Spencer Finch: No Ordinary Blue

15 March 2019 – 04 May 2019 / Lisson Gallery (67 Lisson Street) / Art Categories Events, Exhibition / Art Tags Lisson Gallery, Spencer Finch / / / / /

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With light and colour as his subject matter, the Brooklyn-based artist creates ethereal, poetic work, recreating his journeys and experiences with the natural world in watercolour, photography, installation, video and drawing. Many of his works delve into a specific time and place in history with the objective of recreating those conditions – from the rising sun in Homer’s Iliad to the passing clouds in Emily Dickinson’s Before I got my eye put out – while others, such as 102 Colors from My Dreams (2002), document the colours he saw in his sleep. Determined to capture the ineffable, elusive experiences of our existence, Finch’s work is at once an impressive technical feat and a magical, delicate snapshot of an elapsed moment.
Galleries Now
15 March 2019

Spencer Finch: No Ordinary Blue
Lisson Gallery
London
Fri 15 Mar 2019 to Sat 4 May 2019
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Following the artist’s involvement in recent large-scale public projects – from *Trying To Remember the Color of the Sky on That September Morning* (2014) at the National September 11 Memorial Museum in New York, to his latest commission, *A Cloud Index* suspended above Crossrail’s new Paddington Station (2019) – this intimate exhibition sees Finch return to the studio, presenting a series of new works alongside recent and historic work.
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The first room in the gallery is dedicated to Finch's diptychs which explore subjectivity, variation and change (multiplicity). The exhibition will include new and recent work including Passing Cloud (Studio Table) (2018), Color Test – 111 (2019), Blue-Violet (2019) and As Blind Men learn the Sun (passing cloud) (2018), alongside previous works such as Rainbow (Dunedin) (2008), a recording of two sites where Finch determined the arc of a rainbow had begun and ended. Articulating both the lingering awe of the natural phenomenon and its transitory nature, Finch captures how fleeting the optical event is – like colour; time, memory, and life itself. Hung at a distance from each other, Finch leaves the viewer to fill in the missing colours and complete their own rainbow.

This room also features 2,562.451.2 Km 4/13/08, 4pm/4/14/08 4pm (2008) – a pair of archival inkjet prints taken exactly one day apart, documenting the barely perceptible shifts in the shadows on the artist's studio wall created by the light streaming in through the window. The subtle changes recorded in the photos trace an astronomical change in the earth's position as it orbits the sun; the title referring to the precise distance that the earth travelled in the twenty-four hour period between the photographs.

In the second room, under the theme of gravity, Finch presents works such as his Falling Leaves series, tracing the paths of leaves and matching their colours. While these works embody Finch's scientific methodology, patiently and systematically investigating these phenomena, they also remind us of the romance of Finch's practice; Finch's devotion to the documentation of his surroundings reflects a deep appreciation. Two of the works exhibited in this room, including Falling Leaf (2019) and the installation, Falling Cherry Blossoms (2019), are rendered in watercolour on folded paper that, when unravelled, create the illusion of the gentle tumbling leaf or multiple cherry blossoms falling from the tree.

Continuing the impulse to bring the outside in, light is the focus of the upstairs gallery. Finch's fascination with light belongs to a long tradition: the sun has occupied the minds of scientists, philosophers, writers and artists since the dawn of human history, exploring optics and perception, as well as the connection to knowledge (the 'enlightenment') and religion. The exhibition will feature works such as After Image of the sun (Winter sunset) and Sunset (after Monet) both 2019, an homage to Claude Monet who Finch referred to as creating "an experimental laboratory for certain optical effects." Many of the works in the exhibition, including Sun reflection (gold) (2019) – the recording of the sun's reflections recreated in gold leaf – try to capture the ever-changing experience of light as filtered through colours that Monet himself experienced and painted, creating an Impressionist painting for the twenty-first century.

Installation view of Spencer Finch at Lisson Gallery, London, 15 March – 4 May 2019 © Spencer Finch; Courtesy Lisson Gallery
ART CITIES: London—Spencer Finch

Spencer Finch is best known for light installations that visualise his experience of natural phenomena. His investigations into the nature of light, color, memory and perception manifest in watercolors, drawings, video and photographs. Compelled by what he describes as “the impossible desire to see oneself seeing”, Finch holds up an enchanting prism between the outer world and inner thought. He distills his observations of the world into glowing abstract colour but also diverts them through cultural and historical filters.

