

Painting Air: Spencer Finch, February 24, 2012-August 19, 2012

The work of Impressionist painter Claude Monet serves as the aesthetic touchstone for both parts of Spencer Finch's exhibition (in this room and in the large adjoining gallery). "I want to paint the air," Monet said in 1895, "and that is nothing short of impossible." Like Monet, Finch challenges himself to capture phenomena and experiences that are fleeting or intangible. His artwork over the past twenty years has taken many different forms — including sculpture, installation, watercolor, drawing, photography, and video — depending on which medium and method seem best suited to convey his fascination with light, color, and atmosphere.

The wide range of objects featured in this gallery has been chosen by Finch from the Museum's storage areas (with a few exceptions)—starting with Monet's 1874 painting *The Basin at Argenteuil*, which Finch copied in 1988, when he was a graduate student at RISD. His study of this light-filled composition proved to be a turning point that set him on the trajectory he has followed to this day. Other works, arranged in thematic groupings or "episodes" and pairings reveal links or contrasts between artists, unexpected visual connections among disparate works, and Finch's personal sensibility as well as characteristics of the Museum's collections. The invitation to Finch to curate an exhibition highlighting works in storage has its roots in Andy Warhol's *Raid the Icebox 1*, the seminal project mounted at the RISD Museum in 1970.

New and recent work created by Finch is featured in the adjoining gallery. A large installation, also titled *Painting Air*, was inspired by his visit to Monet's studio and water garden in Giverny, France. Monet's pond functions for both artists as a laboratory where they merge the experience of nature with the artmaking process. In another installation, *Bee Purple*, Finch attempts to make visible to us a color that honeybees can see but which is undetectable to the human eye. In *Sky (Over Franz Joseph Glacier. . .)* ice melts into a pool of water that exactly matches the color of the sky over a New Zealand glacier Finch visited in 2008. Combining scientific analysis with poetic observation, Finch brings new awareness to our encounters with light and color and to the objects we collect, encounter, and live with.

Spencer Finch was born in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1962. He lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Claude Monet
French, 1840-1926
The Basin at Argenteuil, 1874
Oil on canvas
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 42.219



RISD MUSEUM

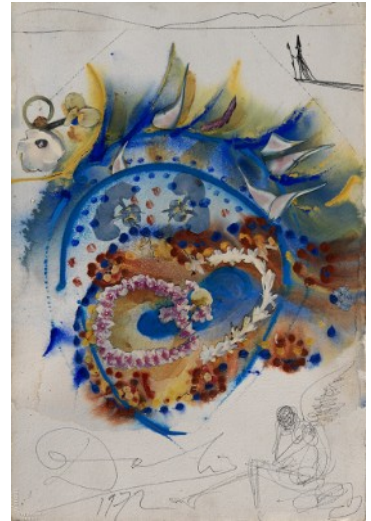
Philip Guston
American, 1913-1980
The Road, 1972
Oil on canvas
Gift of the Estate of Musa Guston 1992.059.2



Joan Mitchell
American, 1926-1992
Mooring, 1971
Oil on canvas
Gift of Bayard and Harriet K. Ewing 1992.124



Salvador Dalí
Spanish, 1904-1989
The Lei, The Hawaiian Suite, 1972
Acrylic, pen, collage on paper
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Gertz 1994.112



Gerhard Richter
German, b. 1932
Ship (Schiff), 1972
Color photo-offset lithograph
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2003.44



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Harry Callahan
American, 1912-1999
Cape Cod, 1972
Gelatin silver print
Gift of Dr. and Mrs. J. Patrick Kennedy 2008.119.11



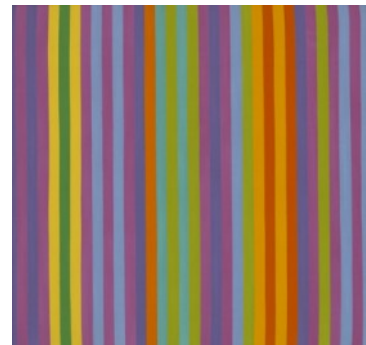
Howard Hodgkin
English, 1932 - 2017
Moonlight, 1972
Oil on wood
Bequest of Richard Brown Baker 2009.92.38



JVC (Victor Company of Japan, Ltd.)
Japanese, 1927-
Videosphere (model 3240), 1970
CRT television with plastic, glass, and metal components
Gift of Glenn Gissler 2010.109.1



Gene Davis
American, 1920-1985
Popsicle, 1969
Acrylic on canvas
Gift of Mr. Arthur J. Levy 72.173



