

Analysis of Spencer Finch's *Candlelight* (CIE 529/418) and
The Outer—from the Inner (Emily Dickinson's Bedroom, dusk)

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The Hill Art Foundation's *Lux and Lumen: Spencer Finch* exhibition displays works by Spencer Finch, an American contemporary artist who works with glass. Finch seeks to capture light that holds significance through his art. Finch is a mixed media artist, who is renowned for his glass installations and public works. His artwork is the accumulation of his knowledge of color and light interacting with culture, memory and media.¹ Upon viewing the show, it is clear that Finch's artworks are meaningfully placed within the exhibition space to convey his artistic message. Many of his works evoke a kaleidoscope's playful colors and geometric shapes, and the unique materials stand out against the gallery's white walls. The luminous presence of Finch's glass works encourages his audience to reflect on the fleeting nature of light and the mortality of human existence. Especially within the works *Candlelight (CIE 529/418)* (2022) and *The Outer—from the Inner (Emily Dickinson's Bedroom, dusk)* (2018), the artist embeds a reminder that nothing lasts forever.

Candlelight (CIE 529/418) (2022) emphasizes the sacredness and scarcity of light, as it relates to human mortality. The work is installed in a window and is crafted with hand-blown Lambert glass, a delicate and beautiful material. The handcrafted quality of Lambert glass creates subtle details in the glass like air bubbles and uneven lines that set it apart from mass-produced window glass. Finch's choice of Lambert glass uses these detailed imperfections of the light meeting the window to activate a beautiful unevenness when reflected on the floor. To make this work, Finch used a colorimeter to record the colors of candlelight and then produced glass emulating the colors of the sacred, distinctive glow of a candle. The warm color scheme paired with the glass' ethereal transparency creates an aura of warmth that envelopes the viewer as if it were a natural candlelight. It is these unique, one-of-a-kind aspects of the window

¹ "Spencer Finch". Lisson Gallery. <https://www.lissongallery.com/artists/spencer-finch>



Spencer Finch, *Candlelight* (CIE 529/418), 2022. Stained glass, steel frame, dimensions variable.

that remind viewers of the small things that make every ordinary object special. Just as everyday objects are each unique, each human life is a limited experience that should be celebrated.

Alongside these factors, Finch constructs the window into an abstract painting of a flame. The window instills a sense of protection as candlelight evokes shelter, comfort, and familiarity. While fostering a feeling of warmth, *Candlelight* (CIE 529/418) also explores the idea of fleeting light. Finch purposefully positions the window to face the setting sun. Observing the window throughout the day will allow the viewer to witness the candlelight's warmth slowly extinguishing as night falls. This experience of losing light is a melancholic journey recorded, captured, and framed in one sculpture. The light, as it slowly slips away, changes the window

from bright fiery hues into melancholic mahoganies and lifeless embers. The window overlooks The High Line, where viewers can observe people passing through continuously, until nightfall when it becomes desolate, further evoking a sense of loss within the viewer.

Finch ignites the thought into viewers' minds about the dying of light as a reminder that every day a fire that is reignited and dies again by night. He reminds us of life's monotonous cycle and that nothing lasts forever.



Spencer Finch, *The Outer—from the Inner (Emily Dickinson's bedroom, dusk)*, 2018. Suite of seven archival inkjet prints, 15.6 x 15.6 inches (39.5 x 39.5 cm) each.

Finch's *The Outer—from the Inner (Emily Dickinson's Bedroom, dusk)* (2018) explores similar concepts through its arrangement and imagery. The work consists of seven photographs of a seemingly ordinary bedroom. However, the photos are consciously organized to show the passage of time and light across the bedroom of the poet Emily Dickinson. Finch's interest in

Dickinson has led to many works including this one, as well as *Sunlight in an Empty Room (Emily Dickinson's Bedroom, dusk)* (2018). Dickinson lived in her home where she wrote in solitude. Her writings brought significance to occurrences in everyday life, in a similar fashion to Finch's pursuit of highlighting the scarcity of light.² Both artists used their arts as means to bring higher meaning to something that is commonly unnoticed. Capturing the passage of light across Dickinson's bedroom from the afternoon to the night allows the audience to experience the fading of light, day, and in turn, fading life. Viewers feel a sense of loss as they watch the repetition of daily life as a constant, dull cycle until it abruptly ends. The sequence transitions from mundane dull colors to glowing hues that signify a reigniting ember, as the day begins again.

These works are exhibited side by side at the Hill Art Foundation, with purpose. Though *Candlelight (CIE 529/418)* is entirely different in the way that *The Outer—from the Inner (Emily Dickinson's Bedroom, dusk)* is photography and doesn't have the same handcrafted qualities as the stained window's Lambert glass, the similar concepts embedded within the two artworks allow the audience to further ponder the overall message Finch communicates. For starters, it is no coincidence that both works incorporate windows. They provide a view into the artist's perspective on the world. *Candlelight (529/418)* uses the window's transparency to record the journey of sunlight throughout the day. *The Outer—from the Inner (Emily Dickinson's Bedroom, dusk)* does the same but the window serves as a vessel for the audience to see Dickinson's bedroom through the eyes of Finch. It provides the audience with a new viewpoint on an ordinary occurrence. Finch sees her bedroom as a symbol of the passage of light and the room

² Beverly Hall Smith, "Looking at the Masters: Spencer Finch", September 16, 2021. <https://chestertownspy.org/2021/09/16/looking-at-the-masters-spencer-finch/>

also functions as a tool that magnifies its significance. The two works are parts of the same story, the same narrative.

Bibliography

Smith, Beverly Hall. "Looking at the Masters: Spencer Finch", September 16, 2021.
<https://chestertownspy.org/2021/09/16/looking-at-the-masters-spencer-finch/>

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