By Efi Michalarou
Photo: Lisson Gallery Archive

Spencer Finch’s solo exhibition "No Ordinary Blue" focuses on three central preoccupations in his work: subjectivity, gravity and light, presenting a series of new works alongside recent and historic work. The first room in the Lisson Gallery is dedicated to Finch’s diptychs which explore subjectivity, variation and change (multiplicity). The exhibition includes new and recent work including “Passing Cloud (Studio Table)” (2018), “Color Test-111” (2019), “Blue-Violet” (2019) and “As Blind Men Learn the sun (passing cloud)” (2018), alongside previous works such as “Rainbow (Dunedin)” (2008), a recording of two sites where Finch determined the arc of a rainbow had begun and ended. Articulating both the lingering awe of the natural phenomenon and its transitory nature, Finch captures how fleeting the optical event is, like color, time, memory, and life itself. Hung at a distance from each other, Finch leaves the
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Info: Lisson Gallery, 67 Lisson Street, London, Duration: 14/3-4/5/19, Days & Hours: Mon-Fri
10:00-18:00, Sat 11:00-17:00, www.lissongallery.com

Spencer Finch, Sunlight in an Empty Room (Passing Cloud for Emily Dickinson, Amherst, MA, August 28, 2004) [Detail],
2004, 100 fluorescent lights, filters, clothespins, Dimensions variable, © Spencer Finch, Courtesy the artist and Lisson
Gallery
Spencer Finch, Paris/Texas, 2008, Sandblasted stained glass, Installation view: ArtPace-San Antonio, Texas, 30.5 x 71.1 cm. © Spencer Finch, Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery.

Spencer Finch, Sunset (South Texas, 6/21/03), 2003, Fluorescent lights, filters, 40.6 x 101.6 cm. © Spencer Finch, Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery.

Spencer Finch, Moonlight (Luna County New Mexico, July 13, 2003), 2005, Filters and tape, Dimensions variable, © Spencer Finch, Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery.

Spencer Finch: No Ordinary Blue

Art ∈ Lisson Gallery, Lisson Grove  Until Saturday May 4 2019

If Londoners don't already know the name 'Spencer Finch', they will when the Elizabeth Line finally opens. The artist is behind a huge ‘skyscape’ for the Paddington part of the new line that changes colour according to time of day and weather (rather, umm... like the *actual* sky??). Get up to speed with the artist's work in the rather more intimate setting of Lisson Gallery. The artworks are all variations on the theme of light, including a few reflecting on the changing seasons.
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The contrasting work of Spencer Finch and Channa Horwitz at Lisson Gallery

By Ian Caldwell on 15/04/2019

While weary travellers passing through Paddington Station in London await Spencer Finch’s artwork of clouds to uplift their day when the new Crossrail Station opens, a short walk away across Edgware Road Finch’s work fills two floors Lisson Gallery in Lisson Street in anticipation of what is to come. Many of his works, such as ‘Darkness (Artist Studio February 16 & 17 2019)’, ‘Blue Violet’, ‘Rainbow (Dunedin)’, ‘Colour Test – III’ and ‘As Blind Men learn the sun (passing cloud)’ are diptychs, while ‘Colour Notes (Winter)’ is a long series of 25 works, all demonstrating his interest and exploration of natural forms and phenonema, while the most subtle of all, appropriate for springtime, is his large installation ‘Falling Cherry Blossom’ faces out onto the London streetscape with a solitary tree and the sky beyond bringing nature into the gallery.

Walk along Bell Street to the other Lisson Gallery and the naturalism of Finch’s work gives way to the precision of Channa Horwitz. As you enter, the atmosphere created by the white walls, the diffuse natural and artificial lighting is immersive; as clean as a scientific laboratory to show her precise mathematical drawings in pen and ink, disrupted however by a distracting noise which draws you downstairs to a light and sound translation of one of Horwitz’s ‘Sonakinatography’ works by Haroon Mirza.

These are reminiscent of the precise mathematical patterns which, as a young architecture student, I had to draw in my first year of studies, but taken into another more complex and refined level determined by self-determined rules, most being in black and white, but a few having the introduction of colour, plus movement in her film ‘And Then They Were None’. Fascinating to explore, especially the large works which change subtly from tile to tile.