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Wadsworth Atheneum Brings Acclaimed Landline Series by Sean Scully to the Northeast

Hartford, Conn. (January 9, 2019) – The acclaimed Landline series represents a dramatic shift in the work of one of today’s most important abstract artists, Sean Scully. In Scully’s words, “I was always looking at the horizon line—at the way the end of the sea touches the beginning of the sky, the way the sky presses down on the sea and the way that line, that relationship, is painted.” The Landline series stems from a group of 1999 seascape photographs taken by Scully in Norfolk, England. He went on to create paintings, sculptures, pastels, drawings, and prints featuring horizontal stripes inspired by the bands of land, water, and sky captured in the photographs. The Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art brings Sean Scully: Landline to New England February 23 to May 19, 2019.

A large-scale, 30-layer Stack sculpture, the first public sculpture by Scully on view at an American museum, was installed on the Wadsworth Atheneum’s Main Street lawn in July 2018 in anticipation of the exhibition. Sean Scully: Landline is the first show to feature the full scope of work from the Landline series in the United States after its premiere at the 56th Venice Biennale. “The Wadsworth has long been a champion of abstract art and artists,” says Thomas J. Loughman, Director and CEO of the Wadsworth. “Sean Scully translates the lived world into art. This is a rare opportunity for our visitors to immerse themselves in this powerfully moving series that communicates a range of experiences and emotions, through a surprisingly broad range of media and scale.”
Known for combining the geometry of European concrete art with the ethereality of American abstraction, Scully’s thick, gestural brushstrokes evoke the energy and beauty of the natural world in the *Landline* works. Unlike his other series, such as *Wall of Light* and *Doric* both inspired by architecture, the works in *Landline* are largely inspired by the moments Scully spent looking out to sea. They are a response to his observation of the layers of the world pressed into the space in front of him in those moments. These layers form the visual stacks that have come to characterize the drawings, sculptures, and paintings of the *Landline* series. The expressive and unconstrained bands of color reach beyond abstraction and into the sublime, where the contours of landscapes unfold to reveal the physical and emotional dimensions of experience, trauma, and memory.

“Scully relates the *Landline* works to his personal immigrant experience,” said Patricia Hickson, the Wadsworth’s Emily Hall Tremaine Curator of Contemporary Art. “As a young man in the United Kingdom, looking out at the Atlantic Ocean, he had a dream to move to America and succeed in New York as an artist. With the *Landline* series Scully contemplates those early years, a long career, and a lifetime of landscapes encountered in travels worldwide.”

In a career that began in the mid-1960s, Scully has risen to international prominence, with work in major museum collections worldwide. The Wadsworth has a long relationship with Scully, first acquiring his major work *Red and Pink Robe* in 2009 not long after the painting was completed. In 2011 he gave The Emily Hall Tremaine Lecture in Contemporary Art and also discussed a number of favorite works from the collection in the museum’s *Artists on Art* mobile audio tour including Gustave Courbet’s, *The Shore at Trouville: Sunset Effect*, 1866 and Francisco de Zurbarán’s *Saint Serapion*, 1626. Scully will be recording new audio content for a mobile tour about land, sea, and skyscapes that will include art from the broader museum collection as well as his own.

*Sean Scully: Landline* traces the series as realized over the past decade in nearly 50 oil paintings, pastels, watercolors, prints, and three aluminum Stack sculptures as well as the earlier photographs and works on paper where Scully first interrogated the idea. The exhibition anticipates a series of international shows including, *Sea Star: Sean Scully* at the National Gallery of Art, London, UK, April 15 – August 11, 2019; *Sean Scully: Human*, San Giorgio Maggiore, Venice Biennale, Venice, Italy, May 11 – November 24, 2019; and *Sean Scully - Eleuthera*, Albertina, Vienna, Austria, June 6 – September 8, 2019. Organized by the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Smithsonian Institution in association with the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, *Sean Scully: Landline* is the first monographic exhibition of work by a living artist that the Wadsworth has presented since 2011. The *Landline* exhibition is accompanied by an illustrated catalogue, featuring an essay by Patricia Hickson, the Wadsworth’s Emily Hall Tremaine Curator of Contemporary Art, an interview of Scully by Stéphane Aquin, the Hirshhorn’s Chief Curator, and original poetry by Kelly Grovier, inspired by *Landline* and written for this publication.

**About the Artist**

Sean Scully lives and works in New York, London, Berlin, and the Bavarian countryside. Current exhibitions include *Beyond Borders* at the Villa Empain-Foundation Boghossian, Brussels, Belgium through February 24, 2019 and two sculptures *Crate of Air*, 2018 and *Wall Dale Cubed*, 2018 on view at the Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Wakefield, UK, through 2019. He recently became one of the only Western artists to have had a career-length retrospective exhibition in China (his 2014 exhibition of over 100 paintings traveled from Shanghai Himalayas Art Museum to the Central Academy of Fine Arts in Beijing), and he was recently the subject of solo exhibitions in São Paulo, Brazil, at the Pinacoteca do Estado; in Neuhaus, Austria, in the inaugural show at the new Museum Liaunig; in Venice, Italy, during the 2015 Biennale; in Dublin, where the National Gallery of Ireland exhibited five major paintings from the collection of 40 works held by the Tate in London, as well as his recent photographs; and in Cork, Ireland, at the Crawford Art Gallery. He is the recipient of the 2016 Harper’s Bazaar Art International Artist of the Year Award, has twice been shortlisted for the Tate’s Turner Prize and his works are
included in the permanent collections of nearly every major North American museum, including the Art Gallery of Ontario, Art Institute of Chicago, Broad Art Foundation, High Museum of Art, the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, National Gallery of Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum and Whitney Museum of American Art, among many others.

Related Programs
Tours of Sean Scully: Landline and landscapes from the collection are offered on Saturdays and Sundays at 2:30pm from Mar. 2 – May 19. A Gallery Talk with curator Patricia Hickson will be held on Feb. 24 at 1pm. “Sunday Serenades Chamber Music Series: Land Sea Sky”, a delightful and elegant soundscape of music complementing the exhibition, will take place Feb. 24 at 2pm. “Art Talk: Sean Scully and Patricia Hickson in Conversation” takes place on Mar. 11 at 6pm following a reception at 5pm.

About the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art
Founded in 1842, the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art is the oldest continuously operating public art museum in the United States. The museum’s nearly 50,000 works of art span 5,000 years, from Greek and Roman antiquities to the first museum collection of American contemporary art. The Wadsworth Atheneum’s five connected buildings—representing architectural styles from Gothic Revival to modern International Style—are located at 600 Main Street in Hartford, Conn. Hours: Wednesday–Friday: 11am–5pm; Saturday and Sunday: 10am–5pm Admission: $5–15; discounts for members, students and seniors. Free admission for Hartford residents with Wadsworth Welcome registration. Free “happy hour” admission 4–5pm Public phone: (860) 278-2670; website: thewadsworth.org.


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