusp. Gorbachev was in power. Perestroika was taking place, but it was still the Soviet Union and I was invited by the Union of the Soviet Filmmakers. It was a large conference called THE SCREEN: A DIALOGUE OF CULTURES. It took place out in the central party headquarters [a resort like meeting place] on the edge of Moscow, which was this atrium-- it was like a giant ski lodge. Atrium lobby, beautiful place-- Astounding. There was a frozen lake. I remember my friend, Anatoly Prokhorov--who I met on the jury at the [sounds like WRO Festival [MS: The WRO Festival of Sound Based Visual Art was held in Wroclaw, Poland, and directed by Piotr Krajewski --this was the first instance of the festival] years before--and I walked out onto lake and it was cracking and making these weird sounds.

**00:25:01**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

He's a Russian and I turned to him and said "well is that a danger sign" I said, "or is it really okay?" He said "I don't know I've never really walked on the ice myself." And, I was like 'oh, no". Anyway Anatoly had a degree in Theoretical Physics, but he was also-- he'd become a cultural theoretician and was really interested in writing about film and other media, extensions of media. So, that conference-- why am I talking about the conference? Oh, you had asked me--this is '91.

**00:25:29**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Yeah.

**00:25:29**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

While we're in the conference the invasion of the Balkans [MS: actually the Baltics --as we clarify later] took place by the Soviets. At the same time the Gulf War broke out. It was amazing how in Moscow the Balkan [Baltic] incursion was much more news than the beginning of the first Gulf War. There were two women who came from the Riga Media Center who brought us a Betacam tape of a...

**00:25:50**

**ADAM HYMAN**

The invasion of the Baltics?

**00:25:51**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Baltics. Did I say Balkan?

**00:25:52**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Yeah.

**00:25:53**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Baltics. Very, very different. Sorry.

**00:25:55**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Yeah.

**00:25:55**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

The Baltic states, yeah. They came from Riga and brought this video tape where the cameraman is shooting a demonstration. They had-- the people had taken the radio station and barricaded themselves in and the Russian forces were fighting to take it out. In the process of this the cameraman gets shot. And the camera falls over, but it keeps running on its side. It was very moving footage of this situation. And we're all in the Press room looking at this fresh video. So it was a VERY interesting period in the Soviet Union.

**00:26:30**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Later when I visited Riga in July the first thing this woman did was take me to that spot where the cameraman was killed. And there were you know the typical flowers and-- There was a whole shrine. He wasn't killed on the spot. He died of his injuries later from probably, gastroenteritis or something. Bad hospital care, most likely.

**00:26:51**

**ADAM HYMAN**

So then, going on to TOPOLOGICAL SLIDE.

**00:26:53**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

All right, so how did that get into this Riga? Oh, Moscow. I delivered this talk in Moscow about the extensions of what I wanted to do. In extending my absolute animation work and improvisational work, real time, into this expansive VR space. There was a call from the Banff Center for the Arts for VR projects, for proposals of artists. And I thought all right I want to do this piece that I'd been thinking about that I delivered in [MS: my talk in] Moscow. But I realized that the technology probably wasn't there yet to do that. That what I was imagining was not yet realizable. I was a little ahead of the curve. So I decided to propose something that I knew was practical.

**00:27:30**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And, I had a friend who was an artist and engineer, Stewart Dickson. Very bright guy who had working with topological models. He'd been taking minimal surface topologies and equating them in models in the computer. A typical topological surface has no thickness. It's actually a plane. But, he was giving them slight thickness, so you could model them. And he was making stereolithography models. Over in Valencia there's a company that does that. So, he was making physical sculptures of these surfaces and I found them quite beautiful and interesting.

**00:28:01            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So it occurred to me. I'd had an idle day dream of a surfing simulator in VR --wouldn't that be cool? You could you know be you know ride synthetic waves. And then I realized well, no-- that's missing all the important things about doing that. It's kind of like the worst application of VR you could imagine. And, it was kind of like a Frankie and Annette, you know beach movie. Boh! So I couldn't-- I was appalled that I even thought of it in the first place. But, then I kind of recuperated the idea thinking well, what if I built a platform that tilted and you could stand on this thing and tilting it would drive you across an imaginary surface.

**00:28:35            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

In this case these topologies that the Enneper disc --which is one of the particular minimal surfaces that Stewart was working with that I found particularly interesting-- and some of the others. I asked Stewart "would you be interested in being involved in the project". He said "yes". So we took his topological surfaces and-- Topologists often talk about taking a walk on the surface as a way of understanding it, right. How it's immersed in space and what its characteristics are. So I thought well this will be perfect.

**00:29:01            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

You'll have this [MS: one meter in diameter] disc [platform to stand on] and you could slide across the [topological] surface [representation] and explore it and gain a deeper understanding. So we built-- in the computer-- so I proposed to the Banff Center of the Arts this proposal that Stewart Dickson and I did and it was accepted. So we actually got to realize it. Unfortunately for us, we were the very first group to do a VR piece [MS: as part of the Art and Virtual Environments Projec]. Brenda Laural had--was doing one. Marcus Novak was doing one. Ron Kuivella. A number of other artists and groups of artists were--Toni Dove-- were doing things. But, we were the first group out of the gate, and they really didn't have their chops together with using this VR stuff yet.

**00:29:37            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So we paid the price. But we got the piece realized. It's a longer story I don't think we have time for it today about quaternion math but-- we solved our basic issues. So you have this huge sort of stadium size topological surface that you could view in the head mount display. And, you say--you could say well, I want to go over there and explore it. You just lean and you go in the direction you lean. So it was a very intuitive interface. If you've ever, you know, ever been on a surfboard, or a skateboard, or a snowboard, or you know, any other kind of sliding device, you could-- it's really quick to figure out that leaning will move you there.

**00:30:12                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So it was a very-- A lot of people commented afterwards that it was one of the most intuitive interfaces. Because up to that time mostly you would point and fly through VR, which is a little disembodied compared to this. This, you're really grounded with gravity and the-- so the Y up vector is the gravity vector. So it was effective. It was a wonderful piece. I was very happy we were able to do that. One of the things I discovered that was interesting was that my notion that you'd get a deeper understanding of the piece was only partially true.

