

Sean Scully

(Dublin, Ireland, 1945)

Sean Scully has been working since the 1970s with pure and vibrant color. His now established style makes his works—usually painted in oil on monumental panels and placed close to one another—immediately recognizable. He thinks of his process of abstraction as fitting into an earlier art historical tradition: true painting that rejects any type of serial, mechanical, alienated production. His masters belong to history: Matisse, first of all, for his emphasis on brilliant and violent colors and for his simplification of compositions; Mondrian, for whom, as for Scully, abstraction is a synthesis of reality, which is its point of departure; and finally, obviously, Rothko, in terms of the work's monumentality, the devotion to painting, and the reflective, metaphysical atmosphere. To these influences one might add the work from Frank Stella's minimalist period, Morandi's tonal painting, and also Van Gogh and De Kooning. During his student years in London, before moving to New York in 1975, Scully was interested first in landscape painting and then lines and grids. A turning point came with a trip to Morocco in 1969, where the fabrics and the hot, enveloping luminosity led him to the style for which he is known today, characterized by vividly colored, broad, vertical and horizontal stripes placed next to one another. His art maintains only formal traces of minimalism; Scully always begins from a representation—landscapes or people, seasons, moments—where he synthesizes the fundamental qualities, sensation, and condition. His painting is strongly material and heroic; he paints on canvas, but also on aluminum panels, looking for different temperatures of color. Geometry is his elementary compositional principle and it functions through juxtaposition, without ever becoming modular. The details, the blending of colors add a sense of story and narration, a personal and meditative movement.

The series *Wall of Light* also had its genesis in a trip, this time to Mexico in 1983, during which Scully painted a watercolor of horizontal and vertical bars in orange, blue, and green, inspired by the Mexican ruins caressed by light. Fifteen years later he began his successful series of bars, which he also calls "bricks," which, with their intense colors, reproduce the light and tones of places and seasons. In *Wall of Light White Tundra*, it is the cold light of the north and the colors—blacks and silvery grays—that imbue this work with the vibrant power of their natural vitality. (EV)