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Richard Estes, designer
 American, b. 1932
 Domberger-Minimal-Edition, printer
 Parasol Press, publisher
 American
Grant's, Urban Landscapes I 1972
 Color screenprint
 Museum purchase with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts 73.002.8



Andy Warhol, designer
 American, 1928-1987
 Styria Studio, printer
 Peter M. Brant, publisher
Mao Tse-Tung, 1972
 Color screenprint
 Twentieth Century Graphics Fund 73.023



Edward Ruscha
 American, b. 1937
Serious Injury, 1972
 Gunpowder on paper
 Museum purchase, Gift of the Museum Associates 75.063

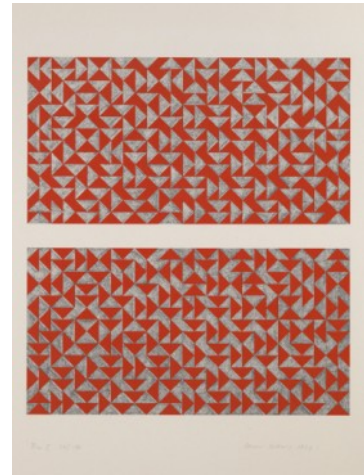


Adolph Gottlieb, designer
 American, 1903-1974
 Kelpra Press, publisher
Pink Ground, 6 Screenprints/Lithos, 1972
 Color screenprint
 Gift of Mr. Wolf Kahn and Mrs. Emily Mason 79.162.5



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Anni Albers, printmaker
American, 1899-1994
Fox Press, publisher
Fox I, 1972
Color photo-offset lithograph
Gift of Katharine and Nicholas Weber 80.087



Garry Winogrand
American, 1928-1984
New York City, Garry Winogrand, 1971
Gelatin silver print
Gift of Mr. Frederick J. Myerson 82.303.8



Chinese
Universal Mountain Censer, 100–200 CE
Earthenware with pigment
Museum Appropriation Fund 18.572



Chinese
P'englai Hill Jar, 206-220 CE
Lead-glazed earthenware
Museum Appropriation Fund 18.572A



RISD MUSEUM

Chinese

P'englai Hill Jar, 206-220 CE

Lead-glazed earthenware

Museum Appropriation Fund 18.572B



William Leighton Leitch

British; Scottish, 1804-1883

Cloud Study-Ramsgate, Kent, Mid 1800s

Watercolor on paper

Anonymous gift 1986.184.35



William Roxby Beverley

British, ca. 1811-1889

Storm Clouds, Mid 1800s

Watercolor, pen and ink, gouache on paper

Anonymous gift 1986.184.5



ILC Dover, manufacturer

American

Eleven layers of material for Extravehicular Mobility Unit (textile sample), ca. 1983

Nylon, acetate, spandex, Dacron, aluminized Mylar, polyurethane, neoprene, Ortho-Fabric (blend of Gore-Tex [Teflon], Nomex, and Kevlar); tricot knit, plain weave, coated

Gift of ILC Industries, Inc./ILC Dover 1990.034



RISD MUSEUM

Oscar Bluemner
American, 1867-1938
Rosy Light, from the series, "Suns and Moons", 1927
Watercolor on paper
Anonymous gift 1992.001.23



Francis Seymour Haden
British, 1818-1910
Cloud Study, mid 1800s
Chalk on wove paper
Anonymous gift 2005.142.91



John Constable
English, 1776-1837
Landscape Study, ca. 1830
Watercolor and graphite on paper
Anonymous gift 74.107.9



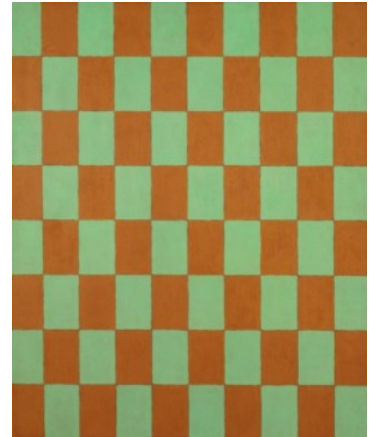
James Rosenquist, designer
American, 1933 - 2017
Charles Ringness, printer
Earth and Moon, Cold Light Suite, 1971
Color lithograph with Plexiglas and styrene beads
Gift of the Bayard and Harriet K. Ewing Collection 76.069



RISD MUSEUM

Sherrie Levine
American, b. 1947
Check #5, 1986
Casein and wax on mahogany
Helen M. Danforth Acquisition Fund 2002.9

The painting *Check #5* by Sherrie Levine is an important recent addition to the Museum's growing department of contemporary art. Sherrie Levine emerged in the 1980s as perhaps the most radical in a group of artists who became known for "appropriation"—the idea of borrowing form and content directly from the works of other artists or from consumer culture.



