

Sean Scully

Born 1945 - Dublin

Ms.Healy 2015

The fifth and sixth year students were fortunate enough to manage to visit the exhibition of Sean Scully's art work in National Gallery this academic year.

The following is an account of the exhibition which has since been removed and closed to the public. The national gallery along with IMMA and The Hugh Lane Gallery and The Chester Beatty all have wonderful exhibitions on display throughout the year so it would be advisable to check their websites if you wish to attend.

The students also visited the Natural History Museum where they spent the afternoon drawing the various animals on display.

Sean Scully is a contemporary Irish artist who celebrates his 70th birthday this year. In celebration of this occasion the National gallery of Ireland is currently showing a collection of his work. The work on show spans two decades the 1980's and the 1990's.

Sean Scully was born in Dublin but moved to London with his family at the age of four. Sean's childhood was difficult in that he suffered from extreme anxiety which he claims was due to his turbulent and sometimes violent home environment. His father was violent at times but seems to have been antagonised by his mother. His father at the age of fourteen was a skilled footballer and had junior trials with Arsenal, due to lack of money in the home his career in football was cut short. Sean's father was resentful of a lost opportunity and carried with him a sense of bitterness throughout his life, this created a negative home life for Sean.

Sean was educated in England and attended Newcastle University and Harvard University Cambridge. Sean is a globally recognised artist and has achieved worldwide acclaim. His work is held in more than 180 collections worldwide, including some of the following museums..

- Metropolitan Museum of Art, Museum of Modern Art, and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum New York. The National Gallery of Art, Washington DC
- Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth. Tate London
- Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen K20K21, Dusseldorf; Albertina, Vienna; Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid; and Institute Valencia d'Arte Modern, Valencia.
- **Dublin City Gallery the Hugh Lane, and the Irish Museum of Modern Art.**

Sean was shortlisted for the **Turner prize** in 1989 and again in 1993, Sean was elected a Royal Academician in 2013.

Sean experienced major tragedy in his own personal life when his son from his first marriage died tragically in his teens in a car crash. This devastated him and the artist claimed he went completely insane with grief. He painted through the pain and continued to be a prolific painter. His marriage didn't survive. It took him 30 years before he could allow himself to try to have another family. He felt a huge sense of guilt. He has since remarried and now has a young son called Oisín whom he cherishes.

Style/technique

Sean's style of painting could be described as **abstract and linear**. Scully believes a trip to Morocco inspired his move from figurative painting into abstraction. He paints in lines of colour sometimes his paintings resemble a chequered board. The artist states his use of particular colours is not a conscious one. His paintings are often made up of a number of panels. Scully paints in oils, sometimes layering the paint on quite thickly to create textured surfaces. His paintings typically involve architectural constructions of abutting walls and panels of painted stripes. In recent years he has augmented his trademark stripes by also deploying

a mode of compositional patterning more reminiscent of checkerboard. He has stated that his style represents the way in which Ireland has moved towards a more chequered society. He stated in 2006,

...‘I remember growing up in Ireland and everything being chequered, even the fields and the people.’

Sean claims... the lines are sometimes symbolic of the land being cut into... a distant memory from Ireland.

Responding to minimal art of the 1960’s and 1970’, Scully has always striven to associate emotions and phenomena of the world into his art, resisting formalism while rigorously reducing the means he employs – a reduced palette of colours and restricting himself to patterns of vertical and horizontal stripes. Scully has always managed to introduce extraordinary variety into his paintings, while their titles often hint at associations with his life or his surroundings.

...‘I hold to a very Romantic ideal of what’s possible in art, and I hold on to the idea of the ‘personal universal’. This is a complex agenda.....

