

GUGGENHEIM

NEWS RELEASE

James Turrell Opens at the Guggenheim Museum in June

Frank Lloyd Wright's iconic rotunda to be transformed into a light installation in the artist's first solo exhibition in New York in more than 30 years

Exhibition: *James Turrell*
Venue: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 1071 Fifth Avenue, New York
Location: Rotunda floor; Annex Levels 2 and 5; High Gallery
Dates: June 21–September 25, 2013
Press Preview: Thursday, June 20, 10 am–1 pm

(NEW YORK, NY – May 14, 2013) — From June 21 to September 25, 2013, the Guggenheim Museum presents *James Turrell*, the eminent American artist's first solo exhibition in a New York museum since 1980. The exhibition features a major new site-specific work, *Aten Reign* (2013), which represents one of the most dramatic transformations of the museum ever conceived—reimagining the rotunda of Frank Lloyd Wright's iconic building as one of Turrell's luminous and immersive Skyspaces. Opening on the summer solstice, the installation will fill the museum's central void with shifting natural and artificial light and intense, modulating color, creating a dynamic perceptual experience that exposes the materiality of light. Including select early works in addition to the monumental new installation, *James Turrell* considers the dominant themes explored by the artist for nearly fifty years, focusing on his investigations of perception, light, color, and space and the critical role of site-specificity in his practice.

James Turrell is one of three concurrent, independently curated presentations of the artist's work in summer 2013. Together, the exhibitions at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art celebrate Turrell's groundbreaking career and form a three-part retrospective across the country.

James Turrell is curated by Carmen Giménez, Stephen and Nan Swid Curator of Twentieth-Century Art, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, and Nat Trotman, Associate Curator, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

James Turrell is organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, New York, in conjunction with

the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston.

The Leadership Committee for *James Turrell* is gratefully acknowledged for its generous support, including Lisa and Richard Baker, Pace Gallery, Almine Rech Gallery, Fundación Almine y Bernard Ruiz-Picasso para el Arte, 425 Park Avenue/Simone and David W. Levinson, and those who wish to remain anonymous.

Exhibition Overview

Since the late 1960s Turrell has conceived a wide-ranging yet unified body of work that explores his specific aesthetic concerns: the use of light as a material that affects the medium of perception; a refined formal language based in geometry; an interest in the optical and emotional effects of color; an interplay between the solid and the ethereal; and an emphasis on quiet, almost reverential atmospheres of introspection and reflection. Building on his early research into sensory deprivation—in particular the *Ganzfeld* effect, in which viewers experience disorienting, unmodulated fields of color—Turrell pursues a state of reflexive vision that he calls “seeing yourself seeing,” in which one becomes aware of the function of one’s own senses and of the material aspects of light.

“Light is a powerful substance,” Turrell explains. “We have a primal connection to it. But, for something so powerful, situations for its felt presence are fragile. . . . I like to work with it so that you feel it physically, so you feel the presence of light inhabiting a space,” he says. “My desire is to set up a situation to which I take you and let you see. It becomes your experience.”

One of the largest installations the artist has ever mounted and the result of nearly six years of planning, *Aten Reign* will materialize the light and the air that fill the expanse of the Guggenheim rotunda. The work proposes an entirely new encounter with the building, as attention is drawn away from the boundaries of the built environment and toward the interior space, creating what Turrell has described as “an architecture of space created with light.” For the first time, the rotunda can be experienced only from below—not as an open void to be looked across, but as a mass of vibrant color that expands and contracts above the heads of visitors.

In *Aten Reign*, daylight enters from the museum’s oculus, streaming down to light the deepest layer of a massive assembly suspended from the ceiling of the museum. Using a series of interlocking cones lined with LED fixtures, the installation surrounds this core of daylight with five elliptical rings of shifting, colored light that echo the banded pattern of the museum’s ramps. As is typical of Turrell’s work, the apparatus that creates the effect is mostly hidden from view, encouraging viewers to interpret what they see by means of their own perception. The work promotes a state of meditative contemplation in a communal viewing space, rekindling the museum’s founding identity as a “temple of spirit,” in the words of Hilla Rebay, the Guggenheim’s first director and a pioneer in the promotion of nonobjective art.