Almost from the start of the twentieth century, artists, including such seminal figures as Marcel Duchamp and Pablo Picasso, borrowed images, styles, and even actual scraps of other artwork in creating their own work. In the 1980s, this tradition of borrowing took a dramatic turn. Drawing from the earlier traditions of the avant-garde, and simultaneously reacting against Western art's penchant for originality, these late 20th-century artists (including Richard Prince, John Baldessari, Louise Lawler, and Jeff Koons) were drawn to reproducing and adapting forms and images that others had crafted. Sherrie Levine took the idea of appropriation to its extreme. In her early work, Levine re-photographed the classic photographs of Edward Weston and Walker Evans. A few years later, she meticulously copied the drawings of Egon Schiele and Joan Miró. These were not meant to be forgeries, though they looked remarkably like the originals. By deliberately choosing these earlier artists' best-known work and then signing her own name, Levine did not intend to fool anyone. Instead, she aimed to provoke extreme responses from viewers while playfully defying the value systems of the art market, a system that had long under-appreciated works by women artists.

In the mid-80s, Levine's work took a turn away from direct appropriations. She highlighted the knots found in a wooden board by covering them in gold leaf and then made a series of stripe paintings in various colors that incorporated the natural imperfections of the wood upon which they were painted. She then created a group of checkerboard paintings, of which *Check #5* is an example.

By mixing wax into a milk-based paint called casein and by deliberately leaving her preparatory pencil sketches visible, Levine draws attention to her own hand at work, something absent in her earlier appropriations. These features give the painting a more handcrafted, personal look, as does the emphasis on the paints'

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support: a piece of wood. The painting has no frame, and it hangs flush on the wall. By accentuating the materiality of the painting, Levine encourages us to view this work not as a depiction of some other item in another place but rather as a physical object in its own right.

In fact, *Check #5* could be mistaken for a brightly-colored, hand-painted checkerboard in the 19th-century American folk art tradition, although there are eighty squares rather than the sixty-four that characterize most game boards. This painting does not directly copy or quote the work of another artist. Instead, *Check #5* is more of a conceptual appropriation that refers to the systematic patterning of geometric abstraction, the formal sparseness of Minimalist art of the 1960s and 1970s, and the enthusiasm for game playing Levine shares with the earlier 20th century Dada artists such as Man Ray and Marcel Duchamp. In the 1920s, Duchamp went so far as to pretend to give up art making and instead said he was devoting his life to playing chess.

Japanese
Textile swatches, 1900s
Gift of Andrea Aranow 2009.117

Japanese
Textile swatch, 1900s
Silk, metallic yarn; compound weave, discontinuous and continuous supplementary weft patterning
Gift of Andrea Aranow 2009.117.10



Japanese
Textile swatch, 1900s
Cotton, bast fiber; compound weave, supplementary warp patterning
Gift of Andrea Aranow 2009.117.11



