

Steve Scott is Steve Scott: The Life and Times of a Kansas Painter

Birger Sandzén Memorial Gallery
Lindsborg, Kansas

May 19 through August 16, 2020



Photo courtesy of Jim Richardson

Steve Scott working on *Dalallama Telecomma*,
circa 2000

I like to call myself a painter. It makes me feel good to associate myself with the long tradition and the thousands of talented souls who have preceded me. Painting allows me to maintain my identity as an individual, but it requires that I examine my place in nature and the world.¹

Steve Allan Scott (1947-2017) knew he would be an artist from an early age. While growing up in Emporia his father would take him hunting and fishing, but Steve would often become so entranced by the patterns and light of the natural surroundings that he'd have to be nudged back to reality with, "Hey, you have a fish on

the line!"² Scott earned art degrees first at Emporia State University (1969) and then an MFA from Wichita State University (WSU, 1972). His graduate school classmate Michael Jilg, now retired from the art department of Fort Hays State University, remembers that when they met Scott already had his signature style well established. He exclusively used Liquitex Acrylic Artist Colors mixed out of the tube for his paintings on canvas and paper, continuing the practice throughout his career. Jilg was amazed that as so young an artist, "His colors were wonderful and the execution was perfect."³

Early Years and School

Steve Scott grew up in Emporia, Kansas. The surrounding environment was a deep-seated influence. As part of his ongoing artist statement, Scott regularly asserted, "As the artist, I am drawn to the structure of the land. Elements of the landscape are reduced to intrinsic shapes; the result being a symbolized language of form. Nature is a guide, and imagination is the creator."

Scott maintained an active exhibition presence while studying painting and drawing at WSU, satisfying the rigorous requirements of the two-year, 60-hour interdisciplinary program. The young artist participated in such group shows as the Omaha *Midwest Biennial* in 1970 at the Joslyn Museum of Art, the Oklahoma annual *Eight State Exhibition*, and at the Wichita Century II *As Kansas Is: Painting* in 1971, among others. For his matriculation in 1972, a fine art graduate exhibition for the ten students was held at the Century II hall. WSU's Assistant Professor of Fine Arts and Scott's mentor, John Fincher, led a tour and added commentary about each student's body of work. Scott showed twelve paintings, including *Dancer in the Garden* which was eventually purchased by collector George Vollmer, whose estate passed the work to the Wichita Art Museum in 2012. The graduating artist also designed his own exhibition catalogue with an art nouveau motif, in a format that is echoed by a new version produced for this exhibition by the Scott family.

As Steve Scott was one of the "stars of the program," he was chosen to fill in for Professor Fincher teaching drawing and painting classes when he left for a sabbatical over the 1972-73 academic year.⁴ Jilg recalls that all of the students assumed they "would get cushy jobs



Landscape with Blue Streak, 1970, acrylic
on canvas, 40 x 43 inches, Collection of Don
Osborn



*Spring-time Dancer on a Red-Sky
Morning*, 1973, acrylic on canvas,
18 x 15, Private Collection



Five-In-One-Doll, 1973, acrylic on canvas, 18 x 18 inches, Collection of Michael and Joyce Jilg



Sad-Eyed Cubist Lady, 1975, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 22 inches, Collection of Tristan Scott



Whisper On the Wind, 1978, acrylic on canvas, 18 x 18 inches, Private Collection

teaching” but at that time when MFA programs were pushing out an average of thirty to forty graduates a year, only a dozen or so teaching positions would open up around the country. Jilg believes his friend would have been a good teacher but there were “just too many of us!”⁵

Whitney Museum of American Art

Searching for new artists from the southwest region of the US, Whitney Museum curator Robert Doty asked for slides of Steve Scott’s work in competition for the upcoming show, *Extraordinary Realities*, held Oct 12- Dec 2, 1973 in New York City. The acrylic on canvas *Poor Barnum’s Fourth Ring Fantasy* was chosen to appear in that exhibition, after earning an Honorable Mention award in the Wichita Art Museum’s 1973 *Kansas Artists Biennial*. By the time of the New York show, Scott had moved his family to Lindsborg and opened the Fourth Ring Studio at his home address. After the exhibition was sent to other venues in Syracuse, Cincinnati, and Chicago, Richard and Barbara Holloway of Wichita purchased the well-traveled painting for their personal art collection, which is lent to this exhibition by their son. Kevin Holloway shares that, “Dad bought the Whitney painting, then got into the habit of going up to Lindsborg to have a good dinner with Steve, buying a painting, and coming home.”⁶

