

PRESS RELEASE

Sean Scully

A Wound in a Dance with Love

Curated by Lorenzo Balbi

MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna

June 22nd - October 9th, 2022

Opening: Tuesday, June 21st, 2022, 6.30 pm

Public talk: Wednesday, June 22nd, 2022, 6 pm

Bologna, 20 June 2022 - MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna presents A Wound in a Dance with Love, a large retrospective of Sean Scully (Dublin, 1945), an artist among the leading exponents of contemporary abstract painting, which will be visible in the Sala delle Ciminiere from June 22nd to October 9th, 2022. The opening is scheduled for Tuesday, June 21st at 6.30 pm, in the presence of the artist. During the evening, which coincides with the Festa della musica, a concert by the master guitarist Lorenzo Biguzzi will be held in the foyer of the museum, promoted in collaboration with the Fondazione Accademia Internazionale di Imola "Incontri con il Maestro" and designed for the occasion.

A public talk with Sean Scully will be held on June 22nd, 2022, at 6 pm in the museum conference room.

The exhibition, curated by **Lorenzo Balbi** with Dublin's **Kerlin Gallery** as the main partner, is based on the show *Sean Scully: Passenger - A Retrospective*, curated by **Dávid Fehér** and organized by the Museum of Fine Arts - Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest (October 14th - May 30th, 2021), later hosted by the Benaki Museum in Athens. It arrives in Bologna in a **renewed version, specifically designed for the MAMbo**. 26 years later, the artist is again the protagonist of a solo exhibition in Bologna: in 1996, it was the Galleria d'Arte Moderna, from whom the MAMbo is derived, which dedicated an exhibition to him in its premises of Villa delle Rose.

Both a wide knowledge of the works by old and contemporary masters and a singular sensibility in obtaining visual and emotional suggestions from actual reality equally converge into Scully's art.

The exhibition in Bologna, with **68 exhibited works** (oil paintings, acrylics, watercolors, drawings and a monumental sculpture), aims at highlighting the continuous dialogue between these two essential components of the artist's work, by retracing over 50 years of creative experience. From the first figurative experiments in the '60s and the minimalist works in the '70s, to the current work, *A Wound in a Dance with Love* documents the most important developments of a practice which is always consistent with its assumptions but is also capable of changing significantly over time, in relation with emotional experiences and existential evolutions, affections and sorrows.

In the opening room two monumental paintings on aluminium face each other: *What Makes Us Too* (2017) and *Uninsideout* (2018 - 2020), works which bring together, in a well-studied contrast, several recurring elements of Scully's works: the tripartite division, the use of stripes as opposed to orthogonal schemes and monochromatic elements, the use of "insets" and the alternation between colored areas and others in black and white.

In the central aisle of the Sala delle Ciminiere, the exhibition path starts with *Fort # 1* (1978), a rigorous synthesis of landscape suggestions and the former *Backcloth*, painted in 1970, a year in which Scully is already determined enough to embrace abstractionism. With *Backcloth* the artist explores to its extreme limits the possibility to use the grid as the only composition module, with a dense set of overlaps, and trying to approach Jackson Pollock's dripping through a fierce use of the typical schemes by Piet Mondrian.

In *Crossover Painting # 1* (1974), visible in the same room, the compositional texture becomes more relaxed, while the chromatic texture appears more refined, in a precise counterpoint between bold colors and delicate shades.

The Sala delle Ciminiere, thanks to its massive volumes, provides the ideal location for the sculpture *Opulent Ascension* (2019), previously shown in the Church of San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice on the occasion of the 58° Venice Art Biennale, a monumental example of the most recent transposition on a three-dimensional scale of the artist's intuitions. It's the artist himself who said:

"I made Opulent Ascension out of Felt. Felt being a material that is PRESSED into existence, and not woven out of a line. MERET Oppenheim, took a cup and saucer, and covered them with animal fur, which meant they became useless. So then were they Art? A fur covered cup and saucer has to be an Art work, because it's strange, and because I have been thinking about it, for decades. Is the skin of something, any creature, any thing, so overwhelming, that it defines what it is? So that everything inside, becomes subservient to what is on the outside. I love this question. Because I can never answer it" (Sean Scully, New York, March 9th, 2020).

On the sides of *Opulent Ascension*, we find several works with a clear landscape inspiration from the series *Landline*, among which are those, lively and cheerful, dedicated to Scully's second son Oisín: *Oisín Green* (2016) and *Oisín Sea Green* (2016), in addition to the tryptic *Arles Nacht Vincent* (2015), an homage to Vincent van Gogh and, on the background, *Black Square* (2020), inspired by Kazimir Malevič.

