

Soledad Sevilla

[ESPERANDO
A SEMPERE]

1. SOLEDAD SEVILLA

Soledad Sevilla (Valencia, 1944) is a key figure in geometric abstraction in Spain. Since the late 1960s, her work has pushed the boundaries between painting, light and space through a distinctive language based on the line, the colour and grid-like structures that reveal the poetry of formal rigour. Her ongoing research into the module and its variations has given rise to a visual universe where repetition, vibration and subtlety build timeless, infinite spaces.

Her career began in the *Centro de Cálculo* at the University of Madrid, a pioneering experimental space that brought together artists who were fascinated by the dialogue between art, science and technology. There she worked alongside Alexanco, Lugán, Barbadillo, Sanz, Abel Martín, Yturralde, Elena Asins and, in a particularly significant way, with Eusebio Sempere, whose influence and friendship were decisive in her artistic development. During the 1970s, Sevilla explored the different possible combinations of the module and she experimented with materials such as methacrylate, tracing paper and acetate. Linear grids evolved from small formats to large white-ground canvases, where a single element is repeated or transformed according to an expansive logic that seems to have no end.

Between 1980 and 1982 she lived in Boston, where she produced a series of fine-line drawings that anticipate the chromatic and spatial vibration of her later painting. On her return to Spain in the mid-1980s she created two paramount bodies of work inspired by Velázquez's *Las Meninas* and the architecture of the Alhambra in Granada. In these pieces she delves into the luminous effects of the line and colour, as well as the relationship between the painting surface and space. Later, her work incorporates references to nature, through rhythmic brushstrokes that evoke leaves, hanging vegetation or architectural structures in the landscape of Granada. At the same time, her installations highlight the spatial dimension of her work, moving between poetical and installation art, where perception takes the centre stage again.

This exhibition is intended to showcase her most recent production (2022–2025) and it brings together the series *Horizontes blancos* (White Horizons), *Horizontes azules* (Blue Horizons), *Agnes Martin* and *Esperando a Sempere* (Waiting for Sempere). They are highly demanding compositions in which the parallel lines, set very close together, take up the entire surface of the canvas, in whites, greys or in colour, which make the visual field vibrate. Meticulous, hypnotic works of art where time seems to stand still as we look at them.

2. SOLEDAD SEVILLA [Esperando a Sempere]

Soledad Sevilla [Esperando a Sempere] is a special exhibition in the artist's career: a project that closes a vital and creative circle and which, at the same time, is essential for MACA, a museum whose origins are closely linked to the collection of the artist from Alicante, Eusebio Sempere.

Sevilla and Sempere met in the 1960s. A mutual admiration and "a deep and endearing friendship" grew between them, while they also coincided in some of the most significant projects related to geometric abstraction in the Spanish art scene. A shared interest in the line, a rigorous approach to composition and a shift towards the sensory —towards a softer, more emotional geometry— connect the work of Sempere and Sevilla. This poetical affinity with the artist from Alicante exists right through Sevilla's career: from her beginnings to her most recent production, such as the series she has been painting since the summer of 2022, conceived to be an inspiration and a tribute to her friend. Like Sempere, Sevilla finds a sensory commotion, a precise and deliberate stillness in the light and the line.

Starting with the artwork from the 1970s held in the collections of the museum, the exhibition focuses on the artist's most recent series. They are large-scale paintings in which the vibration of the line, as a filament or thread, produces surfaces that expand and continually reconfigure themselves. These pieces surround the viewer and invite them to experience the painting not only through vision, but also



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through performance, through the body that shares the space with it. Contemplation therefore becomes a physical experience that unleashes intimate emotions. Sevilla succeeds in making the whole space look like a single unit and, in it, she uses a wide range of registers and subtle variations. Geometry, far from being cold or distant, acquires an intimate and introspective character here.

A thorough and disciplined artist, Sevilla is guided by intuition when she works. As she herself states, her grids are a “background for thought and art passes over them like a kind of reflection”. Sempere himself described it perfectly: “Why talk about painting if you are seeing it?”

3. ACETATE FRAMES

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Soledad Sevilla carried out in-depth research into grids. Starting with a simple module —such as the square, the pentagon or the hexagon— she created new structures through shifts, symmetries and rotations. These modular forms, sometimes hollowed out or with variations in the thickness of the lines, appear in positive and negative and they expand across a transparent support such as acetate using reprographic techniques. The result is a universe of dualities —up and down, right and left, front and back—that explores the tension between transparency and opacity. From that period, a series of thirty acetates has been preserved, a selection of which is on display in this exhibition.

4. THE WHITE PICTURES

In the late 1970s, Soledad Sevilla embarked on a series of white-ground canvases – often diptychs–, in which she draws grids or meshes built from the repetition of a linear element that expands to the limits of the canvas in order to create a feeling of infinity. This is highly refined geometric work in minimalist paintings where the diagonal lines give the composition a sense of *vanishing, flight, an upward inclination*. These pieces were exhibited in Alicante in 1979, and Eusebio Sempere wrote about them in the exhibition catalogue. The artist completed the series in 1980 with a painting that makes the line module much bigger so that it occupies the entire surface of the canvas.

