

## Kayne Griffin Corcoran



### How to Find James Turrell's Art in the Most Unlikely Corners of the Earth

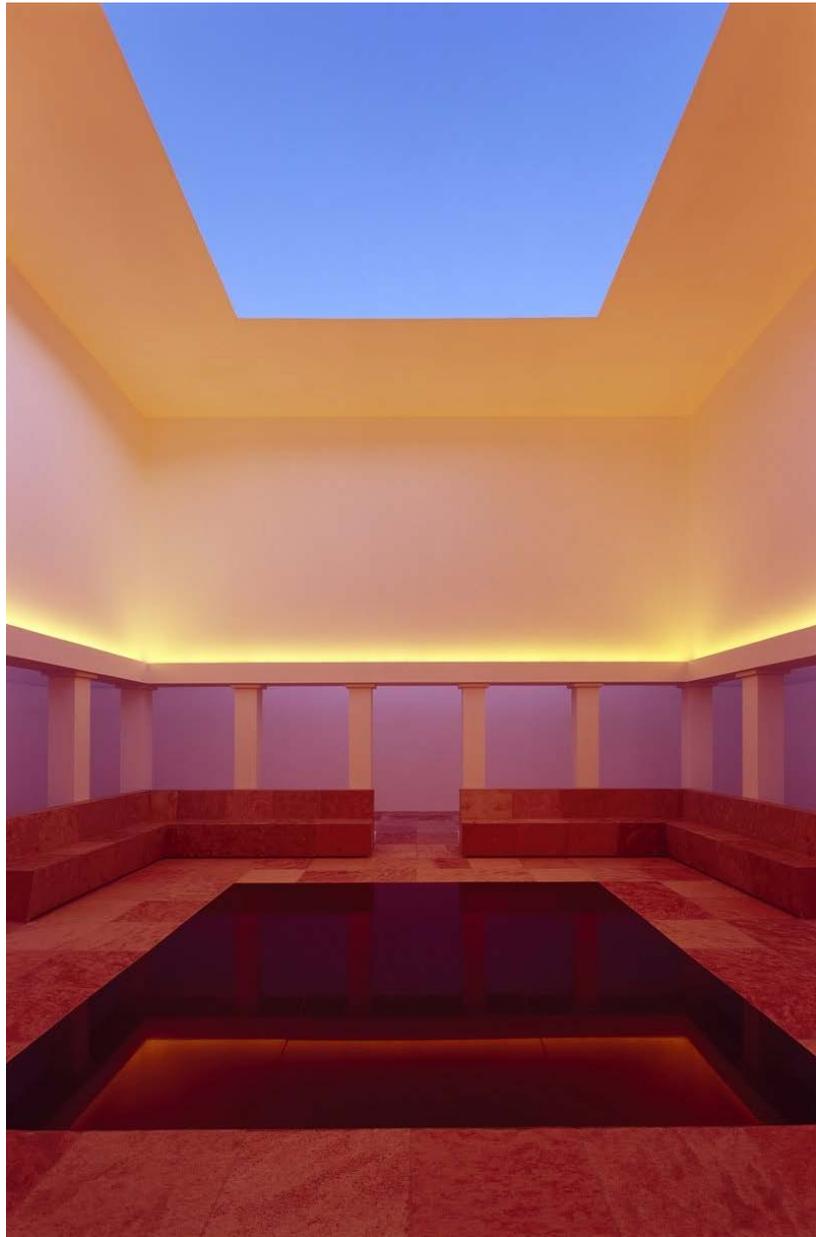
From a crater in the Netherlands to a chapel in Berlin to a vineyard in Argentina, the famed light artist's masterworks span the globe



*Encounter* (2015). Photo: Moritz Bernouilly / Copyright James Turrell

Since the 1960s, James Turrell, the 75-year-old American artist who studied perceptual psychology, has been fixated on light and all the ways he can manipulate it with space and color. But the power of Turrell's work—most often large-scale installations—is that it's all about you, the viewer. "My work is not so much about my seeing as about your seeing. There is no one between you and your experience," says the legendary orchestrator of light whose permanent installations you can find in 29 countries. An avid pilot with a lifelong fascination in merging earth and sky, Turrell considers his studio and canvas the sky, his medium pure light. The artist is best known for his Skyspaces, chambers open to the heavens through an aperture in the ceiling. These observatories—much like all of his work—are designed to be places of contemplative thought. So what are you looking at? Turrell throws it back to you: "You are looking at you looking. What is important to me is to create an experience of wordless thought." So step into the light: From a meditation house deep in Japan's countryside to a former mattress factory in Pittsburgh, *AD* uncovers the most unusual places around the world to see James Turrell's art installations.

