

Press Release | The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Presents James Turrell: The Light Inside

June 01, 2013

The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, Presents James Turrell: The Light Inside Houston presentation one of three concurrent Turrell exhibitions presented by the MFAH, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York Houston—June 2013—The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, presents James Turrell: The Light Inside, one of three simultaneous and complementary exhibitions devoted to the life’s work of James Turrell. Since the mid-1960s, Turrell has employed the medium of light to create site-sensitive installations and monumental environmental projects. This exhibition is organized by the MFAH in conjunction with related exhibitions at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York. Starting in spring and summer 2013, each institution will present a range of works to illuminate Turrell’s dynamic five-decade career, from his early installations made with projected light to his mapping of the heavens at Roden Crater, the monumental “naked-eye observatory” Turrell has shaped within a dormant volcano near Flagstaff, Arizona. The exhibition is on view at the MFAH from June 9 through September 22, 2013.

“James Turrell has worked with the medium of light to create some of the most extraordinary and deeply beautiful art of our time,” commented Gary Tinterow, MFAH director. “He is among the handful of artists who can be credited with changing the course of American art. We are particularly proud to own so many key examples of his work, which we will present in conjunction with the parallel exhibitions conceived by our colleagues in Los Angeles and New York.”

Alison de Lima Greene, MFAH curator of contemporary art and special projects, is organizing the Houston segment of the exhibition in close collaboration with the artist. “The MFAH first began planning this exhibition more than a decade ago, shortly after Turrell’s *The Light Inside* was commissioned for The Wilson Tunnel that links our two buildings,” she commented. “We have shaped our project around this museum’s unique and extraordinary holdings of Turrell’s work, including the series of light-based installations that he has identified as his ‘Vertical Vintage,’ which the museum acquired in 2010.”

About the Exhibition at the MFAH James Turrell: *The Light Inside* is entirely drawn from MFAH holdings of Turrell’s work. The major part of the exhibition will be installed in the 22,000 square-foot galleries of the museum’s Brown Pavilion, designed by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Surveying the artist’s ongoing exploration of light, the installation opens with the simple white light of *Tycho*, an early double projection from 1967 that pays tribute to the “zips” of Barnett Newman, and closes with the evolving and nuanced color harmonies of *Aurora B* (2010-11) from the artist’s “Tall Glass” series. Both these works will have their public debut with this installation. Other works in the exhibition will engage and challenge viewers to test the limits of their perception, culminating with the magnificent *End Around* (2006) *Ganzfeld*, or “complete field,” which engulfs the viewer in a pure, seemingly limitless field of light. Additionally, the artist’s vision for Roden Crater will be documented by the exquisitely printed *Deep Sky* (1984) and *Mapping Spaces* (1987) portfolios from the Peter Blum Edition Archive at the MFAH.

Also on view is Turrell's *The Light Inside* (1999), a special commission permanently installed in The Wilson Tunnel that connects the museum's two gallery buildings. James Turrell in Houston The MFAH shares a long and rich history with James Turrell, supported over the years by Houston philanthropists and beginning in 1994 with the acquisition of the artist's *First Light* portfolio. The museum's 1996 purchase of the Peter Blum Edition Archive, made possible by the Alice Pratt Brown Museum Fund, brought more than 100 major prints, working proofs and printing plates by Turrell into the museum's collection. In 1999, MFAH patrons Isabel B. and Wallace S. Wilson commissioned Turrell's *The Light Inside* to link the Caroline Wiess Law Building with the then-newly built Audrey Jones Beck Building. The museum has continued to maintain its commitment to Turrell with other significant acquisitions, including the 2008 purchase of *Acro, Green* (1968) from the artist's "Projection" series. In 2010, the MFAH made the commitment to acquire the artist's "Vertical Vintage," a careerspanning survey of twelve light-based installations, a landmark for Houston. A gift of the estate of Isabel B. Wilson in memory of former MFAH director Peter C. Marzio, "Vertical Vintage" is the most retrospective overview of Turrell's light-based work in a public collection.

Houston is also home to two important Turrell Skyspaces, which address the changing light and conditions of the sky: The Live Oaks Friends Meeting House, created in 2001, and the recently inaugurated *Twilight Epiphany*, at Rice University's Suzanne Deal Booth Centennial Pavilion, created in 2012. The MFAH is planning special programs with both of these institutions in conjunction with James Turrell: *The Light Inside*.