Lindsborg Years

Steve Scott relocated to Lindsborg, as it was reported later in the *Wichita Register*, “to immerse himself in that city’s arts heritage and thriving art community.”⁷ His classmate from Emporia, Don Osborn, arrived to develop the sculpture program at Bethany College after finishing his own MFA from WSU in 1970, and by 1975 Scott and Osborn were mounting an exhibition in an April show at the Sandzen Gallery together with Robert Walker.

During the 1970s the artist was represented by the Galerie Simonne Stern in New Orleans with regular participation in its shows-- Scott could hardly keep up production with demand!⁸ Along with maintaining

his home studio, Scott owned the Folkways Gallery in downtown Lindsborg, and also supplemented his art income with restoration work for the Old Mill Museum and some graphic work for the Shield Publishing company. From 1980 through 1995 he held maintenance positions at Bethany Home, including many years as director.

The Scott Family -- Steve, wife Laura, son Tristan and daughter Erin -- got to know all the artists in and around Lindsborg, establishing long-lasting ties of friendship through ensuing decades. Steve wrote letters to Bethany College graduates Richard and Laura Klocke while they attended the Art Institute of Chicago. Richard recalls the elder artist as always generous, extending invitations to come to stay while visiting Lindsborg from Chicago and when they returned to Kansas to settle in Lawrence.⁹

Painter-printmaker Nicholas Hill taught and chaired the art department at Bethany College the years 1979 through 1987. Throughout the 1980s Hill and Scott had dual exhibitions together, were represented by the Konstverk Gallery in Lindsborg, and both received awards from the 1981 Salina Art Center annual juried exhibition. In 1983 the two joined eleven other Lindsborg artists, including Lee Becker, Mike Bray, Ray Troll, and Donna Wilson, for a notable show at Wichita’s Ballpark Gallery.



Poor Barnum’s Fourth Ring Fantasy, 1973, acrylic on canvas, 52 x 60 inches, Collection of Kevin and Mary Holloway

During the 1990s, Scott continued to exhibit in regional shows but after marrying Carla Crook in 1994, primarily showed in collaboration on the theme of “Two Together.” Steve and Carla established Studio Two in their home on North Second in Lindsborg, with working spaces for each at opposite sides of the house. The two sent exhibitions throughout Kansas and were featured in the Smoky Hill Public Television program, “Kansas Arts Today.”

In 1999, to celebrate its 25th anniversary, the Lindsborg Arts Council initiated an Art in Public Places program. Steve Scott was the first artist to complete a wall mural,



The Day the Moon Stole the Sun, 1995, acrylic on canvas, 42 x 42 inches, Collection of Margarete Dorsch



A Frozen Moment in Time, 1998, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24 inches, Collection of Karla Prickett



Death in the GMO Corn Patch, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20 inches, Courtesy of Bartlett Arboretum

The Chase, for downtown Lindsborg's decoration. Scott also helped establish the annual Artists Studios Open House, to encourage visitors to tour and appreciate the diverse artmaking in the Lindsborg area.

In October of 2000 the first of Lindsborg's Wild Dala Horses was unveiled at a celebration the Öi Stuga. Scott's *Dalallama Telecomma* was painted with

motifs of telephone handsets, commas, a Buddhist third eye, and hints of Tibetan symbols.

