

# Bockley Gallery



## *Stuart Nielsen: Untitled (clouds) 2016-19*

Exhibition: September 15 through October 17, 2020

Gallery Hours: by appointment

Bockley Gallery is pleased to announce its fall exhibition *Untitled (clouds) 2016-19* that features a monumental triptych by celebrated Minneapolis artist, Stuart Nielsen. Created over an extended period, *Untitled (clouds) 2016-19* dominates a single gallery wall. Each of its three oil on canvas panels measures 105 x 63 inches which, collectively, provide an immersive, if not meditative, viewing experience. A series of oil on paper studies, available for viewing by request, are an absorbing record of Nielsen's focused exploration of multiple compositional and color variations, which ultimately coalesced into the final work.

After more than three decades of pushing the parameters of rectilinear geometry and formal patterning through complex color systems, Nielsen sought a new but related path in his artistic practice. He discovered it in the ever-shifting complex forms of clouds, a universal and awe-inspiring perceptual experience, which he translated into its correspondent geometric form, the ellipse. The unpredictable and transformational nature of clouds, and the more organic geometric ellipse form, are the foundational template for *Untitled (clouds) 2016-19*.

On first glance the three panels seem unrelated, but soon an inherent, compositional intelligence becomes evident. Suggesting an enigmatic yet associative narrative, the triptych is read from left to right, sparking notions of landscape, specific objects and complex spatial relationships—articulated in a unique and unorthodox palette that ranges from muted and pastel hues to jewel-toned and day-glow colors. Nielsen uses color as an expressive and structural means to create form and ultimately to establish our reading of the work. The contrasts and harmonies of the colors advance the work's abstract narrative quality. Regardless of the elusive identities of the forms, the spectral echo of clouds and ellipses is palpable and infuses any reading of the triptych.

Nielsen began the triptych by etching dozens of overlapping ellipses into a base layer of white lead paint. With close observation the ellipses are discernable in each panel. Over the three-year journey, Nielsen painted and repainted new combinations of form and color, which he then

sanded down to reveal elements of what had come before. As various forms came into view and then disappeared, he altered his color palette accordingly with each successive chapter. However, passages of the elliptical forms always remained.

Nielsen's exploration of color and form have antecedents in the early 20th century movement Orphism, co-founded by the French artist, Robert Delaunay and his wife Sonia, and the parallel American movement, Synchronism, co-founded by Stanton MacDonald-Wright and Morgan Russell. Both movements explored the optical characteristics of color, particularly brilliant color and how, when combined with light, could create form. This influence is particularly evident in the center and right panels where color and ellipses merge to create prismatic elements.

Nielsen received his B.F.A. in studio arts from the University of Minnesota in 1970 and has been active in the Twin Cities art scene ever since. His early work, rooted in the Pattern and Decoration movement of the time, was first shown at the pioneering Glen Hanson Gallery, and later at the Thomson Gallery in the 1980s and 1990s. His work was included in the 2020 Nash Gallery exhibition *The Beginning of Everything: An Exhibition of Drawings* at the University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, and in *Layers of Time*, a 2019 three-person exhibition at Form & Content Gallery, Minneapolis. In 2005 a selection of Nielsen's sculpture was featured in a two-person show at the Rochester Art Center, Rochester, MN. His site-specific installation projects are found in public, private and corporate collections including the Elmer L. Andersen Human Services Building in downtown Saint Paul, the University of Minnesota, Saint Paul College, Scripps Medical Clinic, La Jolla California, General Mills, US Bank, Prudential Insurance Company, and Phillips Plastics.

For further information or to make an appointment please contact Bockley Gallery.