

Inside | Outside: Trading Between Art and Architecture

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Abstract:

Staging the Architectural Interior: Spencer Finch's Windows

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Unlike the display of most museum artefacts, exhibitions of architectural interiors often employ strategies of deception and illusion. In the case of period rooms and other conventional formats for display, the window presents a particular problem, and must frequently rely on trompe-l'oeil backdrops, lighting effects and scenographic sleights of hand to maintain a semblance of reality and the original view out. Mostly, however, the theatrical effects fail to convince. Instead, they help to expose permanent tensions between museological demands for historical, material and visual authenticity. In this context, the paper turns to the reconstructed environments and windows of artist Spencer Finch, whose work does away with formal reconstructions in favour of simulated light qualities, atmospheres, and temporal moods. In particular, the discussion will focus on the work *Light in an Empty Room (Studio at Night)* (2015), which recreates the light effects of streetlamps and passing traffic through the windows of the artist's Brooklyn studio. It will argue that by simulating the effect of the window rather than its outlook, Finch effectively reverses the problem of the window for staged architectural interiors, by turning the viewer's gaze back onto the interior itself.