**00:30:40                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Because, you were seeing the localized environment you didn't the gestalt. So, for installation purposes what I wanted to have was a representation of the whole model in rotation. You could see a representation of the person riding the model, sliding to get that sense of it. And, then when you were inside with the head mount display you would understand better the neighborhoods that you were visiting. Also the lighting model that Stewart used came out of Mathematica which uses several lights [MS: Red, green, blue]. So different polygons have a slight different color mixes, so you could remember where you had been. There was a little bit of way finding that was possible just because of color-coding.

**00:31:17                    ADAM HYMAN**

Great. [TECHNICAL] Give me an overall sort of quick view then of your positions and times CalArts.

**00:31:34                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Whoa. I graduated in '75 with a BFA. I started doing small jobs when I could in the industry. You know special effects jobs, pick up whatever was possible. Working for the Fox Venice as the paperboy, delivering calendars throughout the city. That kind of sustained me. I remember when I graduated the Operations Director said well, Michael what are you going do for a living? I just laughed because I'd been working in abstract video all that time. I knew there wasn't really a market for that.

**00:32:08                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

It wasn't like I was going to just jump right in to a spot in the industry. I did at one point go to visit the producers of a rock video show that was on TV and came in and said-- showed them my abstract work and said "what do you think?" "Ah, you see this Emmy award on the wall? We already do that stuff we don't need you kid" and you know, I was dismissed. Summarily dismissed. I thought that was short-sighted because what I did was so different. But, they weren't interested.

**00:32:34      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So there wasn't much commercial application for what I was doing. I always assumed that I'd be a starving artist. I had been before I came to art school. I thought maybe art school would provide a career path that would make that not true. As my idealism matured within the art school environment I realized no, I'm still going to be on the periphery of the culture as not 'a career' per se. I mentioned earlier I came up with a digital watch design idea that I was very interested in. It was a very discreet form follows function, device [MS: This had the potential to generate a sizeable income]

**00:33:03      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And I was contacted by CalArts in 1978 to come and teach, or maybe late '77 because they need someone to teach the video synthesizer, the Paik-Abe. Not too many people knew how to operate that, or to deal with it conceptually. So, I remember at the time saying "well no, I'm really not interested. I've got this other project going, you know." It looked like it was going to be a very lucrative deal, and I finally could have some independent--economic independence-- which could be very useful to pursue my other interests.

**00:33:31      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And, they said "oh, really. You should do it, you should do it. You should apply." So I applied and ultimately I was accepted--got through the selection process. So I came to teach just a single class. As soon as I got here we did a dean search for a new dean. There's an interesting story behind Sandy MacKendrick and why he wasn't dean anymore which I won't tell at the moment. We picked Ed Emshwiller to be dean.

**00:33:54      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So first thing Ed comes on he says "well, we've got to have you teaching more classes." So, I started teaching portable video classes and sort of expanding. So I went from adjunct one class to full time faculty in a pretty short time. I taught in the videographics lab with the Paik-Abe and the other instruments there. I did some investigations. The students wanted something more than what the Paik-Abe could do. So, I looked at a company called OEI, Optical Electronics Incorporated which had some modules that allowed you to do raster manipulation.

**00:34:23      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So we could in effect sort of create a poor man's Scanimate, or like a Rutt-Etra which had been sort of shut down for patent issues by Computer Image which developed the Scanimate, [unintelligible created by Lee Harrison]. I expanded that, taught videographics. So, we got a Hearn EAB, (Electronic Associates Berkeley), synthesizer which is patch programmable. It was more of a true synthesizer. I'd talked to Dan Sandin and gone to visit him in Chicago about maybe building one of theirs. And he said—suggested, you know what you should just get the Hearn because it'll [be] ready made and you can hit the ground running [MS: without the long build time of the Sandin Image Processor].

**00:34:54      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Ultimately, that's what we did [MS: I believe that the Sandin IP would have been a better choice in the long run]. We got our first Wavefront [computer graphic animation] system I mentioned I did 1921>1989 [using this system]. Vibeke Sorensen had been tapped by Ed to direct the Computer Animation Lab and put things together. And that was great. She asked me if I would teach an intro class, so she could teach advanced classes. So I started teaching 3D computer graphics classes. That was difficult. That was once again a case of me saying “you know what, I just learned this. I did one piece. I really don't feel comfortable with that. I want to do it some other time.” “Well, we need somebody to do it. It should be you.”

**00:35:31      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

What's-- I said “oh, I don't think so.” “Well, we'll send you up the Wavefront school for training.” So I went up and did that. So then I had to teach and I had to be one week ahead of the students. And it was just miserable. I find myself in [MS: something somewhat similar to ]that same position today. The software changes so fast. You're always-- you can't get that comfortable or build a curriculum that sort of stays set. You've got to keep manipulating and changing it because the tools are not mature. They're growing very fast.

**00:35:55      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Now I'm teaching motion capture --and animated work with-- You know abstract work with motion capture. And, yet again it's a case of being behind. At one point Vibeke was--decided to leave and we did a search for a director of the computer animation labs. And we finally settled on one really great guy. So our short list got cut down to Kevin Geiger. He accepted the position. He was going to do it. And then he got a call from Disney. They wanted to hire him. And he said ‘Look guys, I'm sorry.’ You know. ‘I really wanted to do this. But, I think I'll go work for Disney.’

**00:36:29            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And so he did. Later I was able to tap him as an advanced teacher. So I then-- someone suggested you should throw your hat in the ring Scroggy, you know maybe you should be director. I was like "I don't want to be an administrator I just want to make art and teach some classes." "Yeah, but we-- you know. You should do it." And I realized that if I didn't do that it was a good chance that the whole 3D CG thing could die on the vine because a lot of the faculty didn't really get what 3D CG could be. In fact they found it anathema because it wasn't hand drawing. It didn't have that tactility they love so much.

**00:36:58            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And so I was a little nervous about that. I took the position as director. Well, I applied. I threw my hat in the ring and was, you know, chosen. And everything was downhill from there. I'm just up to here in administrivia, you know, it's been crazy. But, I actually was able to--I feel comfortably--build up the facility and always looking out for the students. You know what do the students need? How can we best address their needs? In fact, because of that the stuff I wanted with the VR lab and motion capture to work with gesture, I had to keep putting on a back burner because that wasn't what most students were interested in. And we had to address those, all those needs first.