Small World Gallery opened doors in April of 2002, just a few years after owners Kathy and Jim Richardson moved to Lindsborg. The original plan was to have a space to feature Jim's photography for *National Geographic*, but that changed to include other local artists. Steve Scott was among the first to show, and was pleased to be quoted saying, "It's another beautiful place that can draw people here."¹⁰ That fall, Small World Gallery exhibited the artist's *Prairie Castle* series in a show devoted to elevators and grain-related storage systems that dot the prairie landscape. Scott explained, "It was while traveling around that I realized these structures rise above the surrounding landscape like medieval castles. This place does

not really exist; I just take the formal qualities of the silos and elevators and build them up out of my imagination."¹¹ Newton artist Phil Epp loved Scott's work and recalled "shaking loose some cash" to purchase *Crossroads* from the series.¹²

Decorah, Iowa

The summer of 2003 Steve and Carla Scott moved to Decorah, Iowa. The couple had been searching "for a small college town with an arts community and vibrant downtown" and felt Decorah offered healthcare, natural beauty to inspire creativity, plus good trout fishing nearby.¹³ A portion of the private collection on loan to this exhibition came from the studio sale the Scotts hosted in preparation for the move. While in Decorah, Carla and Steve showed many times in the area, including Luther College Center for the Arts, and were represented in the town's Perfect Edge gallery.

Back to Lindsborg

After three years in Iowa, Lindsborg drew the Scotts back home. They returned in 2006 and opened the Visions

gallery downtown on Main Street near the Öi Stuga. Steve quickly developed a series from environmental issues, including the Bartlett Arboretum's painting *Death in the GMO Corn Patch* (2006). The artist's next *Rainy Day* series of 2007-08 was inspired by his coffee group,—"All's they ever talk about is it's raining cats and dogs"¹⁴ Settled back in the state, in 2007 Steve Scott was invited to participate in the *Kansas Masters Invitational Art Show* at the Strecker-Nelson Gallery in Manhattan.

Many local artists were glad to see the Scotts home again. Karla Prickett, now retired from Salina's Arts & Humanities, recalls many visits to the Lindsborg studio with friends. Salina artist Fred Elliott (1943-2020) often accompanied Prickett and purchased several of Scott's paintings over the years as gifts for her, including *Firefly Evening* (1980) and *Arrangement with Black Swans*.

Last years in Hesston

In February of 2013 the Scotts moved to Hesston, Kansas, and Steve set aside his brushes to turn his focus to music. The artist's last exhibition undertaking was a show of paintings at the Dyck Arboretum in 2014, as a fundraiser for its for music programs.

Tristan Scott of Kansas City claims to not know much about his father's art, but affirms that "my earliest memories are of his paintings hanging around our house. His paintings just were."¹⁵ Tristan loved the things painted just for him, but feels he did not fully appreciate his dad's work until he was older and starting a family of his own. Now, he says "I continue to have his art hanging in my home, and I'm teaching my own son to appreciate it...not only the art itself, but the connection to his grandpa."¹⁶

Cori Sherman North, Curator

Notes:

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| 1 Steve Allan Scott, artist's statement ca. 1999. | 9 Richard Klocke phone interview with author, 8 Mar 2020. |
| 2 Carla Scott interview with author, 26 Jan 2020. | 10 <i>Salina Journal</i> , 17 May 2002. |
| 3 Michael Jilg phone interview with author 16 Mar 2020. | 11 <i>Wichita Eagle</i> , 29 Sep 2002. |
| 4 Ibid. | 12 Phil Epp phone interview with author, 7 Apr 2020. |
| 5 Ibid. | 13 <i>Decorah Public Opinion</i> , 6 Apr 2004: B-8. |
| 6 Kevin Holloway phone interview with author, 24 Mar 2020. | 14 Carla Scott interview. |
| 7 <i>Wichita Register</i> (Winter 2002): 64. | 15 Tristan Scott email to author, 13 Mar 2020. |
| 8 Carla Scott interview. | 16 Ibid. |



On the Edge, 1988, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 30 inches, Private Collection

Checklist of the Exhibition

Bethany Home Collection

Backyard Lily Pond, 1984, acrylic on board, 10 x 12 inches, Donated by Sally and Robert Lowder in memory of Leonard and Helen Nelson

Life on Indian Creek, 1987, acrylic on board, 24 x 30 inches, Given in loving memory of Howard Patrick

