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22 April 2025



Spencer Finch and Lindsay Adams to create large-scale commissions for Obama Presidential Center

The centre in Chicago will feature a tiled installation by Finch and a bright, abstract composition by Adams



Spencer Finch is creating a new installation at the Obama Presidential Center in Chicago
Photo by Matthew Herrmann, Courtesy Hill Art Foundation, New York

The Obama Presidential Center has commissioned new site-specific works by the artists Spencer Finch and Lindsay Adams for buildings on its 19-acre campus, located in the Woodlawn neighbourhood on Chicago's South Side. Scheduled to open in the first half of 2026, the centre will include more than 20 commissioned artworks, most of which will be in spaces that are free and open to the public.

Finch, known for his immersive installations that explore colour and memory, will create an installation of wall tiles that invokes the palettes of four cities—Honolulu, Nairobi, Jakarta and Chicago itself—that were formative to former US president Barack Obama's development. The commission from the Chicago-based painter Adams, an installation reimagining one of her gestural, gem-coloured abstract paintings, is titled *Weary Blues* after the Langston Hughes poem [of the same name](#).

Previously announced commissions for the centre include a garden with a [Maya Lin-designed fountain](#), a monumental sculpture by the Chicago artist Richard Hunt and an [83ft-tall stained glass window in the museum building's façade](#) by Julie Mehretu, which stretches vertically along much of the granite-clad tower.

The centre “will be an arts destination in its own right”, says Louise Bernard, the director of the Obama Presidential Center Museum. “I think that may be unexpected for many people when they think about presidential libraries and museums, that art would be such a central focus.”

She points to the enduring importance of the arts to the former First Couple, from their work with artists in the White House to acquiring new pieces for its permanent collection, including an Alma Thomas painting, the [first acquisition by a Black woman artist](#) [↗](#), which took pride of place in the White House dining room.

Key to the centre's curatorial vision, Bernard says, is to feature both emerging and established artists, and to strike a balance between works that have local, national and international roots. Bernard was connected to both Finch and Adams by Virginia Shore, the centre's commissioning curator, who previously served as the director of the Art in Embassies programme.

When she first encountered paintings by Adams—who is from Washington, DC and currently completing her MFA at School of the Art Institute of Chicago—Bernard recalls being “struck by the bold nature of her abstraction [and] the powerful sense of her connection to colour”, as well as by “how much power and potential she has as a young artist working today”. For the commission, Adams will translate her 2024 painting *Weary Blues* into silkscreened panels on fabric, which will be installed in the public cafe area at the centre.

“I hope that [viewers] can feel the movement of the colour and the mood and just sit with it, because my work can often serve as a place of meditation and reflection,” Adams says. The piece is an exploration of “memory and imagination, and what place and home might feel like”, she adds.

The commissions also offer opportunities for artists to explore working in media that are new to them, Bernard says. Adams, who described herself as a “very traditional painter”, had not previously used screenprinting in her work. The façade commission was also the first time that Mehretu, who is known for many-layered abstract paintings, worked in glass.

Finch's piece was inspired by the former president's 1995 memoir, *Dreams of My Father*. “The building, the whole centre, is so much about the president and his relationship to Chicago and the world, that I really wanted it to be connected to him,” the artist says.

Finch has previously used colour to invoke a monumental sense of time and place. His commission for the National September 11 Memorial & Museum in New York, *Trying to Remember the Color of the Sky on That September Morning*, is an installation of 2,983 tiles, each one representing a victim of the 2001 and 1993 attacks and the brilliant blue of the sky on 11 September 2001. For his commission at the Obama Presidential Center, Finch created sets of colour swatches that reference descriptions of Honolulu, Nairobi, Jakarta and Chicago and sent these to Obama, who made the final selection himself. The nearly 70ft-long tiled mural will be installed in the lower level lobby of the campus's Forum building, which will include an auditorium and restaurant.

In addition to the Forum and the Museum buildings, the campus will also include a new branch of the Chicago Public Library, partially underground and topped with a walkable green roof; an athletic facility with a full-sized basketball court, training and wellness areas; and outdoor and green spaces with plazas, walking paths and a vegetable garden.

Since 2015, when the nearby University of Chicago won the bid to serve as an institutional partner for the centre, the project has been met with concern by some longtime residents and elected officials, who fear the project could lead to displacement [↗](#) in the predominantly Black neighbourhoods of Woodlawn and South Shore, where Michelle Obama grew up.

LISSON GALLERY

*Design*Milk
23 September 2025



Spencer Finch Transports Viewers Through Time and Space

09.23.25 | By David Behringer



[VIEW SLIDESHOW](#)

Spencer Finch, *Moonlight (Reflected in a Pond)*, 2025

Spencer Finch will change how you look. The Brooklyn-based artist doesn't just create captivating art objects; he invites visitors to notice the color of light in the gallery itself – a specific spectrum that can transport you to a different time and place. If you've never experienced a Spencer Finch installation, I highly recommend a visit to his current exhibition "One Hundred Famous Views of New York City (After Hiroshige)" at James Cohan gallery in New York, on view now through October 4, 2025.