**00:37:35            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

We finally hit a point where we were comfortable enough, and had things set up enough, that I was able to push that forward. So, we just now have that system and I still have yet to realize my dreams with it. But I'm this close. [1" gesture]

**00:37:47            ADAM HYMAN**

So, for the-- do you make much of your work here then, on these same facilities?

**00:37:52            MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, almost entirely. I can work at home. The last piece that I released was ADAGIO FOR JON AND HELENA which I-- I went back to working with liquid lightshow stuff. Because we had done this show at MOCA. We took part in that show with the Single Wing film. And by the way that's when I had a chance to--a second chance to meet Elias Romero. He was there and I was so excited to talk to him. The first time I met him I kind of didn't know who he was and [MS: simply] Helena's friend was going to project liquids and it was cool.

**00:38:23**      **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And I learned more about him later. So here is a chance to talk to this pioneer and I was really interested in engaging him and I discovered that he had Alzheimer's. So, he just didn't remember. He was very sweet and happy and he had his notebooks. We had a great conversation and connected emotionally. But he didn't-- he couldn't tell me the things that I wanted to know about the past and what he had done. It was really sad. It was bittersweet anyway. But it was so wonderful to talk to him. He's a very warm great guy.

**00:38:49**      **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Well we did that show at MOCA and Lisa Eisner had seen the show and was really excited. She was going to have a 50<sup>th</sup> Birthday party. She had contacted Peter Mays who contacted me because she wanted to do a liquid lightshow. I think she went through Jeremy Strick [MS: actually Ari Wiseman], or something and then Peter blah, blah, blah. So, I had to get all my stuff out, build equipment, do this. Because I hadn't done liquid lights since that show we had done in the '80's for Ray Manzarek.

**00:39:15**      **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So I got stuff, got it all together, invested a lot of money. And then Lisa made changes and plans, changed her mind. So I never did that show. Actually I never recovered any of the money I had invested. It was like I kept telling my wife, yeah I'm going to put the money in this, but it will come back, you know. Anyhow, because I had all that stuff up and ready to go and I really loved doing these slow liquid plates. It was a great change from the way I'm working digitally to have this immediate physical process.

**00:39:40**      **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So I started doing that and then I was making HDV recordings of my performances and then I was able to cut together this five-minute [MS: excerpt from the live performance to make this] piece ADAGIO out of one of those performances. It was just ahead of my mother getting sick and starting her dying process. So I had to fly to Kentucky where she was and spend time with her. I got to spend a week with her as she slowly died. We got to talk and relive stories and connect in a really great way. It was for me probably the best process you could have had.

00:40:09                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)

Because, quite often someone just dies and you don't have any sense of connect, kind of clo--well closure is an overused word. But, any sense of a graceful transition where you get to really come to grips with what's happening over a sort of a period of time. But, it did work out. So it was a really great moment, great grace. Anyway, luckily for me I was able to finish that piece just before that because I was pretty emotionally distraught for a long time. I couldn't do anything else.

00:40:35                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)

But I did shoot a lot of stuff at that period which I have in the can and I'm continuing doing these liquids again and I plan to release a whole series of the *Adagio* pieces and then some other much more complex work.

00:40:48                    ADAM HYMAN

And, well then back in the late '70's was it '77[SOUNDS LIKE KING AND QUEEN, Goodbye Thrown, DESTINY EDIT. [technical]

00:41:01                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS

Wow, time flies when you're having fun.

00:41:02                    ADAM HYMAN

You know what? Let's wrap it.

[END OF TAPE 9; GRAPHICS SAYS PART 2  
END OF TAPE 4]

## **TAPE 10: MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

**00:41:28**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Alright, so tell me about the economics of how you made pieces in the years immediately after you left school.

**00:00:58**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah. It was a difficult situation.

**00:01:04**

**ADAM HYMAN**

What was a difficult situation?

**00:01:05**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Leaving school because in film school you have access to the means of production. And when you leave you're sort of cut off unless you can get involved with a consortium, or some sort of collective. As you know a lot of video collectives pool their resources, so in fact you could have access to means of production. So, it was unnerving. When we were working on the Paik-Abe video synthesizer a group of us approached Abe-san and said look, you're going to leave and go back Tokyo and we're going to graduate and we're not going to have a Paik-Abe, so we can't continue our work. So, could we build, you know would you allow us to build copies of the machine?

**00:01:44**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Because he was working on sort of the fourth generation machine. And, he said yes. He was very generous. So we did that. In my case, I was a destitute student and you know, was just barely getting by. But my friend Larry Janss had the resources to buy the parts. So he and I formed a partnership. He supplied the money for the parts. I built the synthesizer. And we were co-owners of it. And we were roommates at the time in Topanga, so that worked out pretty well.

**00:02:06**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

There was a group of us living in the Hillside House. So I was able to build that. So, I had that. I could continue my work with that machine. But in Larry's wisdom he never got around to buying a video tape recorder. So, I would spend endless hours performing and doing wonderful stuff that like with the lightshow, evanescent. It just evaporated. I remember talking to Nam June about that once. He said yeah, recordings are great. It's like leaving a concrete wake in history. The notion of having this recording at the end of the process is--can be very valuable.

**00:02:39      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So eventually-- So actually, as it were, I could continue my work outside of school. So, between '75 and '78 when I came to teach, most of the work that I was doing wasn't recorded. I was able-- I think as soon as I started teaching-- I'm trying to think if I got a black and white recorder. I think I might have gotten a black and white recorder before that. I think KING AND QUEEN was recorded on that black and white recorder. It's one of the reasons it's a black and white piece. I couldn't afford a color video recorder.

**00:03:11      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So I got this little Concord thing [MS: a relatively inexpensive brand of industrial video recorders], and KING AND QUEEN was named that--I mentioned earlier--as a sort of a nod to Duchamp. It was really based on Arturo Schwartz's book on Duchamp which really does a great Jungian analysis of Duchamp's output. So, this notion of the union of opposites and alchemy and the King and the Queen as sort of a-- I don't want to say cosmology, but these devices that Duchamp was playing with were all kind of laid out really wonderfully by Schwartz. And, I could have tracked back-- Something happened to me in high school.

**00:03:47      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I was in an art class and the teacher gave us an assignment. He said okay I'm giving you some rocks and you've got clay do something with these little round rocks. He had these little river rocks he brought in from Topanga. So, I built a cone with a rock on the top. And, I built an arched slab with a hole in it with a rock in the middle. And, he was like immediately taken by that. In fact, I never got the stuff back because he whisked it off to the Board of Education.