The Bather (1983), which refers to a painting by Henry Matisse, evoked intuitively with a joyous palette and a vibrant light is visible in the side wing of the central space. With this painting, Scully starts the reconciliation between the research by Matisse himself, Piet Mondrian and Mark Rothko, who are regarded as some of the sources of inspiration for his painting.

Mariana (1991) presents the typical "insets" made up of canvases painted with contrasting motives, and physically recessed into the body of the painting, whereas *Long Light* (1998), already

belonging to the MAMbo's Permanent Collection, is a proof of the reflections on light which introduce the next works of the cycle *Wall of Light*, inspired by the careful observation of the bright mutations on the walls, seen and photographed in Mexico first and then in several parts of the world: represented here by two particularly intense works, *Wall of Light White Tundra* (2009), a loan from the Galleria d'Arte Moderna di Torino, and *Wall Light Zacatecas* (2010). This section of the exhibition includes other more recent works, each of them characterized by a particular distinctive mark.

Here we can see also another work which draws explicit inspiration from Vincent van Gogh - *Vincent* (2002), whereas *Empty Heart* (1987) recalls one of the most dramatic periods in the life of the artist, hit by the death of his nineteen-year-old first-born son Paul.

Finally, a last space is reserved to the most recent and significant turning point in Scully's work, the return to figurative painting, on which the artist had briefly worked in his early days. The paintings of the series *Madonna*, made between 2018 and 2019, depict the artist's wife and son as they play with sand and bring to light a topic which has always been dear to Scully, that is the mother with her child. Actually, this topic still underlies the same "insets" which are so recurring in his work and that appear again, by aligning with a permanent self-reflective practice, in the painting which closes the exhibition itinerary: *Figure Abstract and Vice Versa* (2019), a diptych where the figure of Oisín playing on the right is counterweighted by a panel divided in horizontal stripes on the left, whereas a harmonious interplay of joints, where a piece of each canvas fits with the other one, offers the key to interpretation of a painting which keeps to facts by focusing on the exploration of its own essential means.

The exhibition is completed by a selection of **works on paper** which accompany each evolutionary stage of the entire career of Scully, and a **film programme**: *Sean Scully: Set in Stone*, 2008, directed by Michael Doyle; *Sean Scully: Why This, Not That?*, 2009, directed by Michael Doyle; *Sean Scully: Art Comes From Need*, 2010, directed by Hans Andreas Guttner; *Sean Scully: There are no certainties in my paintings*, 2011, directed by Laurence Topham and Michael Tait; *The drawing out of the Eleuthera paintings, parts I and II*, 2017 and 2018, directed by Sean Scully; *A tour of Sean Scully's studio by Oisín Scully*, 2020, directed by Oisín Scully.

On the occasion of his retrospective exhibition in Bologna, Sean Scully will donate to the MAMbo a work which will become part of the Museum's collection: *Aix Wall 4* (2021).

Furthermore, the artist has chosen to pay homage to **Giorgio Morandi** by exhibiting two works in the rooms of the Museo Morandi, on the first floor of the former Forno del Pane.

The first is an early figurative painting, *Cactus* (1964), a work which, although it accurately depicts some plants which are evoked in the title, already shows some peculiar traits of the subsequent abstract research - such as, for example, the background stripes -, whose subject has a singular symbolic value for Scully, according to whom cactus is an "*an indestructible and admirable plant. As a metaphor it mirrors perfectly the life of a painter. It can survive drought and it flowers when it is ready*" (Sean Scully, August 11th, 2004).

The second work is *Two Windows Grey Diptych* (2000), exhibited in perfect harmony among the more rarefied late works of the Bolognese master.

This is what Scully writes about Morandi, and on repetition which becomes abstraction:

“The sameness of his subject amplifies the imaginative response. He has learned the lessons of abstraction. He has understood how powerfully repetition, and visiting the same or similar motif again and again, can open up emotional depth and interpretive range. Abstraction abstracted reality to reach the non-objective shore of new experience. Morandi reverses this journey and returns this possibility to simple observed reality. In this he is very different from Cézanne, his great example. Cézanne never knew abstraction until he was an old man, even though he pioneered it by making painting systematic. Yet, in his way, he overcame appearance with structure. This Morandi did not have to do, since the appearances of things in the world had already been conquered by abstraction” (Sean Scully, Formentera, 2005).

The exhibition is accompanied by the **catalogue Sean Scully. A Wound in a Dance with Love** (Edizioni MAMbo, 2022), which contains all the images of the exhibited works, as well as a selection of other works by the artist to support the essays.

