

# LISSON GALLERY

## Press Release

### Sean Scully *The 12 / Dark Windows*

Lisson Gallery, 508 West 24th Street, New York  
Sean Scully's Studio, 447 West 17th Street, Chelsea, New York  
May 6 – June 18, 2021

*The world in which we live, the existential threat from COVID and the environmental problems we face, has influenced me greatly in my art.*

- Sean Scully, 2021

Sean Scully opens a dual-presentation across two sites in Chelsea, New York, unveiling new work created in his New York studio throughout 2020 and 2021, while the world was rocked by a global pandemic, extensive quarantine measures, Black Lives Matter protests, political instability and mass uncertainty. At Scully's Chelsea studio, open exclusively for this showcase, the artist unveils a monumental new work entitled *The 12* (2020), presented in its entirety for the first time. This twelve-panel piece is a grouping of *Landline* paintings, each with its own distinct personality ranging from spirited to sombre. A new *Black Square Blue* (2020) painting is also on view at Scully's studio. The dual presentation continues at Lisson Gallery's flagship space on 508 West 24th Street which houses a significant multi-panelled painting entitled *Dark Windows* (2020): a suite of works created during some of the bleakest days of the COVID pandemic. The work is presented alongside a series of new pastel drawings recently completed by the artist.

*The 12*, a work comprising twelve unique *Landline* paintings, is an expansion on Scully's ongoing series of lyrical paintings in which, since 1999, he has endeavoured to "integrate all the parts" of the horizon – physical and philosophical, poetic and pastoral. The *Landline* paintings seek to reintroduce nature onto the canvas, keeping a sense of rhythm, of breath. In Scully's horizons breath and nature are tantamount, and the series works as a guide for how to look at or feel the natural world. The title of the set is an emphatic departure from the metaphorical labels Scully has provided throughout his career, instead the epithet is indicative of the series' focus on structure and surety. The twelve individual works come together to form a room of their own, an act of fortification or protection from the profound instability of the outside world – the global pandemic, a narrowing of views across the political spectrum, protests, inequality and climate change – all of which was occurring as Scully began work on the series.

In tandem with this off-site presentation, nearby at Lisson Gallery, Scully exhibits another significant work, conceived in the early months of the global crisis. While *The 12* and *Black Windows* are undoubtedly connected, in *Dark Windows*, there is a new, alien pathogen that lurks on the surface, dislocating the harmony and simplicity of the *Landline* form. This shorter sequence of five panels is characterised by the haunting, sinister presence of a black square, referencing the nihilistic declaration made by Malevich in 1915. The advent of the *Dark Windows* paintings represents the first time in Scully's career that his horizons have been entirely blackened or effectively erased, suggesting a symbolic act of protest, solidarity or even of shocked silence.

The refusal of this opaque viewfinder to reveal anything beyond is a moment of rupture in Scully's own career, wilfully severing or 'disbanding' the horizontal continuity of his ongoing series of *Landlines*, paintings that have perpetually traced the world's contours for the past 20 years. By incorporating these unforgiving and impregnable windows into this liquid continuum, Scully has effectively blocked out the sun's rays and denied his beloved landscape its permanency, signalling a pause or a disconnect with the natural world. As Scully says: "There is no doubt that they are a response to the pandemic and to what mankind has been

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doing to nature. What really strikes me as tragic is that what is a relief for nature is a torment for us. And what is a pleasure for us is a torment for nature. That seems to be the conundrum that we've got ourselves into.”

This new body of work nevertheless serves as a reappraisal or a reckoning – suggesting that while the dark clouds hover and we remain in darkness, the blight will soon be over, and the world will heal itself. Scully adds, “What is going to triumph in this painting? What is going to triumph in our world?”

Following this presentation, The Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth will present a major retrospective of Sean Scully’s work from the 1970s to the present, from June 2021 before touring to the Philadelphia Museum of Art in Spring 2022.

## About Sean Scully

Sean Scully was born in Dublin in 1945 and raised in South London. He received his Bachelor of Arts from Newcastle University in 1972. With a career that spans more than five decades, he has received numerous accolades and has been the subject of multiple touring exhibitions. In 2014, he became the first Western artist to have a career-length retrospective in China. Scully was named a member of the Royal Academy of Arts in London in 2013, and has twice been shortlisted for the Turner Prize. He has received honorary degrees from institutions such as the Massachusetts College of Art, Boston; the National University of Ireland, Dublin; Universitas Miguel Hernandez, Valencia; Burren College of Art, National University of Ireland; Newcastle University, UK, among others. A series of essays and conversations between Scully and the esteemed art critic Arthur Danto was published by Hatje Cantz in 2014, and a collection of Scully’s own writing, selected speeches and interviews, *Inner*, was released in 2016.

Sean Scully’s work is in the permanent collections of numerous important institutions including the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; the Museum of Modern Art, New York; The National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Art Gallery of Ontario, Canada; Tate Modern, London; Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin; De Pont Museum of Contemporary Art, Tilburg; Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, Madrid; Albertina, Vienna; and Guangdong Museum of Art, Guangzhou, China, among many others. In 2015, Scully oversaw a complete renovation at the Romanesque chapel Santa Cecilia de Montserrat, near Barcelona, featuring his work in dialogue with the historic architecture and restoring the church to working condition.

## About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and promotes the work of more than 60 international artists across two spaces in London, two in New York, one in Shanghai, as well as temporary spaces opened in 2020 in East Hampton and London’s Mayfair district. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. It still works with many of these artists as well as others of that generation from Carmen Herrera to the renowned estates of Leon Polk Smith, Ted Stamm and Roy Colmer.

In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors to the public for the first time, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller, Tatsuo Miyajima and Sean Scully. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg, Ryan Gander, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes and Wael Shawky.

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