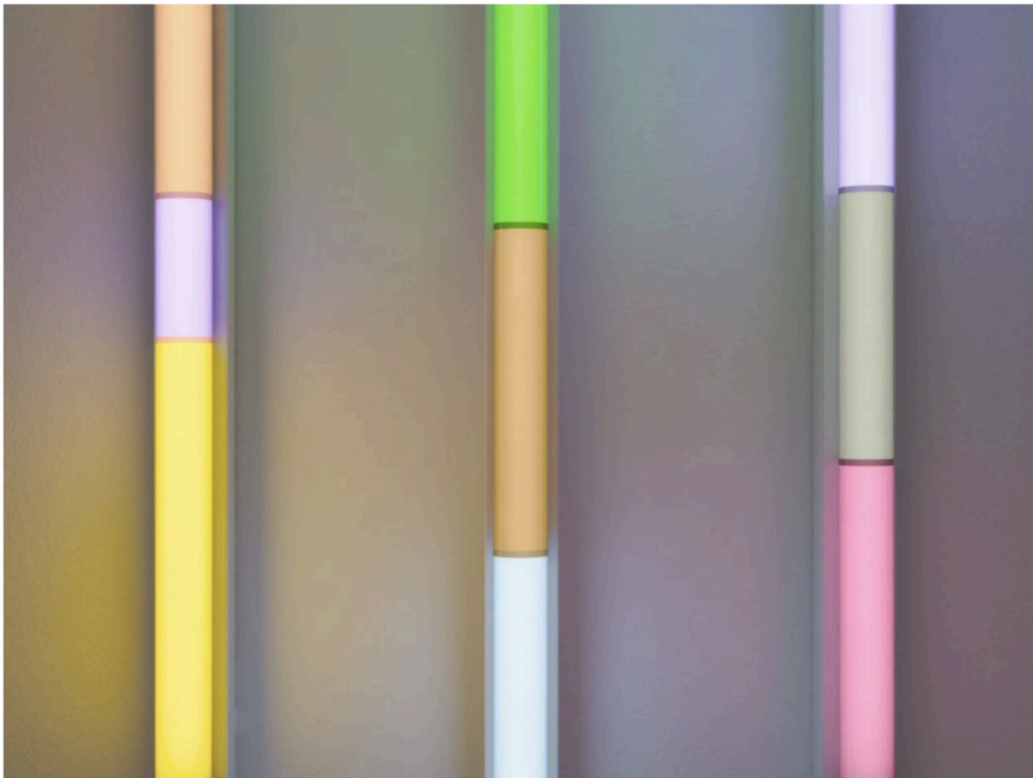


Spencer Finch, Haiku (First Snow, Woods, Winter), 2025

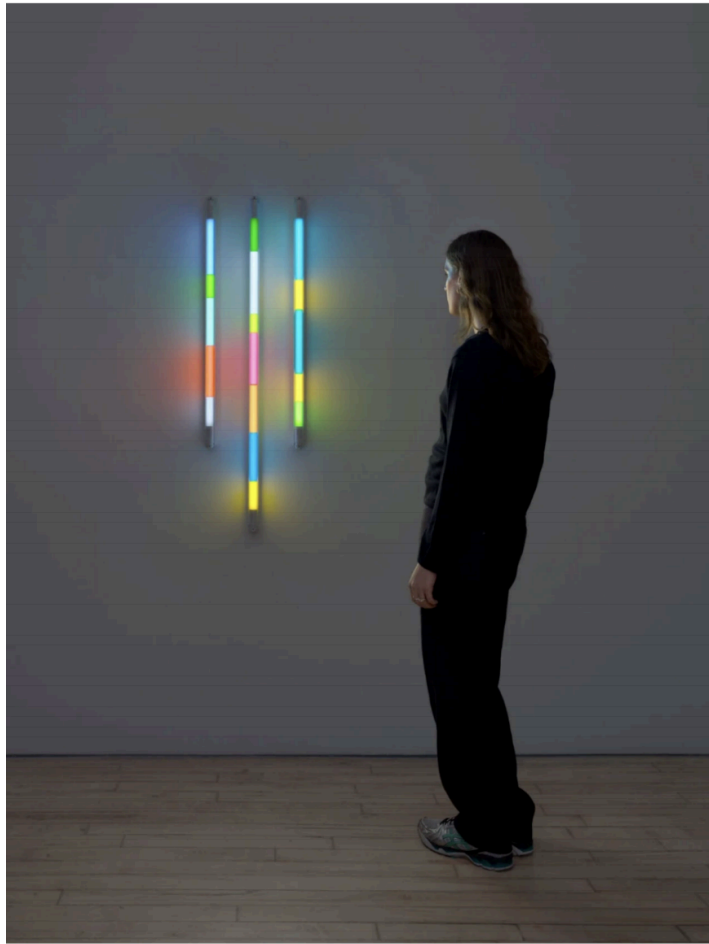
LED lights (resembling fluorescent light tubes) wrapped in colorful filters. The total combination of light that each casts into the room perfectly matches the daylight from a different time and place, measured by the artist. The works on view here are each from a different season – winter through autumn – allowing you to walk through the light of a full year in a single hallway. Each also contains visual hints to that time and place, like in the "Autumn" work (below) for example, where the small orange sections recall falling oak leaves. The three-column shape is inspired by the Japanese haiku in both its verticality and the number of colors in each – using the "5,7,5" syllabic rules of the poetry format and including exactly 17 sections. In other words, each of these is a haiku poem that uses color rather than syllables to result in a total light projection that matches a precisely measured moment in time.



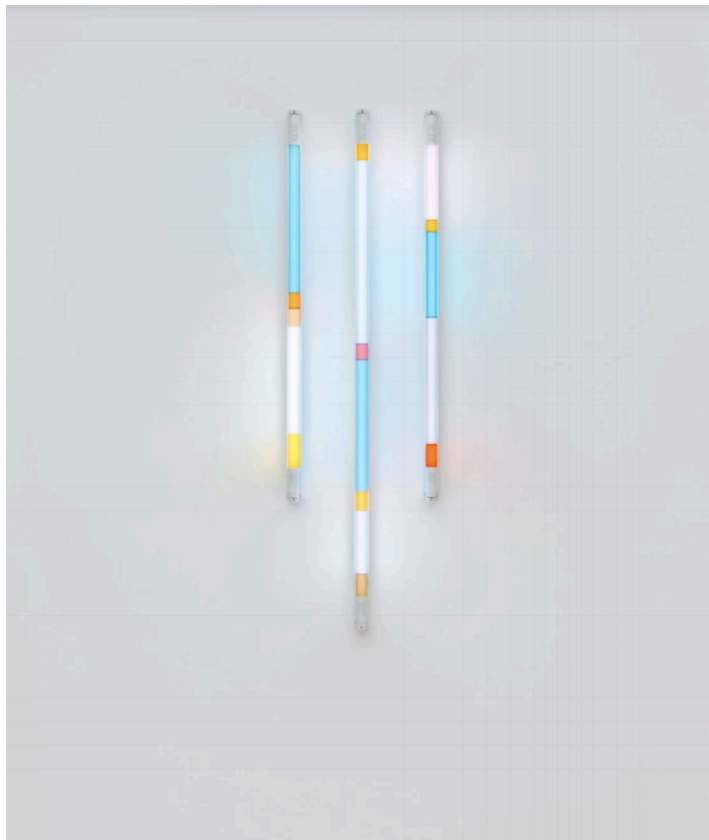
Spencer Finch, Haiku (Wisteria on a Stone Wall, Spring), 2025



Spencer Finch, Haiku (Wisteria on a Stone Wall, Spring), 2025
(detail)



Spencer Finch, Haiku (Summer Afternoon), 2025



Spencer Finch, Haiku (Oak Leaves Falling in the Sky, Autumn), 2025



Spencer Finch, *Moonlight (Reflected in a Pond)*, 2025

The biggest work in the gallery has a similar light-changing precision. "Moonlight (Reflected in a Pond), 2025" consists of dozens of blown-glass panels that lean against an existing wall of windows in the gallery. These accurately translate sunlight into a measured moment of moonlight in New England as it reflected off a pond. Perception meets imagination in a work as intelligent as it is beautiful. And note that within this room, the gallery has turned off all artificial lights above!

The work is inspired by the Japanese tradition of moon-viewing that honors the autumn moon, again inviting us to experience the light of a different time and place where we stand.



Spencer Finch, Moonlight (Reflected in a Pond), 2025 (detail)



You'll find yourself stepping around and weaving between piles of bricks on the floor – a single site-specific work titled "Fourteen Stones, 2025." Inspired by Ryoan-ji, the 15th-century Zen Garden in Kyoto, Finch uses common concrete bricks to reproduce the shapes of the garden's 15 stones – here arranged so only 14 are visible from any corner at a time – a nod to the same idea at the original centuries-old garden, where only a fraction of all stones can be seen at one time.