The volume starts with an exclusive **interview with Sean Scully by Lorenzo Balbi**, a sort of “small exhibition/text”, where the artist answers each question with a work, continues with the essays by **Dávid Fehér**, **Raphy Sarkissian** and **Danilo Eccher** and ends with an important text by Scully (2005), *Giorgio Morandi: Resistance and Persistence*, published for the first time in its Italian translation.

A Wound in a Dance with Love is included in **Bologna Estate 2022**, the program of summer events promoted by Comune di Bologna and Città metropolitana di Bologna - Territorio Turistico Bologna-Modena.

Biography of Sean Scully

Sean Scully’s work is in the collection of virtually every major museum around the world. In 2014, he became the only Western artist to have had a career-length retrospective exhibition in China. This led to his being awarded the International Artist of the Year Prize in Hong Kong in 2018. Recent solo exhibitions include *Landline* at The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington which toured to the Wadsworth Atheneum, Connecticut; a retrospective titled *Vita Duplex* at the Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe; *Sean Scully: Sea Star* at The National Gallery, London, and the first major exhibition of his sculptures at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK; the exhibitions at the Albertina, Vienna; the Villa and Collection Panza, Varese; and San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice, Italy, for the 58th Venice Art Biennale, among others. In 2020 the Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest opened a major retrospective by Sean Scully, his first exhibition in Central Europe, which travelled to the Benaki Museum, Athens in 2021 and will next go to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Zagreb.

2022 will see a major fifty-year career retrospective of Sean Scully: *The Shape of Ideas* at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. Other important solo exhibitions this year include the Langen Foundation, Neuss, Germany; Centre of Contemporary Art Znacki Czazu, Toruń, Poland; and Thorvaldensens Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Sean Scully was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1945 and today lives and works between New York and Bavaria.

Main Partner of the exhibition

Kerlin Gallery

DATA SHEET

Exhibition:

Sean Scully. *A Wound in a Dance with Love*

Curated by:

Lorenzo Balbi

Promoted by:

MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna

Main Partner:

Kerlin Gallery

Location:

MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna | Via Don Minzoni 14, Bologna

Opening period:

June 22nd - October 9th, 2022

Opening: Tuesday June 21st 2022, 6.30 pm. Public talk: Wednesday, June 22nd, 2022, 6.00 pm

Opening hours at the MAMbo:

Tuesday and Wednesday 2 pm - 7 pm; Thursday 2 pm - 8 pm; Friday, Saturday, Sunday and public holidays 10 am - 7 pm. Closed on non-public holiday Mondays

Tickets:

Full 6 euros, reduced 4 euros

General information:

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With the collaboration of Ornella De Carlo

List of Exhibited Works

Backcloth, 1970

acrylic on canvas
198×304.8 cm
private collection

Crossover Painting #1, 1974

acrylic on canvas
243.5×243.5 cm
private collection

Fort #1, 1978

oil on canvas
182.9×182.9 cm
private collection

The Bather, 1983

oil on linen
243.8×304.8 cm
private collection

Uninsideout, 2018-2020

oil, acrylic and oil pastel on aluminium
299.7×571.5 cm
Collection Museum of Fine Arts - Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest

Wall of Light Zacatecas, 2010

oil on linen
279.8×350.4 cm
private collection

Barcelona Dark Wall, 1997

C-print mounted on Alu-Dibond behind Plexiglass
71×106.8 cm
private collection

Long Light, 1998

oil on canvas
244×213 cm
Collection MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna

Mariana, 1991
oil on linen
243.8×213.4 cm
private collection

Aix Wall 4, 2021
oil on copper
50×50 cm
private collection
Collection MAMbo - Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna

Opulent Ascension, 2019
felt on wood
10.2×3.6×3.6 m
private collection

Wall of Light Tundra
oil on linen
280×356 cm
inv. CRT/497, property of Fondazione per l'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea CRT - on temporary loan at GAM - Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Torino. Courtesy of Fondazione Torino Musei

What Makes Us Too, 2017
oil, acrylic and oil pastel on aluminium
299.7×571.5 cm
private collection

Wall of Light Blue Black Sea, 2009
oil on aluminium
215.9×190.5 cm
private collection

