

James Barron Art



Sidival Fila: Metafore Blu

April 14 - May 20, 2023

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“Sewing is the process by which I build the world. It is a way of connecting things... We are connected to nature, to other people, to ourselves, to plants, to animals. We are always in relation. The thread becomes a symbol of our holistic universe.”

Sidival Fila





Sidival Fila was born in Panama, Brazil in 1962. He is a Franciscan monk, living in the San Bonaventura monastery within the Roman Forum. After studying in Sao Paolo, Fila put aside his artistic practice to devote himself entirely to religion for twenty years. In 2006, he began making art again, using ancient materials, including fabric, to create intricate woven and sewn compositions. Bruno Racine, ex-chairman of the Centre Pompidou, describes Sidival Fila's work as "deeply spiritual but without carrying theological message, reporting to asceticism but leading to jubilation." He was recently appointed to the Pontifical Academy of Fine Arts and Letters of the Virtuosi at the Pantheon alongside Peter Zumthor and Gianfranco Rosi, among others.

Fila has taken a monastic vow of poverty, and the proceeds from the sales of his works go to charities in South America and Africa to provide food and education for children in impoverished areas. Citing his belief that "ignorance is the enemy," Fila aims to change the world one child—and one education—at a time.

SIDIVAL FILA

Metafora Blu, 2021
acrylic on sewn canvas
53 x 35 1/3 inches
(135 x 90 cm)





SIDIVAL FILA

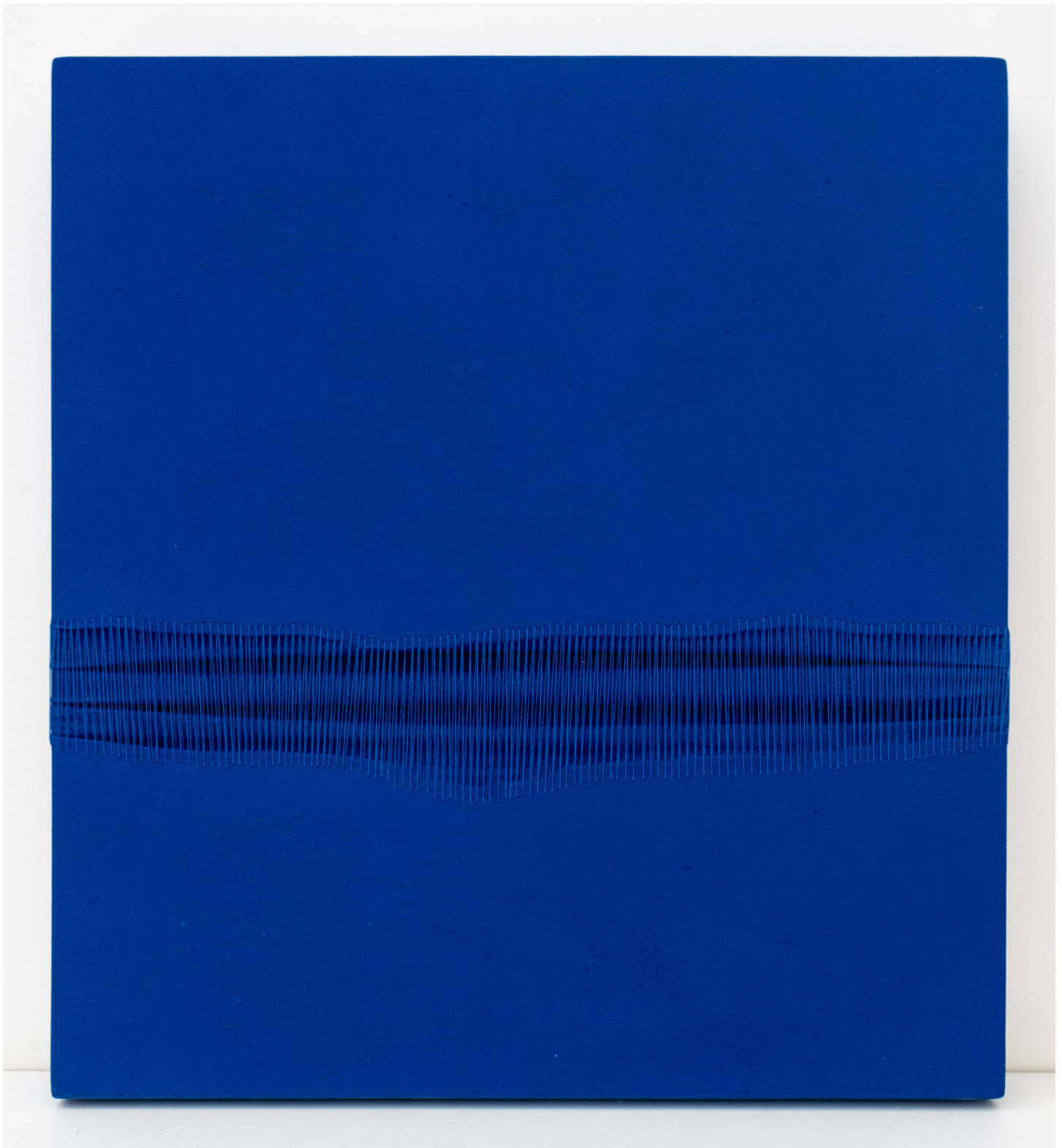
Metafora Blu 106, 2023
acrylic on sewn canvas
19 2/3 x 15 3/4 inches
(50 x 40 cm)