Aten Reign also relates to Turrell’s *Roden Crater Project* (1979–), his magnum opus currently under construction in the desert outside Flagstaff, Arizona. When complete, the modified extinct volcano will house nearly two dozen separate installations, many carefully aligned with astronomical phenomena and all incorporating natural luminance. According to Turrell, the project was informed by the design of ancient observatories, which were oriented to celestial events. The Guggenheim itself echoes ancient

architecture—Wright imagined it as an inverted ziggurat—and *Aten Reign*'s elliptical shape bears similarities to certain spaces at Roden Crater and *Agua de Luz* (an elliptical, stepped pyramid Turrell built in the Yucatan in 2012). Just as the natural world is an inspirational force for Turrell, so it was for Wright, who was fond of the open landscape of the American West, making his second home in Arizona.

Offering a complement and counterpoint to *Aten Reign* is a selection of Turrell's early works, some drawn from the museum's Panza Collection and others on loan. These pieces offer a sample of the artist's various installation types and link the new project to his work of the 1960s and 1970s. In *Afrum I (White)* (1967), one of Turrell's earliest Cross Corner Projections, visitors encounter a glowing cube floating in the corner of a room; what first appears to be a solid object resolves upon closer inspection into simple planes of light. The Single Wall Projection *Prado (White)* (1967), on the other hand, seems to dematerialize space, dissolving the wall and creating a passage to an unknown space beyond. Alongside these projections, selections from the related etching portfolio *First Light* (1989–90) explore how the aquatint technique can invoke qualities of radiance. In the Shallow Space Construction *Ronin* (1968), light emanates from behind a vertical architectural fissure, appearing as a solid plane and dematerializing the darkened wall. *Iltar* (1976), one of his Space Division Constructions, creates an effect that may be read alternately as a flat panel of color hanging on a wall, a foggy void, or an opening into a separate chamber. These works connect *Aten Reign* to the artist's earliest experiments with light and space and offer visitors a variety of perceptual experiences.

About the Artist

Born in Los Angeles in 1943 to a Quaker mother and a father who was a school administrator, James Turrell attended Pomona College, where his studies concentrated on psychology and mathematics. He later received a master's degree in Art from Claremont Graduate School. Turrell's work has been widely acclaimed and exhibited since his first showing at the Pasadena Art Museum in 1967, which established him as a leader in the nascent Light and Space Movement in Southern California. His work has since been presented at major venues including the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam (1976); the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (1980); the Israel Museum (1982); the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (1984); MAK, Vienna (1998–99); the Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh (2002–03); and the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Germany (2009–10); and was included in the 54th Venice Biennale (2011). In addition to the exhibitions at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, and the Los Angeles County Museum of Art in summer 2013, Turrell's art is on view in a solo exhibition at the Academy Art Museum, Easton, Maryland. The artist's work is represented in numerous public collections including the Tate Modern, London; the Los Angeles County Museum of Art; the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; and the Israel Museum, Jerusalem. Turrell has created more than seventy Skyspaces in the Americas, Europe, and Asia, with the first made in 1974 for Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo at his home in Varese, Italy.

Exhibition Catalogue

James Turrell is accompanied by a fully illustrated, 128-page catalogue detailing the production of *Aten Reign* (2013) and situating it in the context of the artist's career. The catalogue features essays by Carmen Giménez and Nat Trotman, the exhibition curators, and Arthur Zajonc, emeritus professor of physics at Amherst College; this writing explores the significance of the new installation in terms of

Turrell's ongoing relationships with architecture, the landscape, and perceptual experience. Designed by 2x4, the book will be available in hardcover at the museum store and online at guggenheimstore.org.

Education and Public Programs

For complete information about the range of public programs presented in conjunction with *James Turrell*, please visit guggenheim.org/publicprograms. Highlights include the following:

Guided Tours

Free with museum admission

Curator's Eye

July 19, 2 pm: led by Nat Trotman (ASL-interpreted)

September 13, 2 pm: led by Nat Trotman

Conservator's Eye

August 23, 2 pm: led by Joanna Phillips

Public Programs

The Elaine Turner Cooper Education Fund: Conversations with Contemporary Artists:

James Turrell with Michael Govan

Friday, June 21, 2 pm

James Turrell joins Michael Govan, co-curator of *James Turrell: A Retrospective* and Director, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, in conversation about the different aspects of the artist's singular oeuvre on view in three concurrent exhibitions this summer in Houston, Los Angeles, and New York. \$12, \$8 members, free for students and interns with RSVP.