RISD MUSEUM

Japanese

Textile swatch, 1900s

Silk, metallic yarn; compound weave, crepe yarn

Gift of Andrea Aranow 2009.117.12



Japanese

Textile swatch, 1900s

Silk; jacquard weave

Gift of Andrea Aranow 2009.117.15



Japanese

Textile swatch, 1900s

Silk; jacquard weave

Gift of Andrea Aranow 2009.117.18



Japanese

Textile swatch, 1900s

Silk, synthetic, metallic yarn; compound weave, jacquard

Gift of Andrea Aranow 2009.117.2

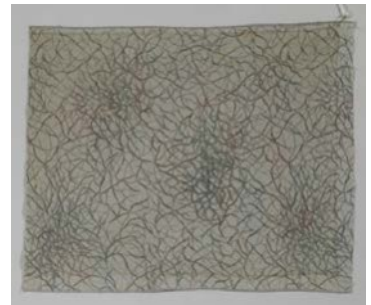


Japanese

Textile swatch, 1900s

Silk; jacquard weave, double ikat

Gift of Andrea Aranow 2009.117.20



RISD MUSEUM

Japanese

Textile swatch, 1900s

Silk gauze weave with manipulated wefts

Gift of Andrea Aranow 2009.117.24



Japanese

Textile swatch, 1900s

Silk; jacquard weave, printed

Gift of Andrea Aranow 2009.117.25



Japanese

Textile swatch, 1900s

Cotton; plain weave, printed

Gift of Andrea Aranow 2009.117.35

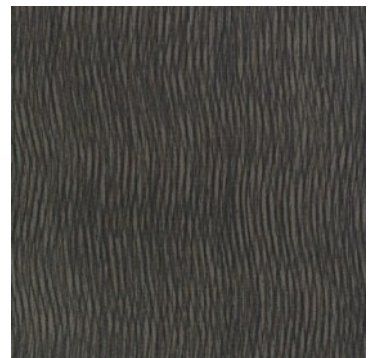


Japanese

Textile swatch, 1900s

Silk; plain weave, printed

Gift of Andrea Aranow 2009.117.44



RISD MUSEUM

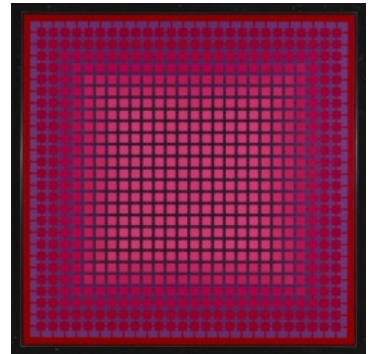
Japanese
Textile swatch, 1900s
Silk; plain weave, printed
Gift of Andrea Aranow 2009.117.47



Japanese
Textile swatch, 1900s
Synthetic; compound weave
Gift of Andrea Aranow 2009.117.6



Julian Stanczak
American, 1928 - 2017
Vaulted, 1983
Acrylic on canvas
Gift of Susan Werner and Thomas Lyon Mills 2003.55

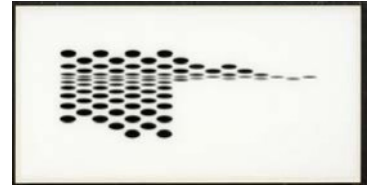


Victor de Vasarely
French, 1908 - 1997
Koeb IV, 1970
Color screenprint on lightweight paper on board
Bequest of Richard Brown Baker 2009.92.230



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Bridget Riley, designer
British, b. 1931
Untitled (Fragment 7/5), Fragments, 1965
Screenprint on Perspex
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Roger Sonnabend 80.047



Thomas Robinson
American, 1835-1888
Spitz Dog, 1873
Oil on canvas
Gift of Mrs. Isaac Fenno-Gendrot 18.510



American
Portrait of a Gentleman,
Oil on canvas
Gift of Mrs. Connal Rowan 1992.099

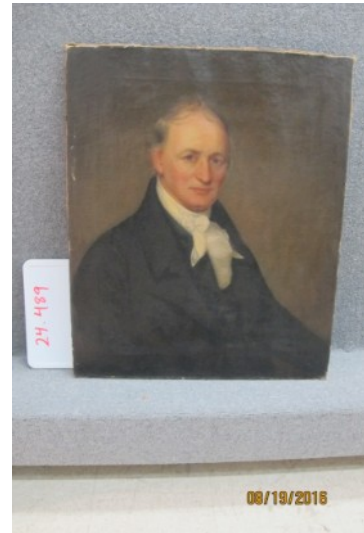


American
Portrait of a Young Girl, ca. 1920
Oil on canvas
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.402



RISD MUSEUM

American
Portrait of Ezekiel Burr, ca. 1830
Oil on canvas
Gift of Misses H.A. and E.L. Rea 24.489



American
Portrait of Mrs. Lydia Yates Burr, ca. 1830
Oil on canvas
Gift of Misses H.A. and E.L. Rea 24.490



John Robinson Frazier
American, 1889-1966
Portrait of Margaret Whitten, ca. 1927
Oil on canvas
Walter H. Kimball Fund 27.201



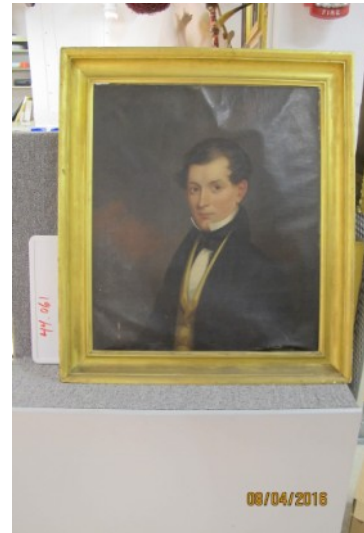
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Thomas Young
American, 1765 - 1821
Portrait of Michael George C. Bates, ca. 1800
Oil on canvas
Jesse Metcalf Fund 33.045



American
Portrait of a Man, ca. 1750
Oil on canvas
Museum Collection 43.4

James Sullivan Lincoln
American, 1811-1888
George Remington, 1828
Oil on canvas
Gift of the Estate of Charles A. and Florence S. Place 44.061