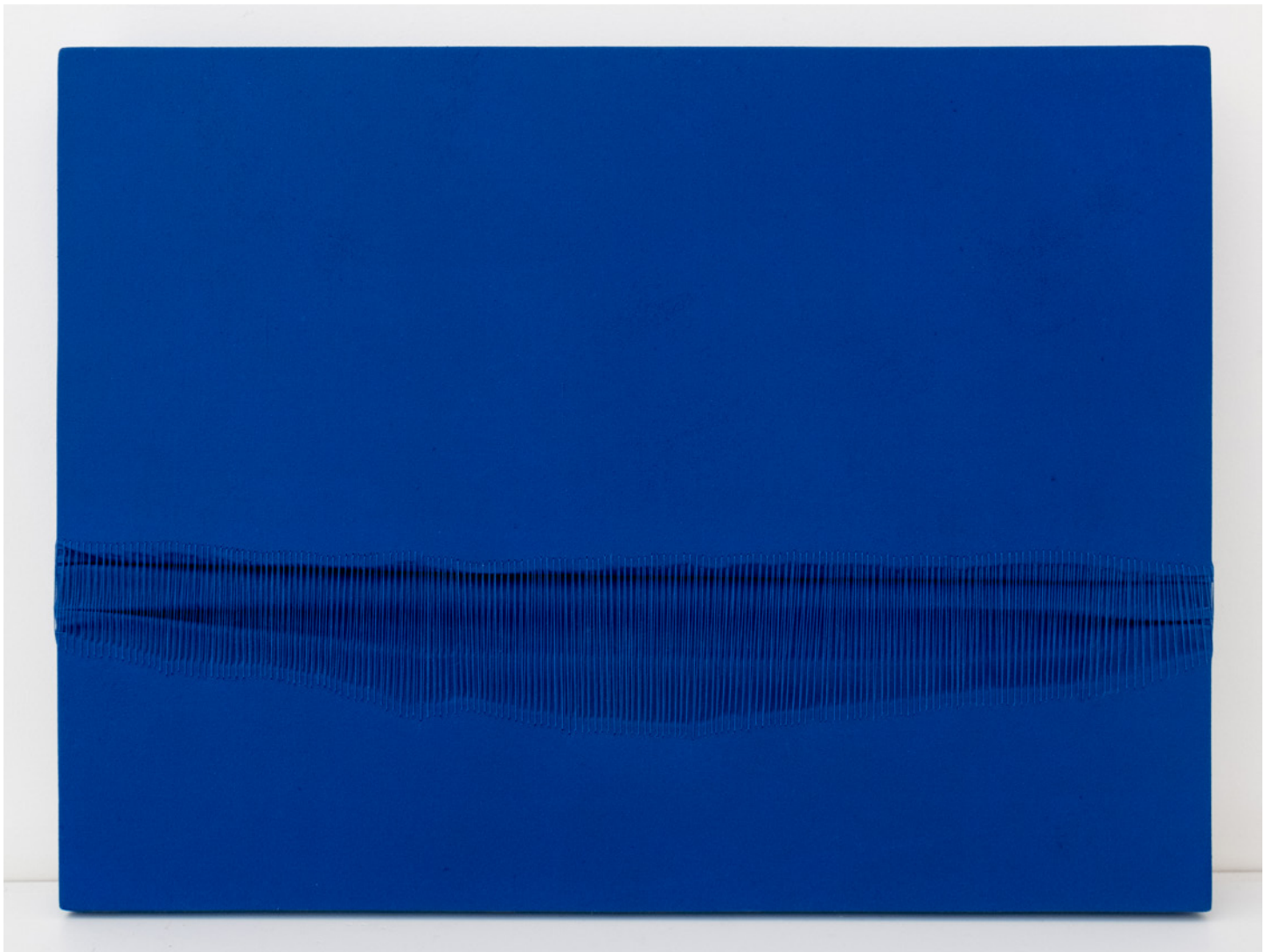
SIDIVAL FILA

Metafora Blu 107, 2023
acrylic on sewn canvas
19 1/3 x 17 3/4 inches
(49 x 45 cm)