Spencer Finch, One Hundred Famous Views of New York City (After Hiroshige), 2025

The final room holds 42 framed watercolors that offer another fascinating connection between New York and Japan through a more traditional art material and method. Finch painted these fractional images by using Hiroshige's series "One Hundred Famous Views of Edo" as a template for exploring New York City's landscape. By overlaying maps of both 19th-century Edo (now Tokyo) and contemporary New York, Finch visited and photographed corresponding locations of Hiroshige's woodblock print views. He then extracted forms from the original ukiyo-e prints as templates to paint small sections from his New York photographs. The result is an overlap where historic Edo and contemporary New York exist simultaneously through cut-out shapes, inviting viewers to appreciate, investigate, and connect the two times and locations. I highly recommend exploring Hiroshige's original series.



Spencer Finch, One Hundred Famous Views of New York City (After Hiroshige), 2025



Spencer Finch, *One Hundred Famous Views of New York City (After Hiroshige)*, 2025

While Japanese visual culture has long influenced Spencer Finch's work – dating back to his teenage years studying pottery in Kyoto – this exhibition is the artist's first exhibition fully dedicated to that influence. The result is a must-visit exhibition that is dazzling, cerebrally satisfying, and rich in respect and gratitude for both Japan and New York City.



Spencer Finch, Moonlight (Reflected in a Pond), 2025 (detail)

What: Spencer Finch: One Hundred Famous Views of New York City (After Hiroshige)

Where: James Cohan, 52 Walker Street, New York NY (2nd floor)

When: September 5 – October 4, 2025

Sculpture Magazine
10 February 2023

sculpture A PUBLICATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCULPTURE CENTER



Painting Air, 2022. Glass, hardware, and wall painting, dimensions variable. Photo: Matthew Herrmann

Spencer Finch: Seeing and Knowing

February 10, 2023 by Stephen Petersen

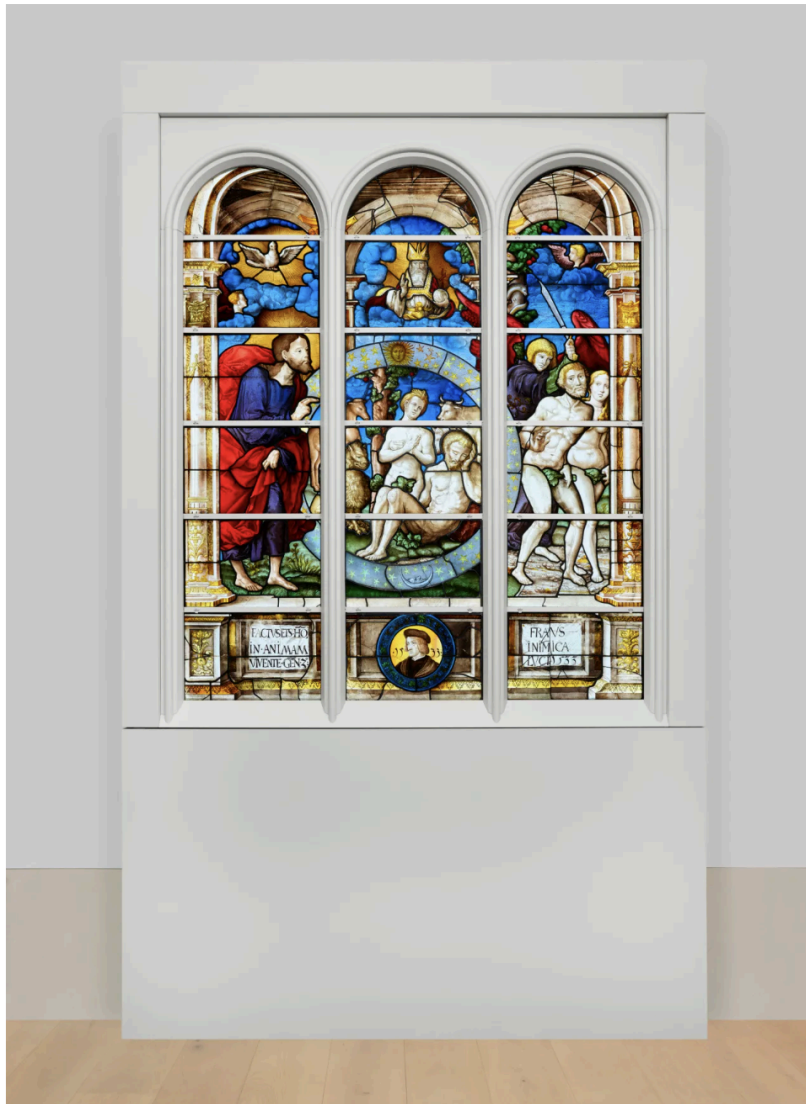
Spencer Finch is interested in shifting light, both as a subject and as an artistic method. He is fascinated with changes in light at different times of the day and year, from one location to another, and with how light shifts as it is refracted through atmosphere, clouds, and windows, or reflected in different surfaces. To explore these changes in his work, he employs a variety of transparent, tinted, translucent, reflective, and diaphanous materials that alter or shift the quality of light. Ultimately, he wants to create what he calls “constantly changing optical events,” where light is continually shifting.



The River That Flows Both Ways, 2009. 700 colored panes of glass, 120 x 12 ft. View of installation at the High Line, New York. Photo: Iwan Baan

Over the course of a three-decade career, Finch has worked in and across a range of media, consistently probing the complexities of vision—how we see and how we know what we see. His work is both extremely methodical and highly whimsical, and it draws almost equally on science and poetry. “Lux and Lumen: Spencer Finch,” a solo exhibition currently on view at the Hill Art Foundation, offers an opportunity not only to reflect on the persistent themes in his work, but also to glimpse some fresh investigations.

As a point of departure for the show, Finch turned to *The Creation and the Expulsion from Paradise*, a large 16th-century stained-glass window by the French master glazier Valentin Bousch recently acquired by the foundation. Finch’s works have long featured colored glass windows—most notably *The River That Flows Both Ways* (2009), the inaugural commission for the High Line, and a 12-story glass façade for the Johns Hopkins Medical Center in Baltimore begun the same year. “Lux and Lumen” underscores this connection through its title, which references the distinction made by Abbot Suger in the 12th century between ordinary sunlight and the sanctified light that passes through stained glass. The ability of stained glass to transform one sort of light into another has been a central theme of Finch’s work for two decades.