Cut Grey Ground 08, 2008
oil on aluminium
279.5×406.5 cm
private collection

Landline Sea, 2014
oil on linen
216×190 cm
private collection

Landline Field, 2014

oil on aluminium
216×190.5 cm
private collection

Oisín Sea Green, 2016

oil on aluminium
216×190.5 cm
private collection

Landline Oisín Green, 2016

oil on aluminium
216×190.5 cm
private collection

Black Square, 2020

oil on aluminium
215.9×190.5 cm
private collection

Empty Heart, 1987

oil on linen
182.9×182.9 cm
private collection

Vincent, 2002

oil on linen
190.5×203.2 cm
private collection

Arles-Nacht-Vincent, 2015

oil on linen
160.5×160 cm (each)
private collection

Three Women Bearing Arms I, 1966-1967

oil pastel on paper / 276×375 mm
private collection

Untitled (Seated Figure), 1966-1967

oil pastel on paper
287×360 mm

private collection

Man in Chair I, 1966-1967

oil pastel on paper

291×342 mm

private collection

Seated Woman I, 1966-1967

oil pastel on paper

314×303 mm

private collection

Seated Woman II, 1966-1967

oil pastel on paper

305×292 mm

private collection

Untitled (Seated Figure), 1966-1967

oil pastel on paper

207×204 mm

private collection

Untitled (Seated Figure), 1966-1967

oil pastel on paper

312×292 mm

private collection

Untitled (Seated Figure), 1966-1967

oil pastel on paper

208×200 mm

private collection

Untitled (Seated Figure), 1966-1967

oil pastel on paper

316×296 mm

private collection

Untitled (Portrait of Woman), 1964

crayon on paper

340×250 mm

private collection

Abstract Four Square Figures, 1966

oil pastel and graphite on paper

889×574 mm

private collection

Abstract Four Rectangles, 1966

poster paint, oil pastel and pencil on paper

559×762 mm

private collection

Four Rectangles with Coloured Stripes, 1965-1966

watercolour on paper

364×482 mm

private collection

Untitled (Homage to Paul Klee), 1968

gouache and ink on cardstock

146×203 mm

private collection

Untitled (Homage to Paul Klee), 1968

gouache and ink on cardstock

146×203 mm

private collection

8.29.89, 1989

watercolour and pencil on paper

568×765 mm

private collection

7.1.90, 1990

watercolour on paper

559×762 mm

private collection

9.24.93, 1993

watercolour and pencil on paper

381×457 mm

private collection

3.27.97, 1997

watercolour and pencil on paper

406×318 mm
private collection

Roma Colored Wall 9.20.05, 2005
watercolour and pencil on paper
570×765 mm
private collection

Doric 3.24.12, 2012
pastel on paper
1024×1524 mm
private collection

Windows, 2016
watercolour, ink and pencil on paper
559×768 mm
private collection

Two Windows, 2016
watercolour, ink and pencil on paper
559×768 mm
private collection

Robe Pink, 2020
watercolour and pencil on paper
565×435 mm
private collection

Opulent Ascension, 2020
watercolour and pencil on paper
565×432 mm
private collection

Felt, 2020
watercolour and pencil on paper
610×460 mm
private collection

Fold, 2010
ink on paper (facsimile)
279×216 mm
private collection

On Metal, 2009

ink on paper (facsimile)

295×210 mm

private collection

Insets, 1989

ink on paper (facsimile)

295×210 mm

private collection

Yellow Leaves, 2007

ink on paper (facsimile)

295×210 mm

private collection

Backs and Fronts, 2016

ink on paper (facsimile)

295×210 mm

private collection

What Art Is, 2004

ink on paper (facsimile)

297×210 mm

private collection

The Wall, 2020

watercolour and ink on paper

565×432 mm

private collection

Body, 2009

ink and charcoal on paper (facsimile)

279×216 mm

private collection

Idea, 2006

ink on paper (facsimile)

245×210 mm

private collection

Kind of Red, 2013
charcoal on paper
280×270 mm (each, 5 pieces)
private collection

Cactus, 1964
oil on canvas
33×27.9 cm
private collection

Madonna 1, 2018
oil and oil pastel on aluminium
215.9×190.5 cm
private collection

Madonna, 2018
oil and oil pastel on aluminium
215.9×190.5 cm
private collection

Madonna, 2019
oil and oil pastel on aluminium
215.9×190.5 cm
private collection

Madonna, 2019
oil and oil pastel on aluminium
215.9×190.5 cm
private collection

Madonna, 2018
oil and oil pastel on aluminium
215.9×190.5 cm
private collection

Madonna, 2019
oil and oil pastel on aluminium
215.9×190.5 cm
private collection

Figure Abstract and Vice Versa, 2019

oil on aluminium

299.7×381 cm

private collection

Two Windows Grey Diptych, 2000

oil on linen

81×61 cm (each)

private collection