SIDIVAL FILA

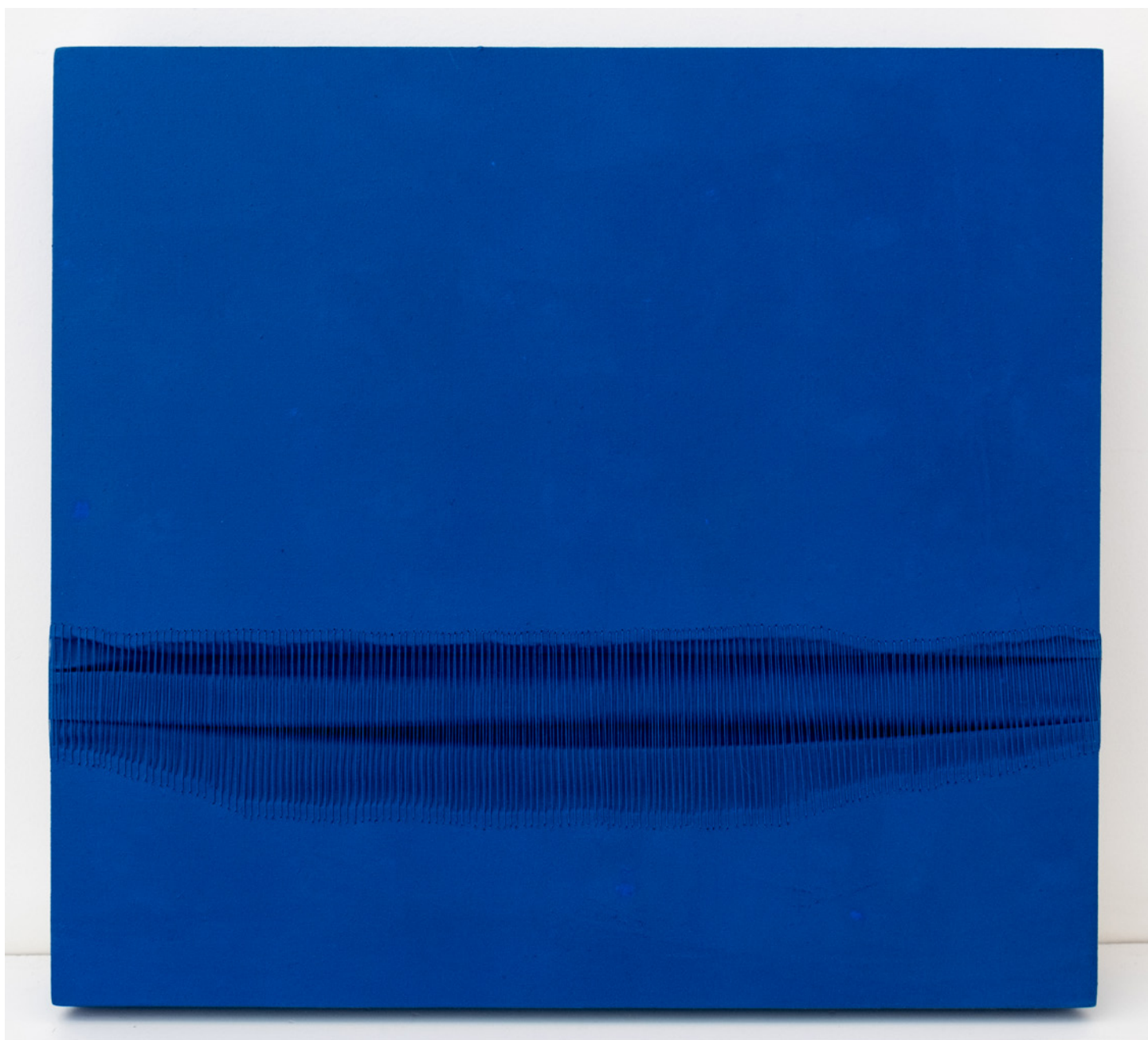
Metafora Blu 108, 2023
acrylic on sewn canvas
17 3/4 x 23 2/3 inches
(45 x 60 cm)





