

James Turrell: Roden Crater

James Turrell is an artist whose media are light and space, and for the last forty years he has been sculpting the cinder cone of an extinct volcano near Flagstaff into one of the world's largest and most important land-based sculptures.

Turrell first studied psychology and mathematics before earning a Masters of Fine Arts degree in 1966, the year that he began experimenting with light projections as sculpture. In the 1970s he started building "skyspaces," which feature openings cut into or constructed as part of roofs. These apertures make apparent the way color changes in the sky over time, and evoke a feeling that the sky is close enough to touch. Turrell has installed dozens of these architectural sculptures in museums across the United States and Europe, and as far away as Australia.

Turrell has received major exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Guggenheim Museum, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, the National Gallery of Australia, and the Bund Long Museum of Shanghai, among others. A museum devoted solely to his work opened in Argentina in 2009. He received a MacArthur "Genius" Award in 1984, and the National Medal of Arts in 2013.

Turrell's most famous work is the 600-foot high *Roden Crater* in northern Arizona. Beginning in 1979 he began to level the rim of the crater and to excavate tunnels through the volcanic cone in order that people could ascend inside it to experience a number of celestial events and optical phenomena. When finished it will be the largest naked-eye observatory in the history of the world.

The Lannan Foundation in Santa Fe, New Mexico has long been a key supporter of *Roden Crater*, and holds an extensive collection of Turrell's photographs and models of the project, as well as archive materials about it.