Valentin Bousch, *The Creation and the Expulsion from Paradise*, 1533. Stained glass and vitreous enamel, 114 x 90 in. Photo: Matthew Herrmann

A new version of *Painting Air*, an ambitious installation first created for the RISD Museum in 2012, fills a two-story gallery at the Hill. The title comes from Claude Monet's characterization of his attempts to capture the play of light in the atmosphere. *Painting Air* reimagines Monet's gardens at Giverny, which Finch understands as being less about horticulture or landscape design than about "creating a kind of laboratory for light and reflections," where the visual depths of the pond and the reflections on its surface create a "complex optical space." Finch notes that glass, like water, is both transparent and reflective. For *Painting Air*, he painted overlapping squares of color, drawn from specific hues found at Giverny, on the walls, and then suspended dozens of transparent glass squares, with varying degrees of reflectivity, from slender cables, so they are free to turn in the ambient breeze and reflect their surroundings at ever-changing angles of incidence. The resulting dynamic play of refraction and reflection creates an intricate, kinetic space of light and color.

Since the first iteration of *Painting Air*, Finch has used the device of multiple hanging panes of glass in an array of installations, some in galleries and some in public spaces. Sometimes he filters the light entering the space with colored gels, as in *Following Nature* (2013, Indianapolis Museum of Art) or *A Certain Slant of Light* (2014, Morgan Library in New York). Sometimes he fogs or color-tints the hanging panes themselves, as in *Thank You, Fog* (2016), made of whitish panes of varying translucence, or *The Western Mystery* (2017), which sampled hues of the sunset over Puget Sound, resulting in a "moving abstraction of a sunset" formed from 90 colored squares of glass.



Painting Air, 2022. Glass, hardware, and wall painting, dimensions variable. Photo: Matthew Herrmann

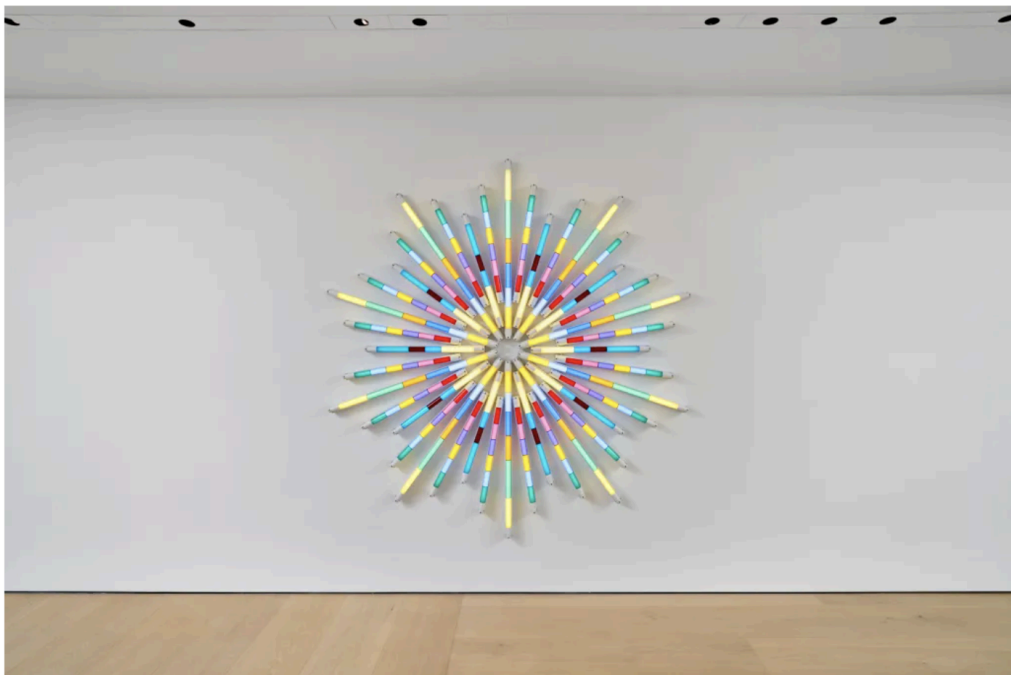
At the Hill, *Painting Air* takes on a kaleidoscopic quality. The second and third floors of the building feature oversize expanses of glass curtain wall, which, Finch notes, "brings everything in," including 10th Avenue below and the adjacent High Line. Unlike the RISD Museum version, which occupied a mostly enclosed gallery, sections of wall remain visually open here, letting light stream in and allowing multiple "unexpected things" to happen. Other works in the exhibition, along with cars and taxis speeding by, and surrounding buildings with their own rows of reflective windows, all become part of the visual field seen in and through the rotating panes.

Finch likens the overall effect of *Painting Air* to Robert Smithson's sites/nonsites: Giverny abstracted and re-presented in New York, so that one can entertain the experience of both places simultaneously. Setting disparate locations into a sort of dialectic has been a theme in his work at least since *Paris/Texas* (2003), in which he used stained glass to convert the summer sun in San Antonio into the cool tones of a Paris winter. Finch has recently taken to enacting more ambitious acts of displacement. In 2016, he re-created an entire California redwood forest out of living saplings at 1:100 scale for *Lost Man Creek* in Brooklyn. And in 2018, he simulated—at full scale—the 15-stone Zen rock garden at Kyoto's Ryōan-ji temple within the reflecting pool of the Mies van der Rohe Pavilion in Barcelona, which he playfully termed "dropping a version of Ryōan-ji into the reflecting pool of the Pavilion."



Fifteen Stones (Ryoan-ji), 2018. 15 Stones, 71.5 x 32.33 ft. View of installation at the Barcelona Pavilion, Fundació Mies van der Rohe. Photo: Anna Mas

Another “nonsite” is featured in “Lux and Lumen.” *Rose Window at Saint-Denis (morning effect)*, made specially for the show, consists of a nine-foot-wide circle of radiating tubes of LED lights with a variety of colored filters designed to reproduce the morning light that emanates from the north rose window of the Basilica of Saint-Denis in Paris (Abbott Suger’s home church). Finch used a colorimeter to measure the particular color of the light on site, then artificially matched it with precision using a combination of gels, a technique that he has worked with for many years to re-create the specific light effects of one place in another. The rays of the tubes visually echo the Rayonnant style of the Gothic rose window at Saint-Denis while alluding symbolically to the sun as the source of light. Typical for Finch, the materials are laid bare in Minimalist fashion. As in a Dan Flavin work, the tubes act as visual components in themselves and cast glowing colored light on the wall, here to dazzling effect.



Rose Window at Saint-Denis (morning effect), 2022. LED fixtures, LED lamps, and filters, 76.5 in. diameter. Photo: Matthew Herrmann

For Finch, the use of gels with artificial lighting is analogous to his use of stained-glass windows to re-create a color atmosphere, not only in the workings of color filtration to create specific lighting situations, but also in the opportunity for aesthetic play as a kind of supplement. Within the demands of having to reproduce an overall color measurement, he is free to combine and arrange units of individual color in almost limitless ways. *Rose Window* features five different blues, three sorts of yellows, two reds, and a pink, creating a lush mandala and evoking the fluorescent equivalent of a Kenneth Noland target painting.

