

C O U N T Y

Sam Messenger: *Blue Veils*

Messenger's *Blue Veil* paintings are composed according to the Fibonacci sequence, the mathematical formula behind the Golden Spiral pattern in nature and art. Messenger paints outward from the center of each piece in successively expanding grids of triangles. Since he paints freehand without the use of rulers or straight edges, the natural variance of the artist's touch softens and bends the underlying mathematical structure, producing diaphanous waveforms that feel sumptuous and organic.

Titles of individual works, such as *Veil for Rampion* and *Veil from Spell*, come from the Brothers Grimm. Although the *Blue Veil* paintings are not narrative or representational in any conventional sense, these titles allow us to imagine them as portals to enchanted lands or as metaphors for the weaving of tales. Messenger encourages multiple interpretative frameworks, from math to myth, without privileging one over another. No matter how we approach them, the *Blue Veils* series remains fundamentally ineffable and abstract.

The blue backgrounds, which resemble cosmic clouds, are made using chance procedures of flooding and evaporation. These techniques are inspired in part by Eastern Orthodox methods of floating pigments on wet substrates to reenact the formation of the universe. Messenger selects his blue pigments for their permanence, granular characteristics, and degrees of opacity, and the patterns formed by their interaction are as beautiful and unpredictable as the billowing nebulae from which stars are born. In his backgrounds and foregrounds alike, Messenger balances poetry and precision, letting geometric structures and the chemistry of materials accede to lyrical expression.

Sam Messenger is a British artist whose work is included in the permanent collections of The British Museum; The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; RISD Museum; Williams College Museum of Art; and numerous significant private collections. He has participated in the Armory Show in New York, The Seattle Art Fair, and UNTITLED Miami Beach, and his work has been exhibited at the Norton Museum of Art in West Palm Beach. Current exhibitions include *Art on Paper Since 1960* at the British Museum and *Line into Space* at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, with forthcoming 2023 solo exhibitions at Berggruen Gallery, San

Francisco, and Davidson Gallery in New York. He lives and works in a 150-year-old converted church in Somerset, England.

Logan R. Beitmen