

SEAN SCULLY_BIOGRAPHY

1945

Born in Dublin, Ireland on 30 June.

1949-59

Family moves to London.

Grows up in a working-class area of South London and attends local convent schools. Paintings in Catholic churches have an important influence on him. The nine-year-old schoolboy wants to become an artist.

Becomes interested in American Rhythm & Blues music and starts a music club of his own. Retains his interest in popular music all his life.

1960-62

Apprentices at a commercial printing shop in London. The experience of type-setting teaches attributes of shape and pressure, light and shadow. Joins a graphic design studio.

1962-65

Attends evening classes at the Central School of Art, London with an interest in figurative painting.

1964

Regularly visits Vincent van Gogh's painting Van Gogh's Chair (1888) at Tate Gallery, London (Now in The National Gallery, London). Its directness has a profound effect on the young artist.

1965

On May 7 1965 Scully becomes a father at the age of 19, with the birth of Paul.

1965-1968

Decides to dedicate himself entirely to art studies. Studies at the Croydon College of Art, London.

Is interested in van Gogh, Emil Nolde, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff and Henri Matisse.

Discovers Abstract Expressionism.

1968-72

Attends Newcastle University, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England. A University Theatre's production of Beckett's 'Waiting for Godot' makes a lasting impression. Scully meets Rosemary Purnell, a fellow student. A close relationship develops while both working in the studio of the Painting Department.

1969

Visits Morocco. The stripes and colors of local textiles and carpets and the southern light make as deep an impression as they did on Eugene Delacroix, Matisse and Paul Klee.

Experiments with sculpture, and form beyond the painted surface, both as a direct response to Morocco, with strips of cloth over wooden structures, combined with the wrapped and the woven, a strong connection to his interest in craft.

His technically flawless paintings consist of a complicated grid system of intersecting bands and lines, which form a rich optical field. The illusion of depth and space is activated by color contrasts. The influence of Op Art is clearly visible.

1970

Awarded the Peter Stuyvesant Foundation Prize.

1971

Scully marries Rosemary Purnell.

After graduation remains as teaching assistant.

At the same time teaches Art one day a week at the City of Sunderland College of Art, Houghton-le-Spring, England.

1972-73

Awarded the Frank Knox Fellowship to attend Harvard University, Cambridge, MA. Makes his first visit to the United States.

Continues to make sculptures of grid frames repetitively wrapped and woven in colored felt.

In painting, experiments with new techniques; starts using tape and spraying paint in paintings composed of grids of interlaced vertical, horizontal and diagonal bands and stripes. All expressiveness is omitted.

1973

First solo exhibition at the Rowan Gallery, London after returning from America. Sells out the entire show.

Inset #2 is a temporary break in his rigid grid system and prefigures his device of the inset canvas, which becomes a distinctive feature of his work from the beginning of the 1980s.

1973-75

Teaches at the Chelsea College of Art and Design and Goldsmith's College of Art and Design, London.

1975

Awarded a two-year Harkness Fellowship with which he moves to New York. Lives with the artist Catherine Lee.

American art, especially Minimalism, and his friendship with Robert Ryman encourages him to simplify his expression.

Creates Change series, 50 acrylic works on paper. This pivotal series reflects the changes in his personal life. At the same time, it prefigures the large, spatially hermetic dark canvases of the following years.

1977

Has his first solo exhibition in New York at the Duffy-Gibbs Gallery.

1978

Marries Catherine Lee.

1978-82

Teaches part-time at Princeton University, New Jersey, USA. Develops important friendships and contacts in the academic and art world.

At this time, his palette is reduced to shades of grey monochrome 'Black Paintings'. The composition is pared down to thin horizontal or vertical lines.

1979

Decides together with his wife to choose one his especially important or typical paintings every year to be named after her. This marks the beginning of his private collection, the series The Catherine Paintings.

1980

Travels to Mexico. Inspired by the trip, he begins painting from nature, transcribing his experience of color and light directly on the paper with watercolors. Before 1980 used watercolor only occasionally.