### Colomé Winery and Estate, Argentina



*Unseen Blue* (2002). Photo: Florian Holzherr / Copyright James Turrell / Courtesy of Grupo Colomé

In the world's highest vineyard, there are endless halls of color, with nothing on the walls, no sculptures, just light: Welcome to the [James Turrell Museum](#) in Colomé, Argentina. The museum belongs to the Hess Art Collection, and houses art from the artist's half-century career—a "time tunnel" of nine rooms devoted entirely to Turrell's works. In the museum's courtyard, you'll find *Unseen Blue* (2002), Turrell's largest skyspace in the world to date. Like all of his signature skyspaces, *Unseen Blue* is an observatory, or chamber, with an aperture in the ceiling open to the sky. To appreciate the skyspace's maximum effect, it should be experienced during dawn or sunset. Turrell has engineered nature's light to coincide with his own artificial light show, creating an intoxicating and dizzying effect that even a fine Argentinian wine grown at 10,2017 feet can't compete with.

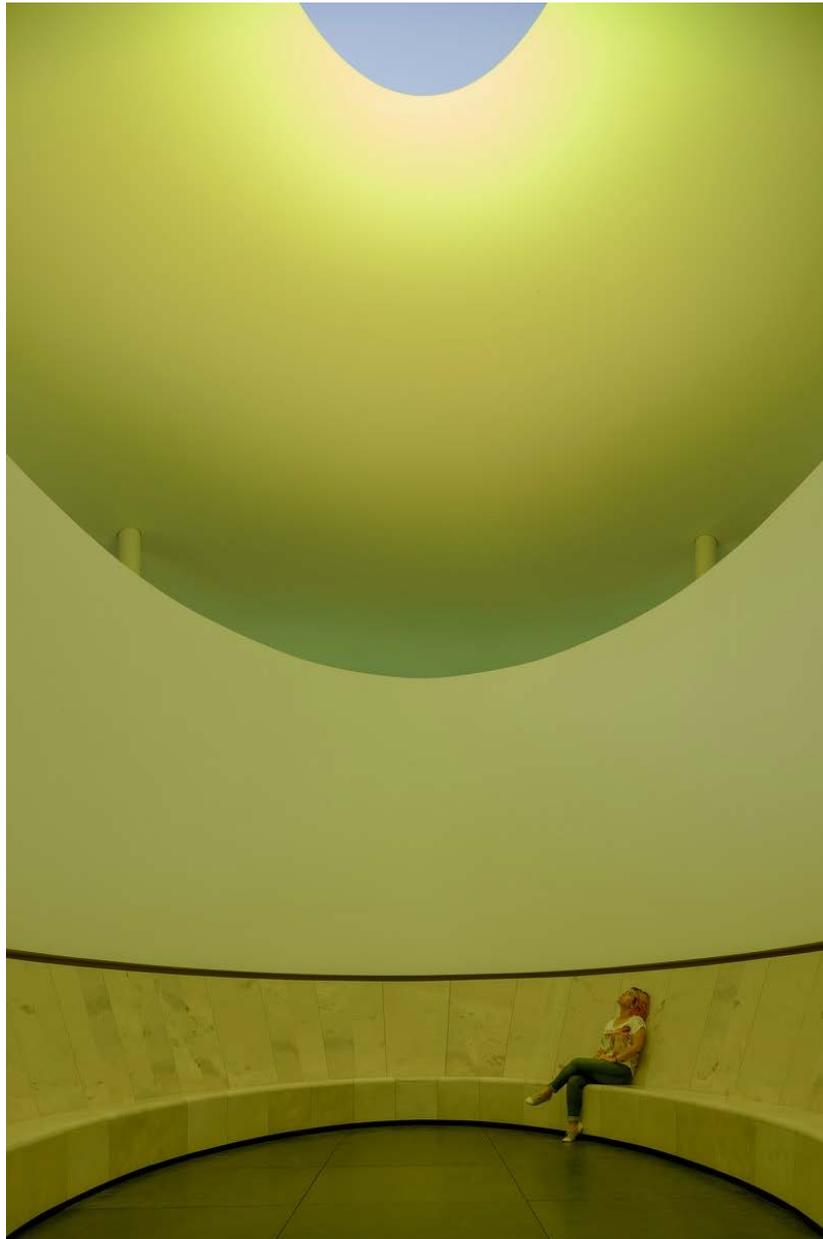
## House of Light, Japan



*House of Light* (1997). Photo: Florian Holzherr / Copyright James Turrell / Courtesy of House of Light

The power of James Turrell's art is that it evokes and expands contemplative states within the viewer. So what could be a more fitting home for his art than a guesthouse for meditation deep within Japan's rural western countryside? Guests can stay overnight at the *House of Light*, where Turrell has fused aspects of traditional Japanese architecture, aesthetics, and culture with his own play on light and shadows. For instance, the Japanese restorative practice of "forest bathing" can be experienced in the home's Light Bath, where guests can bathe in a tub illuminated at night by fiber optics and by day by natural light seeping in from views of the surrounding forest.

### Botanical Gardens of Culiacán, Mexico



*Encounter* (2015). Photo: Moritz Bernouly / Copyright James Turrell

The city of Culiacán is known for its bloodred sunsets, but you'll experience them in a whole new way from James Turrell's *Encounter*, the first skyspace in Mexico, opened to the public in 2015. Located in the lush Botanical Gardens of Culiacan in Sinaloa, Mexico, this skyspace has a unique elliptical shape which, when viewed from above, resembles the shape of an eye. All of James Turrell's skyspaces are designed to be a space for introspection, so it's always advised to experience the space in silence. And in this particular one, surrounded by more than 1,600 plant species, it's also recommended to bring insect repellent.