Birger Sandzén Memorial Gallery Collection

The Dance, 1992, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 30, Gift of Margaret Sandzén Greenough

Prairie Castles/On Track, 2002, acrylic on paper, Gift of Michael and Joyce Jilg in honor of Steve Scott's passion for art

Sad-Eyed Lady #2, 1975, acrylic on canvas, 16 x 12 inches, Gift of Michael and Joyce Jilg

Vigil at the Window, 1982, four panel acrylic on board, 20 x 24, Greenough Collection

Collection of Michael Bray

The Dreamer Under a Starry Sky, 2000, acrylic on paper with grommets, 10 x 22.5 inches

Collection of Cary Brinegar

Losing Love Is Like a Window in Your Heart, 1989, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24 inches

Collection of Margarete Dorsch

The Day the Moon Stole the Sun, 1995, acrylic on canvas, 42 x 42 inches

Land of the Black 'n Blue, 1996, acrylic on canvas, 26 x 30 inches

Locked In – Locked Out, 1989, acrylic on canvas, 12 x 16 inches

Collection of Kevin and Mary Holloway

Poor Barnum's Fourth Ring Fantasy, 1973, acrylic on canvas, 52 x 60 inches

Collection of Marsha and Brad Howe

The Encounter Beyond Evening's Calling, 1972-1980, lithograph (artist's proof), 12.5 x 18.5 inches

Easel Images, 2001, acrylic on canvas, 10 x 8 inches

The Pink Hacienda with Chillies, 2002, acrylic on board, 12 x 10 inches

Collection of Michael and Joyce Jilg

Five-In-One-Doll, 1973, acrylic on canvas, 18 x 18 inches

Ruler of the Lower Garden, 1971, acrylic on canvas over board, 10.5 x 14.5 inches

Sun Kissed, 1978, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 20 inches

Collection of Mark and Jean Kozubowski

Knob handles and a necklace

Massacre on Main Street, 1999, acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20 inches

Menace of the Fields, 1991, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 16 inches

Thund-d-der Storm, 1998, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 24 inches

Collection of Lan Nelson

Living on the Edge, 1995, acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20 inches

Puckers Last Garden, 1996, acrylic on board, 8.5 x 11 inches

Shadowtime/At Home Again, 1993, acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20 inches

Courtesy of Bartlett Arboretum

Death in the GMO Corn Patch, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20 inches

Collection of Judy Murphy

Chili Today, Hot Tamale, 2008, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 30 inches

Sleeping Alone, 1991, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 20 inches

And Life Goes On, 1989, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 24 inches

Collection of Don Osborn

Landscape with Blue Streak, 1970, acrylic on canvas, 40 x 43 inches

Collection of Margaret and John Presley

Ball on a spool and three Christmas ornaments

Quadro Plano, 2003, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 30 inches

Collection of Karla Prickett

A Frozen Moment in Time, 1998, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24 inches

Arrangement with Black Swans, 1996, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 30 inches

Heatwave Series #2, Firefly Evening, 1980, acrylic on board, 19 x 27 inches

From Private Collections

As the Crow Flies, 2004, acrylic on fabric paper, 11 x 16 inches

Barn Loser, 1999, acrylic on canvas, 22 x 28 inches

Bridge to Yesterday, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 24 inches

Christmas ornaments of various shapes and sizes

GMO Cornfusion, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 24 inches

Junkin' Up the New Frontier, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 12 x 16 inches

Little House with a Yellow Bird, 1975, acrylic on canvas, 16 x 16 inches

Make Mine Swedish, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 12 x 16 inches

Not Even a Mouse, 1972, wood and metal, 20 x 9 x 13 inches

The Old Man Taught Me to Row, 1994, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 30 inches

On the Edge, 1988, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 30 inches

Our Town Series: Early Morning Traffic, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 24 inches

Pleasures of the Earth – the Garden, 1994, acrylic on canvas, 22 x 28 inches

Prairie Castles Series/Shipping Point, 2002, acrylic on fabric paper, 11 x 16 inches

Prism Vision. Two, 2006, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 24 inches

A Raucus Reminder Passing Through, 1998, acrylic on paper-faced signboard, 19 x 18 inches

Red Cloud, Nebraska, 2001, acrylic on foam board, 3 x 3 inches.