American
Man with Letter, ca. 1840
Oil on panel
Museum Works of Art Fund 45.035

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Cephas Giovanni Thompson

American, 1809-1888

Portrait of James D. Simmons, ca. 1840

Oil on canvas

Bequest of Margaret Emerson Bailey and gift of Mr. Whitman Bailey
51.560

William S. Taylor

American

Portrait of Royal B. Farnum, 1955

Oil on canvas

Purchased with President's Discretionary Fund 56.174



L. Brown

British, 18th century

Portrait of Isabel Bisby, 1721

Oil on canvas

Gift of Ida L. Colburn 63.069

Eugene Edward Speicher

American, 1883-1962

Portrait of Mr. Jackson E. Reynolds, 1940

Oil on canvas

Gift of Mrs. C. Reynolds Pratt 80.257

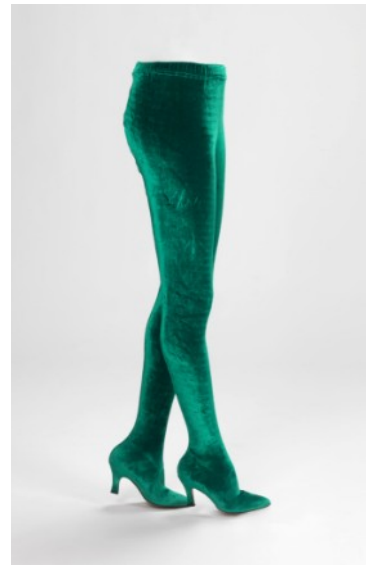


RISD MUSEUM

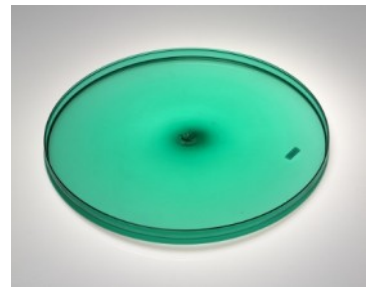
James Sullivan Lincoln
American, 1811-1888
Cyrus and Frank Taft, ca. 1860
Oil on canvas
Gift of Miss Amy H. Taft 12.158



Anne Klein and Co., design label
American, est. 1965
Donna Karan, head designer
American, b.1948
Boot tights, early 1980s
Viscose, nylon, elastic, leather, warp knit, pile
Gift of the Estate of Peggy Cone 2001.73.83



Carlo Scarpa
Italian, 1906-1978
Murano Glass Plate, ca. 1950
Glass
Gift of Glenn Gissler 2009.106.8



Henriette Ronner
Dutch, 1821-1909
Infatigables, ca. 1895
Oil on panel
Gift of Maria L. Corliss 29.109



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Willem de Kooning
American, 1904-1998
Black and White Abstraction, ca. 1950
Sapolin enamel on chart paper
Museum Works of Art Fund 56.186



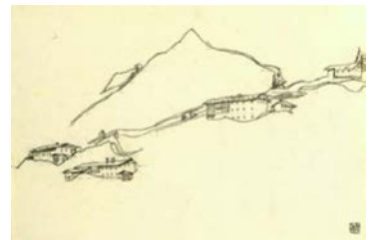
David Smith
American, 1906-1965
Untitled, 1960
Ink and oil paint on paper
Mary B. Jackson Fund 78.049



Peruvian
Textile (head covering), 1200 - 1550
Undyed cotton (natural blue, brown, and off-white); overspun yarn,
paired knotted-weft wrapping
Gift of the Weavers Guild of Boston 80.094.7



Egon Schiele
Austrian, 1890-1918
Mountain Landscape, 1917
Crayon on paper
Anonymous gift 1989.109.1



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Egon Schiele
Austrian, 1890-1918
Woman with Crossed Hands, 1917
Gouache and graphite on paper
Anonymous gift 1989.109.2



Egon Schiele
Austrian, 1890-1918
The Weitenegg Ruins, 1916
Charcoal on paper
Anonymous gift 1990.141.4



Egon Schiele
Austrian, 1890-1918
Portrait of Marga Boerner, 1917
Gouache and crayon on paper
Anonymous gift 1991.079



John Singer Sargent
American, 1856-1925
Rocky Coast Near Boston, 1921
Watercolor and graphite on paper
Anonymous gift 1992.001.119



RISD MUSEUM

John Singer Sargent
American, 1856-1925
Tomb, Toledo, 1903
Watercolor and graphite on paper
Anonymous gift 1992.001.120



John Singer Sargent
American, 1856-1925
Simplon, 1909-1911
Watercolor and gouache on paper
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 22.086



James Abbott McNeill Whistler
American, 1834-1903
Harmony in Blue: The Duet, ca. 1874
Oil on panel
Jesse Metcalf Fund 14.083



Joseph Stella
American, 1877-1946
Underpass, Allegheny, 1908
Charcoal on paper
Anonymous gift 1992.001.129



