

**Sean Scully**

Sean Scully's latest body of work is further evidence of the artist's intensely focused, even myopic painting practice.

Scully's basic idiom—colored blocks arranged in elegant, variously interlocking, allover configurations—grows most directly out of the American Abstract Expressionist tradition, and, as with Pollock, Newman, and Still, one can look at a painting by Scully and know without hesitation that it is "a Scully." Paradoxically, it is precisely this unwavering commitment to his chosen style that is of particular interest in the context of today's art world: In order to engage seriously with his painting, one must dispense with the common imperative to applaud vigorously "new" work, and instead attend closely to subtle modulations. The result, when looking at traces of thick bristles moving heavily through liberally applied passages of matte gray and bursting orange in works like *Wall of Light Summer 8.05, 2005*, is something like an aesthetic trance state.



Chelsea 11.9.05, 2005

Revealingly, it is two eminent philosophers—Arthur Danto and David Carrier—who have engaged most consistently with Scully's work. Though his paintings are determinedly abstract, Scully's titles frequently establish an accessible, geographic referent for a given work. Philosophy, it might be said, makes sense of the world using words, and Scully undertakes much the same task, using his blocks of color to order and record what he sees. Along with his diligent, permutational approach to a single "problem," this may partly explain his status as something of a philosopher's painter. In *Chelsea 11.9.05, 2005*, we see a place and a moment in time recorded abstractly. This is not a knowing metapainting, but rather a naive work that finds joy in the application of sensuous color to canvas, and retains an obstinate faith in the idea that the world can in this way be revealed anew.

—Christopher Bedford