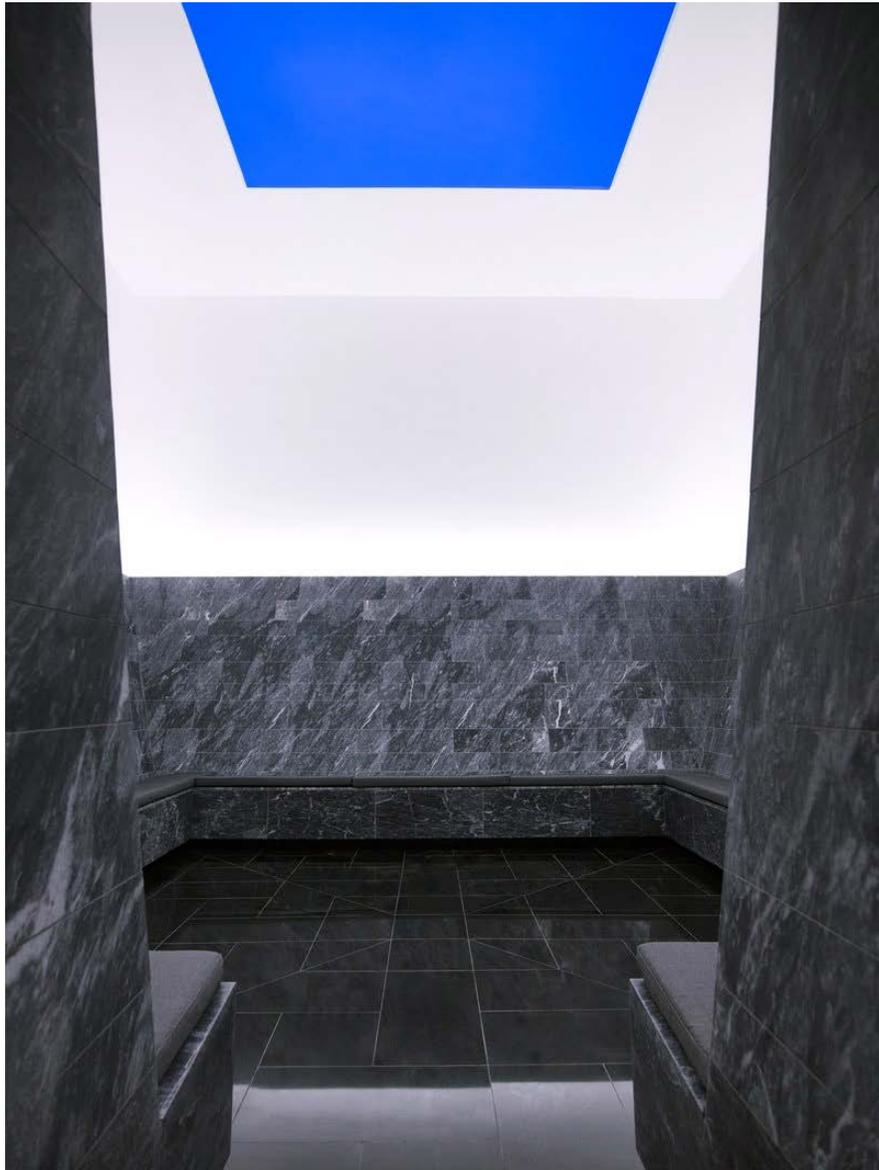
### Celestial Vault, The Netherlands



*Celestial Vault* (1996). Photo: Jannes Linders / Courtesy of Stroom Den Haag / Copyright James Turrell

Designing an artificial crater in the dunes of the Netherlands might have seemed like a daunting feat, but not for the master of light (and see below for Turrell's most ambitious work yet within the Mother Nature-made Roden Crater). Built in 1996, James Turrell's *Celestial Vault* is described not as a sculpture in the landscape, but as a tool to look at light and color. And this tool is expansive—30 meters wide and 40 meters long—creating an optical illusion of a domed sky. To reach the crater, visitors must climb stairs on the dune and then walk through a tunnel leading to an expansive grassy crater with an altarlike stone bench in the center. Lying on the bench, visitors can gaze at the crater's curved edge meeting the open vaulted sky above.

### Amanzoe Hotel & Resort, Greece



*Sky Plain* (2017). Photo: Courtesy of Aman Resorts / Copyright James Turrell

A private Greek villa with your own 72-foot private heated pool, kitchen, terrace, reflection pool, and dedicated staff is pure luxury. But your own James Turrell skyspace? *Amanzoe's* hilltop resort on Greece's Peloponnese peninsula is home to *Sky Plain*, the first permanent James Turrell installation in the Mediterranean. Like his other skyspaces, this immersive light installation has a large aperture in the ceiling, allowing for an intimate and unique viewing of the changing Aegean sky throughout the day. If the villa is not booked, the hotel also offers guests the chance to view the installation as part as a special dining experience.

