



52 WALKER ST | SEPT 10 – OCT 8, 2022

Spencer Finch, *Bauhaus Light (Kandinsky's Studio/ Klee's Studio, afternoon effect)*, 2022, 22 - 4' LED fixtures, 22 LED lamps and filters, 48 x 12 1/2 in. (121.9 x 31.8 cm).

Spencer Finch

We send the wave to find the wave

James Cohan is pleased to present *We send the wave to find the wave*, an exhibition of work by Spencer Finch, on view at the gallery's 52 Walker Street location from September 10 through October 8. This is Finch's fourth solo exhibition with James Cohan. The gallery will host an opening reception with the artist on Saturday, September 10 from 2 - 6 PM.

We send the wave to find the wave features new paintings, light-based work, watercolors, and major installations that deepen Finch's investigations into light, color, and the variability of human perception. The works in the first gallery are dynamic expressions of Finch's enduring interest in the ways in which color and light are translated into a formal vocabulary rooted in minimalism, yet harnessed to an expressive effect. The installation *Bauhaus Light (Kandinsky's Studio/ Klee's Studio, afternoon effect)*, 2022, installed across two sides of a wall in the center of the gallery, brings together 22 light tubes that precisely recreate light from the Bauhaus studios of Wassily Kandinsky and Paul Klee, observed and recorded by the artist in 2015. Much like the installation here, the studios of these two artists were separated by only a thin wall. The colors used in this work were pulled directly from the signature palettes of each artist but carefully adjusted by Finch to match the exact color temperatures of his recordings. Effectively, this installation serves as a portrait of the artists' studios.

The *Optical Study* paintings, a new body of work for Finch, allow the artist to play with color theory to create optical conditions that defy easy legibility. Each painting is composed of two alternating painted discs affixed to a panel of a third color. The composition of these works references Pointillism, but as three-dimensional relief sculptures, the light and shadow cast from the discs upon the substrate create additional layers of visual complexity and optical confusion. The format, with each triptych presenting three permutations of colors, draws upon the minimalist language of Sol Lewitt, yet these works are, in Finch's words, "weirdly impressionistic." The

colors change in varying light conditions and look dramatically different depending on the viewer's proximity to the painting.

Color Notes (Winter, Spring, Summer, Autumn) 2020-2021, explores a more personal relationship with color. Each season is presented as a suite of 25 small abstract watercolor studies of color and form, which Finch describes as “haiku-like observations of the world.” Each individual work is composed of three washy gestures, representing three objects, or natural scenes, as recorded by the artist throughout the course of the seasons. In *Winter*, we find such observations as “spruce / witchhazel / oak leaf,” in *Spring*, “fog / kayak / tarp,” in *Summer*, “chair / rose / leaf,” and in *Fall*, “sunset / sunset / sunset.” This ongoing project draws inspiration from Emily Noyes Vanderpoel’s pioneering study of color theory, *Color Problems: A Practical Manual for the Lay Student of Color*, originally published in 1901. The installation at James Cohan marks the first time one full year is represented as a singular artwork and is presented concurrently with the publication of a new artist book by Finch that also contains an entire year’s *Color Notes*.

Installed between the two exhibition spaces, *RGB, 2022*, is a LED lightbox whose pointillist composition is modeled after the mechanics of optical vision, a formal translation of the complex way we see color. An arrangement of red, blue, and green dots—the only colors that human eyes are sensitive to—mix to generate white light. As Finch notes about this work, “we are seeing how we see.”

In the second gallery, the monumental installation *North Atlantic Ocean (April 14, 1912, 11:40 pm), 2022*, explores the space between sight and perception, creating a moment of dramatic departure from the mood established in the first room of the exhibition. This ephemeral sculpture reconstructs the iceberg that sank the Titanic from four distinct eyewitness accounts, including drawings and photographs. As far as we know, no one actually saw the iceberg when it made contact with the boat, so all documentation of this notorious form was created after the fact. Finch constructs the crags and peaks of the looming iceberg from simple materials, creating depth, mass, and shadow through drapes and folds of tulle and chiffon. Finch’s interest in this historical moment of humanity’s tragic encounter with nature is rooted in his desire to find ways to describe the unknowable and the unseen. Finch has previously created historically based works that plumb the dissonances of collective remembrance—from the 1994 suite of watercolors *Trying to Remember the Color of Jackie Kennedy’s Pillbox Hat* to his 2014 commission for the 9/11 Memorial Museum, *Trying to Remember the Color of the Sky on That September Morning*. Like these earlier projects, *North Atlantic Ocean (April 14, 1912, 11:40 pm)* is fundamentally about the interplay between objective and subjective ways of seeing, and the interpretive possibilities that derive from memory.

As Finch remarks, “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. This second type of seeing, which requires a separation of perception from cognition, embraces the weird and wonderful empirical richness of the world.”

Finch has a concurrent major solo exhibition at Hill Art Foundation, *Lux and Lumen: Spencer Finch*, open now through March 4, 2023.

Spencer Finch was born in 1962 in New Haven, CT, and lives and works in Brooklyn, NY. He studied at the Rhode Island School of Design, Hamilton College, and Doshisha University in Kyoto, Japan, and has exhibited extensively in the US and internationally since the early 1990s. Recent major projects include *A Cloud Index*, a site-specific commission for the new Elizabeth line station at Paddington in London (2022); *Orion*, permanently installed at the San Francisco Airport, CA (2020); *Moon Dust (Apollo 17)*, Baltimore Museum of Art, MD (2019); *Fifteen Stones (Ryoanji)*, an intervention in the International Pavilion at the Fundació Mies van der Rohe, Barcelona, Spain (2018); *Lost Man Creek*, his project with the Public Art Fund, Brooklyn, NY (2016-2018); *Trying To Remember the Color of the Sky on That September Morning*, a special commission for the 9/11 Memorial, New York, NY (2014); and *A Certain Slant of Light*, The Morgan Library and Museum, New York, NY (2014). Recent major solo shows include Utah Museum of Fine Arts, Salt Lake City, UT (2018-2019); MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA (2017); Norton Museum of Art, West Palm Beach, FL (2017); Seattle Museum of Art, WA (2017); Turner Contemporary, Margate, United Kingdom (2014). Finch was included in the 2004 Whitney Biennial, the 2008 Turin Triennale and the 53rd Venice Biennale (2009). His work can be found in collections including the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Morgan Library, New York, NY; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany; Art Gallery of New South Wales, Australia; Kemper Museum of Art, St Louis, MO; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, IL; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY, amongst several others.

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