1981

First retrospective at the Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, England travels within the United Kingdom under the auspices of the Arts Council of Great Britain.

Starts to withdraw from Minimalist aesthetics. Color and space return. Stops taping his stripes and starts drawing them freehand. Brushstrokes are clearly visible. A soft painterly outline becomes characteristic of his works. Gets his richness of color by overpainting in many different layers.

The large polyptych Backs and Fronts, his manifesto painting is completed.

1981-84

Teaches at the Parsons School of Art, New York, USA.

1982

Spends part of the summer working at the artists' colony founded by Edward Albee at Montauk, Long Island. Produces small multi-panel works on found pieces of wood.

Reaches maturity with Heart of Darkness. Combines rigid geometry with expressive texture and color.

1982-83

Continues to combine and recombine canvases to make polyptychs.

1983

Becomes American citizen.

Paul, his nineteen-year-old son from a previous marriage, dies in a car accident in London.

Receives the National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship.

Receives the Guggenheim Fellowship.

Begins his first collaboration with a printer. This prefigures his long-term commitment to printmaking using various graphic techniques.

1984

Achieves international breakthrough.

Dedicates his painting Paul to his deceased son.

Receives the National Endowment for the Arts Fellowship

Selected for the exhibition entitled An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture at the Museum of Modern Art, New York, NY.

1985

First solo American museum exhibition at the Museum of Art, Carnegie Institute, Pittsburgh, PA; travels to the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, MA.

Major museums acquire large-scale Modernist paintings by Scully at a time when Postmodernism is the dominant trend.

The paintings become more physical, to the point where they can stand freely on the floor without any need for support, although they are conceived to hang on the wall.

1987

Changes to a less complex, flatter and smaller scale of working.

1987-90

Makes a number of visits to Mexico. Exposure to new sources of visual stimuli can be seen in new watercolors and works on paper. Time spent with Mayan historical sites proves inspiration for later stone sculptures.

Creates the first image that would become an extended meditation on architecture and light with the Wall of Light series.

1988

Incorporates, for the first time, the element of steel in a painting, *Why and What (Yellow)*.

1989

First solo exhibition in a European museum, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London; travels to Palacio Velázquez, Madrid and Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich.

1990

Maurice Poirier's monograph is published by Hudson Hills Press, New York. Photographs by Scully are published for the first time, in black and white as illustrations and in color in the paintings section.

1991

Expands the use of steel, setting oil on linen Insets into large steel panels.

Begins regular use of the checkerboard motif, which was hinted at in the early *Hidden Drawing and Taped Painting* series.

1992

Lectures at Harvard.

In December, revisits Morocco to make a film for the BBC on Matisse, who visited Morocco in 1912-13.

1993

First exhibition of *The Catherine Paintings* at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Fort Worth, TX.

1994

Makes first paintings at his new studio in Barcelona.

1995

Participates in the Joseph Beuys Lectures 1995 on the state of contemporary art in Britain, Europe and the United States at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, Oxford University, England.

Starts making three-dimensional *Floating Paintings*. These are rectangular vertical sheet metal boxes attached to the wall along one of the narrowest sides. The other sides are covered by painted vertical stripes.

1996

Visits Morocco. The portfolio *Atlas Walls, 1998* includes several photos from this trip.

1997

Photographs exhibited for the first time at Sala de Exposiciones Rekalde, Bilbao, Spain.

1998

Participates in a colloquium held in conjunction with the exhibition *Richard Pousette-Dart (1916-1992)*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

1999

Visits Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic. The portfolio Santo Domingo for Nené consists of photos taken during this trip.

Paints Chelsea Wall, the first painting in the new studio in Chelsea, New York City.

2000

Becomes an Honorary Fellow of the London Institute of Arts and Letters.

2001

Becomes a member of Aosdána, an Irish affiliation of artists engaged in literature, music and the visual arts.

2002-07

Professor of painting at Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Munich, Germany.