On the second level, a window bay is filled with a new version of *CIE 529/418 (candlelight)*, a stained-glass work from 2007. Taking its name from the Commission Internationale de l'Eclairage (International Commission on Illumination), which standardizes the measurement of light in architectural spaces in accordance with a codified system of coordinates, the work uses multiple panes of glass in a variety of colors to filter the full spectrum of daylight down to the wavelength of a single candle flame, altering the light environment of the interior.



Candlelight (CIE 529/418), 2022. Stained glass and steel frame, dimensions variable. Photo: Matthew Herrmann

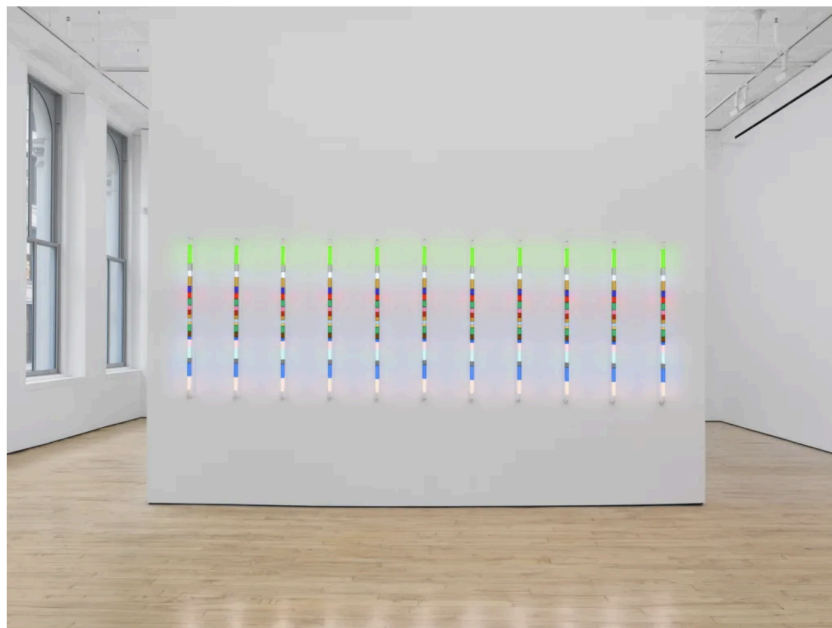
As in the case of *Painting Air*, this is not just a re-installation but a re-conception of the earlier work. As originally installed at MASS MoCA, *CIE 529/418 (candlelight)* consisted of a regular grid of 69 panes of sandblasted colored glass, installed in the old factory windows. In New York, Finch opted for hand-blown stained glass of a type used in European cathedrals, with a rich texture and sumptuous color. The pieces of glass are not regular panes, but large, hand-cut slabs with uneven edges. Arranged in a steel frame in three registers, they form what Finch calls a “casual installation,” with the glass laid in overlapping fashion to create a whole variety of intermediary colors. And unlike the first, sandblasted version, this glass allows the view through to become part of the piece: one can make out buildings, clouds, and people passing by on the High Line.

Photographs, drawings, and other works likewise investigate the idea of the window as a visual threshold, underscoring the central place of glass in Finch’s work. A group of oil pastel drawings based on infrared measurements recording the temperature of Finch’s studio window over the course of a summer day allude to *The Secret Life of Glass*, a major “window” work recently produced for the Corning Museum of Glass. There, Finch measured heat distinctions, invisible to the eye, in the museum’s glass curtain wall and translated the numerical readings into wave forms, assigning particular colors that he found in the palette of Henri Matisse. Glassmakers then produced a huge colored window from fused glass, which Finch installed slightly in front of the original curtain wall. At certain times of day, the building’s atrium becomes bathed in saturated colors, “lux” turning into “lumen.”



The Secret Life of Glass, 2020. Stained glass and steel frame, 12 x 28 ft. View of installation at Corning Museum of Glass, Corning, NY. Photo: Collection The Corning Museum of Glass

For “We send the wave to find the wave,” a recent solo exhibition at James Cohan in New York, Finch focused on the concept of “seeing.” The central work, *RGB (White)* (2022), consisted of an LED light box with red, green, and blue dots diagramming the components of white light as the eye sees them and allowing us, as he says, to see “how we see.” The first of two exhibition spaces in the gallery was devoted to works exploring color and optics in a variety of media, dominated by *Bauhaus Light (Kandinsky’s Studio/Klee’s Studio, afternoon effect)*. Arrayed on either side of a freestanding wall (the Bauhaus studios of the two friends shared a common wall), rows of vertical LED tubes (11 per side) with stripes of filtered gels keyed to specific colors used by Klee and Kandinsky cast tinted light reproducing colorimetric measurements that Finch took in the artists’ studios on an afternoon visit. When a version of this work was shown in Berlin in 2017, the two sets of lights were on facing walls of a single gallery space. Here, they turned away from each other, still constituting a single work, though it could not be seen all at once—a subtle distinction, but one that in its literal two-sidedness hints at the relativity and subjectivity of vision, the theme of the second gallery space, where Finch presented a new and, in some ways, unexpected work.



Bauhaus Light (Kandinsky’s Studio/Klee’s Studio, afternoon effect), 2022. 22 4-in. LED fixtures, 22 LED lamps and filters, each side: 48 x 145 in., overall dimensions variable. Photo: Dan Bradica, © Spencer Finch 2023, Courtesy the artist and James Cohan, New York

North Atlantic Ocean (April 14, 1912, 11:40pm) was preceded by an explanatory text that read, “No one on board the Titanic, not even the lookout who alerted the captain, saw the iceberg in its entirety on the moonless night of April 14, 1912.” Exactly what the iceberg looked like has been the subject of conjecture and disagreement; the best extant images (three photographs and a drawing) were made either the day before or the day after the sinking of the Titanic, depicting likely icebergs in the general area. Finch took those four images as the basis for a single sculpture, with each one represented “at 90-degree intervals around the sculpture.” After entering the room, viewers were asked to allow three minutes for their eyes to adjust before walking around the sculpture.

At first, the space was bathed in darkness. With time, a ghostly, whitish peak started to become visible; then more pinnacles and crags emerged. After several minutes, one could see well enough to examine and walk around the large and rather strange object: a 16-foot-long, simulated “iceberg” elaborately fashioned from layers of sheer white fabric draped over an unseen wooden armature, sitting on a black table in a black space. A single, fuzzy white LED light barely illuminated the sculpture from overhead, while almost imperceptible interior lighting caused it to glow subtly from within. The intended effect, Finch explained, is a “cross between an iceberg and the ghost of an iceberg,” implying an uncertainty as to whether what one saw was really there at all.



