

LISSON GALLERY

Press Release

Sean Scully *Tower*

6 November 2025 – January 2026
508 West 24th Street, New York

Lisson Gallery is pleased to present *Tower*, a solo exhibition by renowned painter Sean Scully featuring three interrelated bodies of work. The eponymous new series of *Tower* paintings represents a radical departure and a bold dismantling of his practice, each being formed from a concatenation of smaller, individual panels, seemingly employing different styles and diverse moments from his own painterly back catalogue. Through the disorder and disjuncture of these tessellating panels, incorporating gaps, overlaps and holes, comes a newfound harmony and rhythm, that also references an earlier, spiritual era of art – such as the perspectival depth and world building found in Quattrocento Italy – as well as the rupture of modern art – in Analytic Cubism or Lucio Fontana’s pierced surfaces, for example.

Assembled from wood, felt and aluminum, the *Tower* works are inherently sculptural, featuring graffiti-esque spray paint, competing grids and flashes of road signs, which bring to mind the tumult of our high-rise, built environment. Through Scully’s complex amalgamation of cohesion and fracture, the *Tower* paintings carry an allegorical force, conveying echoes of ambitious structures like the World Trade Center and the Tower of Babel, and suggesting the gulf between demise and reconstruction. In parallel to the exhibition, seven additional new works from the *Tower* series are on view at Scully’s studio space, with viewings available by appointment.

A further series of paintings contrasts the monumental with the intimate, while a trio of stone sculptures acts as a pivot between the two. Across the display, Scully re-examines concepts that have shaped his five-decade career – the relationship between form and feeling, the emotive potential of abstraction, and the pitting of romantic ‘gesture’ against an aesthetic of impersonality.

In seven paintings on copper, Scully has arranged gestural sweeps of jostling color into tiered bands and tentative grids, suggestive of both turbulence and containment. The metallic surface is both redolent of industry and the earth, because, as Scully points out, “The paintings have a relationship with the elemental world.” As with the holes in the *Tower* series, here tiny breaks in the paintwork allow the copper support to shine through, functioning as a kind of underpainting or underpinning. Conjuring allusions from copperplate etchings to medieval icon painting, the pigment-veiled metal enhances the metaphoric power and surface strength of each piece.

Since his *Supergrid* acrylic paintings of the 1970s, rectilinear and grid structures have been a near-constant in Scully’s art. He has often observed that his work combines the rigor of Modernist abstraction with the pathos of historical European painting. In three free-standing sculptures, these twin currents are translated into compact, lapidary form. Planed blocks of stone fit together in cuboid stacks. Belying the minimalist precision of the construction, the stone itself is a subtle index of ‘real life.’

The sculptures, with their scale and rectilinear precision, form a grounding counterpoint to the loftier paintings. Yet in the *Tower* series, it is also possible to perceive an emotive undertow—one found throughout Scully’s art and arguably linked to his Irish heritage, birth into homelessness, and upbringing in South London. As ever in his art, the personal and the autobiographic glimmer within the apparently systematic.

About the artist

About the artist Sean Scully’s work has shifted the paradigm in American abstraction from Minimalism and its reduced vocabulary towards an emotional form of abstraction, returning to the metaphor and spirituality found in

the European painting tradition. While known primarily for his large-scale abstract paintings, comprised of vertical and horizontal bands, tessellating blocks and geometrical forms comprised of gradated and shifting colours, Scully also works in a variety of diverse media, including printmaking, sculpture, watercolour and pastel. Having developed a style over the past five decades that is uniquely his own, Scully has cemented his place in the history of painting. His work synthesises a thoroughly international collection of influences and personal perspectives – ranging from the legacy of American abstraction, with inspiration from the likes of Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock, and that of European tradition, with nods to Henri Matisse and Piet Mondrian, as well as references to classical Greek architecture. While monumental in scale and gesture, Scully's work retains an undeniable delicacy and sincerity of emotion.

Sean Scully was born in Dublin in 1945 and raised in South London. Wanting to be an artist from an early age, Scully attended evening classes at the Central School of Art in London from 1962 to 1965, and enrolled full time at Croydon College of Art, London from 1965 until 1968. He received his Bachelor of Arts from Newcastle University in 1972. He was awarded the Frank Knox Fellowship to Harvard University in 1972, visiting the US for the first time before moving to New York in 1975. With a career that spans more than five decades, he has received numerous accolades and has been the subject of multiple touring exhibitions. Significant solo exhibitions of his work were recently on view at The Parrish Art Museum, New York (2025); the Art Museum of Sichuan Conservatory of Music, China (2025); Fundació Catalunya La Pedrera, Barcelona (2025); the Centre Pompidou, Paris (2025); The He Museum, Shunde, China (2024); Église-Saint-Nicolas, Caen, France (2024); Ludwig Museum, Koblenz, Germany (2024); National Gallery, Budapest, Hungary (16 May - 1 September, 2024); Houghton Hall, Norfolk, UK (2023); Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark (2023); Philadelphia Museum of Art, Philadelphia, USA (2022); Skulpturenpark Waldfrieden, Wuppertal, Germany (2021).

Sean Scully's work is in the permanent collections of numerous important institutions including the Centre Pompidou, Paris; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; The Forth Worth Museum of Art; the Princeton University of Art Museum; 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; 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, among many others.

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 70 international artists across spaces in London, New York, Los Angeles and Shanghai. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson pioneered the early careers of Minimal and Conceptual artists such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among others. It still works with many of these artists and others of that generation, from Carmen Herrera and Olga de Amaral to Hélio Oiticica and Lee Ufan. 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 leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Liu Xiaodong, Otobong Nkanga, Pedro Reyes, Sean Scully, Hiroshi Sugimoto and Wael Shawky. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation including Dana Awartani, Cory Arcangel, Garrett Bradley, Ryan Gander, Josh Kline, Hugh Hayden, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost and Cheyney Thompson.

For press enquiries, please contact

Mara Gans, Communications Manager, US
+ 1 201 575 4513
mara@lissongallery.com

i: @lisson_gallery
fb: LissonGallery