Red Valley Roamer, 1975, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 36 inches

Rifle, Colorado, 1997, acrylic on foam board, 3 x 3 inches

Rocky Landscape, 1973, acrylic on canvas, 12 x 15 inches

Sailin' Away in loway, 2004, acrylic on fabric paper, 11 x 16 inches

Spring-time Dancer on a Red-Sky Morning, 1973, acrylic on canvas, 18 x 15 inches

The Umbrellas of Lindsborg, 2008, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 30 inches

Where Do We Come From...Where Do We Go, 2001, acrylic on canvas, 23 x 30 inches

Whisper On the Wind, 1978, acrylic on canvas, 18 x 18 inches

Windy Day On the River, 2004, acrylic on fabric paper, 11 x 16 inches

Would You Like to Swing On a Star, circa 1972, wood, metal, and paint, 21 x 13 x 5.5 inches

Yellowstone Wildfire, 1988, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 18 inches

You Don't Need a Weatherman...., 1989, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 24 inches

Collection of Jim and Kathy Richardson

Bellville, Kansas, 1998, acrylic on foam board, 3 x 3

Home, Sweet Home, 1991, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 24 inches

I Ran and I Ran From Some Men in Iran, 2000, acrylic on canvas, 30 x 15 inches

My Town, 1980, acrylic on canvas, 15 x 15 inches

Quietly Settled on the Land, 1995, acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20 inches

Preparatory drawing for *Quietly Settled on the Land*, undated, ink on paper, 6 x 4 inches

The Reality of It All, 2002, acrylic on fabric paper mounted to rag paper, 22 x 16.5 inches

Squirreling Around, 1979, acrylic on paper, 20 x 22.5 inches

Collection of Carla Scott

Fish Box, 1998, acrylic on wood, 9 x 8 x 8 inches

Collection of Tristan Scott

After the Rain, 1991, acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20 inches

Anniversary Shelf, circa 1985, acrylic on wooden shelf, 49.5 x 10 x 5 inches

Balls, Cube, and a Stick, 2004-2008, acrylic on wood

Blue Sun Day, 2009, acrylic on foam board, 3 x 3 inches

A Corner of My World, 1995, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 24 inches

Cherry Blossom Time, 1986, acrylic on board, 48 x 26 inches

Christmas Toy, 1973, acrylic on wood, 15 x 9 x 5.5 inches

Extra Dry #5, 1970, mixed media, 11.25 x 9.75 inches

Extra Dry #6, 1970, mixed media, 15 x 9.75 inches

Fall Frolic, 1991, acrylic on board, 7 x 9 inches

Fantasy Beyond Rifle Ridge, 1972, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 20 inches

Fish On a Swan-Cloth, 1975, acrylic on canvas, 10 x 22 inches

Hose Hanger, undated, acrylic on board with hanger, 26 x 16 inches

Hills-A-Fire, 1991, acrylic on canvas, 15 x 30 inches

Look Through Every Window, 1993, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 24 inches

A Meeting: The Ambassadors of Culture, 1977, acrylic on canvas, 26 x 20 inches

Room To Grow, 2004, acrylic on canvas, 16 x 20 inches

Sad-Eyed Cubist Lady, 1975, acrylic on canvas, 24 x 22 inches

Shag, circa 2005, acrylic on foam board, 3 x 3 inches

Someday Sun-day, 1974, acrylic on canvas, 44 x 32 inches

Tit-Tat: What's That, 1970, mixed media, 11.25 x 10.25 inches



The Sandzén Gallery gratefully acknowledges the generosity of lenders, interviewees, and supporters of the exhibition. Special thanks are extended to Steve Scott's family - Carla, Erin, and Tristan - for their encouragement throughout its development.

Cover image: *Our Town Series: Early Morning Traffic*, 2007, acrylic on canvas, 20 x 24 inches, Private Collection