North Atlantic Ocean (April 14, 1912, 11:40pm), 2022. Dowels, tulle, chiffon, and magnets, 180 x 192 in. Photo: Ofer Wolberger, Spencer Finch Studio, © Spencer Finch 2023, Courtesy the artist and James Cohan, New York

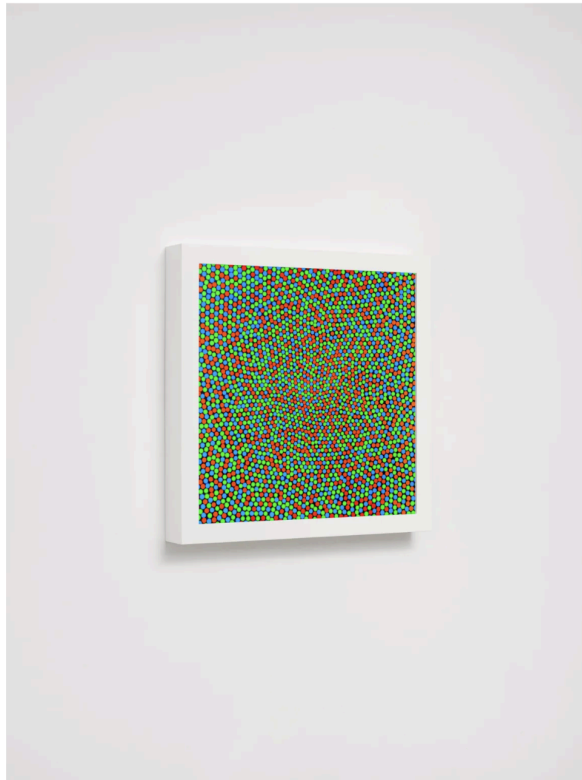
The uncharacteristically theatrical staging and the work’s almost trompe-l’oeil illusionism mark a notable departure for an artist who typically lays bare his materials and means of assembly. And yet one would scarcely mistake the folds in the filmy fabric for channels in hard ice—the sumptuousness and frivolity of the layers of silky material were evident, and, for those who allowed their eyes to adjust fully to the low light, the underlying structure of dowels and magnets could be discerned.

Finch’s iceberg connects to his well-known “passing cloud” sculptures, including *Passing Cloud (after Constable)* (2014), fashioned from crumpled white translucent gels fixed together with clothespins and suspended from filaments overhead so that ambient light showed through at varying degrees of opacity. Like these works, *North Atlantic Ocean (April 14, 1912, 11:40pm)* is a do-it-yourself, provisional arrangement (icebergs are similar to clouds in some ways: ever-changing configurations of water molecules that float around until they dissipate). Through materials and lighting, Finch’s iceberg offered the same play of reflectivity and translucence featured in his clouds and also in certain of his suspended glass works. But here, the ephemeral play was slowed down and submerged in darkness, revealing itself only over time.



Passing Cloud (After Constable), 2014. Filters, monofilament, and clothespins, dimensions variable.
Photo: Courtesy Spencer Finch Studio

Unlike other contemporary artists who have shown iceberg-inspired sculptures—Olafur Eliasson exhibited actual pieces of icebergs in Copenhagen, Paris, and London (*Ice Watch*, 2014, 2015, and 2018–19); New Zealand artist Gabby O'Connor imagined the below-sea portion of an iceberg rendered in folded paper and illuminated from within, in the gallery-filling *What Lies Beneath* (2011–14); Monica Bonvicini installed a 50-foot floating glass iceberg (*She Lies*) in the Oslo harbor in 2010—Finch does not think of his work in relation to climate change. Instead, its subject is something more subtle and ineffable, namely the inability to know objectively what has happened in the past. The folds of fabric conjure, Finch suggests, less the shards of calving glaciers than the ubiquitous drapery in European history paintings. Indeed, he sees the work as a sort of “history painting,” layered with levels of interpretation. His “iceberg,” a three-dimensional conflation of four uncertain and conflicting two-dimensional representations, becomes, for him, a “metaphor for how we understand history.” The irreconcilable images of the iceberg suggested to him the *Rashomon*-like “relativity and subjectivity of history,” a theme that he has previously explored with regard to the 9/11 attacks, the Kennedy assassination, and other momentous events.



RGB (White), 2022. LED lightbox, Fujitrans, 32 x 32 x 4 in. Photo: George Darrell, © Spencer Finch 2023, Courtesy the artist and James Cohan, New York

“We send the wave to find the wave,” the title of the James Cohan show, is, like many of Finch’s titles, taken from Emily Dickinson. In this context, it suggested both disembodied light waves (different colors derive from different wavelengths of light) and ocean waves. It also alluded to attempts at communication at a remove (perhaps not coincidentally, one of Finch’s earliest works, done almost 30 years ago, involved him literally “sending a wave” in multiple senses—he recorded his brainwaves as he watched the blue wave from the opening sequence of “Hawaii Five-O” on television, then transmitted that image as a microwave signal into outer space, aimed at Rigel, the bluest star in the night sky). In a statement released for “We send the wave to find the wave,” Finch explained, “Sometimes I am just trying to see clearly, even though I know that is impossible. Other times, I am trying to not see clearly, hoping it gives insight into that very impossibility.” In contrast to *RGB (White)*, which allows us to see how we see, *North Atlantic Ocean* tries to give insight into the very impossibility of seeing clearly, highlighting the sometimes great distance that separates seeing and knowing.

“Lux and Lumen: Spencer Finch,” at the Hill Art Foundation in New York, remains on view through March 4, 2023.

Artforum

16 September 2022

ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS NEW YORK

Spencer Finch

Hill Art Foundation | 239 Tenth Avenue, Third Floor

September 16, 2022 - March 4, 2023

By Wallace Ludel ☞



Spencer Finch, *Candlelight (CIE 529/418)*, 2022, stained glass, steel frame, dimensions variable.

Spencer Finch's efforts to rediscover and resurrect moments of ephemerality, often through re-creating specific instances of light and color—such fleeting treasures—speak to our instinct to wrest control and ownership of beauty. Finch doesn't look to this gap between our desires and reality with sorrow, but instead explores this push and pull with humor and affection. His work tells a story about human life with all its foibles and grace, reminding us how lucky we are to experience it.

The artist's show here, "Lux and Lumen," takes its title from the writings of twelfth-century historian Abbot Suger, an early champion of Gothic architecture and the steward of a cathedral in Saint-Denis, France, which serves as the subject of Finch's *Rose Window at Saint-Denis (morning effect)*, 2022, a radial composition of LEDs adhered to a wall that re-creates the morning light of the holy space. Suger wrote of the ability that stained glass has to transform everyday light, or *lux*, into the more sacred form of luminescence, *lumen*. By toying with this distinction between the divine and the ordinary, a subtle but revelatory question emerges: What light *isn't* holy?