SIDIVAL FILA

Metafora Blu 109, 2023
acrylic on sewn canvas
17 3/4 x 19 2/3 inches
(45 x 50 cm)





Interview / Sidival Fila

April 2023

James Barron: Tell me about the color blue in your work. I'm reminded of the blue ceiling in Santa Maria sopra Minerva behind the Pantheon, and also of blue in nature: the sky and sea.

Sidival Fila: More than the meaning of the color itself, I love blue because it reminds me a little bit of the sky, a little bit of nature, and even a little bit of a transcendental dimension of the color. To me, blue, like any color, is important as a color. This shade of blue is particular, and it's logical that it is reminiscent of the sky and sea. It's not so much symbolic for me. My intention is to create a color that is beautiful in itself, whether blue, yellow, or green, and I'm interested in how the color interacts with light and form.

JB: Why do you introduce the folds and sewing?

SF: My work, besides the color as color, is about the form I construct, making a fold. The blue threads on the blue canvas create another possibility of chromaticism. It creates another blue color that is not found in nature because it is a rarefied blue, a blue in transparency, a veiling of blue. This is something new. The color becomes three-dimensional on the canvas.

JB: The void is important to you.

SF: The void is a dimension that allows differentiation between subjects. There is a void between you and me right now. Even in music, there is the void between notes. A void is something we often resist. When we feel empty space, we want to fill it, but we have to learn to live with empty space. The emptiness of the canvas is a compositional space. It is not a lack; it is a presence. I work with the void as a presence, as an architectural space within the canvas.

JB: How does it feel when you are sewing—and literally bridging the void?

SF: Sewing is a process by which I build the world. It is a way of connecting things. The threads indicate, through the tension, the energy that is put into the canvas. It becomes a way in which we understand who we are in relation to things: we are united, not as one, but by being connected to each other. We are connected to nature, to other people, to ourselves, to plants, to animals. We are always in relation. The thread becomes a symbol of our holistic universe.

JB: Can you explain the word *metaphora* in your titles?

SF: My use of *metaphora* indicates that I don't want to describe or represent nature, but I recognize there is something of nature in my work. There is something in the fold that suggests a wave or an erosion, or even a human body. It is a metaphor for the real: something that stands for the real but does not literally describe it.

JB: Does it feel similar to you when you pray as when you create art?

SF: Art has a dimension of the spirit because it allows humans to express what is not communicable through words. Art, music, poetry, and literature are all attempts to tell what is inexpressible. Art becomes a spiritual affair because being can manifest itself through a symbolic language. I believe in God as an entity. My art is also the result of the relationship I have with God and with others, my pictorial language.

JB: There is an aspect of your work that I adore: as a monk, you have taken an oath of poverty, yet you've found a way to manufacture money to create social change through art. Your project of donating proceeds so children can go to school in impoverished countries around the world is nothing short of brilliant.

SF: James, ignorance is the enemy. Ignorance brought us Hitler, Mussolini, Berlusconi, and Trump. I believe you can change the world one child—and one education—at a time.

JB: How did you decide to do this?

SF: It's natural. You can't not do good by your fellow man. Everyone in the world, from plants to animals to humans—we all want to live, and we all have to help each other. If I have a life, thanks to God, I want my life to be a gift to others as well.

JB: It's quite amazing to have a life as both a monk and an artist. Are you happy?

SF: Yes, I am happy. I don't feel separate. I feel like a person who is a monk, a religious figure; on the other hand, art is an activity that expresses my soul. I don't feel like an artist; I feel like a monk who paints or a monk who builds works, a friar who works with fabric. Each of us is an artist, but it is not easy to stay one.

JB: What is it like having taken an oath of poverty?

SF: I live in the most beautiful area of the most beautiful city in the world. I have my blue jeans, tee shirts, and sweaters, and I get to make art. What else could I need?