Kobayashi Kiyochika
Japanese, 1847-1915
Matsuki Heikichi, publisher
Japanese
Our Army Attacks the Chinese Encampment at Pyongyang (Wagagun heijo no shin'ei o osou), October 1894
Polychrome woodblock print (triptych)
Gift of Roger S. Keyes and Elizabeth Coombs 1997.90.6



RISD MUSEUM

Kobayashi Kiyochika
Japanese, 1847-1915
Hori Yata, block carver
Inoue Kichijirō, publisher
Our field artillery attacks the enemy camp at Jiuliancheng, 1894
Polychrome woodblock print (triptych)
Gift of Roger S. Keyes and Elizabeth Coombs 1998.72.4A



Kobayashi Kiyochika
Japanese, 1847-1915
Hori Yata, block carver
Inoue Kichijirō, publisher
Our field artillery attacks the enemy camp at Jiuliancheng, 1894
Polychrome woodblock print (triptych)
Gift of Roger S. Keyes and Elizabeth Coombs 1998.72.4B



RISD MUSEUM

Kobayashi Kiyochika
Japanese, 1847-1915
Hori Yata, block carver
Inoue Kichijirō, publisher
Our field artillery attacks the enemy camp at Jiuliancheng, 1894
Polychrome woodblock print (triptych)
Gift of Roger S. Keyes and Elizabeth Coombs 1998.72.4C



Attributed to Ralph Albert Blakelock
American, 1847-1919
Gathering Storm, late 1800s - early 1900s
Oil paint
Gift of Mrs. Gustav Radeke 20.283



Georges Seurat
French, 1859-1891
La Grenouillère, ca. 1885
Conté crayon on paper
Gift of Mrs. Murray S. Danforth 42.209



Joseph Gray, designer
British, 1890-1962
Untitled, ca. 1925
Drypoint
Bequest of Dr. Charles H. MacDonald 60.085.79

Bruce Nauman, video artist
American, b. 1941
Castelli Sonnabend Tapes and Films, distributor
Flesh to White to Black to Flesh, 1967-1968
Video, black-and-white, sound
Jesse Metcalf Fund 81.091



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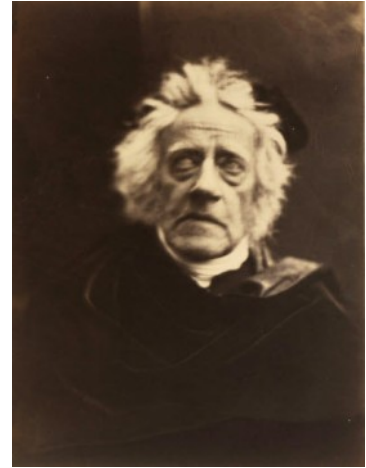
Julia Margaret Cameron

English, 1815-1879

The Astronomer (John Frederick William Herschel), 1867

Albumen print

Museum purchase: bequest of Lyra Brown Nickerson, by exchange
82.008



Julia Margaret Cameron

English, 1815-1879

Louise Beatrice de Fonblanque, 1868

Albumen print from glass negative

Gift of Norman Bolotow and Tamara Belovitch and their Friends in
honor of their marriage 82.063



André Derain

French, 1880-1954

drawing, ca. 1945

Ink and wash on paper

Gift of the Fazzano Brothers 84.198.1179



Georges Seurat

French, 1859-1891

Un singe (Monkey), 1884 - 1885

Conté crayon on laid paper

Collection of Douglas Sharpe EL002.77.1



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In the style of Albert Pinkham Ryder
American, 1847-1917

Maritime

Oil on canvas

Museum Collection INV2005.49



Robert Ryman, designer

American, b. 1930

Seven Aquatints, 1972

Color aquatint on paper

Museum Purchase with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts 73.119



Robert Ryman, designer

American, b. 1930

Seven Aquatints, *Seven Aquatints*, 1972

Color aquatint on paper

Museum Purchase with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts 73.119.3

Robert Ryman, designer

American, b. 1930

Seven Aquatints, *Seven Aquatints*, 1972

Color aquatint on paper

Museum Purchase with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts 73.119.4



RISD MUSEUM

Robert Ryman, designer
American, b. 1930
Seven Aquatints, Seven Aquatints, 1972
Color aquatint on paper
Museum Purchase with funds from the National Endowment for the Arts 73.119.6



Spencer Finch
American, b. 1962
Taxonomy of Clouds, 2006
17 color inkjet prints
Mary B. Jackson Fund 2012.71

Over the course of several months, Finch wandered the Brooklyn neighborhood near his studio, documenting reflections of clouds in the puddles left behind after rain. Consulting a field guide to identify the different types of cloud formations, he recorded seventeen varieties.