### Hotel Castell, Zuoz, Switzerland



*Piz Utèr* (2005). Photo: Florian Holzherr / Courtesy of Hotel Castell / Copyright James Turrell

A former alpine sanatorium in a traditional Swiss village? It's just the sort of unexpected place to be fitting for a James Turrell skyspace. Built in 1913, this sanatorium-turned-art-hotel today offers an impressive collection of contemporary art, including paintings, sculpture, permanent exhibitions, and regular "Art Weekends." But Turrell's skyspace *Piz Utèr* (2005) is what really draws in the art seekers to this castlelike estate. The rotunda stone skyspace showcases the changing mountain skies, best experienced in contemplative silence and taken with a dose of fresh Swiss Alps air.

## Kielder Forest Park, England



*Cat Cairn* (2003). Photo: Florian Holzherr / Copyright James Turrell / Courtesy of Kielder Water & Forest Park

Far from the trappings of modern life, in a remote English village surrounded by thick woods, you can be fully immersed in nature—and a James Turrell light show. On the English border near Scotland lies the *Kielder Forest Park*, a 500-square-mile area of rugged forest, hiking trails, and large contemporary sculptures, including James Turrell's *Cat Cairn: The Kielder Skyspace*. While entering the circular stone structure through a tunnel in the hillside conjures Neolithic times, the recently refurbished LED lighting sequence inside the chamber—fused with the changing sky at dawn and dusk—is nothing this world has seen before.

