

Barcelona, 13 March 2025

**“Abstraction is the spiritual art of our time.”**

Sean Scully

## **Sean Scully returns to Barcelona with a unique exhibition at La Pedrera**

**This is the most extensive exhibition ever held in Barcelona of the Dublin-born artist’s work. It features more than sixty pieces – including paintings, sculptures, photographs and works on paper – offering a retrospective view of the artist’s oeuvre, which spans six decades of creative production**

**Organised by the Fundació Catalunya La Pedrera in close collaboration with the artist, the exhibition is curated by Javier Molins. It will be on display at La Pedrera’s exhibition hall from 14 March to 6 July**

**A programme of cultural activities has been developed around the exhibition to extend its reach beyond La Pedrera. These events will feature Sean Scully himself, alongside filmmaker David Trueba, cellist Anastasia Kobekina, the Escolania de Montserrat and Juan de la Rubia with the Orquestra del Miracle**

**“Sean Scully” is the latest exhibition by the Fundació Catalunya La Pedrera. The most comprehensive retrospective of the artist’s work ever staged in Barcelona will be on view from 14 March to 6 July at La Pedrera’s exhibition hall.**

Curated by **Javier Molins** – art critic, journalist and writer – and developed in close collaboration with the artist, the exhibition follows a **chronological exploration** of Scully’s work, encompassing all stages of his artistic production. **The exhibition presents more than sixty works** – including **paintings, sculptures, photographs, drawings, watercolours and pastels** – created **over six decades**, from his **early figurative pieces** in the 1960s and his **minimalist phase** in the 1970s to his **most recent abstractions** – the latest work in the

exhibition dates from 2025. The works showcase his distinctive style, characterised by a reduction of his iconographic repertoire to a series of **lines, bands and blocks**, which have become the hallmark of his practice and, in his own words, reflect his aspiration to “restore emotion to abstract painting”.

**Born in Dublin in 1945, Sean Scully** is one of the **most influential artists in contemporary abstraction**. Deeply concerned with colour, Scully has reduced his iconographic repertoire to a set of lines, bands and blocks that have become the signature elements of his work. A reflective artist, he is particularly noted for his painting technique. Distinguished by an intuitive layering of paint – often wet-on-wet – his colours blend and emerge, **creating unique tonal variations of remarkable depth** that infuse his abstract compositions with warmth.

**Scully prioritises rhythm over form**; the wide bands that structure his canvases vary in width, have blurred edges and do not always follow the same direction – some run horizontally, while others are vertical. **The simplicity and repetition** of his compositions create a visual cadence that, through his brushstrokes, resonates with life and emotion. Each band of colour contains multiple gradations within, and over time, the artist’s palette has become **increasingly nuanced and complex**.

**Influenced by Henri Matisse, Paul Klee and Piet Mondrian**, Scully is deeply invested in the humanisation of painting. His distinctive way of rethinking the medium bridges **analytical abstraction with poetics**. His work has redefined the paradigm of abstraction, evolving from the reduced vocabulary of American Minimalism to a more emotive form – one that **reintroduces the spirituality** inherent in the European painting tradition. Scully’s work does not convey a fixed meaning but remains **open to interpretation**, often eliciting a profound state of introspection and contemplation.

**The exhibition at La Pedrera** offers visitors a chance to experience **the evolution of Scully’s work** while underscoring his relentless pursuit of redefining abstraction, driven by his desire to capture, in his own words, “something that can reflect the dimensionality of the human spirit within the grid of our world”.

This exhibition at La Pedrera holds particular significance, as **the artist is returning to the Catalan capital**, a city where he lived for a time and maintained a studio for over 14 years. It also coincides with **his 80th birthday on 30 June**. Moreover, it marks **the first retrospective** dedicated to Scully in Barcelona since 2007, nearly two decades ago.

**His time in Barcelona led to the creation of a series of works**, some of which are now returning to the city. These include paintings produced during his stay that bear the city's name in their titles, such as *Barcelona Band of Light* (2004) and *Barcelona Dark Wall* (2004), along with works on paper and photographs.

The exhibition also features a selection of **Scully's sculptures, many of which are being shown in Barcelona for the first time**. A particular highlight is the **newly created sculpture 55** (2025), designed specifically for this exhibition. Standing six metres tall and featuring a striking interplay of colours, it will **greet visitors** to Casa Milà from the courtyard on Passeig de Gràcia.

The exhibition features works from the **artist's own collection** – sourced from his studios in Munich, London and New York – as well as works on loan from museums and institutions such as the **Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía in Madrid** and the **Institut Valencià d'Art Modern (IVAM)**.

### **Expanded exhibition**

Through a carefully developed strategy of partnerships with other cultural institutions, the Foundation's exhibitions extend their reach across the city with a series of cultural initiatives jointly created with various organisations. This year, activities organised in collaboration with the **Gran Teatre del Liceu, the Palau de la Música and Santa Cecília de Montserrat** broaden the exhibition's scope beyond La Pedrera, offering fresh perspectives and fostering dialogues with other artistic disciplines.

As part of "Sean Scully", **filmmaker David Trueba** has created a documentary that offers an intimate look at one of the most significant figures in abstract painting from the second half of the 20th century. The film takes viewers inside Scully's London studio, where he is seen working on his latest pieces and reflecting on his practice. It also documents the preparation of the exhibition at La Pedrera.

## **Fundació Catalunya La Pedrera (FCLP)**

Fundació Catalunya La Pedrera is committed to promoting art and culture through a carefully curated programme of exhibitions, reaffirming one of its core missions: to serve as a cultural catalyst for society. These exhibitions connect the Foundation and La Pedrera with the people of Barcelona and Catalonia, fostering a sense of community and belonging.

### **Fundació Catalunya La Pedrera Press**

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