**00:04:05      MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Because he'd been fighting for his approach to art education which was to give blanket grades. First thing he would say when you're in class. "all right, all you have to do in my class is work. If you don't do the work you fail. If you produce things you get a B, if you have a 4.0 grade average you get an A. This is how it is." But he was fighting with the Board of Education with that. He was very nontraditional. He said. " I don't want you to make work that you think I want to see. I just want you to make what you want. You just follow your muse and I think you'll make much more interesting stuff".

**00:04:35**            **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

This was John Corbeil. Brilliant art educator. And it was liberating. But, these sculptures that I made were completely intuitive. It was just a formal solution for me. But later I realized well it's quite clearly Jungian archetypes. You have the Anima and the Animus. You've got the obvious male, female representations. I mean it's easy to make that reading. And reading Schwartz and his take on Jung's thinking and Duchamp was a big eye-opener for me. So KING AND QUEEN was done that way in black and white.

**00:05:05**            **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So I had that means. But as soon as I started teaching at CalArts in '78 I could take back to my studio at home a color video recorder. So I began to record things that way. Once I had that sort of independence in my studio-- But CalArts had a video studio with a big switcher. We had the Paik-Abe and this other equipment there. So, I started doing my work at CalArts because I had access once again as faculty to the means of production. I also had a steady income--as small as it was--[1" gesture], so I didn't have to worry about side jobs and freelancing. I could actually just concentrate on making my work and teaching. So that worked out very well for me.

**00:05:41**            **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

One of the advantages of being an arts educator is you can continue to make your work without commercial pressures. I don't have to sell any of it. I remember one of the things that Duchamp said that impressed me was that he was able to not participate in the art world in an ongoing way in terms of gallery exhibitions and sales because he was independent. You know he didn't have any kids. He hadn't bred. He had no responsibilities except himself. And of course, later he had Tini and she was able to economically keep them afloat.

**00:06:13**            **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So he just pursued his muse. He did work he wanted to do-- which I thought was a great way to live a life. You know?

**00:06:19**            **ADAM HYMAN**

You just have to pay the rent.

**00:06:20**            **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, exactly. And that was taken care of for Marcel. I struggled a bit, but it was very different then had I taken another path and concentrated on the freelance work, you know, and odd jobs and stuff, to stay afloat and work.

**00:06:35**            **ADAM HYMAN**

And in teaching, would you like-- have you had any interesting artists pass through your classrooms?

**00:06:43**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

A lot of them. Because, I've been teaching a long time. I couldn't begin-- If I make a list I'm going to leave out so many. Amy Alexander would be a really great student I had when I was still doing--teaching the videographics classes. She was here while I transitioned to teaching in 3D computer graphics. She's now a professor at UCSD. She does amazing work. She does performance work with this persona of VJ Ubergeek. She's very much involved in net art, a whole-- a very deep range of things. I couldn't begin to calculate.

**00:07:13**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Jim Ellis is another student. Jim Ellis was doing abstract animation early on in our video studio. And he continues to work. He works with the TOUCH program. His most recent stuff is astoundingly beautiful. He also is someone who kind of works on the side. One of the things I learned from Jeff Perkins was he was making work constantly, but not interested in necessarily gallery exhibition. So he made work as an artist because it was fulfilling his unconscious needs to produce the work and enter into this dialogue between the unconscious and the conscious mind.

**00:07:44**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

A model for him I think was Wally Berman who was doing work. He would show it to friends, but it wasn't exhibiting widely. And I thought that was an interesting way to make art. It's not about a reputation, large scale communication. It's more about what you need to do personally. The catch to that is all the art we're aware of is the art that's been exhibited, or our friends have made that we know about. So if all your work is always hidden no one could ever interact with it [MS: perhaps become transformed by it in some way].

**00:08:10**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Duchamp did a great lecture, or delivered a paper I think in '53 at an Arts Education Symposium [MS: actually presented at the Convention of the American Federation of Arts, Houston, Texas, April 1957]on the creative act [entitled THE CREATIVE ACT]where he says that the audience completes the work, you know. You have your own process as an artist, but it's this social function of art that makes it the most important. So anyway, Jim Ellis would be another one. Mondri, these are fairly more recent people. I'm definitely blanking on a whole lot. A number of people have gone on to do great commercial work. Eric Darnell is directing films for DreamWorks, you know, so he's working in that area.



**00:10:59                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Because that's where the commercial market lay. So, that was the genius of the alternative approaches class. And it's been really successful. I could kind of rattle off a number of those people. Grady Campbell was in the first group. Right now I'm blanking out --there are a lot of students I'd like to mention who went through that process and did amazing things and are continuing to.

**00:11:19                    ADAM HYMAN**

And, all right well we'll go ahead to something else. Tell me about Larry Janss.

**00:11:26                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Well, Larry I first met when we were doing light shows at Joe Funk's place. And, Larry's father Ed was a really interesting guy who was an art collector. And he was the kind of guy who hung out with the artists. So, he hung out with the Ferus Gallery Group. Walter Hopps. He was pretty close with Walter. He would buy art that he loved. And not necessarily because it was a good investment or the trendy thing. Walter Hopps clearly gave him good advice, but he generally just bought the stuff he was passionate about.

**00:11:59                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So, Larry and Sam--Larry's father, Ed Janss, (Edwin) were close friends with Sam Francis, another artist he liked. And so he had Larry follow Sam around when he was on a break from prep school at some point on a vacation. So he became Sam's assistant and was accompanying Sam around. Sam was doing the lithos at Joe Funk's. Larry came there. He saw what was going on with the lightshow. He got to meet Jeff Perkins, myself, Peter Mays, Jon Greene. And, when Larry graduated at a certain point later--

**00:12:33                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Oh, I know what happened. So, Rol Murrow who also was living at the Pot Shop at that area in the apartments [MS: the living quarters were on the second floor]made a film actually, he was a UCLA film student. He made a film on THE TIN SHACK, on the Pot Shop and Joe Funk's litho shop. So, he got involved in the lightshow as well. So, Rol Murrow, myself, Peter Mays, Jeff Perkins and peripherally Scott Hardy, were the kind of core of the lightshow in those days. So we're all joined up.