2003

Receives the degree of an Honorary Doctor of Fine Arts from two universities: the Massachusetts College of Art, Boston, MA, and the National University of Ireland, Dublin

Commissioned to make a site specific sculpture for the University of Limerick. The result is the first monumental sculpture, a 32 metre long block of solid Chinese black basalt and Portuguese limestone, titled Crann Soilse.

2004

Retrospective exhibition opens at Sara Hilden Art Museum Tampere, Finland; Travels to Klassik Stiftung Weimar, Weimar and National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

2005

Sean Scully: Wall of Light exhibition opens at The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC and travels to Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Fort Worth, TX, Cincinnati Art Museum, Cincinnati, OH and the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, NY

Travels to the Isle of Aran with a group of students from the Munich Kunstakademie and makes an extensive series of photographs of the island's stone walls.

2006

Marries artist Liliane Tomasko.

Dublin City Gallery – The Hugh Lane, Dublin opens the Sean Scully Gallery, a dedicated, permanent installation of paintings by the artist.

Exhibition of prints at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Paris

Awarded position of Doctor Honoris Causa by the Universitas Miguel Hernandez in Valencia, Spain

2007-08

Sean Scully. A Retrospective opens at Miro Foundation, Barcelona; Travels to Musée d'Art Moderne, Sainte-Etienne and Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Roma (MACRO), Rome.

Gives Elson Lecture at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.

Commissioned to make Wall of Light Cubed, a site-specific stone sculpture for Chateau La Coste near Aix-en-Provence, France.

2009

Retrospective exhibition *Konstantinopel oder die versteckte Sinnlichkeit. Die Bilderwelt von Sean Scully* (Constantinople or the Sensual Concealed. The Imagery of Sean Scully) opens at MKM Museum Küppersmühle für Moderne Kunst, Duisburg; Travels to Ulster Museum, Belfast.

Son Oisín is born.

2010-2011

Exhibition of important early works, *Works from the 1980s* opens at VISUAL – Centre for Contemporary Art, Carlow; Travels to Leeds Art Gallery, Leeds and Wilhelm-Hack Museum, Ludwigshafen am Rhein, Germany.

2011

Chazen Museum of Art, Madison, WI opens their new expansion with solo exhibition of Sean's 8 part *Liliane* paintings and related works.

2012

Opens nine solo museum exhibitions from Philadelphia, PA to Rome, Italy, including Sean Scully. *Grey Wolf – A Retrospective* at the Kunstmuseum Bern, Switzerland and Lentos Kunstmuseum, Linz, Austria.

2013

Becomes a member of the Royal Academy of Arts in London, England

2014

Awarded an honorary doctorate of Fine Arts from the National University of Ireland's Burren College of Art.

His painting *Green Robe Figure, 2005* is included in the exhibition *Post-Picasso. Reaccion Contemporaneas* at the Picasso Museum in Barcelona. The exhibition examines the responses of contemporary artists to the life and work of Pablo Picasso.

Sean extends his series *Landline* paintings started in 2000. A majority of the work is done on aluminum panels, composed of horizontal stripes using colors that reference his student period.

2015

Opens fourteen solo exhibitions around the World, including the first major retrospective by a western artist in China. The retrospective show travels both to Shanghai and Beijing.

Museum Liaunig/Neuhaus in Austria opens their new building expansion with a solo exhibition Sean Scully. *Painting as an Imaginative World Appropriation*.

Participates for the first time at the Venice Biennale with the solo exhibition *Land Sea* at the Palazzo Falier in Venice, Italy.

Opens a new studio space in Tappan, New York.

Publishes a new book of essays by Arthur C. Danto on Sean Scully.

His permanent installation at the 10th century Church of Santa Cecília de Montserrat in Barcelona, Spain opens to the public. Receives the award V Congreso Asociacion Protecturi, Madrid, Spain for his contribution to the Spanish religious heritage.

A new sculpture in corten steel *Boxes of Air* is made for a solo exhibition focusing on sculpture at Château La Coste, France. Five more sculptures are produced, further developing this expression in depth.

