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Formal Analysis of *Rose Window at Saint Denis (morning effect)*

Spencer Finch's approach to *Rose Window at Saint Denis (morning effect)* (2022) included using a colorimeter to record the color temperature of morning light passing through the north rose window at the Saint-Denis Cathedral and using that data to create an accurate yet modern depiction in his LED piece. Finch's *Rose Window* uses LED lights to mimic the beaming rays of sunlight that shone through the glass of the original rose window in Saint-Denis while allowing for a new immersive experience with a religious connection.

At first glance viewers will notice the use of LED fixtures and lamps that are placed in a circular manner to imitate the shape of the original window. The viewer will then notice how often each color appears. The sizing of Finch's piece stands at 108 inches in diameter while the original north rose window stands at 15 meters. Finch's piece is typically installed in a room with a white background, the LED lights are placed in a circular pattern on the wall, creating the illusion of a circular window. The LED lights illuminate the room and create a sense of depth and dimension. The piece invites the viewer to contemplate the beauty and mystery of light and color, and to experience the present moment in a contemplative and meditative way.

Finch is an American artist known for his site-specific installations and use of light and color. He often creates works that respond to specific locations or environments, such as the natural landscape or the architecture of a building. For this collection he took inspiration from Abbot Suger's strong belief towards the use of stained glass to transform natural sunlight, he felt that stained glass had the ability to change lux, or ordinary light, into lumen, or holy light, thus

naming the entire collection, *Lux and Lumen: Spencer Finch*.¹ He was drawn to the north rose window from the Saint Denis Cathedral and the effect it left on the lighting of the wall it was facing. Finch wanted to emulate a similar effect with a modern twist, choosing LED lights with color filters that matched the color temperature of the original window. It's worth mentioning that the piece is not a direct replica of a real rose window, but more an interpretation of the idea of the rose window, taking advantage of the properties of LED lights to create an immersive experience.

Finch paired this piece with a restored glass window from a church in France made by Renaissance artist Valentin Bousch, both pieces having religious correlation. The rose windows in the Saint Denis cathedral were typically used to convey religious themes and messages to the viewers.² The circular shape of the window, with its radiating lines, is often used to represent halos and is seen as symbolizing the holy, divine and the heavens. The use of stained glass also adds an element of color and light, which was thought to evoke a sense of the divine and the spiritual. In this sense, *Rose Window* could be seen as a contemporary interpretation of this traditional form of religious art.

Spencer Finch has not publicly discussed religious meanings in all of his pieces, however like *Rose Window*, he often uses light and color to create a sense of transcendence and to explore the relationship between the material and the spiritual.

The LED light installation is a modern take on the traditional rose window, using technology to enhance the aesthetic experience. The use of the lights allows the piece to be interactive and dynamic, creating an ever-changing display of light and color that simulates the

¹ "Lux and Lumen: Spencer Finch," Hill Art Foundation, November 19, 2022, <https://hillartfoundation.org/art/exhibitions/view/lux-and-lumen/>.

² "Stained Glass and the Rose Window," Gothic Architecture, April 10, 2012, <https://jennymerr.wordpress.com/2012/03/10/stained-glass-and-the-rose-window/>.

appearance of a rose window. The piece invites the viewer to contemplate the beauty and mystery of light and color, and to experience the present moment in a contemplative and meditative way.

Bibliography

“Lux and Lumen: Spencer Finch.” Hill Art Foundation, November 19, 2022. Accessed January 23, 2023 <https://hillartfoundation.org/art/exhibitions/view/lux-and-lumen/>.

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