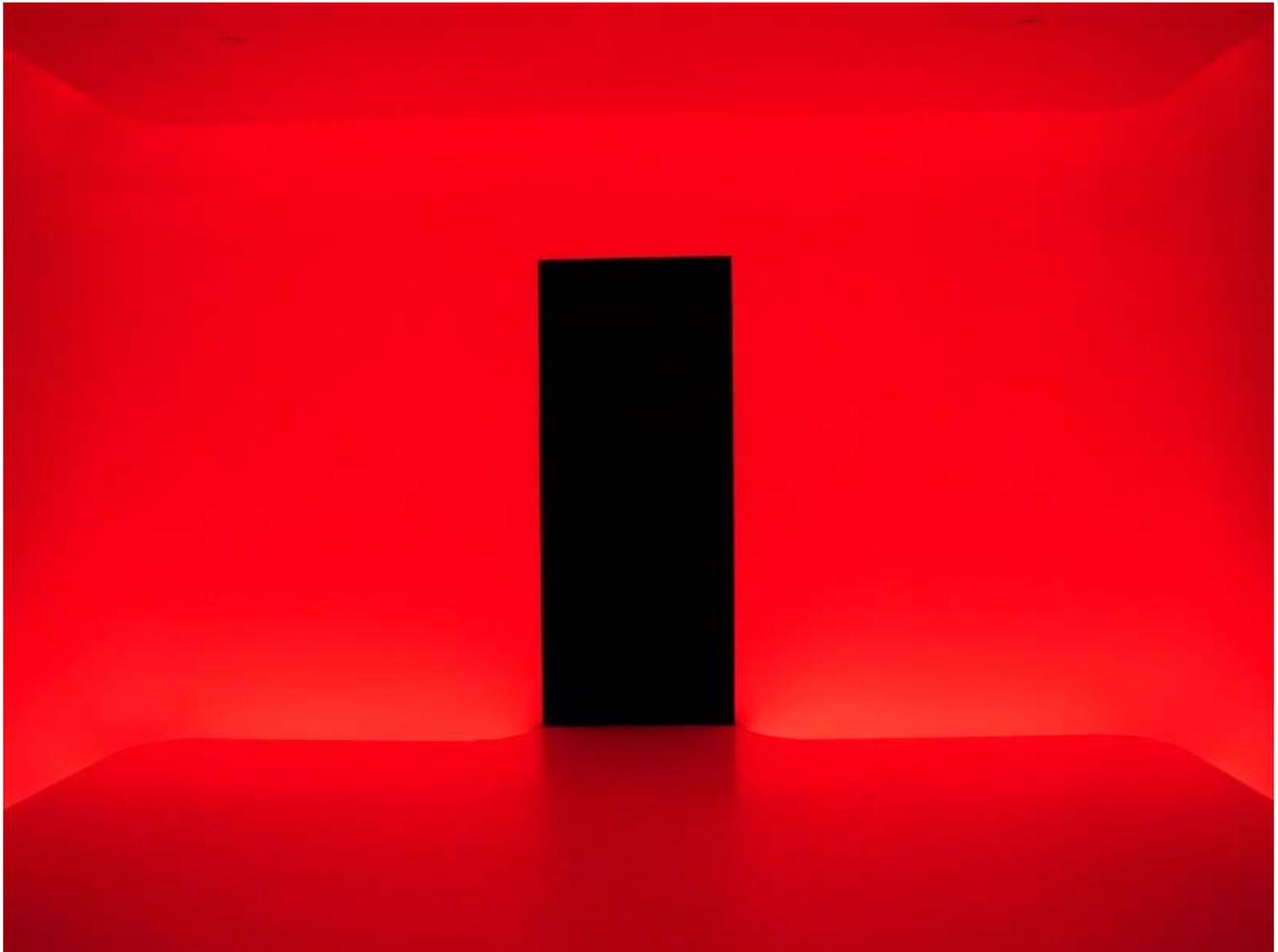
## Rice University, Houston



*Twilight Epiphany* (2012). Photo: Florian Holzherr / Copyright James Turrell / Courtesy of Rice University