**00:15:03**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I ended up working for both of those... All right, so Larry. He grew up with a father who was a great art collector. Larry was bouncing up against the artists all the time. He got involved with Saul Landau, the documentary filmmaker, and went down with him to Chile. Where they shot a film with Country Joe McDonald (of Country Joe and the Fish) called QUE HACER? Country Joe played a CIA agent. Larry was very active in all kinds of interesting things. In the long story Ed's father had donated their land--had a large chunk of land from the Spanish Land Grants.

**00:15:40**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So Larry's grandfather. They had the Holmby Hills. They started real estate development. You can still walk around Westwood Village and see in the sidewalk Janss Development Corporation. That big building on the corner--used to Bank of America--was originally the Janss Realty office. So, Larry's grandfather gave the land to UCLA to build UCLA there. And thus the Janss Steps are there. And Ed got land. They had a ranch out in Thousand Oaks, the Conejo Ranch. So, he got that and they shot movies there.

**00:16:14**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Like GUNSMOKE, TV shows, and stuff. And, then when the Ventura freeway came through there was suddenly this big access. It went right down --bisected their ranch. He went into developing tract houses. In fact, he got Sam Francis to advise him on certain design issues. So Ed had this real estate fortune which really helped. Ed's brother got land up in Sun Valley and set up a ski resort. So, Larry then had economic resources to kind of follow his muse. Do what he wanted to do. And, did that. He made films. To this day he continues. So he was within Single Wing he wasn't really an economic contributor he was just one of the participants artistically.

**00:16:55**

**ADAM HYMAN**

And, what's the deal about with his gallery now in Thousand Oaks?

**00:16:58**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh, well he had a collection of art he was acquiring when he travelled. He's very interested in Nepal and Tibet. And he acquired a bunch of that work, so he set up this gallery in order to exhibit that work. He also continues to do photography. He did summer workshops with Ansel Adams. Photography was his, you know, passion. In fact with the lightshow that's one of the things he did was shoot slides and, you know, add to our slide collection and project slides. He continues-- he was teaching photography for a while. He continues to do his personal art photography. The gallery was also a place for him to exhibit. He also was exhibiting the work of other photographers. So, he had sort of a stable, as a gallerist would of photographers whose work you could buy.

**00:17:45**

**ADAM HYMAN**

And, then why does Single Wing do things at his gallery?

**00:17:49**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Because it's available space and we need to have a studio. Our last studio was above the Fox Venice in this Cumberland Mountain Loft. That was a perfect space. We could be set up all the time. I could drive down from Topanga and project at night and then drive home. We could work every night. We could do [MS: public] shows there which we did every few weeks depending you know on the schedule. I said I produced this Dreme concert series right toward the end. I spell that D-R-E-M-E. It was my bad joke on synthetic crème and synthetic dream.

**00:18:25**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So, we were able to do that. And now that we want to re-form, since Larry has a gallery space which is large enough to set up it makes sense to do it there and that's sort of the history of why that's happening. It's very inconvenient because Thousand Oaks is so far away from-- David and Peter live on the west side, Santa Monica and I live up in Canyon Country. So, it's like an hour and a half drive for me-- when we set up that first time to do-- we decided to do a performance for the premiere of Jeff Perkins film on Sam Francis [THE PAINTER SAM FRANCIS].

**00:18:57**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Which was this film 30 years in the making, or whatever. And, that was our first time to get together and we didn't know what was going to happen. It turned out that the magic could still be there --it was pretty exciting. Because we've all done so much and seen so much since then. We were wondering well, do we remember what-- is the memory of what the show was better than what we could really do? Or, have we lost our chops? And, it turns out actually we can still do some amazing stuff.

**00:19:23**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

We need to work at it more and that's a problem. We're all very busy and have busy schedules. Back in the '60s and the early '70s you know you had all the time in the world it seemed as young men just, you know making art.

**00:19:36**

**ADAM HYMAN**

It's a hard world now.

**00:19:37**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah. [MS: From the relative point-of-view of someone immersed in the intense workload of teaching, raising a young family, etc.”]

**00:19:38**

**ADAM HYMAN**

And, then well you said you mentioned you worked for both Jorgensen and then at the Fox Venice. What did you do at each of those theaters?

**00:19:45**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh, yeah. Well, I was distributing the calendars for the Fox Venice. Jeff Perkins was actually doing the graphic design and the layout at one point. It became a sort of a family business in a way.

**00:19:56**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Peter Mays was projecting.

**00:19:57**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Peter Mays was projecting. Exactly. And Rol was at times. And Peter and Larry were managing the facility. And Bobby Maestri --which is another story. I took over the distribution of the calendars. I don't remember who was doing it before me. I got their route map and I started doing it. And, then I expanded that route map. So, I went all the way from the South Bay out to Pasadena down, you know, to the San Fernando Valley, all through Hollywood. And it was quite a large, large route.

**00:20:25**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And-- We contracted it a bit. And at one point-- I'm not sure how it happened if Kim approached me, or there's something about the Nuart they needed someone and I thought well that could be interesting. But is it a conflict of interest? So, I asked the guys at the Fox what do you think if I started delivering Nuart calendars too. "Oh, no, no problem okay." And, Kim was cool with it. So I started working for Kim. And then I expanded the route. So, then I could do a double up the amount of calendars and there were different bills, so they weren't in direct conflict. I mean you had to make a choice on which night you would go to [MS: which theater].

**00:20:55**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And, that worked for a while. And then Terry Thoren came in and took over that [MS: part of the] business operation. And, he called me in his office one day and made me an offer I could refuse. First he wanted me to give them all the route information. And, I had built personal relationships with every store owner, or every manager in the places that I went. Because to get that point of sale, point of purchase counter space, there's a lot of competition. There's rack jobbers are coming in all the time. So, I had to give out free passes and build personal good will.

**00:21:24                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So, I took it as you know this is my turf I'm not giving it away. But Kim [MS: Terry actually] wanted to pay me less money and do more work or something. And I just said well no, I can't do that, and quit. By that time I was teaching at CalArts anyway. It would sometimes be kind of weird because I would actually hand out calendars to people in line in the movies in Westwood. I had a schedule where I would get them coming out, get them coming in and then run around. And sometimes I'd run into my faculty colleagues and they'd be like "why are you the paper boy? What is this?", you know.

