

Sean Scully *Block*

20 November 2026 – 13 February 2027
Potsdamer Straße 77-87, 10785 Berlin

Opening: Friday, 20 November, 6 – 8pm



Sean Scully, 55, 2025, photo: Pau Fabregat

*'Scully's walls or rather, his constructions – his assemblages of painted blocks, stacked and flanked one against another – do not follow any arithmetic or geometric rule. [...] Every block and every unit he sets down is in itself absolutely unique and unrepeatable.'*¹

Joachim Pissarro, 2026

Galerie Max Hetzler, Berlin, is pleased to present *Block*, an exhibition of paintings and sculptures by **Sean Scully**. This is the artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery.

For *Block*, Scully presents a body of paintings spanning from 1974 to 2026, alongside a selection of sculptures from 2015 to 2025. The works, often vast in scale, engage in dialogue with one another. Echoes in palette, structure and form reverberate across their two- and three-dimensional surfaces. On this, the artist has stated: 'My sculptures are my paintings 3D'.² Across his work, Scully draws from the legacies of Henri Matisse, Piet Mondrian, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Pablo Picasso and Mark Rothko. Fusing personal influence with European tradition and American abstraction, his compositions are built layer by layer, block by block. They evoke architectural structures as much as forms in nature, conjuring horizon lines, meeting points between the earth and sky, rock formations, landscapes, buildings, and human relationships. Comprised of coloured stacks, stripes or bands arranged on horizontal and vertical axes, these seemingly solid bricks of colour allow light to creep in through the cracks, grounding vast scale and gesture with a visual delicacy and vulnerability.

The exhibition traces the development of Scully's distinctive visual language across five decades. Early works, including *Crossover Painting*, 1974, and *Hidden Drawing #3*, 1975, reveal the artist moving away from the strictures of Minimalism in his playful approach to the grid. By *BLUE BLACK GRID*, 2011, this formal structure has loosened further. Here, vertical strokes of cerulean blue and rusted red are set against horizontal bands of midnight blue and eggshell. Interspersed with sporadic accents of mustard yellow, the painting offers a compelling interplay between foreground and background, surface and depth. Composed in oil on aluminium, *Doric Europa*, 2012, presents a light-filled grisaille

¹ J. Pissarro, 'Sean Scully: Construire', in *Sean Scully: Tower*, Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2026, p. 102.

² S. Scully, in D. Carrier, 'S. Scully's Figurative Leap', *Hyperallergic*, 19 March 2019.

³ S. Scully, 'Landline', in *Inner: The Collected Writings and Selected Interviews of Sean Scully*, Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2016, p. 301.

⁴ S. Heaney, 'Bogland', in *Door into the Dark*, London: Faber & Faber, 1969.

⁵ S. Scully, 'Abstract', 2012, in *Inner*, p. 280.

surface, divided into alternating bands of horizontals and verticals, and arranged in groups of two or three. The painting belongs to Scully's celebrated 'Doric' series (2008–2020), inspired by the architectural forms of Greek temples and the birthplace of democracy. Two new paintings from 2026 comprise bright and gestural swathes of colour. Rendered with a sweeping softness that seems to fray at the edges, they oscillate between density and lightness.

In his sculptures, Scully transforms abstract form into physical presence. Standing twenty feet tall, *55, 2025*, presents a monumental, totem-like structure. At once solid and precarious in appearance, the work is built from fifty-five aluminium frames of differing dimensions, each coated in colourful automotive paint. *Landline Cubed*, 2015–2020, emerges from the artist's renowned and ongoing 'Landline' series (1999–), offering a perfectly aligned stack of horizon lines and edges. Shifting between vivid colour and metallic sheen, the units interact with their surroundings, absorbing or reflecting the light. 'My life,' states the artist, 'has been a story of great sorrow and great loss. Landlines stand for edges.'³

In *Air Cage 2*, 2024, six steel crates are stacked in rows of two, like a line drawing in space executed on a towering scale. Incorporating air itself as an integral part of its compositional structure, the sculpture is inspired by a line in Seamus Heaney's poem *Bogland*, which reads: 'An astounding crate full of air'.⁴ Across his work, Scully negotiates mass and void, materiality and abstraction, permanence and volatility. Counterbalancing weight and architectural structure with temporality and evocations of nature, *Block* encapsulates the artist's self-described investigations into: 'How to think free. How to be free. How to be free of context. How to look at the essential blocks and structures of our world. In a place apart. To start again. To make our day again.'⁵

Sean Scully (b. 1945, Dublin, Ireland) lives and works between New York, USA; Bavaria, Germany; and Aix-en-Provence, France. Scully's works are in the public collections of institutions including Albertina, Vienna; The Art Institute of Chicago; The Broad, Los Angeles; The British Museum, London; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Kunsthalle Bielefeld; Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf; Kunsthaus Zürich; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; The Museum of Modern Art, New York; Museo de Arte Moderno, Mexico City; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; Museum Folkwang, Essen; Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden; Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe; Staatsgalerie, Stuttgart; Städel Museum, Frankfurt am Main; Tate, London; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; and Whitney Museum of American Art, among many others.

Sean Scully's work is currently the subject of a solo exhibition at Kunstmuseum Magdeburg, until March 2027.

Further Exhibitions and Events

PARIS

Elmgreen & Dragset
Les Fous d'En Face
19 October – 16 December 2026
46 & 57, rue du Temple
75004 Paris

LONDON

Janaina Tschäpe
24 November 2026 – 23 January 2027
41 Dover Street
London W1S 4NS

MARFA

Rinus Van de Velde
The Dinner
24 May – 6 December 2026
1976 Antelope Hills Road
Marfa, Texas

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