2016

Second major exhibition in China Sean Scully: *Resistance and Persistence. Paintings 1967-2015*. London and

New York travels from the Art Museum of the Nanjing University of the Arts to the Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, and the Hubei Museum of Art, Wuhan.

Revisits the techniques first introduced in the late sixties with spray painting.

Awarded Harper's Bazaar Art International Artist of the Year Award, Hong Kong, China.

Work expands in two particular directions: sculpture and figuration. Most recently Scully has revisited his early exploration in figuration from the late Sixties in an ambitious painting series of graphic yet tender figuration, inspired by his son, titled Eleuthera.

INNER, the collected writings and interviews of Sean Scully, edited by Kelly Grovier, is published by Hatje Cantz in English. Mandarin and German translations follow.

2017

First solo exhibition in Russia is held at MAMM, the Multimedia Art Museum, Moscow, and then travels to the State Russian Museum in St. Petersburg.

2018

Awarded Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters by Newcastle University, Newcastle, England.

Solo exhibition of sculpture at the Cuadra San Cristóbal, Mexico City is the first exhibition ever staged at the Luis Barragán masterpiece, and includes paintings installed in the working stable block.

A 40 metre long mosaic installation is unveiled at the new American Embassy in London.

The first exhibition dedicated to sculpture Inside Outside opens at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park in Wakefield, England. Six new sculptures were made for the exhibition, several in completely new directions, including the monumental Wall Dale Cubed, consisting of over 1350 tonnes of local Yorkshire stone. Crate of Air, a continuation of the Boxes of Air series, was re-thought and re-conceived into smaller modular parts, enabling the artist to reform and reconstruct the sculpture depending on its location.

Two further major exhibitions of painting open. Vita Duplex a retrospective, opens at the Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe. The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington D.C. opens a solo exhibition of the Landline series.

2019

The National Gallery of Art in London, UK, opens a solo exhibition of new work responding to the Museum's collection of Turner paintings, titled Sean Scully: Sea Star. The retrospective Long Light opens at the Villa Panza, Varese, Italy and the Albertina Museum in Vienna dedicates a solo exhibition to the figurative Eleuthera series.

A BBC documentary on the life and work of Sean Scully is released, directed by award winning documentary film maker, Nick Willing.

San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice invites Scully to make a site-specific intervention in the Holy space and accompanying exhibition in their associated buildings, in conjunction with the 58th La Biennale di Venezia. The exhibition, titled Human, is of landmark importance in the artist's career, with a central sculpture 11 metres high in the central nave of the 16th century Church, accompanied by an illuminated manuscript containing over 40 unique drawings to be placed on the lectern in the Choir of the Basilica, on which the monks place the prayer book being used each day, during exhibition hours.

A solo exhibition Long Light opens at the Villa Panza in Varese, Italy, and the exhibition 'Vita Duplex' travels to the LWL Museum, Münster, Germany.

The Albertina Museum in Vienna dedicates a solo exhibition to the Eleuthera series of painting, the series that begins the artist's return to figuration.

2020

Painted during the first month of the COVID-19 pandemic, Black Windows and Black Square become immediately recognized as significant to the moment.

New sculptures using glass and mirror-polished aluminum form the exhibition Inside Outside at fellow artist and friend Tony Cragg's Skulpturenpark Waldfrieden.

Passenger – A Retrospective opens at the Museum of Fine Arts – Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary. This goes on to tour to the Benaki museum, Athens, Greece and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, Croatia.

2021

The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth opens the important 50-year retrospective The Shape of Ideas, initiated by the Philadelphia Museum of Art, after its 2020 opening was postponed by the pandemic.

2022

The Shape of Ideas opens at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Three further retrospectives also open internationally this year: Song of Color at the Langen Foundation, Neuss, Germany; Painting and Sculpture, at the Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej (CSW), Toruń, Poland; A Wound in a Dance with Love, MAMbo Museum of Modern Art of Bologna, Italy. Other solo exhibitions include Material World, at the Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Currently lives and works in New York, Aix-en-Provence, and Germany.