**00:21:49                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

But I felt quite comfortable in it because I understood that I was on a mission to make the world better, you know?

**00:21:55                    ADAM HYMAN**

Yeah, I know it well. Can you tell me about Ed Emshwiller?

**00:21:59                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh, an amazing guy. He became one of my...

**00:22:02                    ADAM HYMAN**

Let's start with by saying Ed, you know?

**00:22:03                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Well, Ed Emshwiller was an amazing influence in my life. When he came to CalArts-- I had, you know, appreciated his film work before and had been very fascinated by his video work particularly SCAPEMATES. And so I was interested in what he was doing. And it turns out that I grew up reading-- seeing his science fiction illustrations on [MS: the cover of sci-fi magazines such as] FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION and ANALOG. These magazines, these pulps I would be buy[ing] as a little kid. So, he had that double career as an illustrator. Well, I liked his film work very much. He really understood what I was doing. He seemed to understand students very well. He became an amazing dean and a great mentor.

**00:22:45                    MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

We didn't work together too much on projects although he worked with students. But we were always in contact and there was a great rapport. Something funny-- before he got sick I hadn't-- none of us knew he would get sick. He and I had this great conversation over a few beers and I was saying "it's really a pity that we don't have immortality that we have to die, you know? It's like what a waste." He said "No, no you don't get it." he says "you have-- this is part of a natural system for this very reason." He said "The culture would freeze. It would never change and grow if the old farts stayed in control."

**00:23:17**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

He said if you got the assholes in power, you [would] still have Alexander the Great, Mao Tse Tung, or whoever it is, there would never be a cultural churn. So, the fact that the old guard dies off and youth come up means there's a chance for a transformation that would not take place. So, it'd be great to be able to stay alive and be in touch with all this stuff, but it's really okay that we all go. I hadn't thought of it that way you know? And, I said "Well okay, well maybe yeah, maybe it is bad idea."

**00:23:41**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And, I don't know [MS: but I believe that it was just] a few months later [that] he got sick and died. I was interested-- he did a class with Vibeke Sorensen and Scott Duncan on stereo which I'm actually proposing a class this next semester on stereo at CalArts, stereography [MS: EXPLORATIONS IN STEREO SCOPIC IMAGING]. And, he had loaned me his Stereo Realist, this great '50s [MS: 3D 35mm] camera. And I had taken it to Europe and I was shooting pictures. I had no idea that he got sick. It happened pretty quick. He got the leukemia and then he went into chemo at Henry Mayo and boom he was gone. So, I wasn't here.

**00:24:08**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Even though I had left my itinerary with Arlene, who was in charge of the film school office at that time-- this is before Patti Palmer --there was a very different kind of personality [MS: running the film school office]--she never contacted me. So I got back and it was on a weekend. I went in my office and I had this huge stack of mail. And I was sifting through it. I came across this letter from Jean Von Furstenberg or Jean Firstenberg at the AFI.

**00:24:29**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

It says "I'm looking for information on how to contact the late Ed Emshwiller's wife Carol. And I'm like "Wait,, what?" It was an unbelievable shock. And, I had all these pictures that I was going to share with him. To this day, I think I want to show Ed some stuff I'm working on. And I have a very similar and maybe even stronger sense with Bill Moritz and Jules Engel. I'm always thinking about how I want to share stuff with them and I can't. It's really a-- the way it is, you know.

**00:25:03**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Do you have anything you want to ask?

**00:25:06**                    **KATE BROWN**

That was so, that was a nice way to end, but...

**00:25:08**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah.

**00:25:10** **KATE BROWN**

Well, I have questions along the way, but...

**00:25:13** **ADAM HYMAN**

Should we leave there?

**00:25:14** **KATE BROWN**

Yeah.

**00:25:14** **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, so I just say that Ed had a great influence on-- he took the school in a very good direction.

**00:25:20** **ADAM HYMAN**

When was that? What was it and what did he...

**00:25:23** **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

He really looked at what the students needs were and what they wanted. He always thought of that. He added computer graphics because he thought that was important and built a very strong facility which to this day is still moving forward even though it gets resistance still. Not as much as in the past. And the way he interacted with the students. For instance, as a Dean something of particularly interesting about him was you could go to the Halloween party and there would be Ed. I remember one year he had-- His costume consisted of just two little baby hands from a rubber baby glued to his head like horns, a brilliant costume.

**00:25:59** **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And, Ed had this long white hair that was swept back and a big beard. And, he laughed like Santa, he looked like Santa and laughed like him. So, he'd "ho, ho, ho." It was perfect. He was also-- He just did a number of things that I think were very good for the Institute in general and for the film school. So he kind of got it and did good stuff. That's not to say subsequent deans haven't done well too. But, he was really there at the right time and place to do this.

**00:26:25** **ADAM HYMAN**

Well, he was dean at over what years now?

**00:26:27** **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I don't remember '81, yeah I don't...

**00:26:30** **ADAM HYMAN**

Did it go from him to Hartmut?

**00:26:32** **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, well actually Myron Emery took interim Dean for a year and then Hartmut [Bitomsky] came and then Steve Anker.

**00:26:38** **ADAM HYMAN**  
And, Sam told me that Hartmut started in '94, so...

**00:26:41** **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**  
That could be.

**00:26:42** **ADAM HYMAN**  
So, whatever it's still 2002 or 3 when Steve started.

**00:26:45** **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**  
Yeah.

**00:26:49** **ADAM HYMAN**  
So that's it. Like four real Deans.

**00:26:51** **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**  
Well, actually well Sandy MacKendrick started.

**00:26:53** **ADAM HYMAN**  
Sandy MacKendrick after Ed Emshwiller?

**00:26:54** **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**  
Yeah, Sandy, Ed, Hartmut and that's it four yeah, so. [MS: To clarify the sequence of Deans; Sandy Mackendrick, Kris Malkiewicz (Interim Dean), Ed Emshwiller, Myron Emery (Interim Dean), Hartmut Bitomsky, Steve Anker.]

**00:27:01** **ADAM HYMAN**  
So, what else did Ed add or change to the program from what Sandy had...

**00:27:07** **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**  
Well, he emphasized the video, he strengthened the video part of it. Sandy always kind of felt video was just useful for imitating film. He really didn't kind of care for it that much. No that's not quite fair I think he got people in here that did video studio work and we actually had video production color three camera stuff. So, yeah he supported it. But he didn't quite get it I think. In fact, he didn't get the abstract video. I had a student Peter Koczera.

