



One Hundred Famous Views of New York City (After Hiroshige), 2025
Suite of 42 watercolors on paper

52 WALKER ST | SEPT 5 - OCT 4, 2024

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

James Cohan is pleased to present *One Hundred Famous Views of New York City (After Hiroshige)*, an exhibition of new work by Spencer Finch, on view from September 5 through October 4, 2025, at the gallery's 52 Walker Street location. This is Finch's sixth solo exhibition with James Cohan. The gallery will host an opening reception with the artist on Friday, September 5, from 6-8 PM.

For this exhibition, Spencer Finch will present four major installations, highlighting the artist's fluency across media. Using watercolor, LED light tubes, stained glass, and concrete bricks, the artist explores different facets of Japanese aesthetics while furthering his ongoing investigations into color, perception, and close observation of nature. Finch's engagement with Japan spans nearly fifty years, beginning with his first visit as a teenager. He began his artistic journey working with a potter outside Kyoto as an exchange student in college, and although the influence of Japanese visual culture has always been present in his work, this is the first exhibition fully dedicated to its impact on his practice.

The title work in the exhibition is a conceptual and technical tour de force, a series of 42 watercolors in which Finch uses Utagawa Hiroshige's *One Hundred Famous Views of Edo* as a palimpsest for exploring the strange beauty of New York City. Finch began by overlaying a map of Hiroshige's 19th-century Edo (now Tokyo) locations over a map of New York City and its outskirts at the same scale. Focusing on the first 42 prints, which represent spring, he visited and photographed those locations last spring. The sites documented ranged from a junkyard in New Jersey to an iconic view of the Statue of Liberty and Staten Island Ferry, a leveling of established hierarchies of value that owes a conceptual debt to Robert Smithson's *Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, NJ*.

Finch next extracted forms from the original Ukiyoe prints—from the famous Sleeping Dragon Plum tree to the hanging bolts of fabric—and used these as keyholes to reveal elements of the photographs of the corresponding New York locations. One sees Hiroshige's historic Edo and Finch's New York City simultaneously, the images of Gotham peeking through the cut-out shapes of Edo. As a body of work, this installation represents both a love letter to the city and a cross-cultural dialogue spanning centuries, as Finch reimagines the contemporary urban landscape through the lens of Hiroshige's iconic woodblock prints.

The exacting verisimilitude of these watercolors is unusual in Finch's oeuvre, but it recalls the artist's formative art school venture of copying Monet paintings in extreme detail in the RISD Museum, an experience he later described as "*my first brush with the Stockholm syndrome*." The New York City views are fragmented through the Japanese prints but together reveal the wonderful visual variety of the city and form an elliptical tribute to the artist's adopted hometown. The scrutiny inherent to this laborious process revealed new details about a deeply familiar place. As the artist notes, "*Before I worked on this project, I never knew that New York's bridges were all painted different colors or how graffiti artists achieve a 3-D effect. And the shade of orange of the Staten Island Ferry: very peculiar!*"

Alongside this installation of works on paper, Finch will debut a series of four light-based *Haiku* works. Like their written analogs, these wall-hung LED sculptures capture a fleeting seasonal moment, distilling it into a poetic image. Presented vertically in the format of Japanese writing, each work consists of 15 distinct color filters arranged in the 5/7/5 pattern of traditional Haiku syllabic structure. These four works, each representing a moment in nature from one of the seasons, are chromatically and spectrally precise, re-creating the specific color of light that the artist measured in situ, using colored filters to achieve the spectral results. Thus, the first in the group, *Haiku (First Snow, Woods, Winter)*, 2025, emanates cool winter light which is generated by filters of light blue and violet, gray, pale yellow, and dull green. The difference in the seasonal light is palpable as the spring light becomes warmer, the summer light is completely full spectrum, and autumn light, representing falling oak leaves in the sky, moves again towards cooler blue.

A monumental stained glass installation is displayed in the six tall windows of the front gallery. *Moonlight (Reflected in a Pond)*, 2025, shifts the exterior sunlight to the color of moonlight reflected in a pond in Finch's native New England, which he measured using a colorimeter. The yellowish green light creates an other-worldly environment which references the Japanese tradition of moon-viewing in to honor the autumn moon. By using the sun to create moonlight, Finch uses the traditional material of hand-blown stained glass to modern conceptual effect. The rectilinear arrangement of panels in the windows contrast with the watery ripples and imperfections of the glass to create a light and space condition which feels both contemporary and ancient.

Installed in the same gallery is a new site-specific sculptural work, *Fourteen Stones*, 2025, inspired by Ryoan-ji, the 15th-century Zen garden in Kyoto. Finch drew upon his visits to the garden, when his quest for quiet contemplation of the fifteen stones were interrupted by hordes of tourists counting to fourteen, the number of stones that are visible from any location along the viewing platform. Using this perceptual idiosyncrasy as a jumping off point to explore the subjectivity of vision, Finch created 26 "stones" out of piles of common concrete bricks, each crudely mimicking one of the Ryoan-ji stones. Reimagining these beautiful, worn stones as uniform, manufactured bricks subverts the experience of the artwork – it becomes not about the beauty of the objects but about the act of seeing. Finch has arranged the stones so that from each of the four corners of the gallery only fourteen are visible. Deploying the vocabulary of minimalism to naturalistic effect, the artist creates an altered meditative environment in which he claims, "*if you squint and stand on one leg, they really look like ancient stones bathed in moonlight*."

One Hundred Famous Views of New York City (After Hiroshige) continues Finch's interest in the limits of perception, and the relativity of human experience. These new works embrace science and poetry in equal measure, communicating experiences of the world that are both universal and intimately subjective.

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 *Bring me a sunset in a teacup*, a two-wall commission for Massachusetts Institute of Technology (2023); *Orion*, permanently installed at the San Francisco Airport, CA (2020); *Moon Dust (Apollo 17)*, Baltimore Museum of Art, MD (2019); *Fifteen Stones (Ryoanji)*, International Pavilion at the Fundació Mies van der Rohe, Barcelona, Spain (2018); *Lost Man Creek*, Public Art Fund, Brooklyn, NY (2016-2018); *Trying To Remember the Color of the Sky on That September Morning*, 9/11 Memorial Museum, New York, NY (2014), and *A Certain Slant of Light*, Morgan Library & Museum, New York, NY (2014). Significant recent solo exhibitions include the 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 Art Museum, WA (2017), and 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 many public collections including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia; Art Institute of Chicago, Chicago, IL; Brooklyn Museum of Art, Brooklyn, NY; High Museum of Art, Atlanta, GA; Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, Washington, D.C.; Kemper Museum of Art, St Louis, MO; Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles, CA; Morgan Library, New York, NY; Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, IL; Museum für Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt, Germany; National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, NY; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, NY.

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