Is it a spaceship or is it a James Turrell skyspace? Both are characterized by out-of-this-world encounters that cannot be identified or explained. On the grounds of Houston's Rice University lies the otherworldly *Twilight Epiphany*, one of Turrell's largest skyspaces in the world—it can seat up to 120 people on two levels. Just before sunrise and sunset an LED-light sequence is projected onto the pyramid pavilion's 72-foot square roof and aperture in the ceiling, creating a light show that plays with the changing colors of the sky during dawn and twilight. Besides showcasing daily symphonies of light, this skyspace is also acoustically engineered to host musical performances.

## Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh



*Big Red* (2002). Photo: Florian Holzherr / Courtesy of the Mattress Factory / Copyright James Turrell

In museums across the U.S.'s contemporary art hubs, such as Los Angeles, New York, and San Francisco, you'll find James Turrell's work. You will also find the prolific American artist's work in Pittsburgh, in the *Mattress Factory*. Housed in a former mattress warehouse built in 1900, Mattress Factory describes itself as a research and development lab for artists. Since 1983, the art space has shown 17 Turrell works, and it has three pieces on view permanently: *Danaë*, *Pleiades*, and *Big Red*. And after more than 35 years of working with the Pittsburgh art space, Turrell is donating a \$1 million custom-designed skyspace to Mattress Factory.

## Ekebergparken's Sculpture Park, Oslo



*Ganzfeld: Double Vision* (2013). Photo: Florian Holzherr / Courtesy of Ekebergparken / Copyright James Turrell

In Norway, a country that is known for its surreal light shows from Mother Nature—both the Northern Lights and the midnight sun—it's only fitting to experience art from the master of light himself. *Ekebergparken's Sculpture and National Heritage Park* in Oslo is home to two of Turrell's site-specific light installations—*Ganzfeld: Double Vision* (2013) and the skyspace *The Color Beneath* (2013). "Ganzfeld" is a German word that describes the phenomenon of perceptual deprivation, an experience that Turrell often experiments with. A trained pilot, Turrell would be familiar with the effects of navigating dense fog or a whiteout. With *Ganzfeld: Double Vision*, he evokes that same wonder with his signature color-out—filling a field of vision with one solid color.

### Chapel of the Dorotheenstädtischer Cemetery, Berlin



*Luther's Light* (2015). Photo: [Mangtronix/Flickr](#)

While it's hard to put in to words what it's like to be immersed in James Turrell's world of light, some viewers have suggested it can be as transformative as a religious experience. The American artist was raised in the Quaker faith, in which worship is characterized by silent "meetings." If you want to "meet the light" among the final resting places of Germany's intellectual elite—philosopher Friedrich Hegel and author Bertolt Brecht's graves are here—head to Berlin's *Dorotheenstädtischer Cemetery chapel*. Since 2015, this 20th-century chapel, renovated with a minimal, modern interior, has been illuminated by a light installation by James Turrell. Every evening from June through September you can take in a LED-light sequence beginning at sunset.

### **Roden Crater, Arizona**

For the last 40 years, on the edge of Arizona's Painted Desert, James Turrell has been on a mission to capture the heavens on Earth with his magnum opus, *Roden Crater*. In 1977, Turrell acquired this two-mile-wide extinct volcano near Flagstaff, the city he calls home, and since then has been excavating tons of earth to carve viewing chambers and tunnels—transforming a volcanic cinder cone into a naked-eye observatory full of his signature light and space installations. Surrounded by the dark skies of Arizona's remote high desert, Turrell's unprecedented work of creating the largest public land art monument is described as being more akin to a Mayan temple than anything seen in our modern times. But unless you're a lifelong friend of the internationally renowned light artist or a VIP in the art world, you'll have to patiently wait to experience celestial phenomena from the inside of a volcano designed by one of the most important artists of our times. The completion date of Roden Crater is TBD. Until then, finding a Turrell skysapce near you will have to suffice as a gateway to the heavens.

—Kathleen Rellihan