



Sean & Oisín Scully. *Jack the Wolf*, 2015. Watercolor, ink and pencil on paper. 22 1/4 x 14 7/8 in. / 56.5 x 37.8 cm. © Sean Scully. Photography: Brain Buckley.

Sean Scully *Jack the Wolf*

September 26 - November 4, 2023

Cheim & Read
547 West 25 Street
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Cheim & Read is pleased to announce an exhibition of Sean Scully's drawings from *Jack the Wolf*, an extraordinary and deeply personal project that the artist made in collaboration with his young son, Oisín. The suite of drawings will be gathered together and published as a children's book in October of this year. This exhibition also includes recent sculpture and paintings by the artist. It will open on September 26th and run through November 4th.

Jack the Wolf began in 2014 as an improvised bedtime story for Oisín, who was five years old at the time. As months of storytelling between father and son turned into a cherished ritual, the tales of Jack's adventures became increasingly detailed and varied. In the drawings, Jack is sometimes seen frolicking in flower-

strewn meadows. At other moments he's pictured in repose on a grand sofa reading a copy of *HOWL*. The wolf's adventures begin to confound all expectations when Jack starts to explore the signature grids and blocked planes of Scully's geometric abstraction. Jack peers behind the signature Scully color planes that have turned into doorways which open onto domestic interiors and secret stores of chocolate. These scenes and more besides are featured in the volume that will be published by Callaway Books.

Moving from London to New York in 1975, Scully shifted the paradigm in abstract art from Minimalism to emotional abstraction by renouncing the constricted vocabulary of the former in favor of a reenchantment of the latter through metaphor and spirituality. After five decades of singular focus on this project, the birth of Scully's son inspired a series of figurative paintings. These featured Oisín on the beach, first with the *Eleuthera* series (2018), and then the *Madonna and Child* series (2018-19), both widely acclaimed and broadly exhibited, in what the German art historian Werner Spies described as a "spectacular break in the oeuvre."

In 2019, as an exhibition of the *Eleuthera* series was being mounted at the Albertina Museum in Vienna, Scully was interviewed by the philosopher and critic David Carrier in the pages of *Hyperallergic*. He said:

Someone recently asked me how I navigate the space between my abstract and figurative paintings, which I often paint side by side. I said I jump.

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Scully's ease and agility at making the jump is made clear by the inclusion of the three recent abstract paintings in the exhibition: *Robe Diptych Orange* (2019), *Pieta 2* (2022), and *Wall Dark Fire* (2023). The works hang side by side with the *Jack the Wolf* drawings and expand upon the emotive, grid-based idiom that he first developed in 1969. Executed on aluminum, linen, and copper, respectively, these works confront the viewer with dramatic shifts in mood and temperature, as fiery strokes of yellow and orange abut swaths of ice-cold blue and green, and lushly pigmented violet and crimson smolder against blocks of deep umber and aquamarine.

The 5.5-foot-tall sculpture, *Felt Stack 1* (2020), continues Scully's three dimensional investigations of modular structures. Here, the artist presents a stack of aluminum squares that are covered in colored felt, adding new dimensions of touch, color, and play into his formal vocabulary.

Sean Scully was born in Dublin in 1945 and grew up in the south of London, where his family moved in 1949. With work in the collection of virtually every major museum around the world, in 2014 Scully became the only Western artist to have had a career-length retrospective exhibition in China. 2018-2019 saw important solo exhibitions such as *Landline* at The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington D.C., which toured to the Wadsworth Atheneum, Connecticut; *Landline and other works*, De Pont Museum in the Netherlands; the retrospective *Vita Duplex* at the Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, Germany; *Sea Star*, The National Gallery, London, and the first major exhibition of Sean Scully's sculptures at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, UK. *Eleuthera* at The Albertina, Vienna; the retrospective *Long Light* at the Villa and Collection Panza, Varese, Italy; and *HUMAN*, at San Giorgio Maggiore in Venice, Italy, for the 58th Venice Art Biennale. In 2020 the Hungarian National Gallery, Budapest opened *Passenger*, a major retrospective that traveled to the Benaki Museum, Athens, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Zagreb, Croatia. 2022 was marked by the major fifty-year career retrospective *Sean Scully: The Shape of Ideas* at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, in the USA, previously shown at the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth, Texas in 2021, alongside three further retrospectives: *Song of Color*, Langen Foundation, Neuss, Germany; Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej (CSW), Toruń, Poland; *A Wound in a Dance with Love*, MAMbo Museum of Modern Art of Bologna, Italy; and the important solo exhibition *Material World*, Thorvaldsens Museum, Copenhagen, Denmark.