5. TRIBUTE TO AGNES MARTIN

In this series of paintings from 2023, Soledad Sevilla pays tribute to the Canadian painter Agnes Martin (1912–2004), in an exercise that takes her from Sempere to Martin and from Martin back to Sempere. It is the beautiful paintings of parallel lines of Agnes Martin, the pale blues, pinks and yellows used in them, but also the words of the artist where she describes how geometry *is the path towards that plane of attention and awareness where the mind knows what the eye has not yet seen*, which provides Sevilla with the necessary impetus to embark on this honorary series that is on display here for the first time.

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6. ESPERANDO A SEMPERE. First series

Soledad Sevilla began the *Esperando a Sempere* series by working with colour gradations, testing formats and techniques, experimenting in order to progress or regress, to exhaust the possibilities. "In one single painting I cannot say everything I want to say; I need more paintings, more moments. Ideas are hard to develop, they are almost like a book, like a novel that is structured in chapters, in stages; there is something to tell there and you have to do it step by step. [...] Once that image comes close to or resembles, what I want to achieve, there is also a whole task of developing and perfecting it, of exhausting it." This series of large colour paintings was left unfinished, on a path that the artist herself decided had run its course. It is on display here for the first time.

7. ESPERANDO A SEMPERE, HORIZONTES AZULES Y HORIZONTES BLANCOS

The series *Esperando a Sempere*, *Horizontes azules* and *Horizontes blancos* (2022–2024) have their origin in a small gouache by Eusebio Sempere from the personal collection of Sevilla. In the summer of 2022, the artist moved her studio to Granada, while she stayed in Madrid alone with a few pencils and Sempere's gouache. From this dialogue on the concept of the horizon came graphite sketches on paper and later, these large-format paintings in which the artist retraces, in freehand acrylic, the lines previously drawn with the help of a parallel ruler, moving the canvas to cover the entire surface.

In these white ground works of art, the grey or blue lines define the space; horizontal, vertical or diagonal, they guide the visual approach and produce subtle variations that create a perceptible vibration across the painting surface. The work process, which involves physically moving along the canvas while painting, introduces minute deviations, slips, hesitations or excesses of paint that the artist embraces as an essential part of the end result. This presence of the body in the making reveals an exceptional position of the artist in the geometric tradition, where order coexists with the contingency of the gesture.

8. SEMPERE writes about SOLEDAD SEVILLA

What is painting to all of us?

Its mission, its destiny. The particular way of seeing and knowing the world (so dark).

How will we learn to truly see? Before us we have the lesson of Soledad Sevilla. Soledad is vocation and tenacity, more freedom for the air and in her solitude she traces woven meshes of lines on the canvas to face the challenge of life.

Without music the soul does not exist, without colour our blindness becomes evident, and Soledad Sevilla is the sum of the harmony and the sound and the wonder before the rainbow.

She herself, with a face that looks like wax, smiles at us sadly; but her eyes, abyssal clarity, draw us into a world unknown, like the sea. The sea of her paintings, a geometry that we love. I mean, that makes us love.

Everything is relative when we compare: the ice cubes and the fire, the whiteness and the demons, the blood and the peace. But Soledad is so pure in her feelings that she forces us to cry out inwardly that her adventure is thrilling and even more so! Soledad Sevilla is outstanding.

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Why talk about painting if you are looking at it? Painting is not for chit-chat. But one must look!

Eusebio Sempere, 1978

9. SOLEDAD SEVILLA writes about SEMPERE

I arrived in Madrid in 1966 and shortly afterwards I met Eusebio Sempere in the Centro de Cálculo at the University of Madrid. Very soon a deep and affectionate friendship formed between us. We saw each other every week. [...]

Our visits and conversations became more and more frequent. In those years of the Centro de Cálculo, our work was labelled as being very cold. It always seemed paradoxical to me that, while this was the general feeling, I saw pure sensitivity, emotion and beauty in Sempere. He was a true reflection of his paintings, not so much the other way round: someone exquisite, yet modest and humble, which made him even greater. Endearing, courteous, affectionate... he has left me with the memory of the sensitive person that he was and I feel that his paintings convey that memory of mine, and they can tell those who did not know him personally about all of this.

At that time there was no intellectual framework, no corpus of thought in Spain, like there might have been before or even later, which might favour dialogue about the creative process. Everything revolved around formality and there was no voice to lead us or provide us with a theoretical framework. It was not until much later that attention was paid to Spanish art beyond its forms and appearances. Contrary to what one might think, given the period, the late sixties and early seventies, the concept didn't seem to exist compared to the formal, which in other parts of the world had long since been left behind of its own accord.

More than just an artistic stance, getting into the Centro de Cálculo was a reaction against the Academy for us, where we had been trained. But it would be a return journey, a fresh start in another place that was neither those origins nor that technology, at least in my case. In time I came to think that the machine, that IBM computer that occupied an entire room, was not in itself a promise of anything. It was slow; it was just another instrument with many limitations as an artistic tool. It was demystified and now I feel that its radical modernity is like a product of its time, but precisely for that reason, very much constrained by it.

Today I meet Sempere again and he rewrites my memory. Eusebio, always surprising, always up-to-date, continually aspiring to timelessness.

Soledad Sevilla, 2019