



Sean Scully, 'SQUARE', installation view; photograph courtesy the artist and Kerlin Gallery.

Sean Scully 'SQUARE'

KERLIN GALLERY
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FROM KAZIMIR MALEVICH to Josef Albers, the square has been valued for its objective flexibility, helping to shape ideas from the purely optical to the iconic. In this show of 100 works, presented non-chronologically and spanning more than five decades of Sean Scully's career, the 'square' is also a useful, common denominator. Our place in time is important to Scully, who in a recent interview asserts, "The question is, are you wrapped rigidly in the cloth of your time, or can you fly out of it and travel time, and I was always very aware that I wanted to do the latter".¹ Time may be the arbiter, but in the swim of the here and now, no one asserts the authority of Sean Scully better than Scully himself.

The most surprising thing here is *Wrapped Grid Orange* (1972 – remade 2020), an aluminium lattice, tightly wound in strips of coloured felt. The metal grid (it was originally made of wood) is softened and – à la Christo and Jeanne-Claude – made extra-visible for being hidden. The variously coloured fabric complicates the uniformity of the structure, with an uneven corner of orange giving way to areas of dark red, grey and black. The work is genuinely odd; a curious mixture of repressed feeling and matter-of-fact form, like a prosthetic limb coddled in superfluous bandages.

Also mysterious, but more conventional, a large painting on loan from IMMA is called *Brennus* (1979). Named for a fearsome Gaul, its sombre bands of wine and black are a shadowy blind, drawing you into darkness. To its left, the much smaller, punchier, monochrome canvas, *Small Blue Painting #3* (1977) is equally austere, with very thin, slightly wavy horizontals creating a finely corrugated surface you want to strum.

Scully's work oscillates between the monumental and the intimate, a dichotomy most obvious when he switches to paper. The absence of large statements in his prints, pastels, and waterco-