

Press Release

Spencer Finch

Only the hand that erases writes the true thing

22 June – 31 July 2021
27 Bell Street, London

For his latest exhibition at Lisson Gallery, the New York based artist Spencer Finch presents all new works, investigating light, colour and human perception. Made primarily during the winter of 2021, the works on view reflect the subtle beauty and mystery of elements of nature such as snow, light, clouds and fog. Using varied materials such as scotch tape, fabric, silver leaf and soft pastel, this exhibition utilises Finch's quintessential creativity and ethereal materials to capture and distill ephemeral moments and sensory experiences.

The exhibition begins with an installation spanning the entire length of the gallery wall at 27 Bell Street. In the work, Finch traces the colour of the snow he encountered on a winter hike. Finch's art often explores subjectivity and perception, investigating the intersection of what we see and what we know. Past works have included documentation of a duration of encounters 'sampled' from his environment using the commercial colour-matching system Pantone. In *Crawford Path up Mt. Pierce, New Hampshire (after a spring snowstorm)* (2021), Finch undertook a conceptual exercise where he matched the precise measurements of colour encountered on a journey up Mount Pierce in New Hampshire, to swatches of household paint colours from the American company Benjamin Moore. The resulting work is extraordinary for its slight variations caused by the changing light on the snowy mountains and surrounding landscape, its subtlety a nod to the simplicity and restraint of Minimalism.

Three new *Usuyuki* works made from an array of white fabrics create a fog-like effect on the gallery walls. Named for the Japanese word for 'light snow', these wall-based sculptures unveil depth through abstracted layers, which like the passing fog, can both reveal and disguise. To create these sculptures, Finch worked with Japanese fabric specialist and solicited local New York fashion shops to accumulate the correct weights of tulle and chiffon, which he then assiduously applied in varying configurations until he achieved the ineffable quality of fog. Much like Jasper Johns's *Usuyuki* prints, which chronicled the artist's own fascination with the Japanese term, Finch uses these works to portray the poetic impermanence of the natural world.

Also on view is a 25-panel pastel work titled *Mistakes* (2021). Challenging perception and testing the limits of objectivity, the images each denote an instance where in a moment's glance, Finch confused one item for another — "sliver of sunlight on chair mistaken for spilled liquid", "drooping mask mistaken for a neck tattoo", and so on. By capturing these fleeting memories and recording their mistaken identities, he probes the temporal, yet remarkably ubiquitous experiences all humans encounter.

Other works on view include a group of silver leaf works on paper depicting fresh snow; a winter haiku fluorescent light work which portrays the shadow of a spruce tree on a snowy ground; a scotch-tape cloud, wherein the translucent adhesive strips are applied to paper in cumulous forms; and a new camouflage work, created by first drawing the traditional browns, greens and tans of the disguised print on paper and carefully erasing all colour by hand to form a minimal abstraction, referencing Robert Rauschenberg's famous erasure of a drawing by Willem de Kooning.

Finch is widely known for his large-scale public projects, the most recent of which is on view in London. *A Cloud Index* is a cloudscape that has been printed onto the 120-metre long canopy of the new Elizabeth line station, making it one of the largest, permanent art works ever created in the city. For the installation, he created 60 hand-drawn original pastels that combine to create a unique collage of clouds, that when printed onto the transparent glass canopy overhead appear to change

according to the light, weather and time of day. While the entire Crossrail project is not complete, visitors can currently see Finch's artwork throughout the station.

About the artist

Spencer Finch is best known for ethereal light installations that visualise his experience of natural phenomena. His investigations into the nature of light, colour, memory and perception manifest in watercolours, 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: in homage to Emily Dickinson's 1862 poem *Before I got my eye put out*, he measured the sunlight in her Massachusetts garden then recreated the effect of a passing cloud by means of fluorescent tubes covered in gel and suspended theatre filters. He has painted the changing shades of grey on Sigmund Freud's ceiling in Vienna, Austria, viewed from the psychoanalyst's couch and later, in *102 Colors from My Dreams* (2002), recorded the colours he saw in his sleep then colour-matched inks to make a sequence of Rorschach blots. His monumental installation *Trying To Remember the Color of the Sky on That September Morning* (2014), on display at the National September 11 Memorial Museum in New York, features a mosaic of hand-painted shades of blue, while his Crossrail commission for Paddington Station in London, *A Cloud Index*, will consist of a 120m long canopy depicting more than 25 cloud types.

Spencer Finch was born in New Haven, CT, USA in 1962 and lives and works in Brooklyn, NY, USA. He has a BA in comparative literature from Hamilton College, Clinton, NY, USA (1985) and an MFA in sculpture from the Rhode Island School of Design, RI, USA (1989). Solo exhibitions include Arcadia University, Spruance Gallery, Glenside, PA, USA (2019); 'Fifteen Stones (Ryoanji)', Fundacio Mies van der Rohe, Barcelona, Spain (2018); 'Cosmic Latte', MASS MoCA, North Adams, MA, USA (2017); 'Lost Man Creek', Public Art Fund, New York, NY, USA (2016); Marfa Contemporary, TX, USA (2014), Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indiana, USA (2013), the Art Institute of Chicago, USA (2011), Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, USA (2007) and Portikus, Frankfurt am Main, Germany (2003). He participated in the Folkestone Triennial, UK (2011) and the 53rd Venice Biennale, Italy (2009). Public commissions include Crossrail, London, UK; the Public Art Fund, New York, NY USA (2016); and The High Line, New York, NY, USA (2008).

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and promotes the work of more than 60 international artists across two spaces in London, two in New York, one in Shanghai, as well as temporary spaces opened in 2020 in East Hampton and London's Mayfair district. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. It still works with many of these artists as well as others of that generation from Carmen Herrera to the renowned estates of Leon Polk Smith, Ted Stamm and Roy Colmer. In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors to the public for the first time, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller, Tatsuo Miyajima and Sean Scully. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg, Ryan Gander, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes and Wael Shawky.

For press enquiries, please contact

Victoria Mitchell, Head of Communications
+44 (0)207 724 2739
victoria@lissongallery.com

i: [@lisson_gallery](https://www.instagram.com/lisson_gallery)
t: [@Lisson_Gallery](https://www.facebook.com/Lisson_Gallery)
fb: LissonGallery
www.lissongallery.com

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27 Bell Street, London NW1 5BY | 67 Lisson Street, London NW1 5DA | +44 (0)20 7724 2739