The show was conceived around the foundation's recent acquisition and restoration of *The Creation and the Expulsion from Paradise*, 1533, a stained-glass work by French Renaissance artist Valentin Bousch. It depicts Adam and Eve on their dejected walk from Eden—the expulsion from paradise yet another metaphor for our need to find the permanent and perfect in a world that is neither. Finch selected ten of his own pieces, made between 2001 and 2022, to exhibit alongside it. Among them are *The Outer—from the Inner (Emily Dickinson's Bedroom Window at Dusk)*, 2018, a suite of seven small photographs of the window beside the eponymous poet's writing desk at her home in Amherst, Massachusetts. These images capture the progression of night; as evening grows, the windows become darker and more reflective, and the surfaces that once contained exterior views instead begin to mirror the room's interior. And *Candlelight (CIE 529/418)*, 2022, a stained-glass installation, makes the natural light from an upstairs corner of the exhibition space mimic the warmth of a candle's flame—another flickering of human yearning, another flash of the divine.

The New Yorker
30 September 2022

THE
NEW YORKER

“LUX AND LUMEN: SPENCER FINCH”

By **Andrea K. Scott**

September 30, 2022



Art work by Spencer Finch / Courtesy the artist / © Hill Art Foundation

“Inebriate of air – am I,” wrote Emily Dickinson, and the same might be said of Spencer Finch. For the past thirty years, the cerebral American artist has been translating the evanescent conditions of specific locations—the climate, the color, the light—into exhilarating installations, paintings, drawings, and photographs that harmonize the systems-based rigor of Minimalism with the unpredictable beauty of the natural world. **“Lux and Lumen: Spencer Finch,”** on view at the Hill Art Foundation through March 4, is a whirlwind retrospective of the artist’s career in ten works, seen in the company of a magnificent, newly restored Gothic stained-glass window, “The Creation and the Expulsion from Paradise,” made in 1533, by Valentin Bousch, for an Alsatian church. (A recent acquisition of the foundation’s, it once graced the Manhattan apartment of William Randolph Hearst.) The window hangs near “Painting Air,” Finch’s dazzling meditation (pictured above) on the reflections and refractions of light in a secular paradise—Monet’s garden at Giverny—based on his observations in 2012. The show also includes a lovely ode to Dickinson, from 2018: seven small color photos, taken through a window above the poet’s desk, documenting the passage of an hour at twilight. As night falls, the glass wanes in transparency, becoming a mirror. (*Hill Art Foundation; Sept. 16–March 4.*)

Published in the print edition of the October 10, 2022, issue.

Artlyst
31 March 2019

Artlyst

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 / [t](#) / [f](#) / [in](#) / [s](#) / [e](#)



Spencer Finch opens his sixth exhibition with Lisson Gallery, presenting a thematic show focusing on three central preoccupations in his work: subjectivity, gravity and light.

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.

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.

LISSON GALLERY

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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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), and 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

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Spencer Finch: No Ordinary Blue / until Saturday 4 May / @lisson_gallery London / click the link in our bio for more

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LISSON GALLERY

Dream Idea Machine

15 March 2019



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

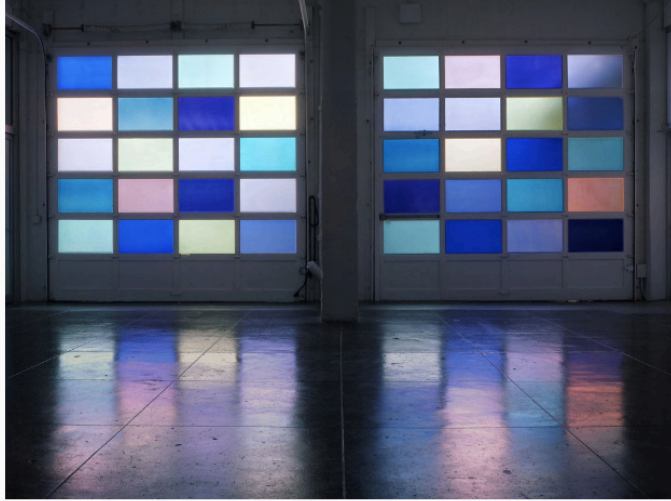
Spencer Finch’s solo exhibition “No Ordinary Blue” focuses on three central preoccupations in his work: subjectivity, gravity and light, presenting a series of new works alongside recent and historic work. The first room in the Lisson Gallery is dedicated to Finch’s diptychs which explore subjectivity, 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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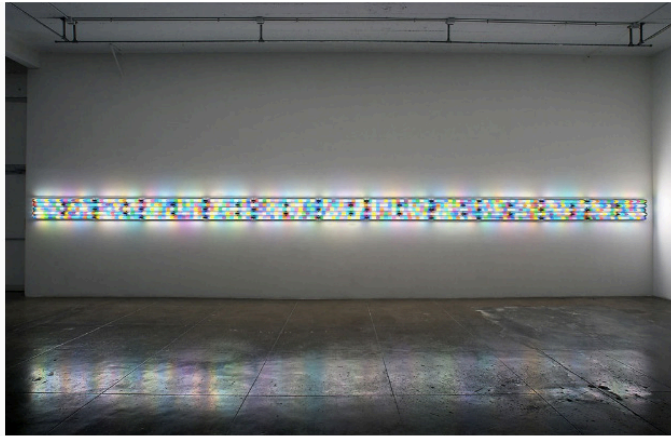
Info: Lisson Gallery, 67 Lisson Street, London, Duration: 14/3-4/5/19, Days & Hours: Mon-Fri 10:00-18:00, Sat 11:00-17:00, www.lissongallery.com



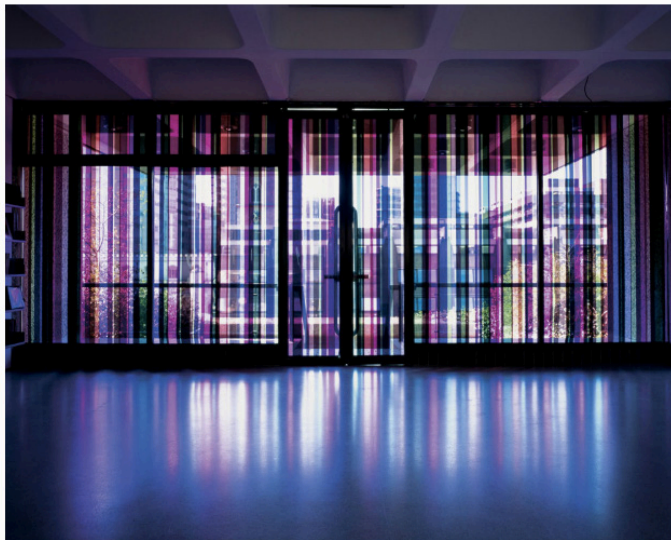
Spencer Finch, Sunlight in an Empty Room (Passing Cloud for Emily Dickinson, Amherst, MA, August 28, 2004) [Detail], 2004, 100 fluorescent lights, filters, clothespins, Dimensions variable, © Spencer Finch, Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery



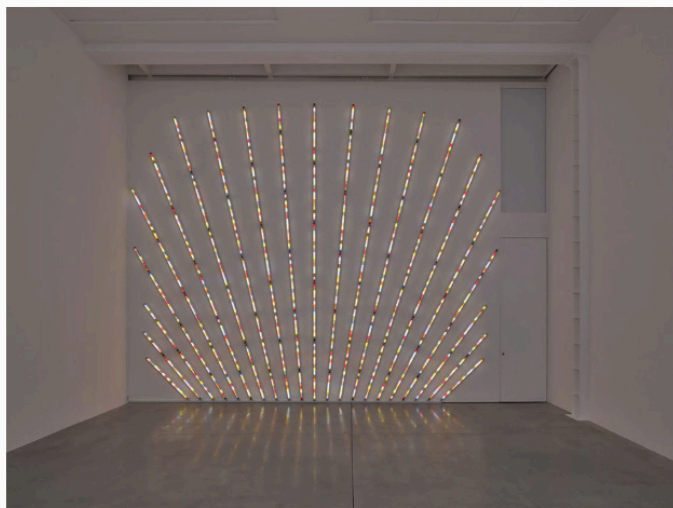
Spencer Finch, Paris/Texas, 2003, Sandblasted stained glass, Installation view: ArtPace-San Antonio, Texas, 30.5 x 71.1 cm, © Spencer Finch, Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery



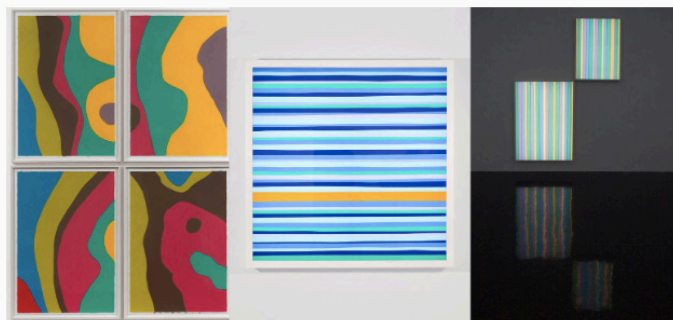
Spencer Finch, Sunset (South Texas, 6/21/03), 2003, Fluorescent lights, filters, 40.6 x 101.6 cm, © Spencer Finch, Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery



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, Mars (Sunrise), 2016, Fluorescents, fixtures, filters, Dimensions variable, size as installed at Lisson Gallery, 610 x 765 cm, © Spencer Finch, Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery



Left: Spencer Finch, Studio Window (Infrared, January, 25 2012, Morning Effect), 2012, Oil pastel on paper, 119.1 x 83.8 cm, © Spencer Finch, Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery. Center: Spencer Morning Light Walden Pond (April 18th, 2013), 2013, LED lightbox, fujitrans, 124.5 x 124.5 x 12.7 cm, © Spencer Finch, Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery. Right: Spencer Finch, Kaaterskill Falls (July 30, 2006, 12:37PM), 2006, Fluorescent light boxes with laminated filters, 188 x 127 x 20 cm and 142 x 97 x 20 cm, © Spencer Finch, Courtesy the artist and Lisson Gallery

LISSON GALLERY

TimeOut London
22 March 2019



Spencer Finch: No Ordinary Blue

Art @ [Lisson Gallery](#), Lisson Grove 📅 Until Saturday May 4 2019



Spencer Finch 'No Ordinary Blue' at Lisson Gallery, London, 15 March - 4 May 2019 © Spencer Finch. Image courtesy of Lisson Gallery

TIME OUT SAYS

DETAILS

DATES AND TIMES

USERS SAY

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.

LISSON GALLERY

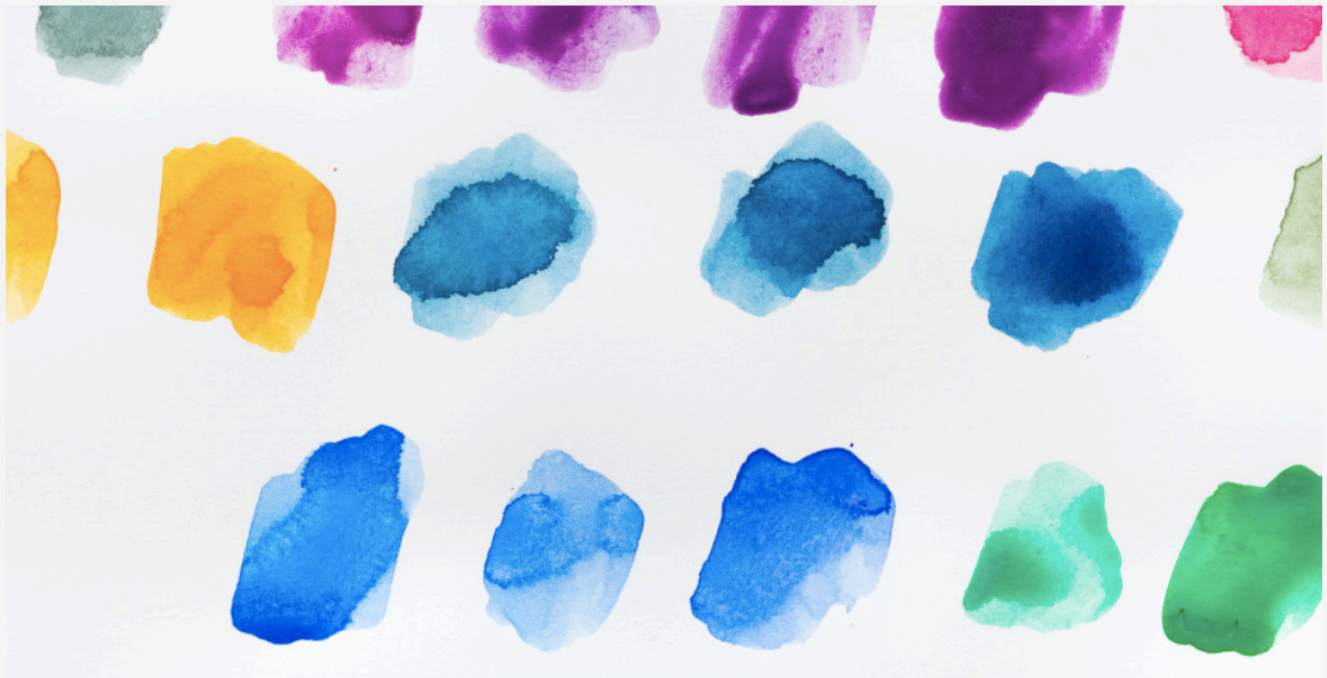
Artlyst

31 March 2019

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Spencer Finch: No Ordinary Blue

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Ian the Architect
15 April 2019

Ian The Architect

ART

ARCHITECTURE

SUSTAINABILITY

SCIENCE AND INNOVATION

You are here: [Home](#) / [The contrasting work of Spencer Finch and Channa Horwitz at Lisson Gallery](#)

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 phenomena, 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 Horowitz'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.