

## Press Release

Spencer Finch

*No Ordinary Blue*

15 March – 4 May 2019

67 Lisson Street, London

Opening: 14 March, 6 – 8pm

In March, 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.

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.

### **About Spencer Finch**

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.

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 ‘Lost Man Creek’, Public Art Fund, New York, NY, USA (2016); Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK (2014); 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 (2019, forthcoming); 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 develops 62 international artists across two exhibition spaces in London and two in New York as well as its new space in Shanghai. 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, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiari and Julian Opie, to the international public for the first time. The gallery represents leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller, Liu Xiaodong, Tatsuo Miyajima and Sean Scully, as well as a number of renowned artist estates, including Roy Colmer, the Leon Polk Smith Foundation and the John Latham Foundation. 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, Senior Media & Communications Manager  
+44 (0)207 724 2739  
[victoria@lissongallery.com](mailto:victoria@lissongallery.com)

i: [@lisson\\_gallery](https://www.instagram.com/lisson_gallery)  
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