

# REYNOLDS GALLERY

For Immediate Release

**ALISON HALL**

***The Ceiling Above Us***

March 5 – April 4, 2015

Opening Reception for the Artist  
Thursday, March 5  
7 – 9 pm



*The Ceiling Above Us, Giotto's Night Sky*, 2013  
Oil, graphite and Venetian plaster on panel, 96 x 77 inches

Reynolds Gallery is pleased to announce the opening of an exhibition of paintings by Alison Hall entitled *The Ceiling Above Us*. The exhibition opens with a reception for the artist on Thursday, March 5, and continues through April 4, 2015. This is Hall's first solo show at Reynolds Gallery.

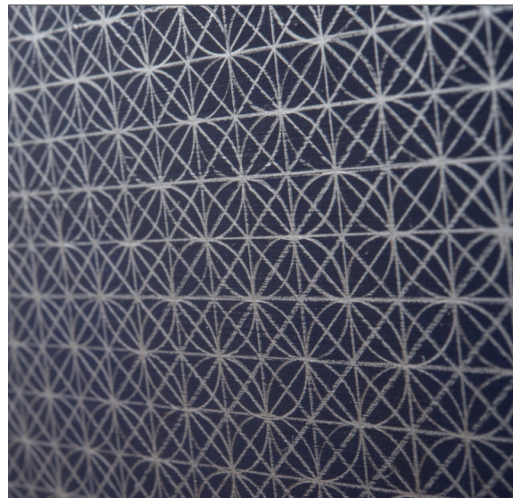
Alison Hall is a painter whose artistic practice is rooted in ritual, meditation, and repetition. Her works are captivating in their formal complexity and subtlety. From a distance Hall's paintings may appear like monochrome color-field works. Yet with a closer look, the surfaces of her paintings begin to pick up light and reveal unfathomably intricate geometric patterns. These graphite line patterns are optical and undulating; they seemingly change as the viewer moves and light shifts. Hall's paintings shimmer due to the reflective quality of the graphite against the rich surface of oil paint over Venetian plaster.

History and ritual are important subtexts through all of Hall's works – both in her subject matter and her laborious preparatory, painting and drawing processes. She has spent many summers in Italy studying 13<sup>th</sup> century Italian fresco painting and chapel adornment, and she has taught herself the geometry and construction of the intricate patterns found in the frescoes, ceilings, and floors of these proto-Renaissance monuments. The largest work in her exhibition, *The Ceiling Above Us, Giotto's Night Sky* (2013), is based on the pattern used in Giotto's famous Arena Chapel in Padua. She explains, "there is a ½ inch grid over the surface, over 40,000 inches of horizontals, verticals, and diagonals and 15,000 circles, all made with a lead pencil. The superimposing of grids and circles slowly begins to build into intersecting points that form the stars" (2014). In addition to *The Ceiling Above Us, Giotto's Night Sky*, the show will present a pair of large black paintings called *The King* and *The Queen*. *The King's* pattern is based on the floor of the Arena Chapel, and *The Queen* uses the ceiling star pattern overlaid with a pattern from the façade of a medieval building in Todi, Italy. In addition, Hall will exhibit a number of smaller new blue and black paintings, the *Blue Black Cold Series*, which use the ceiling star pattern but include painterly abstraction and gestural marks.

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Hall takes no short cuts in her work as the physical and psychological experience of devoting herself to the repetition of marking, sanding, and drawing are a form of meditation and historical connection for her. In addition to intensively plotting and gridding her patterns, she follows a centuries-old Italian recipe for Venetian plaster using gesso of Bologna and rabbit skin glue. She states, "The process creates an immediate relationship for me to the subject matter of the religious paintings I admire. Each panel has fourteen layers of gesso and they are sanded between each layer. I kneel and sand for weeks. The dedication to this preparation reminds me of the repetitive mark making found in my drawings; from start to finish they have qualities of devotion, labor and silence" (2015). This specific plaster absorbs the oil paint in such a way that the surface of the paintings becomes almost silken and lustrous. Thus, using the ancient recipe is both a nod to her source material in Italy and a pictorial element of the work. Hall's paintings are not themselves overly religious yet they exude a sense of mysticism and spiritual quietness.

Hall currently lives and works in Brooklyn, New York though she is originally from Virginia. She received her BA in Studio Art from Hollins University in Roanoke, Virginia and MFA in Painting and Drawing from American University in Washington, DC. She studied abroad in Corciano, Italy during her MFA studies and Todi, Italy during her undergraduate. Hall has held teaching positions at the University of Virginia, Chautauqua Institute of Art, Hollins University, Virginia Tech, and Roanoke College. Her work has been exhibited at The Art Club of Washington and the Katzen Museum at American University, both, Washington, DC; Allentown Museum of Art, Allentown, PA; Kunstgaleriebonn, Bonn, Germany; Taubman Museum of Art, Roanoke, VA; Claiborne Robertson Board Room at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond, VA, in addition to many other solo and group exhibitions. Further, she is the recipient of the Bethesda Urban Partnership Fellowship and a Virginia Museum of Fine Arts Professional Fellowship.



*Blue Black Cold VII*, 2014, oil, graphite and Venetian plaster on panel, 13 ¾ x 11 inches, detail

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