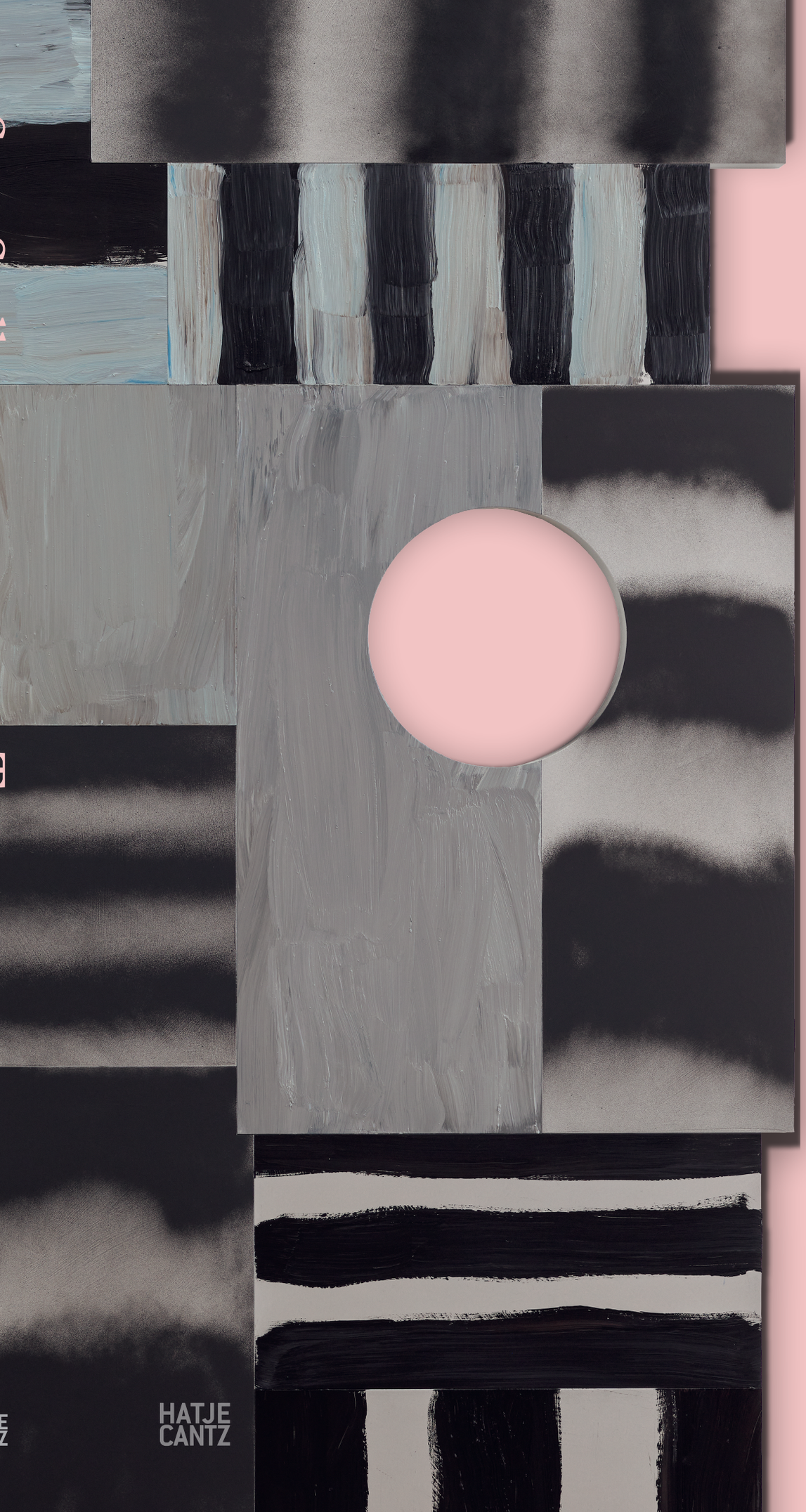


Sean Scully

Tower

HATJE CANTZ











With essays by
Phong H. Bui and
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Sean Scully
TOWER

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PHONG H. BUI

Sean Scully: Path to the Tower

Space-time continuum, constancy of autonomous regions, teleological argument
Correlating the famous watchmaker. Analogy, for once heavenly and earthly bodies
Can they in fact be made as one living organism. Someone dares to build an immense
Ladder. Again, and again, brushing, dragging, sliding with exceptional precarity,
Vicious bitumen, instant melting structures on endless anxious terrains.

Large tilting diagonals, coursing burnt gray matter in the luminous oil sleeks,
When will one see his precepts refuting countless grammatical, psychological
Predicaments? Epistemology, ontological hermeneutics, hermeneutic idealism,
Realism, when can there be the eternal return of good and bad governments,
Predating centuries before *The Prince*? Nowadays, the temperature is poised to

Moderate the compressed slippages of their Burkian thesis. Patterns of unrelenting
Asymmetry while thriving under perpetual anarchy, how long can this friction endure?
Baked brick-red, alabaster, silver, opaline of communal spectral collapse, how far,
How near must we mediate our distances from each tower and in-between them?
Alas, the constancy of heated dialogues is meant to elevate all pictorial inquiries.

Not long before his death, at his home in Paris in 1989, Samuel Beckett stated "I prefer to live in France during wartime than Ireland in peace."[1] This pronouncement may well be applied to a long list of his remarkable fellow Irishmen and women who lived outside their country—Oscar Wilde, George Bernard Shaw, Sean O'Casey, Lola Ridge, Katharine Tynan, James Joyce, and Seamus Heaney (although the poet famously referred his dual residences as "nesting on a ledge" by keeping his heart and home in Ireland while working in America). Here I would add Sean Scully, as someone who understands that one is often required to leave one's birthplace if one ever hopes to find the Promised Land.

Indeed, we are reminded of the iconic Stephen Dedalus in Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* who confronted his conventional upbringing by choosing a self-imposed exile to pursue art. While in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Dedalus's first twenty years was written in the third person and indirectly focused on his inner life, his more mature monologue in *Ulysses* undertakes multiple perspectives from multiple characters with highly experimental language. The varieties in style explore Dedalus's stream of consciousness, and the events that occur in his one-day odyssey. As our current moment is of a crisis that escalates dislocation, displacement, and other forms of voluntary or forced immigration that has reached a global scale—the largest we've experienced since the end of Cold War I in the early 1990s—these circumstances intensify upon those who are fortunate enough to find creative refuge in the arts and humanities. As they depart from their birthplace in search of a new home, one can only imagine each new arrival soon realizes they belong to neither space. He, she, they will forever be caught in the in-between space that, on one hand, barely recognizes their past, but on the other, keeps the haunting memories from the old country that erupt at unexpected moments. It is unlikely that they would feel totally at ease in their adopted homes. One might therefore think their true home is nowhere else but *culture*—culture, as the Dutch-born American artist Willem de Kooning once wrote, "For milk to become yogurt, it needs culture."[2] Drawing on the linguistic roots of Latin *cultura* (associated with cultivation, inhabitation, and agriculture), Cicero proposed his own *cultura animi*—a metaphor for "cultivating the soul," a creation of the self in the making of its intellectual and artistic formation. If one was to think of *Ulysses* as a continuation of the lived experience of Dedalus from *Portrait of the Artist*, one is sure—despite the similarities and differences that lie between the young and the mature Dedalus—also to notice that what initiates the geography of his imagination is Joyce's own definition of "epiphanies." For Joyce, "epiphanies are the moment of heightened perception and intense joy in a human sense—not mystical or religious—which are often initiated by trivial incidents and manifest the holiness of