

Sean Scully 'Aeternum'
Forum Paracelsus, St. Moritz
February 13th – March 8th, 2020

For immediate release.

Sean Scully's work has taken inspiration from many cherished, varied elements of European culture (ranging from the harmonic ideals of ancient Greece to the stone walls in his native Ireland) but he has also successfully responded to – and built on – the legacy of abstraction in the United States. 'Aeternum' makes its focus paintings and pastels that show Scully engaging with classicism through the lens of abstraction. It will be the artist's first solo show in Switzerland in nearly a decade, following his retrospective 'Grey Wolf' at Kunstmuseum Bern in 2012.

As Oscar Humphries, the curator of 'Aeternum,' explains, "There is no better setting for Sean Scully's more classical work than the Forum Paracelsus – given its ancient history. Scully is best known for the change he made to abstraction in the late 20th century, his role in the renaissance of painting as a medium, and his influence on other artists. But Scully is also intensely interested in the ancient world, and the work included in this exhibition – whilst wholly contemporary – is rooted in the symmetry and order of Greek and Roman architecture. Architecture is central to the artist's practice and this begins with the ancients. I love the Forum Paracelsus. Formerly the baths of the region, the building is neo-classical and dates from the 18th century, but its history dates back to 1400BC. We wanted to make a show that examines his fascination with the eternal, hence the title of the show."

At the core of this exhibition are Sean Scully's monumental *Doric* paintings, a series of works he has produced since 2008. The title references one of the three orders of ancient Greek architecture, the least ornate Doric order, and the paintings were conceived as a celebration of the contribution of classic Greek culture to humanity. Sean Scully on the Doric order, which many of the works in this show use as a template: "The spaces between the columns are spaces for thought, for light, for questioning and growth. When I visited the space in St. Moritz, I knew that I wanted to show these works here. I love nature and I live and work surrounded by it. This exhibition will be surrounded by nature also. Architecture, art, and the human spirit versus the power of nature in the mountains and in the lake which you see and feel when you are there."

Scully's *Doric* paintings combine austerity with luminosity and solidity with movement and rhythm. Variations of black, grey, and off-whites are arranged in broad horizontal and vertical bands, using an abstract visual language that is unique to the artist. As well as the *Doric* paintings, pastels and smaller paintings on metal have been chosen for the Forum, creating a balance between the architecture of the works on display and the architecture and tone of the space they will inhabit. Marco Voena, who is supporting the exhibition, says, "I have long admired Sean Scully's work. My background is in Old Masters and while Sean is a contemporary artist, his work also relates to great Italian painting from the past. Having him come to St. Moritz shows that this is an increasingly important art centre in the region. Not just for the galleries that are here but for institutional shows also."

About the artist:

Sean Scully (b. 1945, Dublin, Ireland) is considered to be one of the world's leading abstract painters. Born in Dublin and raised in London, he now lives between New York and Germany.

His work is represented in the collections of The Guggenheim Museum, New York; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Tate Gallery, London; National Gallery of Art, Washington; San Diego Museum of Art, San Diego; Centre Pompidou, Paris; Kunsthaus Zurich, Zurich; Kunstmuseum Bern, Bern – as well as many other museums around the world.

Recent solo exhibitions include: *Sean Scully at Picasso House*, Château de Boisgeloup, Gisros, France, (2019); *Human*, Basilica of San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice, (2019); *Vita Duplex*, LWL Museum, Münster, (2019); *Long Night*, Villa e Collezione Panza, Varese, (2019/ 2020); Lechner Museum, Ingolstadt, (2019/2020); *Landline*, The Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, (2019); *Eleuthera*, Albertina, Vienna, (2019); *Sea Star*, National Gallery, London, (2019); *Vita Duplex*, Staatliche Kunsthalle Karlsruhe, Karlsruhe, (2018); *Landlines and other recent works*, De Pont Museum of Contemporary Art, Tilburg (2018); *Sean Scully: 1970*, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool Museum, (2018); *Inside Out*, Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield, (2018). A major retrospective of Scully's work will open at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in May 2020.

About the Forum Paracelsus:

The Forum Paracelsus in St. Moritz was built in 1866. For many years it was used as a 'pump room' and was connected to the old Kurhaus and spa baths through a lobby. Over time, when the Paracelsus source dried up, the building was no longer used as a pump room and fell into disrepair. The political community of St. Moritz considered it their duty to preserve and restore the site, turning it into a public venue for culture and art. The bathing culture of St. Moritz is deeply rooted – it reaches back to 1400 years BC. The mineral springs with their ferrous and aerated waters achieved great fame and appreciation during the Middle Ages under Pope Leo X and the naturopath Paracelsus. The drinking fountain invites visitors to taste the St. Moritz acid water, and in the core of the museum the Mauritius fountain, dating back to the Bronze Age, can be viewed behind a glass pane.

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