John Zorn: Sacred Voices

Sunday and Tuesday, June 23 and 25, 7:30 pm

The maverick American composer and new-music pioneer John Zorn will premiere *EARTHSPIRIT* and *MADRIGALS*, two new works for female voices, inside James Turrell's site-specific installation *Aten Reign* (2013). George Steel, General Manager and Artistic Director, New York City Opera, will moderate a discussion with Zorn.

\$40, \$35 members.

Google Art Talk: Turrell Trifecta

Tuesday, July 9, 3 pm

As part of the Google Art Project's new series of art talks, curators from the three concurrent James Turrell exhibitions on view this summer will be responding to crowd-sourced questions about the artist. The online discussion features Nat Trotman, Associate Curator, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum; Alison de Lima Greene, Curator of Contemporary Art and Special Projects, Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and Christine Y. Kim, Associate Curator of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Viewers can access the talk via Hangouts on Air on the Google Art Project's Google+ page, <https://plus.google.com/+GoogleArtProject/posts>, and may submit discussion questions via the Guggenheim's social media channels.

Sky Light: Dr. E. C. Krupp

Wednesday, July 17, 6:30 pm

Although the sky is half of the environment and light is what activates sight, both are taken for granted today. However, from prehistoric Ireland's Newgrange to Egypt's Abu Simbel to Mexico's Chichén Itza, ancient civilizations have engaged the sky and manipulated its light. The monumental and theatrical works of James Turrell also anchor audiences with celestial light, but with different motivation.

Astronomer E. C. Krupp, Director, Griffith Observatory, explores parallels with antiquity and engagements with perception in Turrell's installations, particularly Roden Crater and *Agua de Luz* (2012) at Cenote Santa Maria in Mérida, Mexico. Reception immediately follows.

\$12, \$8 members, free for students and interns with RSVP.

Philip Glass: In Concert

Thursday, September 19, 7 pm

Renowned for his immersive music of repetitive structures, composer Philip Glass constructs an exclusive one-hour concert performed within *Aten Reign* (2013), James Turrell's new site-specific installation at the Guggenheim Museum.

Performance \$50, \$45 members, \$35 students and interns with valid ID; performance and private reception with the artist in the Wright \$75, \$65 members, \$50 students and interns with valid ID (all tickets limited capacity).

James Turrell: Sensing Space

Friday, September 20, 3:30 pm

In this half-day symposium, scholars present on topics that cover the range of James Turrell's work, including the nature of perception, conditions of site-specificity, and the philosophy of aesthetics. Speakers include Thomas Crow, Provostial Fellow and Rosalie Solow Professor of Modern Art, Institute of Fine Arts at New York University; Miwon Kwon, Professor and Chair, UCLA Department of Art History; and Mark Taylor, Professor and Chair, Columbia University Department of Religion.

\$15, \$10 members, free for students and interns with RSVP.

About the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation

Founded in 1937, the Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation is dedicated to promoting the understanding and appreciation of art, primarily of the modern and contemporary periods, through exhibitions, education programs, research initiatives, and publications. The Guggenheim network that began in the 1970s when the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, was joined by the Peggy Guggenheim Collection, Venice, expanded to include the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao which opened in 1997, and the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, currently in development. Looking to the future, the Guggenheim Foundation continues to forge international collaborations that take contemporary art, architecture, and design beyond the walls of the museum. More information about the foundation can be found at guggenheim.org.

VISITOR INFORMATION

Admission: Adults \$22, students/seniors (65+) \$18, members and children under 12 free. Available with admission or by download to personal devices, the Guggenheim's new, free app offers an enhanced visitor experience. The app features content on special exhibitions, including *James Turrell*, access to more than 1,100 works in the Guggenheim's permanent collection, and information about the museum's landmark building. Verbal imaging tours are also included for the visually impaired.

Museum Hours: Sun–Wed, 10 am–5:45 pm; Fri, 10 am–5:45 pm; Sat, 10 am–7:45 pm; closed Thurs. On Saturdays, beginning at 5:45 pm, the museum hosts Pay What You Wish. In order to preserve the intimate, meditative nature of James Turrell's work, museum capacity will be limited during this exhibition. Please be aware that there may be delays for entry. Photography is not permitted within the exhibition. For general information, call 212 423 3500 or visit the museum online at:

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