

Spencer Finch

31 March – 19 May 2017

Via Zenale 3, Milan

Photography is a fundamental aspect of Spencer Finch's work and has informed his practice in a multitude of ways throughout his career. Spurred by an ongoing investigation into the nature of colour and the elusive power of light, Finch uses photography – itself a combination of these two elements – as a way of capturing the fleeting and ephemeral, the things one cannot see, but also as a tool to record distinct moments in time. His exhibition at Lisson Gallery Milan celebrates this aspect of the artist's oeuvre and features six works that have either been created using the medium of photography or in response to the photographic process.

The passing of time most poignantly comes to the fore in *Vanitas (Tulips)* (2012), for which Finch documented the fallen petals of three floral arrangements, after having removed them from a vase. The delicate remains evoke the beauty of random patterns and the Dutch tradition of still life painting, offering a meditation on chance and death. Flowers appear again in *The daisy follows soft the sun* (2017), the newest work in the exhibition, in which the camera tracks the movement of heads and stems as they tilt in the direction of the sun throughout the course of a day. The change in natural elements over a period of time is also evident in Finch's photographic work *Thank you, Fog* (2009). Shot at one-minute intervals for an hour, the photographs depict the various states and densities of fog as it descends over Sonoma County in California. The transition from revelation to concealment of the wooded landscape below abstracts the sensation of being lost in a cloudy bank to a single, planar colour.

Photography's blurring of the distinctions between representation and abstraction is further explored in *Lemon Tree* (2010), a sequence of 12 photos that capture the transient shadows cast by a lemon tree from dusk till dawn to record the revolution of the sun. The work is inspired by Federico Garcia Lorca's poem *The Song of the Barren Orange Tree*, a melancholic text in which a fruitless lemon tree begs a woodcutter to cut away its shadow so it can no longer see its barren silhouette.

Shadows assist with the creation of the final work in the exhibition, *Self-Portrait as Crazy Horse* (1993), which masterfully mixes photography and performance. By painting a white wall of the gallery with light-sensitive Cyanotype emulsion paint, Finch transforms the space into both camera and dark room. As he stands between the wall and window from sunrise to sunset in the gallery, the light slowly processes the exposed chemicals on the wall, leaving only a faint silhouette at the centre – a negative image left behind as evidence of Finch's performance and the record of a day. The work's title evokes the 19th-century Oglala Sioux Chief, 'Crazy Horse', who distrusted photography and believed the camera would steal his shadow.

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About Spencer Finch

Spencer Finch is best known for ethereal light installations that visualise his experience of natural phenomena and for his important commissions in the public realm. Among these are *Trying to Remember the Color of the Sky on That September Morning* (2014) the only artwork commissioned for the September 11 Memorial Museum, a vast, yet delicate installation consisting of 2,983 individual squares of paper – one for each life lost and each hand-painted by the artist to match his memory of the crystalline blue sky on the day of the attacks; and *The River That Flows Both Ways* (2009), a meditation on the Hudson river that forms part of New York's High Line, which distils photographic documentation of an eleven hour journey along the river into a grid of coloured panes of glass, their muted yet glowing hues reflecting the infinitely nuanced translucency of the river's waters. His light-based installation *Cosmic Latte*, featuring over 150 specifically fabricated LED fixtures suspended from the ceiling, is currently on view at MASS MoCA in the United States. Finch's commission for London's Crossrail development at Paddington Station, *A Cloud Index*, a monumental glass canopy whose individually etched panes provide a panoptic meditation on the station's role as the gateway to the West, will be unveiled later this year.

Spencer Finch was born in New Haven, Connecticut in 1962 and lives and works in Brooklyn, New York. He has a BA in comparative literature from Hamilton College, Clinton, New York (1985) and an MFA in sculpture from the Rhode Island School of Design (1989). Solo exhibitions include 'Lost Man Creek' with the Public Art Fund, New York, NY, USA (2016-18); 'Ulysses' at Marfa Contemporary, Texas, USA (2014); 'A Certain Slant of Light', Morgan Library, New York, NY, USA (2014); 'Spencer Finch: The Skies can't keep their secret', Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK (2014); Indianapolis Museum of Art, Indiana, USA (2013); the Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois, USA (2011); Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, North Adams, MA, USA (2007); and Portikus, Frankfurt am Main, Germany (2003). He participated in the Folkestone Triennial, UK (2011), the 53rd Venice Biennale (2009) and 'Another Minimalism: Art After California Light and Space', The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, UK (2015).

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world, supporting and developing 52 international artists. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, it 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. In its second decade it introduced significant British artists, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Today it continues to support a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Nathalie Djurberg & Hans Berg, Ryan Gander, Haroon Mirza and many more.

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