James Turrell Perspectives
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Academy Art Museum
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www.academyartmuseum.org

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19 Aerial Photo Mosaic, 1982
Photograph (carbon print), Photographed with Fairchild Ti camera
image 24 ⅞ x 23 ⅜

20 Roden Crater East Portal, 2003
Photograph
image 17 ¾ x 8 ⅜
Courtesy of Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Photograph by Florian Holzherr

21 Roden Crater bowl with Crater Piazza and East Portal, 2003
Photograph
image 12 ⅞ x 9 ⅝
Courtesy of Los Angeles County Museum of Art
Photograph by Florian Holzherr

22 Roden Crater Looking North East, 1979
Photograph, Black and White, image 7 ⅞ x 9 ⅝

Hallway and Spitaleri Gallery

23 Site Plan (blueprint), 1983
Ink jet print, 1/30
image 21 ¼ x 33 ¼

24 Site Plan (blueprint), 2013
Ink jet print, 1/30
image size 46 x 54

25 Roden Crater Looking North East, 1979
Photograph, Black and White, image 7 ⅞ x 9 ⅝

26 Roden Crater Looking North, 1979
Photograph, Black and White, image 6 ⅝ x 9 ⅞

27 Roden Crater Single from Stereo Photo Pair, 1982,
with 2002 Site Plan Overlay
Photograph, Black and White, image 12 ⅞ x 12 ⅞

28 Roden Crater, High Altitude Photograph, 1979
Photograph, Photographed with Fairchild Ti camera
image 5 ⅜ x 5 ⅝

29 Roden Crater Oblique Looking North, October 1979
Photograph, Gelatin silver print
image 6 ⅝ x 9 ⅞

30 Grand Falls of the Little Colorado River, 1982,
with 2002 Site Plan Overlay
Photograph, Photographed with Fairchild Ti camera
image 12 ⅞ x 12 ⅞

31 Grand Falls of the Little Colorado River, 1982,
with 2002 Site Plan Overlay
Photograph, Photographed with Fairchild Ti camera
image 6 ⅝ x 9 ⅞

32 Roden Crater Looking East, 1979
Photograph, Black and White, image 23 ⅝ x 30 ⅝

33 Roden Crater Aerial Photograph, 1982
Photograph, Black and White, image 23 ⅝ x 30 ⅝
American artist James Turrell is one of the most multifaceted artists of our time and well known for working with light, color, and space. A leader in this field, Turrell exhibits at many prestigious art museums around the world and has created permanent installations in close to 30 countries.

James Turrell Perspectives provides a context for understanding Turrell’s work. The exhibition has four components, installed in four floor galleries in the Academy Art Museum. Included is a room of holograms, a site-specific light installation, a selection of photography and a set of bronze and plaster models. In the museum’s Lederer Gallery Turrell and his team created a site-specific “spatial sculpture” or “space division,” titled St. Elmo’s Light. In this work Turrell divides the room into two areas that come to be the “sensing space” and the “viewing space.” In St. Elmo’s Light, a partition wall with a rectangular opening divides the room. Lights aimed at the side walls of the sensing space create a reflective ambient light that dimly illuminates the viewing space. Standing in the sensing space, the viewer initially perceives the opening between the spaces as a flat surface, much like a rectangular monochromatic painting hanging on what appears to be a solid wall. But after studying it closely, a surprising shift in perception occurs—the rectangle opens up and becomes transparent, allowing the viewer to look into the space that lies beyond.

Across the Atrium in the Healy Gallery Turrell’s holograms introduce visitors to ideas that have engaged him for decades: the duality of light, visual perception, dematerialization, the physical property of light, as well as the spiritual quality. Turrell encodes light with meaning. He uses holography as a tool to create light in space; he presents the viewer with a form of light, some representing “outies,” seemingly protruding into the room, and “inies,” seemingly receding to the back. Holograms traditionally are optical objects used to make an image of light that becomes the means through which a three-dimensional object is depicted. Turrell uses holography to examine the physics of light itself; he lets it become the object.

In the museum’s central Atrium gallery, the focus is on James Turrell’s Roden Crater, a crater come from a sonombulant volcano, with a remaining interior volcanic crater; it is located northwest of the city of Flagstaff in northern Arizona. From the beginning the Roden Crater project related to earth artists in the 1960s and 1970s who undertook large-scale sculptural and land art projects. The Walter de Maria, Michael Heizer, and Robert Smithson.

Turrell acquired the 400,000-year-old 3-mile-wide (4.8 km) crater’s land and has, since 1976, been transforming the inner core of the crater into a massive naked-eye observatory, designed specifically for the viewing and experiencing of sky-light, color, and the phenomena. The Winter and Summer solstice events will be highlighted. The magnum opus is still a work in progress and will eventually result into a monumental work of art and one of the most ambitious projects ever envisioned by an artist.

In this central space the exhibition features Turrell’s brightest and most dramatic evolution from spaces he built and designed within the Roden Crater and like the crater’s chambers, contain skyscapes: apertures to the sky carved into an enclosed space. Visitors experience visual phenomena with the movements of the cosmos. Most of the photographs and carbon prints are taken by Turrell himself. He was an aviator at age 14, and is an avid sailor—a man who understands the movements of the sun, moon, stars, and time. He has designed his way through the cosmos. Since attending Pomona College, where he focused on psychology and mathematics, he also knows a lot about the brain, and how we unconsciously construct the reality in which we live. Only later, in graduate school, did he pursue an interest in art. A former Graduate School in Claremont, California.

Turrell’s art is designed to help us catch sight of ourselves in the very act of seeing and to enable us to discover with refreshed eyes the everyday wonders of light. The exhibition focuses on Turrell’s fascination with both the mechanics of visual perception and the metaphysics of light and introduces our audience to recurring themes in Turrell’s oeuvre related to geologic time and his efforts to give viewers a direct experience with the cosmos.

Although often associated with the minimalist and land art movements that have been prominent since the 1960s, James Turrell also has connections with artists like Caravaggio, Rembrandt, Caspar David Friedrich and J. M. W. Turner who were compelled to represent light in a way that conveyed a greater meaning and something transcendent. Turrell’s art has been described as the last great American romantic artist, and his decision to build Roden Crater project has been likened to a Sistine Chapel in the Painted Desert.