

PRESS RELEASE

James Turrell
In Light

Gallery 400
Chicago, IL
September 7–October 30, 2004

Opening Reception: Wednesday, September 15, 2004, 5–8 pm

On the occasion of the installation of the permanent public artwork *UIC Skyspace* on the University of Illinois at Chicago campus by internationally recognized American artist James Turrell, Gallery 400 of the College of Architecture and the Arts is exhibiting a major Turrell gallery work from the collection of the Art Institute of Chicago, *Rayna* (1976), which has not been built or exhibited since 1982. The show at Gallery 400 is on view from September 7 until October 30, 2004 and will also feature ten Turrell aquatint prints from the portfolio *First Light 1989–90*.

Often ephemeral but always stimulating, Turrell's oeuvre of perceptual installations, light projections, and skyspaces explore the complex relationship between light and space, often to dramatic effect. As part of the artist's *Space Division Constructions* series, *Rayna* is a room divided into a "sensing space" behind a rectangular aperture in the central dividing wall and a viewing space in front of it. Seemingly opaque at first, the aperture over time dissolves into what seems to be a translucent scrim that reveals the receding space, fog-filled, and of uncertain depth. Using space to expand or enhance perceptions, the works in the *Space Division Constructions* series explore spatial sensation and perception. Turrell, commenting on what could be seen as the revelatory nature of vision, notes "I am really interested in the qualities of one space sensing another. It is like looking at someone looking. Objectivity is gained by being once removed. As you plumb a space with vision, it is possible to see yourself see. This seeing, this plumbing, imbues space with consciousness." Deceptively simple, Turrell's *Space Division Constructions* are challenging endeavors in individuation and personal awakening. *Rayna* was first exhibited in 1976 at the Arco Center for Visual Art in Los Angeles.

Part of a collection of twenty, the ten *First Light* aquatints on display at Gallery 400 represent some of Turrell's only work in print media. A physical and material record of a projected light moving across a dark room, each print, exquisite and glowing, captures the ephemeral luminescence of flickering light. The aquatints, essentially mediations on light and space, are modeled on Turrell's early experiments with projected light, as seen in his first corner projection piece *Afrum-Proto* (1966). Created while a graduate student at the University of California at Irvine, *Afrum-Proto* is a virtual and illusory projected cube of light. Luminous projections, like that of *Afrum-Proto*, which Turrell terms "holes in reality," led to further experimentation with other floating forms, eventually spawning the *First Light* aquatints. The *First Light* prints shown at Gallery 400 are from the collection of the Milwaukee Art Museum, where the entire *First Light* portfolio was shown earlier this year.

Already known worldwide for his perceptual installations and luminous projections, Turrell has recently become nearly iconic, due to mounting interest in his monumental observatory *Roden Crater*, located in the Painted Desert about forty miles north of Flagstaff, AZ. Within *Roden Crater*, a massive undertaking almost thirty years in the making, a series of underground tunnels and skyspaces will capture and frame the celestial grandeur of the desert sky. The subject of over 140 solo exhibitions worldwide, Turrell's work can be seen in permanent installations at The Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, and The Nasher Sculpture Garden, Dallas. Various major museums, including The Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh; The Museum fur Moderne Kunst, Frankfurt am Main, Germany; The Museum of Fine Art, Houston; and PS1, Long Island City, NY also represent works by the light and space artist. The recipient of countless grants and awards, including a fellowship from the prestigious John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Turrell is truly an international figure of great cultural and artistic importance. Also a pilot and cattle rancher, the artist currently lives in Arizona.

A catalogue with texts by Dean Judith Kirshner of the College of Architecture and the Arts and others, and edited by Maureen Pskowski, will accompany *James Turrell: In Light* and the *UIC Skyspace* installation. Additionally, in March 2005, the College will host a symposium on aesthetic and scientific ideas related to *UIC Skyspace*.

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