**00:27:33**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Actually, a funny thing is while I was an undergrad student, I was teaching a class unsupervised on my own in video synthesizer because there was nobody else that knew this stuff. And, so one of my students Peter Koczera who became [like] my TA [MS: this would technically be a TA to a TA]. And, then I kind of passed it on to him when I left the baton, as a student. Peter created a piece with video feedback that he titled for his thesis piece, he titled it JUST ANOTHER WATERFALL. And, which was a quote from Sandy Mackendrick who said “Video feedback if you've seen it once you've seen it. It's like a how did-- no I'm bumming the quote. “Video feedback is like a waterfall if you've seen one you've seen them all.” Which is you know on the face of it absurd.

**00:28:14**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

But, one can understand a certain logic in that, you know. There is self similarity.

**00:28:22**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Yeah, and there's also the well, I'm still fascinated by the notion of why is there this directing program that's separate from...

**00:28:29**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, Sandy set that up because...

**00:28:30**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

And everyone wants to get rid of it.

**00:28:31**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, well Sandy really felt like the experimental things that were going on with the students in the program in Live Action as it was called. Originally there wasn't a program of Live Action. There was just a Film School and there was sort of experimental stuff with cameras. And, then there was film graphics and Jules' thing. And, it wasn't at all separated. And, over time it separated out and then we had what was called Motion Graphics and then [also] Live Action. There was a director for the animation program, but not for Live Action. It was just the Dean . It was Sandy.

**00:29:05**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And then Character Animation was grafted [on] around I guess '74, '75 because the-- principally I would say--and this may not be the true story, but this is how I understand it--Glen Keane was a student in Experimental Animation, very great draftsman, good animator. Learned stuff. He went to work at Disney. They just picked him up right away. But he got there and they wanted him to do something and it had to do with X sheets. And, he didn't know what an X was because Jules refused to teach those technical skills he thought it would corrupt people. He wanted them to be free form and discover the process that worked the best for them and not be kind of structured in.

**00:29:40**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And, the Disney people were like “wow this is just wrong we can't have this. This is --Walt Disney founded this school and we should be able to get animators who know all the, you know, the craft of animation.” So, thus the Character Animation program got grafted onto the film school. And, then the other [MS: progam] Motion Graphics had to get a new name change it became Experimental Animation. It was Film Graphics initially and then Motion Graphics and then I think Experimental Animation.

**00:30:03**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Yeah, that was another thing-- why are there separate Experimental Animation and Character Animation??

**00:30:06**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Right.

**00:30:06**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

... animation programs.

**00:30:08**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

It's because you know the stuff that Adam Beckett and Kathy Rose and well Sky David now [MS: Dennis Pies then], but-- those people were doing-- didn't fit what studios wanted. You know and there were students--Bill Kopp was one--who did really great character stuff. He ended up working at Disney and did shorts for ROGER RABBIT. But he was in Experimental and flourished there. There was a sense that they needed a separate track and they did that and it was successful because of Tim Burton, John Lasseter, Pete Docter I understand. They all came through that program and have done well in the commercial animation industry.

**00:30:43**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And, Sandy though was frustrated that-- he really wanted a program that could deal with theatrical cinema. So, he formed [an] alliance with [the] theater school thus the Directing Program was formed. It was originally called Directing for Theater, Film and Television, something like that.

**00:30:58**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

That's what I applied to and didn't get in.

**00:30:59**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Aah, there you go. Sandy was a curmudgeon. Oh, one great thing story about Sandy. Don Levy and he were like polar opposites. They did a film history class together and Don sat on one side of the Bijou on the stage in a black turtleneck and Sandy sat on the other side in a white turtleneck. And, they had such opposing views. They got so contentious that it was not very productive. So, Hallock Hoffman who was sort of like the Dean of Students I forget exactly what his title was came and sat in the middle in a gray turtleneck to mediate between these two. He became the mediator.

**00:31:33**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

But, they were just-- These arguments would be very intense which is very healthy for students because you see oh, there is not a unified point of view here. You could look at this from that side and that side and look for the logic. You could. Well, Sandy loved to argue. He had this great British sense of argument. And [MS: one semester] Don Levy took a creative leave and we would have faculty meetings and Sandy couldn't find a foil. So in the meeting he would say-- make some statements and say on the other hand if Dr. Levy was here what he would say is and he would create the whole counter argument. He was just brilliant. Gave me a great insight into his psychology you know?

**00:32:09**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

You know what, tell me about Joan Logue?

**00:32:11**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Ah, she was great. She came in...

**00:32:14**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Start again say her name.

**00:32:15**                    **MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I'm sorry Joan Logue came to teach...

**00:32:17**                    **ADAM HYMAN**

Spell her last name.

**00:32:17**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

L-O-G-U-E. Joan Logue came into teach experimental video just I think on the heels of Peter Kirby maybe he was I think he taught a class as a grad student and he was graduating. They needed to have a class. I'm not certain of the, you know, the chronology. But, Joan came to teach and she was very open and had a lot of great approaches to teaching. I really loved her class. Some of the other students-- she wasn't technically oriented however. So some of the students were very frustrated that she didn't understand the technology. They wanted technical training along with the conceptual.

**00:32:48**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

And she pushed the conceptual and tried to let video engineers handle the technical stuff, which I thought was appropriate. I remember one of her classes she was doing an exercise she had a radio play by-- Not Ionesco. oh, crap-- Krapp's last tape.

**00:33:09**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Beckett.

**00:33:10**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Beckett thank you. So, had this Beckett piece. And, you know it's this guy who sits on a stage basically and he's going through his memories and he's pulling out tapes and playing them. So, we had to take lines from that and do a piece. I wanted to do only abstraction. I was interested in absolute. I didn't want to do characters talking in a scene set. So, I did everything on the switcher graphically that related to this particular thing. You know "bathed off the bank" [MS: a dismembered line from the play "Pushed off the bank and drifted" was the line I was trying to quote here] and the same. It was really a beautiful little soliloquy. I loved that work and she appreciated that.