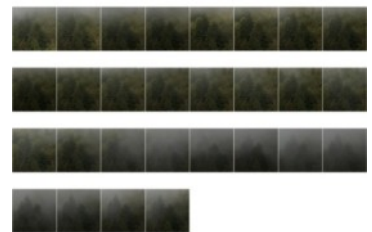


Spencer Finch
American, b. 1962
Copy of Monet's Basin at Argenteuil, 1988
Oil on canvas
Courtesy of the artist TL17.2012.1



Spencer Finch
American, b. 1962
Thank You, Fog, 2009
60 archival inkjet photographs
Courtesy of Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago TL17.2012.10

Fog, which Finch has described as a kind of “anti-image,” is a recurring subject in his work—appearing in misty views photographed from high mountains or from the top of the Empire State Building. Taking his title here from the last book by poet W. H. Auden, Finch shot these photographs with a static camera at one-minute intervals over the course of an hour as fog moved over the densely wooded Sonoma County, California, landscape. Like a veil, the fog both reveals and conceals the terrain.



RISD MUSEUM

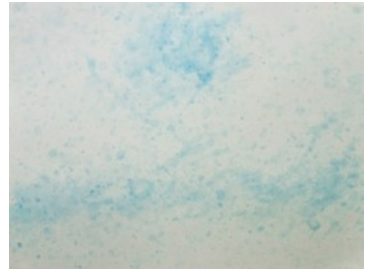
Spencer Finch
American, b. 1962
Fox Glacier XII, 2010
Watercolor on paper
Courtesy of Yvon Lambert, Paris TL17.2012.11

Finch made these watercolors in his studio in 2010 from photographs and notes taken during his trip to New Zealand in March and April 2008.



Spencer Finch
American, b. 1962
Fox Glacier XIII, 2010
Watercolor on paper
Courtesy of Yvon Lambert, Paris TL17.2012.12

Finch made these watercolors in his studio in 2010 from photographs and notes taken during his trip to New Zealand in March and April 2008.



Spencer Finch
American, b. 1962
Fox Glacier XV, 2010
Watercolor on paper
Courtesy of Yvon Lambert, Paris TL17.2012.13

Finch made these watercolors in his studio in 2010 from photographs and notes taken during his trip to New Zealand in March and April 2008.

Spencer Finch
American, b. 1962
Bee Flight Patterns, 2011
7 watercolors on paper
Courtesy of Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago TL17.2012.2

Based on observations of the sky above a New Zealand glacier, Finch's installation replicates the physical properties of this natural phenomenon and simultaneously produces a pure monochrome "painting" the color of the sky. The overflow from the pool is frozen into ice cubes that are deposited into the chute, which in turn melt into the pool, creating a closed system of melting and freezing water dyed to match precisely the blue of the sky. Every eleven and a half minutes ice drops into the chute, creating a loud noise.



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Spencer Finch

American, b. 1962

8456 Shades of Blue (After Hume), 2008

28 watercolors on paper

Courtesy of Galerie Nordenhake, Berlin/Stockholm TL17.2012.4



In response to the Scottish empiricist philosopher David Hume's theory of "the missing Shade of Blue," Finch diluted and dripped successively onto paper one drop of blue watercolor at a time. He used seven different blue pigments (Cobalt, Prussian, Indigo, etc.) and then systematic combinations of each color; there are about 300 individual drops on each drawing. Although Hume believed that humans have knowledge only of things they directly experience, he suggested "the missing shade of blue" to show that it is conceivable that the mind can generate an idea without first being exposed to the relevant sensory experience.

Spencer Finch

American, b. 1962

Nine Melting Snowflakes, 2008

Snowflakes on paper

Courtesy of Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago TL17.2012.5

Spencer Finch

American, b. 1962

Particle of Dust Floating in a Shaft of Sunlight, (down), NZ 3/23/08, 6:25pm, 2008

Colored pencil on paper

Courtesy of Lisson Gallery, London TL17.2012.6

Spencer Finch

American, b. 1962

Particle of Dust Floating in a Shaft of Sunlight, (down), NZ 3/23/08, 6:31pm, 2008

Colored pencil on paper

Courtesy of Lisson Gallery, London TL17.2012.7

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Spencer Finch

American, b. 1962

Pacific Ocean, Stinson Beach, California, November 10, 2004 (noon effect), 2009

Watercolor on paper

Courtesy of Galerie Nordenhake, Berlin/Stockholm TL17.2012.8

These watercolors are from an ongoing series based on the artist's observations of various bodies of water at different times of day under changing light conditions. Finch records the colors he sees at the site and later creates the watercolor in the studio based on his notes. He has made similar works while observing the Atlantic Ocean, Lake Michigan, the Mediterranean Sea, and the River Seine.



