

MEDIA INFORMATION

23 March 2018

“Nothing is abstract...”

Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe stages a retrospective of the works of Sean Scully, one of the most important artists on the contemporary international scene

The new special exhibition at the Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe is dedicated to the internationally renowned artist Sean Scully. Presenting more than 130 works under the title *Sean Scully. Vita Duplex*, the exhibition takes an in-depth look at the artist's oeuvre and offers a glimpse into his inner universe.

Born in Dublin in 1945, raised in London, Scully redefines abstract art, taking it beyond a purely formal exploration of colour, shapes, planes, and light. “I am convinced that abstract art is and always was there to embody deep emotions. I believe that this is its task throughout the history of art,” he says.

His works are deeply bound up with his philosophical and poetic views on art, society, ethics, metaphysics and human nature. He has delineated his position within the realm of abstract art in numerous lectures, interviews and writings, collected in the book *Inner*, which was released in German translation on the occasion of the exhibition. This publication was the starting point for the Karlsruhe show, which contextualises the paintings, watercolours, pastels, lithographs and photographs with writings and quotes from the artist.

The title of the exhibition, *Vita Duplex*, underscores the intrinsic duality of his work, its continuous vacillation between reason and emotion, past and present, light and darkness, order and chaos — an inspiring creative tension. Scully states: “In most of my paintings there is a struggle between light and dark. Or between happiness and sadness. And I don't usually make a painting that is either one. Mostly they are neither one nor the other. That is because I don't think life is about being one or the other. Life has everything in it. Or it has many things in it. I try to make the paintings have different kinds of personalities.”

Sean Scully moved to the United States in the 1970s and became a US citizen in 1983. His work is intermediary between the artistic accomplishments of the Old World and the New. His deep connection with the European tradition of painting and his ever-present awareness of history are evident in his keen interest in Abstract Expressionism, Action Painting and Minimalism.

Professor Pia Müller-Tamm, Director of the Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, said: “We are glad we could arrange this project in cooperation with the LWL Museum of Art and Culture in Münster. With paintings of both old masters and

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contemporary artists coexisting in the collections of our two institutes, we are ideal partners for exhibiting works by such an history-conscious artist as Sean Scully. One of the rooms in the Kunsthalle, for example, shows the diptych of the Bohemian Master next to paintings by Matisse and Morandi and other painters to whom Scully has "selective affinities".

Nine rooms located in the large galleries of the Durm wing give a well-rounded overview of the paintings and drawings of Scully from the 1960s to today, and also display original manuscripts by the artist.

The exhibition is curated by Dr. Kirsten Voigt. This project has been realized in cooperation with the LWL Museum of Art and Culture, Münster. The exhibition will be shown there starting in May 2019.

Address

Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe
Hans-Thoma-Strasse 2–6
76133 Karlsruhe, Germany

Opening hours

10 AM to 6 PM Tuesday through Sunday
Open on the Monday after Easter (2 April) and the Monday after Pentecost (21 May)

Admission

€8 (regular) / €6 (reduced)
Groups of ten or more: €6 per person

Multimedia guide

Available in German and English
€4 (regular) / €2 (reduced)

Public guided tours

Sundays, 3 PM
€2 (plus admission)
No advance registration required

Publications

Two new releases from Hatje Cantz publishing house accompany the exhibition:

Sean Scully: Vita Duplex (exhibition catalogue)

Publishers: Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe / LWL Museum für Kunst und Kultur;
German and English

Hardbound book, 24 × 30 cm, 240 pages, 140 illustrations

ISBN 978-3-7757-4378-5

Price: €30

Inner: The Collected Writings and Selected Interviews of Sean Scully

Publishers: Kelly Grovier / Kirsten Claudia Voigt

Hardbound book, half-linen, 19.7 × 16.6 cm

336 pages, 122 illustrations

ISBN 978-3-7757-4377-8

Price: €58

This book of texts, sketches, notes, essays by and interviews with Sean Scully is being published in German for the first time on the occasion of the *Vita Duplex* exhibition.

Accompanying events

Thursday, 12 April, 7 PM

Jazz concert with the Peter Lehel Quartet

Thursday, 17 May, 7 PM

From the nature of colour to the essence of painting

Lecture (in German) by Dr. Barbara Oetzl

Thursday, 21 June, 7 PM

Dying light: From night scenes to black pictures

Lecture (in German) by Dr. Judith Weiss

Thursday, 5 July, 7 PM

Nothing is abstract

Concert by students of the Karlsruhe University of Music with pieces by Edvard Elgar, Zoltan Kodaly, Franz Schubert and the first ever performance of a composition written for one of Sean Scully's works.

Admission, concerts: €6 (regular) / €4 (reduced)

Admission, lectures: €4 (regular) / €2 (reduced)

A new exhibition at the Junge Kunsthalle entitled *Farbe querfeldein* is dedicated to the meaning of colours in fine arts. This show opens on 24 March, and continues through 21 October.

All information about the exhibition and accompanying events can be found at kunsthalle-karlsruhe.de.

#vitaduplex

The Kunsthalle encourages all visitors to share their impressions of the exhibition on social media — Instagram, Twitter and Facebook — with the hashtag #vitaduplex.