**00:33:43**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

She was actually doing her own work here. She did some really interesting things with multiple wipes and water. So, she was a great inspiration to me and a good mentor. I was really sorry when she left because, you know I was getting a lot from the way she did things. And, I kept in touch with her later in Venice. There was kind of a circle of artists, John Sturgeon and Joan Logue and a few others.

**00:34:05**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Where is she now?

**00:34:06**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

I don't know.

**00:34:08**

**ADAM HYMAN**

She has come up a few times with the, [unintelligible] in the oral history we have.

**00:34:12**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah, she was very influential. She did a lot of interesting videos with-- well she did the one about Paul Magritte, a video for Paul Simon, which still holds up as an interesting video I think.

**00:34:24**

**KATE BROWN**

I have a question.

**00:34:25**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah.

**00:34:27**

**KATE BROWN**

Well, was the Villa Cabrini-- where was that located?

**00:34:30**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

That was in Burbank it was an old Catholic Girls School that had been abandoned and CalArts took it over. It's now Woodbury College. So, I'm sure they restructured the buildings. Well, we had it for one year.

**00:34:41**

**KATE BROWN**

How did your experience of Los Angeles change when you moved out here and do you ever think about CalArts being located outside...

**00:34:49**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah.

**00:34:49**

**KATE BROWN**

...the city?

**00:34:51**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

We thought that having it out here was horrible. It was originally supposed to be across from the Hollywood Bowl below Lake Hollywood. And they couldn't get the city to do the deal with the land and so then apparently they'd also been offered the site that is now Pepperdine in the mouth of Malibu Canyon. I was living in Topanga and commuting as a student. The first year at Villa Cabrini I took a place in Lakeview Terrace. An old friend of mine from my first days in Topanga [MS: Tony Marsden] had a house there and I rented a guest room, or a cottage. It was a separate place.

**00:35:22**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

Because I didn't want to have to commute so far, so I could get into Burbank pretty quick. And then Larry said yeah you should come live in the Hillside House. So, the next year I did that. We had to commute to CalArts. It was horrible. And, so we eventually we ended up renting a garage in--off Lyons. So, we'd just have a place to sleep because we were just going back and forth. If you're really working intensely you're taking classes, then you're doing your work, you know you're exhausted. It's not good to be driving so much.

**00:35:49            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So, I could spend a few days out here at a time. Eventually, I started sleeping in my editing room. I got an editing room as a student. In fact, Marilyn Emerzian and I at the end sort of shared a room. She would go home to sleep and I got to crash. So, we had a refrigerator. At one point the sub level at CalArts was a whole warren of living arrangements of people [who] had studios. It was a very fervent community. There's a similar thing that happened in the art school it's [was] called Little Calcutta where all the people who were living in the [their] studios and it was an artists -community that was very vibrant and alive because people were interacting after hours. It's not just you do your art and you go home to your room somehow. You know it was like a little more traditional like it would happen if a bunch of people got lofts in Westbeth for instance.

**00:36:31            ADAM HYMAN**

That provoked something, but now I blanked as to what it was. Was there a period then when you were living in Venice teaching at CalArts?

**00:36:39            MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yes, in fact what happened was the year I graduated from CalArts '75 Jeff Perkins told me that John Stehura was going to move out of the studio next to his. They had two adjacent shotgun store fronts at 2710 and [MS: 2710 and]one half Main Street [2710 ½] was the one I got --the one half. The place had been subdivided, so it was really narrow. And, I'd thought for a long time I'd really like to have a store front studio. You know I had friends who had that I'd thought it would be cool. So, I decided well, I'll move out of the Hillside House which was a great safe place to live and, you know it was great.

**00:37:10            MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I could get down to the beach easy and I really liked it. But, I thought Oh it's time to you know make another move. Do something interesting. So I got that studio and then I moved--, oh, a speculator bought the studio out from under us even though I had an oral first right to refusal. And, I was going to ask Larry Janss if he'd buy it and then I could, you know, pay him and buy off him. Because I really loved my studio space, but this, we got booted out.



**00:39:30**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Oh, man I had-- let's see I had a Chevy panel truck I had a '53 Chevy panel. In fact, I used to drive the lightshow equipment around in that. And, then I think I don't know by then I at some point I--that broke down and I got a VW Bug. I got a Beetle. And, I'm not sure if that's what I was driving then or not. I'm thinking so. When I got the studio in Venice I ended up buying Joe Bogdanovich's old Volvo. I had an old Volvo 122 Sport with a SU carbs and stuff I learned how to adjust. That's another story.

**00:40:02**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

So once I started teaching at CalArts I was commuting from Venice up here teaching my classes and then driving back. And, I remember it was hard, but you know I loved being in the cultural center and the artists I was hanging-- I used to go to the Brandywine Cafe which had a great cafe society at the time. All kinds of interesting people there. One night I was eating there and Adam Beckett popped in with his sister. And, hey Scroggins you know and that's-- they came over to the corner.

**00:40:24**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

I sat down with him and I used to sit at the bar because I'd be kind of coming in on my own. I'd have my tuna salad, salad with tuna on it and drink some beers and talk to people right? So, I went and joined him. I remember he had a little pen light with him one of those big old fashioned pen light things. And, he started spotlighting the waitress's breasts making her very uncomfortable. And, I knew this woman. She was a friend of mine. I was like "come on Adam knock it off." and Adam's sister was with him. And, she was also upset.

**00:40:50**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS (CONTINUED)**

But Adam was very interested in pushing boundaries and doing what you're not supposed to do. So he was playing the bad boy for attention or whatever you know? He was always apparently [unintelligible] he was like since he was a little kid. He was very interested in pushing the-- I met Adam the very first day of CalArts.

**00:41:06**

**ADAM HYMAN**

Really?

**00:41:07**

**MICHAEL SCROGGINS**

Yeah. My hair was still long, you know it was long enough to sit on. It was very, very long. And, he had this one long braid [gestures to the side of his head] and I thought well that's interesting-- who's this guy? And, we started talking and it turns out we had mutual friends at the Hog Farm and, so we struck up a great relationship. [technical]

**00:41:45**

**ADAM HYMAN**

All right we're done.

00:41:45

MICHAEL SCROGGINS

Well, thank you this has been kind of interesting. I love to talk about myself, so it's a perfect opportunity.

00:41:50

ADAM HYMAN

It works out well. We have lots of you and there's still lots more to do probably.

[END OF TAPE 10]