Spencer Finch

American, b. 1962

Pacific Ocean, Noosa, Australia, April 1, 2008 (afternoon effect), 2009

Watercolor on paper

Courtesy of Galerie Nordenhake, Berlin/Stockholm TL17.2012.9



Spencer Finch

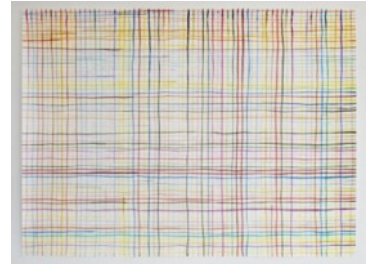
American, b. 1962

The Garden of Eden (All Colors in My Paintbox), 2011

Watercolor and pencil on paper

Collection of Judy and Robbie Mann, Providence TL18.2012

Finch notes of this work: "The idea came from the Brueghel painting of the Garden of Eden in the Pamphilj Gallery in Rome. I was thinking about how I could make a picture of this traditional subject and abstract it. After some false starts I hit on the idea of Adam naming all the animals (and everything else) on the sixth day of creation as the original poetic act and then the relationship between color and language. I decided to examine my own little Eden with all the colors in my watercolor paintbox. I took the 67 colors and organized them in alphabetical order and drew a horizontal line and then a vertical line in each color starting in the top left with Alizarin Crimson and ending in the bottom right with Yellow Ochre. The names from the Winsor and Newton colors are written below and right of where these colors cross diagonally across the paper. I then began to use The Dictionary of Colors from 1933, which was a crazy attempt to standardize thousands of color names (about 4,000 I think) for industry and matched the names of colors in the book with colors that were formed by the overlap of watercolor lines. The names are written in below and right of the cross. . . . The attempt is to name everything possible."



RISD MUSEUM

Spencer Finch

American, b. 1962

Painting Air, 2012

Glass and acrylic wall painting

Courtesy of Rhona Hoffman Gallery, Chicago and Lisson Gallery,
London TL25.2012.1

This work was inspired by Finch's visit during the summer of 2011 to the water garden created by Claude Monet at his home and studio in Giverny, France. Finch was struck by how the pond served as a laboratory for the study of reflection, refraction, transparency, and translucency; the color of the water was always in flux as a result of shifting air currents and conditions of light. Walking along the perimeter path, visitors can see through the suspended glass panels to the overlapping squares of color (thirty-four different tonalities) on the wall. The colors Finch chose for this expansive painting are based on the palette of Monet and Joan Mitchell, the second-generation American Abstract Expressionist painter who settled in Vétheuil, near Giverny.



Spencer Finch

American, b. 1962

Walden Pond (Morning Effect, March 13, 2007), 2007

Paper collage

Courtesy of Lisson Gallery, London TL25.2012.2

As he walked around the pond made famous by transcendentalist writer Henry David Thoreau, Finch studied the varied hues of the water and ice from twenty different spots on the shore. He matched each color he observed with one depicted in a reproduction of a painting by Monet. Finch arranged the images in a collage, its shape reminiscent of that of the pond itself. The placement of each picture corresponds to the general area of the pond the image represents. The images are annotated with the time of day the color was noted, the location from which Finch made his observations (identified as A through T), and the direction of his gaze.



Spencer Finch

American, b. 1962

Bee Purple, 2008/2012

Fluorescent lights, filters, astroturf, foamcore, acrylic paint

Courtesy of Galerie Nordenhake, Berlin/Stockholm TL26.2012

"Bee purple" is the name given to a color made of yellow and ultraviolet that honeybees can see but which is undetectable to the human eye. Filtering out the long wavelengths of fluorescent light, in this room Finch attempts to enable us to see what bees see. Because



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bees have compound eyes, they see all shapes as hexagons, which informs the structure of the flower sculpture here.

Spencer Finch

American, b. 1962

Sky (Over Franz Joseph Glacier, April 8, 2008, 10:40am), 2008

Ice, dye, water, freezer, mixed media

Courtesy of Yvon Lambert, Paris TL27.2012

Based on observations of the sky above a New Zealand glacier, Finch's installation replicates the physical properties of this natural phenomenon and simultaneously produces a pure monochrome "painting" the color of the sky. The overflow from the pool is frozen into ice cubes that are deposited into the chute, which in turn melt into the pool, creating a closed system of melting and freezing water dyed to match precisely the blue of the sky. Every eleven and a half minutes ice drops into the chute, creating a loud noise.

